



## EDITORIAL

# Plurality of Cases – Plurality of Values

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The mission of the *Changing Societies & Personalities* journal is quite ambitious: the journal “examines how rapid societal-level changes are reshaping individual-level beliefs, motivations and values – and how these individual-level changes in turn are reshaping societies”. Fulfilling such a mission involves examining different cases happening to individuals in various countries, societies and communities. On the one hand, it is unlikely that we will ever face a lack of such cases; on the other, they demonstrate a vast diversity, thus requiring adequate and appropriate research methodologies. We hope that the current issue of CS&P is a good example of such adequacy and diversity through providing a tribute for authors from nine countries.

The authors’ team representing three countries – Mohmmmed Salah Hassan, Ali Najem, Asbah Razali (Malaysia), Hussam Al Halbusi, Fadi Abdel Muniem Abdel Fattah (Oman) and Kent A. Williams (Canada) – presents the results of a research study entitled *Risk Perception, Self-Efficacy, Trust in Government, and the Moderating Role of Perceived Social Media Content During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. The authors stress that, in the turbulent times of the pandemic, the critical duty of the research is “to explore and understand behavioural responses to the risk of infection..., especially how people assert their risk perception and how these perceptions shape self-efficacy beliefs”. Additional important fields of the research include the exploration of the risk perception as an interpretation and subjective judgment about a current risk; the evaluation of the social media’ exposure of the appropriate information; the trust in the government, which is vital to the policy’s success during a crisis; and the study of the construct of self-efficacy. The researchers gathered data from 512 individuals (students and academics) based in Malaysia. In investigating the impact of risk perception on trust in government and self-efficacy during the COVID 19 pandemic, the authors have made conclusions concerning, in particular, how social media helped shape behavioural patterns and attitudes.

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Dušan Lužný (Czech Republic) in the article *Religious Memory in a Changing Society: The Case of India and Papua New Guinea*, starts from the research field of memory studies with special attention to the interconnection of collective memory and collective identity and focuses on a specific aspect of collective memory, namely religious memory. In the article, particular examples of material culture (religious buildings and places) are analysed as elements of cultural memory in order to show their link to collective identity in India Papua New Guinea – the societies experiencing fundamental socio-cultural changes associated with the process of decolonization and the creation of a new national identity. Dušan Lužný points out two changes in collective memory: “The first is the emergence of national memory, when as a result of the global spread of the Western conception of the state, which is based on the principle of nationalism, and the strengthening of emancipatory efforts in the regions, efforts to create their own new state units arose and intensified” The second is a change in religious memory associated with Christianization, which went hand in hand with colonialization. “While in India, for example, Christianity remained marginal and is more or less limited to certain localities (e.g., Goa on the west coast), in Papua New Guinea it became dominant (more than 90% of the population professes its various forms)”. The author uses two specific cases – two culturally and socially different regions of Papua New Guinea and India as an analytical application of the concept of religious memory as part of collective memory.

The article *Digital Political Participation of Western and Eastern Parts of Germany Residents (based on Change.org Online Petitions)* by Nadezhda Radina and Daria Belyashova (Nizhny Novgorod, Russia) is focused on the “comparative analysis of digital political participation of residents of the eastern and western parts of Germany in the form of online petitions to discuss the role of historical experience in shaping modern civil action strategies”. A comparative perspective is essential when studying the Federal Republic of Germany in the context of its historical separation and unification. The total empirical base of the research includes 1,036 petitions and covers the period from the creation of the German-language version of the platform *Change.org* in 2012 to March 2018. The authors developed a thematic classifier, which was used to divide the petitions into thematic groups: human rights, animal protection, culture, politics, migration issues, transport system, Internet, support for people with disabilities, financial issues, environmental protection, housing, alcohol/tobacco/drugs, healthcare, elderly people, sports, education, etc. A comparative analysis of petitions from West and East in accordance with the classifier reveals both similarities and differences in motivating the creation of online petitions in the west and east of the country. The authors stress that the analysis of winning petitions is a relevant source of information about efficient relations between the authorities and citizens.

Giorgia Salis and Martin Flegl (México) in their article *Cross-Cultural Analysis of Gender Gap in Entrepreneurship*, underline a significant gender gap in the likelihood of starting a business venture, which still exists in most countries (notably, gender gap in early-stage entrepreneurship activity is more prominent in developed countries than in the developing ones) despite the statistically

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established importance of women's entrepreneurial action for the economy and for the society. The objective of the article was to deepen the existing research work "by attempting to find out what variables and/or mix of variables affect gender gap in entrepreneurship". For this reason, G. Hofstede's cultural dimensions and the Human Development Index of 55 countries were tested. The authors formulate research hypotheses with respect to seven independent variables in order to explain the notion of gender gap; as a result, some of them were confirmed and some rejected. In addition, the conclusion is made "that rather individualistic, pragmatic and flexible societies in terms of societal change, which at the same time are adverse to risk and uncertainty related to the future, tend to have a lower rate of gender gap in entrepreneurship".

In the article *Intergenerational Cooperation and Stereotypes in Relation to Age in the Working Environment*, Danijela Brečko (Slovenia) points out that rapid changes, especially in the developed world, that occurred after World War II have significantly increased the share of the elderly population in relation to the younger population. The article is aimed at analysing such a category as the "older employee" – the age group of 50 or 55. Because most companies today have a rich mix of generations among their employees in order to use their unique experience and knowledge for the benefit of the company, it is equally important to avoid intergenerational conflicts in the workplace. In the article, Danijela Brečko presents the results of studying the intergenerational cooperation and age management in a Slovenian company in the technological industry with over 2,000 employees from four generations, with a large share of older employees, and the average age of around 44.8 years. The research sample of 150 employees was surveyed using an observation method (focus groups). The research seeks to elucidate stereotypes concerning the characteristics of different generations of employees, and the nature of their beliefs in terms of the company's expected attitudes toward their work.

The article *Influence of Self-Perception and Importance of Body Image on the Methods Implemented to Enhance the Physical Appearance* by Mithunasri L V and Anil Jadhav (India) is based on the assumption that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, "we live in a society that considers physical appearance as one of the most important parameters to judge others' personality and richness. Surrounded by the extreme influence of media, we are constantly compelled to see people with perfect looks around us – be it in magazines, on the news, in the movies and all over the internet". The research is aimed at achieving a deeper understanding of the impact of physical appearance on the self-satisfaction of an individual. The authors propose three research questions: Does the level of satisfaction attained through physical appearance impact the importance given to it? Does the contentment on the personal body image significantly affect the usage of various methods to enhance the physical appearance? Does the importance given to physical appearance of an individual have an effect on the various techniques implemented to improve the body image? The data for the research was collected through a questionnaire-based survey across people living in Tamilnadu; 462 responses were obtained. The results have proved some of the hypotheses, while rejecting others.

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The BOOK REVIEW section contains a review by Louie Galvez Giray (Philippines) of the American social psychologist Deborah H. Gruenfeld's book (2020) *Acting with Power*. The power is interpreted as a social contract dependent on the context. The reviewer finds this book "powerful, compelling but accessible to a wide audience due to lively examples, narratives and historical scenarios, which illustrate the ideas" of the author.

Discussions around the topics raised in the present issue will be continued in the subsequent issues of our journal. In planning to introduce new interesting themes, we welcome suggestions from our readers and prospective authors for thematic issues, debate sections or book reviews.

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