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ARIZONA JOURNAL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

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Eat the orange and know what it is to be human

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Research, Innovation & Impact

Volume 10, Spring 2024
Arizona Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies Team

With support from the Office of Societal Impact and the Confluencenter.

Introduction from the Office of Societal Impact

The Office of Societal Impact, within the Office of Research, Innovation, and Impact, is pleased to continue providing the Arizona Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies (AJIS) with financial and staff support. This journal reflects the priorities of our office to expand access to undergraduate research opportunities and showcase the outstanding research being conducted by undergraduates across the University of Arizona campus.

This support has allowed for the expansion of the editorial team for AJIS. This year's record number of submissions speaks to the growth the journal has experienced as a result of a dedicated team of editors.

Articles published in this issue of the journal explore experiences of historically marginalized groups and consider what steps can be taken to create culturally responsive resources and support for a diverse community. Many of these articles seek to understand the experiences of marginalized communities and their responses to challenges, trauma, and barriers to access.

As a land-grant, American Indian and Alaska Native-Serving, and Hispanic Serving Institution, the University of Arizona serves a diverse community of students. As such, we have a responsibility to advocate for marginalized communities and create equitable, accessible opportunities and spaces for all populations.

Our intention in supporting this journal is to provide a platform that showcases important undergraduate work and explores complex, interdisciplinary topics. This was the first year that a showcase event was organized for authors to present their research in a public forum.

Please join us as we congratulate this editorial team on their incredible work on the tenth edition of the journal. We especially want to acknowledge Heather Jensen, Editor-in-Chief, who spearheaded new initiatives for AJIS editors and opportunities for this year's authors.

We want to thank the authors for sharing their insights through their work. For any graduating authors and editors, we wish you all the best in your future endeavors!

Sincerely,

Courtney Leligdon | she, her, hers
Undergraduate Research Coordinator

Kimberly Sierra-Cajas | she, her, hers
Director, Undergraduate Research & Inquiry

RESEARCH, INNOVATION & IMPACT
Societal Impact

A History of Sriracha: A Global Hot Sauce Made in America

Christina Marikos

Hot sauce is a facet of food culture in the United States. If you are a fan of adding some spice to your food, you have likely heard of Sriracha. Though you may not have heard of the hot sauce manufacturer Huy Fong Foods, you have likely tried the sauce, perhaps on a variety of different cuisines. The now famous Sriracha was not always a household name, and Huy Fong's success story has not been without setbacks. To understand the syncretic history of Sriracha, we must take a journey across time and national borders. From its origin as a condiment originally conceived in Thailand, the Huy Fong Foods product started as a homemade sauce created by founder David Tran, a Vietnamese man of Chinese descent, who then emigrated to the United States where his business grew into a global success. The story of Huy Fong Foods– and of Sriracha more specifically– reveals much about American food culture, US trade law, and the fragility of immigrant foodways. Sriracha, a global commodity defined by its transnational cultural character, is a perfect example of how food culture travels and changes in an ever-globalizing world.

Thai Food in the US Before Free Trade and Sriracha's Early Days

In early 1980, in Thailand, a woman named Thanom Chakkapak began making a sauce she called Sriraja Panich for her family. By 1984, a Thai company ThaiTheParos LLC purchased the rights to distribute the condiment from Chakkapak and still does so today across Thailand as well as 50 other countries.[1] In a section titled "The Taste of the Original" ThaiTheParos's English language Sriraja Panich website states the following to differentiate their product from Huy Fong Foods' more popular alternative:

> "Sriraja Panich boasts the taste of the original which features a homonious [sic] blend of "spiciness, sourness, saltiness and sweetness." The sauce is perfectly thick and offers unique [sic] aroma. More importanly [sic], you can feel the taste of real chili as all of Sriraja Panich's manufacturing proccesses [sic] are done without the use of artificial colors, preservatives, MSG or flour."

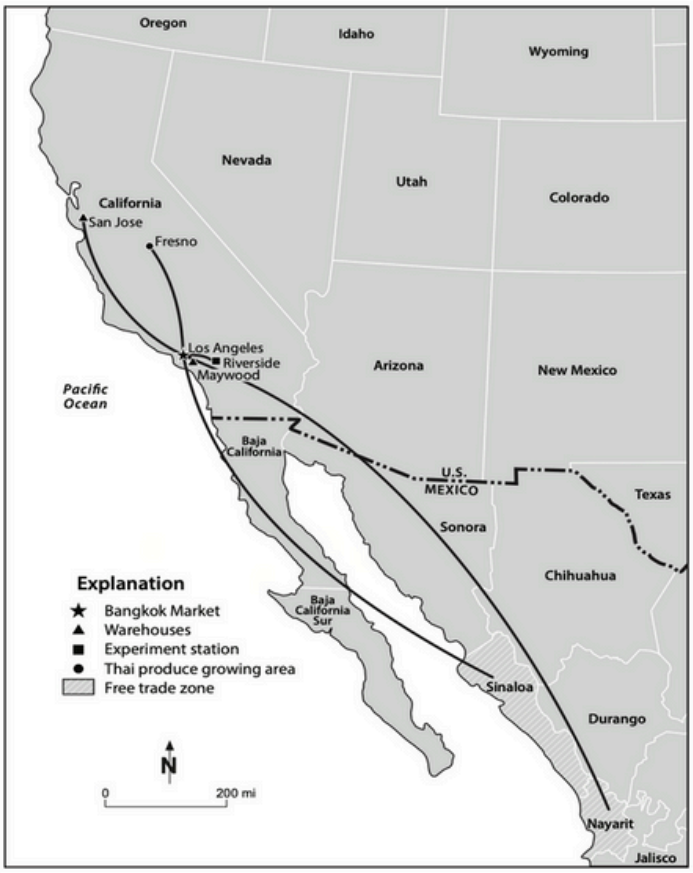
Despite going into commercial production in Thailand, the original Sriraja Panich was not able to be the first of its kind in the United States. Even if the company had been ready to enter the international market immediately, there were significant barriers preventing access to US markets. Not only was importing the final product not an option at the time, but producing it within the United States was also impossible. Even in areas with large Thai diaspora populations, Thai American cuisine in the era before the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 was defined by substitutions. The difficulty of locating Thai ingredients was so pronounced that Thai Los Angeleans organized 120-mile carpool trips to UC Riverside, to harvest leaves from the only kaffir lime trees in the United States at the time. The kaffir limes themselves are inedible, but the aromatic leaves are called makrut and are an essential ingredient in many Thai dishes.[2]

By the 1970s, the largest Thai population in the US was in Los Angeles, and in 1971, Bangkok Market, a Thai grocery store, opened its doors, but American trade policy was still very overtly hostile toward imports, especially from Asia. In the wake of the Second World War, a rollback in trade protectionism occurred in the United States but despite an overall loosening of international trade law, Asian food imports especially still faced insurmountable legal and cultural barriers. Apart from the law itself which stringently regulated the import of fresh Asian foods, the cultural environment in the US was turning against foreign imports as a whole. To protect their profits from foreign competitors, American businesses pushed a very successful "Buy American" movement which implored consumers to spend money on domestic goods as a matter of patriotic principle.[3]

Despite Bangkok Market's role in increased access to Thai ingredients in Los Angeles, pre-NAFTA trade restrictions continued to make accessing Thai ingredients very difficult throughout the US. As historian Tanachai Mark Padoongpatt has noted, investigating what immigrants cook and eat is only part of the story but "centering our analysis on food procurement illuminates how US food policies, food systems, global trade, border making and border maintenance defined the look, feel, and livelihood of ethnic communities."[4] With this in mind, perhaps it is no surprise that large-scale US import of Sriraja Panich was not immediately viable. Bangkok Market's success was the result of careful business strategy, under-the-table smuggling, and the help of US-based professional import brokers.[5]

Despite Bangkok Market's limited success in the Los Angeles area, the United States trade policy both before and after NAFTA requires further examination. Using Pramorte Tilakamonkul, proprietor of Bangkok Market, as an example, we can begin to understand in more detail the nature of US trade law in the pre-NAFTA era. Understanding Bangkok Market's success, and further understanding Huy Fong Foods' choice to use domestic ingredients primarily, can only come with a thorough understanding of the barriers built into US trade policy of the time.

Based on Padoongpatt's account, importing foreign goods began by purchasing the desired goods from a foreign company with an agent or office in the US. Next, importers then hired an import broker to handle the logistical aspects of importing goods.[6] In the case of food imports, this broker would either have dealt with the FDA or the USDA depending on which food items their employer sought to import.



Tilakamonkul had to manage every part of Bangkok Market's ingredient procurement, from production, wholesale, distribution, and import, to retail. Cartography by Syracuse University Cartographic Laboratory & Map Shop from Padoongpatt "Chasing the Yum" in *Food Across Borders*, 93.

The FDA handled all food imports except for meat and poultry which were within the purview of the USDA, which oversaw the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. At this stage, goods could be rejected if they were found to contain pests or diseases. After the USDA/FDA inspection, the broker would also have to undergo US Customs and US Treasury departments who would

[1] "The Origin of 'Sriraja Panich,'" The Heritage, Sriraja Panich. https://www.srirajapanich.co.th/heritage.php?lang=_en. Accessed March 23, 2023.
[2] Tanachai Mark Padoongpatt, "Chasing the Yum: Food Procurement and Thai American Community Formation in an Era Before Free Trade" in *Food Across Borders* ed. Matt Garcia, E. Melanie DuPuis, Don Mitchell. (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2017) 83-86.
[3] Padoongpatt, "Chasing the Yum," 89.
[4] Padoongpatt, "Chasing the Yum," 98-99.
[5] Padoongpatt, "Chasing the Yum," 92.
[6] Padoongpatt, "Chasing the Yum" 87-88.

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U.P.S. SALES ORDER SHEET

Date: _____ Phone: _____

Sold To: _____ Ship To: _____

Qty	Product #	Product Description	Pack/Size	Price	Lbs.
___	-SO08-	**SAMBAL OELEK/GROUND FRESH CHILI**	24/08 oz.	$23.00	17
___	-SO18-	.... *Delicious Ground Red Chili Sauce*	12/18 oz.	22.00	16
___	-SO1G-	(TOUNG OT KHONG TOI)	4/8.50 lbs.	38.00	39
___	-CG08-	**FRESH CHILI GARLIC SAUCE**	24/08 oz.	26.00	17
___	-CG18-	.... *Delicious Ground Red Chili w/ Minced Garlic*	12/18 oz.	23.00	16
___	-CG1G-	(TOUNG OT TOI VIET NAM)	4/8.75 lbs.	45.00	39
___	-SR17-	**SRIRACHA CHILI SAUCE**	12/17 oz.	22.00	16
___	-SR28-	.... *Chili Garlic, Finely Grounded (Squeezable Bottle)*	12/28 oz.	28.00	25
		(TOUNG OT SRIRACHA)			
___	-SB08-	**SAMBAL BADJAK (WITH ONION)**	24/08 oz.	28.00	17
___	-SB18-	.... *Cooked Chili w/ Shrimp Paste, Garlic, and Onion in Oil*	12/18 oz.	26.00	16
		(TOUNG OT CO DAU)			
___	-ST08-	**PEPPER SA-TÉ SAUCE**	24/08 oz.	32.00	16
___	-ST1G-	.... *Cooked Chili w/ Garlic & Saté in Soybean Oil*	4/8.50 lbs.	54.00	39
		(TIA CHIEU SA-TÉ			
___	-STL6-	**PEPPER SA-TÉ OIL** (May spill during shipping)	24/06 oz.	32.00	11
		.... *Soybean Oil From Pepper Saté Sauce (Chili Oil)*			
		(TIA CHIEU SA-TÉ DAU)			
___	-SAMP-	**SAMPLE/GIFT PACK**	5 Bottles	7.00	4
		.... One each: SO08, CG08, SR17, SB08, ST08			

Total Cases _____ Subtotal: $_____

Total Weight _____ Shipping*: $_____

Total: $_____

*Shipping charges will vary depending on destination. Please use our online shipping form to calculate total shipping costs.

Huy Fong Foods order form is primarily for wholesale, grocery supply, not direct to consumer. "U.P.S. Sales Order Form" Huy Fong Foods Inc. Company Website, May 25, 1998, captured on Wayback Machine.

determine the value of the goods and collect import taxes and duties accordingly. Each government agency involved in the import process used different methods to regulate trade. Customs and the FDA required in-person travel to their inspection offices, and the FDA was still using entirely analog organizational systems. The USDA, on the other hand, had basic computerized systems and allowed goods to be delivered to them.[7] Thus, any entity attempting to import foreign foods—and any representatives they could hire—could get trapped in bureaucratic limbo for so long that foods would expire before they ever made it to American consumers.

Even as trade liberalization began to remove legal barriers around the beginning of the 1980s, importers of foreign foods, especially produce, had an increasing number of what Padoongpatt terms "non-tariff" barriers to overcome. The USDA, out of concern for native plant species and foreign plant diseases and pests, outright banned certain Asian produce items, such as the aforementioned *mukrut*.[8]

It was during this era in US trade policy that Huy Fong Foods opened their Chinatown factory in Los Angeles. Huy Fong Foods founder David Tran, like Thanom Chakkapak, the Thai Sriraja Panich creator, first began making Sriracha for himself and his family in Vietnam with local ingredients.[9] In the spirit of the original Sriraja Panich, and of Tran's own original creation for his family, Huy Fong Foods sourced all ingredients locally in California, thus bypassing the trade barriers importers of foreign foods faced at the time. The now famous Sriracha filled a niche in the American hot sauce market, with its domestic ingredients and low price, that other imported Asian chili sauces could not.

Some of Huy Fong's early business strategy moves still serve the company and its success today. Sriracha originally made its marketing appeals directly to grocers and wholesalers, spending nothing on advertising.[10] One of the traits that still characterizes Sriracha today is its cult following. David Tran said of Huy Fong's products, "We make a rich man's sauce at a poor man's price."[11] This focus on quality and low cost has paid off. People who buy Sriracha, and other Huy Fong offerings, don't do so because they've been targeted by a marketing campaign, they do so because they have heard of the product by word of mouth, or tried it for themselves. The sauce initially became popular in the Vietnamese community in this way, but quickly also caught on in the Thai, Korean, and Chinese communities, all of whom had large populations in the LA area.[12] This dispersion among various Asian American communities was facilitated in part by Asian grocery stores, which had been sought out by Huy Fong Foods to stock the product. Asian grocery stores, which cater to Asian American communities, often across national identities, are a site of the creation of the syncretic flavor of Asian American cuisines.

Tran said that his original goal was to make a sauce to accompany phở. Huy Fong Foods has always been very conscious of the fact that its customers come from a wide range of ethnicities and backgrounds, and has actively promoted Sriracha as a product for all.[13] In the early internet age, Sriracha made very direct appeals to its multicultural customer base online. The Huy Fong Foods website published recipes from a variety of cuisines that could all make use of Sriracha. In May of 1998, the recipes offered on the website ranged from chili and Buffalo hot wings to Mapo tofu (a spicy Chinese tofu dish) and Cha-gio (a Vietnamese spring roll preparation).[14] Aside from an offering of recipes, the Huy Fong Foods website also featured an active comments section where customers could leave thoughts and review the products. As early as September 1999, the comments section of the website exclusively features commenters with typical American sounding names from places geographically outside of the Los Angeles area. For example, Jeff Craft from Bremerton, Washington, wrote on August 18, 1999, "I've been using Huy Fong Sriracha and Chili Garlic sauce ever since I first found them in a local Asian food store." Another satisfied customer, Trevor Basset from Colorado Springs, Colorado, wrote on August 8, 1999, "I love this sauce, and really believe it is the hottest out there. Congratulations and Thank You.... Satisfied Customer Across the Country." Regardless of the authenticity of the reviews, and regardless of how curated the review section may be, Huy Fong's website in both the recipe section and the comments page illustrates the company's goal of marketing beyond the Asian diaspora communities in which it first got its start.

In a matter of years after opening in Chinatown, Huy Fong Foods found itself in a position to move to a larger location. By 1987 Huy Fong Foods had relocated to Rosemead, California. Upgrading its production facility from the 2,500 square feet LA Chinatown storefront to the 68,000 square feet Rosemead warehouse marked a huge step forward for Huy Fong Foods. Shortly after this move, in 1990, the company expanded even further, purchasing the next-door Wham-O toy factory space.[15] In this same year, the company also secured the trademark for the now synonymous rooster logo found on all its products.[16]

By the year 1990, Huy Fong Foods had the full line of products that customers know today, presented in the very same packaging, with the very same logo design that is also still used. David Tran has said that the design of the Sriracha bottle was influenced by the iconic American Heinz Ketchup bottle design.[17] This prescient vision of Sriracha in the image of Heinz speaks to the trajectory of success that Huy Fong would soon experience and also to the innately American character of the now globally distributed hot sauce. Yet the trajectory toward success is rarely linear.

Though the image of Sriracha being as ubiquitous as ketchup was on the horizon for Huy Fong Foods, the company would first

[7] Padoongpatt, "Chasing the Yum" 88-89.

[8] Padoongpatt "Chasing the Yum" 89-90.

[9, 10, 12, 15, 16] "Huy Fong Foods, Inc." ed Drew D. Johnson, *International Directory of Company Histories* vol 214 (Gale, Cengage Group, 2019).

[11] Giacomo Tognini, "How Vietnamese Refugee David Tran Became America's First Hot Sauce Billionaire" Forbes, February 5, 2023. https://www.forbes.com/sites/giacomotognini/2023/02/05/how-vietnamese-refugee-david-tran-became-americas-first-hot-sauce-billionaire/?sh=770aa9c73f0a. Accessed December 11, 2023.

[13] Ernesto Hernandez-Lopez, "Lessons from the Legal Troubles of a Popular Hot Sauce" *Gastronomica* Vol 15, No 4 (Winter 2015), 27-33. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26362294.

[14] "Recipes" Huy Fong Foods Company Website. Captured May 25, 1998 by Wayback Machine. http://www.huyfong.com/no_frames/recipes.html.

[17] John T. Edge, "A Chili Sauce to Crow About." New York Times, May 19, 2009. https://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/20/dining/20united.html. Accessed December 11, 2023.

experience a number of setbacks. Thanks to the broad, enthusiastic fanbase Huy Fong actively cultivated, the next era in the company's history, though characterized by legal difficulties, recalls, and logistical challenges, did not mark Sriracha's permanent downfall. With locally sourced American ingredients, Huy Fong Foods found that their company's position in the flow of global trade contrasted the difficulties faced by Bangkok Market. The export of American goods abroad faced far fewer barriers than the import of international goods, especially of East Asian origin into the United States. As Huy Fong Foods began entering international markets, they found that setbacks typically involved temporary batch issues with their product, not insurmountable issues with its country of origin.

Hot Sauce Billionaire

The turn of the century presented Huy Fong with a temporary challenge that affected both their domestic and international distribution: in September 1999, the company voluntarily recalled 42,300 cases of Sriracha after the Hawaii Department of Health issued a warning of bottles exploding when opened due to a build-up of pressure.[18] The issue was determined to be related to the continued fermentation of a specific batch of garlic used in the sauces recalled. This specific issue has been a recurring problem for the company, and as recently as 2018, the company has continued to recall bottles that became too highly pressurized.[19]

Despite this financial setback, by 2001 Huy Fong Foods was annually selling around six million pounds of its chili sauces, for a total annual revenue of about $12 million.[20] Despite its incredible financial success, Huy Fong Foods remained a family business at its core. Several family members were employed by the company. For example, David Tran's son, William, who was acting as the company's director of operations during the 1999 recall, would in 2009 be appointed as the company's president.[21] This period in Huy Fong's history marks the rapid growth of the company's now well-known cult following. Though the company was exporting internationally at this point, its California origins were quintessential to its brand. In the manner of California's cuisine melting pot, Sriracha became a staple in commercial kitchens in everything from street tacos to poke bowls.

A combination of business strategy, product quality, and customer enthusiasm contributed to Sriracha's rapid rise during this period. Sriracha's ravenous fanbase is characterized by niche fanaticism, with some satisfied customers going as far as getting the brand's rooster logo tattooed.[22] LA Times columnist Frank Shyong went as far as to say that Sriracha had achieved "rock-star status among condiments."[23] Huy Fong Foods maintained its continued commitment not to dedicate any money to advertising, yet it continued to grow. LA hosted the 1st annual Sriracha Food Festival in 2013, where David Tran made a rock-star style appearance as the company's founder.[24] The LA Sriracha food festival is a great example of Huy Fong's style of marketing in action. Though the company may not spend money on direct-to-consumer ads, they were a presenting sponsor of the breakout food festival.[25] By cementing themselves as a community member of the greater Los Angeles area, Huy Fong Foods made a powerful marketing choice that further cultivated their enthusiastic fanbase in LA and in the greater United States.

This strategy also tells a compelling story about the centrality of immigrant communities to California food culture. Like Tilakamonkul's Bangkok Market, Huy Fong Foods and Sriracha have become an integral part of the flavor of Los Angeles. In the case of Sriracha, the success reaches even further. The first annual Sriracha festival featured prominent LA chefs and their takes on Sriracha as a versatile and exciting new ingredient. One chef, Randy Clemens, who also served as co-organizer of the event, even published "The Sriracha Cookbook." In the spirit of Sriracha's rock-star status, the festival fliers resemble music festival fliers, listing the line up of chefs presenting their creations, as well as an artist's stylized rendition of the immediately recognizable Sriracha bottle drizzling the red sauce across the page.[26] The event also sought to give back to the local community, donating a portion of its profits to Food Forward, a charity that rescues and donates produce that would otherwise be wasted.[27]The Los Angeles community, as a major urban center, served as an ideal platform for Huy Fong Foods to market their product, while not ever needing to run actual ads.

Event tickets were sold on NightOut alongside the above flyer. NightOut described the event in the listing, "[t]his chef-driven, all-inclusive, 21+ event spotlights the world's most iconic hot sauce in a casual industrial setting." "2013 LA Sriracha Festival Flyer" NightOut Website, Accessed January 24, 2024.

Sriracha's image in this period was nearly untouchable. The story of an immigrant who came from humble origins who became "America's first hot sauce billionaire" was compelling to the fanbase.[28] On top of this popular mythos was the fact that the product was high quality, very affordable, and versatile enough to compliment a wide variety of dishes.

The indirect advertising done by Huy Fong and more notably by fans of their products only bolstered Sriracha's rise to stardom. Bon Appétit named Sriracha ingredient of the year in December 2009, and photos of Sriracha on the International Space Station pushed the boundaries of how far from its LA origins Sriracha had gone.[29] In 2010, national restaurant chain PF Chang's made a deal with Huy Fong Foods, placing Sriracha bottles on every table, like diner ketchup.[30] The image of the Heinz ketchup bottle that once inspired the Sriracha design truly was accurate to how ubiquitous Sriracha would become.

Over the first decade of the new millennium, Sriracha thus went from Asian grocers to kitchens of gourmet restaurants and beyond.

18, 20-22, 30 "Huy Fong Foods, Inc." 2019.

19 Christopher Yee, "Ireland Issues Recall for 'Exploding' Sriracha from California's Huy Fong Foods." *The Mercury News*, December 9, 2019. https://www.mercurynews.com/2019/12/09/ireland-issues-recall-for-exploding-sriracha-from-irwindales-huy-fong-foods/. Accessed December 11, 2023.

23 Frank Shyong, "Sriracha maker adds heat to clash with Irwindale." *Los Angeles Times*, November 9, 2013. https://www.latimes.com/local/la-xpm-2013-nov-09-la-me-1110-sriracha-20131110-story.html. Accessed December 11, 2023.

24 Jenn Harris "First Annual LA Sriracha Festival Coming to Downtown." *Los Angeles Times*, October 3, 2013. https://www.latimes.com/food/dailydish/la-dd-first-sriracha-festival-20131002-story.html. Accessed December 11, 2023.

25, 27 Harris, "First Annual LA Sriracha Festival."

26 "LA Sriracha Festival" NightOut Tickets Page. https://nightout.com/events/lasrirachafestival/tickets. Accessed December 11, 2023.

28 Tognini, "How Vietnamese Refugee David Tran."

29 Victoria Von Biel "Best Foods of the Year from Bon Appetit" *Bon Appetit* December 16, 2009. https://www.bonappetit.com/uncategorized/article/best-foods-of-the-year-from-bon-appetit. Accessed December 11, 2023.

Sriracha was born in a period when trade restrictions made importing quality Asian ingredients difficult. As a result its commitment to locally sourced ingredients, and its family run business style, made it an approachable member of LA's cuisine scene. LA Chef Randy Clemens says it best in the introduction to "The Sriracha Cookbook." Clemens says, "Over the past few years, however, [Sriracha's] fame has carried it beyond the Asian sector, landing it on countless diner counters, restaurant menus, and into the hands of some very upscale chefs. References in several notable cookbooks, as well as appearances in several episodes of Top Chef and on the shelves of Wal-Mart, all stand as testaments to its welcomed ubiquity and tasty reputation."[31]Clemens was right; by the mid 2010s, Sriracha had become a household name, and Huy Fong Foods had become an unparalleled success - like Heinz Ketchup.

The Move to Iwrindale and Huy Fong Foods' Legal Problems

In light of Huy Fong's massive success of the early 2000s, a larger production facility would be required to keep up with demand. In 2010, David Tran began designing a more automated factory, which the City of Irwindale, California, a Los Angeles suburb, won the contract for. The new facility would cost $40 million, and would encompass 655,000 square feet, a massive increase in scale from the Rosemead production facility.[32] Attitudes in Irwindale toward the move were initially that of excitement toward the development prospects and jobs the company would bring, but quickly public opinion soured.

The legal issues between Huy Fong Foods and the City of Irwindale provide an interesting look at a uniquely American, and distinctly Californian, dilemma. Huy Fong Foods' move to Irwindale was planned at length in collaboration with the city, and the company took on great financial risk to move to such an expensive, state of the art production facility. After the new facility opened its doors, the City of Irwindale almost immediately threatened to shut down the new factory due to complaints from locals about symptoms caused by the fumes generated in chili pepper processing. The city sought an immediate temporary restraining order on Huy Fong Foods production, citing the factory as having created a public nuisance with chili pepper odors.[33] Huy Fong quickly sought to remedy the issue and get back to production by installing a $600,000 filtration system, but the reports of the issue persisted and the City continued to pursue legal action against Huy Fong Foods.[34]

Irwindale's response quickly caught the attention of both local California and national press. The response of the LA suburb had distinctly familiar undertones of prejudice and small town, suburban politics. The Los Angeles Times reported in October 2013 that "Tran said he began to get an 'odd' feeling about the city's behavior."[35] And it wasn't only Tran who felt odd. Irwindale's description of the odors as "aggressive" and "spicy" even after the installation of the air filtration system hit familiar notes. The Pasadena Star News reported that out of 61 complaints lodged with the City of Irwindale, a city with a population of 1,500, only four could actually be traced to issues caused by Huy Fong Foods.[36] In a review of the City of Irwindale's legal challenge against Huy Fong Foods, Professor of Law at Chapman University, Ernesto Hernandez-Lopez, stated, "[b]ecause of Irwindale's small size, city leaders tend to cater to residential complaints, even when to the outside world these concerns appear overblown or absurd."[37] Trust between the City of Irwindale and Huy Fong Foods broke down over the public nuisance complaint. Despite the fact that an Irwindale judge blocked the temporary restraining order, which according to Tran, would have put Huy Fong Foods out of business permanently, the fractures in the company's relationship with the City of Irwindale would remain.[38]

Even after the complaint was dropped, Irwindale's response to Huy Fong Foods' alleged odor issue so directly after courting the company to move in sparked broader political debates when Huy Fong Foods publicly announced that they were once again considering relocation. Cities across the country offered Huy Fong Foods pitches intended to entice Huy Fong Foods to set up shop in their cities.[39]

The "discovery" of Huy Fong Foods' odor issues came just as the company was experiencing a period of dramatic growth and popular success. In 2016, the City of Irwindale continued to draw out conflict with Huy Fong Foods and sued the Sriracha manufacturer for unpaid relocation fees.[40] The original 2010 agreement that Huy Fong Foods came to with the City of Irwindale was that the company would pay a flat fee of $250,000 to the City for 10 years in lieu of taxes.[41] The 2016 suit alleged that Huy Fong Foods owed the City $427,086.76 in unpaid fees.[42] Huy Fong Foods had in fact stopped payments to the City in 2013 during the public nuisance complaint. Although Huy Fong Foods does not dispute that they stopped payments, they filed a countersuit against the City of Irwindale citing a "campaign of harassment" waged by the city council against them.[43] Both parties dropped the lawsuits against each other in September 2018.[44]

The heavily publicized legal battles between Huy Fong Foods and the City of Irwindale fanned the flames of interstate rivalry, reinvigorated talk of California's anti-business regulatory environment, and for many echoed familiar tensions toward the smells of immigrant foods.[45] "Traces of immigrant excess must always be kept at bay and where food is concerned, … [i]t must not appear 'too foreign,' 'too different,' 'too oily' or 'too aberrant' wrote American studies professor Martin Manalansan, in an essay commenting on the Sriracha founder's legal troubles.[46]

A more recent and contrasting example of this tension in legal proceedings involved a British Equality and Human Rights Commission injunction against Furgus Wilson, the owner of hundreds of rentals in the City of Kent, who implemented a policy banning Indian and Pakistani tenants from renting his properties.[47] In an email leaked to The Sun he is quoted as having written, "No coloured people because of the curry smell at the end of the tenancy."[48] Manalansan says, "cities are expected to functions as odorless zones" and that smell is a sign of immigrant excess.[49] In a homogenous suburban community like Irwindale, Huy Fong Foods, with its 655,000 square foot factory, and the jobs that come with a production facility of that size, changes the cultural character of the city's economy. When an Asian-American success story moved into town, Irwindale found a way to legally legitimize feelings of xenophobia along the access of odor.

The Srirachapocalypse Averted

The dispute with the City of Irwindale resulted in a three month pause in Sriracha production during the public nuisance complaint. The term "Srirachapocalypse" or "Sriracha Apocalypse" was coined in 2013 when Sriracha briefly disappeared from store shelves during the public nuisance injunction.[50] Thousands of dedicated fans online stirred panic over the real possibility that they may never be able to purchase Sriracha again, and some fans went as far as to stockpile the hot sauce. Sriracha returned to shelves with only a brief disruption in production as a result of the Irwindale dispute, but the Srirachapocalypse highlighted the continued fragility of Asian American foodways in the US even in the current era as a result of what some considered racially motivated bans and legal discrimination.[51]

The racial makeup of the City of Irwindale is largely Latino with a very small minority Asian population. Huy Fong Foods, a multi-national, multi-million dollar Asian-American company presented Irwindale residents with a case of what Manalansan terms "immigrant excess."[52] Manalansan writes "smell in America…is a code for class, racial and ethnic differences."[53]California, as a leader of national agricultural production, is a state with many smells, some of which are strong and unpleasant by nature. In northern California, in farming communities in the Central Valley, pig and cow farms can be smelled from the freeway. These smells are not categorized as a public nuisance, but rather as natural results of the towns' local industry. As Manalansan and Manuur point out,

[31] Randy Clemens, *The Sriracha Cookbook: 50 "Rooster Sauce" Recipes That Pack A Punch* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2011) 17.
[32, 33, 35-37, 38, 45, 51] Hernandez-Lopez, "Lessons from the Legal Troubles…"
[34, 40-44] "Huy Fong Foods, Inc." 2019.
[39] Shyong, "Sriracha maker adds heat."
[46, 48, 52, 53] Martin Manalansan, in Anita Manuur and Martin Manalansan, "Dude, What's That Smell? The Sriracha Shutdown and Immigrant Excess." *nyupressblog*, January 16, 2014. https://www.fromthesquare.org/dude-whats-that-smell-the-sriracha-shutdown-and-immigrant-excess/. Accessed December 11, 2023
[47] "Landlord's 'curry smell' letting ban unlawful," BBC, November 8, 2017. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-kent-41915889. Accessed January 24, 2024.
[49] Jack Royston, "'NO MORE COLOUREDS OR CURRIES' Fury as Britain's biggest buy-to-let landlord bans 'coloured' people in racist rant because they make his properties 'smell of curry'," The Sun, March 28, 2017. https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/3192423/fury-as-britains-biggest-buy-to-let-landlord-bans-coloured-people-in-racist-rant-because-they-make-his-properties-smell-of-curry/. Accessed January 24, 2024.
[50] Jason Koebler, "The Jalapeño Grinding Experiment That Nearly Caused the 'Sriracha Apocalypse'," Vice News, July 14, 2014. https://www.vice.com/en/article/ae3kg4/the-jalapeno-grinding-experiment-that-nearly-caused-the-sriracha-apocalypse. Accessed December 11, 2023.

"when Asianness comes to roost in the town of Irwindale… the cultural odor of the town also changes." [54]

Huy Fong Foods factory in Irwindale California raised a "No Tear Gas Made Here" banner above their Irwindale production facility in lieu of the City's public nuisance complaint. Image: San Gabriel Valley Tribune, December 29, 2013.

Irwindale has a complicated history of racial politics beginning in 1957 when the city was incorporated alongside many other post-World War II California cities as a means of geographically isolating non-white populations from white voting blocks.[55] Prior to its annexation as the City of Irwindale in 1957, the area was a primarily Latino community. Irwindale was annexed in a push to keep the latino community socio-economically and politically isolated from neighboring white communities. Professor Ernesto Hernandez-Lopez argues that the effort to exclude Huy Fong Foods, as a result of the company's overt Asian-ness, stems from the long history of the town's "racial territoriality."[56] A town founded to facilitate the exclusion of the LA metro area's latino population recreated these mechanisms of racialized exclusion when Asian American enterprise came to town. Hernandez-Lopez argues that in a largely homogenous Latino community, excluding outsiders functions as a way to protect privilege and political power in a way that is similar to the redlining and discrimination found in suburban white communities.[57]

Manalansan and Manuur add that Huy Fong Foods being categorized as a public health threat "is part of a longer tradition that views Asianness as a public health menace." [58] They continue by adding, "The SARS epidemic of 2002, with its concomitant xenophobic links to the fear of Asian bodies, is not far removed from the panic about Asianness discursively inherent in the charges being levied against Huy Fong Foods." [59] More recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, America once again saw the same variety of anti-Asian sentiment through the lens of public health with President Donald Trump tweeting "I always treated the Chinese Virus very seriously, and have done a very good job from the beginning, including my very early decision to close the 'borders' from China - against the wishes of almost all. Many lives were saved. The Fake News news narrative is disgraceful & false!" [60] Further into the past, California specifically has a history of this same anti-Asian sentiment wrapped in the language of public health threat dating back to the year 1900, when a bubonic plague outbreak in San Francisco's Chinatown neighborhood saw city officials divide plague risk along racial lines.[61] Looking back to Padoongpatt's account of us trade law in the 1970s and 1980s, we can see this sentiment take yet another shape, "drawing stark lines between non threatening 'native' foods and invasive 'alien' ones… defining the US nation state as modern, safe, and pest- and disease-free, while constantly under threat from a 'torrent' of contaminated imported foods." [62]

Whatever the current focus, the US has an undeniable history of xenophobic, anti-Asian sentiments being cloaked in the language of public health and safety concerns, and the dispute between the City of Irwindale and Huy Fong Foods does not take place outside of this history, but rather within the context of it. Regardless of what future setbacks Huy Fong Foods may face, the company enjoys a broad base of very enthusiastic and very loyal customers. Huy Fong Foods has reached a level of success that will likely allow it to continue making hot sauce for many years to come. In February 2023, Forbes valued the company at one billion dollars.[63] Despite the 2013 Srirachapocalypse, and further 2023 supply chain disruptions temporarily removing the product from store shelves around the country, the sauce continues to be a global commodity with a unique history and an irreplaceable staple of American food culture. In 2016, thirty six years after its initial release, Huy Fong Foods' Sriracha returned to its country of inspiration, becoming available at grocery stores in Thailand.[64]

Conclusion: Globalizing Food Culture

What lessons can we learn from this abridged history of America's new favorite hot sauce? Sriracha is one of many examples of the effects of globalization in American food culture. American food culture is often thought of as a unidirectional force that flows outward. The McDonalds in Beijing and Riyadh are testament to the dispersive power of American food culture, but today American food is also uniquely defined by interplay between immigrant food culture and the American food business landscape. Orange chicken and cheesy gordita crunches are just as American as burgers and fries.

Sriracha is a condiment that comes from the Thai flavor profile, originally created by a Thai woman for her family, then recreated by a Vietnamese man of Chinese descent, who then immigrated to the US to take the country by storm with his product. Huy Fong Foods has intentionally courted a diverse multicultural audience, and in doing so, created a cultural staple in American cuisine. The international success of the condiment appeals to palates without regard for national origin, but a closer look at the local food politics that Huy Fong Foods has had to navigate, reveals the fact that despite the enthusiastic support of its diverse global fanbase, and the unparalleled financial success of the company, it has never been impervious to the long history of xenophobia and racism in America. The company has faced minor setbacks with batch recall issues, and major setbacks with the City of Irwindale. Despite the convoluted legal battles and the brief pauses in production, Huy Fong Foods more than recouped losses.

Huy Fong Foods is not on par with McDonalds, and its success does not mitigate the inequalities in the flow of culture in the globalizing world. It provides us instead with a look at a case that defies the ubiquity of this trend. Sriracha has become an integral part of American fusion cuisine, and enjoys widespread, international success. Casual customers and devoted fans with rooster logo tattoos can all agree, Sriracha is delicious. In the case of this hot sauce, taste beats the trend. Only time will tell what Huy Fong Foods' next challenges will be, but whatever they are, Sriracha hot sauce is here to stay, if only because fans cannot stomach the idea of losing access to it.

Huy Fong Foods' hot sauce, Sriracha, came into being in a period of difficult to navigate US import law, and fragile immigrant foodways. David Tran found a way to create Thai flavors using only local ingredients, both providing a variety of California Asian communities with a shared favorite hot sauce and bypassing the need to navigate the labyrinthine bureaucracy of US trade law. From Chinatown to Rosemead and onward to Irwindale, Huy Fong Foods' facilities have grown in proportion to their dramatic rise in popularity, with David Tran at the center as "America's first hot sauce billionaire." Sriracha is a proud immigrant success story, but more than that it is a story about food culture in the globalized world. Tracking the development of Sriracha across nations, through the US, and then back across the global market with the widespread success of Huy Fong Foods illustrates the

54, 58, 59 Manalansan and Manuur, "Dude What's That Smell?"
55 Ernesto Hernandez-Lopez, "Sriracha Shutdown: Hot Sauce Lessons on Local Privilege and Race," Seton Hall Law Review 46, no. 1 (2015).
56 Hernandez-Lopez, "Sriracha Shutdown." 197.
57 Hernandez-Lopez, "Sriracha Shutdown." 200.
60 Donald J. Trump "I always treated the Chinese Virus very seriously, and have done a very good job from the beginning, including my very early decision to close the 'borders' from China - against the wishes of almost all. Many lives were saved. The Fake News news narrative is disgraceful & false!" Twitter. March 18, 2020. https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1240243188708839424. Accessed December 11, 2023.
61 Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown*. (University of California Press, Berkeley: 2001). 120-121.
62 Padoongpatt, "Chasing the Yum" 90-91.
63 Tognini, "How Vietnamese Refugee David Tran."
64 Victoria Ho, "Thailand Rejoice, Sriracha Sauce Is Now Available - You Knew Sriracha Sauce Wasn't From Thailand, Right?," Mashable, December 15, 2016. https://mashable.com/article/sriracha-now-in-thailand. Accessed December 11, 2023.

multidirectionality of taste in global food culture.

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Decoding The Sims: Analysis of Gamification Frameworks, User Experience, and Game Design Evolution

Genesis Benedith

The Sims series is a captivating journey through simulated life experiences characterized by intricate game systems and player-driven narratives. Employing the MDA (Mechanics, Dynamics, Aesthetics) framework alongside the DPE (Design, Play, Experience) framework, this discussion delves into the detailed dynamics of the game systems within The Sims. Beginning with the original Sims game (2000) and progressing through The Sims 4 (2014), this study examines the nuanced interplay of player agency, randomness, and roleplaying themes across the series. By effectively incorporating relevant academic sources and insights from a personal interview with a user experience (UX) designer from Electronic Arts, this paper offers a comprehensive exploration of the evolution of The Sims series. Furthermore, the discussion also delves into the impact of downloadable content (DLC) and monetization strategies on the overall narrative and player experience. Ultimately, this paper reflects on how these elements, in unison, contribute to player engagement and user experience, shaping the ongoing narrative and evolution of The Sims series within the gaming landscape.

Introduction

The Sims series is an exemplary case study of user experience (UX) and gamification frameworks, offering a rich tapestry of player interactions, narratives, and design principles. Effective UX design in simulation games ensures intuitive controls, meaningful interactions, and compelling narratives, enhancing overall player satisfaction and retention. By examining The Sims series through the lens of UX and gamification frameworks, we can gain valuable insights into how these principles foster player engagement, narrative development, and immersive gameplay experiences within simulated environments.

Gamification Frameworks

Delving into the intricate realms of The Sims requires a nuanced understanding of its game systems, making it an ideal subject for analysis through the Mechanics, Dynamics, and Aesthetics (MDA) framework, as well as the Design, Play, and Experience (DPE) framework. The MDA and DPE frameworks provide valuable tools for analyzing and improving player experiences in simulation games like The Sims series. MDA helps designers understand how game mechanics shape player interactions and experiences, while DPE emphasizes the importance of user-centric design principles in crafting compelling gameplay experiences. By leveraging these frameworks, designers can create immersive, engaging, and memorable player experiences in simulation games.

Mechanics, Dynamics, and Aesthetics (MDA)

The MDA framework, pioneered by Hunicke et al. in 2004, has become a cornerstone in game design, providing a structured approach for developers, scholars, and researchers to dissect, study, and craft various game designs and artifacts. As illustrated in Figure 1, this framework breaks down the components into Mechanics, Dynamics, and Aesthetics (Hunicke et al., 2004). Mechanics encapsulates the specific elements of a game at the level of data representation and algorithms. Dynamics illustrates the real-time behavior of these mechanics, influenced by player inputs and the interplay of outputs over time. Aesthetics defines the desired emotional responses that players should experience when engaging with the game system.

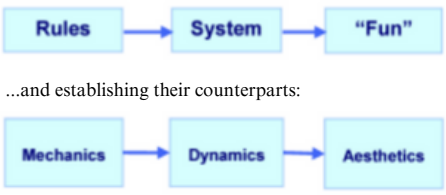

Figure 1: The MDA framework and its components (Hunicke et al., 2004)

Exploring what makes a game enjoyable can be challenging due to limited vocabulary in gaming discussions. Aesthetics in gaming moves beyond terms like "fun" and "gameplay" to focus on specific elements, like sensation, fantasy, narrative, challenge, fellowship, discovery, expression, and submission, as shown in Figure 2. Looking at games in The Sims series through this lens helps us grasp their unique aesthetic components and player experiences. Taking

The Sims into consideration adds an enriching layer to this exploration. The game embodies elements like discovery, fantasy, expression, and narrative. Players engage in a virtual realm where they explore the unknown, create fantastical scenarios, express themselves through customization, and weave narratives within the simulated universe. This inclusion highlights the intricate interplay between dynamics, mechanics, and aesthetics, showcasing the captivating world of gaming and its multifaceted experiences.

1. **Sensation** *Game as sense-pleasure*	5. **Fellowship** *Game as social framework*
2. **Fantasy** *Game as make-believe*	6. **Discovery** *Game as uncharted territory*
3. **Narrative** *Game as drama*	7. **Expression** *Game as self-discovery*
4. **Challenge** *Game as obstacle course*	8. **Submission** *Game as pastime*

Figure 2: *The taxonomy of aesthetics in game design* (Hunicke et al., 2004)

Although the MDA framework has gained widespread acceptance and citation in academia, it has not been immune to criticism. Researchers contend that MDA falls short in addressing aspects of game design beyond gameplay, such as storytelling, user experience, and the influence of technology on design (Walk et al., 2017; Winn & Heeter, 2008). By emphasizing the mechanics, dynamics, and aesthetics hierarchy, the MDA framework reduces designers' control over a game's overall experience. It suggests that aesthetics emerge solely from the interaction between mechanics and dynamics. However, this overlooks the complex interplay of storytelling, user experience, and technological influences on gameplay. For example, in The Sims series, the player's emotional connection to their virtual characters, the narrative arcs they create, and the evolving technology that shapes the game's visual and interactive elements are all integral to the overall player experience. Therefore, relying solely on the MDA framework may limit our understanding of The Sims' nuanced design elements and the diverse factors contributing to its immersive gameplay. Recognizing the need to consider a broader range of factors beyond mechanics is essential for comprehensively analyzing the intricate dynamics and aesthetics of The Sims series.

Design, Play, and Experience (DPE)

While the MDA framework remains prevalent in professional game design, its limitations prompt the introduction of the DPE framework, built on the pillars of Design, Play, and Experience, as shown in Figure 3 (Winn & Heeter, 2008). Both the DPE (Design, Play, Experience) framework and the MDA (Mechanics et al.) framework offer valuable perspectives for analyzing and understanding video games like The Sims series. However, the DPE framework may have some advantages over the MDA framework when analyzing The Sims specifically. The DPE framework strongly emphasizes the player's experience and emotions, including factors such as engagement, immersion, and enjoyment.

The DPE framework emphasizes the player's experience, including engagement, immersion, and enjoyment, aligning well with The Sims series' focus on player creativity, storytelling, and emotional connections with virtual characters. Additionally, the DPE framework acknowledges the importance of narrative and character in shaping the player experience, adopting a player-centric perspective that recognizes the player's subjective experience as central to understanding the game's effectiveness. This perspective is particularly valuable for analyzing The Sims, where player creativity, agency, and personalization significantly influence gameplay experiences.

Shifting from Mechanics to Design, Dynamics to Play, and Aesthetics to Experience, DPE acknowledges that games are more than the sum of their mechanical components, akin to cars being more than just "motor, gearbox, and wheels" (Walk et al., 2017, pp. 31). Drawing parallels, games, like cars, are marketed as experiences. Most games incorporate aesthetics through data representing graphics and sound assets, creating immersive worlds for players. From the player's perspective, games should focus on providing enjoyable experiences instead of just being functional tools. Overall, while the DPE and MDA frameworks offer valuable analytical tools for studying video games, the DPE framework may provide a more nuanced and player-focused approach to analyzing complex simulation games like The Sims. By emphasizing player experience, narrative, and character, the DPE framework offers insights that align well with the unique qualities and appeal of The Sims series.

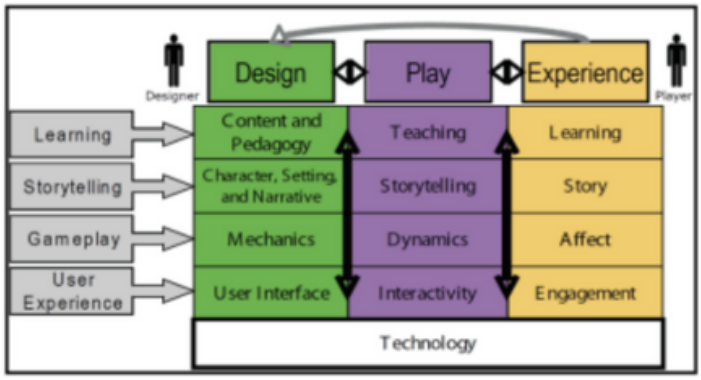

***Figure 3**: The DPE framework and its components* (Winn & Heeter, 2008).

Unveiling The Evolution of The Sims Series

Will Wright's transition from SimCity (1989) to The Sims (2000) marked a significant evolution in his game design journey. SimCity, a city-building simulation game, laid the foundation for Wright's exploration of complex systems and player-driven narratives. The success of SimCity showcased his ability to create engaging, open-ended experiences where players could shape virtual worlds. Building upon this success, Wright envisioned a game that focused not on city planning but on the lives of individual inhabitants. This vision materialized in The Sims, a life simulation game that allowed players to control every aspect of a simulated individual's life. The Sims, emphasizing the intricate details of everyday life, became a cultural phenomenon. Even after making the No. 1 computer title in the United States in 2001, The Sims created a new record as the top-selling PC game in history (at the time), selling more than 6.3 million copies worldwide in 2002. The transition from SimCity to The Sims marked a pivotal moment in game design, shifting the focus from city planning to the intricacies of individual lives.

The Sims: Core Gameplay Mechanics

As we delve into The Sims series' intricate game design elements, it's crucial to grasp the foundational gameplay that has evolved over the years. The Sims original game, released in 2000, introduces players to a multistage simulation where creativity and decision-making intertwine (Ali et al., 2013). In the initial phase, players craft avatars, known as Sims, shaping their appearances and customizing features such as facial features, hairstyles, and clothing for a more enjoyable gaming experience. Subsequently, the player inserts these avatars into a household or neighborhood, establishing the backdrop for traditional game decisions—ranging from daily activities to social interactions. The third stage unfolds as players furnish homes and construct items to fulfill the avatars' needs. Within this simulated community, players control the actions and behaviors of their Sims, dictating whether they live alone or with a family, work or stay at home, and engage in relationships, marriage, parenting, or friendships. This customizable and immersive gameplay experience sets the stage for exploring the game's intricate design elements and its lasting impact on the simulation gaming genre.

In 2000, Macworld presented The Sims as akin to a reality TV

show, allowing players to exert complete control over every aspect of their simulated household (Tessler, 2000). In essence, this does serve as the foundational concept of the game. Players are entrusted with managing a virtual household, wielding authority over decisions as mundane as bathroom breaks to more essential tasks like washing dishes. Beyond dictating these simulated inhabitants' actions, players are responsible for addressing their characters' physical and emotional needs. A failure to meet their basic needs can lead to dire consequences, adding an element of strategy and responsibility to the gameplay. The inherent challenge is that the Sims do not speak English. Instead, "they speak gibberish with pictures displayed above their heads acting as subtitles to the players," rendering their verbal expressions incomprehensible (Griebel, 2006). While the game provides elemental controls indicating these needs, the primary cues come from the Sims' nonverbal expressions. These cues manifest as groans, comical "potty dances," or other gestural forms, serving as vital indicators of their current state (Tessler, 2000).

The Sims 2: Evolution of Gameplay Mechanics

Every development of the series, from The Sims 2 to The Sims 3 to The Sims 4, has a very similar set of mechanics to previous releases, but most importantly, it is delivered with an improved user interface and an entirely new aesthetic. For instance, unlike The Sims original, The Sims 2 features a newer 3-D graphics engine that lets players zoom in on their Sims with high qualitative detail and offers footage capturing so players can record their in-game experience for future playback.

The Sims 2 sequel builds upon the foundation laid by the original game. The omniscient thrill remains, now enhanced by improved graphics and the introduction of long-term challenges. The player's control over the Sims' lives extends beyond the immediate household, impacting entire generations. The autonomy feature in The Sims 2 grants Sims the ability to fulfill their own needs, adding a layer of realism to their virtual existence. Aspirations and genetics further deepen the gameplay, giving Sims unique personalities, goals, and the ability to pass down traits to future generations. Each Sim now possesses a distinct personality with unique traits and memories that shape their interactions and responses to various situations. Aspirations offer a deeper level of engagement, with Sims harboring specific goals and desires, making their virtual lives more intricate and dynamic. This evolution enriches the player's connection with their Sims and incentivizes strategic decision-making to fulfill these aspirations, earning points that can be exchanged for various in-game rewards.

The innovative genetics system in The Sims 2 allows for the hereditary passage of traits from one generation to the next. This introduces a captivating element of legacy and continuity within Sim families, creating a narrative thread that spans across multiple virtual lifetimes. This evolution in gameplay mechanics encourages players to invest in the lifelong journey of their Sims, from youth to old age, creating a more immersive and dynamic simulation experience. Players now have the unique opportunity to witness the consequences of their Sims' actions reverberating through memories and subsequent generations, fostering a sense of investment in the unfolding story of their simulated world. In terms of those consequences, a participant in a research study explained that The Sims 2 allowed her to make her Sims experiment with behaviors that contradicted her personal beliefs and values. She stated, "[The Sims 2] really started to break down the boundaries between good and bad, right and wrong" (Griebel, 2006).

The Sims 3: In-Depth Exploration of Gamification Frameworks

The Sims 3 retained the fundamental gameplay mechanics observed in its predecessors, encompassing avatar creation, house placement, and customization (Ali et al., 2013). The game introduced a heightened level of personalization, allowing players to modify not only their Sims' appearances but also their body shapes, emphasizing the immersive nature of the experience. A case study involving 35 participants aimed to explore user experience in the game interface, shedding light on various aspects (Ali et al., 2013). The experiment, which included tasks such as creating Sims characters, decorating houses, and fulfilling Sims' needs, revealed that participants experienced high levels of immersion and presence in the game. The participants, ranging from novices to experienced players, expressed satisfaction with the graphics, sound, and overall game interface. However, novices faced challenges understanding the game menu and controls, showcasing the importance of accessibility in ensuring a positive user experience. 77% of the study participants had no previous experience playing The Sims. Out of all of the novices, 7.4% experienced confusion with the buttons and icons. Out of all the novices, 77% of the study participants had no previous experience playing The Sims, and 7.4% experienced confusion with the buttons and icons. This confusion could stem from navigating through the menu options, understanding the meaning or purpose of specific icons within the menu interface, or understanding how to use certain features or perform specific actions within the user interface menu. Despite variations in their experiences, the majority of participants expressed feeling addicted to the game and a desire to play it again in the future (Ali, et al., 2013).

Dynamics, Mechanics, and Aesthetics (MDA)

The gameplay of The Sims 3 extended beyond typical conventions, offering a diverse platform that engaged players in various ways. Notably, younger players, especially children, dedicated extensive hours to immerse themselves in the virtual world, actively manipulating virtual houses and showcasing a focus on imaginative play. As the game's dynamics unfolded, it became clear that The Sims 3 had evolved into more than a simulation—it had become a canvas for self-expression, a playground for creativity, and a vast space for exploration within the complexities of the simulated world.

The players' agency over the Sims and the incorporation of customizable features further contributed to the game's enduring appeal and sustained engagement. This agency extended beyond decision-making, delving into customization. Including customizable features empowered players to shape not only the appearance of their Sims but also their personalities and life trajectories. This level of agency fostered a deeper sense of connection and ownership, allowing players to witness the consequences of their decisions reverberate throughout the simulated world. Customizable elements provided a rich tapestry for players to weave narratives, adding layers of complexity to the overall dynamics of The Sims 3.

The aesthetics of The Sims 3 were not confined to visual elements but extended to the emotional and experiential realms. In the experiment, participants revealed a profound attachment to the game, with one research participant expressing their fondness of the graphics and that they believe [The Sims 3] has the "potential to be a very addictive game" (Ali, et al., 2013). Another participant noted that they felt "engaged with the character in the game," as well as the player's daily life, and that they "may continue to play with The Sims in the future" (Ali, et al., 2013). Other comments claim that the game interface is interesting and dynamic for players. These sentiments underscored the deep emotional connections players formed with their virtual characters and the simulated environments. Other comments from various players underscored the significance of the aesthetic experience, emphasizing feelings of control, relaxation, and a sense of the game mirroring aspects of reality. Their user experiences make it increasingly evident that the MDA framework remains pivotal in shaping the ongoing success of The Sims series within the simulation gaming genre.

Design, Play, and Experience (DPE)

The dynamics, mechanics, and aesthetics of The Sims 3 align with the MDA framework and seamlessly correlate with the DPE

framework developed by Winn and Heeter (2008). The immersive gameplay dynamics provide a versatile platform for teaching, storytelling, and interactive experiences, resonating with the DPE framework's emphasis on play and engagement.

The game's emphasis on player agency and customizable features allows players to tailor every aspect of their Sims' lives, from their appearance and personality traits to their homes and relationships. This high level of personalization empowers players to create unique narratives and shape the direction of their Sims' lives, aligning with the DPE framework's emphasis on character-driven storytelling. Additionally, The Sims 3 provides a wealth of content and gameplay options for players to explore, ranging from career opportunities and skill development to social interactions and life events. This abundance of content, combined with the game's intuitive pedagogical approach to teaching players how to navigate the game world and its systems, fosters an immersive gameplay experience that aligns with the DPE framework's focus on learning and engagement.

The aesthetics of The Sims 3, extending beyond visual elements to evoke emotional connections and positive experiences, align with the DPE framework's components of learning, story, affect, and engagement. Through its robust customization options, open-world exploration, and social interaction features, The Sims 3 allows players to express creativity, nurture empathy, foster exploration, and build social connections within the game environment. These positive experiences and emotional connections contribute to a rich and immersive gameplay experience that resonates with players more deeply, reinforcing The Sims 3's alignment with the DPE framework's core components.

Overall, The Sims 3 emerges as a holistic embodiment of the MDA and DPE frameworks, showcasing a harmonious integration of game design elements contributing to its enduring success.

The Sims 4: Innovations and Controversies

In retrospect, a discerning analysis of The Sims 4 reveals a complex narrative, particularly considering the evolution of its MDA framework since its initial base game release in 2014. The critical evaluation hinges on the conspicuous absence of approximately 89 features present in its predecessor, The Sims 3, which drew negative coverage and raised questions about the development decisions that shaped The Sims 4 (Evergreen, 2014). Among the base game's notable exclusions were "pools, toddlers, business and law enforcement careers, cars, babysitters, illnesses, gardeners, ghosts, and story progression," elements that were intrinsic to the gameplay dynamics of its predecessor (Evergreen, 2014).

The decision to omit these features present in The Sims 3 for The Sims 4 likely stemmed from a combination of factors related to game development, design priorities, and market considerations. The development team may have prioritized certain aspects of gameplay or new features over maintaining all existing features from The Sims 3. This could reflect their desire to focus on specific areas deemed essential for the core experience of The Sims 4. While the absence of so many features may have involved a complex evaluation of various factors, the scrutiny faced by The Sims 4 predominantly emphasizes how integral the role of mechanics can be to an immersive player experience. The absence of these features triggered concerns among players and critics, giving rise to a discourse that frames The Sims 4 as a regression rather than a progressive evolution within the series.

Moreover, this substantial shift in the delivery of additional content is rooted in the downsides associated with EA's monetization strategy, particularly concerning introducing favorable features through DLC. The term "DLC" refers to Downloadable Content, additional game content that players can purchase and download to enhance their gaming experience. EA can monetize new features, items, gameplay mechanics, and customization options that expand upon the base game by selling expansion packs, game packs, and stuff packs.

Expansion packs are larger DLC releases introducing significant new gameplay elements and features to The Sims 4. These packs often include new worlds, careers, skills, life states, gameplay mechanics, and interactive objects. Expansion packs are designed to provide substantial content updates that offer players new ways to play and explore the game. Examples of expansion packs for The Sims 4 include Cats & Dogs (2018), Seasons (2018) and Discover University (2019).

Game packs are smaller DLC releases focusing on specific themes or gameplay experiences within The Sims 4. These packs typically include new gameplay mechanics, items, and features centered around a particular theme, such as outdoor activities, supernatural creatures, or vacation destinations. Game packs offer players additional content to enrich their gameplay without the scope of a full expansion pack. Additional, examples of game packs for The Sims 4 include Vampires (2017), Parenthood (2017), and Jungle Adventure (2018). Stuff packs are smaller DLC releases that primarily focus on adding new items, clothing, hairstyles, and furniture to The Sims 4. These packs offer players customization options to personalize their Sims' appearances and homes.

Stuff packs are generally themed around specific styles, aesthetics, or activities, allowing players to enhance their gameplay experience with new decor and fashion items. Examples of stuff packs for The Sims include Movie Hangout Stuff (2016), Kids Room Stuff (2016), and Laundry Day (2018). While these DLCs contribute to the ongoing engagement of players and introduce fresh content, the downside lies in the potential fragmentation of the player base.

DLC can indeed enhance player experience by providing additional content, features, and gameplay options that extend the lifespan of a game and offer new experiences for players. From the perspective of the MDA framework, DLC enriches the mechanics by introducing new gameplay elements, such as items, characters, or scenarios. This can lead to new dynamics as players interact with the added content, creating fresh experiences and challenges within the game world. Additionally, DLC can contribute to the game's aesthetics by introducing new visual elements, themes, or storylines, enhancing the overall immersion for players.

Similarly, from the DPE framework perspective, DLC can enhance the player experience by providing continued engagement and personalization opportunities. Players can tailor their gameplay experience by selecting DLC that aligns with their interests and preferences, thus increasing their sense of agency and immersion in the game world. Moreover, DLC can contribute to the game's overall design by offering new pedagogical elements, such as educational content or alternative gameplay modes, which can enrich the player's learning experience.

However, it is important to note that DLC also raises concerns about accessibility and inclusivity, despite its enrichment to the gameplay. The fragmentation of DLC in The Sims 4 can contribute to frustration among players due to the cost of acquiring content, incomplete gameplay experiences, and limitations in content distribution. Purchasing DLC packs, especially across different categories like expansion, game, and stuff packs, can be expensive for players. As each pack is typically priced separately, players need to spend significant money to access all the content they desire, leading to frustration over the total cost of expanding their gameplay experience. Expansion packs for The Sims 3 typically ranged from $19.99 to $39.99 USD, while stuff packs for The Sims 3 were generally priced around $9.99 to $19.99 USD at their initial release. Expansion packs for The Sims 4 typically range from $39.99 to $49.99 USD, game packs generally range from $19.99 to $29.99 USD, and stuff packs are usually priced around $9.99 to $14.99 USD at their initial release. The Sims 3 did not have a separate category for game packs like The Sims 4, so there are no direct comparisons in terms of pricing. Due to this, players may feel frustrated if they cannot afford to purchase all DLC packs or choose not to purchase certain packs due to budget constraints. This can

result in an incomplete gameplay experience, as players miss out on content that is gated behind DLC.

Certain features or gameplay mechanics may be spread across multiple DLC packs, leading to a fragmented experience for players who only own some packs. The distribution of content across different types of DLC packs can also frustrate players. For example, players may want specific items or features from a stuff pack but must purchase an expansion pack or game pack to access them. This may be perceived as a lack of flexibility for players in terms of choosing and purchasing content based on individual preferences. This approach has sparked debates within The Sims community about whether certain essential features should be part of the base game rather than being segmented into purchasable content. As The Sims 4 continues to evolve, addressing these concerns and finding a balance between monetization and player satisfaction becomes integral to sustaining the series' legacy. Observing The Sims 4 within the broader context of the series, the game's biggest challenge lies in the comparison with The Sims 3, particularly in terms of MDA. The scrutiny over the absence of key MDA features intensifies the critique of The Sims 4, contemplating how the game's mechanics have progressed or declined, notably influencing the dynamics cherished by players in the earlier installment. The Sims 4's departure from certain mechanics and dynamics present in The Sims 3 prompts questions about the evolution of gameplay and player experience, highlighting the importance of balancing innovation with maintaining core elements that resonate with players.

However, the DPE framework offers a nuanced perspective that saves The Sims 4 from being solely judged based on its departure from The Sims 3's MDA features. By examining the game's design choices and overall player experience, the DPE framework allows for a comprehensive analysis beyond mechanics alone. This approach acknowledges the importance of player engagement, storytelling, and emotional connection, which are central to the appeal of the Sims series. The Sims 4 can be evaluated through the DPE framework based on its ability to deliver a compelling player experience despite differences in mechanics compared to its predecessor.

Contrary to the criticisms it has faced, The Sims 4 does present discernible advancements within the franchise. One of the most notable improvements is witnessed in the revamped Create-a-Sim (CAS) system, which now offers more detailed and nuanced customization options for Sims' physical features, clothing, and accessories. The Sims 4's CAS mode introduced more detailed sculpting tools for adjusting facial features and body shapes. Players now have finer control over shaping their Sims' faces and bodies, allowing for more precise customization. In addition, the layering system in CAS is more intuitive in The Sims 4. Players can easily add clothing, accessories, and hairstyles in layers, making it simpler to mix and match different items to create unique looks for their Sims. The introduction of emotions is another noteworthy addition, influencing Sims' behaviors and interactions based on their mood states. Unlike The Sims 3, where Sims showcased relatively static emotional responses, The Sims 4 introduces a dynamic emotional range that affects their day-to-day activities and social interactions. The build mode has also been streamlined, providing a more intuitive and user-friendly experience for constructing and furnishing homes.

The Sims 4 also introduces the concept of multitasking, allowing Sims to perform multiple actions simultaneously, adding a layer of realism to their daily lives. For example, Sims can cook while talking to another Sim, eat and watch TV while sitting on a sofa, or listen to music while working on a treadmill. This allows Sims to accomplish more tasks in a shorter amount of time. Additionally, Sims can engage in group conversations, allowing multiple Sims to talk to each other simultaneously. This adds a sense of realism to social interactions, as multiple Sims can participate in discussions or socialize together without needing individual interactions for each Sim. Because the game's interactions are designed to be dynamic, Sims can seamlessly switch between different actions without interrupting each other. For example, a Sim can start cooking a meal, chat with another Sim while cooking, and then resume cooking without any interruptions to the cooking process. These changes collectively contribute to a more immersive and engaging gameplay experience, highlighting the series' commitment to evolving its mechanics and dynamics while maintaining the core aesthetic appeal.

Central Themes Across The Sims Series

Throughout the Sims series, the themes of player agency, randomness, and roleplaying have been integral components shaping the player experience. Player agency, evident from the inception of the series, empowers players to make decisions and exert control over the simulated lives within the game. The introduction of long-term life aspirations in The Sims 4 exemplifies a nuanced evolution of player agency, allowing for more personalized and goal-oriented gameplay. The element of randomness, manifested through the Sims' autonomy or free will, introduces unpredictability into the virtual world, creating scenarios where Sims exhibit unexpected behaviors, adding an element of surprise and challenge.

Player Agency

Player agency, a fundamental aspect of The Sims series, empowers players to make decisions and exert control over the simulated lives within the game. In the original game, players had the freedom to design houses, create Sims, and guide their actions, influencing their relationships, careers, and daily activities. The introduction of long-term life aspirations in The Sims 2 further enhanced player agency by providing specific goals for Sims to achieve, giving players more direction and purpose in their gameplay. The Sims 3 expanded on this by introducing open-world gameplay, allowing players to explore neighborhoods freely and interact with various elements of the game world, thereby increasing the sense of autonomy and control. In The Sims 4, player agency evolved with the addition of more robust customization options and the ability to multitask, providing players with even greater control over their Sims' lives and interactions. Overall, the evolution of player agency across the series reflects a continual effort to empower players and offer them more autonomy and freedom in shaping their gameplay experiences.

Randomness

Throughout The Sims series, randomness has been a consistent feature, introducing unpredictability into the virtual world and creating scenarios where Sims exhibit unexpected behaviors. In the original game, Sims' autonomy allowed them to make decisions independently of player input, leading to surprising outcomes. For example, a Sim might decide to start a romantic relationship with another Sim without player intervention, or they might autonomously choose to pursue a new hobby or career. The Sims 2 introduced wants and fears, influencing Sims' actions based on their personality traits and life experiences, adding another layer of unpredictability. For instance, a Sim with the fear of fire might panic during a cooking mishap, while a Sim with the want to get married might autonomously propose to their partner. In The Sims 3, open-world gameplay increased randomness as Sims could autonomously explore the neighborhood, interact with other Sims, and engage in various activities based on their traits and moods. This increased freedom of movement and interaction led to a wider range of unpredictable scenarios, such as chance encounters with neighbors or unexpected events during outdoor excursions. In The Sims 4, advancements in AI and behavior algorithms have further enhanced randomness, with Sims' emotions and multitasking capabilities influencing their behaviors and interactions with objects and other Sims. For example, a Sim in a flirty mood might

autonomously flirt with other Sims, while a Sim in a playful mood might engage in playful interactions with objects around them. Overall, the evolution of randomness across The Sims series reflects a continual effort to introduce diversity and unpredictability into Sims' lives, enhancing the overall gameplay experience for players.

Roleplaying

Roleplaying has always been a central theme in The Sims series, with players assuming the roles of virtual architects, storytellers, and caretakers of simulated lives. In The Sims 1, players had the freedom to create elaborate narratives and shape the lives of their Sims through interactions, relationships, and storytelling. The introduction of life aspirations in The Sims 2 encouraged players to immerse themselves in their Sims' lives, guiding them through specific life goals and milestones. The Sims 3 expanded on this by introducing storytelling tools such as Create-A-World, allowing players to build custom neighborhoods and shape their own unique narratives. In The Sims 4, the emphasis on emotional states and character traits further enhances roleplaying opportunities, as players can delve deeper into their Sims' personalities and motivations. The evolution of roleplaying across the series reflects a continued focus on providing players with the tools and freedom to create immersive and engaging narratives within the simulated universe of The Sims.

Inside the Design: An Interview with a UX Designer from Maxis at Electronic Arts

In a personal interview with Bea Acree, a UX designer at EA, a deep dive into the intricate world of player agency, randomness, mechanics, dynamics, aesthetics, and roleplaying within The Sims 4 unfolded (2023). Acree, who has been instrumental at EA, sheds light on her multifaceted role, involving the creation of wireframes, prototypes, and close collaboration with game designers to ensure a seamless user experience within The Sims 4. This collaborative effort is integral to maintaining player agency, ensuring that users feel in control of their virtual domains. While emphasizing the business-related aspects of her daily work and constant collaboration with stakeholders, Acree outlined her overarching goal: ensuring that The Sims games consistently offer an enjoyable experience for players. Highlighting the challenges involved in crafting the UX for The Sims 4, Acree delved into aspects like managing flexibility, coordinating features, addressing globalization and localization concerns, and maintaining broad appeal. The Sims 4 has a diverse and global player base. Localization ensures that the game is accessible and enjoyable for players from different regions and cultural backgrounds. By adapting the game's content, language, and design elements to suit various regions, UX designers like Acree can create a more inclusive and welcoming experience for players worldwide. In addition, localization allows UX designers to ensure that the game's content and interactions are culturally sensitive and appropriate for players around the globe. This includes adjusting in-game text, imagery, symbols, and references to align with cultural expectations and avoid potential misunderstandings or offense. A localized user experience enhances user engagement and satisfaction. Players are more likely to enjoy and engage with a game that feels familiar and relevant to their cultural context.

Acree also emphasized the importance of striking a balance between player freedom and guidance, highlighting her team's efforts to enhance user experience through features like discovery quests. One such feature, discovery quests, was introduced to help players familiarize themselves with the game without feeling overwhelmed by the user interface. Acree explained, "You don't want to tell the players exactly what to do, but you want to help them along, and to me, one way to do that is called progressive disclosure." Progressive disclosure, as Acree described, is a design principle that involves revealing information gradually, starting with the most essential or basic details and offering more detailed guidance as needed. By providing players with the option to access additional information or guidance when needed, designers can avoid cluttering the user interface with unnecessary tutorials or information. For example, during a birthday party event, players receive tasks in the top left corner of the screen. In discovery quests, hovering over the text provides more information, and clicking on the task displays an arrow in the game pointing to the objective. This approach allows players to maintain autonomy while offering accessible avenues for additional guidance if desired. In essence, these efforts aim to empower players to explore and enjoy the game at their own pace while ensuring that helpful resources are readily available for those who seek them.

Discussing the latest updates, Acree highlighted her team's enhancements to The Sims 4, launched in 2023. She emphasized the significance of organization and improved filtering and sorting features. Notably, the food menu in the kitchen underwent a redesign, allowing players to easily select their desired food type from categories like vegetarian, lactose-free, meat, seafood, and sweets. Acree underscored how seemingly minor adjustments can profoundly impact player interaction, especially for players who are vegetarian, vegan, have allergies, or follow specific dietary preferences. These enhancements improve user experience and player engagement by catering to diverse player needs and preferences, ensuring that all players can enjoy a more personalized and inclusive gaming experience.

Speculating on the evolution of the series, Acree attributed changes to factors such as new product excitement, different development teams, evolving features, and unique user interface needs for each game. Looking to the future, Acree anticipates that UX design will continue to support freedom of expression, inclusivity, and accessibility in UI design for games like The Sims.

Project Rene: The Future of The Sims

The forthcoming installment of The Sims franchise, known as Project Rene or The Sims 5, signifies a notable departure from the conventional Sims gaming experience. Revealed through a video update for the "Behind the Sims Summit" in September 2023, EA's announcement of the game adopting a free-to-play model introduces intriguing possibilities. The video, featuring VP franchise creative Lyndsay Pearson, not only confirms the coexistence of Project Rene alongside The Sims 4 but also pledges ongoing support and captivating content updates for the latter.

As VP Lyndsay Pearson stated, "We start with our creative tools, a key part of our Sims DNA. We're experimenting with what's worked and where we can push further to offer more flexibility than ever before." EA's is committed to enhancing user experience by refining the creative tools, a core aspect of The Sims, and offering unprecedented flexibility to players. EA is testing ways to provide greater flexibility by allowing players to modify not only patterns and colors but also the shapes of in-game objects for building and decorating. This commitment to innovation aligns with the guiding principle of pushing boundaries while staying true to the franchise's DNA. It demonstrates an intent to evolve and adapt to contemporary gaming trends while retaining core elements that have defined the series.

EA's commitment to empowering players aligns with the principles of the DPE framework, which emphasizes player engagement and agency in shaping their gaming experience. Furthermore, EA's exploration of what has worked in the past and their willingness to push boundaries reflects a dedication to continuous improvement, resonating with the iterative nature of game design under the MDA framework. While adapting to contemporary gaming trends, EA intends to retain certain elements from previous series, such as the creative tools that are integral to The Sims DNA. However, this evolution does not necessarily entail discarding elements from the previous series, but rather refining and enhancing them to meet the evolving expectations of players and align with modern gaming trends.

Despite the initial enthusiasm surrounding the transition to a

free-to-play format, the video cautiously alludes to potential early access phases and the introduction of paid DLC packs. The analogy suggests a shift in the DLC strategy, allowing for a broader shared system and lowering entry barriers, yet concerns linger about the extent of this inclusivity. In summary, The Sims series's future holds promise and uncertainties. The delicate balance between a free-to-play model, potential DLC packs, and player expectations remains an intricate dance that EA must navigate.

Conclusion

This comprehensive analysis of The Sims series has delved into the intricate game design elements, showcasing a rich exploration of Mechanics, Dynamics, and Aesthetics within the gaming realm. Employing the MDA framework and correlating it to the DPE (Design, Play, and Experience) framework, the examination has unveiled the series' evolution, shedding light on the nuanced interplay of player agency, randomness, and roleplaying themes. The Sims series stands as a remarkable achievement in game design, seamlessly fulfilling both the MDA framework and the DPE framework, providing players with a rich, engaging, and harmonious simulation gaming experience.

As the analysis navigated the intricate landscape of The Sims series, it highlighted the significance of continuous adaptation in game design, addressing challenges, and leveraging opportunities. The themes of player agency, randomness, and roleplaying have been central to this exploration. The Sims series provides players with a diverse and immersive gaming experience that has garnered global popularity. The series emphasizes player-driven storytelling and customization, allowing players to exercise their creativity and control over their virtual lives. This focus on customization fosters emotional engagement as players form deep connections with their virtual characters, influencing the game's enduring appeal.

Additionally, The Sims series offers a wide range of gameplay options and content to cater to various player preferences, from building houses to pursuing careers and relationships. However, there are challenges to address, such as refining monetization practices. In the case of The Sims 4, the latest base game release, players may feel compelled to spend money on additional packs to access desired content not included in their initial purchase, leading to potential dissatisfaction and financial burden. Therefore, addressing and refining monetization practices in The Sims 4 is crucial to ensuring a fair and satisfactory gaming experience for players. Overall, The Sims series offers valuable lessons for game development, highlighting both successes and areas for improvement that can inform the creation of future games.

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Examining the Outlook of First-Generation Students at the University of Arizona — Second-Generation Immigrants' Views on American Identity, Privilege, and Belonging

Sophia Horovitz

Little research exists regarding the demographic of first-generation undergraduate college students who are children of immigrants. A first-generation undergraduate student is someone whose parents have not attained a four-year college or university degree. The outlook of second-generation immigrants on education and the world as a whole may be very different from those of their parents, which is why I took a particular interest in learning from individuals of this demographic. The goal of this study is to gain a well-rounded understanding of the experiences of first-generation undergraduate students who are second-generation immigrants regarding their identity, views on American privilege, and sense of belonging in the United States and at the University of Arizona. This study defines “first-generation” as undergraduate students who are the first in their immediate family to attend any form of college in the United States. The result of this study intends to inform the student body and faculty at the University of Arizona about first-generation college students’ sense of belonging and views on American identity. The responses from this study will benefit the University of Arizona community and help improve the University’s outreach and support to students of this demographic.

Introduction

Segmented assimilation theory is a sociological perspective that examines the process of immigrant integration and assimilation into a new society (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). The theory suggests that the immigrant experiences in a new society are diverse and can be understood through different pathways of assimilation. Segmented assimilation theory has identified three distinct integration trajectories into U.S. society among the children of immigrants: incorporation into the dominant mainstream, downward integration into the so-called “underclass,” and upward social mobility coupled with ethnic preservation (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). One strength of segmented assimilation theory is that it considers the role of various contextual, geographical, political, familial, structural, and cultural factors in noncitizens’ integration trajectories into the United States. School experiences, as highlighted by scholars like Portes and Zhou (1993) and Portes and Rumbaut (2001), are among the factors shaping the assimilation outcomes of immigrants in the U.S. However, there is little differentiation regarding the impact of these factors on children of immigrants who are first-generation college students. An emerging body of literature found that an increasing share of members of ethnoracial groups, particularly Asian Americans and Latinos, identify primarily on pan-ethnic terms such as Mexican American, Chinese American, or simply as “American” (Martinez and Gonzalez 2021; Jang et al. 2022). Research in this area finds that primary pan-ethnic identification is often a result of perceived discrimination, marginalization, and feelings of alienation from mainstream American society. Finally, there is evidence that college campuses are

important sites of identity formation among young adults, particularly Latino and Asian American students (Reyes 2018). Drawing on these three bodies of scholarship, I aim to gain a better understanding of the perceptions and lived experiences of first-generation college students who are children of immigrants. Specifically, I will be examining the relationships between students' 1) understanding of "American privilege" and interpretation of how American identity shapes their assimilation, 2) sense of belonging on a college campus, and 3) long-term career goals and aspirations. I will examine these relationships by conducting 30-minute interviews with first-generation college students who are the children of immigrants at the University of Arizona.

Acculturation, Power & Integration

In my research, I will focus mostly on topics concerning acculturation, assimilation, and integration into United States society. To best grasp the responses of the interviewees, we must develop an understanding of these terms. Acculturation, assimilation, and integration are three distinct concepts. Acculturation occurs when one culture socializes a group to normalities within the dominant culture. For example, in the United States, immigrants socialize using "school behaviors, and skills and rituals characteristic of much of White American society" (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007). Acculturation is the initial process of adopting elements from a new culture, and it is often a precursor to assimilation, where individuals or groups fully integrate into the dominant cultural norms and values. Over time, whilst assimilating to the "dominant" culture, individuals lose sight of minority cultural and heritage values (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007). Conversely, integration occurs when an individual identifies equally with the culture of their heritage and host country. The concept of integration is not always linear towards assimilation as it is often affected by different contingencies, such as one's ethnic or racial background, location, and human capital (Telles, Ortiz, & Moore, 2008). Integration and assimilation are not necessarily mutually exclusive; rather, they are interconnected processes, with integration representing a broader spectrum of cultural incorporation and assimilation being a potential outcome within that spectrum. Integration can involve the coexistence of diverse cultural elements, and while it may lead to assimilation for some individuals, it is not an inevitable or singular trajectory for everyone. The research encompassed in this paper examines the concepts of acculturation and integration with an emphasis on assimilation. There are three main theories of assimilation: (1) straight-line (classic) assimilation theory, (2) segmented assimilation theory, and (3) new assimilation theory.

Straight-Line/Classic Assimilation Theory

Assimilation occurs when an individual develops a stronger identification with the culture of a new country, surpassing their connection to their cultural heritage. The straight-line or classic assimilation theory proposes that as individuals develop relationships with the dominant culture in a society, they gradually lose touch with their ethnic cultural elements (Lash, 2018). In American society, straight-line assimilation is characterized by the adoption of American cultural practices and societal norms by United States immigrants, coupled with the loss of ties to their heritage cultures. American sociologist and a primary scholar in classic assimilation theory, Milton Gordon, uses straight-line assimilation theory to explain the upward mobility of successive immigrant generations due to the adoption of primary-group relationships and the incorporation of mainstream social networks and institutions (Gordon, 1964). This research project seeks to examine the validity of classical assimilation theory in the context of undergraduate college students.

Segmented Assimilation Theory

The segmented assimilation theory helps describe the diverse paths immigrant populations may follow while adapting to American culture. There is no one way to assimilate and adapt to a society. Groups of immigrants assimilate into a variety of sectors in American society (Portes and Zhou, 1993). Because of the diversity within American society and the diversity of immigrants to America, "the process of growing up in America oscillates between smooth acceptance and traumatic confrontation depending on the characteristics that immigrants and their children bring along and the social context that receives them" (Portes and Zhou, 1993). There are three main categories of segmented assimilation that immigrant populations are known to experience: (1) "Growing acculturation and parallel integration into the white middle-class," (2) "opposite direction into permanent poverty and assimilation into the lower class," and (3) "rapid economic advancement with deliberate preservation of the immigrant community's values and tight solidarity" (Portes and Zhou, 1993). It is important to understand these different modes of incorporation into society when attempting to understand the diversity in types of assimilation immigrant populations may face. Different ethnic and racial groups approach assimilation differently. The assimilation process varies depending on how individuals decide to embrace American ways (Portes and Zhou, 1993). Not all immigrants assimilate into society in the same manner. Some immigrant populations in the United States are vulnerable to downward assimilation into the lower class particularly because of their skin color, geographic location, or absence of mobility leaders to help incorporate them into upper-class society (Portes and Zhou, 1993). Particularly, when immigrating to the United States, "the expectation is that the foreign-born and their offspring will first acculturate and then seek entry and acceptance among the native-born as a prerequisite for their social and economic advancement" (Portes and Zhou, 1993). If immigrant populations do not assimilate and seek acceptance into American culture, they risk confinement to the lower classes (Portes and Zhou, 1993). Upon seeking acceptance into American society, many immigrants thoroughly assimilate into American culture by compromising their cultural heritage – as assimilation to American society is sometimes easier than grasping onto one's heritage culture (Portes and Zhou, 1993). However, as stated above, this pattern is not the case for all immigrants. Some immigrant groups, particularly young immigrants, remain connected to their cultural heritage, and ethnic communities and often "have a better chance for educational and economic mobility through the use of the material and social capital that their communities make available" (Portes and Zhou, 1993). The relationship between strong ties to one's native culture and adaptation to mainstream American society is another aspect this project seeks to explore.

New Assimilation Theory

New assimilation theory is a modified version of the classical and segmented assimilation theories and suggests that assimilation is characterized by structural integration into a society, rather than the adoption of mainstream culture and norms of that society (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007). This theory suggests that a group's integration into society is influenced by a variety of factors and cannot be explained by one theory or specific trajectory. It acknowledges the continuous contribution of immigrant groups to American "mainstream" society, highlighting a reciprocal process where immigrants shape American society as much as American society reshapes them. While some immigrants may completely give up their cultural heritage, others actively bring their cultural elements into the new country, contributing to a nuanced understanding of assimilation dynamics. As a result, the current societal landscape in the United States is undergoing constant transformation, foreseeing a significantly different future.

Assimilation and Education

Factors such as socioeconomic and immigration status hinder assimilation and give rise to social and economic inequalities among immigrant populations. Some leading analysts "[that believe] in the

universality of assimilation, argue that [these inequalities] are the result of a large first- and second-generation population still adjusting to American society" (Telles, Ortiz, & Moore, 2008). A primary factor affecting immigrant populations' assimilation is the education level. One study asserts that "Mexican Americans are especially slow to assimilate because the immigrant generation has had especially low levels of education and other forms of human capital compared with other immigrant groups" (Telles, Ortiz, & Moore, 2008). The focus on the education levels of immigrant populations, specifically second-generation undergraduate college students, is driven not only by personal interest but also by the significance of understanding the unique challenges this demographic faces.

Much of assimilation into American culture is the attainment of a collegiate education (Reyes 2018). Educational institutions across the country influence undergraduate students in different ways due to factors such as the campus location, campus life and culture, and the opportunities provided to students on campus (such as course offerings, scholarships, and faculty support). However, "some consequences of institutional differences are distinct outcomes on several measures, including students' identities, their sense of who they are, their collective action behaviors, and their ideas about in equality and opportunity in America" (Reyes 2018). The interviews in this paper will examine the collegiate experience of various first-generation undergraduate students who are second-generation immigrants specific to the culture and opportunities provided at the University of Arizona. The University of Arizona is designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for Hispanic and Latino students. This recognition is achieved by having a student population where at least 25% identify as Hispanic. As an HSI, The University of Arizona promotes its programs and initiatives that enhance the educational experience and success of its Hispanic students. Studies show that "historically underrepresented students' sense of belonging is influenced by campus racial climate, which in turn is a part of the institution's overall normative arrangements" (Reyes 2018). Understanding the impact of these factors on the experiences of second-generation immigrants is essential to address the broader dynamics of inclusion within the collegiate setting. A university's 'racial climate' generally shapes students' interactions with each other both in academic and non-academic settings. This study seeks to understand the dynamics of interactions among first-generation undergraduate students who are children of immigrants at the University of Arizona. It delves into the complexity of whether these interactions, involving peers, professors, or other students, exhibit predominantly positive or negative aspects.

American Identity and Nationalism

This research project also will dive deeply into the respondent's perspectives on American identity and nationalism. Nationalism is a concept regarding "the effort by a people to determine their own destiny and free themselves from external constraint, to overcome internal divisions and unite, and to express their sense of themselves and their cultural heritage" (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007). It coincides with the common conception of American identity associated with various freedoms such as the freedom of speech, religion, and expression (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007). Nationalism is typically tied to the ethnic and racial identities of various societal groups (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007). These identities blur when incorporating nationalism in a general sense into American identity, particularly concerning the cultural and heritage ties of immigrant populations in the United States. This specific context emphasizes the unique challenges and complexities immigrants face as they navigate the dynamics of national belonging while preserving their distinct cultural backgrounds.

The United States is a diverse country home to individuals who identify with various cultures, ethnicities, and racial groups. The United States has engaged in "more than two centuries of effort to construct a surprisingly widespread sense of peoplehood among an ethnically and racially diverse population" (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007). However, with this effort comes disagreements from people arguing that "ethnic ties have been replaced … by political commitments… in what has come to be called 'civic nationalism'" (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007). The political culture of the United States has a strong hold on the citizens who live here and is a seed of solidarity. The lasting impact of the United States' political culture is seen in citizens' active engagement in democratic processes, shaping the culture from local initiatives to national elections, while transcending individual differences through shared values and ideals. This fosters collective responsibility and solidarity, encouraging collaboration in the commitment to the nation's democratic principles. However, the political practices and values in the United States extending into educational institutions conflict with the racial identities of many resident populations (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007). The United States has "stumbled repeatedly over its reluctance to include various non-White populations in the peoplehood it imagines and over its insistence that they accept a European heritage as their own " (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007). Individuals who come to the United States from other countries are often forced to assimilate into American culture by adopting new cultural norms and succumbing to the identity of American nationalism. Research shows that "no matter how open, accessible, and principled they appear, civic forms of nationalism almost inevitably privilege – or come to privilege – certain cultural or ethnic forms and practices, even certain ancestries, over others" (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007). The individual identities of first-generation students at the University of Arizona are notably influenced by the United States, particularly in the context of nationalism impacting various aspects of their lives, including their experiences within social institutions such as the school systems.

Data and Methods

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics

Gender	
Male	1
Female	4
Non-Binary	1
Age	
19	1
20	3
21	1
25	1
Class Standing	
Freshman	-
Sophmore	2
Junior	3
Senior	1
Ethnicity	
Polish	1
Hispanic	4
White	1
Country of Familial Origin	
Mexico	4
Poland	1
Brazil & Portugal	1
Socioeconomic Status	
Working poor	2
Lower class	2
Middle class	2
Upper class	-

From January 2023 to May 2023, I interviewed six first-generation undergraduate students at the University of Arizona, all of whom are second-generation immigrants. The participants' were renamed as follows: Sarah, Olivia, Matt, Chloe, Michelle, and Anna. I advertised my research project using flyers in my classes and on social media. Students interested in participating contacted me for an interview. This project was filed with and approved by the Institutional Review Board. The interviews, which each lasted approximately 30 minutes, were conducted in person, over Zoom, or by phone and consisted of the same series of questions attached in the appendix of this paper. The carefully crafted interview questions intend to delve into participants' backgrounds, understanding of "American privilege", sense of belonging on a college campus, and their long-term career goals and aspirations, and to provide a comprehensive exploration of their experiences and perspectives. The audio of each interview was recorded and transcribed. I used a qualitative approach to analyze each interview and to draw comparisons across responses. All data and responses are kept completely confidential to maintain participant confidentiality identification.

The participants interviewed spanned the ages of 19 to 25 years old identifying as male, female, and non-binary. The interview encompassed both traditional (first-time) and non-traditional (second-time or transfer) undergraduate students. Participants identified as white, Polish, or Hispanic and traced their ancestry back to Poland, Brazil, Portugal, or Mexico. There were four socioeconomic classes represented by the participants: working poor, lower class, middle class, or upper class.

Integration in US Society

As first-generation college students who are children of immigrants, many participants believe that integrating into the United States simply means fitting into the United States and American society. This could mean having stability (e.g. financial, personal, relationship), owning a home, and having a standard 9-5 job — a critical aspect underscored by interviewees, revealing the absence of such privileges in certain immigrant families. One participant noted how her family lacks the privilege of a set schedule that accompanies the stability of a 9-5 job; their schedule varies depending on the type of work their parents are offered.

Another participant, Sarah whose mother immigrated from Poland, remarked that "we [herself and her family] think of the United States as the American Dream." Sarah explains that she believes immigrants come from all over the world to America for this very reason; the hope of obtaining a life of freedom and opportunity to work and build a comfortable life for themselves and their family. Reflecting this, an immigrant's perspective on the United States diverges significantly from the general view of immigration held by the broader U.S. population. Furthermore, Sarah highlighted the acculturation experience of her mother, who, upon relocating to the United States, adopted a nickname due to the difficulty Americans faced in pronouncing her given first name. Her mother felt compelled to adopt an Americanized pronunciation for her name to assimilate into American culture. In Sarah's opinion,

"People in America expect you to come here and leave your culture behind. They expect you to assimilate into 'American culture' or whatever that is. When immigrants come to America, [the American society] does not like it when you keep your culture. They would rather you be a white American."

Sarah's interpretation of assimilation into American culture follows a classic and straight-line assimilation theory approach by adopting American culture whilst abandoning one's cultural heritage. The research within this project shows how students such as Sarah view the United States as a country that disregards racial and cultural practices that are not 'white.' Despite this disregard, some immigrants hold on to the hope of the American Dream seeking better futures for their families as explained by other students. Other students when asked for their outlook on integration into the United States' society reflected on their experiences. For example, another participant, Michelle, noted that growing up in America, her life at home was always different from that of her peers. She stated that she was raised with different beliefs and traditions than most other kids and, as a result, was tasked with navigating the differences between her home culture and that of the wider American society. Michelle found particular difficulties in navigating the American school system because her parents were unable to help her work through the process.

Next, participants were asked whether or not they believed that their family had fully integrated into the US society. Most participants felt they had fully integrated into the US society and lost significant ties to their heritage culture. The participants also noted it is their parents and grandparents who retain the traditions, culture, and language of their home country. It can be inferred that as the generations progress in America, fewer students keep ties to their ancestral countries. However, in some cases, the students believed their families integrated into the US society to jobs and the safety and comfort of living here, but have not integrated in a cultural sense. Other students mentioned they believe their families have fully integrated into the United States society simply because all family members have United States citizenship and/or their passport says they are American citizens.

One student, Chloe, stated that she does not believe she has integrated into the United States society because she and her parents struggle with a language barrier. According to her, she and her family will always be in situations where they do not understand something or they are not understood. Furthermore, her family does not celebrate many American holidays or traditions, such as Independence Day.

Cultural and Social Barriers

Participants were then asked what if any, cultural or social barriers they face daily as first-generation college students and children of immigrants. The most influential barriers that most participants admitted to facing are economic and language barriers. The economic status of participants' families affected their financial aid and whether they needed to work. Furthermore, scholarships and financial aid often act as stressors for these students — particularly non-traditional students who do not qualify for as many scholarships as they did their first time in college. As a non-traditional student returning to college for the second time, Michelle explained how "[she] did not qualify for many scholarships because [she] is a non-traditional student this time around." In regards to language barriers, some students find that speaking two languages presents a challenge and sometimes do not consider themselves fluent in either language. Participants described problems communicating with peers, professors, and advisors and understanding subject matter in their second language which is often English. The language barriers coupled with unfamiliarity with the school system in the United States pose significant challenges for this demographic of students.

When asked about cultural barriers, Sarah responded that she does not face many barriers because, racially, she identifies as white. However, ethnically, she feels as though there are many aspects of her culture that others do not understand. In social settings, she often hears discriminatory remarks about her culture. Such comments may be indicative of implicit biases and microaggressions that are persistent in society and further pronounced in a college campus environment. This aligns with segmented assimilation theory, underscoring the impact of discriminatory attitudes on individuals from immigrant backgrounds as they navigate diverse societal contexts, including higher education settings.

Defining American Identity and Privilege

Following that, participants were asked several questions relating to American privilege and American identity. First, participants were asked to describe what it means to be an American and whether they

identify as American. According to Michelle, being an American comes with an understanding of how American society works. Michelle stated that "the way that the society, the people, the interactions, the economy, the way things work [in America] are just different."

In her interview, Sarah stated that, in her opinion, being American means freedom, but they also recognized the pros and cons of the term. For example, immigrants in America may enjoy new opportunities and privileges by becoming American, but these opportunities are often limited in terms of access to certain resources, socioeconomic mobility, and full societal inclusion. Sarah explained that freedom means many different things to different people; some social classes enjoy greater freedom than others. Another student, Olivia, stated that being "American" means being able to "work for the things you want and to try and get a better future for the next generation." One participant, Chloe, simply believes that being American means being born on American land whilst having legal status in America without the fear of deportation. One participant considered themselves "more American" than their parents solely because they are American citizens and their parents are not.

Transitioning from the participants' descriptions of "being American" to their identification as American, students are shaped by various factors, including upbringing, legal status, and personal connections to the concept of American identity. The four of the students interviewed identify as Americans because they were born and raised in America. One participant, Matt, said, "Yes, [I identify as American] because that is what my passport says. I trace my roots back to Mexico but, in the end, I am American."

One student, Michelle, identifies both as American and with their country of origin. Michelle explained:

"I identify as Brazilian American. When I was little, I really wanted to hold on to being Brazilian because I got taken away from that, so I never had the full opportunity to become Brazilian. But the older I get, the more that I realize that I can be Brazilian in some aspects but I am more used to the American life, but at the same time, I still have those Brazilian values that were passed down to me. I would never say that I am just American. I would always say that I am Brazilian American."

Most participants' answers are consistent with existing research on how a growing proportion of multicultural individuals identify themselves primarily with pan-ethnic terms as opposed to identifying with their country of national origin (Martinez and Gonzalez, 2021). On the other hand, tow participants do not identify as American. In her interview, Chloe answered:

"I don't consider myself American. When being asked about my identity I always say Mexican because I have grown up with all of the values and the Mexican culture… versus someone who grew up [in America] and whose parents are from here. I have always just considered myself Mexican."

Chloe's answer reflects a sense of pride in their identity which ties into the concept of nationalism and preservation of one's cultural heritage (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007). After discussing their identity, participants were questioned about what "American privilege" means to them. Three participants' answered that privilege comes with being born in America and raised within American culture, with Michelle stating:

"In the US, we have a lot of luxuries that are not granted to others in other countries. Like the ability to say and think about what we are feeling and the ability to practice whatever religion. Even the ability to walk in public with your phone out. Americans live in a bubble. As Americans, we grow up in a relatively safe world. We can walk around with relative safety and relative flexibility to be who we are. And I think that is a privilege of being an American."

Unlike immigrants who might face challenges with language barriers and pronunciation, American-born individuals generally do not encounter such difficulties. Being raised in America comes along with learning American slang and ways of speaking that non-native Americans may not know. Sarah noted how members of her family would be profiled as "non-American" simply by the way they pronounced certain words. Stereotypes created by language barriers reinforce harmful assumptions, perpetuate exclusionary narratives, and can subject individuals to biased treatment and discrimination. Furthermore, participants explained that being an American provides the privilege of being able to work and study in the United States without encountering any difficulties such as obtaining citizenship or paperwork authorizing them to do so. Another participant, Matt, stated that "if one works hard enough, one will be able to enjoy the privileges that come along with living in America." The most common theme among responses to this question was that participants associate American privilege with easy access to advantages such as education or work opportunities. Most participants agree that Americans overlook the everyday transactions they consider normal, such as financial transactions and access to opportunities, without realizing that many other people worldwide lack such privileges and struggle socioeconomically to attain such opportunities.

A Sense of Belonging at the University of Arizona

To understand experiences at the University of Arizona, participants were asked about their sense of belonging on campus — specifically whether they found a group, organization, or space on campus in which they developed a sense of comfort and community. Some participants remarked they normally feel comfortable at the University of Arizona because of its diverse student body population. As of August 2023, the undergraduate student body at the University of Arizona is 27.4% Hispanic and Latinx students which is the second largest demographic on the University of Arizona's campus behind the 67.7% of white students. Furthermore, the undergraduate student body is also composed of 9.7% Asian, 7.3% Black or African American, 0.9% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 3.6% American Indian or Alaska Native students. All participants found it interesting to see a coalition of students from many different countries and cultural backgrounds. Many feel as though the University of Arizona provides a lot of help for students who are children of immigrants as well as first-generation students. Financial assistance and access to professors who speak their native language are two critical forms of support that help alleviate financial barriers and ensure access to resources for students to achieve their academic goals and reach their full potential.

However, a sense of belonging was not the case for all students. For instance, Chloe was shocked upon coming to the University of Arizona because she expected the University to be more diverse due to its proximity to the US-Mexico border. Chloe expected a majority Hispanic population, rather than the eurocentric student population that she observed. Despite the diversity of students at the University of Arizona, Chloe found it difficult to make friends that she could relate to. Other students stated that they are "comfortable to an extent" here on campus. The students who have not found a profound sense of community at the University of Arizona do not engage in clubs or sororities but find comfort in their classes and major departments.

Undergraduate Challenges

The participants were prompted to share if they encountered any challenges during their undergraduate education. Students discussed familial, economic, resources, and gender stressors. Sarah remarked how attending the University of Arizona has "opened her eyes" to the challenges other people face. Specifically, she explained how undermining it can be to be a woman in college. In her opinion, no matter how successful a woman can be, they are still seen as a little girl in the eyes of other individuals in their line of work. Although Sarah does not face direct challenges, she can recognize the relevance of gender inequality challenges and expects them in her future career. Other students admitted to dealing with family issues while pursuing their degrees. A common theme among the students interviewed was the stress of balancing taking care of their family, with college responsibilities and financial difficulties. Additionally, many

participants mentioned that finding the right academic resources and learning how to use them effectively presented a great challenge upon entering college.

Where do Students Find Their People?

The participants were then asked whether they found a sense of belonging on campus. Although the University of Arizona is large, five participants agree that they can find a sense of community on campus. One participant, Sarah explains "You are able to find those niche groups within the University of Arizona because it is such a big university." Chloe found her group within one of the multicultural sororities. In this tight-knit community, Chloe found camaraderie and a space to connect with other individuals who shared similar cultural backgrounds and experiences. Her sorority became a haven for mutual understanding, fostering a strong bond among its members. Through shared traditions, celebrations, and shared challenges, Chloe not only forged lasting friendships but also found unique opportunities for personal growth, leadership development, and cultural enrichment. Others found their support systems within their academic community from peers, professors, and advisors.

Four participants interviewed are pursuing majors or minors in Spanish or Portuguese. They remarked on how the Department of Spanish and Portuguese's faculty provided support and understanding for students of their demographic while recognizing the value they contribute to the University. Olivia is enrolled in a Spanish heritage learning class, which is specifically designed for students whose first language is Spanish. This course allows her to connect with students who share her cultural background and language. Beyond language skills, the class fosters a sense of community, where shared cultural backgrounds create a unique learning environment. This interaction strengthens Olivia's connection to her roots and provides a supportive network, which, as Olivia stressed, helped motivate her to continue with school. Matt mentioned how many of his friends from back home in Mexico are also attending the University of Arizona, and he finds his sense of belonging here on campus with them. Through his hometown friends, Matt not only maintains ties to his roots but also benefits from a shared understanding that extends beyond academics. Whether navigating the challenges of a new environment or celebrating cultural traditions together, his friends become a crucial support system. The shared experiences and common background ensure the University of Arizona is a more welcoming and inclusive space, enhancing Matt's overall collegiate experience.

Although the majority of participants found their niche groups on campus, some participants struggled to integrate into university life due to cultural differences and language barriers not always understood by the broader student population.

As follow-up, these participants were asked, what, if anything, can the University of Arizona do to increase the student's sense of belonging on campus. Chloe suggested expanding the space for Hispanic or Latino students on campus. Although cultural and heritage centers already exist on campus, they are small and relatively unknown to students. Participants suggested that the centers should expand their presence on campus by offering more welcoming and attractive events for Hispanic and Latino students to engage in.

Family Support

The next question posed to the participants was whether their immediate families were supportive of their decision to go to college. Four expressed that their families were supportive and encouraged them from a young age to pursue college to support themselves. As first-generation students, many of these participants receive an immense amount of encouragement from their parents to pursue a college degree. Chloe explains how "one of the main reasons I came to college is because of my parents. I wanted to make them feel proud that their first child was going to college." However, this is not the case for all students. Some other participants felt their parents pressured them into pursuing higher education to obtain degrees in fields they were not interested in. Matt explained how he felt "forced" to go to college to become a doctor. Even though integrating into the collegiate school system got easier as the years went by, Matt struggled to find the courage to assert his aspirations and pursue a degree aligned with his passions, rather than fulfilling his parent's desire for him to pursue a career in medicine. As a non-traditional student returning to college to pursue a different degree, Michelle explains how her parents were supportive of her decision to attend college the first time around but cannot understand why she decided to return to school. Michelle is the same age as her parents were when they purchased their first house, making it challenging for them to understand why she desired to go back to school.

Additionally, two participants mentioned the variance in education levels among their immediate family members added difficulty to their college experience. Michelle commented that, when applying to college, she faced challenges as a result of her parent's inability to help navigate the college application process. First-generation college students face barriers to understanding the US education system due to their families' unfamiliarity with the US educational system. As a result, first-generation college students might not receive the same guidance and advice as students whose parents attended college. These challenges highlight the importance of providing comprehensive support for first-generation college students as early as the application process.

What Do You Want Others to Know?

The final question asked participants what they wanted others to know about their experiences at the University of Arizona. Sarah's response to this question was insightful:

"People need to be more open-minded. We think, believe, and see things in the media and we categorize people as 'all immigrants are this' or 'all immigrants are that.' But not all immigrants are people of color, and not all immigrants are people who are white. There is such a broad range of [people from various places and backgrounds] and I think that it is important to listen to everyone's stories. Because we are all different for different reasons. When people categorize others it really closes off your perspective."

Sarah's insight highlights the importance of open-mindedness, and avoiding categorization of immigrants based on stereotypes. Sarah's perspective emphasizes the need to listen to diverse stories without oversimplifying or generalizing individual experiences which is essential for an inclusive academic environment. Navigating college as first-generation students within the context of American identity is no easy feat. With a vast range of educational and social opportunities to facilitate connections with peers and faculty who share similar backgrounds, the University of Arizona can foster a support system crucial for successfully navigating the American college experience.

Limitations

Although this study provides valuable insights into the experiences of first-generation college students who are second-generation immigrants, the study is limited in its small sample size of only six participants and a focus solely on the University of Arizona. Future research could address these constraints by expanding participant samples across diverse universities and regions. Additionally, incorporating longitudinal studies—research conducted over an extended period—would provide insights into the evolving perspectives and challenges faced by these students throughout their academic journey. Such an approach could better explore the dynamic nature of identity, American privilege, and the sense of belonging at a university over time. Furthermore, integrating quantitative methods with qualitative approaches could enhance the generalizability of findings in subsequent investigations. While qualitative methods, such as interviews, provide in-depth insights and rich narratives from participants, quantitative methods involve numerical data analysis, which allows for statistical generalizations. By combining these approaches, researchers can achieve a more

comprehensive understanding of the experiences of first-generation college students who are second-generation immigrants.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research paper is to investigate the experiences of first-generation college students who are second-generation immigrants. The study, conducted from January to May 2023, aims to comprehensively understand students' views on American privilege, identity, and overall sense of belonging at the University of Arizona. Participants shared their insights into undergraduate challenges, family support, and their desires for others to understand their experiences. The students highlighted the complexities of assimilating into American culture while preserving their heritage and facing economic and language barriers. Despite diverse experiences, participants emphasized the importance of open-mindedness, rejecting stereotypes, and recognizing the diversity within immigrant communities. Students stressed the importance of support systems, both within the university and from family, in overcoming challenges and fostering a sense of belonging in higher education.

The results of this study aim to aid the University of Arizona in the outreach and support of first-generation college students who are second-generation immigrants. The University of Arizona can improve its outreach and support for students of this demographic by seeking to support these students in all aspects of their lives in addition to academics. Along with broadening financial scholarship opportunities and cultural spaces for first-generation students, the University can work on educating the wider student body and faculty on the experiences of first-generation college students coming from immigrant families. By developing an understanding of each other's experiences, students and faculty alike can provide a supportive environment and system necessary to foster first-generation students' success in college.

Appendix

Demographic Characteristics

1. How old are you?
2. What is your current class standing (e.g., first-year, sophomore, junior, senior)?
3. What is your current major?
4. What is your gender identity?
5. How do you identify ethnically or racially?
6. How do you identify socioeconomically? Choose one:
    a. Upper-class
    b. Middle-class
    c. Lower middle-class
    d. Working poor
7. To which country or countries does your family trace its ancestry?
    a. For example, are your parents from Mexico, Guatemala, China, India, etc.?
8. What, if any, cultural or social barriers do you face on a daily basis as a first-generation college student and child of immigrants?

American Identity and American Privilege

1. What does integrating into US society mean to you?
2. Do you believe your family has fully integrated into US society? Why or why not?
3. In your opinion, what does it mean to be an "American"?
4. Do you identify as "American"? Why or why not?
5. When you hear the term "American privilege," what does this mean to you?
6. Where do you see yourself in 5 to 10 years?
7. What are your long-term career goals?

University of Arizona Specific Questions

1. Please describe your experiences as a first-generation college student and child of immigrants at the University of Arizona.
2. Has your immediate family been supportive of your decision to go to college? Why or why not?
3. What challenges, if any, have you experienced during your undergraduate career?
4. Do you feel a sense of belonging on campus?
    a. If YES: Where do you find this sense of belonging? For example, do you find it in a particular space, class, club, or group?
    b. If NO: Why?
        i. What can the University of Arizona do to increase this sense of belonging?
5. What do you want others to know about your experiences at the University of Arizona?

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Collectivized Suffering and Post-Traumatic Growth

Gabbi Figueroa

Cultural psychology research on the ways individuals conceptualize experiences of suffering has largely focused on cross-cultural analyses between groups from vastly different backgrounds and ideologies. Previous cross-cultural approaches differentiate between cultural groups and their ideologically-reinforced interpretations of suffering but lack salient information on how individuals conceptualize and grow from personal suffering contrastingly to their identified group. This study goes beyond previous cultural-psychological studies and takes a multicultural approach to research the intricacies of microcultural groups within the broad culture of the United States by comparing the adverse experiences of minority and majority group members within the diverse culture of the University of Arizona. Understanding the underrepresented individuals' experiences of suffering is needed due to a lack of literature on the psychology of suffering that explores adverse experiences for those outside the majority population (white, middle socioeconomic status, and cisgender). We hypothesized that minority group members would display more post-traumatic growth (PTG) as a result of having more collectivization of suffering present within their narrative writing compared to majority group members. To measure the presence of collectivization and personalization, we utilized a thematic statistical analysis to interpret the personal suffering narratives. Data for this study is sourced from an experiment conducted by Dr. Daniel Sullivan regarding the impact of historical identity consciousness on the collectivization of personal suffering where 81 participants were asked to write about any stressful life event and prompted to consider personalization or collectivization when evaluating their stressful experience. Using two-way ANOVA testing we were unable to reject the null hypothesis; however, through statistical analysis of participant prompt compliance rates, we were able to establish methodological validity of the original study's narrative condition prompt used to ask participants to either collectivize or personalize their suffering. The results of this study have implications to support underrepresented communities by bringing awareness to how collectivized or personalized understandings of suffering can lead to culturally-informed PTG.

Keywords: collectivized suffering, post-traumatic growth, multicultural analysis

Introduction

The study of the psychology of suffering has previously focused on cross-cultural analyses of different cultural groups and the benefits that come from personalizing suffering as a negative experience that develops into an opportunity for self-improvement within the overall life story for majority (white, middle SES, cisgender) group members specifically (Sullivan et al., 2018). However, little to no cultural-psychological research has taken a multicultural approach to analyzing the intricacies of how minority group members interpret their personal suffering and how those interpretations may facilitate positive or negative outcomes individually. Previous cultural-psychological research conducted on minority populations focuses on the ways group members construct individual social identities in direct relation to their group's history of disadvantage and socioeconomic need (Howarth, 2002; Hornsey, 2008). In addition, researchers have observed that minority group members collectively experience historical suffering from the past as present-day minority group members continue to make life decisions based on past traumas (Mohatt et al., 2014; Waldram, 2014). Cross-cultural research on historical trauma and suffering developed an understanding of how minority groups interpret suffering and how marginalized individuals can experience post-traumatic growth (PTG) through coping after stress using a framework that addresses the collective group as opposed to the individual (Ortega-Williams, 2021). These cross-cultural findings form the foundation for analyzing how minority individuals conceptualize important areas of identity in terms of their collective group and experience of historical suffering. With this understanding of how minority individuals are connected, we hypothesize that minority (vs majority) group members will display more PTG as a consequence of more collectivization of suffering present within their narrative.

The purpose of the current study is to analyze the narrativization of suffering through a multicultural approach within the U.S. through a survey to discover how minority (vs majority) group members interpret personal suffering based on their group membership through prompted narrativization. In this study, we analyzed secondary survey data where participants were randomly assigned to interpret their suffering in a personalized or collectivized explanation and were then asked a series of PTG survey questions. The current study presents one experiment that develops the connection between collectivization and PTG specifically for minority group individuals, which is informed heavily by a series of previous studies on culture, social group connections, and disadvantaged history.

Literature Review

To understand the ways in which minority and majority group members interpret their suffering we must develop a brief conceptual background on different cultural ideologies, social identity construction, and personal awareness of historical oppression of their group. Previous research on the psychology of suffering has brought attention to historically disadvantaged groups having culturally reinforced stories for interpreting adversity (Hammock, 2008; Dunlop, 2021), interpreting suffering differently than the majority (Howarth, 2002; Hornsey, 2008), and having their meaning making processes of present day suffering be impacted by transgenerational historical oppression (Mohatt et al., 2014; Waldram, 2014). Cultural psychology has tended to take a cross-cultural approach to researching new discoveries on ideologically reinforced interpretations of suffering, but there is lacking information on the ways marginalized individuals within diverse cultures conceptualize personal adversity in comparison to the majority population. By taking a multicultural approach to delve into the psychological processing differences between majority and minority group members within diverse societies, this study seeks to illuminate the intricacies of making meaning from adversity supported by previous foundational research findings. The following literature review presents the narrative psychological perspective on suffering interpretations, the relationship between historical oppression and social identity formation, and the importance of collectivization of suffering for minority group members' PTG.

Studies on the psychology of suffering have previously focused on how cultures guide individuals to interpret experiences of adversity through socially reinforced stories known as "master narratives" (McLean & Syed, 2022; Dunlop, 2021). Master narratives are defined by narrative psychology as the dominant discourse within cultures on the way to conceptualize one's individual experience that is socially constructed and culturally reinforced (McLean & Syed, 2022). Demonstrating the positives of adhering to master narratives, social scientists observe that individuals who analyze self-redemptive narratives of assessing the significance of negative life experiences and articulate the positive personal growth experienced from adversity reported higher levels of psychosocial adaptation, well-being, and life enrichment (McAdams & McLean, 2013; Hammock, 2008). On the other hand, researchers argue that due to the bulk of studied populations identifying as cisgender and white, the results lack salient information on how individuals from marginalized groups are impacted by the imposition of redemptive master narratives (McLean & Syed, 2022; Hammack, 2008). Specifically, researchers in support of increasing diversity in narrative psychology discuss the existence of alternative narratives for individuals who do not align with the identity or life experiences of the dominant culture and instead place more value on connections to others when faced with adversity (McLean & Syed, 2022). According to this view, marginalized individuals in the U.S. who make meaning of their suffering by interpreting it within the context of personal connections with others through a narrative characterized by their life circumstances experience higher levels of life satisfaction and enrichment (McLean & Syed, 2022). At the same time, marginalized individuals tend to feel less satisfied with their lives and have lower levels of well-being which, according to researchers, is in large part due to not being able to fully identify with the self-redemptive narrative of the U.S. (McLean & Syed, 2022; Dunlop, 2021). Results on the positive and negative implications of master narratives informed the present study by developing the ways minority individuals narrativize personal suffering and generated an in-depth analysis of how minority individuals in the U.S. can facilitate growth through alternative narratives of suffering in comparison to majority individuals.

Establishing the master and alternative narratives utilized by majority and minority group members respectively opens discussion for why these differences in suffering interpretations arise. Prior research shows that minority group members interpret personal suffering in reference to historical disadvantages that shaped their group's identity through the collective social identity built from oppression (Howarth, 2002; Taylor et al., 2019). Social identities are understood through social psychological theory to be the unique qualities of an individual's self-concept that are derived from their personal association with social group memberships (Hornsey, 2008). By delving deeper into social identity, these previous studies found that the majority of populations are often characterized by a sense of personal agency to decide which social group they identify with most (Howarth, 2002; Hornsey, 2008). This is a decision that is often not available to minority individuals due to power structures set in place and the way history impacts and increases the intertwining of personal and social group identities (Howarth, 2002; Gómez et al., 2011). These studies provide foundational guidance on how minority group members, in comparison to majority group members, formulate their understanding of the self as being influenced by historical and continuous oppression, increasing minority group member identity fusion with their social group identity (Gómez et al., 2011; Bonam et al., 2019). This research interests me as it details how minority individuals formulate their social identity in terms of those around them thereby developing the concept that minority group members would interpret their suffering similarly to those whom they are connected to.

With the development of group and individual identity being

rooted in historical knowledge and awareness, research into historical trauma provides a deeper understanding of how minority group members refer to their groups' historical experiences of oppression when interpreting personal present-day adversity.

Research on historical trauma defines the concept as a complex collective oppressive or discriminatory experience that spans multiple generations of people who have identities or circumstances in common (Mohatt et al., 2014; Waldram, 2014). The utilization of the previous historical narrative that characterizes minority group members is known as the collectivization of suffering where individuals see their personal suffering as being partially rooted in the history of disadvantage for their group (Mohatt et al., 2014). The importance of collectivization of suffering for minority individuals specifically is that it allows for group members to make meaning of their suffering in reference to a larger historical injustice as well as provide solace in the face of future suffering for those in similar circumstances (Adler et al., 2016; McLean & Syed, 2022). By interpreting individual suffering in terms of a larger issue, coping is made more manageable because the blame is shifted from the individual to the collective, which can foster PTG (Adler et al., 2016; Ortega-Williams et al., 2021). Developing an appreciation for the types of interpretations of suffering that facilitate growth from traumatic experiences allows the present study to provide finer detail of the positive outcomes associated with minority group members collectivizing their suffering.

Each of the studies reviewed reveals theoretical and concrete understandings of where the psychology of suffering has developed cross-cultural understandings, group-dependent interpretations of adversity, as well as the gaps in research on the individual experiences of suffering conceptualization within minority groups. Within cultural psychology, generalizations of trends occur among cross-cultural analyses, but larger steps need to be made in developing an in-depth analysis of minority group member experiences. The previous cross-cultural research demonstrated the complexity of culturally dependent master narratives for suffering interpretations (Hammock, 2008; Dunlop, 2021), elaborated on the ways historically disadvantaged group members conceptualize suffering based on past oppression (Howarth, 2002; Hornsey, 2008), and further analyzed the impact of continuous historical trauma on the PTG of minority group members (Mohatt et al., 2014; Waldram, 2014). With a greater understanding of the cross-cultural analyses, a multicultural approach needs to be implemented to further an understanding of how minority group members narrativize and conceptualize their identity in terms of the collective and can develop greater PTG through these processes to increase overall well-being.

Methods

Overview. This study is part of a larger set of studies conducted with a multicultural-psychological perspective on how people from different (majority vs. minority) group backgrounds within the diverse culture of the United States think about suffering. This smaller study was an exploratory project to establish methodological validity for the last of the four studies (Sullivan et al., 2023), previously conducted on the measurement of the presence of collectivization and personalization within participant narratives. The current smaller project utilizes participant and survey data from the previous studies to employ a multicultural psychological lens to analyze how PTG levels interacted with the presence of personalization and collectivization within the suffering narratives dependent upon group status. Methods for participant data collection were reviewed for relevancy and provided below to allow for a fully informed analysis of the results. The relevant variables were identified depending on their significance for analyzing demographics and group status in reference to responses to the suffering narrative prompts, PTG items, and the formation of the project-specific coding scheme.

Demographics. 83 participants from the undergraduate student population of the University of Arizona (age: M = 18.50 years; 66.7% female, 30.9% male, 2.5% transgender) completed a survey in exchange for course credit. Prior to analyses, two participants with substantial missing data were removed leaving 81 valid participant responses. Participants indicated their race/ethnicity with the following response options: White/Caucasian (58%); Black/African-American (6.2%); Native American/American Indian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander/Alaska Native (6.2%); Hispanic/Latinx (24.7%); Asian American/Asian (8.6%). Participants indicated their socioeconomic status (SES) with the MacArthur ladder measure by rating their subjective ranking in society relative to other people on a scale of *1 = worse off in society, least money, worst jobs* to *10 = best off in society, most wealth, most education, best jobs* (*subjective social status*; M = 6.19, SD = 1.58).

Group Status: Majority vs. Minority. After completing demographics, participants were prompted to "Think about a social group that is an important part of your identity…This could be your racial/ethnic group, a political group you belong to, a religious group/denomination, or any other community or social group." Participants typed the name of the group, which was later textually inserted into relevant survey tasks and items. They were then asked to respond "Yes" or "No" to the question: "Do you consider this social group to be a minority group in this society (the United States), meaning a group that has experienced historical or ongoing discrimination, persecution, or disadvantage?" Based on this question, participants were assigned majority (50.6%) or minority (49.4%) group status.

Suffering Manipulation. Participants were then asked to write "about a time in the past few years when you experienced a great deal of stress and suffering." Participants then rated the severity of the event they wrote about on a scale of 1 = One of the least stressful things that has happened to me to 7 = The most stressful thing that has ever happened to me (M = 6.00, SD = 1.00).

After all participants completed the suffering manipulation prompt detailed above, they were then randomly assigned to complete either a personalized suffering or collectivized suffering prompt. Participants in the personalized suffering narrative condition were instructed to:

Think about how this stressful event fits in with the broader story of your life. In particular, think about how things were before this event, and whether or not this event caused you to see the world differently. Please take a few moments to write about how this event impacted your life's story and the extent to which you changed as a person because of this event.

By contrast, participants in the collectivized suffering narrative condition responded to the prompt:

Think about how stressful events like this often happen to people like you. In particular, think about the social group you belong to which you named earlier. Please take a few moments to write about how this kind of event often happens to people in your group, and whether you think people in your group could take action to stop such stressful events from happening so much in the future.

Examples of the kinds of events participants wrote about in these conditions are available in Appendix A.

PTG. Participants then completed a validated measure related to coping with potential traumatic stress. They were asked to complete the 10-item PTG Inventory (PTG; Cann et al., 2010; α = .81), with respect to the stressful event they had written about. Participants responded using the original metrics of the PTG-validated scale.

Presence of Collectivization and Personalization. To code the presence of collectivization and personalization within the suffering manipulation prompts, a coding scheme was developed with

theoretical and applied guidance from Thomas (2006) on taking an inductive approach to identifying themes to code within qualitative data. Personalization was defined and operationalized as "interpreting personal suffering as a part of their individual life story in reference to how it impacts their self-concept and how they see the world." Collectivization was defined and operationalized as "interpreting personal suffering as being partially rooted in the history of disadvantage for their group/community." The presence of personalization and collectivization were both rated on a scale of *1 = Not present* to *3 = Very present*.

Two coders conducted a pilot test of the coding scheme on 10 randomly organized suffering narratives and had an 80% agreement rate, which was deemed high enough according to Krippendorf's alpha standards for interrater reliability to proceed to coding the remaining 71 randomized narratives after resolving coding disagreements. After the coding of all 81 entries was completed, interrater reliability was measured by correlating the scores given by two coders for each category (collectivization r = 0.79; personalization r = 0.84). Due to both correlations meeting the universal cutoff for reliability, interrater reliability was established for the suffering narrative coding scheme. After this, a final set of coding decisions was assembled using the coding scheme and comparing both sets of scores to utilize during data analysis. The full suffering narratives coding scheme with examples is available in Appendix B.

Results

Collectivization and personalization scores. To perform the necessary parametric tests, we coded the secondary suffering narrative data for the presence of collectivization and personalization represented by collectivization and personalization scores. We utilized the coding scheme described in methods to score the narratives from *1 = Not present*, to *2 = Somewhat present*, to *3 = Very present* for collectivization and personalization separately (collectivization: M = 1.77, SD = .78; personalization: M = 2.66, SD = .58).

Collectivization Score and PTG. After the collectivization and personalization scores were coded for, we employed a two-way ANOVA to test our main hypothesis. Contrary to the hypothesis, no significant interaction between collectivization score and group status on PTG was found through the ANOVA analysis. The F-value was .586 with a p-value of .446, indicating that there was no significant difference on PTG levels influenced by either collectivization score or group status.

Group Status and Suffering Narrative Prompt Compliance. After testing the hypothesis, we conducted chi-square tests on participant compliance with the suffering narrative prompts to establish methodological validity. We first needed to adhere to the binary categorical requirements of chi-squares, by reducing the collectivization and personalization scores from 1-3 down to *0 = Did not comply* to *1 = Complied*. Table 1 illustrates the binary results for collectivization condition compliance based on group status. Table 2 displays the binary results for personalization condition compliance based on group status.

Table 1. *Binary collectivization scores of minority/majority-identified participants*

	Majority-identified	Minority-identified	Total
0-Did not comply	34	22	56
1-Complied	7	18	25
Total	41	40	81

Table 2. *Binary personalization scores of minority/majority-identified participants*

	Majority-identified	Minority-identified	Total
0-Did not comply	17	26	56
1-Complied	24	14	25
Total	41	40	81

After consolidating the collectivization and personalization scores we compared group status to suffering narrative condition compliance using chi-square tests. After the chi-square tests were conducted, we converted the results into percentages to analyze the compliance rate to the respective suffering narrative prompts based on group status. The chi-square results converted to percentages are represented in Table 3 to establish methodological validity through further qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Table 3. *Percentage of minority/majority-identified participants who complied with the prompt*

	Majority-Identified	*Minority-Identified*
Collectivization Prompt	*38%*	*72%*
Personalization Prompt	*104%*	*93%*

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to take a multicultural approach to analyze how minority and majority group members interpret personal suffering differently through prompted suffering narrative writing. The ANOVA statistical results demonstrated an insignificant interaction, meaning we were unable to reject the null hypothesis of collectivization score and group status influencing PTG levels. The insignificant interaction between the presence of collectivization and group status on PTG levels has pertinent implications for the previous studies which the secondary survey data was sourced from. In the original study, a significant interaction effect was observed between the experimental suffering narrative condition and group status on PTG, F (1, 77) = 5.19, p = .03, partial-η2 = .06. The quantitative original study did not consider the qualitative data analysis of the suffering narratives themselves and assumed the presence of collectivization and personalization based on participant condition. However, through further review of the qualitative data analysis, we could not corroborate the significant interaction effect that was originally found.

We theorize there could have been a methodological error within the coding scheme we developed that led to our results. We only coded the randomized suffering narrative responses as opposed to coding both the primary stressful narrative response and the narrative condition of participants. Separating the two aspects of participant responses made it difficult to detect the type of suffering participants experienced and its relation to their minority or group membership, especially for the collectivization condition. A solution for this problem will be to create a more detailed and sensitive coding scheme with a greater scoring range in order to provide clear parameters for a more thorough and valid qualitative analysis.

Simultaneously, we theorize the lack of result corroboration to the original study could be due to a Type I error within the quantitative study. It is possible that the original study's quantitative results were simply incorrect and the interaction between suffering narrative condition and group status on PTG is a spurious effect. This would indicate why this smaller study with narrative coding does not

reaffirm the previous significant findings. We plan on replicating this study with a larger sample size to discover whether a Type I error has occurred by assessing a null effect through replication. Although we believe this to be less likely than a methodological error occurring within the coding scheme, these results offer insight into the complexity that comes with researching the qualitative aspects of the idiosyncratic experiences of suffering for minority and majority group members.

Through our chi-square testing, we were able to establish methodological validity for the suffering narrative prompts from the previously conducted experiment via participant compliance percentages. Participants, regardless of condition, either complied with the prompt or expressed misunderstanding of what was being asked. 3 out of 81 participants answered their assigned prompt while also fulfilling the requirements of the opposing condition despite never being asked or presented with information regarding the opposing prompt, therefore fulfilling presence codes for both collectivization and personalization. Due to this double completion phenomenon, the percentage of compliance for majority-identified group members completing the personalization prompt surpassed 100% by a small margin. These statistical findings demonstrate that the prompts were able to convey what was being asked and participants were able to understand the requirements, even with expressed difficulty qualifying their suffering experience.

Research elaborating on the differences between majority and minority groups within the diverse culture of the United States provides a unique perspective to the field of cultural psychology that has previously only focused on broad cross-cultural analyses. We go beyond these studies by parsing through differences in suffering contemplations between microcultural groups under the context of an overarching heterogeneous culture, so researchers can be better equipped to provide culturally informed support resources reflecting collectivized or personalized understandings of suffering.

Specifically, our research into how PTG levels are impacted by culture through suffering interpretations and group status provides stepping-stones for society to curate culturally informed resources for facilitating greater well-being for minority group members and positive psychosocial adaptation following stressful life events. The current study has implications far beyond understanding how different groups within the University of Arizona contemplate suffering as a whole and has the possibility to inform PTG resources for underrepresented group members throughout the United States in the future.

Appendix A

Examples of Suffering Narratives Written by Participants

Personalized Suffering Narrative / Majority Group Member:
"I feel like this moment impacted my life's story broadly in the sense that I still am dealing with the impacts of the injury itself today and that is pain that I still deal with on an almost daily basis. It also impacted me by making me realize that I was capable of dealing with a lot of my problems on my own but that it ultimately probably caused me more suffering to try to hide it and not talk to anyone at all so as a result of that I tried to be more open with the people closest to me about what was going on in my life. I also feel like I changed as a person in that this situation helped me realize what my priorities in life were regarding the sports I played and my goals education and career wise because for a while during that injury I was concerned that I could have ruined my chances at what career I wanted and that I needed to be more careful with the scenarios I put myself in in my sports."

Personalized Suffering Narrative / Minority Group Member:
"In the broader story of my life, this experience is just a small part of it, but will forever influence how I deal with future situations. For starters, it has made me a more cautious and less trusting person. It also has been the reason I have grown and matured so much over the last year. I think I am more capable of being more empathetic and cautious, not just with myself, but for others. The event led me to seek help, and while dealing with it I dealt with other past traumas that I had suppressed from my childhood helping me understand myself better and heal as a whole person."

Collectivized Suffering Narrative / Majority Group Member:
"I think a lot of people my age, and I'm sure in my sorority as well struggle with disordered eating. I think if we made it a normal talking subject, and promoted that all foods are good, and that all bodies are perfect less women would have low self-esteem regarding their bodies."

Collectivized Suffering Narrative / Minority Group Member:
"Within the LGBTQ+ community, we are constantly ostracized and judged, most especially by religious groups. We are denied rights that we should be allowed to have, such as marriage. We are judged as morally wrong, when we are simply different. I think that if we keep fighting for our rights, fighting for the social acceptance that is starting to spread, it will come in time."

Appendix B
Suffering Narratives Coding Scheme

Collectivization

Concept	Indicator
Not Present	Expresses no connection between personal suffering and individual self-concept or impact on worldview OR expresses misunderstanding of the prompt
Somewhat Present	Refers to broader group/community experience of suffering with small to no connection between personal suffering and the group/community experience
Very Present	Provides concrete examples of personal suffering and connects them to group/community experience of suffering

Personalization

Concept	Indicator
Not Present	Expresses no connection between personal suffering and individual self-concept or impact on worldview OR expresses misunderstanding of the prompt
Somewhat Present	Expresses broad connections between personal suffering experience and individual self-concept development or impact on worldview with fewer details
Very Present	Provides concrete connections between personal suffering experience and individual self-concept development and/or impact on worldview

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Heal-Thy Brain: The Intersectionality of Race, Sleep, and Socioeconomic factors in ADHD

Faith Johnson

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2023), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has two primary presentations: an ongoing pattern of inattention or a hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development, or both. ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition with genetic factors but can be intensified by environmental influences. It is one of the most commonly diagnosed mental disorders in adolescence (Faraone et al., 2022). Sleep problems in youth with ADHD are reported to be in the range of 25% to 55% (Stein et al., 2022). Due to ADHD's complexity, the symptoms can be misunderstood or misinterpreted by the public. It is often not diagnosed before adolescence, families can often wrongly consider their children as "hyperactive", instead of their symptom being a form of hyperactivity from ADHD. However, only a small fraction of neurodivergence in adolescents are diagnosed in the United States. Currently, in the United States, about 6.1 million adolescents have been diagnosed with ADHD in the past two decades (Holland, 2018). Even with extensive data, there are still gaps regarding accurate diagnosis, including racial disparities, sleep disturbances, and socioeconomic factors. Additionally, the lack of ADHD diagnoses in adolescents can cause profound challenges in various areas of their everyday lives. For instance, Stein et al. (2022) have been seeing an increase in symptoms of insufficient sleep, as well as sleep disorders, among ADHD individuals. ADHD can contribute to the development of other sleep disorders in adolescents and young adults. Research suggests that children with ADHD are more prone to developing sleep problems than their neurotypical counterparts (Holland, 2018). Moderate to severe sleep problems occur at least once a week in 19.3% of the clinic-referred children with ADHD, 13.3% of the psychiatric controls (children taking stimulants), and 6.2% of the pediatric controls (children who are not taking stimulants) according to parents (Stein et al., 2022). ADHD is associated with lower sleep duration and a higher incidence of sleep disorders in adolescents and young adults, negatively impacting their school, work, and personal lives in more ways than one. This paper will examine the importance of sleep in individuals with ADHD, including exploring how cultural and socioeconomic factors shape sleep and other biological functions. The data collected will inform lifestyle changes for physical and mental health for those with ADHD, and also help shape approaches to sleep and health for others in the neurodivergent and the BIPOC communities.

Literature Review

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder has garnered a great deal of attention over the years due to recent discoveries about the disorder's impact on cognitive functioning. This has yielded numerous examples of the disorder being imprecise amongst various communities. Inaccuracy and underdiagnosis can induce unwanted stigmas and perplexity for individuals who are challenged with ADHD symptoms. Previous literature highlights how ADHD affects people of color disproportionately, and they may encounter extra challenges to diagnosis and treatment owing to prejudice, environmental factors, and their socioeconomic position. Because of these constraints, attempts to diagnose and treat ADHD have been severely disregarded. This review addresses how the intersectionality of race, socio-economic issues, and sleep can influence an ADHD individual's experiences and outcomes. Sleep disparities between African Americans versus Caucasians, sleep debt, cognitive performance, and periodic limb movement disorders will be extensively reviewed.

Throughout many academic studies discussing the symptoms of ADHD, the correlation between racial disparities and sleep impacting ADHD adolescents is overlooked. Various studies have found that Black and Hispanic children are less likely to be diagnosed with ADHD than white children, even when they have similar symptoms. The lack of diagnoses may be due to stereotypes about people of color as always being a part of a lower socioeconomic background, systemic biases, and a lack of awareness of ADHD in these communities. Buckhalt et al. (2007) investigate the correlation between African American and European American children's sleep duration and cognitive functioning. Their motives for inquiring on this particular subject stemmed from previous findings of studies on children's sleep hygiene and decreasing sleep duration. They also discussed how it was important to carry out a better sleep deprivation study for children, as the last few cases have been deemed ethically inappropriate for children. The researchers from this study used the work from previous research to find a correlation between sleep loss and the negative effects on working memory and executive functioning (Buckhalt et al., 2007). In particular, African Americans reported more nap times, oversleeping on the weekends, and sleep-disordered breathing. Methods used in this research were sample recruitments of calling parents from various zip codes to permit the use of their children in the study, and self-questionnaires such as the School Sleep Habit Surveys. The WJ III, a nine item test used to calculate and showcase intellectual abilities and cognitive abilities, was used. Of the nine tests, six were used: verbal comprehension (VC); concept formation (CF); visual matching (VM); numbers reversed (NR); auditory working memory (AWM); and decision speed (DS). These results showed that sleep and wake problems correlated to worse cognitive performance (Buckhalt et al., 2007). When asking teachers to report their academic performances, it was surprising to find out that race did not play a part in cognitive abilities, but socioeconomic status did. "This hypothesis rests on the assumption that African Americans (AA) and lower SES children are likely to be exposed to more stressors in their environment than their European Americans (EA) and higher SES counterparts, and that additional stressors (e.g., poor sleep in this study) may be related to lower levels of cognitive functioning" (Buckhalt et al., 2007). The most significant finding from the sleep survey was that bed-sharing/room-sharing had a significant effect on cognitive performance. In conclusion, race did not play a significant factor alone in cognitive ability, but the effect of economic status made an impact. Sleep disturbance comes from environmental factors like noise from bed sharing/room sharing, money stressors, and family issues. Children who have higher SES have the privilege of living less restricted and can focus better. "Poorer sleep in low-SES individuals may be related to a variety of factors, including work schedules, overcrowded households, chronic stressors associated with scarcity of resources,

diet and alcohol consumption, and even poorer temperature control in the sleep environment" (Williams, 1999). Further research needs to be done to look at health disparities in African Americans and low SES children. The research on two-parent households and sleep duration needs further investigation. Overall, the study showcased the urge to better support and advocate for those who come from a low SES to enhance their sleep quality.

Fox et al. (2007) posits that many people suffer from insufficient sleep. This insufficiency is also known as sleep debt. The researchers' exegesis of the expression "sleep debt" refers to individuals having to reimburse their sleep hours over time. For example, it is recommended that people obtain eight hours of sleep every night; thus, if they only reported receiving five hours of sleep, their sleep debt would be three hours. Due to the accelerated lifestyle many individuals have to maintain to survive, Fox and colleagues investigate if age, race, and socioeconomic status display how sleep debt alters everyday life. The methods used were conducted from the Public Health Management Corporation Community Health Survey dataset. Three questions were asked of 10,000 households residing in Pennsylvania in the following counties: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties. These counties were chosen by Random Digit Dialing to participate in telephone interviews given in either English or Spanish. Participants were asked questions about their sleep quality, quantity, and need (Fox et al., 2007). It was indicated that underrepresented populations have the most sleep debt; primarily African Americans and Latina women. Participants' stress levels could be assumed from dealing with systemic racism and longer work hours than their White counterparts. Participants with a psychiatric disorder were also associated with increased sleep debt. In correlation to age, it was noted that the older the individual was, the shorter their sleep latency (the amount of time it takes to fall asleep) was, but they had less sleep debt (Fox et al., 2007). The study also discusses the qualities between men and women: "Female respondents were also more likely than males to carry a sleep debt of at least 1 hour (58.8% for females vs 47.5% for males)."These findings gave valuable insight into identifying sleep debt in large populations, mostly emphasizing the effects of sleep disparities in minority groups.

Williams et al. (2016) compared and contrasted sleep between Black and White Americans. The research showed how African Americans and non-Black Hispanics had more physiological symptoms hindering their health than their Caucasian counterparts. To test their results, the researchers used the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System and self-reported surveys to emphasize various sleep durations from the participants. They found other factors such as the internet and economic factors to be key variables of the differences in sleep between the two populations. Overall, they concluded that African Americans are more vulnerable to physical and mental health risks when it comes to sleep.

In addition to the understanding of the correlation between diverse populations and ADHD, Slobin and Masalha (2020) express their insights on how different ethnic populations value children's care while dealing with the diagnosis of ADHD. Throughout their literature, the researchers provided their initiative to showcase how access to mental health, stigmas, and treatment influences the adaptive strategies of children with ADHD. In their methods, the databases PsycINFO, Entrez-PubMed, and PsycARTICLES were used to provide the data. Identifying a barrier to access to mental health, Slobin and Masalha (2020) noticed that teachers often dismissed ADHD symptoms in minority children for disruptive behavior. This causes concern as most of adolescence is spent in a classroom setting, meaning teachers are vital in observing the true behaviors of children. These biases often can affect the child's identity and portray their characteristics as "bad" instead of as neurodivergent tendencies. Additionally, this can cause room for error in accurate diagnosing by mental health providers, as well as deviate individuals from receiving any help at all when they are older. The stigma alone raises different attention and acceptance in the communities. In regard to the lack of education about neurodivergence in ethnic communities, Slobin and Masalha (2020) identified that people of color responded to their child's behavior as more adverse than Caucasian parents, who saw their child's behavior as something to seek support for. African American parents were more likely to refer to their child's condition as a behavior problem or as an inherent characteristic implying that the child was "bad," whereas most Caucasian parents referred to it as a medical syndrome (Slobin and Masalha, 2020). The researchers discussed these responses from different backgrounds that can affect the treatment outcomes for children with ADHD. If a child's neurodivergence is considered "bad," this can result in more conduct reports and possibly being labeled as a miscreant. If their behavior is labeled as a "syndrome," more emphasis on seeking mental health treatment and alleviating symptoms is seen to support those types of ADHD individuals. Limitations include the data being "nonexhaustive" and being limited to mostly data from Caucasians and African Americans. The review gives an understanding of how better education is needed to help not only destigmatize the diagnosis of ADHD, but make health care inclusive to all neurodivergent individuals.

Craig et al. (2020) investigate how sleep disruptions might increase current ADHD symptoms, making it more difficult for youngsters to control their behavior and execute everyday tasks. ADHD is frequently linked with considerable functional impairment, such as difficulty with attention, executive function, and emotional regulation, which can have a negative influence on a child's daily life and create long-term consequences. Furthermore, children with ADHD and multiple sleep problems (e.g., bedtime resistance, waking up, tossing/turning in bed) have been shown to have more caregiver deficits and poorer quality of life, family functioning, and school attendance than children without sleep problems (Sung et al., 2008). There were three questions the researchers sought to answer: What are the characteristics of sleep disorders in a clinical sample of ADHD youth? What is the association between inattentive and hyperactive/impulsive symptoms, as reported by parents and teachers, and sleep issues in a clinic-referred sample of kids with ADHD? Do sleep problems, in addition to ADHD symptoms, contribute to functional impairment? Craig et al. (2020) study how sleep disturbances may exacerbate existing ADHD symptoms, making it more difficult for children to manage their behavior and complete daily chores. Using these considerations, Craig et al. (2020) set out to research potential therapies that may enhance sleep quality and overall outcomes for children with the illness. The researchers used methods such as recruiting parents of 192 children with ADHD, who completed measures regarding their children's ADHD symptoms, including the Pediatric Sleep Questionnaire, and Child Health Illness Profilend functioning (Weiss Functional Impairment Rating Scale–Parent Report)As a result of the methods, they were able to suggest that sleep disorders associated with children with ADHD did have a significant impact on their functional impairment. This suggests a link between the severity of ADHD symptoms and the risk of sleep issues. The discovery that sleep variability is connected to the other sleep abnormalities observed in ADHD lends credence to the theory that sleep issues and ADHD may be biologically associated, with disruption of the circadian rhythm, arousal, and sleep/wake transitions (Imeraj et al., 2012). All of these variables combine to create a vicious cycle of sleep disruption and ADHD symptoms, which can have a detrimental influence on a child's academic performance, social relationships, and overall quality of life.

Conclusively, Dr. Sara Frye and her colleagues (2018) conducted research to determine how physical variables affect ADHD patients. The goal of this study was to look into the effect of periodic limb motions on the behavioral performance of teenagers with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Prior

studies revealed that people with ADHD had a higher risk of a movement problem called Periodic Limb Movement Disorder. This condition affects 26% to 64% of people (Frye et al., 2018). Furthermore, a random sample of 421 teenagers self-diagnosed by their parents was recruited as study participants. The researchers employed clinical history, neuropsychological assessments, physical examinations, a child or adult behavioral checklist, and a nine-hour polysomnography as methodologies. The findings revealed that adolescents with ADHD had a greater risk of developing PLMS than persons with PLMS alone. Additionally, the researchers discovered that PLMS may be a crucial trigger in the development of anxiety and mood problems in ADHD patients. More research is required to help these people suffering from PLMS. One limitation was that the study was cross-sectional, and there were not enough meaningful findings for people who don't have ADHD with PLMS alone or neurobehavioral outcomes. Additionally, there were self-reports of ADHD from parental observation that showed the findings should be approached with caution. Based on the study's findings, it is critical to continue learning about adolescents with ADHD and PLMS.

With many of the findings on ADHD resulting in the "how" and "why," this literature explores the possibilities of the effect of nature versus nurture on ADHD. The current challenge in coping with ADHD is explaining the underlying causes. Many individuals with ADHD do not showcase the common symptoms of fidgeting, impulsivity, or being severely absent-minded at a glance, making it challenging for society to see them as neurodivergent due to their abilities to adapt to social norms. Despite ADHD being genetic, environmental factors can exacerbate symptoms. After a diagnosis, most people assume and focus on the A in ADHD, attention. Many more symptoms that need to be discussed when dealing with ADHD are hindering daily activities. Additionally, the "why" for explaining ADHD is not thoroughly discussed and collected before diagnosis. For example, people of color who might face microaggressions regularly can have their ADHD mostly show up as anxiety which won't show up at all due to them having to mask their emotions out of self-protection. Adolescents coming from lower SES backgrounds who might have sensory issues due to noise from living in a crowded house or neighborhood can be misdiagnosed with another disorder/deficit and not get the proper treatment needed. ADHD can be complex. It is essential to have accurate diagnoses and more education on coping mechanisms. The current tactics for diagnosing ADHD come from a surplus of diagnoses from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the diagnosis of common symptoms expressed above is the ultimate explanation for ADHD

Conclusion

The preceding literature review emphasizes the importance of seeing ADHD from a holistic viewpoint instead of interpreting it only from diagnostic measures. It demonstrates the need for examining ADHD beyond genetic factors. The previous research highlighted that the effects associated with ADHD are much more than just genetics. The literature encompasses a broader perspective, including societal factors and lack of provider education when discussing ADHD in various populations. Furthermore, the literature review enhances this research to accentuate the importance of lifestyle factors exacerbating ADHD symptoms. To ensure the overall well-being of neurodivergent individuals, clinicians have a responsibility to provide accurate diagnoses. Diagnosing neurodivergent individuals comes with significant accountability and a need for accuracy to ensure people with ADHD experience satisfaction. To improve the outcomes across intersections of people with ADHD who experience poorer sleep, lower SES, and racial disparities, improved education on diagnosing is imperative. With better sleep hygiene, inclusive access to neurodivergent support from health care providers, and more advocacy in marginalized communities, the way of life for individuals with ADHD can feel less daunting while maintaining societal norms.

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Relationships Reimagined: Analyzing International Partnerships With Palestinian Theatre to Highlight the Potential for Greater Impacts

Jordan Buck

International collaboration and support for Palestinian theatre can compromise its effectiveness as a tool for resisting Israeli occupation. Furthermore, the integration of principles from Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and the recentering of Palestinian narratives holds the potential to overcome challenges within international collaboration. This will ultimately enhance support for Palestinians' ongoing struggle for liberation. After providing historical context, the paper will focus on Palestinian theatrical activities occurring after the signing of the Oslo Accords, a series of private negotiations intended to impose a two-state solution. The paper will then detail the pros and cons of international funding for and partnerships with theatrical endeavors in Palestine, and make recommendations for improving such partnerships in the future.

Given that this paper will discuss how international collaboration with Palestinian theatre affects its efficacy as an avenue for social change, a brief historical overview of its development before and in the beginning stages of these partnerships will be provided. Rather than focusing only on the dramaturgical aspects of Palestinian theatrical performances, this paper also examines instances of collaborative theatre making in Palestine to better understand their local and global manifestations and perceptions, and how to more intentionally carry out future efforts to provide the best possible outcomes for Palestinians.

Historical Background of Palestinian Theater

The modern theatrical activities in Palestine have taken inspiration from folk traditions such as shadow theatre, *hakawati*, *maqama*, and even *dabka* dances (Snir 2005, 2). These public storytelling and performance traditions were not necessarily limited to Palestine, as the evolution of cultural production was more or less in line with that of the rest of the Ottoman territories (Fig. 1) during the several decades before the Empire's demise. Additionally, Palestinian theatre at the time drew much of its influence from visiting theatrical productions which toured around the greater Levant (Nassar 2006, 17). It wasn't until about the 1930s, when the British Mandate for Palestine was in full swing, that "an explicit political consciousness" emerged from within Palestinian society, and was reflected in theatre (Nassar 2006, 17).

There was pushback from British authorities, who sought to prohibit any political messaging in theatre performances. Artistic growth was further crippled by the atrocities of the *Nakba*, the Arabic word referring to the mass expulsion of Palestinians from their land in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The aftermath of the war brought further barriers to artistic production. Notably, the obstacles of displacement and foreign rule, whether by Egypt's control over the Gaza Strip, Transjordan's annexation of the West Bank, or Israel's occupation of pre-1948 Palestine (Fig. 2). These events effectively stripped away Palestinian cultural autonomy, and the immense trauma of displacement and occupation shifted most Palestinians' priorities away from artistic production. It is noted by Reuven Snir, a historian of Palestinian theatre, that during this period, "The few attempts to accelerate the development of local theatre under Israeli rule were part of the authorities' scheme to create a sort of 'positive' Arab culture which would head off the increasing drive for Palestinian nationality" (Snir 2005, 167). Many scholars point to the post-1967 Arab-Israeli War era as marking the continuation of professional Palestinian theatrical development. This was due in part to Israel's territorial gains in the war, which placed the Gaza Strip and West Bank under Israeli occupation (Fig. 3), uniting Palestinians in these areas under a common political cause. Despite constant efforts by Israeli forces to restrict the activities of nascent theatre troupes, Palestinian theatre continued and evolved (Snir 2005, 102).

Theatre groups grew in a more professional sense during the early 1970s, and in 1971, al-Balalin was founded: a group that set the precedent for various companies to follow (Snir 2005, 103). Al-Balalin's work was extremely influential as it divorced the tradition of using classical Arabic in plays, a practice they disseminated through touring productions in the West Bank and Jerusalem (Varghese 2020, 27). Efforts during the 1970s to create a national Palestinian theatre proved to be unsuccessful. However, six years after the founding of al-Balalin, a handful of its members collaborating with Palestinian theatre makers in Israel, would form the al-Hakawati theatre troupe (Snir 2005, 130). Named for the traditional Arab storyteller, al-Hakawati slid into the foreground of the world of Palestinian theatre, becoming the very first company to receive major funding. They were allotted $100,000 from the Ford Foundation in 1983, allowing them to lease a performance space (Varghese 2020, 29).

Simultaneously, the Ford Foundation was "the first international agency to fund theatre in the 'developing world'" (Nicholson 2021, 5). Just a year later, al-Hakawati debuted the Palestinian National Theatre, providing a space for other theatre companies to develop and perform works (Varghese 2020, 29).

Unfortunately, following the beginning of the First Intifada in December 1987, Israeli authorities cracked down even further on Palestinian theatrical works than they had in the past. One instance of this censorship was Israel's ban on al-Hakawati performances in Gaza and the West Bank, rendering the company's material inaccessible to its main audience at a time when their politically subversive activities would have had the greatest impact. Eventually, and despite impassioned efforts to bypass Israeli restrictions, the suppression of their activities would lead to the breakdown of the original al-Hakawati troupe (Snir 2005, 159). Yet the Palestinian National Theatre remained, and more groups emerged, including the al-Kasaba Theatre and Ashtar Theatre, the latter of which was created by members of al-Hakawati (Snir 2005, 160). Around this time, Arna Mer-Khamis, a former member of the elite Israeli Palmach unit of the Zionist paramilitary group, Haganah in the 1948 war, was inspired to establish the Stone Theatre in Jenin Camp as she watched schools across the occupied territories be shuttered by Israel (Varghese 2020, 52).

Sadly, many children who found refuge and healing in the Stone Theatre were killed in militant actions during the Second Intifada of the early 2000s, and the theatre ceased to exist as Palestinians were once again thrust into an existential conflict (Arna's Children; Nicholson 2006, 13).

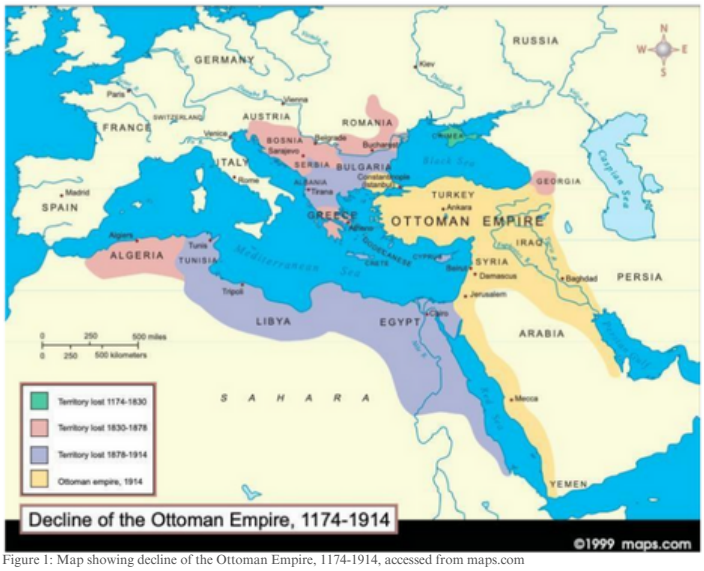
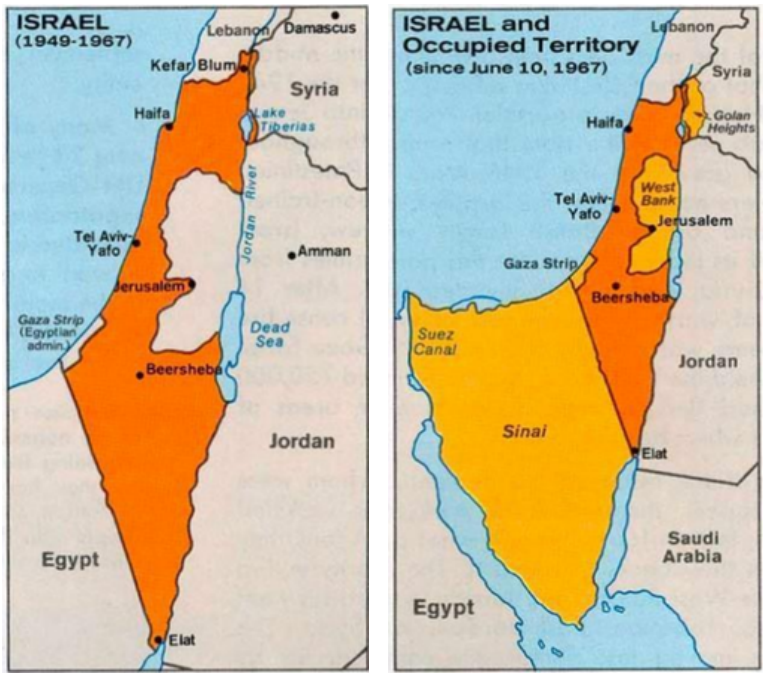


Figure 1: Map showing decline of the Ottoman Empire, 1174-1914, accessed from maps.com



Figures 2 and 3 show Israeli occupied Palestine before and after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Accessed from In Issues in the Middle East, Atlas, First edition, U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 1973.

Between the two intifadas, Palestinian theatre faced serious impediments to its practice. However, as the post-Oslo Accords era began to mature, international financial support for Palestinian theatre expanded, marking a drastic shift from the volunteer-centered efforts of the past and increasing the influence of foreign organizations in the development of theatrical works. This transformation has laid the foundation for Palestinian theatre as it is known today. The relationship between local Palestinian theatre companies and the various organizations who support them, and the tensions, benefits, and obstacles that ensue, are what this paper will examine further, beginning with some shortcomings of these relationships.

Challenges Posed by International Funding and Collaboration

Due to the financial support offered by organizations outside of Palestine, theatre companies often have to reshape their ventures to better suit the interests of the organizations and donors (Nassar 2006, 37). These interests are typically centered around "development," focusing on the economic elements of occupation. However, this theme tends to ignore the realities of the occupation in Palestine and issues such as freedom of movement, land and water rights, political autonomy, and the right of return for refugees (Nicholson 2021, 9). This viewpoint imagines that theatrical endeavors in Palestine act as a stimulus for further economic growth on the ground, which can aid in addressing the humanitarian crises facing Palestinians. However, Israel's own discriminatory policies are the principal reason for the conditions in the first place; the very existence of their state relies on such policies to retain power over the occupied territories. An aid strategy which fails to address the state apparatuses responsible for carrying out these policies is doomed to fail. In fact, this neo-liberal aid framework supports the interests of the Israeli state as it undermines efforts for political solutions in Palestine, allowing the occupying government more time to advance their colonial project (Nicholson 2021, 10). The conception of Palestinian theatre as an agent of social or political change is therefore invalidated.

While Palestinian theatre troupes emerged for the purpose of confronting Israeli occupation and ultimately achieving liberation, the "NGO-ization," as Nicholson calls it, threatens these principles. Those funding Palestinian theatre don't share these sentiments, and instead focus their efforts on "'issues' framed as 'projects': women's rights, drugs awareness, sexual health, children's empowerment, co-existence with Israel, non-violence, and so forth" (Varghese 2020, 31). Once more, these "issues" are divorced from the larger political conditions under which they surface, despite also being important to Palestinians. From the point of view of funders, many of the obstacles to achieving progress lie not within the Israeli state apparatus, but in Palestinian society, which, measured against their standards, is "intolerant" and "backward" (Nicholson 2021, 14). True liberatory and revolutionary ideals are then replaced with what are deemed globally acceptable values, backed up by human rights-centered messaging (Nicholson 2021, 11). Ironically, this messaging is regarded as valuable by Western nations, many of whom are participating in their own forms of structural oppression against minority groups. It could be argued that this is merely a blind spot and not an intentional reinforcement of neocolonialism, but even so, that reinforcement is one of its outcomes. Revolutionary language becomes warped and co-opted through these partnerships, as is the case with the Freedom Theatre, which "has been branded through militant terms such as 'cultural intifada' and 'cultural resistance'" (Nicholson 2021, 13). While these terms may have initially reflected the intentions of the theatre, their descriptive accuracy becomes less clear in the presence of an international audience.

Furthermore, Palestinian theatre companies are often forced to partner with companies residing in donor countries, which tend to be in the global north. These connections prevent possible partnerships in other colonized places where they "have far more in common historically and politically" (Varghese 2020, 121). Another concept that enables this dynamic is the assumed necessity for Palestinians to be "rescued" from their perceived helplessness by so-called progressive societies abroad, a designation which nations in the global south are rarely granted. This dynamic establishes a clear hierarchy wherein Palestinians and their struggles are fetishized, and international backers position themselves as saviors and arbiters of progress.

Palestinian theatre companies have been forced to sacrifice their sociopolitical inspirations for the preferences of foreign funders, but it is not always the case that companies submit to these pressures. For example, the al-Rowwad Theatre located in the Aida refugee camp rejected a funding opportunity for the development of a project promoting the awareness and prevention of HIV. This rejection was because the company believed the project was centered on the funding organization's greater global interests as HIV is nowhere near a widespread issue in Palestine, and the project would therefore waste time and resources they could use to better serve their community (Varghese 2020, 47). Another example of local pushback can be found in the boycott of al-Kasaba Theatre by other Palestinian artistic organizations after their bilingual production of *Romeo and Juliet* received funding from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1994 (Varghese, 36). This boycott was successful as al-Kabasa theatre did not pursue these types of collaborations again. These instances demonstrate how, despite pressures from the foreign entities that fund Palestinian theatre, efforts exist to resist their influence, and there remain further opportunities for dialogue and opposition by Palestinian theatre makers.

Positive Manifestations of International Relationships

Apart from the dependence of Palestinian theatre troupes on foreign financing, another element that confuses the relationships between Palestinian theatre participants and their international collaborators is that many times these efforts *do* lead to efficacious outcomes for Palestinians. International reception of Palestinian opposition to oppression and progress towards Palestinian aspirations has been improved by these partnerships. One such example can be seen in the Ashtar Theatre's *The Gaza Monologues*. This production is a collection of monologues developed from children's personal accounts of life in the Gaza Strip and initially premiered in 2010. The violence experienced in each of the children's lives is not glossed over, nor is its origin in the Israeli occupation. The play was well received internationally, in large part due to its simultaneous performance in 21 different countries. It eventually earned the acclaim of the United Nations, which hosted two performances at its New York headquarters, reaching an incredibly large audience (Varghese 2020, 78). Another example can be seen in the Freedom Theatre's *The Siege*, which toured in the UK and received wide international attention after being reviewed by various media outlets (Santos 2018, 105). The play followed the story of the 2002 Israeli siege of the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem, and, for many people outside of Palestine, debunked the myth that religion lies at the center of the decades long conflict (Santos 2018, 105).

In addition to these cases, foreign partnerships allow Palestinian theatrical activities to provide direct benefits for Palestinians in the occupied territories. By making sense of their experiences through performance, participants in *The Gaza Monologues* were reported to have achieved some level of psychological recovery from their mental ills after the most recent war (Varghese 2020, 79). Along with its international performances, *The Gaza Monologues* was performed by various theatre groups in Jerusalem and the West Bank, fostering connection despite the blockade on Gaza (Varghese 2020, 77). Theatrical activities practiced locally in the occupied territories can engage community members who might otherwise ignore their potential as a form of resistance. Varghese (2020) goes on to highlight the function of the work to assert Palestinian humanity and cultural identity, combating the narratives of the prevailing Zionist society which seek to erase or deny the existence of Palestinian society.

A theatre practitioner associated with the Freedom Theatre held events in the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh for its citizens to engage in theatrical production. This inspired resident Manal Tamimi to approach the theatre with the interest of creating a play about the frequent local protests held against Israeli authorities (Varghese 2020, 126). Tamimi insisted that the production tour different villages to showcase Nabi Saleh's sustained resistance to occupation. Rather than just the creation and process of the work providing emotional benefit, the play is also used as a vehicle to inspire resistance and resilience through the identification with a widespread, collective Palestinian struggle (Varghese 2020, 126). The creation of a theatrical space for Palestinians to express their interests then helps to strengthen both community bonds and protest efforts. The result of the protests' transmutation can be understood as a form of protest in its own right. This demonstrates the capacity of local theatre endeavors to adequately feature and take into account Palestinian interests in their work. Beyond works of theatre, community-integrated efforts can provide advantages for Palestinians, like how al-Rowwad Theatre functions as a performance space, temporary clinic, recreational facility, vocational and artistic training center, and educational center (Varghese 2020, 46). The generation of shared community spaces, whether temporary like the touring performances of Tamimi's play, or more permanent as in the case of al-Rowwad theatre, juxtaposes the harsh realities of occupation with imagination.

When international funding allows Palestinian theatre makers to prioritize the perspectives of Palestinians on the ground, greater material, emotional, and social achievements will follow. For example, the case study of the Freedom Theatre demonstrates the positive impacts of their community-led theatre approaches (Santos 2018, 99, 109). These types of interactive, community-led approaches exist in other theatre companies as well, and seem to be particularly effective.

Recommendations for Future Improvements in Collaboration

To theorize how a more calculated approach to international collaboration with Palestinian theatre could be realized in the near future, one can consider Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (or TO). TO is a method of creating and analyzing theatre by using direct engagement of both actors and spectators to advance socio-political change. A principle encompassing all subsets of TO is the importance of "the analysis of the gap between what is and what could be" (Howe 2023, 85). Theatre of the Oppressed has already been utilized in some productions by Palestinian theatre groups, notably *The Gaza Monologues* and *The Freedom Ride* (Varghese 2020, 77, 82). Part of its success in these instances is its ability to address that "many practitioners of theater for social change fetishize oppressions and condescendingly construct reductive notions about the everyday lives and, more specifically, the capacity for humor and pleasure of oppressed peoples" (Howe 2023, 92). This fetishization frequently occurs when international collaborators have an outsized role in the final products of Palestinian theatre making. This effect leads further into the discussion of the importance of centering Palestinian voices when carrying out collaborative theatre making, and the necessity of developing an open dialogue between Palestinians and their collaborators.

For such a dialogue to occur, it is in the best interest of both parties to start the conversation at the very beginning of the endeavor, before any major decisions have been made. This practice has been utilized by Palestinian theatre artists to successfully imbue upon their collaborators "an understanding of the Palestinian context" (Varghese 2020, 122). In one instance, foreign members of a collaborating production crew visited the West Bank to witness the occupation for themselves, which deeply informed conversations between the parties, and helped to build what Varghese refers to as "shared languages," which he defines as "the ways in which a group forges common aesthetic, methodological and political vocabularies to encourage and maintain meaningful collaborations" (2020, 139). These languages may take the form of specific rehearsal tactics such as material generated through performance, the adoption of specific vocabulary to understand the work, and particular collaborative games and exercises which promote ensemble-building (Varghese 2020, 139, 141). Constructing a mutual understanding of the dramatic work at hand allows for conflicts and misunderstandings to be more easily navigated and can also eliminate power imbalances between participants.

Another strategy originating from Theatre of the Oppressed is legislative theatre, which encompasses "theatrical techniques to generate solutions to real-life problems through public forums to make or amend laws in a democratic and participatory manner" (Saeed 2015, 6). This creates dialogue between members of a community, and with political and legislative entities and institutions. This method was utilized in an initiative called "the Legislative Theatre Project for Women in Afghanistan," which began in 2010. The project culminated in a written report compiled from the community forums and activities, which illustrated the recommendations and ideas of the participants. This report was presented and discussed in a number of meetings with legal and political organizations where it was further developed and eventually delivered to the Afghan parliament (Saeed 2015, 18). Though not much follow-up occurred after submission, the project's impact and potential for similar projects in the future cannot be ignored (Saeed 2015, 18). Similar outcomes could occur for Palestinians if such initiatives are implemented in their theatrical and community spaces.

Previous Scholarship and Common Conceptions

The majority of modes of Palestinian cultural production are often overlooked by scholars, and Palestinian theatre is no exception. Some scholars assert even fiercer criticisms, describing this unique tradition of cultural production as never having existed. This perspective fails entirely to recognize the legitimacy of earlier forms of theatrical activity which later evolved into what we know today as Palestinian theatre. Additionally, it ignores the significant obstacles posed by the loss or nonexistence of detailed archives due to the Israeli occupation's theft and destruction of such resources (Nassar 2006, 17). Compounding these challenges are the cultural differences between the Arab and Western worlds in regard to their artistic conceptions of history, knowledge, and theatrical production. For example, while many cultural groups find validity in non-written oral histories, others find them to be illegitimate. In instances when scholars do recognize Palestinian theatre as a subject worthy of further study, they often gloss over the earlier or more traditional iterations of Palestinian theatrical activities, such as hakawati storytelling traditions. They instead prefer to focus on contemporary pursuits which more closely resemble Western theatrical works. Even in the broader landscape of theatre within the Arab world, it has been said that Palestinian "theatre never really developed professionally and artistically, and survives on adaptations and borrowings," although adaptations are a common element of nearly all global theatre making (Nassar 2006, 17). There has been a lengthy and ongoing process of Palestinians developing a shared history and identity that is reflected in all elements of Palestinian society, including cultural productions such as theatre.

In spite of these challenges, scholars have increasingly engaged with the topic of Palestinian theatre, not only by exploring its early history and beginnings, but also by investigating the manners in which it confronts Israeli military occupation, interacts with theatre makers and audiences internationally, and affects the emotional wellbeing of its participants. The aforementioned obstacles, however, limit the scope of discussion on the topic to the more established and well-funded Palestinian theatre companies which tend to be the subject of previous scholarly inquiries. Nonetheless, this does not detract from the impact and legitimacy of other, less documented theatrical endeavors in Palestine which are increasingly

being studied in their own right.

Conclusion

Despite Palestinian theatre facing major impediments since the time of the British Mandate, it was ultimately able to flourish, in part due to international funding. However, this brings its own set of challenges, as Palestinian theatre companies are coerced into abandoning their personal sociopolitical aspirations in favor of the ideals of donor countries. This abandonment can be circumvented by prioritizing Palestinian perspectives, creating opportunities for greater benefits on the ground. The implementation of principles from Theatre of the Oppressed can further heighten the effectiveness of Palestinian theatrical activities, especially when effort is made to follow through on the manifestations of projects such as legislative theatre. Any of the above-mentioned endeavors must take into account prevailing attitudes towards Palestinian theatre, and Palestinian society as a whole.

The humanization of Palestinians via the purposeful centering of their voices allows power imbalances to be dismantled and the prevalent fetishization of Palestinian struggles to be addressed, making way for more authentic collaborations. Rather than accentuating possible economic development opportunities, international aid organizations and funders should promote projects that take into account the political reality in Israel/Palestine. Nassar explains the desires of Palestinian theatre makers best, saying, "I realized that Palestinian theatre artists constantly question the role of their work. They do so, however, not on the basis of whether it is original or authentic, but rather in terms of what is effective in countering the cultural annihilation under the present occupation" (Nassar 2006, 16). These changes in priorities have the potential to pave the way for theatrical activities which may have a higher likelihood of improving material conditions for Palestinians. This potential was previously demonstrated through the Legislative Theatre Project for Women in Afghanistan (Saeed 2015, 17). Unfortunately, it is difficult to measure the direct impact of theatre on a material level, and more projects are needed to further explore specific outcomes for Palestinians. It cannot be ignored that the oppressive societal conditions for Palestinians place limits on this work; however, the potential for global solidarity to amplify the impact of Palestinian theatre is immense, and may situate it as a robust tool in the continuing struggle for liberation.

Artists have the responsibility to achieve ends beyond mere entertainment, and Palestinian theatre artists encapsulate this spirit in their creative undertakings. Any artist wishing to build solidarity through collaboration with Palestinian practitioners should affirm their values and ambitions instead of attempting to shape them. Furthermore, artists have the opportunity to learn from Palestinian creatives and seek to understand how they might shape the realities of their own communities. By committing to these interests, artists can evolve their practices to better suit the increasing urgency of socio-political threats, especially in Palestine.

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