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The subjective well-being of ethnic Albanians in Macedonia

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The Subjective Well-Being of Ethnic Albanians in Macedonia

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The Republic of Macedonia, a small country in Southeastern Europe, declared independence from Yugoslavia on September 8, 1991. Although images of the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia may come to mind during this period, Macedonia was able to gain independence peacefully and became heralded as a harmonious multicultural society by the international community. The country, with an approximate population of 2.1 million people, is composed of multiple ethnic groups including: Macedonian 64.18 percent, Albanian 25.17 percent, Turks 3.85 percent, Roma 2.66 percent, Vlachs .48 percent, Serbs 1.78 percent, Bosniaks .84 percent, and 1.04 percent other (Dimova, 2006, p. 184). Albanians represent Macedonia's largest minority, and they have felt marginalized pre and post-independence. Scholars cite issues such as education, low employment in the state administration, and language and cultural rights as some of the main topics of debate. Tensions between the country's Macedonians and Albanians culminated in an eight-month insurgency in 2001, which was started by a group of ethnic Albanian rebels. The international community (specifically the United States and the European Union) encouraged a political solution, which led to the conclusion of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA). OFA remains relevant today, serving as the document that began addressing minority (mainly Albanian) rights.

Although Macedonia is a multiethnic country, this study aims to assess the subjective well-being (SWB) of the Albanian minority in Macedonia. Subjective well-being can be defined as a person's cognitive evaluations of their lives; scholars also use the terms happiness and life-satisfaction to describe SWB. There are ten independent variables examined in this study falling two categories---internal/demographic (i.e. gender, age, education) and external/socio-economic

(i.e. unemployment, ethnic identity, perceived discrimination, interpersonal trust, institutional trust, and corruption).

To understand the SWB of a group of Albanians in Macedonia, I used a qualitative and quantitative approach with a group of eight participant introduced to me through my network. I conducted online interviews (i.e. Skype) to discuss the aforementioned independent variables. As most of the extant research measures SWB through surveys, I used two surveys on happiness and life-satisfaction to operationalize the dependent variable. Conducting interviews added a twist to the convention approach, and it was frankly more interesting to hear directly from participants' experiences.

The SWB of Albanians in Macedonia is of particular interest, as I come from an Albanian (from Albania) background. I spent two months completing an internship in Macedonia last year, and I wanted to find a way to create a meaningful project through the intersection of these two aspects. As a disclaimer, I do not seek to minimize the voices of other minorities by narrowing my focus to Albanians; furthermore, even the conclusions from this project cannot be generalizable to all Albanians in the country. Most of my interviews were conducted with people who are involved in inspiring local communities to be aware and open-minded; with that being said,my well-educated and well-connected participant pool is not very diverse. On the other hand, this is an interesting and important subset of the population as they seek to lead communities into the future.

The results showed that ethnicity did not play a factor in the SWB of my participants, whereas the most impactful variables were those affecting the general population. In fact, based on conversations with them and locals during my time in Macedonia, I learned that ethnicity is used as a tool by political parties, but on a day-to-day basis, it does not play as large of a role for

them. However, these experiences cannot be generalized to all Albanian populations, but hopefully this research can jumpstart future researchers to broadening the scope of the participant pool.

Historical Background

Introduction

This chapter aims to explain the country's chronological development from the 20th century to the present period, with the primary focus being the status of Albanians in the country. By the end of the chapter, the reader should understand why Macedonia was on the brink of civil war in 2001 and where it stands today. Although the insurgency occurred roughly 17 years ago, issues that led to the conflict remain in national headlines, which necessitates an in-depth discussion on interethnic relations between Albanian-Macedonians and Macedonians. For the remainder of this paper, Albanian-Macedonians refers to Albanians living in Macedonia due to a lack of a better term, and Macedonians defines ethnic Macedonians in the country.

Demographics.

Ethnic strife can partly be attributed to demographics, as Albanian-Macedonians are the largest minority in the country. According to the most recent 2002 census, the following groups comprise Macedonia's population: Macedonian 64.18 percent, Albanian-Macedonian 25.17 percent, Turks 3.85 percent, Roma 2.66 percent, Vlachs .48 percent, Serbs 1.78 percent, Bosniaks .84 percent, and 1.04 percent other (Dimova, 2006, p. 184). Although Albanian-Macedonians represent a quarter of the population, over half of all Albanians live outside the home nation (i.e. Albania); this phenomenon is known as the "Albanian Question." As demonstrated by Figure One, two countries with a primarily Albanian population—Albania and Kosovo—border Macedonia to the west and the north. Figure Two shows that Albanian-Macedonian populations are heavily concentrated in the western part of the country, sparking secessionist concerns since these areas are contiguous to both Albania and Kosovo. However, Albania, as a kin state, has maintained a non-interventionist policy toward Albanian-

Macedonians; Albania shifted from isolationism after the fall of communism and has relied on the West, primarily the United States, for its Euro-Atlantic integration prospects. The West would never accept Albania's border changes, limiting the country to the status quo (Gjevori, 2018, p. 173). Kosovo, having recently celebrated its 10-year independence from Serbia, does not have the military or economic capability to annex Albanian-populated areas in Macedonia and must focus on domestic stability. Even though a reunification of all Albanians into one state may seem less likely in the present day, the 1999 Kosovo War and the 2001 Albanian-Macedonian Insurgency captured these insecurities.

Figure One. Balkan Peninsula

Retrieved from: https://gazetablic.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Ballkan-454x330.jpg

Figure Two. Ethnic Concentrations within Macedonia
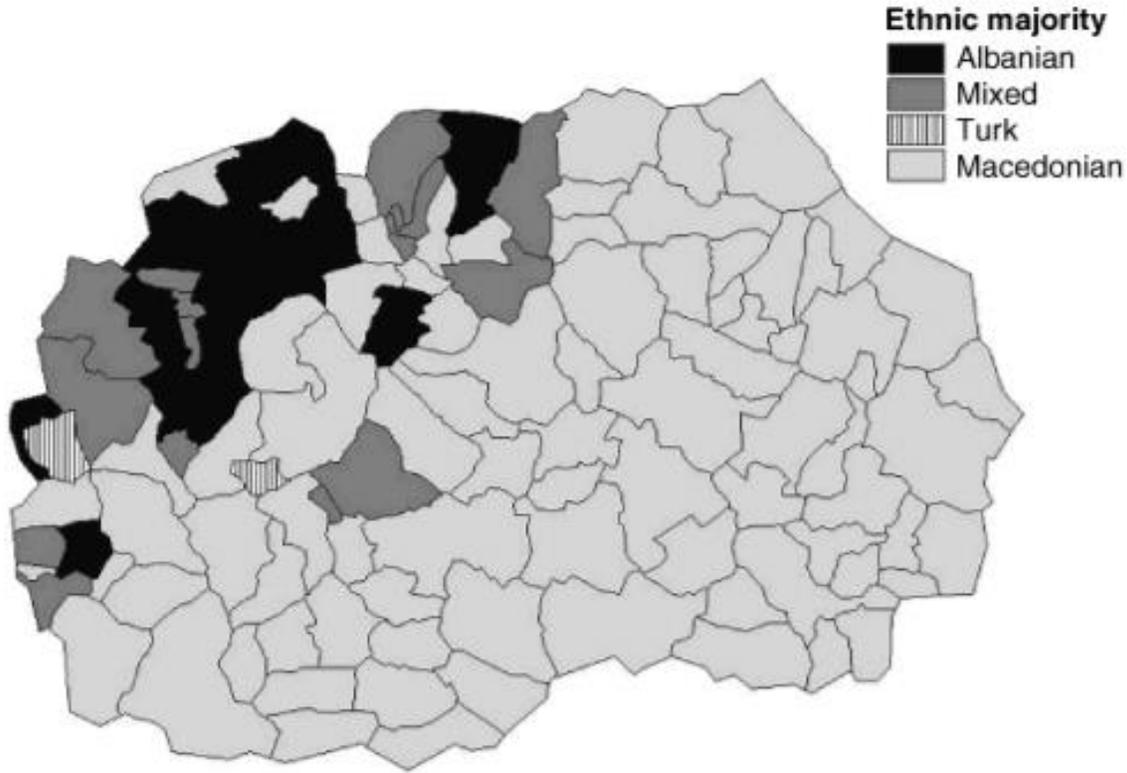
Fig. 3. Ethnic majorities (>60 percent) in Macedonia's municipalities in 2002 (based on Statistical Office of Macedonia, 2003).

Retrieved from Ethnic Dimensions of Regional Development in Macedonia: A Research Report by Harley Johansen (Note: this figure was made prior to the redrawn municipal borders. Present-day Macedonia has less municipalities than this figure.

The ethnic divide within Macedonia exacerbated tensions. Although available research does not offer data on ethnic composition of cities within Macedonia, based on personal observations the capital of Skopje is very much ethnically separated; the Vardar River divides the city, where Macedonians reside on one side of the river, and Albanian-Macedonians on the other. Not all cities are as ethnically divided as Skopje, based on conversations with people. Although the groups cohabitate, there are several differences that have resulted in mistrust, including: Slavs are primarily Orthodox, and 70 to 80 percent of Albanians are Muslims; the Macedonian language uses the Cyrillic alphabet, whereas Albanian is Latin-based. Both

languages belong to the Indo-European family, but Macedonian is a member of the Balto-Slavic branch and Albanian has a separate branch.

These differences contributed to a lack of understanding between the two groups. Intermixing between the ethnicities was uncommon in the 20th century and resulted in competing narratives presented by each group. The Macedonians viewed Albanian-Macedonians as "long-term squatters whereas Albanians view the Macedonians as oppressors who have been unwilling to grant the equal rights" (Perry, 2001, p. 363). Nevertheless, Albanian-Macedonians' rights have improved in the country's short history after independence, and as we will see in the next section, Macedonians also had to fight for their own rights.

The term "Macedonian" was fluid for decades due to competing claims on its territory by its neighbors (i.e. Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania). It remains contentious to the present day due to nationalism within the region, mainly with Greece, and this point will be elaborated upon in a later section. How did the Republic of Macedonia get its borders and come into existence as an independent state? Although we could go back centuries, recounting each battle where there was a transfer of territory, we will begin with a simplified version of regions history in the 20th century.

Bucharest Treaty.

The Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 marked an uprising against the Ottomans, with Albania gaining independence on November 28, 1912. Albania aspired to create a nation-state uniting all Albanians (from Kosovo, Montenegro, and western Macedonia) into one political unit. However, the newly-independent country received a smaller territory than it wanted (Dimova, 2006, p. 292). The Bucharest Treaty, concluded in August 1913, split Kosovo and Macedonia between

Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece, with over half of Albanians outside of the Albania. According to Duncan (2015), Albanians outside the kin state were marginalized during this period; for example, Albanian could not be taught and newspapers in the language were prohibited (p. 458). Albanians remained marginalized, but after World War One, Macedonians were also included on this list of marginalized populations.

Post-World War One and World War Two.

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes incorporated Macedonia's territory in the aftermath of World War One and was referred to as "Southern Serbia (Perry, 2001, p. 362). After the Versailles Peace Treaty was implemented in the Balkans, Macedonia's minorities frequently used the minority petition procedure, as granted by the Treaty, but their petitions were rejected. (Dimova, 2006, p. 292). The Macedonians no longer remained a minority after the creation of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in 1945 by Josip Broz Tito; Yugoslavia comprised six republics—Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia-- and two autonomous provinces within Serbia—Kosovo and Vojvodina (Duncan, 2015, p. 455). Yugoslavia was structured so that nations had their own republics, meaning that Macedonia was finally recognized as a distinct people, prompting the construction of a Macedonian identity. Shortly thereafter, Macedonians standardized their language (Perry, 2001, p.363).

Although Macedonia achieved recognition as a nation in the SFRY, Albanians had the title of a "nationality" (i.e. minority). The carefully chosen term refers to larger non-Slavonic ethnic groups that had another nation-state in the world (i.e. Albania), but "nationalities" were not granted self-determination. There was a third term to differentiate even smaller ethnic

groups, "ethnic communities." However, Tito's call to"Brotherhood and Unity" appealed to a

common socialist ideology, attempting to integrate minorities into the system. Scholars such as

Adamson & Jovic (2004) argue that nationalities, such as Albanians "were no longer treated as a

'minority, but a 'nationality, whose economic, political and ethnic status improved significantly

when compared to any previous period of living in a 'Slavonic state,'" (p.299). On the other

hand, Babuna (2000) maintains that after the Tito-Stalin break in 1948, relations between

Albania, which sided with the Soviet Union, worsened and negatively impacted Albanians within

Yugoslavia (p. 69). Babuna (2000) found the following measures took place after cutting ties

with the Soviet Union:

> The Yugoslav government discriminated against the Albanians politically, economically, and socially. Most Albanian-language schools were closed and measures were taken against the Albanian intelligentsia and teachers of history and the Albanian language. The commemoration of national holidays and the display of Albanian national symbols were banned. (p. 69)

Tito recognized that, as a leading figure of the Non-Aligned movement supporting self-

determination, he had to put his promises of integration into practice within Yugoslavia's

borders.

Linking Fates between Kosovo and Macedonia.

In 1963, Tito declared Kosovo an autonomous province, but Albanian-Macedonians'

status remained the same (Duncan, 2015, p. 462). According to Ortakovski (2001), Kosovo's

true turning point occurred after Aleksander Rankovic's dismissal; he had the reputation of being

a hardliner against Albanians and led Kosovo as a police state (Babuna, 2000, p. 71). Although

political persecution ended in this period, student protests began in 1968, calling for the right to

display national symbols and use their language (Duncan, 2015, p. 462). Albania welcomed the

gains made by Kosovars, while criticizing the lack of improvement of the status of Albanians in

Macedonia. In fact, in a 1969 editorial in an Albanian newspaper accused the Macedonian authorities for their "chauvinist policy towards the Albanians, of inhuman treatment, and denials of the most elementary rights and the continuous efforts for denationalization" (Bibeaj, 1983, p. 491). Albanians in Macedonia did not have the same luck gaining improvement in their status. However, under the 1974 constitution, Tito did support the use of minority language through media and education.

The 1980s represented a period of particularly pronounced ethnic strife in Macedonia. Again, nationalist riots erupted in Kosovo in April 1981, calling for the establishment of an Albanian Republic as an equal partner in Yugoslavia (Koppa, 2001, p. 43). Serbia quickly cracked down on the protests, which Macedonian authorities mirrored repressive measures in their republic. Macedonian officials suspected that "if Kosovo was going to gain increased status, Macedonian Albanians would certainly press for improved status for themselves. Kosovo has always taken the lead…in forming a nationalistic elite on both sides" (Koppa, 2001, p. 52). Three hundred Albanian-Macedonians were jailed as result of increased repression; for example, the Albanian language was removed from high schools under the guise that Albanian-Macedonians had not yet mastered the Macedonian language to be productive members of society. Furthermore, until 1992, policies required the use of Slavic toponyms and prohibited parents from giving Albanian-Macedonian babies from being give a nationalist name (Duncan, 2015, p. 465). Drawing from a personal experience, one person told me that the government added

Capitalizing on Societal Cleavages.

The 1980s also saw a visible effort in further differentiating Albanian-Macedonians from Macedonians by emphasizing their different religious preferences. As mentioned earlier, Albanian-Macedonians are predominantly Muslim, whereas Macedonians are Orthodox, placing a large role of religion in society. Although Kosovars were allowed to promote their cultural identity, Albanian-Macedonians were not awarded the same rights; thus, they turned to religion as a meaningful form of expression (Koppa, 2001, p. 41). It was not only religious differences that were used to stir mistrust/fear of each group, but also other cleavages.

Macedonians feared a creeping domination of Albanian-Macedonians in their republic because of the expanding population of the latter. Albanian-Macedonian women did have much higher fertility rates than Macedonian women; for example, in 1953, fertility among Macedonians was 143.6 live-births per 1,000 women and 251.1 among Albanian-Macedonians. In the 1980s, Macedonia was the only republic in Yugoslavia to maintain a constant population replacement rate due to Albanian women (Brunnbauer, 2004, p. 570). Macedonia's parliament enacted a four-member family policy in 1987, reasoning that social services could not sustain Albanian's high fertility rates; they also opened educational centers and encouraged contraception (Brunnbauer, 2004, p. 575). Numbers hold high importance, especially when ethnic groups feel threatened.

High Albanian-Macedonian fertility can partially be explained by other cleavages, such as the traditional v. modern way of life, Albanian-Macedonians being characterized by the former. After World War II, Macedonians largely abandoned the patriarchal lifestyle, whereas Albanian-Macedonians, and the wider Albanian population, preserved a kin-centered community (Ruzin, 2001, p. 355). However, gender bias among Albanian-Macedonians, who largely excluded women from public participation and, in effect, limiting advancement opportunities.

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Albanian-Macedonians felt marginalized from the republic, resulting in their efforts to sustain self-sufficiency; one way of doing this was through multiplying their population. In terms of employment, Macedonians generally received white collar jobs because they lived in industrialized areas and had higher education than Albanian-Macedonians; conversely, Albanian-Macedonians relied on farming and did not have equal opportunities. Brunnbauer (2004) also suggests that there was ethnic discrimination within the administration to strengthen the Macedonian identity. Furthermore, education remained a large factor as to why Macedonians were favored, who had more opportunities to advance in school. For example, a law in 1985 only allowed Albanian classes to be taught provided that over 30 students enrolled and there were qualified teachers (Poulton, 2000, p. 129). However, in the mid-1990s, Albanians made up less than 10 percent of secondary school students; additionally, in 1993, only 38 Albanians graduated from Macedonia's universities, significantly lower than the 2,022 Macedonians (Brunnbauer, 2004, p. 588)**.** Statistics largely remained the same after the establishment of the Republic of Macedonia.

What can be taken away from this section? First, the problems between Albanians and Macedonians are multidimensional and are not only linked to cultural characteristics, but also to other cleavages (rural v. urban, traditional v. modern, state-employed v. self-employed) (Brunnbauer, 2004, p. 589). Given these differences, there was not much intermixing between the two groups; in fact, a 1974 study showed that mixed marriages between the two communities did not exist (Poulton, 2000, p. 132). As we will see, Albanian-Macedonians will continue to struggle for the same rights post-independence (i.e. education, language rights, employment) as they did in Yugoslavia. We shall conclude this section with a quote from Koppa (2001), who summarizes Albanian-Macedonian position nicely:

Ethnic Albanians in the SFRY represent a self-conscious ethnic group, highly frustrated and dissatisfied with the existing system, which it perceives as being structured to its detriment. The Albanians are faced with built-in inequalities: limited access to power, career opportunities, social and political mobility as well as ethnic discrimination. (p. 500)

Post-Independence

Macedonia peacefully declared independence from Yugoslavia on November 17, 1991, but it would not have an easy transition. The young republic would face threats including: the transition from communism; the "Four Wolves"—Serbia to the north, Bulgaria to the east, Greece to the south, and Albania to the west; a potential spillover from the Bosnian War, etc. (Ackermann, 2000, p. 71).

Macedonia is a special case in history in that it was the first country in which concepts of conflict prevention were applied. In addition, it is the first time in UN history that a peacekeeping force included a major contingent of US soldiers. The UN sent troops to Macedonia 1992 as part of the UN Protective Force (UNPROFOR) with Swedish, Finnish, Danish, and Norwegian contingents (Miller, 1997, p. 421). They were deployed because country was largely defenseless after the Yugoslav National Army left the country. Interethnic tensions only exacerbated the external threats, which put pressure on the evolving Macedonian identity. As we will see in this section, similar struggles, discussed in the previous section carried over to the post-independence period for both Macedonians and Albanian-Macedonians. Macedonians were figuring out how to build their identity, while hostile neighbors attempted to hinder their progress. Similarly, Albanian-Macedonians strong claims to nationalism, but they still aimed to have them recognized by the state. Problems with education, language, and equal representation would persist. Unfortunately, in 2001, Macedonia was on the brink of civil war after a low-scale insurgency by a group of Albanian-Macedonian rebels began,

marking the highest level of violence in the country. The international community, specifically the West, rushed in to prevent a civil war and, worse, a widespread Balkan conflict.

Transition Period Struggles.

The cultural clashes can partly be explained by the definition of the state in the new constitution. The constitution voted upon officially declared that "Macedonia is the national state of the Macedonian people, providing for the full equality of citizens and the permanent coexistence of the Macedonian people with the Albanians, the Turks, the Roma, and other nationalities" (Koppa, 2001, p. 43). Albanian-Macedonians pushed back against the definition of Macedonia as an ethnic state, as opposed to a civic state or at least one where they were recognized as a constituent nation. In January 1992, a referendum was held among the Albanian-Macedonian population, which voted to secede as the Republic of Ilirida within Macedonia; unsurprisingly, the referendum was declared illegal (Koppa, 2001, p. 44). However, although not legally required, Albanian-Macedonians were incorporated into the new structure through participating as a junior coalition partner in each government since independence to preserve internal stability. The transition period as an independent state also presented economic difficulties for Macedonia. During the early transition period all unemployment rates were high, but different ethnic groups were unequally affected. The Turkish unemployment rate was highest at 45 percent, followed by the Albanian (37 percent), and mixed ethnic (29 percent) municipalities; ethnic Macedonian municipalities registered the lowest unemployment rate, at 24.5 percent (Johansen, 2004, p. 542). Similarly, higher education was highest for Macedonians, followed by mixed ethnic groups, and attainment at the post–high school level is highest in ethnic Macedonian municipalities; the Albanian university was in Kosovo, which was now

outside their country. With that being said, these socio-economic disparities were prevalent in the transition period. Macedonia also had to face the hostility of its neighbors.

The Problem with Greece.

Macedonia's neighbors (i.e. Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece) challenged the idea of a separate Macedonian identity. Each country contests different aspects of the country's identity because Bulgaria does not accept the Macedonian language as distinct, the Serbian Orthodox Church does not recognize the Macedonian Orthodox Church's autonomy, and Greece disputes Macedonia's constitutional name and has delayed the country's Euro-Atlantic integration.

The greatest hostility was propelled by Greece since it saw the constitutional name "Republic of Macedonia" as a territorial threat to the its own region called Macedonia. Macedonia opposes this view and argues that Greece did not start calling northern Greece Macedonia until 1988, arguing that the opposition is only over politics (Shea, 2009, p. 82). To avoid tensions with Greece, the international community (the European Union and the United States) gradually recognized Macedonia under the name "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)" in 1994, mainly after seeing little commitment from Greece to resolve the name issue. Greece placed a 19-month full trade embargo on Macedonia only one week after the United States recognized the country under its provisional name, which had detrimental effects on the landlocked country. The embargo reached 60 million dollars in costs in the first month, and an additionally 40 million in each following month (Shea, 2009, p. 287). US negotiators, Richard Holbrooke and Matthew Nimetz, finally reached an agreement between Macedonia's and Greece's officials on September 13,1995, agreeing that the embargo would be

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lifted as soon as Macedonia removed the Star of Vergina from its flag, which the Greeks viewed as their own symbol.

Although Macedonia was granted recognition under its constitutional name by the United States, Russia, and China in 2004, there has not been a solution to the name dispute to the present day. The ongoing name dispute has impacted Macedonia's integration into Euro-Atlantic institution, such as NATO and the European Union. For example, Greece rejected Macedonia's NATO membership in 2008 under FYROM and blocked the start of EU accession talks, despite some positive reports from the European Commission (Marusic 2018). UN special envoy Matthew Nimetz continues to serve as the primary envoy who negotiates between the two countries.

The 2001 Insurgency.

Meanwhile, Macedonia faced internal threats, as the fragile peace between Albanian-Macedonians and Macedonians after a group of ethnic Albanian rebels, called the National Liberation Army (NLA), launched an attack on Macedonian security forces in February 2001. Although there is no widespread consensus on the causes of the conflict, scholars posit three reasons for the conflict. First, some scholars view the NLA fighting to address legitimate Albanian-Macedonians demands (e.g. unequal state employment, education, language, etc.). Second, a second approach originates in the 1999 war in Kosovo where NATO launched a 78-day air campaign in response to Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's ethnic cleansing of Albanian Kosovars. There were Albanian-Macedonians who fought in the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), including Ali Ahmeti, the leader of the largest Albanian-Macedonian political party. The Kosovo conflict placed pressure on Macedonia, as approximately 335,000 Kosovar

Albanians fled to Macedonia during the conflict; almost 260,000 refugees stayed in Macedonia at the end of the conflict (Ringdal et al, 2007, p. 78). Some viewed the Kosovo crisis as a spillover to Macedonia, which leads us to the third cited cause, which is the attempt to create a "Greater Albania" (Phillips, 2012, p. 69). Perceptions of the origins on the conflict may differ within Macedonia. For example, Ringdal et al (2007) argues:

> Ethnic Macedonians indeed see the conflict [the 2001 insurgency] as having been to Albanian criminal gangs provoking disorder of their own ends, the influence of Kosovar Albanian guerrillas, and perhaps foreign interests including the United States…Ethnic Albanians are much more likely to see the guerrilla leaders as local and Macedonian national heroes, fighting for equality, fair treatment for Albanians, and local autonomy and representation. (p. 92)

The NLA had several demands such as amending the constitution to recognize Albanian-Macedonians as a constituent people, recognize Albanian as an official language alongside Macedonians, and increase Albanian-Macedonian employment in state institutions (McEvoy, 2015, p. 167). The NLA also called for international help to determine the true population of Albanians, which they believed to be closer 30 percent than the reported 23 percent, and they demanded the release of all political prisoners. The fighting ensued for eight months, where the violence closed in on the capital of Skopje. The deadliest fighting occurred on August 7th when Macedonian police raided rebel forces in Skopje killing five, but then the rebels retaliated the next day by killing 10 Macedonian soldiers. Within the eight months of fighting, 250 people were killed, and 170,000 civilians were displaced (Watkins, 2003, p. 111). The international community incentivized the parties to cooperate by tying Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic (i.e. EU and NATO) integration prospects to ending the 2001 conflict. These incentives worked, and Western diplomats, such as former French judge Robert Badinter, were heavily involved in the peace process by drafting the Ohrid Framework Agreement (thereafter OFA or the Agreement)

(Bieber, 2005, p. 9). An All-Party coalition signed the OFA on August 13, 2001, ending the eight-month conflict.

The Ohrid Framework Agreement.

The international community (specifically the United States and the European Union) played an enormous role in encouraging a political solution. The West brokered cease-fires, but these were oftentimes violated by both the NLA and police forces. Nevertheless, Western diplomats succeeded in bringing Albanian-Macedonian political parties (i.e. PDP and DPA) and government officials to the negotiating table; the Albanian-Macedonian political parties publicly negotiated with the government, since the latter branded the NLA as terrorists. However, both Albanian-Macedonian political parties and the NLA voiced similar grievances. The demands by the PDP and DPA intended to: "reform the Constitution, [increase the] representation of Albanians in the civil service sector, [include a] provision of university education in the Albanian language, and the decentralization of state power" (Reka, 2007, p. 56). The international community incentivized the parties to cooperate by tying Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic (i.e. EU and NATO) integration prospects to ending the 2001 conflict. These incentives worked, and Western diplomats, such as former French judge Robert Badinter, were heavily involved in the peace process by drafting the Ohrid Framework Agreement (Bieber, 2005, p. 9). The All-Party coalition signed the OFA on August 13, 2001, ending the eight-month conflict.

The OFA was designed to end the conflict and to implement confidence-building measures. After several rounds of broken ceasefires, NLA members gave up their weapons to 4,500 NATO troops in Macedonia, which fulfilled OFA's first goal (Watkins, 2003, p.116). One of the tenets of the Agreement was to preserve Macedonia's territorial integrity, and therefore,

attempted to balance integrating ethnic communities. Leaders agreed to implement measures of

consociationalism, which are democratic methods to strengthen the stability in culturally

fragmented societies; in other words, consociationalism promotes the cooperation between major

cultural groups. Stanisevski and Miller (2009) discuss the four characteristics of the

consociational approach:

> (a) rule of a grand coalition of leaders of all significant cultural segments; (b) the mutual veto rule (i.e., the ability of any cultural segment to halt a governmental initiative); (c) proportionality as a principle in political representation, including civil service appointments and allocation of public funds; and (d) a high degree of autonomy for each segment to run its own internal affairs. (p554)

Elements of consociationalism were implemented through OFA, which included the

power-sharing arrangements, such as proportionality throughout the national election system and

public administration and revamping the Parliamentary Committee for Inter-Community

relations (Lyon, 2015, p. 161). One of the most important provisions in the OFA regarding

power-sharing was that the laws affecting culture, language, education, personal documentation,

and the use of symbols must be adopted by a majority vote in the Assembly and a majority

support of representatives not from the majority community; this is also known as the Badinter

principle (McEvoy, 2015, p. 171).

Macedonia and the international negotiators were committed to upholding the country's

territorial borders, and this concept is one of the staples of the Agreement. One way to address

Albanians' concerns was by implementing municipal decentralization to allow groups that

constitute a minority nationally but a majority locally to exercise greater autonomy. The 2002

Local-Self Government Act gives municipalities more control over urban and rural planning,

protection of the environment, local economic development, municipal utility activities, culture

(e.g. events, heritage preservation), social welfare, education, healthcare, and more (Siljanovska-

Davkova, 2009, p. 114). A draft law was introduced in July 2004 that would reduce the number

of municipalities from 123 to 84, giving Albanians control over 16 of the new ones. However, there were accusations of gerrymandering through an ethnic lens (i.e. Albanians and Macedonians). For instance, the proportion of Albanians increased from 20 percent to 50 percent in the municipality of Kičevo. The redrawn municipalities created a large opposition by Macedonians, and even turned violent during a July 22 protest, which left 17 people injured (Carter, 2009, p. 22). The opposition parties challenged it in a referendum on September 1, 2004, which rapidly became a referendum on the content in OFA. There was a renewed sense of instability, so several days before the referendum and one day after his reelection, U.S. President George Bush recognized Macedonia under its constitutional name (Chivvis, 2008, p.146). The "sticks and carrots" game worked, as the referendum did not meet the required 50 percent threshold.

Although decentralization granted Albanians greater autonomy, the international community criticized the speed of its implementation. The International Crisis Group assessed that financial decentralization had been occurring slowly and unevenly. The Albanian political party started by former members of the NLA, Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), claimed there were disparities between budget distributions between rural and urban communities (Siljanovska-Davkova, 2009, p. 110). Lyon (2016) confirmed the difficulties in providing local services, showing that municipalities have authority over providing hard services (i.e. water and waste management, etc.). On the other hand, the available grants are inadequate and force local government to spend a higher proportion on earmarked expenditures (i.e. salaries, transport costs, etc.)(p. 128) Even if municipalities want to obtain capital grants to fund infrastructure (e.g. new schools, roads, etc.), the grant distribution system is complicated since at least six ministries and two more bureaus need to authorize the spending (p. 126). To put revenue spending in

perspective, in 2013, the central government revenues Macedonia were nearly 12 percent higher than those of the European Union, whereas local government revenues were approximately nine percent lower in 2013 compared to the European Union (Sejdini, 2016, p 454).

Decentralization also strove to encourage a higher minority participation in the public administration; it should be noted that OFA did not legally require strict ethnic quotas. One Albanian politician noted that since 2006, Albanians have not been hired in proportion to their Macedonian counterparts; some institutions have had just 4 or 5 percent Albanians, and the group is unlikely to hold senior-level positions in public institutions (McEvoy 2015, p. 187). However, ten years after the 2001 insurgency, Albanians employed by the state was 16.9 percent compared to the 10.2 percent in 2000 and 8.3 percent in 1997. Scholars have noted that higher representation of Albanians in the public administration is more likely when the mayor is Albanian. In 2010, state institutions consisted of 77.3 percent Macedonians, 1.6 percent Turks, 0.7 percent Roma, and 1.6 percent Serbs (Lyon, 2011, p. 30). Although these examples present some difficulties in decentralization, municipalities were given more control when it came to sensitive issues.

The Agreement benefited minorities through giving greater language rights. OFA and the following Law on Use of Languages stated that the Macedonian language would be used as the official language and for international relations. In section 6.5 of OFA, at least 20 percent of the population is also an official language, but, as explained in the document, The rest of the Agreement mainly applies to the use of that any language spoken by at least 20 percent of the population would be considered an official language in that municipality. Lyon (2011) explained that the minority official languages "can be used for personal documents, civil and criminal proceeds, within municipalities, in communication between citizens and central government, and in higher education…[and] although the Albanian language can now be used again in

parliamentary session, Albanian is not official 'throughout' the country" (Lyon, 2011, p. 30). In other words, in implementation, Albanian was official in those areas where the group consisted 20 percent of the population. However, OFA did reduce the previous 50 percent threshold for minority languages to be considered official (Lyon, 2015, p. 164). Reducing the threshold for mandatory use of community languages from 50 to 20 percent of the local population meant that Albanian acquired official status in 29 of the current 80 municipalities, Turkish in four, Serbian in one, and Romani in one (Lyon, 2015, p. 164). It is important to note that out of all of Macedonia's minorities, only the Albanian language met the 20 percent threshold to be considered an official state language; for those minority languages where the population consisted less than 20 percent of the municipality, the local authorities had the discretion to decide whether the language would be recognized as an official language in that municipality.

The Agreement also addressed education for minorities, a particularly salient issue for Albanians. The state was required to provide primary and secondary education in minority languages, in addition to funding for university level education for languages spoken by at least 20 percent of the population of Macedonia; the higher education requirements only applied to Albanians since they were the only group, other than Macedonians, that made up at least 20 percent of the population. However, the wording in the Agreement does not specify that the Albanian language is the only other language that meets the requirements for both official status and to have a university. Higher-level education needed to be addressed, as in 1994, the Albanian community founded a university in their language, which was subsequently declared illegal by the government. Police raided the campus, and the university's president was jailed for two and half years (Lyon, 2015, p. 164). However, the Albanian university in Tetovo was recognized in 2004, and started receiving state funding.

The Agreement includes a provision on the use of a community's emblems, particularly flags. Section 7.1 specifies that local authorities can place emblems in front of public building to represent the identity of the majority of the community in the respective municipality, but it must be placed next to Macedonia's official flag. The use of flags posed a sensitive issue, as Macedonia's Constitution prohibited the use of flags of other states on its territory; Albanians use a flag, which is red with a black double-headed eagle, to express their identity, and it is also Albania's state flag. Other minorities, such as the Turks in Macedonia, were also affected by this law. According to a university professor, Albanians in Macedonia view it is their native symbols, and as a symbol of Albanians as a nation (Kolsto, 2014, p. 179). In the mid-1990s, two Albanian mayors (from Gostivar and Tetovo) were elected, and they decided to use the Albanian flag alongside Macedonia's. The Constitutional Court ruled on the constitutionality of this action, and it suspended all future decisions on May 22, 1997. The Gostivar City Council ignored the Court's decision, which caused a group of people tried to remove the flag in front of the Gostivar Assembly. There was a skirmish outside the Assembly, but matters turned even more violent on July 9, 1997 when police removed the flags. These actions prompted riots, and 196 were injured and four protesters were killed (Kolsto, 2014, p. 179). Macedonia's Assembly (*Sobranie*) adopted the 2005 Law on the Use of National Symbols, in which an ethnic communities' flags can be used alongside Macedonia's state flag. However, in 2011, the law was amended, requiring the state flag to be one-third larger than that of the ethnic community (Bajrami & Iseni, 2014, p. 206).

Overall, the pros and cons of OFA have been heavily discussed by scholars, and this section serves to highlight some of these areas. Scholars seem to come to a consensus by arguing that OFA used a top-down, as opposed to a bottom-up, approach; in other words, local actors

were not consulted in the creation of the Agreement because political parties were under pressure by the international community to resolve the conflict. However, scholars still seem to agree that most of the decision-making occurs between high-level officials behind closed doors instead of involving local actors. Smaller ethnicities, apart from Albanians, also voiced their concerns for not being consulted throughout OFA's process. Lastly, OFA has been criticized for not bridging social ties between Albanians and Macedonians, was viewed as a zero-sum game between Albanians and Macedonians. For instance, in a 2003 survey, Macedonians and Albanians were asked if they approved of the OFA on a scale of one to five. Macedonians averaged a 2.16 and Albanians averaged a 4.23. According to Reka, only 11 percent of Macedonians supported OFA five years after its conclusion (Reka, 2008, p 66). On the other hand, Albanians loyalty to Macedonia increased to 79 percent from 57 percent between 2002 to 2004 (Reka, 2008, p. 66

Nevertheless, OFA remains one of the main points of reference in Macedonia's post-independence history. Although implementation of the Agreement is mixed, it did start improving conditions for the Albanian minority. However, the international community was heavily involved in the process to end the conflict, and world powers continue to push Macedonia's government to fully implement the Agreement. The West dangles the EU accession carrot, making OFA implementation a precondition to becoming a member. The Agreement is still important today, as there is even a minister in charge with the implementation of OFA. The Agreement has had great effects in Macedonia's contemporary history, as will be covered in the next section.

Contemporary History

Interethnic issues are only one dimension of the problems facing Macedonia. There are also socio-economic factors that impact the general population. For example, in 2016, Macedonia had a 24 percent unemployment rate, which was 15 points above the EU average and one of the highest rates in Europe (Janeska et al, 2016, p. 32). However, Macedonia's State Statistical Office, which releases quarterly reports on unemployment, does not seem to report on the unemployed by ethnicity. The latest 2017 statistics show a 22.4 percent rate, and 40,799 pout of the 213,564 were people aged between 15 and 24 years old (State Statistical Office, 2018, p. 67). High unemployment is one of the factors contributing to Macedonia's high brain drain, causing the country to be ranked 142nd out of 142 countries in brain drain intensity between 2011 and 2012 (Janeska et al, 2016, p. 26).

Macedonia's history in the past three years has been plagued by political crises, especially grand corruption and a violent incident in parliament. Grand corruption, as defined by Transparency International, refers to "high-level government crimes that distort the functions of the state at the expense of the public good." Former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, from the nationalistic party VMRO-DPMNE, ruled between 2006 through 2017. However, a 2015 wiretapping scandal led to his downfall when opposition SDSM, leaked a series of "bombs," which were illegal wiretaps of 20,000 citizens' conversations. The wiretaps were ordered by the Chief of the Administration for Security and Counterintelligence, Sašo Mijalkov, who happened to be Gruevski's first cousin. These conversations revealed crimes ranging from election fraud, court manipulation of cases, etc. One of the tapes showed Gruevski allegedly asking for over 20 million euros in kickbacks for awarding a government tender to a Chinese company tasked with building two highways (Macedonian Information Agency, 2015). The scandal led to Macedonia taking the largest drop in the Corruption Perception Index score from 90th out of 180 in 2016 to

107th in 2017 due to the wiretaps (Marusic, 2018). VMRO-DPMNE won the December 2016 elections, but without enough votes to form a government. The country was left without a government for six months.

Opposition SDSM leader at the time and current Prime Minister Zoran Zaev reached an agreement with DUI (the largest ethnic Albanian political party and VMRO-DPMNE's former coalition partner) to form a coalition. DUI agreed to partnering with SDSM on the condition that the Albanian language be recognized as an official language statewide. President Gjorje Ivanov refused to handover the mandate, but in April 2017 the groups went ahead with electing a parliament speaker, an ethnic Albanian Talat Xhaferi. This action prompted a group of 200 demonstrators (many of whom were VMRO-DPMNE supporters) to attack Macedonia's parliament, injuring members of parliament in protest of electing a new speaker. To clarify, it was not the fact that Xhaferi is Albanian that incited violence (The Guardian, 2017). Zaev finally received the mandate on June 1, 2017.

The West welcomed Zaev into his leadership role, who has been publicly committed to joining the European Union and NATO. It is seeming to come closer to a reality, as Macedonia is attempting to resolve the name dispute with Greece. For example, Macedonia renamed its Alexander the Great airport to Skopje International Airport to reduce tensions with Greece, and each country's foreign ministers have been meeting to hopefully reach a solution after the nearly 30-year dispute.

The final important recent development is the passage of the Albanian Language Law. Parliament had approved the law with 64 out 120 votes in favor on March 14, 2018,, after President Ivanov refused to ratify it in January 2018. This makes Albanian official throughout

the whole country, instead of solely in municipalities where Albanians represent 20 percent or more of the population (as explained in OFA). The West (in addition to Albania and Kosovo) welcomed the new law.

This concludes the historical background on Macedonia. Although this was a lengthy description, it was necessary to give the reader a detailed description of conditions in Macedonia pre and post-independence. Having this background information will only give the reader a richer understanding of the rest of the project. The aim of this project is to assess the well-being of Albanians, so it is important to see if any of these historical factors play a significant role in their lives

Literature Review

An individual's well-being is important to assess, as it leads to a productive and happy life. Well-being can be defined as optimal psychological experience and functioning, and this definition implies that it ranges from an extremely undesirable life to an extremely desirable life (Deci 2006, p.1). It can also be divided into two categories: subjective and objective. Objective indicators are defined as judgments by someone other than whose life is being measured (Olson 1986, 80); some examples include income level, quality of housing, etc. This paper focuses on subjective well-being because "subjective well-being goes hand in hand with objective thriving" (Vroome and Hooghe 2015, p. 5). Subjective well-being (SWB) refers to "a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life" (Lopez and Snyder 2011, p.69). The cognitive component refers to life satisfaction, which involves a general evaluation of one's life using their own standards of what a good life entails (Werkuyten and Nekuee 1999, p. 281), whereas the affective evaluations, which signify happiness levels, will be explained further below.

There are three approaches to evaluate overall well-being: need-gratification, hedonic experiences, and life satisfaction. The need gratification approach is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs in which basic universal needs have to be met (i.e. food and shelter) until more advanced needs (i.e. social relationships, belonging, autonomy, and meaning) can be achieved (Lok-sang and Yew-Kwang 2006, p. 68). The second approach, hedonic experiences, indicates happiness---the presence of positive affect and the absence of negative affect. Lastly, the life satisfaction involves judgments evaluating the most important aspects of their lives on a scale highly undesirable to highly desirable (Lok-sang and Yew-Kwang 2006). Although the three approaches may seem different, researchers use the terms wellbeing, happiness, and life satisfaction quite interchangeably. For example, some may just reference happiness, life

satisfaction, or take the average of the two. These are measures that researchers use to examine well-being, but it is also important to reflect on what the average person considers when asked about SWB. According to Olsen et al (1986) they use four standards: perceptions of their pasts, their futures, their goals, and social comparisons. These standards are important when examining measurements of SWB.

Under the umbrella of subjective well-being, there are internal and external factors. External determinants are factors within an individual's environment that impact the individual's well-being, whereas internal determinants are factors within the individual that cause him or her to experience certain levels of life satisfaction (Lok-sang and Yew-Kwang 2006, p. 76). Public policy is aimed to change peoples' environment, so decision makers focus on external factors (i.e. taxes, etc.) to improve well-being. However, studies show that internal factors are very influential, because according to Lok-sang and Yew-Kwang (2006), genetic factors accounts for approximately 50 percent of variation, with the remainder dependent on external causes. In adulthood, environmental factors count for systematic change in life satisfaction since genes have been constant since genes have been stable throughout one's life (Lok-sang and Yew-Kwang 2006, p. 82). In addition, there is no existing support for the claim that genetic determinants are so strong that they have no effect on life satisfaction (Lok-sang and Yew-Kwang 2006, p. 82). This is promising because policies, whether good or bad, reflect on the SWB of the people.

There are various factors that affect SWB and all of them cannot be reviewed within the scope of this project. Some factors that will not be included are physical health, type of work, hours worked, commuting, personality, etc. Because public policy can improve SWB through external determinants, the focus will largely remain on these variables, while shedding light on a

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few internal determinants. The external determinants that will be discussed include: economic factors (unemployment), social capital (ethnic identity, trust, perceived discrimination, membership in voluntary groups), and the government (perceptions of corruption). The internal factors that will be briefly reviewed are education and age. These internal factors were included because their implications could reveal cultural attitudes about a certain society. One must note that the internal and external factors are very interrelated, so it may be difficult to determine causality.

Internal Factors (Demographic Variables)

Age.

This category also includes experiences of the past, particularly if a person lived under communism, which is relevant in Macedonia. Studies generally find that a U-shaped curve with higher levels of well-being at the younger and older end and the lowest life satisfaction between 32 and 50 years-old (Dolan 2007, p. 98). Other studies have found that mean levels of life satisfaction showed almost no change from age 18 to 90 (Inglehart 2006, p. 296). What is truly of interest is whether one's experience under communist rule affect SWB. Ronald Inglehart showed that societies that experienced communist rule show relatively low levels of SWB, even when compared with countries at much lower levels of economic developments (Inglehart 2006, p. 173). A 1995 study in Russia, showed that SWB continued to fall even after the collapse of communism, but there must be other societal factors leading to these results (Inglehart 2006, p. 175).

Education.

The level of education attained by minorities is contentious, as there are many disparities between groups. Therefore, it is important to determine if any relationship exists between education and SWB. For the most part, scholars tend to agree that education increases well-being, but the level of education at which one is most satisfied is contested. The influence of education is high in Latin America with each additional year increasing happiness, but the variable became insignificant when social mobility and relative economic standing were included, and other studies confirm these findings (Dolan 2007, p.100). In a study conducted among a majority group (i.e) and ethnic minority (i.e Iranian), both groups with members of higher levels of education showed increased well-being than those with lower levels education (Schaafsma 2011, p. 789). Being educated helped members of a minority cope with their status, such as by decreasing cultural conflict among the Iranian minority in the Netherlands (Werkuyten & Nekuee 1999, p. 301). The study of Iranians in the Netherlands also confirmed that education leads to higher sense of mastery and contributes to well-being (Werkuyten and Nekuee 1999, p. 288). Since our area of interest is Southeastern Europe, one study found that positive influence of education on happiness in Eastern Europe. The participants felt a higher sense of controls, meaning higher levels of well-being. These positive findings are very influential especially in low income countries because of the increased sense of control (Dolan 2007, p. 99). Lastly, one finding by Wagner (2014) showed that life satisfaction decreased among immigrants in Canada who have less than a high school education than those with some post-secondary education. However, most of the available literature finds a positive relationship between education and SWB. We will hypothesize that if a participant has higher levels of education, then they will have higher levels of SWB.

Gender.

The extant literature is inconsistent with the effects of gender on SWB. A study conducted in 1960 found no differences between SWB levels between men and women. Furthermore, Diener et al (1984) suggest that men are somewhat less happy than women, whereas a 1984 study found men were slightly happier than women (Diener et al, 1999, p. 292). A study of minority populations in Chicago found that women felt the greatest effects of perceived discrimination were gender-specific, and those women who experienced high levels had lower levels of SWB through lowered levels of sense of growth, master, autonomy, and self-acceptance (Ryff et al 2003, p. 275). A study on the effects of communism on well-being concluded that its effects were lowered when there were higher rates of female non-agricultural employment (Meisenberg, 2015, p. 1552). In Europe, women who are housewives or employed part-time are slightly happier than full-time employees (Meseinberg, 2015, p. 1553). In Central and Eastern Europe, women have a four percent higher probability in lower financial satisfaction and a three percent higher risk of low societal position than men (Schnepf, 2010, p. 80). The largest effects of gender were found among the elderly, in addition to women who pursued higher education (Schnepf, 2010, p. 81). Higher education has greater effects for men than women in this study, as these achievements only reduced their low financial satisfaction by 13 percent compared to the 20 percent for men (Schnepf, 2010, p. 82). Lastly, this study found that in post-communist countries about five percent more women have lower SWB (Schnepf, 2010, p. 83). Schnep's 2010 study can allow us to hypothesize that women will have lower SWB.

External (Socioeconomic Variables)

Unemployment.

Although scholars may not fully agree on the effects of income on SWB, there are well-documented studies that demonstrate the negative impact of unemployment. This link is so strong and even challenges a theory, called adaptation, questions the worth of public policy. Adaptation states that people adjust to their circumstances, rendering policies ineffective (Lok-sang and Yew-Kwang 2006, p. 79). For example, short-lived life events (e.g. failure on a task or buying a new car) do not last more than a few months, showing that people do indeed adapt to their situations. One of the benefits of this theory is that humans are resilient when faced with adverse circumstances. However, unemployment may have a more damaging affect, meaning adaptation theory may not fully apply.

Unemployment has a much deeper effect on an individual than a simple loss/reduction in income. Even being unhappy with a job is better than having no job at all because one unemployed, people risk losing face and internalize negative thoughts; these include feelings of worthlessness, a lowered self-esteem, loss of social status, social life, etc. The effects of unemployment are comparable to grief or separation because these people no longer feel needed (Helliwell et al 2013, p. 66). According to adaptation theory, unemployment caused sharp life satisfaction and increased after some time, but never to the original level (Lok-sang and Yew-Kwang 2006, p. 81). On the other hand, the World Happiness Report (2013) had conflicting results; well-being fell after unemployment and remained at this level until reemployment. According to Di Tella et al (2001), those who are unemployed experience five to 15 percent lower dissatisfaction than the rest of the general population. Other personal characteristics influence the degree of dissatisfaction; scholars have found that males, middle-aged, those with higher education, or high income, will suffer greater in well-being after becoming unemployed (Dolan 2007, p. 102).

However, unemployment may help minimize the harmful consequences on one's well-being. For example, the effects will be neutralized in areas with over 22 percent unemployment (Lok-sang and Yew-Kwang 2006, p. 81). This is because the stigma is reduced and being unemployed is associated with greater social support (Helliwell et al 2013, p. 67). Similar to the neuroscience experiment with the dots, others' unemployment had a positive effect on well-being (Helliwell et al 2013, p. 67). In another sense of relativism, unemployment overpowered the effects of income and inflation. In sum, unemployment negatively impacts subjective well-being and its harmful impact is widely accepted by scholars.

Social Capital:

This section switches to a discussion of social capital and well-being.

Social relationships are extremely important in being mentally fit; close friendships are especially important because it those people who will be there in times of need. Social capital is defined as the features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. A society with high levels of social capital is said to have high social trust, high participation among its citizens, and high levels of institutional trust. Consequently, these factors positively correlate with happiness (Tokuda et al 2010, p. 2574). This section includes the factors listed above, in addition to two more areas of interest---ethnic identity and perceived discrimination

Ethnic Identity.

Although ethnic identity may seem like an internal determinant as opposed to an external one (i.e. environmental factor), it is the latter simply because it is a process that is formed through interactions with others, hence the name *social* identity theory. Additionally, the World

Happiness Report (2013) considers the community an external determinant of well-being, so my research follows the extant standards. Past research has highlighted different aspects about ethnic identity; some point to culture, others emphasize attitudes toward one's group (Phinney 1990, p. 511). For the purposes of this thesis, ethnic identity will be defined as "the extent to which people identify with their heritage group" (Schaafsma 2011, p. 786). Further understanding of the topic is complicated by the fact that every group (in our terms, ethnic) is unique. In the rest of the paper, when the term ethnic group is used, it signifies

> a large or small group of people, in either traditional or advanced societies, who are united by a common inherited culture (including language, music, food dress, and customs practices, racial similarity, common religion, and common history and ancestry and who exhibit a strong psychological sentiment of belonging to the group. (Taras 1)

Having these strong connections have serious implications; they can lead to ethnic conflict, discrimination, etc.

Now that there is a general understanding of the term, it is important to examine how it is formed. The formation of ethnic identity is examined through three different schools of thought---primordialist, instrumentalist, and constructivist. The primordialists view it as a natural, biologically given in which each member of society is born into a specific ethnic group. On the other hand, instrumentalists see ethnicity as "a tool used by individuals, groups, or elites to obtain some larger, typically material end" (Taras 2016, p. 4). Lastly, constructivists, who take a more sociological approach, view ethnic identity as social constructions created through a product of social activity. All of these approaches seem logical, but one thing they have in common is that ethnic identity is reinforced through others. According to Kennedy and Cummins (2007), social interaction provides the best "opportunities to experience feelings of

connectedness through personal relationships with others…[and these] opportunities to develop and maintain personal relationships via social settings in which ethnic identity is salient is likely to represent an accessible and enduring path to identity…" (p. 112).

The social aspect is reflected in social identity theory, which claims individuals need a sense of group identification in order to maintain a sense of well-being. This implies that feelings of belonging contribute to positive self-concept (Phinney 1990, p. 501). The process of forming an ethnic identity is social, shown through a three-stage model (diffusion, moratorium, and achieved). The first stage is diffusion, where an individual holds a positive or negative attitude of their ethnicity; typically, these thoughts are influenced by parents or society at large. The second stage is called moratorium in which some sort of event (ethnic conflict, discrimination, etc.) sparks their curiosity and exploration of their identity. Lastly, the achieved stage is a "secure commitment to one's group based on the knowledge and understanding obtained through an active exploration of one's cultural background" (Kennedy and Cummins 2007, p. 108). The final stage, achieved identity, is important when determining ethnic identity's relationship with subjective well-being. Researchers have shown that there is a positive relationship between achieved (or high) levels of ethnic identity and self-esteem, which in turn causes higher well-being. The relationship is strongest in the achieved stage, compared to the two previous ones. In addition, a study by Martinez and Duke (1997) showed that the higher the ethnic identity, the higher the self-esteem, confidence, and purpose in life of an individual. In a different perspective, Kennedy and Cummins (2007) take the need-gratification approach and argue that identity is a universal need, which increases self-esteem, and in turn, well-being.

Ethnic identity can be a very important source of well-being for minorities, as a stronger ethnic identity can lower the impact of stereotypes against a group. This was concluded in a

study of adolscents, but it can be generalized to adults since they usally have a higher sense of ethnic identity. It has been shown that those in denial of their ethnic background could lead to a negative self-concept (Suzuki-Crumly and Hyers 2004, p.139). Attitudes towards one's ethnicity are crucial to marginalized groups in society (politically, economically, etc) and makes them more assertive when their identity is threatened (Phinney 1990, p. 499). Ethnicity and age are thought to interact, since older respondents tend to show less differences as a function of ethnicity. (Dolan 2007, p. 99). In addition to being a factor of well-being, ethnic identity can also play a mediating role, as will be discussed in the next section.

    Perceived Discrimination.

Ethnic identity is not only a factor that leads to subjective well-being, but also plays a mediating role between perceived discrimination and well-being. Negative perceptions of discrimination can have damaging implications and the most harmful one is a lost sense of control. Ethnic minority groups exhibit lower levels of life satisfaction than the majority group because they face more discrimination than the majority. In this case, ethnic identity acts as a shield from these negative perceptions. For example, those who had high levels of ethnic identity, were more likely to report subtle discrimination, but they were less likely to be affected by it than low identifiers (Schaafsma 2011, p.791). On the other hand, a study conducted on Iranians living in the Netherlands found competing results and the progression is as follows: perceived discrimination led to higher levels of ethnic identity, in turn, lower levels of mastery (i.e. sense of control) and lowered well-being (i.e. Wekuyten and Nekuee (199). These studies show that perceived discrimination can either lower or have no effect on SWB, so the data will help shed light on this issue.

Interpersonal Trust.

Interpersonal trust is crucial for societies to enable cooperation, civic engagement, and minimize transaction costs (Koopmans and Viet 2014, p. 91). Trust is not given unconditionally and can be difficult for one to do, as it puts them in a vulnerable position. Trust can be particularized or generalized, meaning that it either exists among a specific group of people or it is widespread, and is especially difficult in severely divided societies (Lenard 2016, p. 123). Patti Lenard (2016) provides four characterstics of deeply divided societies: hostile and competitive ethnocultural groups, ethnocultural divisions frame the vast majority of political conflicts, the groups perceive the division to be insoluble, and widespread hostility creates violent conflict in which people live under discrimination and insecurity (p. 117). These characteristics are important to discuss because Macedonia can be considered a divided society, mainly between Albanian-Macedonians and Macedonians.

If the minority is found to have only particular trust, it could have harmful societal consequences. Veenhoven (2008) discussed this relataionship, arguigng that it will be more difficult to generate trust if there area strong ties between particular groups (p. 10). A study in Germany showed that ethnic heterogeneity and trust in neighbors was negatively related (Koopman and Veit 2014, p.105). Similarly, the Gallup World Poll found that higher levels of interpersonal trust were positively associated with life satisfaction and positive affect, and negatively associated with negative affect (Calvo et al 2012, p. 1). Lastly, a study in Serbia found that high levels of interpersonal trust were related to SWB over and above sociodemographic variables. (Jovanovic 2016, p. 288). The findings in Serbia are very relevant to the present study because Macedonia and Serbia have similar features, including an Albanian minority. Cross-national research conducted in Asian countries confirmed higher levels of social trust,

individually and aggregately, are associated with people's happiness in these countries (Tokuda et al 2010, p. 2585). These results demonstrate the importance to of examining social trust among the general population.

Membership in Voluntary Organizations.

One way to improve trust between community members is through the membership of organizations. The types of these organizations can be characterized by bridging and bonding. Bonding social capital refers to forming ties between those who are *like* you, whereas bridging refers to social capital that ties people who are unlike you (Lenard 2016, p. 29). In severely divided societies, bonding is strong, but bridging is weak. However, both bridging and bonding help predict SWB, but bridging effects are stronger.

Membership in organizations has positive effects on mental health. For example, one study found that elderly immigrants in Israel who were more socially active reported less depressive symptoms (Wagner 2014, p. 5). In addition, Veenhoven found that individuals who were members of clubs and churches reported greater subjective well-being than nonmembers, but the causality may not be so clear (Veenhoven 2008, p. 44). Paul Dolan confirms these findings, concluding that attending multiple non-church activities is positively related to life satisfaction in 49 countries.

Some factors that impact SWB are attendance at religious services and length of residence. The act of going to church has surprisingly been debated on its impact on SWB. The argument is that church attendance affects SWB indirectly because having firm beliefs affects well-being, but attending church has indirect influences because church attendance only strengthens religious beliefs and world views (Ellison 1991, p. 90). Length of residence was

found to positively impact SWB, but only for those who have resided in Canada for only one-third to two-thirds of their lives (Wagner 2014, p.15). A significant amount of research has been completed on immigrant communities instead of minority groups as a whole, which may be a limitation of the literature and its applicability to the current study.

Institutional Trust.

Institutional trust will be briefly discussed because it is interrelated with interpersonal trust and corruption. According to Patti Lenard (2016) when one claims that an institution can be trusted, what is actually meant that "the *individuals* who operate the institution can be trusted to do so effectively" (p.17). Therefore, it can be seen that interpersonal trust plays a role in institutional trust. Nevertheless, institutional trust is an important factor among minority groups. Lenard claims that if a group is consistently treated as second class-citizens, it will be inclined to deny the legitimacy of the regime (Lenard 2016, p.124). Minority group members may have a difficult time extending trust to policymakers because of the high stakes of material and symbolic outcomes. With that being said, the quality of institutions affects subjective well-being too. In a cross-country analysis, the quality of formal institutions were positively related to happiness.

There was competing evidence on these claims, but this author concluded that in low-income countries, the effects of economic-judicial institutions dominates those of political institutions in low income countries. These results suggest that "institutions protecting life and property—the economic-judicial institutions—are associate with happiness at most levels of development" (Bjornskov et al 2010, p.427). However, institutional trust is eroded when there is

corruption which in turn lowers SWB (Tay et al 2014, p.752) demonstrating that institutional

trust is at least partially related to SWB. This point will be further discussed in the next section.

Corruption.

Because of the findings that in low income countries SWB is more affected by economic-

judicial institutions than political institutions, it would be interesting to research the effects of

judicial corruption on subjective well-being. Unfortunately, there was a lack of literature

specifically on judicial corruption; the available literature examined political corruption and is

still relevant to our question. According to Transparency International, corruption can be defined

as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain" and political corruption specifically refers to a

"manipulation of policies, institutions and rules in the procedure in the allocation of resources

and financing by political decision makers, who abuse their position to sustain their power,

status, and wealth." Political corruption is important to examine because it includes the

economic-institutional aspect that negatively affects the public in low-income countries. The

presence of corruption even dominates the effect having a supported candidate elected into

office. This variable is associated with SWB when the government is not corrupt, but loses

association when it is (Tavits 2008, p. 1608).

The detrimental effects of corruption are, in a way, similar to those of perceived

discrimination. Corruption reduces subjective well-being because of the loss of one's sense of

control in addition to having harmful psychological effects, such as maintaining relationships

and increased inequality (Tavits 2008, p.1615). These effects can even be more harmful for

minority groups if they are already in a disadvantaged position. On a more institutional level,

corruption weakens democratic political processes, which lowers accountability and the

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openness of governments. This again leads to a loss of sense of control, and, therefore, negatively impacting SWB. It decreases citizens' power to influence government decision-making through democratic participation (Tavits 2008, p.1615). In an earlier section, we learned the powerful effects of unemployment on SWB; however, it was found that in the presence of corruption, the effects of unemployment on SWB became insignificant (Tavits 2008, p.1616).

Scholars in the field of economics cite potential positive outcomes of corruption. "Boon theorists" argue that corruption overpowers institutional inefficiencies and therefore, promotes economic growth (Tay et al 2014, p.752). On the other hand, "bane theories" posit that corruption generates inappropriate incentives that harm growth (Tay et al 2014, p.752). Overall, on the individual level, corruption reduces well-being because it reduces wealth. In highly corrupt societies, income matters more for citizens because those who are poor feel constrained by the lack of income, again showing that a lost sense of control is significant (Tay et al 2014, p. 758). In the aforementioned study, corruption accounted for 13 percent of variances in life satisfaction. Overall, corruption has such powerful negative impacts on individual SWB, whether in terms of income or loss of trust in institutions.

This concludes the section on external factors. To summarize, these factors (economic, social capital, and government) are influences from the environment that impact subjective well-being. Many of these variables are interrelated so it may be difficult to determine causality. Now, internal factors will be briefly discussed since the interest lies in the external factors, which have the most implications on public policy.

Methodology

Introduction

There are two primary types of research design methods used to explore a phenomenon, qualitative and quantitative. The main difference between them is that qualitative research relies on human perceptions and understanding, whereas quantitative research depends on measurements and statistical analysis (Stake 2010, p.11). The current study links both methods, with a heavier emphasis on a qualitative approach and a smaller quantitative component. The main goal is to understand the subjective well-being of ethnic Albanians in Macedonia through real peoples' experiences; because the thesis involves the *subjective* well-being of Albanians, the best way to tackle this issue is through hearing accounts from the people themselves. Qualitative researchers aim "to understand—that is to interpret—the meaning that people ascribe to events and actions, how they make these meanings their own, and how they negotiate these meanings in interactions with other people" (Magnusson & Marecek 2015, p. 1). As can be understood, a qualitative approach, through interviews, is best suited for this study.

Qualitative Research

Scholars have fiercely debated the benefits of qualitative research, claiming quantitative methods have higher validity by offering objective data. Although there no set formula on how to approach a research question using a qualitative lens, this should not be grounds to dismiss it all together. One of the main benefits is demonstrated by Creswell (2007):

> We need a *complex,* detailed understanding of the issue. This detail can only be established by talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature. We conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices…Qualitative approaches are simply a better fit for our research problem. (p. 40)

One can only read so much about ethnic minorities, but hearing from the population that is affected is invaluable. This does not go to say that there are no limitations by selecting this approach.

One of the main drawbacks of qualitative research, specifically interviews, is the sample size. Many scholars address the question, "How many interviews is enough?" and one common answer that arises in the literature is data saturation, which entails bringing new participants until interviews reflect redundancy or data replication. This may seem a bit vague, but the main claim is that each researcher makes their best judgment on when they have enough quality data. Some scholars are not satisfied with this ambiguity and try to offer a general guide. For example, Marshall (2013) found that single case studies should generally contain 15 to 30 interviews (p. 21). This study is based on eight interviews with Macedonian-Albanians who were introduced to me through my network in Macedonia.

Identifying Participants

Given this background information, we can continue to the beginning steps in interacting with potential participants, that is the recruiting process. Because I went to Macedonia without local connections, I was hoping to form bonds with people I met in-country; luckily, this went as planned and there was one person who gladly accepted request and exceeded my expectations. I am indebted to him. He introduced me to local leaders, professors, former government officials, and religious leaders who showed me to different sides of examining issues. The employee, and friend, began by sending an introductory email to his connections and waited for their response. I followed up with my own standardized email to explain my purposes in further detail (See Appendix A). To clarify, all correspondence was completed in English, to minimize any

miscommunication since their level of English was more advanced than my Albanian. Naturally, one may begin to question this method, where you ask one well-connected person to introduce you to others and then ask participants to keep referring you; this is known as snowball sampling/chain referral.

Snowball sampling does have an inherent issue that needs to be addressed. It is "likely to yield a set of individuals who are similar to one another….in age, social class, educational attainment, and other demographic characteristics. In addition, through their prior interaction with one another, they may also have come to share similar views" (Magnusson & Marecek 2015, p. 39). This is an understandable concern, as other methods such as, advertising, can bring a more diverse participant pool; yet, snowball sampling was the most appropriate way to reach the Albanian community. It is true that using the snowballing sample did bring individuals who are similar, in terms of education, employment, etc. Most of the participants in the current study had a college education, were involved in their communities, had traveled around the world, etc. and I acknowledge that the experiences of my respondents may not be generalizable to those with different characteristics.

Semi-Structured Interviews

We have covered the types of participants that were recruited and now we must turn to the actual interviews themselves. Interviews are "verbal interchanges where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person" (Longhurst 2010, p. 145). These are commonly used in political science, as researchers interview elites and have compiled guides on how to conduct them. Interviews can be divided into three branches: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews are the most commonly used type of qualitative

research and will be utilized for this research. They are generally informal, conversational in tone, and use open-ended questions; this last point deserves emphasis as an interviewer would not gain substantive material by only asking yes/no questions (Longhurst 2010, p.145). Benefits of semi-structured interviews include "enabling reciprocity between the interviewer and participant, enabling the interviewer to improvise follow-up questions based on participant's responses, and allowing space for participants' individual verbal expressions" and putting the participant at ease through the style's casual nature (Kallio et al. 2016, p. 2955).

Kallio et al. (2016) offered a four-phase development process that unfolds when using semi-structured interviews and the current study satisfies each step. The first step is recognizing the pre-requisites to use this style, one of which is studying people's perceptions and opinion or complex or emotionally sensitive (p. 2959). This research studies people's subjective and complex personal experiences with ethnic conflict, discrimination, etc., both very sensitive topics. The second phase includes retrieving and using previous knowledge; this simply means that the interviewer is asking pre-determined questions based on prior research. A literature review was conducted before these interviews; I formulated questions based on the hypotheses in the literature review. Careful preparation goes into creating interview questions and will be discussed in further detail in a later section. The third phase is constructing an interview guide that is utilized during the interview. Although all phases are important, this may be the most crucial as the order and wording of questions affects the quality of data a researcher will receive. Some criteria for a "good" question include: clearly worded, not leading, single-faceted, in-depth, and open-ended (Kallio et al. 2016, p. 2960); the multiple requirements ensure that every word was carefully thought out. The fourth phase is testing the interview guide, which allows the researcher to adjust and improve their data and the final phase presents the final guide, after

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making the necessary changes (Kallio et al. 2016, p. 2960). This section merely introduced the steps necessary to ensure a researcher maximizes their data by asking the right questions the right way. It is necessary to apply the third (constructing the interview guide) and fourth (testing the interview guide) phase to the current study, as they help the reader gain a better understanding of the methodology.

Phase three, constructing the interview guide, is one of the most challenging tasks as a researcher. There are multiple factors to consider, as indicated in the previous paragraph. To reiterate, scholars, such as Jacob & Furgerson (2012), have come to a consensus that semi-structured interviews should be open-ended in addition to being as neutral as possible. Boyce & Neal (2006) do admit that there are limitations of in-depth interviews, one of which is that they are prone to bias (p. 3). For example, a researcher may want to prove their research question by asking charged questions or perhaps participants may have a stake in giving a certain response. However, the researcher should take every effort possible to allow for minimal bias. In this study, I tried to remain as neutral as possible, but to be frank, I did face difficulties, because questions dealing with ethnicity can often convey emotion. At the same time, I did not want to pressure the participant in responding positively about ethnic problems if there was not one; however, these questions were necessary to help me gain a better understanding of ethnicity's role in the Albanian minority's day-to-day life.

Once I obtained informed consent from the participant, I began asking them questions from the list of 20 questions, beginning with basic background questions (See Appendix B). Brayda & Boyce (2014) mention that there can be a pattern to asking questions, starting with opinions and feelings; they also suggest minimizing background and demographic-related questions because they are simply boring (p. 13). However, in order to establish trust with the

participant, especially since these were Skype interviews, I began with background questions and eased my way into the more sensitive topics. The bulk of my questions were related to my hypotheses (i.e. employment, ethnic identity, voluntary social groups, etc.), which were mentioned in the literature review chapter. It is important to note that the independent variable related questions do not ask how they cause the dependent variable (i.e. subjective well-being), as these are largely abstract concepts and the participant would be at loss for words; this is ultimately the job of the researcher to assess.

The final list of questions, after constant revisions, is listed in Appendix B. This brings us to the fourth phase of semi-structured interviews, testing the interview guide through pretests and pilot tests; the former refers to conducting mock interviews with friends or colleagues (Magnusson & Marecek 2015, p 57). I tested the questions on my parents, who helped me refine the wording. Additionally, in the Honors Thesis course, students are assigned a partner to work throughout the semester. My partner reviewed my interview questions and helped me clarify confusing wording. After receiving this additional help, it was time to pilot the questions with the potential participants, a very critical phase for a researcher to test what is or is not working. Mangusson & Marecek (2015) admit that although unusual, a topic may not work because "it concerns experiences that the participants you selected have not had…it might happen if the researcher was mistaken about some aspect of the category from which participants were selected. In such a situation, you have two choices. First you can drop the topic from the interview guide" (p. 66). I encountered this issue regarding one of my former hypotheses on perceived relative income (i.e. the higher the perceived relative income the higher the subjective well-being). Every time I asked these questions, there was a pause and a moment of confusion from each participant. I received a similar response each time along the lines, "I personally have

not experienced this because there are laws in place regarding pay." With that being said, I decided to eliminate this variable because of the muddled responses from each person.

For the official interviews, I conducted 30-minute to hour-long online interviews (using Skype,with eight participants. On my side of the interview, I was located in my apartment, assuring that no one was around to ensure confidentiality. The interviews began with introductions, leading to informed consent, and the list of questions. The fact about semi-structured interviews is that the researcher must read the participant; the loose structure allows for the order of questions to be changed and more spontaneous conversation, follow up questions, etc. What many people do not realize is that interviewing is a skill, proving more difficult than it seems, especially when sensitive topics are introduced. A skillful interviewer uses "tactics of interaction…[including] active listening, building trust, allowing them for the participant to tell his or her story, and showing empathy" (Brayda & Boyce 2014, p. 321). This may not seem too taxing until other considerations are take into account, such as remaining focused on getting the necessary answers, asking follow up questions, etc. Additionally, cross-cultural interviewing increases the chances of misunderstandings and skewed data, because similar words can take on different meanings in other cultures (Brayda & Boyce 2014, p. 321). Although these are challenges, the benefits outweigh the costs and ultimately an interviewer gets better with practice.

There are two primary ways to collect data during in-depth interviews—audio-recording and notetaking. The former preserves accuracy and allows the researcher to remain fully engaged with the participant; the latter allows the documentation of non-verbal cues, but can be distracting for both people (Banner 2010, p. 28). Unfortunately, audio-recording, the more popular method, was no longer an option after the switch to Skype interviews, since problems

could arise trying to record over the computer. Consequently, I took notes during the interview and typed a summary of notes shortly after. Researchers advise taking notes right after the interview so details are still fresh, allowing for a richer analysis and valuable project; our memories are not as reliable as we may think so this step was extremely important, because a substantive interview could easily become insignificant if the researcher waits too long to reflect. Originally, there was a small fear that taking notes would make the participant uncomfortable, but in this respect, Skype interviews were more beneficial as the participant could not see the notebook; with time, I improved in making more eye contact with the participant and writing while not looking at my notes. It also took a few interviews for the interview guide to become more like a routine.

After conducting all the interviews, I then had to turn to transcribing the hand-written notes. Of course, not audiotaping prevented me from transcribing the conversation verbatim, but it did allow me to skip a step in the process. For example, McLellan et al. (2003) refers to the audiotape as a "realist" object and the transcript as a "constructivist" one (p.66). Taking handwritten notes made me filter the interview through a constructivist lens from the very start. After typing up all the notes and taking time to reflect on each interview, I sifted through the transcriptions and identified patterns. I will admit that it was exciting to realize these commonalties, as it showed that this project could make a meaningful contribution. At the same time, notetaking could limit the depth and detail of the conclusions drawn. McLellan et al (2003) found the following:

> If an analysis focuses on providing an in-depth description of the knowledge, attitudes, values, beliefs, or experiences of an individual, a group of individuals, or groups of individuals, a greater number and possibly lengthier units of text need to be included in the transcript. With this type of analysis, researchers are not only interested in identifying patterns and salient themes. They also want to demonstrate variations in how social

phenomena are framed, articulated, and experienced as well as the relationships within and between particular elements of such phenomena. If researchers do not need such a detailed analysis, the exploration of general themes and patterns can be undertaken with less text. (p.67)

In this case, we are interested in an in-depth perspective of the subjective wellbeing of a subset of the Albanian minority. Taking handwritten notes partially limits the depth of the research, but in the results and analysis section we will be able to assess the true impact/limitation of this method.

We have spent a majority of the time discussing interviews, as they offer the most value to this project. In-depth interviews can be used as a standalone method, but Creswell (2007) recommends collecting multiple forms of data, such as observations, documents, etc (p.38). A secondary method that was utilized in this study was observations and it merits a brief discussion. I spent two and a half months working at the U.S. Embassy in Macedonia, and I was able to follow the political developments very closely. My main responsibility was covering the daily news and reporting the most important headlines; I also spent a fair amount of time observing. I experienced how American diplomats interacted with government officials and how they tackled complex issues, including minority rights. Being an outside observer was an invaluable personal experience and could to add more depth to my analysis. Because my internship was concentrated on politics, I can draw on this knowledge to bridge the individual, subjective experience, into a more meaningful interpretation for the reader. By observations, I also refer to my own subjective experience in Macedonia, walking around the city and viewing differences in infrastructure, social groups, etc. My summer in Macedonia gave me a better insight into how the country operates, something that cannot only be learned from reading books alone. The use of multiple methods these two method of qualitative data (interviewing and observations), coined triangulating data, only strengthens the validity of the project.

Quantitative Research as a Reliability Check

This concludes the discussion of qualitative methods and now we can direct our attention to the second primary type of research---quantitative. The polarization between qualitative and quantitative research brings people to the conclusion that they must strictly stick to one; however, this is not always the case. Nevertheless, there are three schools of thought on this issue: purists, situationalists, and pragmatists (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2005, p. 376).

These three camps can be conceptualized as lying on a continuum, with purists and pragmatists lying on opposite ends, and situationalists lying somewhere between the two. Purists deem qualitative and quantitative research completely different and advise no intermixing; situationalists assert that one method should only be used but claim both are valuable; pragmatists support integrating the methods within a study to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the topic (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2005, p. 376). This study follows the pragmatic approach, which offers several advantages, the most important being "the inclusion of quantitative data can help compensate for the fact that qualitative data typically cannot be generalized. Similarly, the inclusion of qualitative data can help explain relationships discovered by quantitative data" (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2005, p. 383). In other words, the methods complement each other; the quantitative component helps make the experiences more generalizable to the subset of the Albanian minority studied.

The operationalization of the dependent variable necessitated a quantitative component to this study. However, I must emphasize that I did not run statistical analyses, as the sample size was too small. The purpose of this quantitative component is more of a reliability check, to determine if the answers given in interviews correspond with survey results. Referring to the

literature review, subjective well-being has two components, happiness and satisfaction with life. One way to measure each of these is through conducting surveys using extant scales created by prominent researchers in the field; the two scales used in this study are the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) by Sonja Lyubomirsky and Satisfaction with Life Scale by Ed Diener (See Appendix C). These scales were selected with the guidance of a JMU psychology professor, who introduced me to accredited survey instruments in the subjective well-being field. Because the data for this study were collected online, the surveys had to be administered through email. Forty-eight hours after the interview I sent a follow up/thank you email to the participant, which contained a link to anonymous surveys. At this point, one may be wondering why I waited to send this email instead of doing it immediately after. The reasoning behind this move is if the participant completed the surveys upon the conclusion of the interview, the data would be skewed after spending a long time talking about heavy topics.

The online surveys were creating using a free website called Survey Monkey. The link contained three items: a multiple-choice question requiring the participant's age range, the Subjective Happiness Scale, and the Satisfaction with Life Scale. The reason age was included in the online survey instead of the Skype interviews was to ensure the participant felt comfortable, especially since it could be taboo in the culture to inquire about age. However, I could not analyze the data using statistical software, such as SPSS, because the sample size was too small, limiting my ability to draw statistically significant conclusions. In effect, the quantitative component serves more as a "reliability check" to check whether my interview-based interpretations are consistent with the surveys. Nevertheless, the complementary qualitative and quantitative methods help the researcher and the reader get a wider perspective of the issues at large.

In sum, this project heavily focuses on a qualitative approach, specifically through semi-structured interviews using Skype as a research medium, while interweaving observations. A smaller component of the study consists of a quantitative method (surveys) to help make generalization only among the participants. Through the completion of this project, I strive to interpret the meanings of the lives of Albanians in Macedonia, presenting a coherent narrative through the commonalities in the participants' experiences. With this preparation in mind, let's examine how participants responded to these methodological techniques in the next chapter.

Results & Discussion

Results

The following results are from semi-structured interviews conducted with eight Albanian-Macedonians (four males and four females). A few disclaimers must be made before analyzing their responses. First, five out of eight participants are employed at the same workplace, but details about this organization's mission are kept private to preserve confidentiality. What can be noted is that the group is committed to promoting a more cohesive society; thus, the employees may be predisposed to being open-minded. Second, one of the participants is an expatriate, but this person grew up in Macedonia and gave valuable insights on life there. It is difficult to generalize the experiences to all Albanian-Macedonians, and many participants acknowledged this limitation during the interviews. Even though the participant pool is not the most diverse, each person had their own unique insights. Similarly, the others were introduced to me by my network in Macedonia. See Table One to gain a better understanding of the background of the participants, mainly through their demographics.

[Insert Table One]

Table One shows the types of participants interviewed, and as is evident, one uniting factor is that they are all well-educated. Overall, the group can be characterized as well-educated and well-connected.

Survey Results.

Two surveys (Subjective Happiness and Satisfaction with Life) were used to measure the subjective well-being.

[Insert Figure Three]

[Insert Figure Four]

It should be important to note that the quantitative results are based on responses from six out of eight participants. Both surveys use a likert scale, ranging from one to seven. By looking at the Subjective Happiness Scale, it is evident that this group of participant places on the higher end in terms of happiness and life-satisfaction.

[Insert Table Two]

One highlight from the subjective happiness survey responses is that when asked about their happiness levels compared to their fellow citizens, on a scale of one through 7, the group places at a 5.5. This score captures that they might realize that they are doing well compared to others, especially since the minimum score was a 5. Remember, the mean represents six participants' answers, and this average could have changed with the final two responses. The second highlight from this survey is that the participants also score high on overall happiness levels, reaching 5.3. However, the range between the maximum and minimum values was 3, whereas. Overall, these six participants have high subjective happiness.

There were also six responses for the satisfaction-with-life survey, but these responses showed higher ranges between the maximum and minimum values.

[Insert Table Three]

The participants averaged a 5.3 when reflecting on the conditions of their lives. However, the range for this question is five, representing great disparities between two participants. Similarly, there is a five-point range for questions three and five; in contrast, the subjective happiness scale only had a five-point range for question three. However, the averages for all questions except the last one on life satisfaction were either five or above, meaning that the participants were on the higher end of the scale. However, most participants averaged a 3.8 on the question, "If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing." Although there was an even smaller sample

size for the surveys, these responses help operationalize the dependent variable and contextualize the independent variables that will be examined below. One final thing to note before delving into the substantive matter is that several factors are interrelated, and it may be hard to determine causality when assessing one factor. As was discussed in the literature review, there are internal and external factors that affect subjective well-being, and in an attempt to present the information in a more coherent manner for the reader, the internal and external factors will be intermixed. The surveys allowed the participants to self-report their levels of subjective well-being whereas the interviews gave the researcher the responsibility to determine the relevant internal and external variables affecting their well-being.

Gender.

The participants in this study identified with their biological sexes---male and female---but this does not signify that other genders are not present in Macedonia. Gender is the first topic of discussion because it is the easiest to confirm that little to no causality exists between gender and subjective well-being among these participants. As mentioned in the historical background chapter, Albanian-Macedonians (and Albanians in general) are more traditional/patriarchal than their Macedonians, making a woman's experience very interesting to examine. When asked, "Do you face any expectation/challenges based on your gender?", almost all participants, except for one female, mentioned that gender discrimination was not a part of their subjective experience. Participant Two explained that women are expected to behave more lady-like and said that it is a taboo if women make sexual references.

What was even more interesting was to see the men's reaction to this question. Many of them had confused looks, followed by a longer moment of silence than the other questions; one male participant mentioned that there were no expectations for males in society, and a different

male participant noted that he had never thought about gender discrimination before. On the other hand, male Participant Four acknowledged that gender discrimination exists. Similarly, the women in this study, besides Participant Two, did not have personal experiences with gender discrimination, but they did mention that other women face issues. "Growing up, I knew that some women were prevented from going to school or the mosque because they were female," recalled Participant One. Participant Five noted that gender discrimination exists due to a lack of education and awareness among women. An underlying theme for the female participants is that they received the necessary support from their families to pursue their desires, and they all are highly educated. One female participant even laughed at the question about gender discrimination, exclaiming "We have too many problems to worry about gender discrimination!" Based on these experiences, we can reject the hypothesis that females will have a lower subjective well-being among these participants.

Education.

Perhaps the most unifying factor among all eight participants is that they are all well-educated (See Table One). All participants have at least a high-school diploma, and all are will have at a bachelor's degree in the future. Given that receiving an education is one path to getting a good job, these participants are motivated to continue in higher education. This particular group of participants is highly motivated in the education sector, and some have even pursued education abroad. Participant Seven decided to take a gap year, but he explained that his family has the means to support him and is also working in this period. Macedonia is suffering from a brain drain, and getting a good education puts pressure on the younger generation to find jobs overseas. A younger participant shed light on a darker side of education in the country, noting that there is a lack of meritocracy even in universities. According to this participant, some

professors are chosen based on party loyalty as opposed to meritocracy, noting that she is not as satisfied with the education; this phenomenon may be unfamiliar to students in the United States, but corruption in higher education is prevalent in the Western Balkans. Nevertheless, education is an important factor in finding the employment in the country, or better jobs outside Macedonia; therefore, the hypothesis that education affects subjective well-being is supported by these participants.

Employment.

Employment is the most supported variable affecting well-being in this study. An individual's well-being is strongly affected if there are no job opportunities commensurate to one's education level. Participant One did not find difficulties in finding a job and had a creative outlet through her time as a music teacher*, where she was able to work in the field in which she received education. On the other hand, Participant Two voiced frustrations with not being able to find employment even as a Ph.D. candidate and must work season jobs and even unpaid internships. Unfortunately, her experience is shared among many others in the country and these conditions cause young people to work overseas, primarily in Western Europe. The lack of jobs and meritocracy in Macedonia makes it difficult to find work, as several participants emphasized. One participant is a full-time student and although he is not looking for work, he noted that most young people feel constant stress about finding employment. Others also commented on the politicization in the state administration as well, where applicants must pledge loyalty to a political party to gain employment. This issue is generalizable to the whole country, not just Albanians. However, some participants noted that Albanians' employment status improved after OFA, which encouraged greater ethnic diversity in the public administration.

*Profession changed to preserve confidentiality.

Overall, unemployment and low future jobs prospects have a negative impact on well-being, and conversations with people undergoing these experiences confirm the hypothesis that unemployment negatively impacts well-being.

Age.

Although the original hypothesis for age predicted that older participants would have lower subjective well-being due to experiences under communist rule, the interviews did not support this hypothesis. Most participants were too young to have these memories, and even the ones who recalled these times did not express any certain periods of dark times. In fact, the trend in Macedonia, as explained by my participants, is that young students worry about the uncertainty about their prospects. Furthermore, one participant commented, "Youngsters are depressed, and we need to find ways to engage them and keep them in this country." On the other hand, Participant Seven, who is taking a younger participant is not worried about his prospects, as he has familial support and is employed. Again, employment/hope for the future may also be an intervening variable. With that being said, we can reject the hypothesis that older participants will have lower subjective well-being.

Ethnic Identity.

Based on the interview, all participants had high levels of ethnic identity.

[Insert Table Four]

Two participants expressed similar ideas by responding, "If I had the opportunity to choose my ethnicity, I would not change it. I am proud to be Albanian." One participant explained that his ethnic identity is very important to him, as it allows him to connect with friends in Kosovo and Albania. However, only Participant Three mentioned that the first factor that identifies him first is his religion and then his ethnicity. Overall, participants emphasized that there must be an

avenue for cultural expression, and one person gave the example that there must be a redefinition of national symbols; he noted that Macedonia's national anthem only uses Macedonian heroes. Similarly, a different participant also brought up the 1997 protests over the use of the Albanian flag in front of a municipal building (as explained in chapter two). All eight participants have high levels of ethnic identity, but its effect on subjective well-being is inconclusive thus far.

Perceived Discrimination.

Only two out of eight participants perceived discrimination based on their ethnicity.

[Insert Table Four]

First, one participant noted that she will be in a group with her Macedonian friends who may something derogatory about Albanians, not knowing she is Albanian. She explained that instead of letting these comments affect her, she will in fact ask why they hold these stereotypes and have a group discussion. Second, a different participant learned from a mutual friend that his job application had been thrown out due to his ethnicity; in fact, all Albanian-Macedonian applicants were not considered for the position. Similarly, some scholarships have no Albanian applicants, but perhaps it could be due to their lower socio-economic status. However, discrimination is not one-sided as Albanians are not the only victims. For example, a Macedonian citizen at a store asked an Albanian employee a question, and the employee responded that they did not know the answer. The next person in line, an Albanian, asked the same question and was provided the service.

The other participants said that they have not perceived discrimination, but several expressed that if they had, then they did not notice. Even though participants may not have directly experienced discrimination, one person gave an example where it was indirectly perceived in a 2016 court case involving the death of a four-year old Albanian boy, Almir Aliu,

killed by a Macedonian driver, Boban Ilic. Aliu was killed, allegedly after an argument between his father and Ilic after the child's father allowed someone to cut him in line at the hospital. Ilic, who was in line behind the family, was allegedly angered and a fight broke out between him and Aliu's father, and the families joined in. Ilic said he did not mean to hit the child and argued he accelerated his car to try to remove himself from the situation. However, the problem was escalated to a hate crime, and the case has been back in headlines after the prosecutor reduced Ilic's sentence from premeditated murder to a serious traffic offense on March 15, 2018 (Associated Press, 2018). Protests of 1000 people in Skopje only a few days after the decision was released, accusing the prosecutor of an ethnically-motivated decision. An Albanian justice minister, Bilen Saliji, resigned in March 2018 due to the ruling. Although cases like these have serious implications, perceived discrimination with this study's participants does not have great effects on well-being, as most have not experienced it, and their high levels of ethnic identity block the effects of

Interpersonal Trust.

Interpersonal trust is one of the most interesting variables in this research; interpersonal trust in this context is referring to interethnic trust.

[Insert Table Four]

Although it is difficult to ascertain a clear depiction of interpersonal trust's effect on subjective well-being, what can be explained is that people who live in ethnically-mixed areas have higher interpersonal trust than those who do not. For example, Participants One and six grew up in ethnically mixed areas where they regularly had Macedonians and other minority groups to their houses; they have always been comfortable around different ethnicities because they were exposed to them from a young age. On the other hand. Participant Eight mentioned

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that he speaks little Macedonian and does not have many Macedonian friends, as he lives in a more ethnically-homogenous area; he speaks little Macedonian but started gaining more exposure to the group after joining afterschool activities. One participant mentioned that her mother attended school in Kosovo during the 1980s where Albanians experienced high discrimination (remember, this was during the period of an increasing fight for Albanian rights in Kosovo). She explained that her mother did not want her children to act the same way and raised them to be more open-minded. However, the overall results on interpersonal trust's effect on subjective well-being is somewhat inconclusive at this point, but if anything, it has a slight positive correlation. It would have been interesting to learn more about generalized versus particular trust.

Membership in Voluntary Organizations.

Nearly all the participants were heavily involved in voluntary organizations, and these similar interests bind them together.

[Insert Table Four]

Several participants mentioned that they volunteered for organizations that promote interethnic trust, healthcare, civil discourse, etc. One participant, who lives in an ethnically-homogenous municipality, mentioned that being involved in these activities allowed him to gain more exposure to Macedonians. Overall, all but one participant are involved in voluntary organizations, and their passion was evident in the interviews. Therefore, we can accept that membership in voluntary organizations impacts individual well-being.

Institutional Trust/Corruption.

All of the participants had low trust in institutions and were very critical of the government, citing government corruption during former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski's regime as one of the worst periods in Macedonia's history.

[Insert Table Four]

This view was especially pronounced by the young Participant Three, who explained that the political scandals only added more stress onto college students. Most participants mentioned a lack of a meritocracy in a lot of positions, proving that who you know, not necessarily what you know, really matters in Macedonia. Participant One also mentioned that when hearing about Gruevski's Skopje 2014 project, arguing that the millions of euros spent could have been invested in improving infrastructure where it is needed instead of placing lavish statues in the center of the city. One participant's response to corruption sums up the general stance on the issue nicely, "When the government is corrupt, it is stealing from me and that directly affects me." With that being said, corruption, given the tense political climate in Macedonia's recent history, has a negative effect on subjective well-being.

Discussion

What can be concluded from the information disclosed by these eight people? First, the most important factors affecting well-being are ones that impact all citizens, regardless of their ethnicity. The most important independent variables affecting subjective well-being among this subset of Macedonia's population are: education, employment status, corruption, and membership in voluntary organizations. People need to be educated to find good jobs; although the quality of education in Macedonia is questionable, there needs to be opportunities to receive education. Employment status/job prospects seem to greatly affect well-being, as demonstrated by Participants Two and Three; even pursuing a Ph.D. does not guarantee a job. My

conversations with locals in Macedonia may add even more context. For example, one undergraduate expressed that he could find a job within the state administration if he pledged party loyalty, or he could just jump around from internship to internship, guaranteeing freedom of choice but less certainty; he preferred the latter, refusing to succumb to party politics. Many of these conversations showed that educated groups do not emphasize ethnic politics. Even people who do may overcome these prejudices by joining voluntary organizations. Participant Seven showed that joining local organizations allowed him to have exposure to a group of Macedonians since he lived in an Albanian-Macedonian dominant area. Most participants emphasized the need for interethnic understanding, and one way to improve this is by gathering together

Unfortunately, politicized institutions and high-level corruption have limited prospects for citizens. Similarly, they have tried to draw upon ethnicity as a tool to remain in power, but my conversations with locals have also showed that the citizens have lost trust in these institutions. In fact, the participants have served as community leaders in promoting political discourse, critical thinking, and bridging a gap between ethnicities. This open-minded group could be a reason why there was not much variation in the results. Although ethnicity may not be the most important role among individuals with these similar characteristics, that does not go to say that it may not be elsewhere. It is important for future researchers to get more variation among their participants to paint a clearer picture of the subjective well-being of Albanians in Macedonia.

Concluding Thoughts

The participant pool can be considered a model for the country. Overall, they are doing well, but problems occurring in the country must be addressed. In that sense, government policy can positively impact all people. I asked each participant about their thoughts on the most necessary reforms in Macedonia. Although I painted a pretty good picture in my mind, it is more important to gain feedback from those who are directly affected by government policy. The most common reforms are listed, in order of frequency and importance:

1. Rule of Law → Judicial reform through an independent, non-discriminatory of elected officials.
2. Educational Reform → Lack of quality and qualified professors
3. Reducing the Influence of Polarized Media
4. Increased Citizen Awareness

Prime Minister Zoran Zaev has been publicly committed to reinstalling the rule of law in Macedonia, primarily through cooperating with Euro-Atlantic institutions. However, vague statements about commitments to democracy are not enough. Most citizens of Macedonia with whom I have conversed have presented an optimistic view of their new leader. EU and NATO accession are looking more like a reality for Macedonia; however, laws must be implemented.

Similarly, the Albanian Language Law, passed by parliament on March 15, 2018, improves the status of the minority on paper, but it will take time to see how it matches up in implementation. Future researchers should take a different approach in researching well-being of Albanian-Macedonians, primarily through comparing municipalities in terms of ethnic composition, budgets, etc. They could also take a quantitative approach by conducting surveys in several municipalities, but if a qualitative approach is preferred, then future researchers should interview people from different backgrounds to be able to have more generalizable data. Lastly, this study focused on one nation within Macedonia, largely ignoring the other groups

(Macedonian, Turks, Roma, etc.). Macedonia is a multiethnic society, and government officials should promote the cohesiveness instead of using politics to divide the people.

Although this study did not find as large of an effect of ethnicity on subjective well-being, it still contributed to existing literature by interviewing citizens in the contemporary period. Similarly, it shed light on the current conditions in the country and the needs of the people. There is still more work to be done to ensure equality of all groups within the country, and I hope that the new government remains as committed to a multicultural society in practice as it does in the media.

Appendix

Table One: Internal Factors Affecting Subjective Well-Being (Plus Employment Status)

*Note: The education attained refers to the degree level completed. Several participants are pursuing higher degrees or have declared their intent to continue their education.

Age	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	This box is intentionally left blank.
	4 participants	**3 participants**	**1 participant**	**0 participants**	
Gender	Male	Female	Other	This box is intentionally left blank.	This box is intentionally left blank.
	4 participants	**4 participants**	**0 participants**		
*Education Attained**	High School Diploma	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Ph.D.	This box is intentionally left blank.
	2 participants	**3 participants**	**2 participants**	**0 participants**	
Employment Status	Full-time (40 hours or more per week)	Part-time (Up to 39 hours per week)	Unemployed and looking for work	Full-time Student	Stay-at-Home Caretaker
	3 participants	**2 participants**	**1 participant**	**1 participant**	**1 participant**

Figure Three: Satisfaction with Life Scale for Quantitative Component.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale

By Ed Diener, Ph.D.

DIRECTIONS: Below are five statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1-7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number in the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Slightly Disagree
4 = Neither Agree or Disagree
5 = Slightly Agree
6 = Agree
7 = Strongly Agree

_____1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

_____2. The conditions of my life are excellent.

Figure Four. Subjective Happiness Scale for Quantitative Component.

Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)

By Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D.

For each of the following statements and/or questions, please circle the point on the scale that you feel is most appropriate in describing you.

1. In general, I consider myself:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not a very happy person						a very happy person

2. Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
less happy						more happy

Table Two. Subjective Happiness Scale Mean Responses.

*Note: These measurements are on a scale of 1 (not very happy/not at all) to 7 (very happy/a great deal)

**These averages are based on the responses from six out of eight participants.

Subjective Happiness Scale Questions	Participants' Mean Responses	Maximum and Minimum Values

In general, I consider myself 1 (not a very happy person) 2,3,4,5,6,7 (a very happy person)	5.3	Max= 7 Min= 4
Compared to most of my fellow citizens***, I consider myself	5.5	Max= 7 Min= 5
Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you?	4.3	Max= 7 Min= 2
Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they are never as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization describe you?	2.3	Max= 4 Min= 1

***The original subjective happiness scale states, "Compared to most of my peers…." instead of citizens. I adapted the scale to make it relevant to the sample population in this study.

Table Three. Satisfaction with Life Scale Mean Responses.

*Note: These answers use the following scale:

　　1= Strongly Disagree

2=Disagree
3=Slightly Disagree
4=Neither Agree or Disagree
5= Agree
6= Agree
7=Strongly Agree

**These averages are based on the responses from six out of eight participants

Satisfaction with Life Scale Questions	Participants' Mean Responses	Maximum and Minimum Values
In most ways my life is close to my ideal.	5.2	Max= 7 Min= 3
The conditions of my life are excellent.	5.3	Max= 7 Min= 2
I am satisfied with my life.	5	Max= 7 Min= 2
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.	5.2	Max= 6 Min= 4
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	3.8	Max= 6 Min= 1

Table Four: External Factors Affecting Subjective Well-Being (Minus Employment Status)

Key:

       1= Low

       2= Medium

       3= High

*Note: A score of one for the perceived discrimination variable denotes *no* perceived discrimination. Although a score of zero would have been more appropriate for this variable, the original scale was used to preserve uniformity. A score of two for perceived discrimination represents personal examples experienced by the participant.

	Level of Ethnic Identity	Perceived Discrimination*	Level of Interpersonal Trust	Membership in Voluntary Organizations	Institutional Trust
Participant One	3	1	3	1	1
Participant Two	3	2	3	3	1
Participant Three	3	1	3	3	1
Participant Four	3	2	3	3	1
Participant Five	3	1	3	3	1
Participant Six	3	1	3	3	1

Participant Seven	3	1	2	3	1
Participant Eight	3	1	3	3	1

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