

NEWSLETTER ON
THE
RESULTS
OF SCHOLARLY WORK

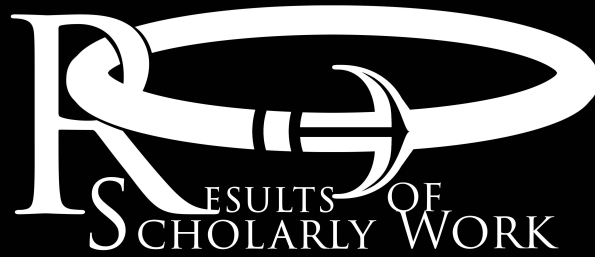
IN SOCIOLOGY, CRIMINOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

TRANSFORMATION



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VOLUME 4, ISSUE 1. «TRANSFORMATION»

Wernher von Braun, a space rocket designer, once said: “Nature does not know dying, all that it knows is transformation.” But not all changes are for the better. Transformation is the state in which humanity has been arriving on planet Earth for all ages. Sometimes the transformation is only accelerating by the events taking place in the world. New control systems are being introduced which how the government claims should only improve people’s lives. All this is veiled by concern for the safety of their fellow citizens. After all, the more a person is helpless, then the more vulnerable he is and the more he needs state assistance. But this innovations, which allegedly lead to good, have another side - a moral and psychological damage to people’s health.

Human in itself is very vulnerable, and the vulnerability gives rise to the meaninglessness of this life. What to do in this circumstances? The external environment pushes for the transformation of views, methods, systems of orientation, management, etc. But, is it possible to make the transformation happen without harming both human health and business? Of course, we need a technological approach and methods on the basis of which the introduction of new changes will not destroy everything that has already been created, but will allow us to smoothly adapt to changing conditions.

The Issue “Transformation” is a collection of the articles that raise a number of questions and problems that have affected humanity over the past few years, as well as a number of methodologies that contribute to human adaptation in certain conditions.

*Best regards,
Editorial board*





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Jerome Krase is an Emeritus and Murray Koppelman Professor at Brooklyn College of The City University of New York and is an activist-scholar who works with public and private agencies regarding urban community issues. President of European Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. He researches, lectures, writes, and captures photographs about urban life and culture globally.

p. 8

HOW TO USE METHODS OF VISUAL SOCIOLOGY TO STUDY GLOBAL THREATS



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p. 24

PSYCHOLOGICAL TASK: LIFE "BEFORE" AND "AFTER"



VALENTYNA VORONKOVA

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p. 36

**DIGITAL SOCIETY TRANSFORMATION AS A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL:
GLOBAL PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF THE PRESENT**



IGOR GAVRILENKO

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PSYCHIC TRANSFORMATION AMIDST BATTLE: UNDERSTANDING PTSD AND COMBAT-RELATED PSYCHIC TRAUMA

p. 56

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STORIES IN DIVERSE MEDIA? PLAY, STORY TELLING, & CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY IN THE GOOGLEBURG GALAXY

p. 66

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THE ORIGINS OF THE "BRAINWASHING" THEORY. FROM THE PRIVATE LECTURES OF PROFESSOR MASSIMO INTROVIGNE

p. 76



HOW TO USE METHODS OF VISUAL SOCIOLOGY TO STUDY GLOBAL THREATS

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues for the significance of employing visual sociology methods to study global threats. The central theme revolves around the human tendency to struggle with recognizing shared humani-

ty, often resorting to negative stereotyping that contributes to dehumanization and social injustices. The author draws on decades of experience in using visual semiotics to confront the stigmatization of diverse communities, emphasizing the role of the visual in reshaping perceptions. Addressing the

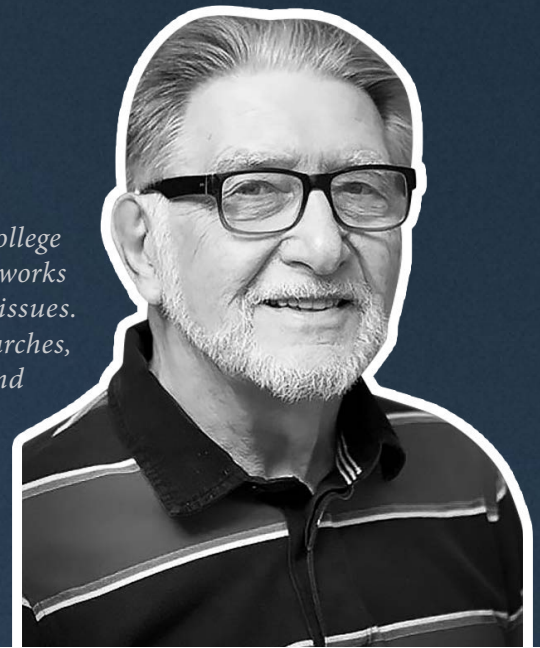


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dehumanization inherent in conflicts, the author emphasizes the importance of recognizing the «Other» as part of the human family, advocating for a right to be seen and represented in diverse ways. The essay critiques historical and contemporary visual practices that exclude and denigrate minorities, citing examples from film history and modern media. It underscores the persistence of negative stereotypes and advocates for counter-narratives that portray the diversity and humanity of marginalized groups. The conclusion reaffirms the author's commitment to using visual technologies and emphasizes the integration of visual technology with traditional approaches as a means to foster a deeper understanding of our multicultural world.

Keywords

visual sociology, global threats, dehumanization, visual semiotics, urban environments, stigmatization

INTRODUCTION

In this brief visually-enhanced essay I hope to discuss the importance of seeing in important matters that are often ignored. As to global threats, I think most people would agree with me that the greatest threat is war. As I write this essay, the mass media and the virtual world has turned their attention away from the COVID-19 global pandemic to the variously described «war in Ukraine.» The effects of this war are being felt far beyond Ukraine itself (Delisle, 2022; Kuzemko et al., 2022; Pereira et al.,

2022; Roland, 2023; Sedrakyan, 2022). Attention today is also on potential «invasion» of The Republic of China by The People's Republic of China. Certainly, such conflicts affect the economy, forcing us to cope with new challenges (Bougias et al., 2022; Del Lo et al., 2022; Nóia Júnior et al., 2022; Qureshi et al., 2022). Some pundits are warning that these conflicts, proxy or not, could light the fuse for a nuclear holocaust in World War III (Helfand et al., 2022). In this regard, it might seem rather pointless to discuss «How to use methods of visual sociology to study global threats.» However, as I have learned over too many decades of conscious existence, most threats to humankind can be traced to the difficulty of, if not the impossibility of — if I be allowed to paraphrase — «seeing our neighbors as ourselves,» as opposed to seeing them as «others» who are unworthy of equal, humane treatment.

I have spent decades directly and indirectly visually confronting, in words and images this pervasive and universal problem of recognizing our common humanity via a rather pedestrian version of visual semiotics. As I continue to explain to my students, or others less required to listen, we learn the meanings of the things that we see via our occipital lobes through the process of socialization. Those meanings, sometimes referred to as attitudes, norms and/or values, contain not only factual knowledge about the objects of our corneal attention, but aesthetic and moral evaluations as well. How else could it be possible to see our fellow human beings as tall, short, handsome, ugly, or at the same time people to be exterminated or enslaved?

The dehumanization that makes possible the all too common historical and contemporary tragedies of genocide and slavery, depend in large part on the successful negative stereotyping of ethnic and other socially defined groups such as members of the LGBTQ+ communities (Kteily & Landry, 2022; see also Bonache et al., 2016; Croom, 2015; Durante & Fiske, 2017; Haslam & Stratemeyer, 2016; Heinrich, 2013; Kim & Loury, 2019). For example, I began my work combatting the unwarranted stigmatization of African American neighborhoods which was used to justify their mistreatment by public and private agencies (Krase, 1973). To appreciate what I later termed the «Visual Semiotics» of race and ethnicity, it is necessary to recognize that ordinary people have the power to change the meanings of the spaces and places they occupy and use. Although they may not be the most powerful of entities in our glocalised world, they nevertheless, perhaps naively, sometimes consciously, and more often unconsciously, compete with other individuals, groups, and organizations to define their micro worlds for themselves and for others. Relatedly, another emergent question is "What does racial or ethnic look like?" A more direct way of phrasing the question is "How does the appearance of a neighborhood lead to it being defined a particularly an ethnic or racial one?" And; «What are the consequences for the residents of local designations such as enclave, ghetto or slum?» Most importantly; «What are the meanings of those designations to those who have the power, legitimate or not, to influence if not determine their life chances?» As I have often written:

When we newly pass through urban spaces, we are like tourists using our eyes to decipher the clues and cues that loudly and quietly surround us. 'Is this a safe or a dangerous place?' 'Am I welcome here or should I leave before it is too late?' 'Are the people who live here rich or poor?' 'What is their race,

ethnicity, or religion and how (or why) does it matter?' Some things are easy to tell on a street, such as whether there are things for sale. Legitimate merchants make it obvious that they are seeking customers with signs that compete for attention, but for the sale of illicit goods, the signs vendors give off are subtler. Yet, for the knowledgeable customer they in plain view. This reading of the 'street signs,' is no mere aesthetic exercise. As I first argued in *The Presentation of Community in Urban Society* (Krase, 1973), what we see on the street makes a difference in how we respond to the places and the people we encounter in our increasingly complex and changing urban surroundings (Krase, 2012, p. 1).

To help address this issue visually I synthesized the following formulation:

1. Presentation — what ordinary people do in their everyday lives that is displayed in public.
2. Re-Presentation — how their lives are more or less objectively recorded and reported by social scientists, journalists, and other observers.
3. Representation — the standardized re-presentation that comes to stand for those people.

METHODS

The field of visual sociology can be helpful in examining global threats and issues. Visual sociology employs visual data, such as photos, videos, drawings, and other images, to analyze social phenomena. This method aids in gaining a deeper understanding of global threats. Photo-documentation involves taking pictures or videos of issues like climate change, poverty, and conflict, followed by an analysis to assess their impact within the social and cultural context. When examining mass media, the focus is on scrutinizing visual content such as news photos



and online videos to understand how they shape public opinion and perceptions of global threats. Visual ethnographies involve observing the lives and activities of groups connected, either directly or indirectly, to global threats. Lastly, mapping uses geographic information systems to create visual maps that illustrate the distribution of global threats and their effects on different regions.

Employing visual tools for crafting questionnaires or conducting visual interviews with individuals grappling with global issues facilitates data collection while observing their responses and reactions. Analyzing visual content available on the Internet and social networks enables us to discern the perspectives and emotions of a population deeply concerned about a threat. It is essential, during global threat research, to handle visual materials with care, adhering to ethical standards and ensuring the privacy and safety of individuals who may be subjects of study. In examining the visual sociology of global threats and problems, it is pertinent to identify key philosophical orientations. Visual anthropology, which delves into cultural and social phenomena through visual analysis — specifically observation, photography, and videography — offers valuable insights. The concept of «visual ethnography» is encompassed within this framework. Exploring the symbolism and imagery associated with global threats aids in comprehending societal perceptions, unraveling the images employed in media and sociocultural contexts. The study of semiotics proves instrumental in dissecting symbols, signs, and their meanings within visual materials pertaining to global threats. Consumer anthropology, examining the visual culture of consumers and reflecting their attitudes toward global issues, provides another philosophical dimension. The incorporation of marketing and cultural research becomes useful in this context.

The works of Ferdinand Tönnies, Ferdinand Tönnies, Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, and John Berger, among others, can prove beneficial for the exploration of visual sociology and global threats. Each of these scholars' methods and concepts contributes to broadening our understanding of global threats, their societal impact, and the diverse ways in which these issues are perceived and integrated into cultural contexts. The complexity of analyzing a multicultural world becomes evident, requiring an appreciation for and interpretation of cultural differences and interactions among various groups. To effectively analyze the multicultural world, a methodological approach is suggested. This involves adopting a systems approach



that perceives the multicultural world as a system wherein different cultures, subgroups, and individuals interact. The emphasis is on understanding the relationships between these components and their mutual influences. Ethnographic research is recommended to gather data from diverse cultural groups, utilizing observations, interviews, and participation in cultural events to acquire insights into their lives and values. Additionally, a study of textual sources, encompassing literature, media, religious texts, and other materials reflecting the cultural values and identities of various groups, proves integral to the analytical process.

Visual sociology assumes a pivotal role in scrutinizing visual materials, including photographs, drawings, advertisements, and other depictions reflecting cultural diversity and stereotypes. The analysis of the impact of globalization on the multicultural world encompasses the proliferation of mass culture, migration, and communication technologies. Consequently, it becomes imperative to investigate social practices, customs, and rituals across diverse cultures, examining how they interact and adapt to one another. An in-depth exploration includes analyzing conflicts and cooperation between cultural groups, understanding the conditions and causes of conflicts, and exploring avenues for peaceful coexistence. Delving into the concepts of identity within different cultural groups, along with how they define themselves and others, is essential. Sociocultural anthropology contributes by exploring concepts such as cultural relativism, cultural apparatus, and cultural development, enhancing our comprehension of the multicultural



world. This methodology serves as a powerful tool to gain deeper insights into the intricacies and interrelationships within the multicultural world. It facilitates the identification of opportunities for enhancing intercultural interaction and understanding.

RESULTS

Although the initial units of analysis for my studies had been socio-spatial, i.e., neighborhoods and cities, over the decades I have modified this simple formula to include related scholar activist studies of variously stigmatized social groups themselves and, in a way, to see the world as a cosmopolitan city (Krase, 2020, 2012b, 2010, 2004, 2003, 1977, Krase & Shortell, 2015).

My work is both a theoretical and methodological practice for as put by John Grady (1996) "... producing and decoding images which can be used to empirically investigate social organization, cultural meaning and psychological processes" (p. 17). In my neighborhood studies, I focused on what John Brinckerhoff Jackson (1984) called vernacular landscapes that are part of the life of communities which are governed by custom and held together by personal relationship which are, according to Dolores Hayden (1990), "...an account of both inclusion and exclusion" (p. 11). David Harvey (1990) also argued that: "Different classes construct their sense of territory and community in radically different ways. This elemental fact is often overlooked by those theorists who presume a priori that there is some ideal-typical and universal tendency for all human beings to construct a human community of roughly similar sort, no matter what the political or economic circumstances" (p. 265). According to Gottdiener (1985) «the study of culture which links symbols to objects is called semeiotics.» and «spatial semeiotics studies the metropolis as a meaningful environment» (pp. 15–16). He adds that the most basic concept for urban studies study is the "settlement space" which is both constructed and organized. "It is built by people who have followed some meaningful plan for the purposes of containing economic, political, and cultural activities. Within it, people organize their daily actions according to meaningful aspects of the constructed space" (Gottdiener, 1985, p. 16). As to the importance of seeing strangers, Lynn Lofland (1985) noted that "city life was made possible by an 'ordering' of the urban populace in terms of appearance and spatial location such that those within the city could know a great deal

about one another by simply looking (p. 3). Obviously, her observation is even more true when looking beyond the borders of cities and more problematic as to the moral evaluations attached to the appearances (representations) in a world of eight billion strangers (Shortell & Krase, 2013).

As to the “Right to the City,” Lars Frers and Lars Meier (2007), argue that the word “right” has many meanings which must be adjusted as local and historical contexts, and must pay attention to the right to practice diversity within it. With specific reference to immigrants, Marcello Balbo (2009) sees the right to the city as “a series of legitimate claims to the necessary conditions of a satisfying, dignified and secure existence in cities by both individual citizens and social groups.” These “rights” are clearly tied to the notion of a cosmopolitan city, where people have learned to live with diversity and to respect each other’s differences. Marius Ossewaarde (2007) argues that cosmopolitanism requires an appreciation of a global humanity. “This appreciation depends on weaker social bonds between locals, thus allowing for a more abstract, universal, indeterminate and virtual” community that would include the Other. Cosmopolites, or “citizens of the world,” are essentially those who willingly belong to the same community as diverse «Others.» Such an idealized urban condition is something devotedly to be wished because every society has its own virtual ideal of local community its members are often unable to see minorities and other strangers as legitimate citizens of the cities they share.

Although there are many excellent and more elaborate definitions of visual approaches to the study of human society as in visual sociology and anthropology and related (inter)disciplines, my own, less eloquent version which is the foundation of my work is simply the use of visual technologies, such as cameras, for the collection of data for analysis and consequently to visually enhance findings. In much of my camera work, I have tried to capture others in such a way that our common humanity can be more directly grasped as suggested, as I interpret it, by Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology (Husserl, 1982). With simple quotidian images I hope to remove (bracket) the meanings that have been artificially attached to the object/image by the societies in which we live which makes intersubjectivity (recognizing our common humanity) more possible. For example, I have tried to demonstrate how visual and virtual technologies can be integrated with traditional modes of research to foster an understanding of multicultural urban environments. In some cases,

by simply walking through the ordinary spaces of im/migrant neighborhoods to counter stereotypical images presented by biased media. While Michel De Certeau wrote of creating the city in the act of walking (De Certeau, 1985), I have tried to create more inclusive cities by weaving critical ideas into narratives of places through which I pass (Krase 2010, 2012a).

A significant aspect of the dehumanizing “Othering” necessary for warfare; that is, killing fellow human beings, is seeing others as unworthy of humane treatment. We can think of this as a problem of inclusion... Who is to be included in the human(e) family. As to inclusion, I believe that all human beings should have the right to be seen as they are and according to our own personal and cultural values. People also must be able to create and control their own images, even if they are ignored and perhaps feared. These depictions of quotidian diversity or commonplace “otherness” also have practical value, as they can serve as antidotes to the negative portrayals in the mass media that hinder the mobility as well as the inclusion of diverse groups, such as migrants and minorities, in cities today.

Images and acceptance of diversity are socially and politically bound together. As Charles Taylor (1994) wrote: “Equal recognition is not just the appropriate mode for a healthy democratic society. Its refusal can inflict damage on those who are denied it.” He continues: “The projection of an inferior or demeaning image on another can actually distort and oppress, to the extent that the image is internalized” (p. 36). This sensitivity to the power of images is crucial for any approach for creating a shared sense of community in the world today. It can be suggested in this context that human rights and social justice depend not only open access to tangible territorial and geographic spaces but also concern visual/virtual spaces.

Both Europe and the United States have long and ignoble histories of using images to exclude despised minorities and otherwise denigrate diversity. In the selection of images that follow this text, Figures 1 and 2 are examples of how images disseminated in popular media were used to show the ineligibility of freed Black slaves, Irish immigrants, and Jews for local as well as national community membership. Such visual practices continue today in more sophisticated and technologically advanced ways and accomplish the same exclusionary goals. Common to both venues in the current century is the visual stigmatization of more recent minority group migrants and, especially post 9/11, Muslims.

Two of the best-known examples of modernist visual defamation were the films *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915) and *The Eternal Jew* (Hippler, 1940) or *Der ewige Jude*. Using racist stereotypes, in *Birth of a Nation*, D. W. Griffith made his film more personal by presenting a perverted version of The U. S. Civil War through the lives of two families and their servants. During emotion-evoking scenes slaves and abolitionist are shown as the villains and, during Reconstruction, the racist Ku Klux Klan heroically rises. *The Eternal Jew* (Hippler, 1940) or *Der ewige Jude* is a "classic" documentary style propaganda film that served to expound the menace of European Jewry. Jews are visually depicted as filthy, evil, and corrupt. Selective scenes of Jewish life and clips from Jewish cinema serve to visually "explain" the Jewish problem and the film ends with Adolf Hitler declaring that, if there is war, the Jewish race will be annihilated (*Vernichtung*).

Whether documentary or fictional, the cinematic portrayal of despised minorities has much in common as to media technique. Marlon Riggs' documentary *Ethnic Notions* (Riggs, 1986) shows how powerful stereotypes have fed anti-black attitudes throughout American history. The images she presented of loyal uncle Toms, carefree Sambos, faithful Mammies, grinning Coons, savage Brutes, and wide-eyed Pickaninnies in cartoons, feature films, popular songs, minstrel shows, advertisements, folklore, household artifacts, and children's rhymes show how racial images have evolved. These caricatures were popular from the 1820s through the Civil Rights Movement (1955–1968) and, although somewhat muted, continue today (Wacquant, 1993).

As Islamophobia continues to be a plague in European and American discourses today, we should also consider *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (Jhally, 2006). From silent films to current Hollywood hits Arabs have been shown: "from Bedouin bandits and submissive maidens to sinister sheikhs and gun-wielding 'terrorists.'" As in *Ethnic Notions* (Riggs, 1986), it offers important insights into the source of these stereotypic images and how they influence domestic and foreign policies. See also *Latinos Beyond Reel* (Picker & Sun, 2013). Whether for Blacks, Jews, Arabs or others, the persistence of negative images makes prejudicial attitudes seems "natural." As do I, *Reel Bad Arabs* argues for counter-narratives that would do "justice to the diversity and humanity of Arab people and the reality and richness of Arab history and culture" (Shaheen, 2001a).

Unfortunately, in both Post-9/11 Europe and America, negative images of Arabs, and of Muslims in general have proliferated and iconized visual expressions of Islam such as veils and mosques have become even more contentious (El-Aswad, 2013; Krase & Shortell, 2010, 2015; Shaheen, 2008).

DISCUSSION

I have attempted in the preceding text an overview of my attempts to show how human diversity and inclusion are not mutually exclusive and how visual technologies can be integrated with traditional modes to foster an understanding of our multicultural world. What follows are some examples from my own and the work of others that were discussed or alluded to in the forgoing essay. Although I believe some can stand without captions, I have included them to provide some context.

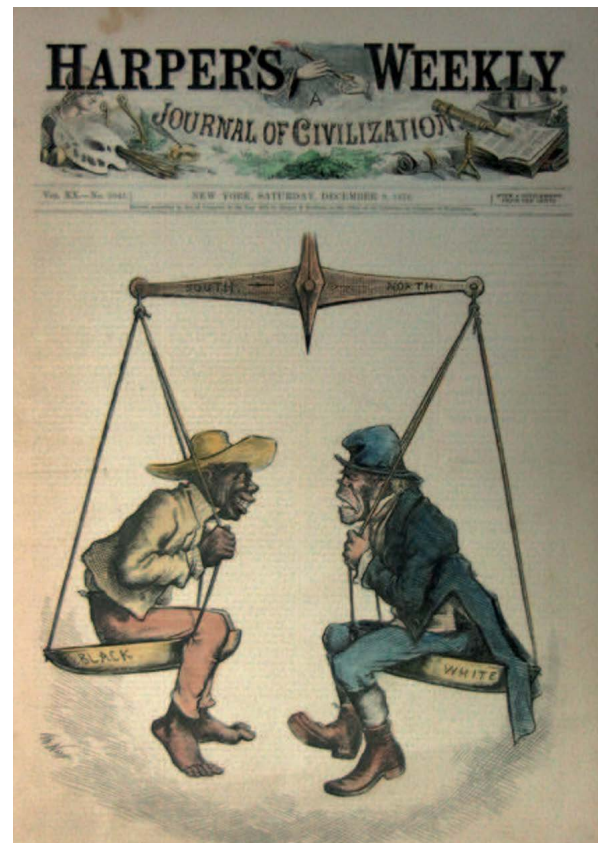


Figure 1. The Ignorant Vote, 1876 by Thomas Nast. *Note.* This cartoon was published during the 1876 election, in which both sides charged fraud. Nast compares the African American Republican vote in the South to the Irish Catholic Democratic vote in the North (Nast, 1876).



Figure 2. *The Eternal Jew* or “*Der ewige Jude*,” 1940.

Note. *The Eternal Jew* (1940) or *Der ewige Jude* is a “classic” documentary style propaganda film that served to expound the menace of European Jewry. Jews are visually depicted as filthy, evil, and corrupt.

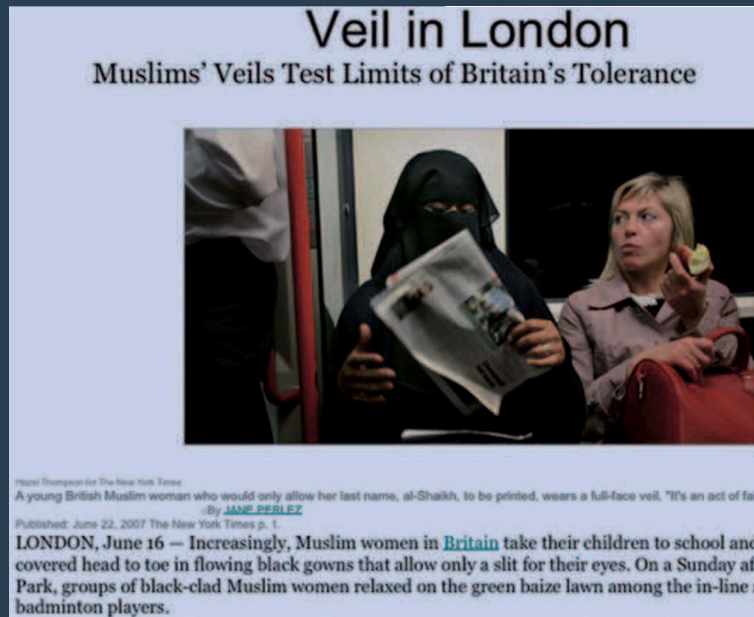


Figure 3. "Veil in London," 2007 by Hazel Thompson.
Note. The large and small negative reactions to the wearing of head and facial coverings by Muslims and others in nominally "Christian" countries are captured here in the facial expression of a rider on the London Underground.



Figure 4. Caribbean Band in Prospect Lefferts Gardens, Brooklyn. 1975 by Jerry Kruse.
Note. In the 1970s the Prospect Lefferts Gardens was stigmatized a dangerous black ghetto. Here is a photo from a neighborhood association block party.

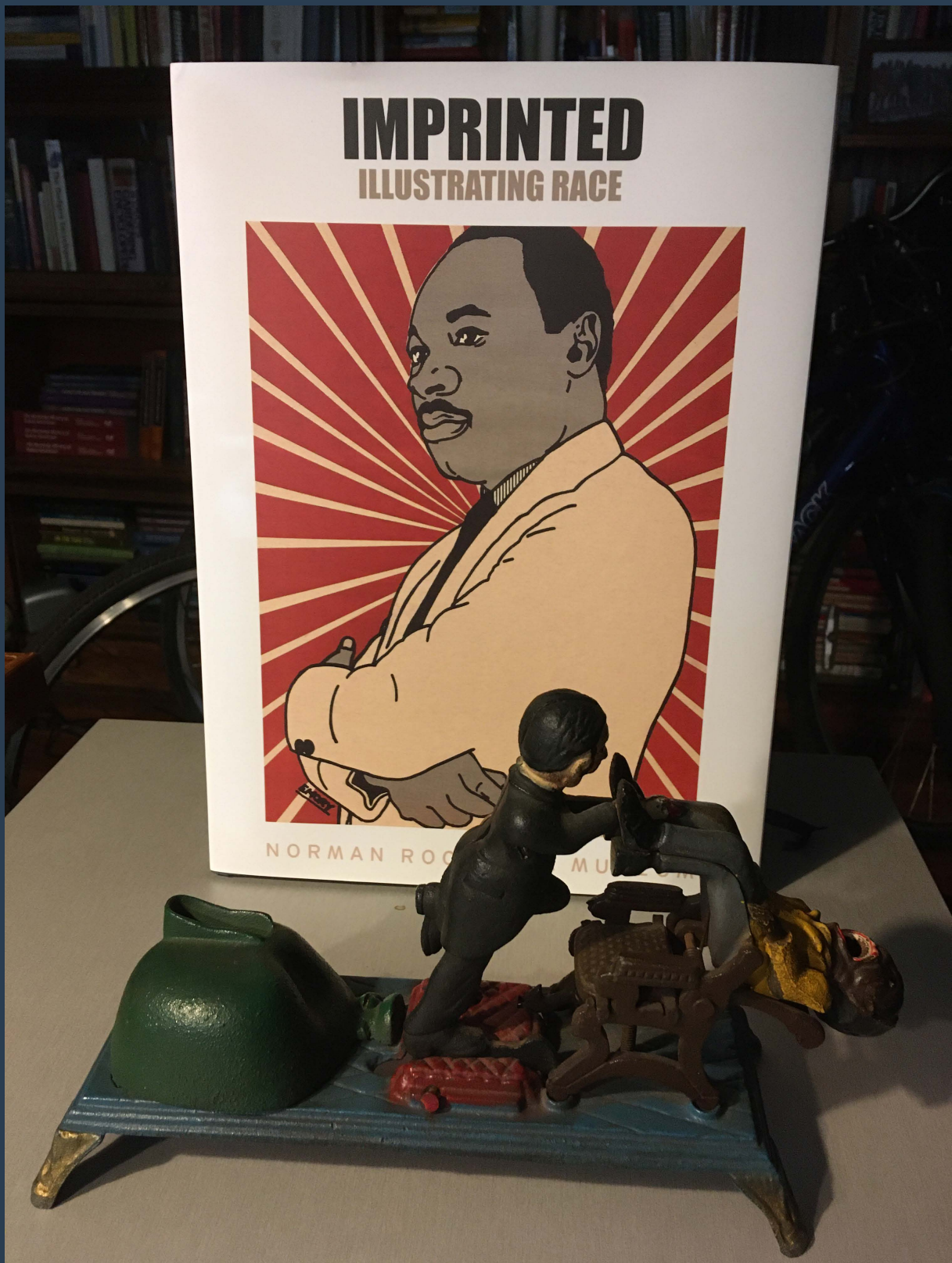


Figure 5. Jolly N- Mechanical Toy, Circa 1900.

Note. I bought this object at an antique store as a reminder of commonplace and stigmatizing racial stereotypes in American society. As a backdrop I placed a copy of the catalogue “Imprinted: Illustrating Race” presented at the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Massachusetts during the summer of 2022.



Figure 6. Grandfather and Grandchild in Oslo, Norway, 2020, by Jerry Krase.

Note. I took this photo in the summer of 2010 where, in the summer of 2011, Anders Behring Breivik killed eight people when he detonated a bomb in central Oslo. Later that same day he opened fire, killing 69 more, at a youth camp because he thought it was necessary in order to stop the "Islamisation" of Norway. Breivik also accused the governing Labour Party of promoting multiculturalism and endangering Norway's identity. It must be noted, that he was not declared insane despite appeals by prosecutors (BBC News, 2012). Since that horrific incident, Norway, as the rest of Europe, has seen the successful rise of anti-immigrant electoral politics.



Figure 7. Artist in China, Hangzhou, China, 2017, by Jerry Krase.

Note. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the people of China at home and abroad were vilified. Given the current increasingly cold relations between the West and China, I have added photos like this to my collection which I show to audience to counter negative historical and contemporary images.



Figure 8. Child in Istanbul Mosque, 2010, by Jerry Krase.



Figure 9. Cape Town Kids, Cape Town, South Africa, 2000.
Note. Pictures of children are powerful antidotes to denigrating images of all groups.

CONCLUSIONS

Utilizing visual sociology methods for studying global threats offers an opportunity to gain a more profound understanding of the sociocultural dimensions of the issue and its societal impact. Here are steps to follow when employing visual sociology methods for studying global threats:

1. Identifying the specific global threat you intend to study, such as climate change, pandemics, terrorism, etc.
2. Collecting a diverse range of visual materials associated with the chosen threat. These materials could include photographs, images from social media, news reports, artistic drawings, etc.
3. Applying visual sociology analysis techniques to delve into the meanings and perceptions conveyed in the visual materials. This analysis may involve assessing composition, color, symbols, context, and other elements within the images.
4. Analyzing the results and interpret how the visual materials reflect societal perceptions of the global threat. Considering variations in these perceptions across different cultural contexts and among diverse social groups.
5. Examining how the perceptions of global threats, as expressed in visual materials, influence people's behavior. This analysis could encompass studying public reactions, precautionary measures taken, and the emergence of social movements.
6. Comparing your findings with data from other studies on global threats conducted using different methodologies. This comparative approach helps validate your findings and broaden the overall understanding of the problem.
7. Presenting your findings visually using tools such as photographs, graphs, charts, maps, etc. This visualization enhances the accessibility and comprehension of your research outcomes. This approach enhances the accessibility and comprehensibility of your research.

Visual sociology introduces new dimensions to the study of global threats, enabling scholars to gain a deeper understanding of the emotional and cultural aspects influencing society's perceptions and responses to these threats. In the context of this study, several additional concepts and approaches can be considered:

1. Utilizing a semiotic approach to analyze images for signs, symbols, and their meanings.
2. Exploring the role of social media in shaping public opinion regarding global threats. Examining how images and information shared on social networks impact the dissemination of certain moral or cultural norms.
3. Encompassing not only photographs but also videos, graphics, and other multimedia materials to comprehensively capture the dynamics and diversity of visual representations of the threat.
4. Participatory research allows individuals to express their perceptions of global threats through visual means, such as organizing photo competitions or mass photography projects to gather first-hand materials.
5. The geographic dimension of global threats entails the analysis of visual materials from diverse regions worldwide, exploring how different cultural and geographic contexts shape perceptions and responses to threats.
6. A long-term study involves monitoring changes in the perception of global threats, unveiling the evolution of public opinion and reactions over time.

Additionally, a comparative analysis of cultural contexts regarding threats in various cultural settings aids in understanding how cultural characteristics influence perceptions and adaptation to global issues. The incorporation of these methods, approaches, and concepts in the study of global threats through visual sociology provides a comprehensive and nuanced perspective on how society perceives and responds to the challenges facing the world.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL TASK: LIFE «BEFORE» AND «AFTER»

ABSTRACT

War has settled in the city as a neighbor, necessitating a unique approach to addressing the challenges that arise in such circumstances. This scientific article delves into the central psychological challenge that individuals in Ukraine face in light of the significant events of February 2022, as they adapt to the changed city life. It presents a heuristic model of human skills block formation in the process of life and activity is introduced; the role of psychologism and the dynamics of changing realities on personal reconsideration of individual's approaches and methods of life and activity safety is described. Three levels of adaptivity to situations that potentially might unfold in the city under military conditions these days are categorized by the concepts of individual's adaptability and maladaptability. The primary objective of this research is to demonstrate how feelings of helplessness can serve as a powerful motivator, compelling individuals to acquire essential skills necessary for adaptation in specific conditions. Consequently, there is a growing urgency for individuals to gain proficiency in firearm usage, as the psychological

challenges of our times force people to either seek refuge or embark on a journey of acquiring practical skills that enable them to live and effectively address challenges even in novel and transformed circumstances.

Keywords

psychological challenge, helplessness, life safety, actual skills, hybrid warfare, weapons skills

INTRODUCTION AND PREREQUISITES FOR THE RESOLUTION OF SCIENTIFIC AND PRACTICAL ISSUES

The significance of studying psychological problems arising from global war, crises, and instability, driven by factors such as economic underdevelopment, poverty, wars, conflicts, and interference from hegemonism and power politics, underscores the pursuit of human rights based on values. Addressing these psychological problems emphasizes (a) the unity of humanity in the realm of human rights;



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(b) collective security for the shared future of humanity; (c) resolving humanitarian crises, with sovereign equality partnerships key to enhancing global human rights management; (d) cross-cultural learning as a prerequisite for overcoming global crises; (e) endorsing common security as an environment for safeguarding human rights and preventing humanitarian disasters; and (f) achieving justice and common understanding. The study aims to identify psychological challenges related to the quest for human survival and adaptation skills, employing a scientific approach and specific methods, principles, and research tools.

The conceptual objective of understanding the development vectors of civilizations, societies, social strata, and individual groups shares a similarity with the process of organizing chaos. Similarly, studying and gaining insight into the dynamics of individual development, which is inherently heterogeneous, presents a comparable challenge. Interestingly, various linguistic expressions across different cultures mirror how personality formation unfolds. For example, a factor such as war is a strong catalyst for changes in a person's personality (Knežević et al., 2022; Meyer et al., 2019; Morina et al., 2018; Saba et al., 2022; Weinberg et al., 2021). As we progress from one milestone to another, from stage to stage, and encounter pivotal moments, each of us confronts specific life challenges and obstacles that necessitate overcoming. This journey not only yields specific outcomes but also fosters skills, prepared-

ness, strength, resilience, and more. It is crucial to underscore that the impact of life circumstances on the individual is the focus of interdisciplinary social-behavioral research (Ellis et al., 2020; also refer to Arslan, 2016, and Panaite et al., 2022). At each new life stage, individuals encounter not just tests but also psychological tasks, often not consciously perceived or explicitly formulated. These psychological tasks emerge automatically, compelling individuals to take specific actions before pivotal events unfold. When we critically analyze the essential aspect of life's tasks, we delve into the realm of psychologism. Understanding the psychologism inherent in any unfamiliar task is a crucial factor in its resolution.

Some argue that a psychological task manifests in an individual's consciousness as a problematic situation containing data and conditions necessary and, to some extent, sufficient for its resolution using available knowledge and experience. The sufficiency of these conditions can be debated. However, it is vital to recognize that without psychological tasks, there is no upward movement or development. Consequently, such tasks play a pivotal role in shaping an individual's education and training. Transforming a problematic situation into a defined task represents an act of productive thinking. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the unique characteristic of a psychological task is that its comprehension does not always occur immediately. Sometimes, individuals may only classify past psychological tasks and understand

how they must be solved and why after a considerable period, often spanning a decade or more.

The psychological task introduces new rules that govern a different path of self-determination for an individual. Take, for instance, the commonly recognized "difficult age." What prompts the emergence of this particular stage in personality development? The so-called difficult age or transitional period arises due to a shift in the psychological task during an adolescent's life. Unlike early childhood, adolescence brings new phases of socialization. Adolescents no longer reside solely within their homes with their parents; they become part of the neighborhood, altering their behavioral patterns. Parents gradually lose their dominance or influence over their children at this stage because, as it turns out, the most influential figures reside in the neighborhood or on the streets. This shift occurs because home is considered a safe haven compared to the potentially risky outside environment, where new authority figures emerge. In environments where danger lurks, new figures of authority naturally arise, leading to a shift in the psychological task and corresponding changes in behavior.

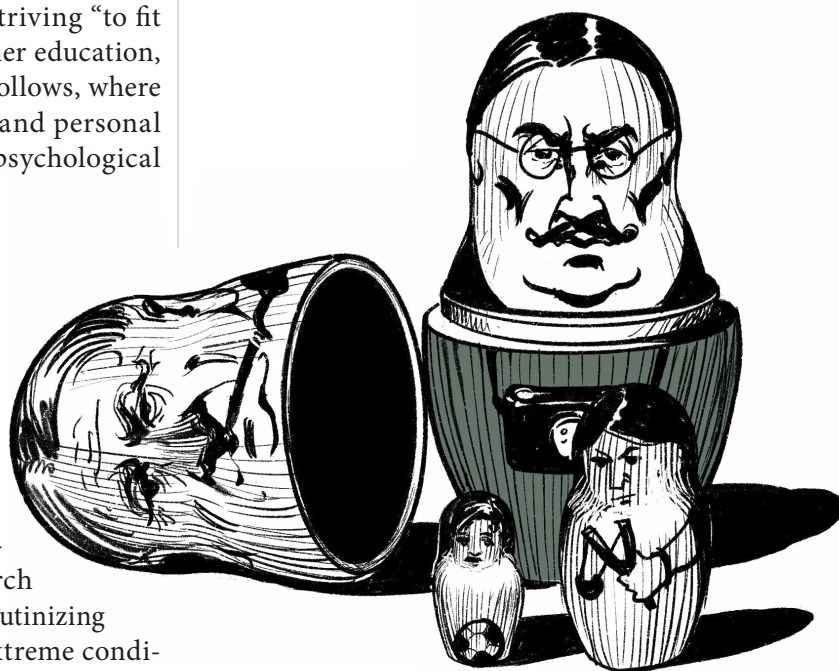
How does a teenager experience this difficult age? The future becomes unknown and unpredictable, looming unexpectedly. After a few years, the teenager may realize that this uncertain future is more scary than the "dangerous individuals" encountered in the neighborhood during childhood. Conditions evolve, and societal transformations unfold. Adolescents pursue their education, complete school, and many enroll in higher education. Thus, at the university level, another paradigm shift occurs, accompanied by new psychological tasks, such as striving "to fit in" with peers. After finishing higher education, the transition to the "work" stage follows, where the type of work, company goals, and personal aspirations impose entirely fresh psychological tasks on young individuals.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in examining the psychological problems associated with the acquisition of human survival and adaptation skills is grounded in a scientific approach, utilizing specific methods, principles, and research tools. Initially, our focus involved scrutinizing survival and adaptation skills in extreme condi-

tions, identifying factors conducive to successful adaptation, and devising training programs to enhance these skills. This process included a comprehensive review of relevant literature pertaining to the chosen issue. In selecting methods and tools for investigating the psychological aspects of human survival and adaptation, we employed diverse data collection techniques such as surveys, observations, interviews, and document analysis. Subsequently, the gathered data underwent analysis using statistical and analytical methods aligned with the research hypotheses and questions. Research on psychological skills employs diverse methodologies tailored to the specific problem and research objectives, encompassing:

1. Utilizing questionnaires or surveys to gather participant data, probing their knowledge, experiences, skills, and confidence in particular situations.
2. Conducting observations of individual or group behavior under varying conditions, with structures adapted to the study's requirements.
3. Engaging in interviews with study participants, capturing their opinions, experiences, and strategies related to psychological skills.
4. Employing psychological tests to quantify skill levels, such as stress tolerance, emotional intelligence, decision-making prowess, etc.
5. Conducting experiments to explore the influence of different factors on the development of psychological skills, such as the effectiveness of training or educational programs.
6. Employing computer models, virtual reality, or simulations to generate scenarios in which



participants can acquire and enhance psychological skills.

7. Utilizing psychometric methods and tools to gauge psychological attributes and capabilities, including personality tests, stress scales, or adaptation scales.

We employ philosophical methodologies to scrutinize, contemplate, and address philosophical issues and challenges, specifically:

- The method of doubt (skepticism) involves questioning established knowledge, assumptions, and beliefs to attain a higher level of objectivity and truthfulness.
- The method of analysis aids in uncovering the connotations and potential interpretations of concepts, subsequently amalgamating different concepts, ideas, or theories into a unified systematic approach. This method contributes to the development of novel philosophical systems and theories.
- The method of deduction entails progressing from general principles or axioms to specific conclusions, relying on logic and rational arguments.
- The method of induction is applied to examine particular facts and phenomena, leading to the derivation of general conclusions and generalizations. This method aids in the formulation of theories based on observations.
- The method of genesis (evolution) is employed to analyze the processes of transformation and development of ideas, concepts, and social structures.

In the realm of philosophical analysis, we employed a blend of these methods, tailoring our approach to the philosophical tradition utilized in examining the complex issue of acquiring survival and adaptation skills in contemporary conditions. Significantly, the analysis of human adaptability levels in times of war, crisis, and survival played a crucial role, necessitating an integrated approach and the application of diverse methodologies to assess various facets of adaptation.

Examining adaptability levels in altered urban living conditions within the contemporary context requires employing various methodological approaches to evaluate how individuals adjust to changes in the environment, social circumstances, and technological advancements. Potential methodology for further research may include:

1. Utilizing surveys and interviews.
2. Employing surveys and structured interviews to discern the viewpoints, experiences, and adaptation strategies of urban residents.
3. Investigating both public and personal social media accounts to discern discussions and experiences related to adjusting to transformations in the urban environment.
4. Employing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to monitor alterations in the urban environment and their effects on lifestyles.
5. Examining the utilization of mobile applications and geotechnology for navigation and decision-making in urban settings.
6. Administering psychological tests and surveys to gauge stress levels and the efficacy of adaptation strategies.
7. Behavioral observation: Scrutinizing the conduct of citizens in various situations to comprehend their adaptation to change.
8. Economic analysis: Examining alterations in consumer behavior, investigating shifts in purchasing patterns and preferences in urban settings.
9. Work and Education: Assessing the impact of changes in the urban environment on the occupational and educational practices of city residents.
10. Technological research: Utilizing sensors and smart devices.
11. Implementing sensors and smart devices to monitor and analyze data concerning environmental changes and people's responses; exploring digital platforms; scrutinizing the utilization of digital platforms to facilitate communication, work, and other facets of daily life.
12. Medical assessments: Examining health and physical activity, assessing how alterations in the urban environment affect the health and physical activity levels of the population; evaluating access to healthcare by appraising the availability of health services and their role in adaptation strategies.
13. Cross-city benchmarking: Contrasting adaptation strategies across various cities globally, considering cultural, economic, and social characteristics.
14. Experience-sharing: Establishing platforms for cities to exchange insights to enhance adaptation strategies.

This methodology can form the foundation for a thorough investigation into the adaptability levels of urban residents in contemporary conditions, considering diverse aspects encompassing social,



psychological, economic, technological, and medical domains.

This article presents the key findings of the research on the topic "psychological task"; the comprehensive conclusions derived from the holistic completed research will be featured in my upcoming monograph, "The work of human mind in the mode of task solving," scheduled for publication in March 2023.

RESULTS

Psychological Tasks as Catalysts for Skill Development

Understanding how individuals acquire, develop, and apply skills is essential for both personal development and societal progress. Human skill formation is a multifaceted field of research that has garnered significant attention across various disciplines (Du et al., 2022; Hodges & Lohse, 2020; Gerli et al., 2022; Lochner & Park, 2022; Scandurra & Calero, 2020; Zhong et al., 2022). Examine how a psychological task affects skill formation. Such a task initiates a pattern of behavior that, in itself, is delicate and unstable. However, it is through learning that this pattern gains mean-

ing. All human skills are essentially composed of these behavioral patterns. This concept forms the core of the skill system. To visualize this heuristic model, we can liken it to a set of matryoshka dolls. Initially, a block of skills acquired in childhood forms the innermost doll. Then, in adolescence, the next block of skills (e.g., stand-up for oneself) is added, and so on, as one progresses through life. Each skill set wraps around the central axis of development, much like the matryoshka dolls. Consequently, over the course of one's life and activities, an individual constructs a "garland" of skills, strung through time, with each element resembling a matryoshka doll.

The largest and most robust "matryoshka doll of skills" is developed during childhood, with subsequent ones diminishing in size. When considering this concept on the scale of global anthropological genesis, we can recognize that each element of the "matryoshka doll" represents a key skill of its respective era. Understanding the key skill of an era holds practical value, not only for expanding one's personal opportunities and self-realization but also for comprehending the broader historical context of human development, including its socio-cultural nuances. From a psychological perspective, the notion of a key skill serves as a starting point for the development of an



effective methodology for human training, aimed at nurturing individuals into mature, capable, and independent personalities. This approach is particularly crucial in the context of our rapidly changing modern environment (Maltsev, 2018).

Facing challenges as individuals (once again, due to shifts in the environment and the “rules of the game” within it) represents a psychological task that predefines a specific behavioral pattern. For instance, a pattern of successful and tactically competent behavior that enables one to navigate through a pandemic and rebuild a business (examine this as a unique case). This pattern, even if it is comprehensible to an individual, requires specific skills that need to be made enduring and valuable within a limited timeframe (often in a short period). The subsequent step involves constructing degrees of effectiveness.

In modern psychology, the first fundamental principles for implementing effective changes in the organization of daily life and activities emphasize the concepts of “adaptability” and “maladaptability.” Adaptability is understood as an individual’s capacity to swiftly adjust to the changing conditions within which they operate and live (McKeown, 2012). Put simply, it can be described as a set of specific habits in everyday life.

CITY AND WAR: REALITIES IN 2022

Examine and outline the unique aspects of human life in urban environments through these theses. In one way or another, contemporary urban dwellers are accustomed to engaging in various activities that secure their livelihoods. This includes commuting to work, shopping at markets, strolling in parks, or cycling, among others. The specific set of habitual activities varies for each city resident. However, one thing that no modern resident of European or American cities is accustomed to is urban warfare, primarily because such conflicts have not occurred during their lifetime. For a person, psychologically perceiving a city as a theater of military operations can be quite challenging, largely because cities have historically been designed to protect people. The very idea that individuals can be killed in a city is difficult for the human mind to accept. Therefore, we can deduce that a person’s adaptability to such conditions is virtually nonexistent, making it easier for them to evacuate from the city rather than learn to live in such circumstances. Typically, in times of military operations, citizens are evacuated from the city. However, contemporary realities demonstrate that cities can become battlefields even in times of peace, outside of wartime.

As an illustration of this statement, we can refer to the events of 2014 in Odessa. During that year, people tragically lost their lives on the city's streets due to gunshot wounds in entirely non-military conditions. The scenario of these events unfolded unexpectedly and unpredictably. No one was prepared for the outbreak of gunfire in a civilized age during peacetime. People were leading their ordinary lives when suddenly gunshots rang out in the city center. This incident was by no means isolated. Later in the same city, the Odessa House of Trade Unions was engulfed in flames. As a result of confrontations and the blaze, 48 individuals lost their lives, and an additional 250 suffered injuries. Reflecting on such events or being an unwitting witness to them highlights the unsettling reality that if a Molotov cocktail can be hurled at the Trade Union House, there is nothing preventing certain individuals from targeting a commercial office, bank, or a crowded bar with a similar bottle. Hence, the current level of human maladaptation to such conditions worldwide is exceptionally high, and these incidents serve as stark reminders of this fact.

An example from the opposite side of the world highlights the Black Lives Matter riots in the United States. People in cities, particularly in the northern parts of the US, found themselves unprepared to defend their homes, cars, and even stores from a heated mob (Dickerson, 2020). I recall seeing online videos of an unarmed woman being robbed in broad daylight on the street, with

no one daring to restore order. These actions were carried out under the banner of Black Lives Matter. Today, urban warfare often unfolds as portrayed in the 1991 American film "Backlash": just one block away, there is a war, while two blocks away, a wedding is taking place (Howard, 1991). Given the above, it is evident that war has settled in the city as a neighbor since February of this year. The skills that are essential for individuals today are significantly distinct from the skills that held importance prior to February of this year. I personally witnessed how people in Odessa repeatedly came under fire and how 70 people were injured when a missile found its target. The missile passed just 200 meters away from me and my colleagues, not without consequences. As we left the scene of the incident, we saw many doctors providing first aid to the injured.

Urban combat is an incredibly complex military discipline. In Soviet times, urban combat received not only special attention but also had a dedicated department for teaching this discipline. Urban warfare was taught for a staggering 5 years. This discipline happens to be my specialty, as I, the author of this article, studied tactics and various aspects of urban combat for 5 years. Decades ago, it was already recognized that the primary battlefield would be the city. Analyzing the daily military news corpus reveals headlines such as "Artyomovsk has been taken," "fighting for Kramatorsk," "battle for Bakhmut," "course



to Kherson,” and so on (Cave & Isai, 2022). The theater of hostilities is unfolding directly within settlements. To draw a historical analogy, we can cite the Wild West, where the city became the arena for battles, shootings, and the resolution of conflicts. If a person sought adventure, the path of adversity led them to the city.

In the 21st century, we may not have reached a state akin to the Wild West, but the progression in that direction is undeniable. From a prototypical perspective, consider the film “The Headless Horseman” as it effectively portrays the repercussions of war for different segments of the population (Vajnshtok, 1972). Initially, customs prevailed, followed by the emergence of informal laws, and only later did formal legal structures and the codification of laws and fundamental decisions come about. During the Wild West era, judges often apprehended criminals themselves, conducted trials, and carried out executions. It is worth noting that in the state of Texas, even today, civilians commonly carry firearms and bladed weapons both within the city and beyond. Texans are reluctant to part with their firearms, and the practice of openly carrying guns and knives is nationally and legislatively sanctioned. The memory of how things used to be, when “in the old days Colonel Colt settled matters for everyone,” remains deeply ingrained, solidifying the skills of wielding a firearm and defending lives and property, passing these skills down through generations. I have personally visited Texas and observed that while people there carry guns, I did not witness acts of violence among them. Texans are known for their politeness towards one another. Nevertheless, what is a centuries-old tradition in Texas may not be the norm in other states within the same country.

In essence, we can describe the ongoing global events as “war has settled in the city as a neighbor,” necessitating an approach to address the challenges that arise in such circumstances.

DISCUSSION

Adaptability Levels in Evolving Urban Environments

There are multiple levels of adaptability to potential situations that might arise in a city during times of military unrest. The first level is when individuals who find themselves caught up in the chaos and become victims of disorder. Adapting to the urban environment and its ever-changing

dynamics under such circumstances is far from easy.

For instance, consider the events in Kiev in 2014. Adapting to the unrest is a challenging ordeal. When a person realizes that someone has lost their life in their city, right in their familiar surroundings, it inevitably leads to the distressing thought that they too could have met the same fate, and perhaps they still will. I happened to be in Kiev during the initial Maidan protests (Guardian Staff Reporter, 2014). I was not politically inclined at the time, but I inadvertently became a witness to the unfolding turmoil. While I disapproved of the events transpiring in the capital, I felt powerless to change anything. However, there was someone who could make a difference. One evening, after having dinner with a friend, we decided to take a walk to Maidan Nezalezhnosti. Naturally, we were not the only ones out and about; we encountered various people along the way. One particular group seemed to be giving us hostile looks. My friend did not appreciate the way they were eyeing him and decided to confront the instigator. Before long, a crowd had gathered around us, ready to confront us aggressively. Yet, my friend remained composed, calmly observing the crowd as it continued to swell. When someone from the crowd stepped forward with certain demands, my friend simply stepped aside and let his security handle the situation. Consequently, within a matter of minutes, the crowd dispersed. This incident vividly illustrates that an individual’s adaptability in any situation is contingent on their skills — whether they possess the knowledge and abilities to navigate and survive under those conditions. Incidentally, my friend is well-versed in doing so.

These recurring situations in various parts of the world serve as stark reminders of a person’s vulnerability and helplessness when they lack an organized structure to protect them. The profound sense of psychological helplessness and the inability to adapt to such circumstances represent the central challenges of our times. Many individuals might assume that staying at home is a safer option when they feel helpless. However, this notion did not spare the residents of Mariupol when military shells rained down, causing destruction to residential homes, infrastructure, and city streets. Regardless of where a person chose to be or hide at that moment, there was no place of absolute safety.

In this context, we can assert that maladaptive factors give rise to helplessness, and helplessness, in turn, leads to an inability to adapt. In

other words, when an individual feels helpless, they cannot explore ways to adapt to unfamiliar, dangerous, and unpredictable conditions. Their only recourse is to evacuate the perilous area. Consequently, helplessness stands as the primary aspect and pivotal factor that compels individuals to contemplate their actions, decisions, and behavior when confronted with urban unrest or hostilities, which, as evidenced by the events of 2022, can erupt suddenly, at the whims of others, and without any means of prevention.

However, the challenge lies in the fact that such conditions occur:

1. Unexpectedly.
2. At the discretion of others.
3. Most importantly, they are beyond individual control.

For instance, just a year ago in 2021, the residents of Kherson enjoyed a peaceful life, but today, the majority of the city's population has been compelled to abandon their homes. Several districts of Mykolaiv lie in ruins, with artillery shelling and enemy missiles resounding from morning till night. The only way to counteract psychological helplessness is by introducing a systematic and effective approach.

Level I: Urban Unrest — At this level, psychologism urges individuals to alter their established perspectives and restructure their lives to become less susceptible to conflicts of this nature. People, in principle, are unaware of what the future holds, and it remains uncertain.

Level II: Localized Conflict — This level goes beyond mere riots in the city and escalates into an armed confrontation involving the use of small arms.

Level III: Full-fledged Warfare — Here, heavy weapons, tanks, and the like are utilized. While the first and second levels may still allow for a semblance of daily life, it is impossible to coexist in a city experiencing the conditions of the third level, necessitating evacuation. In reality, there is no gradual transition from one level to another. An unexpected moment may lead to the appearance of a certain level in your city. The transition between levels depends on numerous factors, but comprehending them necessitates military analyst skills, a subject far from the average person's grasp. Such situations catch individuals off guard, and the development and outcome of these conflicts remain uncertain. Urban warfare erupts and escalates like a volcano, and before the

“volcanic eruption” occurs, individuals must decide on a safe destination outside the perilous city. In this context, we will not delve into the topic of survival in extreme conditions, as it encompasses numerous factors beyond the scope of this article. Nonetheless, learning to wield weapons is undoubtedly essential for surviving in such dire circumstances.

The investigation into the city's education systems focuses on their role in enabling adaptation to evolving conditions. This involves evaluating the accessibility of educational resources, the quality of education, and opportunities for professional development. The assessment encompasses the following key dimensions:

1. Social Inclusion: Examining the city's citizens' level of adaptation to social inclusion, considering aspects such as equality, anti-discrimination efforts, and the active participation of all sectors in city life.
2. Energy Resilience: Assessing the city and its residents' preparedness for changes in energy infrastructure, including the shift to renewable energy sources and improvements in resource efficiency.
3. Crisis Management: Analyzing the city's and its inhabitants' readiness to handle crises, be they natural disasters, epidemics, or unexpected situations. This includes evaluating the implemented management mechanisms to minimize the impact of such events.
4. Digital Literacy: Gauging the digital literacy of the city's residents, including their proficiency in effectively utilizing digital technologies for work, education, and communication.
5. Urban Ecology and Green Technologies: Evaluating the city's integration with nature and its success in implementing green technologies to enhance the environmental quality and citizens' comfort.
6. Adaptability in Work and Business: Examining the readiness of the city's residents to adapt to changes in the labor market, foster entrepreneurship, and embrace modern technologies in business.
7. Social Connection and Networks: Investigating the development of social support and ties among city dwellers and exploring how these factors influence their ability to adapt to change.

These dimensions encompass diverse facets of urban life and provide a foundation for a thorough examination of adaptability levels in altered

conditions. Various data collection methods, including surveys, statistical analysis, participation in focus groups, and others, can be employed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current status and future prospects of adaptation in the urban environment.

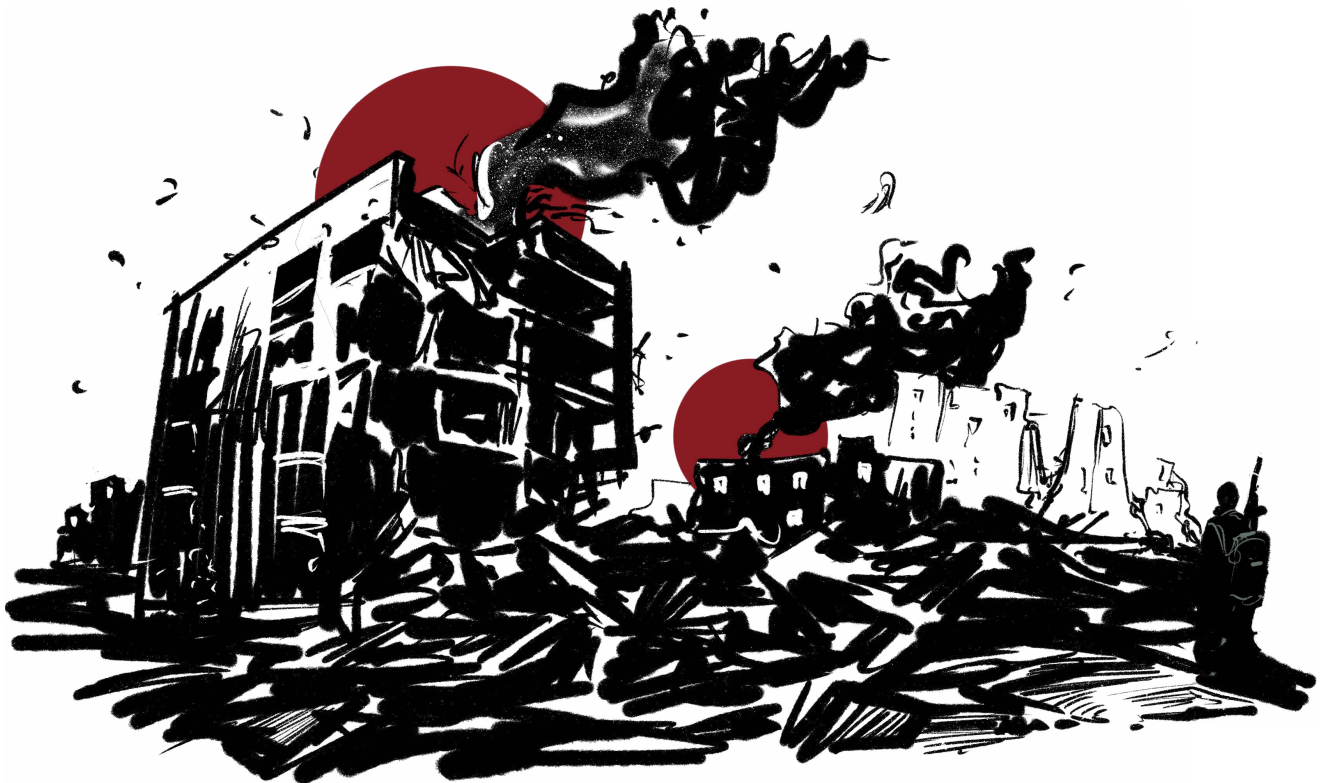
CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

As recently as a decade ago, the average citizen had no pressing need to acquire firearm skills. However, today, the overwhelming sense of helplessness compels people to pursue this skill. The relevance of this matter is no longer in question; the military realities of 2022 speak louder and more vividly than any words. Of course, an ordinary, even trained person, would not engage in combat against the military. So, why should one learn to use weapons in such a scenario?

The fact is, aside from armed soldiers, the streets of a city become infested with looters and criminals during and after a military conflict. As soon as hostilities commence, the first problems to arise typically involve the scarcity of food, medicine, and other essentials. Desperate individuals increasingly resort to looting; stores become prime targets for theft, and even law enforcement

agencies may struggle to maintain order. The film “Solntsepyok” (translated as “Hotsunlight” in English) effectively demonstrates how a series of incidents and occurrences can set off subsequent surges in criminal activity. Banditry becomes an integral facet of wartime realities that cannot be ignored. Therefore, during wartime, ensuring the survival of criminals and upholding order in prisons are not top priorities. This means that criminals will prioritize their own survival. Consequently, acquiring the skills to handle firearms for self-defense and safeguarding one’s family and friends becomes essential. The urban landscape has transformed, and criminals need to continue surviving. Since they are unlikely to engage in normal social interactions and lack other means of subsistence, the number of robberies and thefts is likely to increase.

In conclusion, it is essential to clarify that this practical discussion does not aim to address the question of “how to behave in combat-like conditions.” Rather, the purpose of this scientific work is to highlight that helplessness directly fosters the motivation for individuals to acquire the necessary skills to adapt in specific circumstances. In one way or another, many factors today make it imperative for individuals to learn how to use firearms, as the psychological challenges of our time push individuals toward either seeking refuge



or embarking on a learning path. The primary psychological task of today is to acquire the ability to defend oneself in local and hybrid conflicts.

Studying levels of adaptability in altered urban living conditions in contemporary contexts means analyzing how people adapt and adjust to any changes in the urban environment given current social, economic, technological, and environmental conditions. This may include examining changes in behavior, coping strategies, emotional responses, and the use of new technologies and community resources. Examples of how people adapt in such a study include:

1. Changes in mobility: How do changes in a city's transportation infrastructure affect the mobility of residents? What new forms of transportation have become more popular?
2. Impact of technology: How does the use of digital technologies change the daily lives of city dwellers? What roles do mobile apps, smart gadgets, and other technologies play?
3. Social change: How do changes in social norms affect the behavior of citizens? How do social networks affect social ties in urban environments?
4. Economic aspects: How do changes in the city's economy affect the financial situation of residents? What new job opportunities have arisen due to changes in the urban environment?
5. Environmental aspects: What measures are being taken to improve the environment in the city, and how does this affect the lives of city dwellers? How do people change their habits in response to environmental initiatives?
6. Psychological well-being: What factors in the urban environment influence the psychological health of residents? What adaptation strategies are used to cope with stress and uncertainty?
7. Changes in housing conditions: How do changes in urban development affect housing conditions? What new forms of housing have become more popular?
8. Education and Culture: What new educational opportunities have arisen due to changes in the city? How do cultural developments and infrastructure affect the lifestyle of city dwellers?

These represent just a few considerations when examining adaptability in urban environments under contemporary conditions. The choice of

research methodology will hinge on the specific goals of the study and the researchers' particular areas of interest.

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DIGITAL SOCIETY TRANSFORMATION AS A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL:

GLOBAL PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF THE PRESENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to comprehend both the theoretical and practical aspects of studying society's digital transformation as a sustainable development goal within the context of global problems and challenges of modernity. The research objectives are as follows: 1) to review the role and significance of digital technologies in addressing the challenges

posed by the pandemic and in achieving sustainable development; 2) to identify digital transformation as an innovative approach to solving the problems associated with sustainable development; 3) to analyze the issue of digital divide as a global economic and social challenge; 4) to develop guidelines for enhancing the efficiency of innovative digital transformation systems.

Currently, numerous studies have explored the connection between digital technologies and sustainable development. Digital technologies such as smartphones, the Internet, artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things, cloud computing, and others have the potential to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs. In this study, we refer to articles by R. Andriukaitienė, V. Voronkova et al. (2020), O. Kyvliuk (2014), M. Lepskiy (2022), O. Maltsev (2020), V. Nikitenko et al. (2019, 2021), R. Oleksenko and O. Punchenko.

Keywords

digital transformation, digital technologies, sustainable development, global challenges, digital divide

INTRODUCTION

We are currently in an era where policymakers are navigating the digital realm without a clear global mandate, resulting in a lack of coordinated efforts to monitor and shape digital policies. This information gap significantly hampers sound public decision-making, as domestic policies often clash with varying international regulations. Stringent regulations not only stifle entrepreneurial initiatives but also discourage the adoption of digital technologies, ultimately limiting their potential contributions to national employment

and economic growth. The fragmentation of the Internet and the global digital economy further marginalize users, diminish incentives for innovation, and escalate trade tensions among governments. Changes are needed to remedy this situation, as reflected in the general discourse of current interdisciplinary research in various fields (Carlsson & Rönnblom, 2022; Dammann et al., 2022; Eom & Lee, 2022; Hafselde et al., 2022; Weerakkody et al., 2016).

In a period marked by the transformative impact of digital technologies on industries, economies, and society at large, the Internet emerges as a vital catalyst for social and economic progress. The concept of sustainable development is gaining increasing relevance, with technologies like the Internet and cloud computing offering the potential to bridge the gap between developed and developing nations, address global challenges such as poverty, hunger, and climate change, and expedite overall human well-being (Afanasieva & Oleksenko, 2018). However, this digital transformation also exacerbates inequality and erodes social cohesion. For instance, the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019 highlights the disparity in internet access between developed countries, where over 80% of the population is online, and developing and least developed countries. Consequently, it becomes the responsibility of each policymaker to mitigate and minimize the negative impacts of information technology, with the overarching objective of ensuring that "no one is left behind." Both international and non-state actors at the global, regional, and national

levels are increasingly recognizing the potential of digital technologies in achieving the sustainable development goals (Buhaichuk et al., 2022).

Relevance of the Article

In 2018, a significant step was taken with the Ministerial Declaration, which acknowledged that digitalization and emerging technologies, especially Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), hold great potential in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in the areas of industry, innovation, and infrastructure (Economic and Social Council, 2018). The United Nations resolutions underscore the pivotal role of the Internet, data, artificial intelligence, and other transformative technologies. Over the years, approximately 320 sessions and workshops have been dedicated to exploring how the Internet can support developing nations and promote sustainable growth, addressing the pressing global challenges of our era. Undoubtedly, this topic is hardly the most popular one for research of different countries and regions (Billón et al., 2021; Gnanngnon, 2020; Hussain et al., 2021; Pérez-Castro et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022).

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is facilitated by the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM), which fosters collaboration among various stakeholders, including governments, research institutions, and scientific organizations. The emphasis is on addressing challenges through inclusivity and equity, aiming to bridge inequalities between the Global North and South, counter economic and social exclusion, especially among vulnerable groups, and narrow the gaps between rural and urban populations, different age groups, and ultimately, between genders. The "2025 Targets: Connecting the other half" initiative commits to providing affordable broadband services, promoting sustainable digital skills, achieving digital gender equality, ensuring accessibility, and fostering digital literacy. Numerous studies have been conducted on the links between digital technologies and sustainable development, demonstrating that technologies such as smartphones, the Internet, artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things, and cloud computing can indeed contribute to realizing the SDGs (Voronkova & Nikitenko, 2022c).

Global, regional, and local solutions like e-banking and e-money have the potential to enhance access to financial services, particularly in rural areas, improve energy efficiency, and reduce electricity and other media costs. This showcases



the role of digital technologies in advancing the successful achievement of the SDGs (Walsh et al., 2020; see also Del Río Castro et al., 2021; Mora et al., 2021; Murinde et al., 2022). Sustainable development in the digital realm can be most effectively realized through collaborative efforts, where actors pool their experiences, knowledge, and resources to pursue common goals, especially in developing nations. This involves sharing information, providing advice, and disseminating best practices in digital inclusion, with a particular focus on women's participation.

The Aim of the Article

The aim of this article revolves around both theoretical and practical aspects pertaining to the study of society's digital transformation as a means to achieve sustainable development within the context of contemporary global challenges. The study aims to accomplish several specific goals:

1. Analyze the significance and role of digital technologies in addressing the repercussions of the pandemic and advancing the cause of sustainable development.
2. Illuminate digital transformation as an innovative approach to resolving the challenges associated with achieving sustainability.
3. Characterize the issues associated with the digital divide, recognizing it as a global economic and social dilemma.
4. Investigate the avenues for enhancing the effectiveness of innovation systems in the realm of digital transformation.

METHODS

The research methodology concerning the digital transformation of society towards sustainable development amidst contemporary global challenges is a multifaceted and intricate matter, which has been the subject of examination by various international organizations, including the Club of Rome. The methodology adopted for studying digital transformation as a strategy for attaining sustainability encompasses a range of methods that enable an in-depth exploration of this complex subject, an analysis of the conditions required for achieving sustainability (what, who, when, where, how, why), and a substantiation of the role of digital transformation as a fundamental tool for policymakers in addressing the global challenges of our times (Voronkova et al., 2021b).

Examining the digital transformation of society for sustainable development necessitates a systematic and interdisciplinary approach. To keep pace with the ongoing dynamics, continuous monitoring and research updates are essential to address emerging challenges and opportunities. Investigating the intricate relationship between digital transformation and sustainable development demands a comprehensive methodology tailored to uncover key aspects and societal significance.

Various methods may be employed in studying the digital transformation of society, tailored to the specific objects and objectives of the research. We have identified effective methodologies, including: (a) Document and Literature Analysis: This involves scrutinizing academic articles, legislation, policy documents, company reports, and other sources to comprehend the current scenario, historical context, and progression of digital transformation; (b) Structured Questionnaires and Surveys: Designed to gather quantitative data from diverse stakeholder groups like citizens, businesses, and government, these instruments provide insights into various perspectives on digital transformation; (c) Expert Interviews: Conducting interviews with experts, government officials, entrepreneurs, and other essential stakeholders to acquire a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives and experiences within the digital transformation domain. Big Data analysis was employed to discern trends, connections, and patterns in the realm of digital transformation. (d) SWOT Analysis: Employing SWOT analysis to pinpoint the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with digital transformation within society; (e) Case Studies: Undertaking case studies of digital transformation in specific sectors like healthcare, education, and energy to scrutinize distinct impacts and outcomes; (f) Systemic Approach: Adopting a systemic approach to perceive digital transformation as a intricate system comprising interdependent components; and (g) Modeling and Computer Simulation: Utilizing modeling and computer simulation techniques to anticipate potential developments and simulate the repercussions of digital transformation.

The methodology for addressing the issue of societal digital transformation as a sustainable development objective also encompasses:

1. Economic Evaluation: Assessing the influence of digital transformation on the economy

through economic analysis, encompassing cost-benefit assessments, job generation, and GDP growth.

2. Environmental Assessment: Examining the environmental effects of digital transformation, considering factors such as energy consumption, CO₂ emissions, and waste management.
3. Public Opinion Study: Investigating public sentiment and discussions on digital transformation through the study of websites, social media, and online forums.
4. Political Decision Examination: Scrutinizing political decisions, strategies, policy programs, legislation, and regulations governing digital transformation, aiming to identify and support the regulatory framework for digital transformation.

These diverse methods and approaches facilitated the identification of potential risks and vulnerabilities linked to digital transformation, enabling the development of measures to mitigate them. This comprehensive approach also extended to studying the enduring impact of digital transformation on society and its future development.

Among the methods employed to address these challenges are systemic and structural analysis, phenomenology, synergetics, modeling, and forecasting. On the philosophical and methodological level, the study of society's digital transformation towards sustainable development leverages the heuristic potential of system-structural and system-synergetic methodologies. At the level of concrete scientific methodology, a diverse array of approaches is integrated, including cultural, paradigmatic, civilizational, axiological, phenomenological, praxiological, and hermeneutical perspectives. The third methodological and technological level employs a combination of general theoretical, empirical, and specialized methods and approaches. These methodologies facilitate the empirical collection, theoretical analysis, and synthesis of research findings, enabling a comprehensive examination of the subject matter.

The suitable methodological framework for problem research takes into account the interdisciplinary nature of the research subject. Given the increasing prevalence of diverse global challenges in our time, modeling these challenges becomes increasingly important. Models serve the purpose of forecasting short- and medium-term events related to problem resolution. The theoretical concept of a "model" in the study of society's digital transformation towards sustainable development can be understood as an artificially

created construct resembling, in some manner, the process being studied. Various models formalizing different aspects of this subject can be constructed to reflect and predict the future state of any element within the digital transformation of society (Voronkova et al., 2021a). The number of these models often depends on the complexity, specificity, or simplification of the description of the real system under investigation.

There are several methods for constructing models, including analytical, experimental, and combined methods. Combined methods, particularly the expert-dynamic and expert-analytical methods, are highly suited for modeling the digital transformation of society as a goal of sustainable development. These approaches are closely aligned with the holistic modeling of complex systems. Synergetic modeling, in particular, represents a scientific extension of the holistic approach. Synergetics offers a holistic perspective when selecting information for modeling processes. Instead of considering a multitude of factors determining the state of a system, as in conventional modeling, synergetics focuses on a few key parameters that influence the components of the process, the system's state, and, in turn, the resolution of contemporary global challenges.

It is important to note that the synergetic approach entails a comprehensive description, which is crucial when dealing with complex systems, such as the digital society. Traditional reductionist methods struggle to analyze trends due to the excessive number of significant variables involved. Therefore, the synergetic approach becomes essential for modeling the processes related to researching the digital transformation of society as a sustainable development goal. Drawing on socio-philosophical methods, we can scrutinize the methodology employed in studying the digital transformation of society as a goal of sustainable development (Voronkova et al., 2022b).

RESULTS

1. This paper examines the role of digital technology in mitigating the pandemic's impact and advancing sustainable development. It argues that digitalization is essential for progressing towards a digital welfare state. Digital technology has grown exponentially, with its global reach expanding. The widespread availability of smartphones has provided most of humanity with constant connectivity, access to information, social media, and audiovisual

entertainment. Digital transformation is enabling organizations to reinvent their business processes using new digital tools.

2. The digital transformation of society and organizations emerges as an innovative approach to addressing the challenges associated with achieving sustainable development. This transformation compels organizations to evolve their business practices and explore new avenues. To tackle innovative challenges, businesses must align their goals with a digital transformation strategy. Common challenges faced by organizations include skills gaps in areas such as cybersecurity, application architecture, software integration, data analytics, and data migration.
3. The issues of the digital gap as a global economic and social problem are being researched. The global digital gap is used to describe the digital divide between industrialized and less developed countries; between urban and rural areas at the national level; between North and South, leading to the economic and social exclusion of millions of people; between the elderly and the youth, and ultimately, between men and women.

4. Strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of digital transformation innovation systems are formulated. Digital transformation has brought forth new innovative opportunities and challenges for companies, demanding a fresh perspective. Today's entrepreneurs must truly adopt a "digital mindset" to solve problems and capitalize on the opportunities presented by new digital technologies for achieving long-term success and maintaining a significant competitive advantage. "The Age of Digital Interdependence" represents a set of recommendations aimed at assisting governments, companies, and individuals in making sustainable business and digital future decisions as a matter of policy (UN Secretary-General, 2019).

1. The Significance of Digital Technologies in Mitigating Pandemic Impact and Achieving Sustainable Development

Addressing the digital transformation of society as both a global challenge and a sustainable development goal necessitates the utilization of qualitative and quantitative data to monitor progress. This



involves gauging what has been accomplished and what remains to be done in the context of addressing the pressing global challenges of our time. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) holds the promise of enhancing various aspects of our world, including agricultural production (SDG 2 — Zero hunger), traffic management (SDG 3 — Good health and well-being), and the transition to renewable energy (SDG 7 — Affordable and clean energy). These issues are currently the subject of extensive research (Guandalini, 2022; Hassoun et al., 2022; Mondéjar et al., 2021; Novillo-Ortiz et al., 2018; Schena et al., 2022).

However, a significant challenge persists, especially in developing countries: the lack of reliable, accessible, and relevant data. Often, issues related to the capacity of available resources, security, and environmental conditions make it arduous to collect and analyze data essential for sustainable development. To address this predicament, The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data was established, following the recommendations of the Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development (IEAG). The aim of this partnership is to engage various stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, civil society, and academia, in collaborative efforts to generate and utilize data. The issues surrounding the digital transformation of society as both a global challenge and a sustainable development goal are considered nascent and evolving (Voronkova et al., 2022a).

The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has exerted a profound economic and social impact on numerous countries worldwide (Lepskiy, 2022), including those in Latin America and the Caribbean. Concurrently, digital technologies have experienced exponential growth, reaching a global scale. Widespread and uninterrupted connectivity has extended to a significant portion of the global population, driven by the widespread adoption of smartphones, which provide access to information, social media, and audiovisual content. The rapid advancement of technology within the digital sphere has led to the utilization of devices and applications leveraging cloud computing, big data analytics, blockchain technology, and artificial intelligence. This technological revolution, coupled with evolving corporate strategies, has significantly augmented the role of global platforms. However, it has also brought about socially detrimental consequences, most notably the exclusion of a substantial segment of the global population from the benefits of digi-

talization. This exclusion predominantly stems from inadequate income levels that impede access to high-quality devices, stable home internet connections, and the ability to utilize these resources on a daily basis.

As a result, a significant disparity has emerged between the expanding coverage of Internet infrastructure and actual usage. Additionally, other challenges have become increasingly pronounced, including the proliferation of fake news and the escalating threat of cyber-attacks, which pose ever-growing risks to personal data privacy and security. Furthermore, the mass production of electronic waste (e-waste) has reached alarming levels. The global landscape, marked by an unresolved balance between the benefits and drawbacks of digitalization, has become unfavorable. Geopolitical tensions, often revolving around digital patents, standards, and manufacturing, have notably eroded the effectiveness of multilateral decision-making (Voronkova & Nikitenko, 2022a).

The environmental crisis has evolved into an ecological catastrophe. Escalating inequalities within numerous countries, coupled with the exclusion of vulnerable populations, have made it increasingly challenging to establish social and political systems capable of effectively managing digital progress. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these issues and plunged the world into its most severe economic crisis since World War II. This crisis has had adverse repercussions on employment, wages, and the fight against poverty and inequality. While digital technologies have played a pivotal role in mitigating the pandemic's effects, their benefits have been curtailed by structural barriers. These include limitations in connectivity (access, usage, and speed), social disparities, variations in productivity, reduced competitiveness, and limited access to data and information management, among other factors (Voronkova & Nikitenko, 2022b).

Nevertheless, there are new prospects for Latin America and the Caribbean. As the region most severely affected by the crisis, addressing long-standing challenges is imperative. This includes overcoming the sluggish economic growth experienced in recent years, characterized by declining investment and stagnant productivity, and reinvigorating efforts to combat poverty and inequality. To surmount these obstacles, the region must exert significant efforts to achieve economic, social, and environmental sustainability. This entails implementing progressive structural changes through the active creation

and deployment of technologies to diversify the production system. Taking a systemic approach, a crucial issue is the necessity to transition towards a sustainable digital society within the framework of the digital revolution. This involves investigating the impact of digitalization on social well-being and equality, promoting universal access to digital technologies, strengthening regional cooperation, and transitioning towards a regional digital market (Voronkova et al., 2020).

The proposed solutions set the stage for a more inclusive and sustainable approach to digitalization. These initiatives aim not only to expedite recovery from the ongoing crisis but also to enhance overall productivity by enabling organizations to rethink their business processes through the adoption of new digital tools and practices. Digitalization is a pivotal factor in shaping a new future and moving toward the establishment of a digital welfare state (Kyvliuk, 2014).

In the year 2022, nine critical challenges in the domain of digital transformation demand attention and resolution: (a) lack of a change management strategy; (b) complex software and technology; (c) incentivized adoption of new tools and processes; (d) continuous evolution of customer needs; (e) lack of a digital transformation strategy; (f) lack of proper IT skills; (g) security issues; (h) budgetary constraints; and (i) cultural mindset.

Digital technologies play a crucial role in addressing the challenges posed by the pandemic and in achieving sustainable development (Hussain, 2021). They empower organizations to reimagine their business processes and adopt new digital tools and practices. Nevertheless, the transformation journey is fraught with a spectrum of challenges, encompassing human-centric issues, structural complexities, technical obstacles, and limitations in infrastructure support (Fernández-Rovira et al., 2021; Varadarajan et al., 2022). This underscores the imperative for organizations to innovate and adapt, enabling them to navigate the current crisis successfully and position themselves for ongoing progress (Rodrigo et al., 2022; see also Etz et al., 2020; Gouveia & Mamede, 2022; Mann et al., 2022; Sedera et al., 2022).

2. Digital Transformation: An Innovative Approach to Tackling the Challenges of Sustainable Development

Digital transformation transcends the mere introduction of new software, technologies, and processes aimed at efficiency and automation. It represents a comprehensive, innovative approach

to conducting business, playing a pivotal role in reshaping organizational practices. When embarking on a digital transformation initiative, organizations must consider various facets, including how people react to change, the impact of change on customer relationships, cost implications, alignment with business objectives, and more (Gilder, 2018).

Digital transformation empowers organizations to propel their business forward and equips them to thrive amid competitive landscapes by venturing into new realms. However, statistics indicate that 70% of digital transformation programs fail due to employee resistance and a lack of management support (McKinsey). Only 16% of employees report that their companies are actively pursuing digital transformation efforts that enhance performance and sustainability. Consequently, there is a need to address the challenges of digital maturity that will influence businesses in 2022. While digital transformation offers unique opportunities for innovation and growth, it also necessitates critical thinking and potential reconsideration of fundamental aspects of the business (Lee, 2018).

In 2022, there are 20 crucial challenges to contemplate when embarking on digital transformation projects:

1. **Lack of Change Management Strategy.** Organizations with well-crafted change management strategies are six times more likely to achieve or surpass their digital transformation objectives. Cultivating a robust change management culture is indispensable for any organization's success, and the absence of a change strategy can lead to the failure of new projects or implementation plans. An effective change management strategy involves project planning that identifies root problems and fosters relationships with all stakeholders and employees. Therefore, businesses should develop a change management strategy in collaboration with change management experts (Konopik et al., 2022; Volberda et al., 2021).
2. **Complex Software and Technology:** Enterprise software inherently carries complexity, and new technologies can be daunting. This complexity poses a significant challenge for organizations embarking on digital transformation, both in terms of implementation and data integration, as well as in terms of end-user interaction. Executives should bear this in mind at the outset of transformation

projects and seek out the most intuitive integration solutions.

3. **Incentivizing the Adoption of New Tools and Processes:** The introduction of new processes and technologies often encounters resistance from in-house employees who may believe that their current methods are sufficient. To successfully implement new software, organizations must offer comprehensive adaptive training and ongoing support to help employees quickly become adept and productive with the tools (Cherep et al., 2022).
4. **Continuous Evolution of Customer Needs:** Organizations are in a constant state of evolution, a process accelerated by events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. It is crucial to consider customer desires since everything is shifting as the world and industries evolve. Digital transformation is a complex, time-consuming endeavor. But, if customer needs change during this period, it will introduce new challenges. Therefore, flexibility is essential as it is time to adopt new digital technologies.
5. **Lack of a Digital Transformation Strategy:** Legacy systems and manual processes should ideally be replaced with new digital systems.

If there's a plan (or necessity) to implement advanced and sophisticated systems, a proper migration strategy for existing systems should be devised. All these questions need answers before launching a digital transformation initiative, as a successful transformation project hinges on a predefined strategy.

6. **Lack of Proper IT Skills:** Succeeding in transforming an organization requires a skilled and high-performing IT team, which can be challenging to assemble, especially given the current shortage of technical talent. According to a corporate survey, 54% of organizations reported that their inability to attain digital transformation goals stemmed from a shortage of technically skilled employees. Challenges faced by organizations include skills shortages in cybersecurity, application architecture, software integration, data analytics, and data migration. Organizations lacking in-house IT professionals can address this issue by engaging external consultants and digital transformation experts to help bridge the implementation gap (Kyrychenko et al., 2021).
7. **Security Concerns:** Many corporate entities, particularly those operating in data-sensitive industries, confront significant privacy and cybersecurity challenges (Maltsev, 2020). Extensive digital transformation initiatives often



revolve around the adoption of cloud technologies and the integration of all corporate data into a centralized system. This consolidation amplifies the risk of cyberattacks aimed at pilfering customer data and proprietary information. This increases the threat of cyberattacks to steal customer data and corporate secrets (Lee, 2021). Online attacks can exploit system vulnerabilities and misconfigurations. Hence, it is crucial to have a proactive plan in place to address these threats before they materialize. It is advisable to engage a cybersecurity expert to identify vulnerabilities in your security defenses.

8. **Budgetary Constraints:** Digital transformation entails substantial financial investment. For organizations whose transformation strategies lack refinement, the scaling-up process can gradually impede project timelines and introduce additional tasks, thereby augmenting project costs. Factors such as consulting services, evolving customer needs, or IT errors can further inflate the overall expense of digital transformation. It is essential to create long-term projections outlining the organization's goals and the expected return on investment resulting from the transformation. This proactive approach aids in gaining a clear understanding of budgetary boundaries and identifies opportunities for budget expansion.
9. **Cultural Mindset:** Organizations entrenched in legacy systems and manual procedures often harbor a traditional mindset. This mindset resists change, views automation skeptically, and faces difficulties in embracing new technologies. A substantial challenge in digital transformation is the cultural shift that necessitates alignment across all levels, from management to new hires. Everyone must be prepared for significant alterations in their daily routines and must exhibit a willingness to acquire new skills. The most effective digital adoption platforms incorporate features that facilitate end-user feedback on content and provide comprehensive analytics regarding feature usage, successful streams, areas requiring further digital tool implementation, and the overall level of product adoption within the organization. Various companies are addressing this issue through diverse strategies. For instance, Manpower Group is transitioning seamlessly to a fully digital hiring process using Whatfix, Baystone Media is promoting the adoption of its new suite of digital tools with Whatfix, and

Cardinal Health is transforming its legacy customer service into a 24/7 self-help solution with Whatfix (Shapiro, 2022).

10. To effectively tackle these challenges, it's imperative to establish a team of change leaders within your organization. Begin by assessing your current workforce to identify individuals who exhibit qualities of influence, innovation, and trustworthiness. Assemble a cross-functional team comprising high-performing professionals to form this change leadership team. This team plays a pivotal role in shaping a vision for the digital transformation process that aligns seamlessly with your business objectives and is created by those intimately familiar with the inner workings of the organization. This approach enables organizations to proactively approach digital transformation initiatives with a keen focus on the human aspect of change (Jackson & Dunn-Jensen, 2021; Sergi et al., 2022). Digital transformation involves a complete overhaul of core processes, tools, and experiences, and for many organizations, this is an entirely new endeavor. This presents both a challenge and a cornerstone for success in digital transformation.

A shift toward innovative problem-solving and alignment of business objectives with your digital transformation strategy is paramount. The rationale for digital transformation should be the driving force behind every organizational endeavor as new processes are implemented. Understanding customer needs, identifying pain points and challenges related to your offerings, products, and services, and analyzing current processes to pinpoint legacy systems requiring infrastructure enhancements should all be integral parts of this strategy. Ultimately, the transformation process should directly align with your core business objectives, fostering improved employee performance, enhanced customer service through clear systems that address more customer needs, and increased revenue generation for the organization.

To resolve the challenges faced by organizations, it is crucial to remain agile. Digital transformation projects inherently stem from a recognition of organizational vulnerability. Leaders understand that innovation and change are imperative to adapt and compete in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. Technology advances swiftly and often outpaces expectations. Embracing agility means being unafraid to pivot and seize opportunities as they arise. The very

decision to embark on a digital transformation journey signifies that the organization and its employees are agile. Therefore, there should be no apprehension about embracing new processes and tools or replacing traditional practices with innovative approaches. Furthermore, numerous researchers today are working on creating tools and models for the digitalization of various types of businesses (Böttcher et al., 2022; Csordás et al., 2022; Marcon et al., 2022; Veile et al., 2022). Digital transformation indeed represents an innovative means of addressing the challenges associated with achieving sustainable development.

3. The Digital Divide: A Global Economic and Social Problem

The digital divide, both as an economic and social issue, has recently garnered significant attention. This term refers to the global disparity in access to the Internet and other information and com-

munication technologies (ICTs) that facilitate the global connectivity of households, individuals, and businesses. Specifically, the "global digital divide" characterizes the disparity in access between developed and less developed countries, as well as the divide between urban and rural areas at the national level. Rural communities, in particular, face challenges in keeping pace with the rapid growth of digital connectivity. The establishment of Internet and cloud infrastructure in these areas is often challenging. Additionally, factors such as limited education opportunities, difficulties in acquiring IT skills, and the financial constraints of the population make it hard for individuals in these communities to afford mobile and other technological devices. Consequently, these communities encounter difficulties accessing government services, obtaining external information, and even staying updated on local matters. These challenges have ripple effects, including limited access to quality education, inadequate





healthcare, and cases of parental abandonment, emphasizing the urgent need to bridge the digital divide in rural areas (Nikitenko et al., 2021).

It is worth noting that the digital divide is not solely attributed to the rapid pace of technological change. In addition to the material and infrastructural hurdles faced by rural communities in the digital era, there exists a significant social challenge. With the widespread use and adoption of cell phones and the internet, digital inclusion is no longer described as a binary issue of “having” or “not having” digital tools. Instead, the conversation now centers on the degree of usage of these digital tools. Before assessing the impact of digital connectivity, it is crucial to gauge the actual level of adoption and utilization of these tools. While providing rural communities with access to these technologies and connectivity options is a significant step toward development, it is equally vital to focus on training, adoption, and utilization to ensure that digital connectivity positively affects these communities. It’s important to recognize that digital skills serve as a platform and catalyst for poverty alleviation (Nikitenko et al., 2019).

As highlighted in the The Sustainable Development Goals as Business Opportunities of 2016, the technology and telecommunications sectors are categorized as cross-cutting sectors, playing a pivotal role in addressing various eco-

nomics challenges. Consequently, South Africa has begun incorporating ICTs into various sectors of the country, resulting in a substantial increase in internet users from 5.3 million in 2009 to 38.13 million in 2021. During the same period, global internet usage has risen from 1.73 billion to 4.66 billion users. However, it’s important to note that most users of ICT infrastructure in rural communities are not advanced users. They primarily utilize phones for voice calls, SMS, and social networking. These regions have yet to fully implement integrated IT-based services in areas such as education and agriculture (Nikitenko et al., 2022).

The central question at hand is: Can Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) truly make a substantial difference in the lives of rural communities? According to the United Nations Development Programme, increased ICT usage enhances service delivery, provides access to digital advancements for ongoing improvement of essential services, and facilitates knowledge sharing. The rapid pace of technological change underscores the growing need for effective ICT services in critical areas such as education, healthcare, and agriculture. Digital inclusion encompasses information technology, e-learning, e-health, high-speed internet access, and digital literacy, all contributing to the success of individuals and communities striving

to participate in the digital realm. To promote such integration and bridge the digital divide, it is essential to implement inclusive policies and comprehensive approaches that ensure equal access for all, irrespective of age, gender, race, or religion (Oleksenko & Garbar, 2022).

The digital divide revolves around two significant challenges. First, the more economically disadvantaged a community is, the fewer digital opportunities it tends to have. For instance, despite increased infrastructure provision in Brazil, a significant portion of the population did not perceive the need for digital access (Oleksenko & Voronkova, 2020). Additionally, numerous studies have confirmed that digital literacy and learning are essential to fully capitalize on ICT infrastructure investments, whether provided by the private or public sector (Voronkova et al., 2022b). With proper training, the population can effectively harness the available technology.

Another pressing issue in South Africa's ICT sector is the ICT gender gap. Deep-seated socio-cultural norms and beliefs have exerted a substantial influence on the impact of ICTs in the country. Gender stereotypes are notably evident,

with men predominating in access to education, higher income, and employment opportunities (Gillwald et al., 2010). However, Gilbert's hypothesis suggests that, given equal opportunities, women are more inclined to embrace learning and the use of digital tools compared to men (Gilbert, 2010). Therefore, providing women with opportunities would enable them to compete in the job market and secure entry-level positions through acquired IT skills. Persistent cultural and gender disparities are likely to persist in the ICT sector. It's important to recognize that technological transformation is fundamentally a transformation of people, and bridging the digital divide represents a global economic and social challenge (Punchchenko et al., 2020).

DISCUSSION

Enhancing the Efficiency of Digital Transformation Innovation Systems

The directions for enhancing the efficiency of digital transformation innovation systems are



becoming increasingly diverse, signaling the onset of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This new era is marked by digitalization shaping and influencing society in novel and often unpredictable ways. It is crucial to reflect on the precise shifts we are currently undergoing and how we can collectively and individually ensure that this ‘revolution’ benefits everyone. In the Arab region, the drive for government and business digitalization has gained momentum due to the necessity imposed by measures of exclusion and social distancing. Sustained efforts in this direction can pave the way for a digital transformation in the Arab region, unlocking immense potential to advance and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To combat the COVID-19 pandemic and manage its aftermath, individuals, public institutions, and the private sector in the Arab region have harnessed digital technologies to safeguard lives, maintain social connections, and ensure the continuity of education, business operations, and public services. Nearly two years after the pandemic’s onset, Arab countries must consider principles of fairness and sustainability when determining which digital responses to COVID-19 should be institutionalized and expanded. It is essential to remain vigilant about technological megatrends and potential threats and to take action to catalyze the systemic changes required for recovery and progress across various domains.

Digital transformation involves the utilization of digital technologies to fundamentally transform products, services, and their delivery methods to better align with customer needs. To facilitate a more rapid and inclusive transition to the online sphere, most Arab countries have taken the following measures (UNESCWA, 2021):

1. Expanded digital access, resulting in increased Internet bandwidth and speed at no extra cost (e.g., Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, and Lebanon).
2. Unblocked voice messages over IP applications (e.g., Oman).
3. High-income Arab nations have enhanced public Wi-Fi availability and supported disadvantaged groups, particularly migrant workers, by providing free personal computers, SIM cards, online access, and ICT training (e.g., Qatar and Saudi Arabia).
4. In partially served regions, such as Palestine and rural Morocco, digital infrastructure has been upgraded through donor-supported programs to expand broadband coverage. Digital transformation has the potential to

promote equity, inclusion, and social advancement. However, for its full realization and to prevent the exacerbation or emergence of new disparities, countries in the region must address pre-existing inequalities.

The key areas for enhancing the effectiveness of digital transformation innovation systems are designed to:

1. Accelerate progress in broadband internet access while addressing persistent disparities both between and within countries. These disparities encompass factors like gender, location, age, disability, and literacy. To bridge these divides, it’s essential to consider various dimensions, including availability, accessibility, affordability, acceptability, and quality of broadband services.
2. Digital literacy should be a fundamental component of education across all segments of society, including women, the elderly, and others. This entails integrating digital literacy into primary and secondary education, ensuring that people of all ages are equipped with essential digital skills.
3. Efforts should be made to raise awareness and ensure the safety of underage users in the digital realm. This includes preventing gender-based violence and inequality in the digital sphere. Despite progress in internet connectivity, there is still a long way to go in ensuring universal access to safe and empowering digital experiences. The use of digital technologies can enhance the resilience of education systems, breaking down barriers and enabling flexible learning opportunities for students, as well as supporting educators.
4. Investment in inclusive information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure is crucial. This includes providing adequate support and training for teachers to acquire digital skills, as well as addressing the needs of the most vulnerable groups. Special attention should be given to rebuilding infrastructure in conflict zones to ensure that students have access to distance learning opportunities.
5. Collaboration and partnerships at regional and global levels are essential to support innovation and the sharing of expertise in digitalization, particularly in the education sector. This includes the development of online learning technologies. In some cases, innovative approaches like GPS-enabled mobile applications have been used to enforce quar-

antive measures for individuals suspected of carrying infectious diseases or those arriving from abroad (Punchchenko et al., 2020).

In pursuit of these goals, we have identified the potential challenges and future threats posed by AI-based systems. This is particularly relevant in the context of developing smart agriculture and smart health programs, which hold significant importance for each of us. To enhance the effectiveness of digital transformation within open innovation (OI) models, several key directions can be considered:

1. Implementation of Digital Innovation Systems.
2. Strengthening Social Networks.
3. Introduction of New Processes.
4. Introduction of New Digital Technologies.
5. Development of Agility at Organizational Scale.

6. Implementing Innovation in Digital Transformation.

Innovation is fundamentally a learning process that organizations employ to acquire new knowledge and experiences. It thrives in environments where risk and failure are tolerated, and experimentation is encouraged.

The rapid ascent of digital transformation is reshaping traditional entrepreneurial paradigms and established business models, ushering in a new era that presents unique challenges for scholars specializing in management. This wave of digital transformation has not only unveiled fresh prospects for innovation but has also posed novel challenges that necessitate a paradigm shift. In this digital landscape, contemporary entrepreneurs must adopt a "digital-first" mindset to navigate complexities, solve problems, and fully capitalize on the opportunities presented by emerging digital technologies. The key drivers of



success in this digital era are data, information, and knowledge, which entrepreneurs are encouraged to leverage to unearth untapped market potential and implement inventive business models.

Furthermore, the momentum of digital transformation is further accelerated by the introduction of artificial intelligence and virtual reality tools, amplifying their impact on consumers. On one hand, these novel technologies hold the promise of addressing some of humanity's most pressing societal challenges, such as climate change, aging populations, income inequality, and unemployment. Simultaneously, their potential societal benefits hinge on their accessibility and equitable utilization, ensuring that they are deployed in a distributed and decentralized manner that respects local skills, capabilities, knowledge, traditions, and heritage. By adhering to this approach, these technologies can play a pivotal role in the development of intelligent manufacturing systems, offering effective solutions with broader

applications across various domains (Oleksenko & Voronkova, 2020).

Human-driven innovation represents the convergence of technology and the widespread emergence of innovations rooted in technologies like big data analytics, artificial intelligence, and robotics. These emerging technologies, as they are developed and deployed, exert a profound influence on the innovation landscape, subsequently shaping broader societal outcomes. However, there is a growing concern that innovation, under certain circumstances, may have adverse effects on human well-being and the environment.

One explanation for these potential negative impacts is that contemporary innovation processes tend to be excessively technology-focused within an increasingly intricate environment. In the present context, innovation endeavors can only serve as drivers of societal progress if their ultimate aim is to generate positive outcomes for the entirety of society. Achieving this objective



may necessitate interdisciplinary collaboration and the amalgamation of technical and humanities disciplines, alongside the adoption of innovative approaches.

An essential driver of innovation is what we refer to as the human dimension of innovation management, where actual innovation efforts unfold within organizations. Companies are undergoing digital transformations that create fresh opportunities and, concurrently, challenges, particularly for smaller enterprises. This digital transformation triggers alterations in various organizational facets, precipitating changes in business models, shifts in business processes and value chains, and empowering companies to develop novel products/services while managing an expanded global customer base. The digital transformation also exerts an influence on the management of individuals and teams involved in the innovation process, reshaping internationalization strategies, market choices, entry modes, and network development (Punchchenko et al., 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

Digital innovation and entrepreneurship have also attracted the interest of development stakeholders and governmental bodies. The growth of e-commerce and digital innovation, primarily led by the private sector, stands out as a positive consequence of the pandemic. With improved digital accessibility and initiatives to expand electronic payment services, there are opportunities to enhance the resilience of many economies.

To capitalize on these opportunities, countries should adopt long-term e-commerce strategies that establish a conducive environment. These strategies should encompass legal and regulatory enhancements to bolster the security of online transactions and foster the development of digital skills. Furthermore, expanding electronic payment options, including mobile payments, is essential to increase access to financial services in regions that lag behind the global average. Countries must also create an environment that encourages ICT innovation and entrepreneurship to expedite economic recovery. Startups are pivotal drivers of technological innovation and entrepreneurship and will assume an increasingly crucial role in cultivating the skills demanded by future jobs. Consequently, the startup sector should prioritize fortifying these businesses, enabling them to integrate seamlessly into the value

chain and promoting technology- and skills-based education, training, and policy.

These digital trends aim to stimulate innovation and competition in both domestic and international markets. As digital technologies reshape the processes involved in developing new products and services, they hold the potential to narrow the digital divide and ensure equitable access to technology. These advancements can lead to positive outcomes, including poverty reduction, enhanced education, improved social well-being, and better health.

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PSYCHIC TRANSFORMATION AMIDST BATTLE: UNDERSTANDING PTSD AND COMBAT-RELATED PSYCHIC TRAUMA

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a conceptual framework for understanding post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and psychological battle fatigue (BF) as outcomes of mental adaptation to changing environmental conditions. These conditions are primarily linked

to the experience of war, military threats, and the broader challenges of the global landscape. It is worth emphasizing that these challenges have, without exaggeration, affected the global population in 2022.

The pressing need for research on PTSD and BF is driven not only by the significant shifts in



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global military events but also by the absence of fundamental methodological research that aligns with the demands of the 21st century. The author has identified crucial issues that form the basis for further comprehensive scientific and practical investigations. The overarching goal of this research is to develop effective methodologies and establish rehabilitation programs tailored to the specific needs of combatants, internally displaced individuals, and civilians residing in war-affected regions.

Keywords

PTSD, battle fatigue, rehabilitation program, military threats, individual susceptibility, psychological resilience

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing world, characterized by unpredictable military realities, human activities are undergoing significant restructuring. The presence of military threats has disrupted the balance of security, resulting in various socio-economic consequences. Both civilians and the military are forced to adapt psychologically to these new, unsafe conditions and varying speeds of change. This adaptation is essential to create conditions conducive to task performance, considering the unpredictable nature of the environment and the element of surprise.

War not only changes the "rules of the game" but also profoundly impacts individuals, reshaping their outlook on life, its meaning, and even their sense of self. Contact with the realities of war is often a challenging experience that leaves enduring marks on one's character.

Traumatic experiences, common among both military personnel and civilians, often lead to negative psychological consequences, some of which are reversible, while others are not. Prolonged exposure to stress during wartime can result in psychological and psychiatric disorders, with potentially dangerous implications for the well-being of both adults and children (Ellevåg & DeLisi, 2022; Norman et al., 2022).

Despite numerous books on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), it remains crucial to note one significant limitation: the effectiveness of existing rehabilitation methods is not entirely assured, and there are no guarantees of success. Furthermore, comprehensive studies on this topic were primarily conducted in the mid-twentieth century. Undoubtedly, the work of scientists continues today (Peterson et al., 2021; see also Brede-meier et al., 2022; Fredman et al., 2020; Herzog & Kaiser, 2022; McLean et al., 2022; Rauch et al., 2022; Straud et al., 2022). It is worth recognizing that all the knowledge we have about PTSD is a compilation of earlier research, lacking a conceptual framework, heuristic models, innovative methodological approaches, fundamental schematics, and strategies for mitigating the consequences of trauma and disorders. Consequently, in contemporary circumstances characterized by global threats, such as pandemics or hybrid wars, and amid actual military conflicts, there is a critical need to revisit and advance our understanding of addressing the consequences of mental transformation.

METHODS

The approach to investigating psychological transformation in combat situations underscores the

complexity and significance of addressing issues like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and mental trauma arising from combat experiences or other stress-inducing scenarios. It is crucial to recognize these as serious mental conditions. The following outlines key facets of the methodology for understanding mental transformation in combat conditions:

- Ensuring thorough preparation and training prior to military operations to minimize the likelihood of traumatic events.
- Cultivating skills for stress resistance and adaptation to challenging circumstances.
- Swift and precise identification of PTSD and combat-related trauma.
- Offering psychological support and counseling for individuals affected by such conditions.
- Employing effective methods like cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), emotional-behavioral therapy (EBT), or exposure therapy for treating PTSD.
- Conducting group sessions for veterans to share experiences and provide mutual support.
- Pharmacotherapy: Administering medications in cases of severe PTSD or other mental disorders, as prescribed by a psychiatrist.
- Implementing programs for military personnel focused on restoring both physical and mental health, along with facilitating social adaptation.
- Educational and training programs designed to aid the transition to civilian life.
- Overcoming social stigma, increasing public awareness of PTSD and combat-related trauma, and fostering a supportive environment for veterans and victims. This methodology necessitates an integrated approach, incorporating medical, psychological, social, and rehabilitation assistance.

It is crucial to consider the individual needs and experiences of each survivor, ensuring comprehensive support throughout all stages and aspects of their lives. Continuing the exploration of mental transformation in combat, specific emphasis should be placed on the following considerations:

1. **Family Support:** Providing assistance and support to the families of veterans and survivors, including access to psychological support and informational resources.
2. **Self-Care and Training:** Instructing affected

individuals in self-care and coping skills for the maintenance of both physical and mental well-being.

3. **Facilitating Psychosocial Functionality Restoration:** Focusing on the development of social adaptation and interpersonal skills to ensure a successful transition back to civilian life.
4. **Results Monitoring and Evaluation:** Continuously assessing the mental state and functioning of affected individuals to gauge the effectiveness of treatment and training.
5. **Interprofessional Collaboration:** Collaborative efforts involving psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and other professionals to ensure a comprehensive approach.
6. **Preventive Measures:** Implementing actions to prevent stress and PTSD among military personnel and individuals exposed to stressful situations.

The methodology for mental transformation in combat represents an evolving process necessitating coordinated endeavors and resources from the government, military services, mental health professionals, specialized organizations, and the public. Ensuring that affected individuals have access to essential support is crucial for restoring their mental health and fostering a positive life post-combat.

The research objective in this context is to further explore and develop effective methods and strategies aimed at enhancing the mental well-being of veterans and survivors of combat. Enhancing our comprehension of the following aspects is crucial:

1. **Effectiveness of Therapeutic Approaches:** Research endeavors should focus on evaluating the efficacy of diverse psychotherapeutic and pharmacotherapeutic methods for addressing PTSD and combat-related mental health issues. It is essential to ascertain which approaches are most suitable for specific categories of affected individuals.
2. **Risk and Protective Factors:** Investigating factors contributing to the development of PTSD and combat-related trauma, alongside identifying protective factors, is essential. This understanding aids in the development of more effective prevention and support strategies.
3. **Innovative Technologies:** Exploring the use of innovative methods, such as virtual reality or telemedicine, to enhance access to psychotherapy and mental health support.

4. **Physical and Mental Health Interconnection:** Exploring the correlation between the physical and mental well-being of veterans and combat survivors is vital. Designing programs incorporating physical activity can contribute to enhancing mental health.
5. **Socio-Cultural Considerations:** Recognizing the influence of cultural and social factors on the mental health and experiences of affected individuals is essential. Research should maintain cultural sensitivity and adaptability to different groups.
6. **Policy Impact:** Research has the potential to shape the development of policies and support programs for veterans and survivors of combat-related challenges.

In essence, the research methodology should be comprehensive and interdisciplinary, involving psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, medical professionals, as well as military and civil society stakeholders. Effective assistance for those who have undergone combat stress and trauma necessitates the integration of knowledge and resources.

RESULTS

What is PTSD? PTSD, or post-traumatic stress disorder, is a physiological stress response that occurs in the body following a traumatic incident. When the traumatic incident is entirely new and unfamiliar to the individual, and when its duration and level of danger increase (such as prolonged occupation, continuous shelling, air raid alerts, etc.), the extent of damage to mental health can increase exponentially. Notably, women are more susceptible to developing PTSD after experiencing a traumatic event, with a ratio of 1:2.5 compared to men (Vernor, 2019). Without proper professional rehabilitation, PTSD can lead to irreversible psychological damage, the breakdown of social connections, depletion of coping resources, loss of employment, health deterioration, and even suicide.

During a press conference held at Interfax-Ukraine in September 2022, the authors of a study titled “Psychological State of the Ukrainian Population in the Context of Full-Scale War” presented several significant statistical findings. Specifically, over 90% of surveyed Ukrainians displayed symptoms indicative of PTSD, with 57% of respondents being at risk of developing PTSD (*Phase of War-induced Psychological Mobilization of Ukrainians Continues*, 2022).

According to survey data, 40% of those interviewed reported threats to their own lives or had directly witnessed such threats due to their presence in combat zones or under enemy fire. Additionally, over 41% of respondents had family members or loved ones who were or are currently in combat zones, including 16% who had lost someone close to them. The Ministry of Health’s estimates suggest that over 15.7 million Ukrainians will experience psychological challenges in the post-war period, with 3.5 million people requiring therapy and support from medical specialists, including psychiatrists. Approximately 800 thousand Ukrainians will need long-term medication and psychological support. Regrettably, one discouraging conclusion drawn from this data is that there may be insufficient resources to sustain psychological mobilization within society (*Phase of War-induced Psychological Mobilization of Ukrainians Continues*, 2022).

WHO CAN DEVELOP PTSD?

The following categories of individuals are at a higher risk of developing post-traumatic syndrome and/or other mental disorders that can significantly impact their personality during their life and activities in conditions involving military operations, direct and indirect military threats, and other traumatic events (NICE, 2018; Department of the Army, 2009):

1. War veterans.
2. Civilians residing in combat zones.
3. Victims of sexual and/or physical violence.
4. Prisoners and survivors of torture.
5. Victims or witnesses of persistent domestic violence.
6. Survivors of bullying.
7. Witnesses of terrorist attacks.
8. Individuals who have experienced natural disasters and industrial accidents.
9. Women who have undergone traumatic childbirth.
10. Participants in traffic accidents.
11. Workers who have suffered on-the-job injuries.

These groups may be particularly susceptible to psychological trauma and may benefit from appropriate support, intervention, and rehabilitation to mitigate the long-term effects of their experiences.

ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PTSD

Previous research underscores the significance of individual vulnerability and resilience as pivotal factors in the development of PTSD (Horn & Feder, 2018). Furthermore, certain individuals exhibit a heightened predisposition to experiencing such traumatic events. Consequently, drawing abstract comparisons with the past, such as the notion that individuals used to return from the frontlines, establish families, and engage in work without difficulties, while nowadays they struggle to find meaning in life, is fundamentally flawed. Similarly, equating veterans transitioning to civilian life with the general civilian population is inappropriate. Recognizing these objective psychological differences is crucial when formulating strategies for reintegrating individuals into society.

It is imperative to acknowledge that each individual is unique, and their sensitivity (susceptibility) to stress factors, and consequently, the extent of resulting consequences, can substantially differ, even among individuals of the same profession. In essence, possessing the knowledge that a specific person, denoted as "X," has expe-

rienced combat is insufficient for achieving a comprehensive diagnosis.

The presentation of PTSD often occurs sporadically in the form of "flashbacks," wherein old memories resurface vividly. These flashbacks can be triggered by reminders of the traumatic event and can transpire both during waking hours and while asleep. Irrespective of claims of being in a state of complete alertness, individuals grappling with PTSD typically manifest symptoms such as heightened aggression, irritability, and anxiety. They become preoccupied with concerns about their personal safety.

The syndrome can entail a range of physical manifestations, including sleep disturbances, impaired attention, constipation or diarrhea, indigestion, muscle hypertonicity, limb tremors, headaches, seizures, chest pain, and tachycardia. The indication of PTSD often involves experiencing intense fear upon the mention of the traumatic incident or actively avoiding discussions about it. Many individuals with PTSD are unwilling to broach the subject of their trauma and may even distance themselves from individuals who serve as reminders of the event, including those closest



to them. Survivors often grapple with emotional emptiness and a loss of interest in activities that once brought them joy. They may also develop a pervasive mistrust of people in general and nurture a strong belief that the world is a perilous place.

Everyday life problems have a tendency to accumulate, often resembling a growing “snowball” effect. These problems may encompass difficulties at work or in securing employment, complications within intimate relationships, and even contemplation of suicide. As an attempt to evade the harsh reality, individuals may resort to alcohol and drug abuse as a coping mechanism.

In the case of military personnel, they face a notably higher risk of experiencing combat mental trauma, a severe form of PTSD. When the symptoms of destructive stress reach a critical threshold and surpass a serviceman’s adaptive capacities (their level of mental stability), combat psychic trauma can occur. This traumatic experience instills intense feelings of fear, terror, helplessness, and hopelessness in the affected individual. The serviceman’s body undergoes adaptation to the shifting conditions of the combat environment, but this adaptation is no longer focused on fulfilling the combat mission; instead, it becomes an effort to preserve the serviceman’s own psyche. The extent and duration of this immersion into a state of self-preservation can vary widely among individuals.

When delving into the roots and essence of psychological and psychiatric trauma, it is important to note that within the psychoanalytic framework, Sigmund Freud (1921) characterized trauma as an unforeseen and excessive irritation. This irritation is so potent that the psyche’s usual defense mechanisms become ineffectual, rendering the Ego entirely helpless. It results in a breach of the psyche’s protective barriers by an external traumatic force, penetrating the individual’s psychic structure and causing internal disorganization of psychic functioning. According to Freud (1921), certain conditions are necessary for an event to become traumatic:

1. The individual assigns a traumatic meaning to the incident.
2. The person does not respond to the event with active actions.
3. The person does not receive social support from others.

From a cognitive perspective, as explained by Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, individuals develop a foundational set of values throughout their lives that shapes their understanding of the world and

their role within it (Janoff-Bulman & Timko, 1987). When exposed to severe stress, this value system begins to disintegrate. Initially, the surrounding world is perceived as mostly benevolent and just, with favorable events, and the person feels capable of controlling their own experiences.

However, a soldier can suddenly find themselves in an extremely hostile environment where death looms at every turn. They come to realize that a large number of individuals, collectively labeled as the “enemy,” are actively seeking to harm them. These shattered expectations about the world and one’s place in it descend upon a person like an overwhelming avalanche. It becomes evident that controlling one’s own motives, emotional state, actions, and external events is far from guaranteed. The collapse of this foundational value system, coupled with the rapid expenditure of physical, psychological, psychiatric, and spiritual resources, and the inability to adapt physically, leads to a breakdown of the warrior’s psychological stability — a form of *psychological and psychiatric trauma* (Karayani, 2016).

From an anatomical and physiological perspective, psychotrauma is seen as a focal point of pathological regulation in the central nervous system’s adaptive processes. This brain mechanism’s primary function is to preserve the individual by leading them to escape from the fear and horror of war through illness, rendering them unable to continue participating in combat. At the neurotic level of the disorder, a serviceman may experience prominently expressed asthenic, depressive, hysterical, and other syndromes, accompanied by a significant reduction in their ability to critically evaluate their circumstances and engage in purposeful activities.

DISCUSSION

Combat psychotrauma can manifest in various symptoms, including (Department of the Army, 2009):

- Senseless activity of the warrior (so-called “running in circles”).
- Flinching or shrieking in response to a memory or sudden movement.
- Tremors, chills, partial or complete paralysis.
- Blindness, deafness, or amnesia.
- Visual and auditory hallucinations.
- Insensitivity to danger.
- Physical exhaustion, tearfulness, or stupor.
- Panic and fleeing when under fire.

- Isolation from coworkers.
- Speech impairment, like stuttering, slurring, or speaking rapidly.
- Conflict and aggressiveness.

These symptoms can evolve into chronic syndromes and become more complex, taking on the forms of neurasthenic, hysterical, depressive, or obsessive neuroses. In such states, a serviceman may lose their ability to orient themselves in their surroundings and manage their activities.

For instance, the pathological displacement of internal conflict onto somatic grounds can result in hysterical neurosis. This condition may lead to hysterical seizures characterized by convulsive psychoreflexes, which can include sudden crying or laughter, sighs, "barking" coughs, respiratory convulsions, hiccups, and convulsive limb movements, along with a clouded consciousness.

It is important to note that the mentioned symptoms are just a subset of potential consequences, even when discussing a single condition like hysterical neurosis. Other effects may include skin and mucous membrane anesthesia, sensory disorders often appearing on the same side of the body as the anesthesia, "tunnel vision" (concentric narrowing of the field of vision), object bifurcation, "hysterical blindness," and "hysterical deafness."

Motor disorders can manifest as cataleptic seizures, where individuals may fall into sleep-like states, experience lethargy, or enter hypnoid states, often freezing in specific positions. Military personnel may tend to maintain and exacerbate their illness. Different degrees of pretense can manifest as self-mutilation, simulation (feigning symptoms of somatic and mental illness), aggravation (exaggerating symptoms), and dissimulation (concealing the illness).

As combat participants delve deeper into their illness, the likelihood of reactive and protracted psychosis increases. This can lead to acute affective-shock reactions characterized by prolonged agitation or lethargy, sometimes rendering the individual completely immobile. Symptoms may include anxiety, fear, depression, severe cognitive impairment, visual and auditory hallucinations, delusions, and other disturbances that not only incapacitate the combat participant temporarily or long-term but also impair their ability to accurately perceive reality.

It is worth noting that while there's a general pattern where the severity of psychopathological disorders corresponds to the proportion of affected warfighters (with fewer individuals experiencing more severe disorders), understand-

ing and addressing the situation of those affected is crucial. Additionally, although several treatment protocols for PTSD exist, none are comprehensive and universally effective. Therefore, treatment and rehabilitation should be tailored to each individual, considering specific protocols and life circumstances.

Currently, psychotherapists, psychiatrists, and social workers qualified to work with traumatized individuals provide treatment and rehabilitation. Psychotherapy and medication are primary avenues of recovery (Voloshin et al., 2014). Psychotherapy aims to address the root causes, archive the trauma, and disarm its impact. Approved medication therapy protocols often include antidepressants, which have an effectiveness rate of approximately 60% when used without psychotherapy (Reisman, 2016). Less than one-third of patients experience full recovery. Cannabis and its derivatives are also commonly used worldwide to treat PTSD, but their effectiveness remains insufficient.

Raising awareness should be a community effort, especially for the loved ones who support individuals with PTSD. They need to understand the underlying issues, the causes, and how to prevent or respond to seizures and flashbacks. Public awareness campaigns about these problems are essential but unfortunately often neglected. Stigmatization, hate speech, and exclusion from society should not be tolerated. Failing to address these issues in civilian life can push combat veterans towards criminality. A neglectful attitude, coupled with the inability of the state and society to provide alternatives, can lead to individuals with unresolved issues turning to a life of crime.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

When researching the phenomenon of PTSD, it is crucial to address various questions that serve as a foundation for comprehensive scientific and practical research. The ultimate goal is to develop effective methodologies and rehabilitation programs for combatants, internally displaced persons, and civilians in war zones. Here are some key questions to consider:

1. Explore the historical development of the phenomenon, including its actualization and resolution in the 20th century.
2. Examine whether the existing terminology from previous studies can be unified or if

these should be considered as distinct phenomena.

3. Assess how modern methods of warfare may have altered previously researched phenomena.
4. Investigate whether the disease in question can be viewed as a mental defense mechanism and to what extent.
5. Define and analyze the concept of psychotolerance.
6. Explore the influence of the educational system on psychotolerance.
7. Investigate whether the age of military personnel is related to the parameter of psychotolerance.
8. Determine what factors make individuals initially susceptible to trauma, including the range and extent of injury.
9. Examine the role of concepts such as truth and justice in psychosocial resilience.
10. Analyze the impact of faith, philosophy, and personal beliefs on psychosilience.
11. Explore the significance of concepts like fortune and luck for warriors.
12. Assess the role of the “death cult” in warrior training.
13. Define and study the concept of “self-sacrifice.”
14. Investigate how being on the front line, direct combat contact, encirclement, separation from main forces, or captivity affect the psyche.
15. Analyze the benefits and harms of stress and distress in the context of military operations.
16. Explore the mechanism of stupor as it relates to the phenomenon.
17. Consider alternative professions for warriors in the context of socialization.
18. Assess whether personal growth can be a psychotherapeutic method of healing.
19. Determine if the reorganization of a warrior’s personality takes priority over medication.
20. Explore whether there are differences in syndrome acquisition based on the branch of military service.
21. Investigate the reasons behind the “heroization of war” and its comparability to the phenomenon under study.
22. Examine how the degree of damage can be regulated and what core values a warrior should have.
23. Define the characteristics of an effective psychological rehabilitation center.
24. Explore the importance of individualized rehabilitation techniques and programs.
25. Assess the role of individuals affected by the phenomenon in post-war processes.
26. Investigate the role of adaptive sports in rehabilitation.
27. Analyze the phenomenon of individuals turning to crime as an alternative to war and how to address this issue.
28. Define the procedures for interaction with charitable foundations, sports organizations, and state institutions in the context of rehabilitation.

Military confrontations create extreme emergency situations that result in psychological and psychiatric disorders affecting various categories of individuals, including military personnel, civilians in war zones, and internally displaced persons. These disorders encompass a wide range of pathological conditions, with PTSD being a prominent manifestation.

Providing assistance to individuals with psychological and psychiatric disorders in such contexts should involve a systematic approach, including the following steps:

1. Safe and timely evacuation of affected individuals from the emergency zone to a secure environment.
2. Utilizing both medication-based and non-medication-based therapeutic approaches.
3. Offering counseling and support.
4. Implementing specialized psychotherapeutic and psychosomatic techniques and methodologies.
5. Medical and social rehabilitation.
6. Preventive medical care to minimize the risk of further deterioration of mental health.



Effective assistance to victims requires close coordination among various professionals, including general practitioners, psychosamologists, psychotherapists, clinical psychologists, and social workers from relevant ministries and organizations, such as power ministries, ministries of emergency situations, and healthcare institutions. Additionally, the involvement of volunteer and public organizations can play a crucial role in providing support and resources for those affected by these emergencies.

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STORIES IN DIVERSE MEDIA?

PLAY,
STORY TELLING, &
CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY
IN THE **GOOGLEBURG**
GALAXY

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61439/XTBP1411>



ABSTRACT

This paper explores the role of language and storytelling as fundamental aspects of human experience. It emphasizes the importance of critical media literacy in today's tech-dominated world, where diverse stories and media are essential for democracy and freedom. The paper also highlights the impact of social media on storytelling and the need to challenge the dominance of profit-driven platforms. It underscores the power of storytelling through play and critical media literacy in shaping our understanding of the world and advocating for diverse perspectives.

Keywords

media, Googleburg Galaxy, story telling, critical media literacy, stories

INTRODUCTION

Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan is often remembered for his idiom that technology can be viewed as an extension of the self. For close to 300,000 years, language has served as a human technology. Through language, the ability to play and tell stories has served as an extension of the self

into physical and digital environments (Handwerk, 2021). But language is more than an extension of self; it is also a core component of subjecthood. The choice of words (storytelling) we use to categorize, order, structure, and explain the chaos of human life offers different glimpses into our subjectivity based entirely on the language we select (the stories we tell). In contemporary research narratives, language often acts as a certain indicator of the issue under investigation (Lee et al., 2022; Moreno et al., 2021; Ogren & Sandhofer, 2021; Park et al., 2022; Ríssola et al., 2022). It is also an intriguing scientific problem that draws significant attention from researchers across multiple disciplines (Cummins, 2021; Ferretti et al., 2017; Goodman & Frank, 2016; Kirby et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2022). The words that describe the spaces we occupy impact how we exist within those spaces, and of course, who benefits from such interpretations. We use language to craft the stories by which we embody the world we live in. Language organizes one's place within that world by describing who belongs and who benefits from access and privilege. In the Googleburg Galaxy of the 21st century, a world dominated by Google, Apple, Amazon, Facebook, and more, subjecthood requires critical media literacy and an active engagement with media technologies to ensure diverse stories and diverse media (Gennaro & Miller, 2020). The goal of the article is to analyze stories across different platforms such as games, storytelling, and critical media literacy within the Googleburg galaxy.

RESEARCH METHODS

Developing a methodology to investigate stories in diverse media, play, storytelling, and critical media literacy in the Googleburg galaxy is crucial for comprehending and analyzing information presentation in various formats, including the vast expanse of data accessible in this galaxy. Key facets of this methodology include: (a) recognizing the contextual backdrop when examining stories in different media, encompassing socio-cultural, historical, and political dimensions; (b) engaging in critical media literacy, entailing the evaluation of information sources, validation, and differentiation between fact and opinion/speculation; (c) adopting a multimedia approach that integrates text, graphics, video, audio, and more; (d) investigating games as a form of media, specifically video games, which play a vital role in narrative storytelling, delving into their plots, ethical dimensions, and their interaction with players; (e)



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comprehending how stories unfold in diverse media, including narrative techniques and expressive methods, aiding in the examination of these stories' impact on the audience; (f) the methodology should consider the intended audience and the potential influence on them, emphasizing

the importance of understanding how stories shape individuals' thoughts and beliefs; and (g) incorporating ethical considerations into storytelling across various media forms. Broadly, the approach to researching stories in diverse media necessitates a deep comprehension of the media landscape and the skill to critically assess information, regardless of its presentation format. In a Googleburg world where information is abundant and diverse, this methodology is particularly vital for discerning factual accuracy from misinformation and sustaining a critical perspective towards all encountered information.

Exploring the methodology for researching stories in diverse media, games, storytelling, and critical media literacy is a significant and intriguing area of study, especially in today's world where media profoundly influence perceptions of the past and present. To initiate this exploration: (a) determining the historical topic, period, or phenomenon for research across different media, such as World War I, the Middle Ages, or the history of religious conflicts; (b) selecting the media formats under consideration, identifying options like movies, television, computer games, literature, comics, music, etc.; (c) developing an analytical framework or evaluation methodology to assess each media format, including the analysis of factual reliability, portrayal of historical events, and characterization of figures; (d) investigating the content of various media formats related to the selected topic, collecting data, creating analytical notes, and recording observations; (e) comparing how the story is presented in diverse media formats and from different perspectives, scrutinizing emphasized or distorted aspects in each medium; (f) exploring how media representations of history can impact public perception and understanding of historical events, encompassing an examination of reactions from viewers, players, or readers to specific historical depictions and interpretations; and (g) examining how varied audiences perceive and respond to historical information in different media formats, probing into the levels of media literacy and critical thinking among viewers, players, or readers.

The research methodology should consistently evolve and adjust to shifts in media and society. Study methods of stories in diverse media and practicing critical media literacy aids in comprehending how media formats shape the perception and interpretation of history, fostering critical thinking among information consumers. The research on stories in diverse media and critical media literacy encompasses:

1. Conducting content analysis of media content to identify specific historical facts or aspects emphasized, ignored, or distorted in various media formats. Utilize quantitative methods to assess information distribution.
2. Employing category-specific content analysis to assess the information content of media formats within the context of the designated "category" or the associated level of accuracy. This aids in assessing the significance of alignment with historical facts across various mediums.
3. Monitoring audience responses to historical presentations in different media by analyzing comments, discussions, reviews, and critiques. This provides insights into how viewers, players, or readers perceive the information and how it shapes their perspectives.
4. Employing questionnaires and interviews with the audience to explore their perception of historical information in the media formats they consume. This helps uncover their knowledge, perspectives, and attitudes toward history.
5. Applying mediation theories to examine how media impact the perception and comprehension of history. For instance, investigate the influences and mediations that media exert on the development of historical narratives.

If Googleburg serves as a metaphor for the contemporary digital landscape, it becomes imperative to examine and analyze trends in the digital media galaxy. This entails scrutinizing how technological advancements impact the representation of stories and contribute to media literacy. These methodologies prove valuable for exploring historical narratives across diverse media formats and cultivating critical media literacy in the Googleburg galaxy or any other digital environment. It remains crucial to underscore that researching stories in media demands objectivity, thorough analysis, and a profound comprehension of its societal implications.

RESULTS

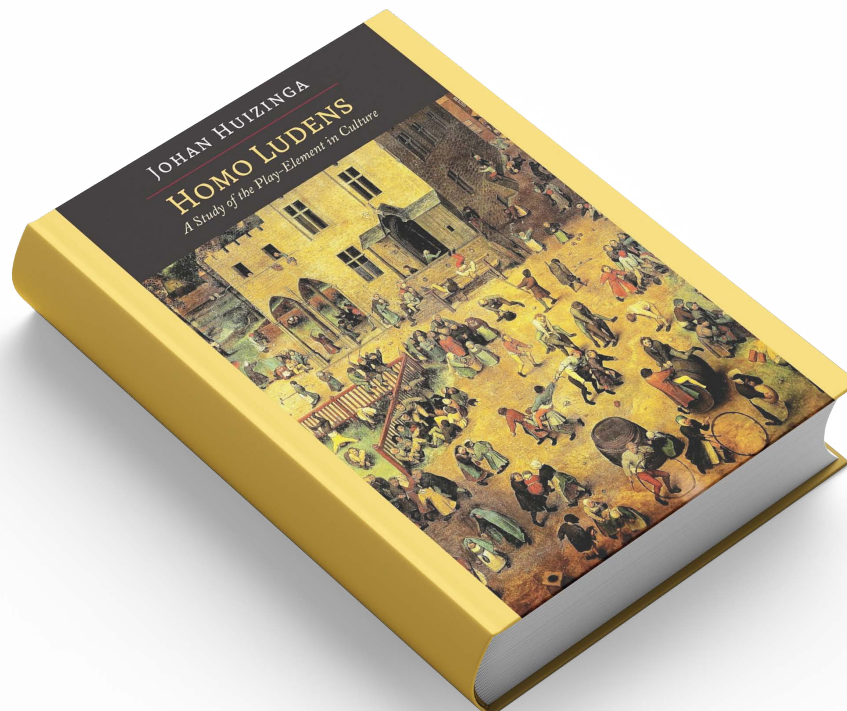
Consider the term *homo sapiens*, universally agreed upon to best describe the species to which all current human life belongs. As Yuval Noah Harari explains in *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, there was at one point in history many species of the genus *homo*; however, the only species that survives today is the *homo sapien*

(Harari, 2014). The Latin translation for the term *sapien* is “wise man” indicating, as Harari argues, it was the intellect of sapiens that allowed for their adaptability, which included the creation of and use of tools. Using their intelligence, sapiens both adapted to their surrounding environments simultaneously as they altered those environments to human life. Such adaptability was paramount for sapiens survival and tantamount to its ultimate dominance over other homo species despite their comparative lack of size, strength, speed.

However, we are more than just knowledgeable beings. We are also storytelling beings –*narrans*. John D. Niles (1999), in his work *Homo Narrans: the Poetics and Anthropology of Oral Literature*, argued it was the use of language as a tool, which made sapiens unique. For Niles, sapiens adapted and prospered in environments around the globe by using language to communicate their knowledge through stories, which created opportunities to adjust the self to the environment or the environment to the self. All animals communicate, but storytelling turns communication into animation, bringing language to life. Storytelling is a uniquely sapien trait that allows for the sharing of wisdom across generations beyond that which is already passed on in the genetic code of each animal.

Play is a complementary trait to intellect and storytelling for our species of homo, which has been advantageous to survival. In *Homo Ludens: a Study of the Play-Element in Culture* Johan Huizinga (1949/1998) discusses the crucial role that play occupied in the establishment of sapien civilizations and societies, suggesting it to be of equal importance to language and myth (storytelling). Play, as a system, takes language and shapes it to tell stories. Play, as a technique, engages sapiens in their concrete situations, challenging them to question their role in these situations and empowering them to engage as active meaning-makers in those to follow. Play, as a method, is creative and expressive. Play, as a methodology, offers contestation, rebellion, and subversion opportunities. Fundamentally, play is the process through which our subjective selves digest our objective realities by animating language, legitimating and/or destabilizing stories, and crystalizing objectification or activating subjectivity in every one of us.

Critical media literacy can be viewed as an approach that encourages play. As a social justice project, critical media literacy uses play to unpack representation, ideology, and economics issues in media and technology. According to Douglas Kellner and Jeff Share in *The Critical Media Literacy*



Guide: Engaging Media and Transforming Education, practicing critical media literacy involves a conceptual understanding of six intersecting themes: social constructivism, languages and semiotics, audience and positioning, politics of representation, production and institutions, and social and environmental justice (Kellner & Share, 2019). Hegemony, for example, works because of the presence of the press and its ability to shape human interaction by dominating the venues of storytelling and play (Gramsci, 1971). This is equally true for the culture industry (Adorno,

1991). In fact, one of the real dangers of capitalism has been the exploitation of the working class by a few elites and the acceptance of this marginalization by the working class as a "normal" component of everyday life (this is hegemony!). The danger of capitalism and a primary reason for its growth and success has been its ability to manufacture consent, a process by which ruling elites control the storytelling process; limiting the number of stories that get told, shaping the process of how they are shared, legitimating the criteria by whom they are spoken, and regulating



the channels through which they get distributed (Herman & Chomsky, 1998). There is even a desire to manage how these stories get consumed! Capitalism, on the surface, appears to be an economic system. However, the underlying actions that grease the wheels are ideological and based not on what gets sold but on how stories get told and consumed.

SOCIAL MEDIA. STORYTELLING AND PANDEMIC PLAY

The Internet and social media have fundamentally transformed our world in recent decades, affecting many areas of human endeavor (Alarcón et al., 2018; Chester et al., 2020; Ding et al., 2017; Mudrick et al., 2016; Vaterlaus et al., 2015). Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are altering the practices of human storytelling. For more than 6000 years, as the world changed around us, sapiens survived by adapting and telling stories. Storytelling provides comfort explaining the reasons behind societal changes and has helped sapiens adapt to change by marking out the steps required to successfully adjust to the emerging world. More recently, in the case of COVID19, where the changes were instant, global, and with dire consequences, the primary spaces for storytelling migrated to social media. With people in lockdown and self-isolation around the globe, play, work, socializing, shopping, fitness, art, culture, leisure, learning, and music were relocated to social media spaces. However, social media spaces are not free public spaces. Social media platforms are businesses owned, controlled, and monitored for profit. Therefore, their impact on the processes of language, storytelling, and play occurs within a framework that serves their economic interests. The impact of social media is now being researched by many different scholars and experts in various fields (Grover et al., 2022; see also Chen et al., 2022; Reisach, 2021; Turner, 2018).

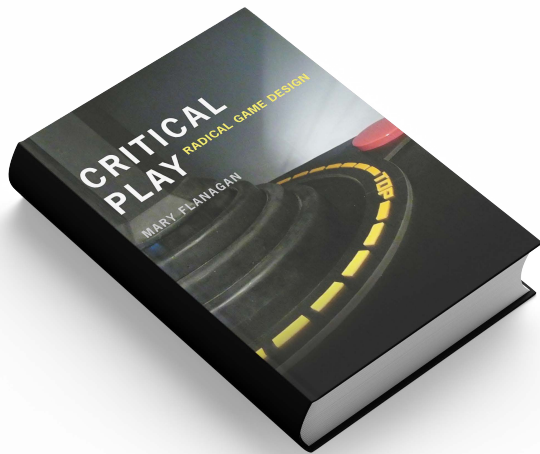
Here, an area of particular interest is young people's storytelling on social media, as young people are the largest user group of social media (Third et al., 2017). In the spring of 2020, COVID19 forced the migration of all aspects of young peo-



ple's lives to the digital. Around the world, outdoor public spaces were closed, schools were shut down, sports teams and clubs were cancelled, and the opportunity to gather and congregate in public areas was discouraged and even made illegal in some parts. By April 2021, UNICEF reported that over 1.6 billion children in 190 countries had been displaced from public spaces by COVID19, moving schools and activities to the digital where available (Miks & McIlwaine, 2021). Research on young people, social media, and human rights at York University in Toronto, Canada, in 2021 explored young people's play during COVID19.¹ In a pandemic and post-pandemic world, access to play spaces remain a priority for democracy since play by its very definition is supposed to exist outside of ordinary life. In *Homo Ludens*, Huizinga (1949/1998) argued that humans play by entering the "magic circle": "temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart" (p. 10).

Within the magic circle, individuals take on a set of expected roles, actions, and persona that are different from outside of the game. When asked about their experiences of play during the pandemic, young people frequently expressed the primary role occupied for social media for connecting with other people during COVID19 lockdowns. For the young people who spoke about their pandemic play, COVID19 had displaced the location where play happened, from liminal

¹ Under the supervision of Dr. Steve Gennaro, this research was conducted in collaboration with more than 50 York University Children, Childhood and Youth students and over 120 young people from the greater Toronto area who documented how they played during lockdown, isolation, and the global pandemic.



spaces or third spaces outside of adult control and direct supervision, onto social media platforms and often inside the primary area of the home (to access the technology required to visit social media platforms) with limited privacy. These findings from the pandemic play research are not the isolated experiences of youth. Therefore, when a small group of proprietors control the magic circle, the types of stories that get told, shared, liked, and crystalized into popular discourse are framed through the guiding principles of the proprietors who operate these spaces for profit. It is no coincidence that billionaire owners of Amazon, Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Oracle (as examples) profited greatly from COVID19 by owning the very platforms and commons where stories get told and where play happens.²

DISCUSSION

In “The Culture Industry, Enlightenment as Mass Deception” Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer noted the sedative possibilities of entertainment (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2006). For Adorno and Horkheimer, the goal of the culture industry is to entertain the masses establishing agreement (or consensus) between the media, the medium, and the media viewer. As Adorno and Horkheimer (2006) argue, when people are entertained, they uncritically accept the media that sedates them, the ideological bias embedded

in the structure of the medium, and the diversity (or lack thereof) in media stories. If storytelling shapes who we are and has the power to alter the reality we live in, then the subversive power of play should not be overlooked. For children, it has been primarily agreed-upon dating back to G. Stanley Hall and the beginning of adolescent psychology through to Jean Piaget and his staged theory of cognitive development, until the present moment, that “play” occupies a primary role in the mental, social, and even moral development of young people and their understanding of language, culture, and self (Hall, 1904; Piaget, 1985). Be it child’s play or adult storytelling; play occupies a subversive position, whereby it creates a safe space to challenge, critique, and even destabilize social norms. Learning social roles, often called “identity formation,” occurs through subversive play. Through play, children take the stories that explain the world and their role in it- and act them out. In acting out the stories of a culture, children choose to accept or deny these stories as truth.

Mary Flanagan (2009) argues in *Critical Play: Radical Play Design* that play can act as a space for subversion whereby an individual can use the play space to explore and speak back to social issues where there is dissonance between the game player and their lived experiences. When the stories told by the culture industry are consumed critically, the lack of diversity and the crisis of representation become immediately visible. As Flanagan notes “[p]lay is, by definition, a safety space. If a designer or artist can make safe spaces that allow the negotiation of real-world concepts, issues, and ideas, then a game can be successful in facilitating the exploration of innovative solutions for apparently intractable problems” (Flanagan, 2009). Despite being subjected to the prescribed stories generated by the algorithms of Google, Facebook, Instagram, Apple, Amazon and more; we can still be designers who reclaim the magic circle as a play space to tell stories. A true word can still be spoken back to power. Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* describes this power to name “the word” as a core component for liberation as it enables the subject to also name the world, thereby participating in transforming it (Freire & Ramos, 2000). It is therefore a requirement for democracy that all

² “The 400 richest Americans added \$4.5tn to their wealth last year, a 40% rise, even as the pandemic shuttered large parts of the US, according to Forbes magazine’s latest tally of the country’s richest people” (Rushe, 2021). For more on the inequity of capital during COVID, see the January 2021 OXFAM report by E. Berkhout et al. (2021).

people have the freedom to tell their stories and the opportunity to access free spaces where these stories can be shared. Examples of critical media literacy, practiced as subversive play can take multiple forms, such as “unplaying, re-dressing or reskinning, and rewriting” (Flanagan, 2009). This is precisely what has happened on social media across 2020 and 2021 in response to the murder of George Floyd or the discovery of mass graves of unidentified Indigenous Children from Canadian Residential Schools.

Louis Althusser (1970) argued that ideology is most dangerous not when it is seen as an ideology but rather when it is dismissed as “normal” and a regular part of everyday life. Social media is the home of digital play. Social media platforms operate within a framework of normalcy — privileging some while actively denying others. Ruha Bejamin’s *Race After Technology* and Safiya Noble’s *Algorithms of Oppression* provide clear examples of how the normalcy of technology create false notions of diversity, equity, and representation (Benjamin, 2019; Noble, 2018). If we begin from the premise that language is a technology and an extension of the self, then story telling is the very way that we become in the world, which surrounds us. And play is the process by which we consume and tell stories. Therefore, critical media literacy can help illuminate the importance of play and play spaces to diverse stories and diverse media in the Googleburg Galaxy, which are essential to freedom and democracy.

CONCLUSION

Exploring stories in diverse media, including games, storytelling, and critical media literacy within the context of Googleburg, involves:

1. It is beneficial to adopt a multimedia approach that incorporates text, audio, video, graphics, and interactive elements when delving into stories across different media.
2. Applying critical analysis to assess how history is presented in different media is crucial. This includes identifying and examining stereotypes, biases, or distortions that may be present.
3. Considering the cultural context and influences on historical representations in different media is essential for a comprehensive understanding of how stories are shaped and communicated.

Games are examined in the context of: (a) interactive history: analyzing the use of games to tell stories through interactive plots and player choices; (b) historical accuracy: Investigating the degree of historical accuracy in games, including the accuracy of events, characters, and atmosphere; (c) impact on perception: exploring how games can influence perception and understanding of history, especially in younger generations; (d) storytelling, narrative strategies: exploring different narrative strategies in storytelling and their impact on historical understanding; (e) narrative in digital formats: examining the effectiveness of digital formats (video, audio, digital books) for conveying historical narratives; (f) the emotional dimension: analyzing how emotional context in stories can affect the perception of history; (g) critical media literacy in Googleburg, evaluating information: developing critical media literacy skills to evaluate the credibility of historical information in online environments; (h) use of technology: exploring how technology, such as search engines and social media, influences the formation of historical consciousness; (i) digital literacy: developing digital literacy to effectively engage with different media at Googleburg; (j) a critical look at algorithms: understanding how search and recommendation algorithms can shape distorted representations of history and how to counter this; and (k) combining these aspects will help create an integrated approach to exploring story in different media, including games, storytelling, and the development of critical media literacy in the context of Googleburg.

In conclusion, the following methods prove highly effective for research of stories in diverse media (gaming, traditional storytelling, and critical media literacy) within the context of Googleburg and conducting comprehensive content analysis:

1. Ethnographic Approach: Applying ethnographic methods to study people’s interaction with historical content in different media.
2. Sociological Research: Utilizing surveys and focus groups to identify preferences, perceptions, and the impact of games, stories, and media on collective and individual historical consciousness.
3. Experimentation: Developing research projects, including creating interactive projects such as games or digital storytelling, to test the impact of different media on perceptions of history.

4. Developing Educational Programs: Using media materials to evaluate the effectiveness of interactive learning and the formation of historical understanding.
5. Theoretical Framework.
6. Semiotic Analysis: Applying a semiotic approach to investigate symbols, signs, and story structures in different media.
7. Reception Theory: Using reception theory to explore how audiences perceive and interact with historical content.
8. Research Ethics: Paying attention to cultural context and being ethical, respecting cultural sensitivities when researching history in different media.
9. Transparency of the Research Process: Ensuring transparency in data collection and processing, as well as openness of criteria for evaluating the results.
10. Collective Reflection: Conducting a collective reflection involving researchers, audiences, and community members to better understand the effects of the research.
11. Comparative Analysis: Performing a comparative analysis of the impact of historical media in different cultures and comparing their perception and impact.
12. Format Comparison: Exploring differences in the perception of stories through different media such as books, movies, games, and digital storytelling.

This methodology offers a broad spectrum of approaches to examine stories in diverse media within the context of Googleburg. The integration of both qualitative and quantitative methods, practical experiments, and theoretical frameworks facilitates a comprehensive understanding of how media shapes historical consciousness.

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THE ORIGINS OF THE “BRAINWASHING” THEORY. FROM THE PRIVATE LECTURES OF PROFESSOR MASSIMO INTROVIGNE

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ABSTRACT

This article delves deep into the origins of the term “brainwashing” and traces its evolution from a historical backdrop involving unscrupulous psy-

chologists and the geopolitical tensions of the Cold War era. The author explores how people in the academic world perceived “brainwashing” and examines the methods used for it. With a keen emphasis on Professor Massimo Introvigne’s lectures



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and the pivotal role of ideology, the article unveils how this term was employed for the manipulation of public opinion and how it found its footing within the realm of religious extremism. The article then embarks on a historical journey, taking us from the roots of “brainwashing” in Nazi Germany to its subsequent resonance during the Cold War in the United States.

Furthermore, it sheds light on the extended application of “brainwashing” within the realms of religion and anti-cult movements. In particular, it delves into the thought-provoking perspective of Margaret Singer, who categorized religions into two distinct types and raised the enduring question of how to discern if someone has undergone the process of ‘brainwashing.’ In summary, this article offers a comprehensive historical exploration of the term “brainwashing,” underscoring its lack of a solid scientific foundation.

Keywords

brainwashing, religious extremists, counter-cult, anti-cult movements, ideology

INTRODUCTION

The term “brainwashing” conjures up images of espionage, cults, and mind control. It is commonly thought of as the process of forcibly manipulating an individual’s beliefs, thoughts, and behaviors to align them with a specific ideology, agenda, or group. This topic was and continues to be an area of research interest today. (Albarracín, 2022; Cai & Mason, 2022; Hassan & Shah, 2019; Pailhès & Kuhn, 2021). Particularly given the rapid development of information technology, it is interesting to consider what role social networks play (Bastick, 2021; Chang & Tsai, 2022; Chen et al., 2022; Ferrara, 2017). In everyday conversa-

tions, we often use the term “brainwashed” to describe someone who has been manipulated or influenced in a harmful way (Atran, 2020; Bauza & Bouchard, 2018; Laskin, 2021, Leistedt, 2017). However, it is not widely known that this phrase has its roots in a significant historical event involving unethical psychologists and the Cold War tensions.

The term “brainwashing” can denote a method or tactic involving misinformation or the manipulation of public sentiment. In this context, “brainwashing” involves an effort to shape the beliefs, attitudes, or perceptions of individuals or groups by disseminating disinformation, falsehoods, or prevailing stereotypes. This can encompass the propagation of inaccurate news, manipulation of social media, or the utilization of various approaches to sway public opinion and cultivate specific stereotypes or beliefs. To counteract brainwashing and the dissemination of disinformation, it is crucial to approach information critically, verify sources, and ensure accuracy before believing or sharing it.

Additionally, promoting media literacy is essential to foster a more informed and rational public discourse. The manipulation of public opinion and the spread of disinformation are particularly pertinent challenges in today’s information society. To gain a deeper comprehension of these concepts and techniques, it is beneficial to examine key factors and tools employed in their execution. Social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, serve as convenient channels for disseminating disinformation and influencing public opinion due to their swift dissemination and extensive audience reach. The misuse of bots (automated programs posting messages online) facilitates the widespread dissemination of disinformation, contributing to alterations in the perception of information across a broad audience. Certain

media platforms, particularly those with limited editorial oversight, may permit the circulation of false news and dubious content. The application of psychological tactics, such as leveraging emotional influence, fear, and outrage, can amplify the efficacy of manipulation and disinformation. Frequently, these manipulative practices and the spread of misinformation are employed to further specific political, economic, or personal objectives. The algorithms employed by social media and other platforms can establish "filtered bubbles," reinforcing users' inclination to seek only confirming information. To address these challenges, collaboration among society, technology firms, law enforcement agencies, and citizens is essential. Working together can involve identifying and curbing disinformation, enhancing media literacy, fostering critical thinking, and encouraging an unbiased comprehension of information.

In 2016, renowned sociologist of religions, Professor Massimo Introvigne from Italy, was invited by Ukrainian scholar Oleg Maltsev to visit Odessa (Newspaper "Public Surf," 2016). During his visit, Professor Introvigne delivered a series of lectures on the subjects of counter-cult and anti-cult movements. These lectures covered their historical context, the methods employed, and, of course, how religious extremists profit from their activities. Professor Introvigne emphasized that at the core of the activities of religious extremists lies the development of a suitable ideology because everything begins with ideology.

To illustrate the significance of ideology in his lectures, Professor Introvigne drew upon numerous instances of terrorist attacks. It became apparent that explaining the motives behind these attacks was a complex task, and leading scholars discarded notions that terrorists were driven solely by insanity or financial gain, as many of them were financially well-off individuals. Consequently, it was established that terrorist actions were underpinned by a particular idea, often rooted in religious ideology. In the context of religious extremists, the ideology was closely associated with the concept of "brainwashing" (Newspaper "Unsolved Crimes," 2016c).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research content involves logically justifying the selection of methodological approaches based on the formulated criteria by the author.

This includes interpreting these approaches in relation to potential objects and subjects of research within the specified problem set and organizing the obtained results and conclusions systematically. The primary methods employed include logically justifying the choice of methodological approaches, specifying the selected and relevant provisions of these approaches for the subjects under study, and logically structuring the principles of researching information and disinformation issues. The article's presentation logic for both procedures and research outcomes aligns with the sequence of its implementation.

The methodology ensures a comprehensive acquisition of information about the studied process or phenomenon. The theoretical and methodological foundation of the research is delineated as a collection of approaches, wherein the synergetic and information approach serves as the overarching scientific basis, the axiological approach functions as the theoretical and methodological strategy, and the cybernetic and activity approaches serve as practical tactics for problem-solving in diverse areas related to information and disinformation.

Within the framework of this article, when addressing brainwashing methods, it's crucial to distinguish between the scientific validity of this concept and the strategies employed by individuals, organizations, and social institutions to deceive others for personal gain. When exploring methods of disinformation, let's refer to the research of Oleg Maltsev (2022) and his book "Enigma or Crime: Real Life and Economics," which outlines four distinct methods of disinformation:

- **Crude work:** an unsubstantiated theory where the subject is offered to a person without any research methodology, reliable facts and evidence, without photography as an instrument of scientific research and without validating scientific data. It is a simple statement, a theory or hypothesis, unsupported by anything.
- **Truth with "discount" conclusions.** In this case, the data is conscientiously collected, and the source material is presented. Although collecting data is one part of the scientific work, there are other stages as data processing and conclusions that are not considered. At this stage self-deception begins. Despite having "accurate" raw data, conclusions that are made based on them can be absurd.

- **Clean job:** the best historical example is the work of the Franciscan monks. These people were “experts” in rewriting history: they produced treatises, documents, and other material evidence at the highest level. It could be the case that even 100 years later, most people have no idea that they are dealing with a fake document.
- **Enigmatic Mass:** the subject of research is secret and unknown. For example, UFOs are enigmatic, and it is an exciting topic for many. Since it is impossible to verify the authenticity of their existence, any information “wrapped” under this topic can be fed to people.

All of the above-mentioned techniques, methods, and ways of research are used against people in all areas on a daily basis. Meanwhile, provided a person wants to find out what is actually true and what is not — he can find that answer in most of the cases. But usually, he does not even pose questions as such. Moreover, gaining an understanding of these four methods enables us to view the concept of brainwashing through this analytical lens.

RESULTS

Remarkably, the theory of “brainwashing” has its origins in Nazi Germany and was put into practice by the Munich Institute for Social Research. Another influential institution working on this theory was founded in Frankfurt. German scholars aimed to synthesize Marxism and psychoanalysis, merging the ideas of Karl Marx (Marx & Engels, 1975) and Sigmund Freud (1999) to elucidate the mass indoctrination of citizens into the Nazi party. Prominent figures in this field included Rudolf Arnheim (1972) and Walter Reich (1976).

Initially, the explanation for these events rested on the belief that the bourgeoisie, alarmed by the Great October Socialist Revolution, sought to establish a political party to safeguard their interests. However, when these scholars observed Nazi parades, it became evident that the majority of participants were not from the bourgeoisie but ordinary individuals with modest means. This raised a new question: how had proletarians aligned themselves with the bourgeoisie, originally believed to have conflicting interests?

During the course of their rigorous research endeavors, German scholars arrived at a profound and consequential revelation: the working-class population gravitated towards

and immersed themselves within the folds of the Nazi party due to a sophisticated and intricate process of psychological manipulation. This revelation compelled them to formulate an elaborate psychological theory, aimed at unraveling the intricate web of influence and control that led individuals down this path (Newspaper “Unsolved Crimes,” 2016b).

As the sands of time unfurled, scholars hailing from the esteemed Frankfurt School found themselves inexorably compelled to seek refuge beyond the borders of Germany. This necessity arose from their dual identity as individuals of Jewish descent and fierce opponents of the despotic Nazi regime. In their newfound sanctuary within the United States, these erudite minds, imbued with academic zeal, continued to nurture the flames of intellectual inquiry. Some among them even found their expertise enlisted by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

However, with the culmination of World War II and the annihilation of the Nazi regime, the demand for their scholarly acumen waned, as the specter of Nazism receded into the annals of history, no longer a subject of immediate concern for the United States. Simultaneously, a seismic shift unfolded on the global stage, marked by a burgeoning geopolitical, military, economic, and ideological standoff between the burgeoning socialist bloc, anchored by the USSR, and the dominant capitalist bastion, led by the United States.

In this pivotal historical epoch, the specialized knowledge and wisdom of these expatriate German scholars, who had already disseminated their teachings to eager American followers, found renewed relevance, as American society sought an explanation for the process of becoming a communist. Without hesitation, these distinguished scholars leveraged the same analytical framework they had hitherto employed to elucidate the Nazi party membership, now applied to unravel the process of becoming a Communist (Newspaper “Unsolved Crimes,” 2016a).

The scientific community’s focus turned towards the examination of communism in China, where it was referred to as “Maoism.” There existed a belief that Mao Zedong possessed a capacity for profound mental influence over individuals, a notion that naturally piqued the interest of American intelligence agencies.

Consequently, two eminent professors, Robert Jay Lifton (1961) and Edgar H. Schein et al. (1961), both disciples of the foundational

Frankfurt School, undertook the mantle of researching this particular facet. Driven by their scholarly dedication, Lifton embarked on a mission assigned by intelligence agencies, leading him to Hong Kong to investigate the nuances of mental manipulation on the ground. While Lifton and Shine did unearth elements of psychological influence, they found them to be relatively limited in scope. It is noteworthy to mention that in China, the pursuit of psychological control often resorted to extreme measures, including violence and torture. In stark contrast to the way these findings were interpreted by the American Congress, the CIA took a different path. CIA operative Edward Hunter, working as a journalist for a Miami publication, began crafting sensational narratives that posited the idea that the Chinese possessed the capability to transform any American into a Communist through the

insidious process of "brainwashing" (Hunter, 1951). This metaphor resonated powerfully within American society, leading many to believe in the feasibility of such "brainwashing."

The American CIA even went so far as to produce a fabricated manual on the art of "brainwashing," ostensibly authored by the head of the USSR's KGB. The Church of Scientology was tasked with disseminating this spurious textbook. What stood out was that the so-called "brainwashing theory" lacked a rigorous scientific basis. Nevertheless, the United States harbored genuine apprehensions about the potential for brainwashing. FBI Director John Edgar Hoover vividly illustrated the concept of brainwashing by using a metaphor, likening it to a vinyl record within one's mind. According to Hoover, the Communists would extract this vinyl record from the head, inscribe their desired content upon it, and then reinsert it, effectively altering an individual's beliefs and convictions (Newspaper "Unsolved Crimes," 2016a).

During the Cold War era, a notable cinematic work that emerged was "The Manchurian Candidate" (Frankenheimer, 1962). In its storyline, a young patriot falls victim to Soviet spies who subject him to a three-day ordeal of intensive "brainwashing." The success of this brainwashing is such that he later becomes an unwitting assassin, targeted to eliminate the President of the United States. At this historical juncture, as highlighted by Professor M. Introvigne, two distinct viewpoints were in a kind of ideological clash:

1. The perspective put forth by Professors Lifton (1961) and Shine posited that a person, when pushed to the brink and subjected to violence and extreme stress, could indeed undergo a transformation in their beliefs.
2. The second perspective, although lacking scientific rigor, was skillfully propagated and asserted the existence of a systematic process of "brainwashing." This viewpoint depicted a scenario in which an individual's brain "record" was erased and then overwritten. As a result of this well-crafted propaganda, the term "brainwashing" became synonymous with what the Communists purportedly did, thus influencing the perception of many Americans at that time.

However, in the 1960s and 70s, the term "brainwashing" expanded its scope and found application in two novel domains: religion and anti-cult



movements. William Sargant (1957), a psychiatrist and the head of one of Canada's major psychiatric associations, notably employed the term "brainwashing" for religious purposes. Sargant harbored strong antipathy toward Christianity and harbored a vision of reviving Roman Greek faith. He thought that no one can believe such stupidity as Christianity. According to Sargant's contention, one could only embrace Christianity if subjected to a process of "brainwashing" (Sargant, 1957).

In the 1970s, psychologist Margaret Singer emerged prominently in the American landscape and later became a pivotal figure in the anti-cult movement within the United States. Singer had received training from Shine and had also collaborated with Sargant. While Singer presented herself as a university professor, this was not entirely accurate. Although she was a psychologist, she lacked credentials in psychiatry. During a time when anti-cult and anti-sectarian sentiments were gaining traction, Singer introduced a compelling notion. She posited that Sargant's assertion, which implied that anyone embracing any religion had essentially been "brainwashed," was an exaggeration. Singer (2003) proposed a dichotomy of religions into two categories:

1. Religions of the first type were those that individuals willingly embraced of their own accord.
2. The second type encompassed cults and sects, wherein individuals entered due to the influence of "brainwashing."

Singer's viewpoint presented a somewhat peculiar and mutually exclusive logic. On one hand, she contended that one voluntarily accepted religious concepts, while on the other, she maintained that individuals joining sects did so because they had been "brainwashed." This perspective raised questions regarding the blurred boundaries between what constituted a religion versus a sect.

Interestingly, both in subsequent legal proceedings and ongoing debates, people consistently confronted Singer with a fundamental question: how could one ascertain whether a person had been 'brainwashed'? However, despite her persistent inquiry, Singer never provided a definitive, well-structured, or scientifically robust answer to this pivotal question.

In his lectures, Professor Introvigne highlighted that Margaret Singer derived a significant portion of

her income from involvement in various legal disputes (M. Introvigne, lecture, October 13, 2016). In one particular trial held in Switzerland, Professor Introvigne and Margaret Singer found themselves on opposing sides of the legal battle. When the judge inquired whether Mr. Introvigne was familiar with Singer's research on sects, Prof. Introvigne humorously responded, "Of course I am. And for more than one year." Subsequently, when asked about his perspective on sects, Introvigne wittily quipped, that any organization for which Singer was paid becomes a sect.

The concept of "brainwashing" has never attained scientific status, and it has failed to be recognized as a legitimate scientific theory. Instead, it has been utilized in different historical periods to address ideological challenges, as observed in its use by organizations like the CIA. Additionally, experts like Margaret Singer





have employed the idea not only for intellectual pursuits but also as a means to generate income.

DISCUSSION

In general, the research methodology of brainwashing theory is an informal term employed to describe or criticize approaches that simplify or manipulate information to influence the opinions, beliefs, or attitudes of others. The term is often used to characterize practices such as mass media manipulation, political propaganda, or other efforts aimed at shaping public opinion. The concept of brainwashing originated from methods designed to psychologically influence individuals who have been held captive or subjected to intense pressure, compelling them to alter their beliefs and behavior.

The issue of indoctrination and manipulation of people's beliefs, which may be construed as "brainwashing," is frequently discussed in the modern scientific narrative. There are specific techniques that might fall under the umbrella of the term "brainwashing":

- **Disinformation:** Disseminating false information or distorting facts to sway people's beliefs and opinions. This encompasses fake news, manipulative photos or videos, and other deceptive means.
- **Emotional Influence:** Aiming to evoke emotional reactions like fear, anger, sadness, or joy to shape a specific mood or perspective on an issue. Information laden with emotional charge can significantly impact decision-making.
- **Conspiracy:** Promoting belief in conspiracy theories, often rooted in illogical or unsupported evidence. This can distort perceptions of events and foster paranoid beliefs.
- **Group Pressure and Social Conformity:** Leveraging social pressure to prompt individuals to deviate from their beliefs and opinions, aligning instead with the accepted views of the group.
- **Restriction of Access to Information:** Controlling media or the internet to limit access to alternative information and establish a monopoly on the flow of information.
- **Repetition of Isolated Messages:** Perpetually repeating the same message or ideology, even without evidence or justification, to influence beliefs through sheer repetition.
- **Psychological Pressure and Control:** Employing psychological pressure, including assurances,

intimidation, and threats, to subdue will and mold new beliefs.

- **Indoctrination:** Systematically teaching a specific ideology or belief system to persuade individuals to adopt it as their own.
- **Psychological Manipulation:** Using psychological techniques, such as neuro-linguistic programming, to govern the thoughts and actions of individuals and others.

It may also involve elements such as manipulation of information, the use of psychological techniques, control of access to information, political or social pressure, and the continual repetition and reinforcement of specific messages or ideologies to implant them in people's thinking. Moreover, it is believed that contemporary methods in this context also encompass social media and algorithmic filtering. Social media algorithms have the capability to present content to users that aligns with their existing beliefs, reinforcing pre-existing stereotypes and opinions. This can lead to the creation of "filter bubbles," wherein individuals are exposed to minimal or no alternative viewpoints.

Newspapers and yellow journalism utilize sensationalized headlines, exaggerations, and distorted events to captivate audiences and create a psychological impact. Media and political propaganda leverage television, radio, and newspapers to disseminate one-sided views and political agendas. Comparison manipulation involves contrasting a chosen ideology or candidate with others portrayed as less attractive, creating an illusion that the preferred alternative is superior. Another tactic involves creating the impression of a threat, fostering the belief that a specific group, idea, or phenomenon poses a societal danger and that only particular measures, often aligning with a specific political or ideological direction, can safeguard against this perceived threat.

The utilization of authority figures, whether influencers, experts, celebrities, or other credible sources, reinforces specific beliefs or attitudes. Microtargeting and personalization leverage user data to tailor messages and advertisements, targeting individuals with customized content designed to shape their thoughts and beliefs. Additionally, psychological pressure tactics, including isolation, intimidation, and other methods, are employed to coerce individuals into changing their beliefs and subjecting them to influence.

Disinformation, indoctrination, and manipulation exert various detrimental consequences on society:

1. **Loss of Trust:** The proliferation of misinformation and brainwashing erodes trust in the media, authorities, and other information sources, fostering general skepticism and hindering the formation of an objective public opinion.
2. **Political and Social Discord:** Disinformation fuels discord in society, exacerbates political debates, and contributes to conflict, posing threats to stability and security.
3. **Health and Safety:** Inaccurate health information can lead to perilous decisions regarding treatment, vaccination, or disease prevention, with severe public health implications.
4. **Influencing Elections:** Misinformation can be wielded to sway the outcomes of elections, disrupting the democratic process and challenging the legitimacy of the elected government.
5. **Loss of Time and Resources:** Combating disinformation demands significant effort, time, and resources from the media, law enforcement, and society at large, diverting attention from addressing genuine problems.
6. **Violation of Privacy:** Certain brainwashing techniques may involve the violation of personal privacy, including the use of personal data to manipulate individuals.
7. **Promoting Extremism:** Disinformation can fuel extremism, radicalization, and violence within society.

To counter these shortcomings, concerted efforts are necessary from society, government, technology companies, and the media. Identifying, halting, and rectifying misinformation, along with enhancing media literacy and critical thinking among citizens, are crucial components of an effective response.

The concept of brainwashing lacks a specific scientific theory or identifiable authors and sources. Instead, it serves as a term to describe strategies and techniques involving the dissemination of misinformation, manipulation of information, and the use of psychological methods to alter the beliefs and behavior of individuals or groups. The notion of influencing opinions through media and various channels has a long history, and the methods employed can vary depending on the context. These manipulation and disinformation techniques may be employed by political entities, commercial agents, media members, activists, or other actors with an interest in shaping public opinion. Specific strategies such as disinformation, fake news, social media manipulation, psychological influences, and other tactics to influence public opinion are utilized by

diverse actors across different spheres to achieve their respective objectives.

In the current era of advanced technology and global information dissemination, various methods play a significant role in misinforming and manipulating public opinion. These include Fake News and psychological manipulation, which involves using techniques to control individuals' emotions, beliefs, and behavior. Another method is trolling, an active engagement in online communities aimed at spreading speculation, aggression, and misinformation, contributing to conflict and division. Additionally, network echo chambers and filtering algorithms on social media platforms can create filtered bubbles, reinforcing users' existing views and limiting exposure to diverse information. Another noteworthy method involves the use of automated programs (bots) for the automatic distribution of posts and comments, creating artificial demand for specific topics and positions. These methods collectively shape the landscape of information influence in our interconnected world.

These methods also encompass mixed truth and lies, where true facts are combined with incorrect or distorted elements to create a favorable sentiment or discredit opponents. Political advertising and influencing elections involve content-sponsored campaigns and influential groups shaping political processes. Anonymity and pseudonyms are utilized to spread misinformation, making it challenging to identify information sources. Information and disinformation campaigns are organized efforts featuring a multitude of exciting news, events, or information items to divert attention from real problems or foster a favorable mood. Financial influence employs resources to support media agencies, political groups, or activists, shaping news agencies. Additionally, the misuse of statistics and data involves presenting information in a biased manner, potentially deceptive or highlighting selective aspects of an issue. These methods collectively contribute to shaping the information landscape and influencing public perception in our interconnected world. Various other methods contribute to misinformation and manipulation.

Combating these tactics necessitates a multifaceted approach involving effective regulation, enhanced cybersecurity, education, media literacy, and open information sharing. Collaborative efforts are essential, with the public, media, technology companies, and authorities working

together to mitigate the impact of misinformation on society. The development of media literacy, critical thinking, and effective algorithms for filtering and detecting misinformation is crucial. It requires a united front involving the public, government, media companies, and technology platforms to effectively combat these challenges.

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