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Image Healing: From Abbas and Miyazaki's Films to the Realization Path of Art Therapy in Film Creation

Lan Bai¹

¹ Hangzhou Lanting Film and Television Culture Media Co., Ltd., Hangzhou, China

Correspondence: Lan Bai, Hangzhou Lanting Film and Television Culture Media Co., Ltd., Hangzhou, China.

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Abstract

This study employs an interdisciplinary theoretical framework integrating art therapy, psychoanalysis, object relations, trauma psychology, and film semiotics to propose a core model of cinema as a “transitional space” and “non-verbal therapeutic medium.” It demonstrates that the act of viewing films constitutes a complete psychological process encompassing trauma accommodation, emotional catharsis, cognitive restructuring, and self-integration. Using Abbas Kiarostami's minimalist realism and Hayao Miyazaki's fantastical animation aesthetics as dual case studies, the research employs film psychology textual analysis, audiovisual language interpretation, psychodynamic explanations, and role relationship dynamics to reveal how visual imagery influences viewers' unconscious structures, emotional regulation systems, self-object representations, and collective subconscious, thereby achieving therapeutic integration of individual trauma repair and contemporary spiritual symptoms. Building on this foundation, the study develops an operational and theoretically grounded therapeutic film creation grammar, providing an internationally visionary interdisciplinary approach for the clinical psychological application of cinematic art and the construction of therapeutic aesthetics.

Keywords: art therapy, film therapy, trauma integration, psychoanalysis, transitional space, autopsychology, film psychology, audiovisual language, role dynamics, therapeutic creation

1. Introduction: The Interdisciplinary Foundation of Film as a Healing Medium

1.1 Research Background

The existential anxiety, attachment damage, trauma diffusion, and emotional alienation triggered by accelerated modernity have become global mental health concerns. Art therapy, characterized by non-verbal, symbolic, and inclusive interventions, has emerged as a crucial pathway for trauma healing, emotional regulation, and personality integration (Case, 2019; Robbins, 2020). Film, as a comprehensive art form integrating spatiotemporal structures, audiovisual symbols, narrative empathy, and mirror-like identification, naturally aligns with psychoanalytic concepts of fantasy space, transitional phenomena, and unconscious expression mechanisms (Winnicott, 1953; Lacan, 1964).

While most film studies focus on narrative analysis, ideological frameworks, and aesthetic styles, systematic deconstruction of cinematic creation mechanisms through psychoanalytic and clinical art therapy perspectives remains underexplored. This study bridges film psychology interpretation, role dynamics analysis, psychological mechanisms of dramatic conflict, and the psychological effects of audiovisual language with creative practice, achieving a paradigm shift from “film interpretation” to “therapeutic creation through film.”

1.2 Core Proposition

(1) The Film as the Media Realization of the Transitional Space

The film constructs a latent space between the reality principle and the pleasure principle, allowing unconscious

conflicts, traumatic memories, and repressed emotions to emerge safely (Winnicott, 1971).

(2) Watching Movies Is a Mini Psychoanalysis

Through the imagery, the audience achieves empathy, projection, identification, accommodation, and working-through, symbolically resolving their inner conflicts.

(3) Therapeutic Film Follows the Clinical Treatment Logic of “Trauma Presentation–Negative Emotion Acceptance–Meaning Reconstruction–Self-Integration.”

The narrative structure, the setting of dramatic conflict, the construction of character relationship and the design of audio-visual language all serve the restoration of psychological homeostasis and the integration of mental structure.

1.3 Subjects and Methods

This study adopts a qualitative interdisciplinary approach that integrates film aesthetics, psychoanalytic theory, and art therapy perspectives. Abbas Kiarostami and Hayao Miyazaki are selected as representative directors because their works respectively embody two contrasting healing paradigms: introverted individual healing and extroverted era healing. To explore the psychological mechanisms of cinematic healing, the study applies the following analytical methods.

Psychoanalytic textual interpretation is used to examine symbolic structures, unconscious expressions, and narrative patterns in the films. This approach helps reveal how cinematic narratives reflect psychological conflicts, desires, and processes of emotional reconstruction.

The clinical logic of trauma psychology is employed to reduce complex narrative situations to basic psychological mechanisms of trauma, recovery, and emotional integration. Through this approach, character behaviors and narrative developments are interpreted in relation to trauma processing and psychological healing.

Detailed audio-visual analysis is conducted to explore how cinematic language—including camera movement, editing rhythm, sound design, and visual composition—participates in shaping viewers’ emotional and psychological responses.

The dynamics of relationships between characters are analyzed in order to understand how interpersonal interaction functions as a medium for psychological projection, empathy formation, and emotional transformation.

The study refers to the process logic of art therapy and applies a correspondence approach between creative grammar and therapeutic mechanisms. Through this perspective, film creation is interpreted as a symbolic process that mirrors therapeutic stages such as emotional expression, symbolic reconstruction, and psychological integration.

Through the mutual verification of film aesthetics, psychological theory, and creative practice, the study attempts to construct a theoretical framework for understanding cinema as a potential medium of psychological healing.

2. The Psychological Mechanism of Film as Art Therapy: Interpretation of Film Studies and Psychoanalysis

2.1 Transitional Space: The Ontology of Film’s Healing

Winnicott’s concept of potential space forms the ontological foundation of cinematic healing.

The film is neither a completely objective reality nor a purely subjective fantasy, but a third space that allows for the coexistence of illusion and reality (Winnicott, 1953).

From the perspective of film studies, this space is constructed by narrative immersion, picture stitching, sound envelopment and time-space continuity, which enables the audience to contact the unconscious, face the inner object and repair the traumatic memory within the safe psychological distance.

2.2 Mirror Identity, Mirror Need and Role Attachment

The mirror stage of Lacan and the self-psychology of Kohut jointly explain the primary therapeutic mechanism of film:

Through role identification, emotional projection, and idealized investment, viewers achieve mirror self-confirmation and strengthen their sense of self-identity, thereby compensating for the lack of mirror reflection, fragmented self, and absence of attachment in reality (Lacan, 1949; Kohut, 1977).

The film psychology summarizes it as the role attachment mechanism: the stable, empathetic and accommodating role can become the transitional object of the audience and provide the restorative emotional experience.

2.3 The Psychological Function of Dramatic Conflict: Trauma Activation, Acceptance and Repair

Dramatic conflict in film is traditionally understood as the driving force of narrative development. From a psychoanalytic perspective, however, conflict functions not only as a plot mechanism but also as the symbolic externalization of inner psychological tensions. Characters' goals often represent unconscious desires that seek expression within the narrative structure. The forces that hinder these goals may correspond to internal psychological defenses, trauma fixation, or superego prohibitions that restrict the realization of those desires.

Within this framework, dramatic conflict becomes a projection of internal psychic struggle into the narrative world. The tension between characters frequently mirrors processes of transference and countertransference, as well as the repetition of earlier relational patterns formed in past object relationships. Through confrontation, misunderstanding, or emotional negotiation, the narrative gradually brings these hidden psychological dynamics into visibility.

The resolution of dramatic conflict therefore represents more than the restoration of external order. It symbolically reflects the reconciliation of internal contradictions and the reconstruction of psychological balance. In healing-oriented films, conflict design usually follows a principle of moderate activation, safe containment, and non-violent resolution. Rather than intensifying trauma to the point of emotional overload, such narratives carefully regulate the exposure of psychological pain while guiding characters toward recognition, acceptance, and eventual repair.

2.4 The Psychological Effects of Audiovisual Language: A Neurocinematic Perspective

Audiovisual language in cinema functions not only as an aesthetic medium but also as a psychological regulatory system that shapes viewers' emotional and cognitive responses. Research in neurocinematics suggests that specific cinematic techniques can influence neural activity, emotional arousal, and attentional focus during film viewing.

Camera stability and movement patterns, for example, can affect the viewer's sense of psychological security. Stable framing and slow camera movement often generate feelings of calmness and continuity, while rapid movement or unstable imagery may heighten tension and anxiety. Similarly, visual elements such as lighting, color, and composition contribute to the regulation of emotional activation. Soft lighting and balanced compositions tend to create an atmosphere of safety and reflection, whereas sharp contrasts and fragmented compositions may intensify psychological disturbance or suspense.

Sound design also plays a crucial role in emotional modulation. Music, rhythm, and ambient sound can directly influence the autonomic nervous system, guiding viewers' emotional states and synchronizing affective responses with narrative development. Editing rhythm and spatio-temporal continuity further shape viewers' sense of psychological coherence. Smooth temporal transitions support identification with characters and narrative immersion, while abrupt discontinuities may disrupt emotional integration.

Together, these audiovisual elements form the technical foundation through which healing-oriented cinema constructs its psychological effects, enabling film to operate as a medium capable of regulating emotional experience and facilitating symbolic processes of reflection and recovery.

3. Abbas: Minimalist Image as an "Inclusive Object" and Contemplative Healing

The films of Abbas Kiarostami can be understood as a form of contemplative cinematic art therapy. His aesthetic strategy is characterized by the depoliticization of imagery, the reduction of dramatic confrontation, and the avoidance of visual aggression that often dominates mainstream cinematic language. By minimizing spectacle and emotional coercion, the image becomes a stable, neutral, and non-intrusive containing object. In psychological terms, such images provide viewers with a perceptual environment that is calm, open, and receptive rather than demanding or intrusive. This aesthetic orientation enables cinema to function not merely as representation but as a psychological space in which viewers can safely experience reflection, emotional release, and inner integration.

3.1 Playwriting: De-Conflict Narrative and "No Event Space"

Kiarostami's narrative structure deliberately avoids strong dramatic conflict, climactic confrontation, and explicit value judgment. Instead, his films frequently return to the micro-temporal structures of everyday life, such as walking, waiting, casual conversation, and quiet observation. These seemingly uneventful moments form what can be described as a "no-event space" in which narrative tension is deliberately softened.

From the perspective of film psychology and narrative dynamics, this narrative strategy creates a safe psychological environment that allows a form of mental regression. By reducing the intensity of external stimuli and the pressure of dramatic escalation, the narrative weakens the authority of the superego and relaxes rigid defensive mechanisms. As a result, the spectator's mental state gradually shifts from a mode of tension and performance to a mode of simple existence. Within such a contemplative narrative space, viewers are encouraged to slow down their cognitive processing and turn inward, opening the possibility for introspection

and emotional reflection.

3.2 Image: Long Shot, Gaze and Mirror-Inclusive

A characteristic feature of Kiarostami's visual language is the frequent use of long shots and sustained visual observation. For instance, the long-shot ending of *The Wind Will Carry Us* illustrates how duration and spatial openness can create a non-intrusive viewing experience. A fixed camera position, eye-level perspective, extended duration, and spatial emptiness together produce a form of gentle, non-invasive gaze.

In psychological terms, such an audiovisual structure resembles the therapeutic conditions of unconditional positive regard, stable object presence, and the supportive holding environment described in clinical psychology. The long shot is therefore not merely a stylistic preference but an extension of the psychological container created by the film. By allowing time and space for emotional experience to unfold, the image enables viewers' feelings to remain present, gradually transform, and integrate into a broader internal understanding. Through this process, the spectator is given the opportunity to complete a subtle form of inner emotional integration.

3.3 Sound and Editing: Ganglionic Rhythm Regulation and Deactivation

The auditory and editing strategies in Kiarostami's films further reinforce this contemplative psychological environment. Ambient sounds dominate the soundscape, while non-diegetic music is often minimized or absent. Editing patterns remain smooth and continuous, avoiding abrupt transitions or rapid montage.

These stylistic choices influence the viewer's physiological and emotional state. The absence of intense rhythmic stimulation reduces excessive activation of the sympathetic nervous system and promotes a calmer parasympathetic response associated with relaxation and emotional stability. In this sense, the audiovisual rhythm functions as a subtle mechanism of emotional regulation.

From the perspective of neurocinematics, Kiarostami's audiovisual design can be understood as a trauma-sensitive cinematic language. Rather than amplifying anxiety or tension, the film's sensory environment gradually deactivates stress responses and encourages psychological calmness and attentional openness.

3.4 Summary of Therapeutic Mechanisms

Kiarostami's cinematic language constructs a contemplative therapeutic process that can be summarized as a gradual psychological sequence: contemplation leads to relaxation, relaxation allows defensive mechanisms to soften, and this softening enables a process of internal self-regulation that may ultimately result in a sense of existential tranquility.

This mechanism parallels several therapeutic approaches in clinical psychology, including supportive therapy, holding-oriented therapy, and mindfulness-based interventions. Within this framework, Kiarostami's films provide a stable psychological environment particularly suitable for individuals who are introspective, emotionally sensitive, or prone to anxiety. By offering a calm perceptual space rather than dramatic stimulation, the films enable viewers to encounter their own emotional experiences in a safer and more reflective manner.

4. Hayao Miyazaki: Animation as a Media Practice of Trauma Integration and Self-Actualization

The animated works of Hayao Miyazaki present a more dynamic model of psychological transformation. Miyazaki's animation can be interpreted as a narrative structure that mirrors the process of trauma integration and self-actualization. Through symbolic imagery, emotional confrontation, and relational repair, his films construct a developmental pathway that gradually guides characters from psychological fragmentation toward inner coherence.

The narrative logic underlying Miyazaki's films closely resembles the psychological dynamics observed in therapeutic processes. Rather than avoiding conflict, his stories often begin with a moment of trauma activation in which the protagonist encounters loss, separation, fear, or existential uncertainty. This initial disturbance triggers the emergence of internal conflicts that must be confronted throughout the narrative journey.

Following this activation stage, the narrative typically moves toward what can be described as a confrontation with the "shadow," a concept associated with the encounter between the conscious self and its repressed or feared aspects. Through encounters with antagonistic figures, ambiguous allies, or symbolic creatures, the protagonist gradually externalizes internal psychological tensions.

As the narrative progresses, emotional release becomes possible through acts of empathy, sacrifice, reconciliation, or self-recognition. These moments allow previously fragmented emotional experiences to be expressed and reorganized. The process is frequently accompanied by the repair of damaged relationships or the rediscovery of meaningful connections with others, which functions as a form of object repair within the psychological structure of the character.

This narrative trajectory leads toward ego integration and self-actualization. The protagonist emerges not as a victorious conqueror but as a more integrated individual who has reconciled conflicting emotional forces and

developed a deeper sense of identity and responsibility. In this sense, Miyazaki's animated cinema can be understood as a symbolic media practice through which trauma is not merely represented but gradually integrated within a narrative framework of psychological growth.

4.1 The Interpretation of Role and Conflict in the Framework of Psychoanalysis

Within a psychoanalytic framework, the characters and conflicts in Miyazaki's films can be interpreted as symbolic representations of internal psychological structures. Rather than functioning merely as narrative roles, these elements often correspond to archetypal forces that structure the protagonist's inner world.

Nature frequently appears as a symbolic representation of the collective unconscious or the primordial maternal space. Forests, rivers, spirits, and natural landscapes function as images of an original psychological wholeness in which the human self remains connected to deeper instinctual and emotional layers. In contrast, war, industrial destruction, and technological aggression often represent forms of cultural trauma. These forces can be interpreted as symbolic manifestations of separation anxiety, castration anxiety, and the broader civilizational repression of instinctual life.

The young protagonists that frequently appear in Miyazaki's narratives function as auto representations of the emerging self. Through their journeys, the films dramatize the psychological development of a subject attempting to reconcile conflicting emotional and moral forces. The spirits, beasts, and supernatural companions encountered along the way frequently operate as archetypal figures that embody protective energies, ideal objects, or inner guardians that support the protagonist's psychological transformation.

At the deepest narrative level, the central conflict in Miyazaki's films can be understood as a symbolic expression of multiple psychological splits: the division between self and object, civilization and nature, as well as consciousness and the unconscious. The resolution of these conflicts does not typically occur through domination or victory but through recognition, reconciliation, and integration. In this sense, redemption within Miyazaki's cinematic universe corresponds to a process of individuation and the reconstruction of inner psychological integrity.

4.2 A Critical Reading of Princess Mononoke: The Clinical Process of Trauma, Acceptance and Integration

(1) The God of the Earth: The Primordial Object and the Representation of Collective Trauma

In *Princess Mononoke*, the Forest Spirit—often referred to as the Deer God—functions as more than a mythological figure or natural entity. Within a psychoanalytic framework, this figure can be interpreted as the embodiment of a primordial object that represents the origin of life, a symbolic life matrix, and an image of the collective unconscious. The presence of the Forest Spirit establishes the film's deeper symbolic structure, in which nature appears as a space of psychological wholeness and primordial balance.

The beheading of the Deer God constitutes the central traumatic event of the narrative. This moment represents not only a disruption of the ecological order but also a symbolic fragmentation of the primary psychic structure. At the narrative level, it reflects the breakdown of the relationship between human civilization and the natural world. At a psychological level, it can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of collective trauma in which the connection between self and nature, consciousness and the unconscious, is violently severed.

The black corrupt substance that spreads across the landscape following this event functions as a visual metaphor for unresolved trauma. Its uncontrolled expansion resembles the diffusion of unprocessed psychic material, representing negative projections, destructive impulses, and emotional residues that have not yet been integrated. In psychological terms, this imagery corresponds to the experience of depressive anxiety, emotional overflow, and the exhaustion of the self when traumatic experiences cannot be adequately metabolized.

(2) Shan: The Traumatized Self and the Angry Inner Child

The character of Shan embodies the psychological structure of a traumatized self. Her aggression, distrust, and extreme vigilance toward humans can be interpreted as typical defensive responses formed in the aftermath of attachment disruption and identity conflict. Having been abandoned by human society and raised among wolves, Shan exists in a liminal psychological position between the human world and the natural world, which intensifies her sense of alienation and emotional fragmentation.

From the perspective of trauma psychology, Shan's hostility toward humans can be understood as a defensive structure that protects a deeply wounded inner self. Anger in this context does not function merely as destructive emotion but as a protective mechanism that preserves the integrity of the traumatized subject. Her heightened vigilance toward perceived threats reflects a common post-traumatic pattern in which the self remains constantly alert to potential invasion or betrayal.

Miyazaki's narrative approach is significant in that it does not suppress or prematurely resolve Shan's anger. Instead, the film allows her emotional intensity to remain visible and legitimate within the narrative space. This

narrative choice reflects an ethical principle similar to that found in trauma therapy: emotional experiences must first be acknowledged and expressed before they can be integrated. By allowing Shan's trauma to unfold rather than forcing immediate reconciliation, the film creates a psychological space in which anger, grief, and vulnerability can gradually move toward acceptance and transformation.

(3) Return of the Head: Reintegration of Fragmented Objects and Trauma Repair

The moment when the severed head of the Forest Spirit returns to its body represents a critical turning point in the psychological structure of the narrative. Symbolically, this moment marks the reintegration of fragmented objects and the restoration of a disrupted internal order. In psychoanalytic terms, it signifies the transition from psychic fragmentation toward the reconstruction of a more coherent inner structure.

The intense light that emerges during this sequence functions as a symbolic representation of psychological illumination. Rather than merely serving as a visual spectacle, the light can be interpreted as a moment of detachment from destructive emotional cycles and an unlocking of previously repressed unconscious material. Within the therapeutic metaphor of the film, this illumination corresponds to the moment when traumatic experiences become consciously acknowledged and therefore open to transformation.

Simultaneously, the dramatic changes in color and visual atmosphere signal a shift in psychological energy. The transition from dark, corrupted imagery to a more balanced visual environment reflects the movement of psychic energy away from depressive exhaustion toward processes of integration and sublimation. Music also plays a crucial role in this transformation. The rising musical structure during this sequence creates a sense of emotional release, suggesting that previously accumulated tension is gradually metabolized and discharged.

These audiovisual elements correspond to what trauma therapy describes as the moment of "working through." At this stage, the traumatic experience is no longer avoided or repressed but actively processed and symbolically reorganized. The return of the head therefore functions as the psychological resolution of the narrative conflict and the beginning of emotional integration.

(4) Forest Rebirth: Self-Actualization and Reconciliation with Existence

The rebirth of the forest at the end of *Princess Mononoke* does not represent a return to a pre-traumatic state. Instead, it symbolizes the emergence of a new equilibrium in which trauma has been acknowledged and integrated into the broader structure of life. The restored landscape reflects a psychological condition in which loss is recognized, fragmentation is accepted, and new relational boundaries are gradually established.

This transformation suggests that healing does not involve the complete elimination of suffering. Rather, it requires the capacity to acknowledge loss without being entirely defined by it. In the film's narrative resolution, characters learn to accept the fractures that have occurred while simultaneously rebuilding meaningful relationships with the world around them. The newly emerging relationship between human society and nature therefore takes the form of coexistence rather than fusion or domination.

From a psychological perspective, this process corresponds to a mature form of healing in which trauma is not erased but integrated into the evolving structure of the self. Pain is not removed from experience but gradually transformed into a source of reflection and growth. The self that emerges from this process is not perfect or fully restored but repaired and reorganized.

The film ultimately moves beyond the illusion of complete "cure" and instead presents a vision of psychological maturity grounded in acceptance, resilience, and coexistence with the complexities of existence.

5. A Comparative Study of Two Directories: The Psychodynamic Differences of Two Healing Paradigms

The films of Abbas Kiarostami and Hayao Miyazaki represent two distinct paradigms of cinematic healing. Although both directors construct narrative spaces that allow viewers to confront psychological suffering, their approaches differ significantly in terms of psychodynamic mechanisms, narrative strategies, and aesthetic orientation.

Kiarostami's cinematic language can be understood as a supportive and inclusive therapeutic model. His films tend to address psychological conditions characterized by anxiety, tension, excessive defensiveness, and emotional vulnerability. Instead of intensifying dramatic conflict, Kiarostami deliberately reduces external stimulation and narrative pressure. Through minimalist storytelling, weak dramatic conflict, and contemplative pacing, his films create a stable perceptual container in which viewers can gradually relax their defensive structures. This cinematic environment resembles therapeutic approaches such as supportive therapy, mindfulness-oriented reflection, and forms of gentle hypnotic absorption. The creative orientation of this paradigm is therefore characterized by anti-dramatic structure, low narrative pressure, and a high degree of emotional tolerance.

Miyazaki's animation presents a more dynamic therapeutic model based on exposure, emotional acceptance, and

psychological integration. His films frequently engage with deeper layers of trauma, including cultural anxiety, existential conflict, and the fragmentation of the self. Rather than avoiding conflict, Miyazaki's narratives actively activate archetypal forces and symbolic confrontations that allow characters to encounter their inner "shadow." Through dramatic conflict, emotional catharsis, and relational repair, the narrative gradually guides characters toward a process of object reintegration and self-actualization. The creative orientation of this paradigm therefore emphasizes strong symbolism, intense narrative confrontation, and eventual psychological integration.

The two paradigms share an important spiritual foundation. Both directors avoid narratives based on violence, moral condemnation, or psychological domination. Instead, their cinematic worlds emphasize respect for the inner experience of the self, tolerance toward emotional suffering, and the possibility of symbolic repair through narrative completion. In this sense, both filmmakers demonstrate how cinema can function as a medium for psychological healing, offering viewers spaces in which pain can be acknowledged, endured, and gradually transformed.

6. The Clinical Grammar of Therapeutic Film Creation (Original Core)

Drawing upon psychoanalysis, art therapy, trauma psychology, neurocinematology, and theories of film creation, this study proposes a conceptual framework that may be described as a "clinical grammar" of therapeutic cinema. Rather than treating film merely as narrative entertainment, this framework interprets cinematic creation as a symbolic process capable of facilitating emotional regulation, trauma integration, and psychological reflection. The proposed grammar does not prescribe a rigid formula for filmmaking. Instead, it outlines several structural principles through which cinematic narratives can create psychologically supportive environments for viewers.

6.1 Narrative and Conflict Healing Grammar

Within a therapeutic cinematic framework, narrative structure is designed not primarily to intensify dramatic excitement but to support psychological accommodation and integration. Instead of relying solely on classical "overcoming" narratives in which conflict is defeated through domination or victory, healing-oriented narratives tend to adopt trauma-accommodating structures that acknowledge vulnerability and emotional complexity.

In such narratives, dramatic conflict functions as a catalyst for psychological growth rather than as a tool for spectacle or emotional manipulation. Conflict is therefore framed in ways that allow characters to encounter internal contradictions and gradually reorganize their emotional experience.

Another important principle is the maintenance of psychological safety for the viewer. Healing-oriented narratives typically provide a certain distance from traumatic events and incorporate mechanisms of narrative containment that prevent emotional overload. This allows viewers to confront difficult experiences without becoming overwhelmed by them.

These narratives permit negative emotions such as anger, grief, or fear to surface openly without prematurely forcing them into positive resolution. Emotional authenticity is preserved, and the narrative gradually moves toward reconciliation and integration rather than toward simple closure or dramatic triumph.

6.2 The Grammar of Role and Relationship Healing

Healing-oriented cinema also relies on specific configurations of characters and relationships. One important element is the presence of a stable accommodating figure who functions as a supportive psychological reference point within the narrative. This role may take the form of a mentor, guardian, companion, or symbolic protector who provides emotional stability and encourages the protagonist's psychological development.

The developmental trajectory of the protagonist often follows a path similar to therapeutic processes, moving from trauma exposure through emotional expression and reflective understanding toward eventual integration. Characters are therefore not defined solely by external achievements but by their evolving capacity for emotional recognition and relational connection.

Relationships between characters frequently mirror deeper psychological structures such as attachment patterns, empathic resonance, and internal object relations. Through these relational dynamics, the narrative dramatizes processes of trust formation, emotional repair, and mutual recognition.

At the same time, healing-oriented narratives tend to avoid exploitative patterns in which suffering is sensationalized or in which abusive relationships are romanticized. Instead of reinforcing destructive dynamics, the narrative emphasizes respect for vulnerability and seeks to prevent the emotional consumption of violence.

6.3 Image Healing Grammar

Visual composition plays a central role in constructing the psychological environment of therapeutic cinema. Healing-oriented film images tend to emphasize stability, openness, and perceptual safety rather than sensory

stimulation or visual aggression. Through careful control of camera position, lighting, spatial composition, and movement rhythm, cinematic images can regulate the viewer's bodily and emotional state.

A stable camera position often corresponds to a sense of bodily stabilization for the viewer. When the visual frame remains calm and balanced, the spectator experiences a reduced level of perceptual tension. Similarly, the use of an eye-level perspective creates a relationship of equality between the viewer and the cinematic subject. This perspective avoids visual domination or oppression and instead encourages reflective observation.

Lighting also contributes to the construction of a psychologically supportive environment. Natural light or soft lighting conditions tend to create a nurturing visual atmosphere, while excessive contrast or aggressive illumination may generate emotional pressure. Spatial "white space" within the frame further functions as a psychological breathing space that allows the viewer's perception to slow down and expand.

Slow and continuous camera movement helps reduce excessive sympathetic nervous system activation. Through these visual strategies, the image becomes not merely an aesthetic device but a medium for emotional regulation and contemplative experience.

6.4 Sound and Editing: Healing Grammar

Sound design and editing rhythm constitute another important dimension of therapeutic cinematic language. In healing-oriented film structures, auditory elements are often organized in ways that support emotional regulation and perceptual continuity.

Ambient sound frequently takes priority over heavily stylized sound effects or dramatic musical intensification. Natural environmental sounds help maintain a sense of sensory grounding and contribute to a balanced neurophysiological state. Music, when used, often functions as a supportive emotional presence rather than as a manipulative device designed to force specific emotional reactions.

Another important feature is the reduction of excessive sensory stimulation. Healing-oriented sound design typically avoids rapid shifts in volume, abrupt sonic contrasts, or overwhelming auditory density. Such low-stimulus environments are more compatible with trauma-sensitive cinematic design.

Editing patterns also contribute to psychological stability. Continuous editing and smooth transitions help maintain a coherent sense of narrative and emotional continuity. When viewers are given sufficient temporal space within a scene, emotional experiences are allowed to remain present long enough to be processed. This temporal openness creates conditions for what trauma psychology describes as the process of working through.

6.5 Image Healing Grammar

Beyond narrative structure and audiovisual rhythm, healing-oriented cinema also relies on symbolic imagery that resonates with deep psychological archetypes. These symbols function as mediating structures between unconscious emotional experience and conscious reflection.

Natural landscapes often appear as representations of primordial life forces. Within a psychoanalytic or archetypal framework, nature can be interpreted as a symbolic matrix that reflects the original connection between the self and the broader environment of existence. Such imagery evokes a sense of psychological grounding and wholeness.

Water frequently symbolizes emotional flow and purification. Rivers, rain, or oceans may represent the movement and transformation of emotional experience, suggesting the possibility of renewal through the release and circulation of affective energy.

Light functions as another important symbolic element. The emergence of light often signals moments of psychological insight, awakening, or integration. Rather than merely illuminating the visual field, light becomes a metaphor for the gradual expansion of consciousness.

Images of rebirth or regeneration often appear at the resolution of healing narratives. These images do not imply a return to an untouched or innocent state but instead represent the integration of trauma into a renewed structure of the self. Through such symbolic processes, cinema creates a visual language that expresses psychological transformation and existential renewal.

7. Time Healing: Film as a Repair Device of Collective Unconsciousness

Contemporary society is increasingly characterized by widespread psychological pressures that extend beyond individual experience. Rapid social change, technological acceleration, and the fragmentation of traditional social structures have contributed to a range of collective psychological conditions. Among these are attachment deficits in interpersonal relationships, heightened emotional vulnerability, the diffusion of traumatic experiences through media environments, and a growing sense of existential uncertainty. In addition, collective anxieties and unresolved historical tensions often appear in the form of symbolic "shadow projections" within cultural narratives.

Within this context, healing-oriented cinema can be understood as a cultural mechanism that contributes to the repair and regulation of collective psychological structures. Film provides a symbolic space in which unconscious fears, desires, and conflicts can be expressed, observed, and gradually reorganized. Through narrative, image, sound, and symbolic representation, cinema functions as a collective container that holds shared emotional experiences while allowing audiences to confront them from a safe distance.

Cinema operates as a cultural mirror that reflects the psychological condition of its historical moment. Archetypal symbols, narrative conflicts, and emotional transformations within films often resonate with deeper layers of the collective unconscious. By giving symbolic form to otherwise diffuse psychological tensions, healing-oriented films make it possible for audiences to recognize and integrate elements of the collective shadow.

Therapeutic cinema is not merely a form of entertainment. It can be understood as a restorative cultural practice that contributes to the gradual reorganization of collective mental structures. Through the shared experience of cinematic narratives, viewers participate in a symbolic process of emotional recognition, reflection, and integration. Film thus becomes a kind of mobile cultural “psychotherapy room” in which the psychological challenges of an era can be explored and partially repaired.

8. Conclusion

This study explores the therapeutic potential of cinema through an interdisciplinary framework that integrates psychoanalysis, art therapy, trauma psychology, and film semiotics. The analysis demonstrates that film can function not only as a narrative or aesthetic medium but also as a structured symbolic environment capable of influencing emotional regulation, self-representation, and unconscious psychological processes.

Through the comparative examination of the works of Abbas Kiarostami and Hayao Miyazaki, the study identifies two distinct paradigms of cinematic healing. Kiarostami’s films construct a contemplative and inclusive perceptual environment in which viewers experience emotional stabilization and reflective awareness. In contrast, Miyazaki’s animated narratives activate deeper layers of trauma, guiding characters and audiences through processes of confrontation, emotional expression, and psychological integration. Together, these two paradigms illustrate how cinematic images can engage with both individual psychological structures and broader cultural anxieties.

By linking the interpretation of film psychology with the analysis of dramatic conflict, character dynamics, and audiovisual language, this study proposes a conceptual framework that describes the clinical grammar of therapeutic film creation. This framework suggests that narrative design, character relationships, visual composition, and sound structures can collectively contribute to the construction of psychologically supportive cinematic environments.

The findings indicate that healing-oriented cinema may play an important cultural role in periods characterized by widespread psychological tension and existential uncertainty. Rather than functioning solely as entertainment, film can also serve as a reflective cultural space in which audiences encounter, process, and symbolically reorganize emotional experience. In this sense, therapeutic cinema represents not only an aesthetic orientation but also a form of cultural practice that encourages empathy, psychological awareness, and the possibility of inner reconciliation.

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Anglophone Identity in the Cameroonian Body Politic: Perceptions and Political Agitations Since 1961

Dr. Laluh Ernest Effim¹

¹ Lecturer of Social and Economic History, University of Buea, Cameroon

Correspondence: Dr. Laluh Ernest Effim, Lecturer of Social and Economic History, University of Buea, Cameroon.

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Abstract

This study examines Anglophone identity and political agitation in the Republic of Cameroon since reunification in 1961, focusing on the historical origins of Anglophone consciousness, perceptions of marginalization, and the evolution of political resistance within the Cameroonian body politic. Using a qualitative historical methodology based on primary and secondary sources, the study reveals that the distinct colonial experiences of British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroun created divergent legal, educational, and political traditions that shaped Anglophone identity after reunification. The abolition of the federal system in 1972 and the increasing centralization of political power intensified perceptions of exclusion and cultural assimilation among Anglophones, leading to organized political agitation ranging from constitutional advocacy and civil society activism to protests and armed resistance. The study further finds that although Anglophone agitation has succeeded in preserving collective identity and attracting national and international attention to issues of governance and representation, it continues to face challenges such as political repression, internal fragmentation, militarization, and limited institutional reforms. The study concludes that the Anglophone crisis is deeply rooted in historical and structural factors associated with colonial legacies, identity politics, and centralized governance, and recommends inclusive dialogue, constitutional reforms, protection of Anglophone institutions, equitable development, and democratic governance as necessary measures for sustainable peace and national integration in Cameroon.

Keywords: Anglophone identity, body politics, Cameroon, prescription, political agitation

1. Introduction

The reunification of British Southern Cameroons with the already independent Republic of Cameroon on 1 October 1961 marked a decisive turning point in the political and historical trajectory of the Cameroonian state.¹ Conceived as a union of two distinct colonial legacies-British and French-this moment laid the foundation for a complex and often uneasy coexistence within a single polity. While the federal arrangement initially adopted at reunification appeared to recognize the cultural, legal, and administrative particularities of the Anglophone minority, subsequent constitutional and political developments gradually eroded these guarantees.²

This evolution has generated enduring debates over identity, belonging, and power within the Cameroonian body politic. Anglophone identity in Cameroon is rooted in the specific historical experience of British colonial administration, which left behind distinctive institutions, notably the common law system, an Anglo-Saxon

¹ Konings, P., & Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2003). *Negotiating an Anglophone identity: A study of the politics of recognition and representation in Cameroon*. Brill.

² Fanzo, V. G. (2014). *Cameroon history for secondary schools and colleges: Vol. 2. The colonial and post-colonial periods*. Macmillan.

educational framework, and particular forms of local governance.¹ These features have come to constitute not merely administrative differences but markers of a collective identity among the populations of the North West and South West regions. Over time, however, many Anglophones have perceived their identity as marginalized within a state increasingly dominated by Francophone political culture, especially following the abolition of the federal system in 1972 and the subsequent centralization of power.²

The tensions arising from these developments have found expression in various forms of political agitation since reunification. From early constitutional debates and demands for federalism to more recent protests led by lawyers, teachers, and civil society groups, Anglophone grievances have consistently revolved around issues of political representation, cultural preservation, and equitable resource distribution.³ The resurgence of protests in 2016, which escalated into a broader socio-political crisis, underscores the persistence and intensification of these concerns within contemporary Cameroon.⁴

This article situates Anglophone identity within the broader historical context of state formation and nation-building in Cameroon. It seeks to critically examine how identity has been constructed, contested, and mobilized as a tool of political negotiation and resistance from 1961 to the present. By adopting a historical approach, the study interrogates the interplay between colonial legacies, constitutional transformations, and political agency in shaping Anglophone consciousness and agitation. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing scholarly debates on minority identity, postcolonial governance, and the challenges of national integration in plural societies.

2. Conceptual Clarification

There are some concepts associated with study. Each of them shall be examined seriatim.

2.1 Anglophone Identity

Anglophone identity in Cameroon refers to the collective historical, cultural, linguistic, legal, and political consciousness shared by the English-speaking populations of the North West and South West regions of the Republic of Cameroon. This identity emerged from the British colonial experience in the former Southern Cameroons and is distinguished by institutions such as the common law system, the Anglo-Saxon educational model, and the use of the English language in administration and public life.

Scholars view identity as a socially and historically constructed phenomenon shaped by shared experiences and collective memory. According to Francis B. Nyamnjoh (2005),⁵ identity in postcolonial African societies often develops through struggles for recognition and belonging within the state. In the Cameroonian context, Anglophone identity has evolved not merely as a linguistic category but as a political consciousness rooted in perceptions of marginalization, exclusion, and the desire to preserve institutional distinctiveness.

Historically, Anglophone identity became more pronounced after reunification in 1961 and intensified following the abolition of the federal system in 1972. Over time, it transformed into a mobilizing force for political action, advocacy, and resistance against perceived assimilationist policies. Thus, Anglophone identity in this study is understood as both a cultural heritage and a political expression shaped by historical experiences and state-society relations.

2.2 Body Politics

Body politics refers to the structure, organization, and exercise of political power within a state or political community. It encompasses the processes through which authority, representation, resources, and decision-making are distributed and regulated within society. In political science, the concept is closely linked to governance, state power, and the relationship between institutions and citizens.

Harold Lasswell (1936)⁶ conceptualizes politics as the process of determining “who gets what, when, and how,”

¹ Chem-Langhèè, B. (1995). *The paradoxes of self-determination in the Cameroons under United Kingdom administration: The search for identity, well-being and continuity*. University Press of America.

² Eyoh, D. (1998). Conflicting narratives of Anglophone protest and the politics of identity in Cameroon. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 16(2), 249–276.

³ Nkwi, P. N. (2006). *Voices from the margins: A study of the Anglophone problem in Cameroon*. Langaa RPCIG.

⁴ International Crisis Group. (2017). *Cameroon's Anglophone crisis at the crossroads* (Africa Report No. 250). International Crisis Group.

⁵ Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2005). *Africa's media, democracy and the politics of belonging*. Zed Books.

⁶ Lasswell, H. D. (1936). *Politics: Who gets what, when, how*. McGraw-Hill.

emphasizing the allocation of power and resources within society. Similarly, David Easton (1965)¹ defines the political system as the authoritative allocation of values within society. These perspectives collectively explain body politics as the institutional framework through which political authority and societal interests are managed.

Within the Cameroonian context, body politics refers to the manner in which political authority is centralized, exercised, and contested within the postcolonial state. It includes issues such as representation, governance, participation, constitutional arrangements, and access to national resources. The concept is particularly relevant to the Anglophone question because perceptions of exclusion from the national body politic have contributed significantly to political agitation and identity-based mobilisation.

2.3 Perception

Perception refers to the way individuals or groups interpret, understand, and give meaning to social, political, and historical realities. It involves the formation of opinions, beliefs, and attitudes based on experiences, observations, and interactions within society. Perceptions may not always reflect objective reality, but they significantly influence behaviour, political attitudes, and social responses.

According to Walter Lippmann (1922),² people respond not directly to reality itself, but to the “pictures in their heads” constructed from social experiences and public narratives. In political contexts, perceptions shape how communities understand governance, inclusion, discrimination, and power relations.

In this study, perception refers specifically to the way Anglophone populations in Cameroon interpret their position within the state. These perceptions are shaped by historical experiences of reunification, constitutional change, political representation, economic distribution, and cultural preservation. Perceptions of marginalization, exclusion, and assimilation have played a central role in the emergence and intensification of Anglophone political agitation since 1961.

2.4 Political Agitation

Political agitation refers to organized efforts aimed at influencing political opinion, challenging existing political structures, or demanding political, constitutional, or social change. It often involves activities such as protests, advocacy, demonstrations, political campaigns, public criticism, and collective mobilisation intended to draw attention to grievances and influence state policies.

Ted Robert Gurr (1970)³ argues that political agitation often emerges from feelings of relative deprivation, where groups perceive a gap between their expectations and actual political or socio-economic conditions. Such perceptions of injustice can generate frustration and collective political action.

In the Cameroonian context, political agitation refers to the various forms of resistance and mobilization undertaken by Anglophone populations in response to perceived political, cultural, and economic marginalization. Since 1961, this agitation has evolved from constitutional advocacy and elite negotiations to mass protests, civil society activism, and, in some cases, armed resistance. Political agitation in this study is therefore understood as both a reaction to perceived inequalities and a mechanism through which Anglophone communities seek recognition, representation, and institutional reforms.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a historical research design to examine the evolution of Anglophone identity in the Cameroonian body politic and the associated political agitations since 1961. The historical approach is appropriate because it enables the interpretation of long-term political and social processes, particularly those related to postcolonial state formation, governance, and identity construction.⁴

The research is primarily qualitative in nature and relies on documentary and archival methods. Secondary sources constitute the main body of evidence and include scholarly books, journal articles, and historical analyses focusing on Cameroon’s political development and identity dynamics. These materials are essential for reconstructing the historical trajectory of Anglophone consciousness and its political expressions over time.⁵ In addition, official documents such as constitutional texts, government policy statements, and reports from international organizations are used to trace key institutional transformations in the Cameroonian state, particularly the transition from a federal to a unitary system in 1972 and its implications for governance and

¹ Easton, D. (1965). *A systems analysis of political life*. Wiley.

² Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public opinion*. Harcourt, Brace and Company.

³ Gurr, T. R. (1970). *Why men rebel*. Princeton University Press.

⁴ Ngoh, V. J. (1996). *History of Cameroon since 1800*. Pressbook.

⁵ Le Vine, V. T. (2004). *Politics in francophone Africa*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

regional identity.¹ These sources help situate political grievances within broader structural changes in the postcolonial state.

The study also employs historiographical analysis, which involves critically engaging with different scholarly interpretations of Cameroon's postcolonial political evolution. This approach allows for a comparative examination of competing perspectives on identity formation, state centralization, and regional marginalization, thereby strengthening analytical depth and balance.²

Where available, oral historical accounts and recorded testimonies are used as supplementary sources. These provide insight into lived experiences, political mobilization, and collective memory, approaches. The thematic approach identifies recurring issues such as identity construction, political exclusion, resistance, and governance challenges, while the chronological approach ensures that developments are situated in their correct historical sequence from 1961 to the present.

The significance of this methodology lies in its ability to provide a comprehensive and historically grounded understanding of Anglophone identity and political agitation in Cameroon. By integrating historical design, qualitative interpretation, documentary evidence, and historiographical comparison, the study ensures a balanced reconstruction of events and meanings. It strengthens the reliability of findings through triangulation of sources, avoids one-dimensional explanations, and captures both structural transformations and lived experiences. Ultimately, it offers a nuanced explanation of how colonial legacies, state policies, and identity politics have interacted over time in shaping Cameroon's political landscape.

4. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on a combination of postcolonial theory, social identity theory, and relative deprivation theory as complementary analytical lenses for understanding the evolution of Anglophone identity and political agitation within the Republic of Cameroon since 1961.

First, postcolonial theory, which gained prominence in the mid-20th century-particularly through the works of Frantz Fanon in 1961 and Edward Said in 1978-provides a foundational framework for interrogating the enduring impact of colonial legacies on state formation and identity construction.³ This perspective examines how colonial administrative systems, cultural hierarchies, and imposed boundaries continue to shape power relations in post-independence states. In the Cameroonian context, the coexistence of British and French colonial legacies created dual institutional and cultural identities, which have remained sources of tension. Postcolonial theory thus explains how Anglophone identity emerged as a response to perceived domination, marginalization, and the assimilationist tendencies of the postcolonial state.

Second, the study draws on social identity theory, developed by Henri Tajfel in 1979 (with John Turner), to analyze how group identity is formed and mobilized in political contexts.⁴ This theory posits that individuals derive a sense of identity and self-worth from their membership in social groups, leading to in-group cohesion and out-group differentiation. Applied to Cameroon, Anglophone identity can be understood as a collective consciousness shaped by shared language, legal traditions, and historical experiences. The theory helps explain the persistence of Anglophone solidarity and the mobilization of this identity in response to perceived exclusion from national political and economic structures.

Third, relative deprivation theory, systematically articulated by Ted Robert Gurr in 1970, is used to explain the emergence of political agitation and protest movements.⁵ This theory argues that feelings of deprivation arise when there is a perceived gap between expectations and actual conditions. In the case of Anglophone Cameroon, expectations of equality and autonomy at reunification have, over time, contrasted with experiences of political marginalization, underrepresentation, and cultural erosion. This perceived disparity has contributed to grievances that fuel protests, resistance movements, and demands for structural reforms.

The relationship between these theories is complementary and mutually reinforcing. Postcolonial theory provides the historical and structural foundation by explaining how colonial legacies created the conditions for identity differentiation. Social identity theory builds on this by explaining how these differences are internalized and transformed into a shared group consciousness. Relative deprivation theory then explains how this consciousness translates into political action and agitation when perceived inequalities persist.

¹ *Ibid.*

² Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2005). *Africa's media, democracy and the politics of belonging*. Zed Books.

³ Fanon, F. (1961). *The wretched of the earth*. Grove Press. Gurr, T. R. (1970). *Why men rebel*. Princeton University Press.

⁴ Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict.

⁵ W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.). (1979). *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Brooks/Cole.

The significance of these theories to this study lies in their collective ability to provide a multidimensional understanding of the Anglophone problem. They allow the study to move beyond a purely descriptive historical account to an analytical explanation of why Anglophone identity emerged, how it has been sustained, and why it has led to recurrent political agitation. By integrating structural, psychological, and political perspectives, the framework enhances the explanatory depth of the study and provides a coherent basis for analyzing the interaction between colonial legacies, identity politics, and state governance in Cameroon.

5. An Overview of Anglophone Identity and Body Politics in Cameroon

Anglophone identity in Cameroon is historically grounded in the bifurcated colonial experience that followed the defeat of Germany in 1916 and the subsequent partition of Kamerun between Britain and France under the League of Nations mandate system. The British-administered Southern Cameroons evolved under a system of indirect rule closely linked to Nigeria, while French Cameroun developed under a centralized assimilationist administrative framework. These divergent colonial trajectories produced distinct institutional, legal, and political cultures that would later shape postcolonial identity formation.¹ The reunification of British Southern Cameroons with the already independent Republic of Cameroon in 1961 thus represented not simply a territorial merger, but the integration of historically differentiated political communities.

The federal constitution of 1961 attempted to accommodate this duality by granting a degree of autonomy to the federated states. However, as argued by Victor Julius Ngoh (1996), the arrangement concealed structural imbalances in political power. The 1972 referendum, which abolished federalism in favor of a unitary state, marked a critical turning point in the reconfiguration of state power. This shift accelerated the centralization of authority and contributed to the gradual erosion of Anglophone institutional distinctiveness, particularly in the legal and educational spheres.²

Anglophone identity has since evolved as both a cultural and political construct, shaped by shared historical experiences and reinforced through perceptions of marginalization. According to Francis B. Nyamnjoh (2005), identity in postcolonial African states is often negotiated through claims of belonging and recognition, particularly where state structures privilege certain linguistic or cultural groups. In Cameroon, this has led to the consolidation of Anglophone consciousness as a form of political resistance to perceived assimilationist pressures.³

The concept of body politics is essential for understanding how these identity dynamics intersect with structures of power. In political science, body politics refers broadly to the organization and exercise of power within a political community. Harold Lasswell (1936)⁴ conceptualizes politics as the process of determining “who gets what, when, and how,” thereby emphasizing the distributive nature of power within the state.

Similarly, David Easton (1965)⁵ defines the political system as the authoritative allocation of values in society. Together, these perspectives provide a clearer and more precise foundation for understanding body politics as the institutional and procedural framework through which power, resources, and representation are distributed.

Within the Cameroonian context, body politics encompasses both formal institutions—such as the executive, legislature, and judiciary—and informal mechanisms that regulate access to power. As Dieudonné Eyoh (1998)⁶ observes, the state has historically exhibited centralizing tendencies that limit pluralistic participation. For Anglophones, this has translated into grievances over underrepresentation in national decision-making bodies, the imposition of Francophone administrative practices, and the perceived erosion of the common law system.

These institutional concerns are reinforced by economic dimensions of marginalization. The Anglophone regions, despite their contributions to national revenue, have often been perceived as receiving unequal levels of public investment and infrastructural development. This perceived imbalance strengthens feelings of exclusion and contributes to political mobilization.⁷

Historically, Anglophone political agitation has evolved through distinct phases. The immediate

¹ Johnson, W. R. (1970). *The Cameroon federation: Political integration in a fragmented society*. Princeton University Press.

² Le Vine, V. T. (1964). *The Cameroons: From mandate to independence*. University of California Press.

³ Konings, P., & Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2003). *Negotiating an Anglophone identity: A study of the politics of recognition and representation in Cameroon*. Brill.

⁴ Lasswell, H.D. (1936). *Politics: Who gets What, When, and How*. McGraw-Hill.

⁵ Easton, D. (1965). *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*. Wiley.

⁶ Eyoh, D. (1998). Conflicting narratives of Anglophone protest and the politics of identity in Cameroon. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 16(2), 249–276.

⁷ Takougang, J., & Krieger, M. (1998). *African state and society in the 1990s: Cameroon's political crossroads*. Westview Press.

post-reunification period was dominated by elite negotiations and constitutional debates. The reintroduction of multiparty politics in the 1990s marked a second phase characterized by organized identity-based movements such as the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), which advocated for federalism or secession.¹ The third phase, beginning in 2016, has been marked by mass protests and escalating conflict, reflecting a deepening crisis of governance and legitimacy.

In analytical terms, the interaction between Anglophone identity and body politics reveals the structural tensions inherent in postcolonial state formation. It underscores how historically rooted institutional differences, when coupled with perceived political and economic exclusion, can generate enduring identity-based conflicts. The Anglophone question therefore remains central to broader debates on governance, inclusion, and national integration in Cameroon.

6. Effectiveness of Anglophone Political Agitation Since 1961

The effectiveness of Anglophone political agitation in Cameroon since 1961 may be evaluated through its impact on identity preservation, political consciousness, state response, and national discourse within the Republic of Cameroon. Although the movement has faced considerable limitations and has not fully achieved many of its core political objectives, it has nonetheless played a significant role in shaping debates on governance, representation, and national integration in Cameroon.

One major area of effectiveness has been the preservation and consolidation of Anglophone identity. Since reunification, political agitation has contributed to sustaining a distinct Anglophone consciousness rooted in the common law system, Anglo-Saxon educational traditions, and the historical experience of British colonial administration. Through continuous advocacy and mobilization, Anglophone actors have prevented the complete assimilation of these institutions into the dominant Francophone political culture.² In this regard, agitation has served not merely as political resistance but also as a mechanism of cultural and institutional preservation.

Another significant achievement lies in the ability of Anglophone movements to transform what was initially perceived as a regional grievance into a nationally and internationally recognized political issue. During the 1990s, organizations such as the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) succeeded in articulating demands for federalism, autonomy, and recognition in ways that attracted scholarly, diplomatic, and international attention. According to Dieudonné Eyoh (1998),³ Anglophone agitation exposed structural weaknesses within the centralized Cameroonian state and compelled broader discussions on inclusion and democratic governance.

The reintroduction of multiparty politics also demonstrated the growing effectiveness of political mobilization within the Anglophone regions. Political parties and civil society groups increasingly used democratic platforms to express grievances and challenge centralized governance structures. This period witnessed the strengthening of regional solidarity and collective political awareness among Anglophones, particularly concerning issues of representation and equitable resource distribution.⁴ The 2016 protests represented perhaps the most visible demonstration of the effectiveness of Anglophone political agitation. Initially led by lawyers and teachers, the protests successfully drew global attention to grievances surrounding the legal and educational systems in the Anglophone regions.

International organizations, foreign governments, and human rights groups began to engage more actively with the crisis, thereby internationalizing the Anglophone question.⁵ The government also responded with certain institutional measures, including the creation of the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism and limited decentralization reforms.

Despite these achievements, the effectiveness of Anglophone agitation has remained limited in several important respects. The movement has not succeeded in securing a return to federalism, achieving constitutional restructuring, or obtaining independence for the Anglophone regions. State centralization remains largely intact, and many Anglophones continue to perceive political and economic marginalization within national institutions.⁶ Furthermore, internal fragmentation within Anglophone movements has weakened their overall effectiveness.

¹ *Ibid.*

² Konings, P., & Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2003). *Negotiating an Anglophone identity: A study of the politics of recognition and representation in Cameroon*. Brill.

³ Eyoh, D. (1998). Conflicting narratives of Anglophone protest and the politics of identity in Cameroon. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 16(2), 249–276.

⁴ Takougang, J., & Krieger, M. (1998). *African state and society in the 1990s: Cameroon's political crossroads*. Westview Press.

⁵ International Crisis Group. (2017). *Cameroon's Anglophone crisis at the crossroads* (Africa Report No. 250).

⁶ *Ibid.*

Differences in ideology, strategy, and leadership have often undermined cohesion and negotiation capacity. While some groups advocate federalism and dialogue, others pursue separatist objectives, making it difficult to present a unified political agenda. This fragmentation has complicated efforts toward sustainable conflict resolution and reduced the movement's bargaining strength.

State repression has also significantly constrained the effectiveness of political agitation. Arrests, restrictions on civil liberties, and military responses to protests have limited open political engagement and contributed to the radicalization of some factions. Consequently, although agitation has succeeded in raising awareness and strengthening collective identity, it has also contributed to prolonged instability and conflict in the Anglophone regions.

In historical perspective, the effectiveness of Anglophone political agitation since 1961 can therefore be described as partial and evolving. The movement has been effective in preserving identity, generating political consciousness, and compelling national and international attention to issues of marginalization and governance. However, it has been less effective in achieving structural political transformation or resolving the deeper constitutional questions at the heart of the Anglophone problem. This mixed outcome reflects the broader challenges of negotiating identity, power, and inclusion within a centralized postcolonial African state.

7. Challenges of Anglophone Political Agitation in Cameroon Since 1961

Anglophone political agitation in Cameroon since 1961 has faced numerous structural, political, and socio-economic challenges that have limited its capacity to achieve lasting constitutional and institutional transformation within the Republic of Cameroon. These challenges have shaped both the direction and intensity of the movement across different historical periods.

One of the principal challenges has been the highly centralized character of the Cameroonian state following the abolition of the federal system in 1972. The concentration of political authority within the central government significantly reduced regional autonomy and weakened mechanisms through which Anglophone concerns could be institutionally addressed. According to Victor T. Le Vine (2004),¹ the postcolonial Cameroonian state developed around a strong central executive structure that limited pluralistic political participation and reinforced administrative dominance from the center.

Another major challenge has been political repression and restrictions on dissent. Over the years, Anglophone activists, journalists, lawyers, and civil society actors have frequently encountered arrests, intimidation, and limitations on political expression. Such responses have constrained peaceful political engagement and contributed to deepening mistrust between the state and Anglophone communities. Nicodemus Fru Awasom (2004)² argues that the inability of the state to adequately address constitutional grievances contributed to the radicalization of sections of the Anglophone movement.

Internal fragmentation has equally undermined the effectiveness of political agitation. Anglophone movements have often been divided over ideology, leadership, and political objectives. While some factions advocate federalism and constitutional reform, others demand outright independence for the former Southern Cameroons. These divisions have weakened strategic coordination and reduced the movement's negotiating strength. As observed by Mark W. DeLancey (1989),³ fragmented opposition movements within centralized African states often struggle to sustain unified political pressure against entrenched state systems.

Economic and infrastructural limitations have also constrained Anglophone political mobilization. Many Anglophone regions have experienced perceptions of uneven development, poor infrastructure, and limited state investment compared to other regions of the country. These conditions have affected both the organizational capacity of advocacy groups and the socio-economic stability necessary for sustained civic engagement. Such disparities have reinforced perceptions of exclusion and marginalization among local populations.⁴

Another challenge has been the limited level of international intervention and recognition. Although international organizations and foreign governments have expressed concern over the Anglophone crisis, most external actors continue to prioritize Cameroon's territorial integrity and regional stability. As a result, international responses have generally focused on mediation, humanitarian assistance, and calls for dialogue rather than support for

¹ Le Vine, V. T. (2004). *Politics in francophone Africa*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

² Awasom, N. F. (2004). The reunification question in Cameroon: Was the bride an enthusiastic or a reluctant one? *Africa Today*, 50(1), 99–121.

³ DeLancey, M. W. (1989). *Cameroon: Dependence and independence*. Westview Press.

⁴ *Ibid.*

separatist demands.¹

The militarization of parts of the Anglophone movement after 2016 has further complicated the struggle. While armed resistance emerged partly in reaction to state repression, it also transformed the crisis into a prolonged security conflict. This development led to widespread displacement, economic disruption, school closures, and humanitarian suffering within the North West and South West regions. The escalation of violence shifted attention from constitutional grievances to security concerns, thereby complicating possibilities for peaceful negotiation and reconciliation.

Historical and demographic realities have also posed challenges. Anglophones constitute a minority within Cameroon's broader population, limiting their influence within national electoral and administrative structures. In addition, differing political loyalties among Anglophone elites have weakened collective bargaining efforts, as some elites remained integrated within state institutions while others aligned themselves with opposition movements.

Furthermore, the absence of sustained and inclusive dialogue mechanisms has prolonged tensions. Attempts at negotiation have often been undermined by mistrust, inconsistent implementation of reforms, and the exclusion of certain stakeholders from peace initiatives. This has limited opportunities for consensus-building and durable conflict resolution.

In historical perspective, the challenges confronting Anglophone political agitation reflect the broader difficulties of negotiating identity, representation, and autonomy within centralized postcolonial African states. These obstacles continue to shape the trajectory of the Anglophone question and its implications for governance, political stability, and national cohesion in Cameroon.

8. Perception and Political Agitation Since 1961

The evolution of Anglophone political agitation in Cameroon since 1961 cannot be fully understood without examining the underlying perceptions that have shaped collective consciousness and political behavior within the Anglophone regions. These perceptions—rooted in historical experience, institutional change, and socio-political realities—have played a critical role in transforming identity into organized political action within the Republic of Cameroon.

In the immediate aftermath of reunification in 1961, Anglophone perceptions of the union were largely characterized by cautious optimism. The federal arrangement was widely viewed as a safeguard for the preservation of Anglophone identity, particularly in relation to the common law system, educational structures, and administrative autonomy. However, this perception gradually shifted as centralizing tendencies within the state became more pronounced. The 1972 abolition of the federal system marked a turning point, leading to growing feelings of betrayal and marginalization among Anglophones.²

During the 1970s and 1980s, political agitation remained relatively subdued, largely confined to elite circles and expressed through limited constitutional discourse. However, underlying perceptions of exclusion continued to deepen. According to Victor T. Le Vine (2004), the increasing concentration of political power at the center contributed to a sense of political invisibility among minority groups, including Anglophones. These perceptions were further reinforced by administrative practices perceived as favoring Francophone norms, particularly in the legal and educational sectors.

The reintroduction of multiparty politics in the 1990s marked a significant shift in both perception and political agitation. Anglophones increasingly began to articulate their grievances in terms of systemic marginalization and cultural erosion. This period witnessed the emergence of organized movements such as the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), which framed the Anglophone problem as a question of identity, rights, and self-determination.³ As Francis B. Nyamnjoh (2005) notes, perceptions of exclusion can serve as powerful catalysts for identity-based mobilization, particularly in contexts where institutional channels for redress are weak or ineffective.

From the 2000s onward, these perceptions became increasingly entrenched and widespread across different segments of Anglophone society. Grievances were no longer limited to political elites but extended to professionals, students, and civil society actors. The perception of being second-class citizens within the state gained prominence, reinforced by issues such as underrepresentation in public institutions, perceived neglect in

¹ International Crisis Group. (2019). *Cameroon's Anglophone crisis: How to get to talks?* Africa Report No. 272.

² Eyoh, D. (1998). Conflicting narratives of Anglophone protest and the politics of identity in Cameroon. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 16(2), 249–276.

³ *Ibid.*

infrastructure development, and the erosion of Anglophone cultural and legal systems.¹

The 2016 protests represented a critical escalation in Anglophone political agitation, driven largely by professional groups such as lawyers and teachers. These actors protested against the perceived imposition of Francophone legal and educational practices in Anglophone regions. The state's response to these protests further shaped perceptions, with many Anglophones interpreting it as evidence of systemic repression and unwillingness to address legitimate concerns. As a result, the agitation evolved from reformist demands-such as a return to federalism-to more radical calls for autonomy or independence.

Over time, the interaction between perception and political agitation has created a self-reinforcing cycle. Perceptions of marginalization fuel political mobilization, while state responses to agitation often reinforce those same perceptions. This dynamic has contributed to the persistence and intensification of the Anglophone crisis, making resolution increasingly complex.

In historical perspective, Anglophone political agitation since 1961 can thus be seen as a continuum shaped by shifting perceptions of inclusion, exclusion, and identity within the Cameroonian state. What began as a cautious engagement with a federal system has evolved into a sustained and multifaceted struggle for recognition, representation, and autonomy. Understanding this interplay between perception and agitation is essential for any meaningful analysis of the Anglophone question and its implications for governance and national integration in Cameroon.

9. Conclusion

The question of Anglophone identity and political agitation in Cameroon since 1961 remains one of the most significant and enduring issues in the historical and political evolution of the Republic of Cameroon. Emerging from the unique colonial experiences of British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroun, Anglophone identity developed as a distinct socio-political consciousness rooted in differences in language, legal traditions, educational systems, and administrative culture. Although reunification in 1961 was envisioned as a framework for coexistence and national unity, subsequent political developments-particularly the abolition of federalism in 1972 and the increasing centralization of state power-contributed to growing perceptions of marginalization and exclusion among Anglophone communities.

Over the decades, these perceptions evolved into organized political agitation expressed through constitutional advocacy, civil society mobilization, and, more recently, armed resistance. The Anglophone struggle has therefore reflected broader debates surrounding identity, representation, governance, and state legitimacy in postcolonial Africa. While Anglophone political agitation has succeeded in preserving collective identity, raising national and international awareness, and challenging the structures of centralized governance, it has also faced serious obstacles including state repression, internal fragmentation, limited international intervention, and the militarisation of the conflict.

Historically, the Anglophone crisis demonstrates the enduring influence of colonial legacies on postcolonial state formation and national integration. It reveals the difficulties associated with managing diversity within centralized political systems where minority identities perceive themselves as politically, culturally, and economically marginalized. The persistence of the crisis further underscores the limitations of coercive approaches to governance and highlights the importance of inclusive political dialogue, constitutional accommodation, and equitable representation in sustaining national cohesion.

Ultimately, the future of Cameroon's unity and stability depends significantly on the ability of the state and relevant stakeholders to address the root causes of Anglophone discontent through genuine institutional reforms and inclusive governance mechanisms. Without meaningful engagement with historical grievances and identity concerns, the tensions surrounding the Anglophone question are likely to persist. The study therefore concludes that the Anglophone problem is not merely a regional dispute, but a fundamental challenge to nation-building, democratic governance, and political integration in Cameroon.

10. Summary of Findings

This study examined the evolution of Anglophone identity and political agitation in Cameroon since 1961 within the broader framework of the Cameroonian body politic. The findings reveal that Anglophone identity emerged primarily from the distinct colonial experiences of British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroun, which produced different legal, educational, administrative, and political traditions prior to reunification. The 1961 reunification, though intended to foster national unity, instead created structural tensions arising from the coexistence of two historically divergent political cultures within a centralized postcolonial state.

The study further found that the abolition of the federal system in 1972 significantly intensified Anglophone

¹ *Ibid.*

perceptions of political and cultural marginalization. The gradual centralization of power weakened institutional protections previously associated with Anglophone autonomy and contributed to growing dissatisfaction among Anglophone populations. These perceptions of exclusion became central to the development of a collective Anglophone consciousness and identity.

Another major finding is that political agitation evolved progressively over time. Initially, Anglophone grievances were expressed mainly through constitutional debates and elite negotiations. However, the reintroduction of multiparty politics in the 1990s expanded the scope of agitation, leading to the emergence of organized movements advocating federalism, greater autonomy, and, in some cases, secession. The study also established that the 2016 Anglophone crisis represented a major turning point, transforming long-standing constitutional grievances into a broader socio-political and security crisis.

The research additionally found that Anglophone political agitation has achieved partial effectiveness. It succeeded in preserving Anglophone identity, increasing political consciousness, and drawing national and international attention to issues of governance, representation, and marginalization. Nevertheless, the agitation has faced significant challenges including political repression, centralization of state authority, internal fragmentation within Anglophone movements, limited international intervention, and the militarization of the conflict.

Furthermore, the study established that the Anglophone problem reflects broader postcolonial challenges associated with nation-building, identity management, and political inclusion in Africa. The persistence of the crisis demonstrates the enduring influence of colonial legacies and the limitations of centralized governance structures in accommodating cultural and political diversity.

Overall, the findings indicate that the Anglophone crisis is not merely a regional or linguistic issue, but a historically rooted political question closely connected to governance, constitutionalism, representation, and national integration in Cameroon.

11. Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to address the persistent challenges surrounding Anglophone identity and political agitation in Cameroon and to promote sustainable national integration within the Republic of Cameroon.

11.1 Inclusive Political Dialogue

There is a pressing need for sincere, inclusive, and sustained political dialogue involving government authorities, Anglophone leaders, civil society organisations, religious authorities, traditional rulers, youth groups, women's associations, and representatives of displaced populations. Such dialogue should move beyond symbolic consultation and focus on addressing the fundamental constitutional, political, and historical grievances underlying the Anglophone crisis. Constructive dialogue would help rebuild trust between the state and Anglophone communities while creating avenues for peaceful conflict resolution and national reconciliation.

11.2 Constitutional and Institutional Reforms

Meaningful constitutional reforms should be undertaken to address long-standing concerns regarding excessive centralization of political power. Greater decentralization or a reconsideration of aspects of federalism could provide regional institutions with more administrative, political, and financial autonomy. Such reforms would strengthen local governance, encourage broader political participation, and create a greater sense of inclusion among Anglophone populations. Institutional reforms should also ensure fair representation of Anglophones in national decision-making bodies and public institutions.

11.3 Protection of Anglophone Legal and Educational Systems

The preservation of the common law system and the Anglo-Saxon educational model should be treated as a national priority. These systems constitute essential components of Anglophone historical and cultural identity. The government should ensure that legal and educational policies respect the bilingual and bicultural nature of the state by recruiting qualified common law magistrates, maintaining English-language educational standards, and avoiding administrative practices that undermine Anglophone institutional traditions. Effective bilingualism should be implemented practically rather than remaining a symbolic constitutional principle.

11.4 Equitable Economic Development

The government should prioritize balanced economic development and infrastructural investment in the North West and South West regions. Many Anglophones perceive economic neglect as evidence of political marginalization. Improved road networks, healthcare facilities, schools, electricity supply, water systems, and employment opportunities would contribute to reducing socio-economic frustrations and restoring confidence in state institutions. Development programs should also focus on empowering local communities, supporting

agriculture, and encouraging private investment in conflict-affected regions.

11.5 Promotion of National Integration and Cultural Inclusion

National integration should be built on mutual respect, equality, and recognition of cultural diversity rather than assimilationist tendencies. Educational curricula, civic education programs, and media initiatives should promote awareness of Cameroon's dual colonial heritage and encourage intercultural understanding between Anglophone and Francophone communities. Government policies should actively combat discrimination, stereotypes, and exclusionary political practices that undermine national cohesion.

11.6 Protection of Human Rights and Civil Liberties

The protection of fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms is essential for lasting peace and stability. The state should uphold freedom of expression, freedom of association, and the right to peaceful assembly. Excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests, intimidation, and censorship often intensify grievances and contribute to radicalization. A more democratic and participatory political environment would encourage peaceful civic engagement and reduce the appeal of violent resistance.

11.7 Peacebuilding, Disarmament, and Reintegration

Comprehensive peacebuilding initiatives should be implemented to address the humanitarian and security dimensions of the crisis. Efforts toward disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration of armed groups are necessary for restoring stability within affected communities. In addition, psychosocial support, community reconciliation programs, and rehabilitation of displaced persons should be prioritized in order to rebuild social trust and repair the long-term effects of conflict.

11.8 Strengthening Historical and Academic Research

Scholars, historians, and researchers should continue objective and interdisciplinary studies on the Anglophone question. Historical scholarship plays a crucial role in uncovering the origins, evolution, and implications of the crisis. Universities and research institutions should encourage studies focusing on constitutional history, identity politics, governance, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution in Cameroon. Such research would contribute to informed policymaking and deepen public understanding of the historical roots of the Anglophone problem.

11.9 Strengthening Democratic Governance and Accountability

The government should promote transparency, accountability, and good governance at both national and regional levels. Corruption, political favoritism, and lack of accountability weaken public trust in state institutions and intensify political frustrations. Strengthening democratic institutions, judicial independence, and electoral credibility would help create a more inclusive political environment where grievances can be addressed peacefully through constitutional mechanisms.

Overall, the implementation of these recommendations would contribute significantly to peaceful coexistence, democratic governance, constitutional stability, national cohesion, and long-term peace in Cameroon.

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Design of a Maritime-Themed Toy for Preschool Children

Chen Chengcheng¹

¹ Architettura, Ingegneria dell'informazione, informatica e statistica, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy

Correspondence: Chen Chengcheng, Architettura, Ingegneria dell'informazione, informatica e statistica, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy.

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Abstract

This paper focuses on early childhood education aimed at promoting maritime military culture and science education. It proposes the design of an educational board game based on a maritime military theme, intended to provide children with foundational learning. Through the introduction and popularisation of knowledge regarding ships and maritime navigation, children can develop an understanding of China's naval affairs from an early age. At the same time, parents remain keenly interested in experiential, interactive education for their children. Many parents face challenges in selecting early learning toys and are increasingly prioritising the importance of subconscious education and companion-based parent-child interaction during their children's development. This project is aimed at pre-school children aged 3–6. Based on the fundamental principles of convenience, safety and ease of use in children's toys, it integrates learning through play into daily life. During play, it cultivates children's spatial awareness of shapes and expands their logical thinking. By gradually increasing the game's difficulty, it encourages brainstorming and stimulates visual senses, thereby sparking creativity, achieving cognitive balance and enhancing cognitive abilities.

Keywords: naval affairs, science education, board games, experiential activities, preschool children

1. Origin and Background of the Study

1.1 Background and Significance of the Research Topic

1.1.1 Background to the Topic

Against the backdrop of modern society, a wide variety of toys continue to emerge, and the choice of toys for pre-school children has become a matter of consideration for many parents. These toys must not only provide children with enjoyment whilst they play, but also fulfil educational requirements, enabling children to acquire knowledge as they grow and to continually develop and be nurtured within the ocean of knowledge. For children aged 3–6, it is crucial to provide them with a basic understanding and foundational education regarding China's current naval forces. Moreover, in today's context, the cultivation of military culture among children is increasingly important, as it lays a solid foundation for them to develop a sound worldview in the future. Popular science outreach on national defence education is gradually appearing in various aspects of daily life, fostering a sense of family harmony and creating a bridge of mutual trust between parents and children.

1.1.2 Significance of the Topic

Taking the theme of maritime military affairs as its starting point, this project focuses on the design of toys for pre-school children, with the aim of using toys as a medium to convey to children the prosperity and strength of China's maritime military power. The core of the Chinese national spirit is patriotism, which has inspired generation after generation of the Chinese people to strive tirelessly for the prosperity and development of the motherland. Childhood represents the most crucial formative period in a person's life, and is also the optimal time for military cultural education. How to fully capitalise on this golden period of education and enhance the

impact of maritime military education on children is a pressing issue; innovative educational tools for popular science are the solution. Through clever design, children's intellectual abilities are honed, their agile thinking and problem-solving skills are developed, whilst hands-on activities satisfy their natural curiosity about the world. Parents can further shape their children's understanding of maritime military culture, foster a positive family ethos, establish their authority by participating in their children's developmental stages, and build a harmonious and close parent-child relationship.

1.1.3 Objectives of the Topic

This paper aims to provide children with an introduction to maritime military culture, thereby stimulating their interest in and awareness of the nation's maritime military affairs. It utilises children's toys as a medium for disseminating and promoting China's maritime military culture, and designs a toy for pre-school children that enhances their manual dexterity and cognitive development.

1.2 Topic Research

Firstly, we conducted research into existing children's educational board games and their rules currently available on the market. The product primarily features naval vessel models, incorporating designs inspired by several representative vessels from China's naval forces into our research and analysis.

This is an educational board game for children from the United States designed to enhance spatial awareness through play. It features animal tiles of various shapes and game levels. Not only does this benefit early childhood education and scientific literacy, but the process of matching the tiles to their corresponding positions on the game board also captures children's interest and improves their concentration. Children successfully complete the challenge by placing the game pieces in the correct positions according to the pictures. During this process, they also gain an understanding and familiarity with the animals.

This is a Chinese-designed board game for young children. The game primarily involves matching blocks to corresponding cards; players must arrange the physical models in the correct positions according to the two-dimensional layout to complete each level. Not only does this help develop children's logical thinking skills, but the process of arranging three-dimensional shapes also stimulates their curiosity and desire to explore. At the same time, it enhances their ability to observe and identify key information whilst playing. The toy features straight edges and rounded corners to ensure safety.

This is an award-winning children's board game designed by Benlai Design, which ingeniously combines a traditional Chinese chessboard with a tangram puzzle. The pieces are categorised into different levels based on their shape and size, and players can also assemble the tangram pieces whilst playing. This not only helps children develop their ability to perceive and coordinate the division of shapes, but also allows them to experience the spark of imagination through play.

1.3 Summary of Topic Research

With regard to the existing range of board games for pre-school children on the market, although there has been a constant stream of new products in the fields of science education and construction toys in recent years, and whilst there are many different assembly methods in terms of spatial graphic cognition and module combination, there remains a lack of innovation in design philosophy, with gameplay often limited to modules and traditional assembly methods. Furthermore, current board games tend to be overly two-dimensional, frequently relying on the richness of flat designs to enhance visual impact and increase entertainment value, whilst there is relatively little focus on the design of physical model products.

There is a relative scarcity of educational toys centred on maritime military themes, and their educational value is, to some extent, lacking. This project aims to design a toy for pre-school children with a maritime military theme at its core. Drawing on China's modern naval fleet — which features a variety of distinctive and representative vessels — the design focuses on four primary types: aircraft carriers, destroyers, frigates and supply ships. Each vessel possesses distinct functionalities and designs. This serves as the design starting point and rationale. During children's play, graphic modules, vessel combination methods and track designs are integrated to facilitate interaction with the user. Through the toy's design and accompanying cards, parents can engage in educational activities with their children, with experiential learning serving to strengthen parent-child bonds.

This project is a toy designed for pre-school children, based on the premise of nurturing and cultivating an appreciation for maritime military affairs, with the aim of promoting China's maritime military heritage. Based on an analysis of the physiological and psychological characteristics of pre-school children, this toy must satisfy their natural curiosity and foster emotional engagement during interaction. The naval military theme provides children with a rich and novel hands-on experience, thereby widely disseminating naval military culture through play-based learning.

Research Process Planning:

- (1) A detailed market analysis of educational children's toys and educational board games was conducted. Designs of naval vessels were collected and refined to produce a preliminary design for a naval-themed board game aimed at pre-school children.
- (2) Using the naval military theme as a backdrop, four representative vessel types were selected to further develop suitable designs for the board game's aesthetics and interactive mechanisms, and to complete the design of the naval military-themed children's toys based on this proposal.
- (3) Applying knowledge of product design, a prototype of the naval military-themed children's toy was designed and produced.

2. Design Principles and Methods

2.1 Analysis of Design Positioning

This project focuses on the design of children's toys with a naval military theme. The design features a refined, unified aesthetic and employs a modular structure, allowing users to assemble the toys themselves and making them easy to store. Whilst prioritising aesthetic appeal, the design also emphasises practicality, ensuring a clear logic, a neat and minimalist appearance, and compatibility with existing toy manufacturing processes, thereby embodying the aesthetic of order found in design theory. The exterior features rounded chamfered edges, incorporating geometric shapes such as triangles, ovals and squares. This not only stimulates children's visual and spatial thinking but also significantly enhances safety during use.

2.2 Analysis of Functional Positioning

This is a children's toy designed around a maritime military theme, with a focus on experiential interaction. It uses illustrated cards to educate children about China's maritime military equipment and vessels. As children grow, they need constant practice and external stimulation to master basic life skills and develop an understanding of the world around them. By offering a variety of formats rather than relying on a single didactic approach, the toy stimulates children's interest in independent learning. Children are free to plan their boat's route according to the design scenario; successfully completing a level involves positioning the boat in a fixed spot that matches the illustration on the card. This fully harnesses children's autonomy to enhance their independent thinking skills, whilst the assembly process also strengthens parent-child interaction and fosters a closer bond.

2.3 Analysis of Colour Positioning

This research project focuses on a maritime military theme and is aimed at pre-school children aged 3–6. Drawing on the principles of the three primary colours, two colour schemes have been developed: one featuring yellow and blue, and the other blue and pink as the primary colours. Taking into account the target audience's colour perception abilities, colours that are both soft and vivid — and which help develop children's visual skills — have been selected as secondary colours. These are integrated with the design's functional attributes and stylistic features. distinctive colours are selected to highlight the characteristics of naval vessels.

When selecting colour schemes, the focus is on soft tones that enhance colour contrast. From a child's psychological perspective, warm colours evoke feelings of enthusiasm and joy, helping to foster a closer bond with children during play, relieve stress, and create a more harmonious and welcoming environment. From a physiological perspective, the visual sensory systems of pre-school children are still developing; they are particularly drawn to toys with vivid colours and high saturation, which in turn stimulates their interest in and desire to explore these toys. The inspirational nature of colour schemes can enhance experiential, science-based teaching, allowing children to become fully immersed in the educational process whilst playing happily.

When products interact with users, the visual appeal of the product's colour and design instantly captures a child's attention during use. This greatly satisfies children's natural curiosity about the world, leading to faster emotional development compared to their peers.

2.4 Analysis of Target Audience Positioning

China's Compulsory Education Law stipulates that children who have reached the age of six must enrol in school to receive an education. Drawing on developments in child psychology, the renowned early childhood education expert Mr. Chen Guomei, in his work *Preschool Psychology*, divides the childhood stage into six periods. Toy design will target pre-school children aged 3–6; for children whose intellectual development is still in its formative stages, a toy that exercises fine motor skills and enhances cognitive thinking is an essential item. Children in this age group are brimming with curiosity about the world. Building upon age-appropriate principles, the play structure has been upgraded and optimised, with meticulous attention paid to the disassembly, stacking, arrangement and combination of components. This ensures that parts can be effectively

interchanged during assembly, significantly enhancing children's grasp of the toy's details and overall structure, as well as their interest and understanding.

This cognitive development is also reflected in the children's ability to complete the assembly of different ship hulls, and this children's toy specifically employs a challenge-based approach to satisfy their need for a sense of achievement.

3. Analysis of Design Content and Effects

3.1 Conceptual Sketches for a Science Education Board Game

Concept Sketch 1: This is a jigsaw-style board game. Set against the backdrop of the Maritime Silk Road, it features simplified designs of naval vessels, with different sailing routes mapped out from start to finish. As children play, they learn about the locations along the journey, and the game includes a storage box at the bottom for easy tidying away.

Drawbacks: Compared to other children's toys on the market, this design offers a relatively limited range of gameplay, and there is room for improvement in terms of fostering children's logical thinking.

Concept Sketch 2: This is a board game. The simplified naval vessels are used as game pieces. Players roll dice to move a set number of spaces, navigating through mazes and obstacles encountered during the voyage. Children must plan their routes to avoid these hazards. The game can be played solo or in two-player mode; in the latter, the first player to reach the finish line wins.

Disadvantages: The educational value is limited, and the lack of storage features makes it easy for pieces to get lost.

Sketch Proposal 3: This is a graphic classification board game. Using cards to introduce the characteristics and attributes of the selected naval vessels, and based on the different level layouts provided on the cards, players must navigate small boats featuring spatial graphics along a route to specific positions to complete the task.

Advantages: Innovative gameplay that develops children's hand-eye coordination and logical thinking, with built-in storage functionality.

Following a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the above design proposals (as shown in Figure 1), Sketch 3 was ultimately selected for further development.

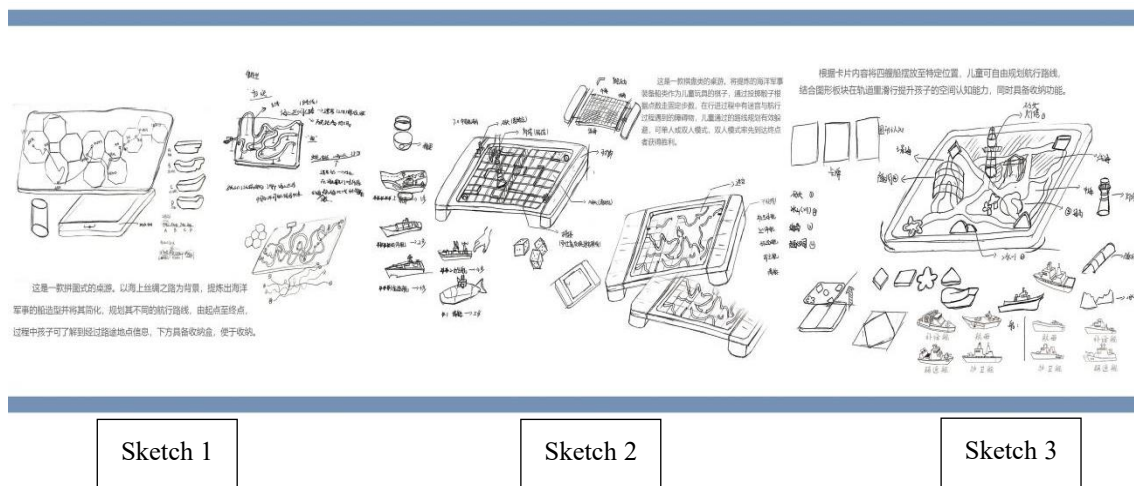


Figure 1. Design sketches for children's toys with a naval theme

3.2 Design Proposal for the Science Education Board Game

The design of this children's toy with a naval theme features ships representing China's naval equipment, navigation route scenarios and corresponding spatial recognition exercises. Children move the ship's projection onto a three-dimensional space based on the content of two-dimensional cards; if the shapes align correctly, they successfully complete the level. The toy's design incorporates a margin for error, allowing children to change direction promptly to resolve any issues they encounter whilst planning their route to complete the task.

The toy model is divided into three layers: a storage box, a game panel and the ship components. It also includes 14 game cards: four cards detailing the functional attributes of the ships and ten level cards. Whilst providing

children with educational insights into China's naval military themes, the toy also helps develop their hand-eye coordination and cognitive skills.

3.3 Module Design for the Science Education Board Game

This project involves the design of a children's toy set with a naval theme, comprising a ship module and corresponding graphic modules, as well as lighthouse, tunnel and glacier modules (as shown in Figure 2). The set is stored in a toy storage box, and players move the modules to specific positions by selecting task cards. This naval-themed children's toy set features educational modules and puzzle elements, allowing for interaction with children during play to explain naval culture.

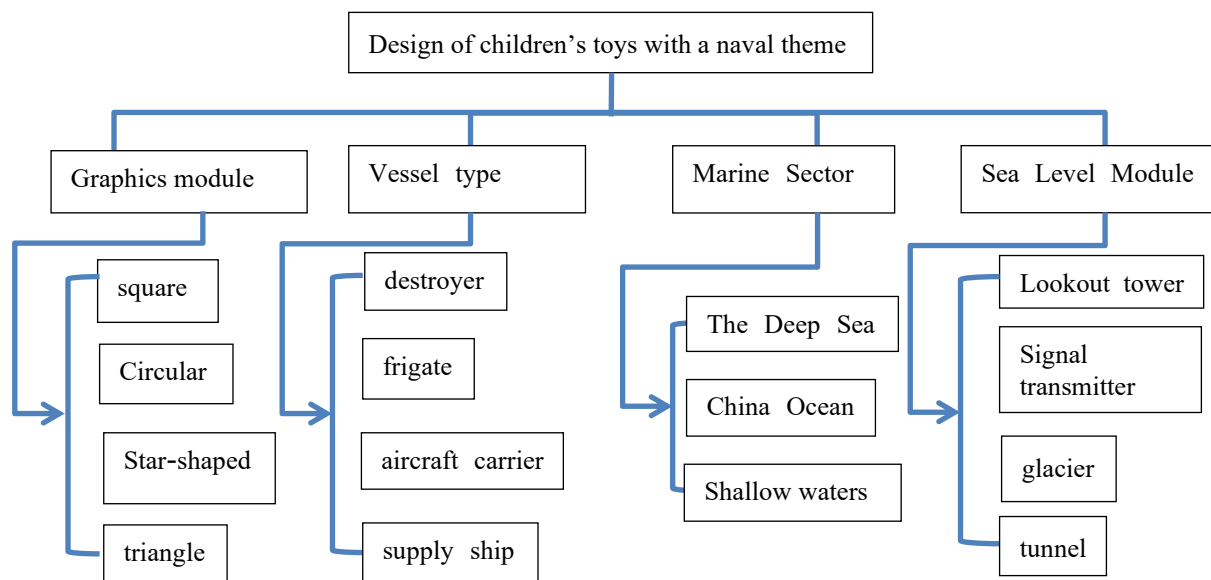


Figure 2. Diagram showing the layout of the toy modules

3.4 Vessel Modelling and Graphic Design for the Science Education Board Game

The naval vessels featured in this design primarily comprise four representative types, including an aircraft carrier, a frigate, a destroyer and a replenishment ship. The designs are minimalist, with each hull featuring distinctive, iconic elements.

Aircraft carriers are pivotal to naval operations; their large deck areas, particularly the vast flight decks, enable aircraft to operate, facilitating their docking, landing and take-off; The primary missions of a destroyer include air defence, land attack and anti-submarine warfare, endowing it with diverse combat capabilities. It is likewise one of the key combat vessels in modern Chinese naval forces. Its most distinctive features are its slender hull and the advanced radar equipment mounted above the hull, designed to accommodate a variety of naval tasks such as missile defence, air defence and anti-submarine warfare; Frigates are primarily responsible for escort duties, safeguarding the safe passage of ships and ensuring they can carry out their missions smoothly. Emphasising flexibility and safety, their defining characteristic is that of a protective vessel, with the upper hull designed in the shape of a protective wing; Replenishment ships possess ample space to store large quantities of fuel, food, ammunition and other supplies, providing both vertical and horizontal resupply to other vessels; consequently, the storage containers are selected as their representative feature. During the design refinement process, by observing the characteristic outlines of these ship types, elements are appropriately simplified, retained and exaggerated to enhance the vessels' visual appeal and recognisability.

3.5 Navigation Route Design for the Science Education Board Game

This children's toy, designed with a naval theme, features a game board set against the backdrop of the vast, boundless ocean. The game is divided into different routes, each colour-coded to represent the deep sea, mid-sea and shallow sea. The board is adorned with various objects representing scenarios encountered during navigation, and includes key checkpoints. Children select any one of the 10 scene cards and, following the instructions on the card, slide the ship along the track to the correct position. By planning different routes, the game helps develop children's independent thinking and decision-making skills. The various branching routes offer distinct visual experiences of the voyage, creating an immersive sensation. Operating the ships allows

children to understand their functional characteristics, whilst integrating knowledge of maritime culture and naval history, enabling them to learn and grow through play.

3.6 Game Booklet Design for the Science Education Board Game

This educational board game is designed around a naval theme. The game booklet contains instructions for using the toys, rules of play, illustrations of the toy models, 10 reference cards depicting various scenarios, descriptions of the characteristics of four types of naval vessels, and cards detailing their functional attributes.

3.7 User Interaction Workflow for the Science Education Board Game

This is a children's toy design centred on the theme of naval warfare. The design features four representative types of ships, with their hulls simplified through stylised design (as shown in Figure 3). By incorporating educational elements about naval culture, it lays a solid foundation for early intellectual development in pre-school children and helps foster a sense of patriotism. During play, children first select a card to identify the corresponding ship type. The shape of the ship's base can be recognised and identified, and the piece is then fitted onto the toy's chassis, stimulating the child's visual recognition skills. Next, after inserting the ship body with its graphic module, the child moves it along the navigation track to adjust its position to match the object depicted on the scene card. Finally, if the ship strays off course, it can be adjusted to the correct direction and route; the challenge is successfully completed when the ship is positioned correctly and aligns with the objects depicted on the scene card.

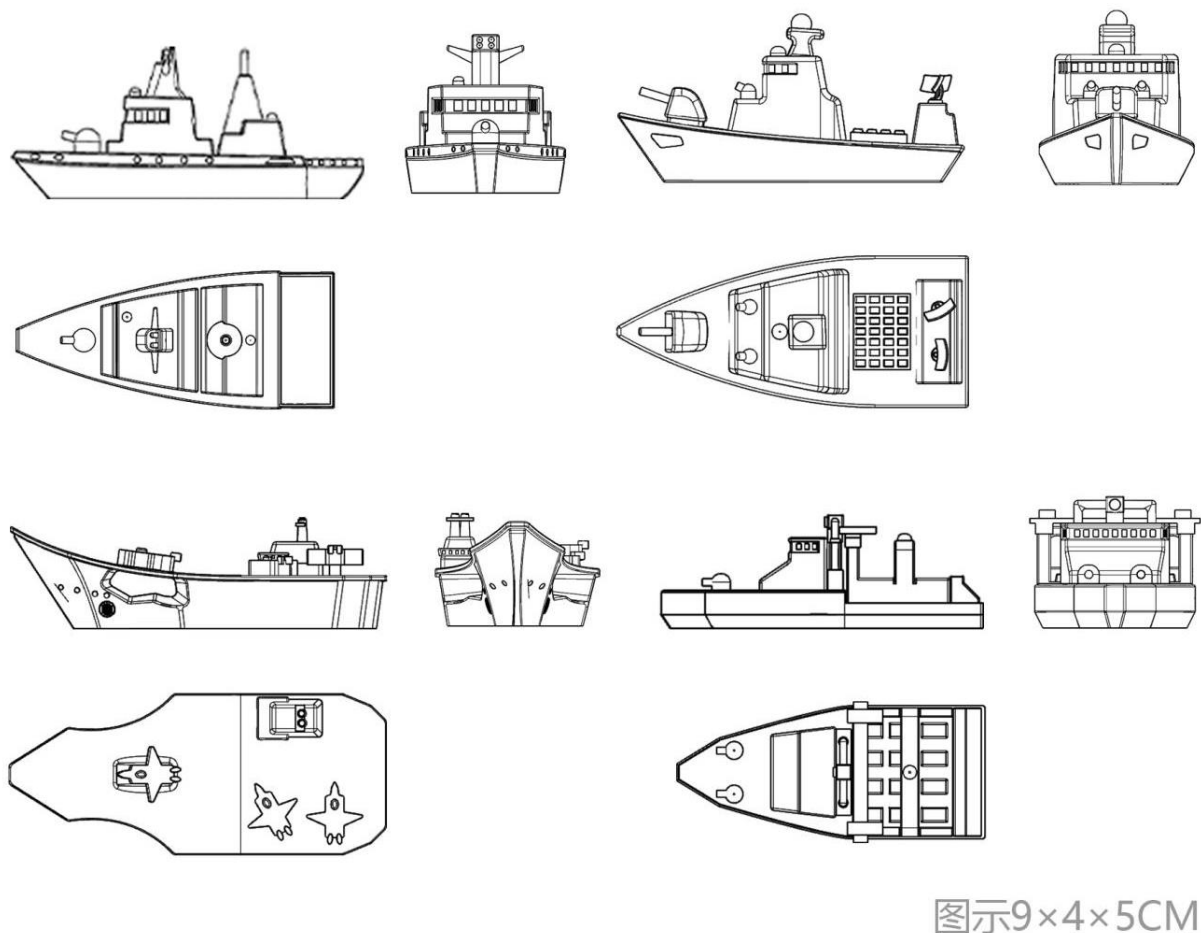


Figure 3. Structural diagram of a naval vessel

4. Practical Design of Children's Toys with a Naval Theme

4.1 Product CMF

In this design project, colour schemes have been developed for children's toys based on a naval military theme, resulting in two colour scheme proposals: yellow and blue, and blue and pink as the primary colour schemes. To highlight the toy design itself, we have taken the target user group into account: children aged 3–6 have a particularly strong perception of vivid colours. We have selected both soft and vivid colours as secondary tones,

linking them to the functional attributes and stylistic features of the toy design to mimic the colours of a ship. The design maintains harmony and unity with its surrounding environment.

In terms of materials, solid models are crafted primarily from wood. As wood is relatively soft, it is easy to carve into the complex structures of a ship, allowing for the clear presentation and accurate reproduction of intricate design details. During the manufacturing process, the models can be fully filled, including the minute and delicate internal structures. The smooth surface enhances the toy's texture, whilst the optimised tactile feel ensures children are comfortable whilst playing. This approach effectively reduces the workload in later stages, thereby improving the product's aesthetic appeal and overall quality. Compared to traditional toy materials, this is a relatively healthy option, offering superior environmental and safety performance whilst minimising potential pollution during production.

In terms of the manufacturing process for this product, the application of paint ensures rich, vibrant colours with a wide range of options available. The smooth, polished wooden surface provides a comfortable tactile experience for children, making the toy more lifelike and enhancing its visual appeal to the target audience. The painted finish also protects the toy from moisture and mould, thereby extending its lifespan.

5. Conclusion

Science education centred on maritime military themes is of paramount importance during the early years of a child's education, laying the groundwork for their future life planning. Using toys as a medium to convey and promote maritime military culture, as well as to disseminate knowledge about China's modern maritime military equipment and vessels, combined with spatial visualisation techniques to enhance children's visual cognitive abilities, and the arrangement of different scenarios to stimulate their curiosity. This paper employs methods such as user observation, case analysis, inductive summarisation and literature review to investigate the design approaches for children's toys with a maritime military theme. The research conclusions are as follows:

- (1) It is essential for educational board games to feature a maritime military backdrop. Through innovative conceptual design, these games effectively and ingeniously mitigate the risk of children losing interest due to overly simplistic or complex gameplay.
- (2) In line with the cognitive and physical-mental developmental characteristics of pre-school children, increasing interaction between family members or peers and the child helps create a harmonious and warm interactive atmosphere, thereby reducing social anxiety and fear.
- (3) The innovative aspect of the design lies in the integration of marine military-themed science education with user experience. Guided by design methodology principles, a suite of marine military-themed children's toys has been developed, comprising four representative ship models, a storage box, a game board, scene module assemblies, ten scene cards, and four informational cards detailing the ship models, alongside the production of physical prototypes. During the completion of the overall design proposal, numerous issues were identified and explored, relating to the compatibility and interoperability of methodologies; the scientific validity of these approaches requires further in-depth examination.

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Appendix

Final Project



Figure 4.

Image source: Author's own illustration.

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The Case of Sex Pistols as an Expression of Nihilism in Society

Teresa Filizzola¹ & Isaia Tonino Filizzola¹

¹ Independent Researcher

Correspondence: Teresa Filizzola, Independent Researcher.

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Abstract

Nihilism is arguably one of the most discussed concepts in philosophy, especially in times still relatively close to us, after Friedrich Nietzsche theorised and wrote extensively about it in the second half of the 19th century. Besides representing a set of ideas and a philosophical current, it can be regarded as coinciding with a human condition — an individual's response to life and society which results from or in perceiving them as meaningless, in an overall context where moral truths or values are rejected or not believed to exist. This implies that nihilism not only has an abstract nature but also a concrete one, which can translate into forms of expression such as literature and art, as well as music. This is precisely what the present paper aims to show, by starting with a brief introductory analysis of the Beat Generation and then moving to the field of music with a more thorough examination of punk rock band Sex Pistols' case. Indeed, both serve as an example of how a literary and cultural movement and a music phenomenon respectively can be permeated by and propagate nihilistic traits which consist in alienating from the purposeless modern society and its conventions as well as protesting against it, while promoting personal liberation and nonconformism.

Keywords: nihilism, society, Beat Generation, Sex Pistols

1. Introduction

Nihilism has been discussed since the most remote epochs, even prior to the emergence of Greek philosophy. It was only through the theorisation of Friedrich Nietzsche, however, that the theme assumed a fundamental role in the development of modern thought. In order to provide readers with some points of reference, should they wish to pursue the subject further, there are several figures who are associated with the concept of nihilism and are worth exploring. In fact, the list is extensive and includes thinkers and writers such as Friedrich H. Jacobi, Arthur Schopenhauer, Giacomo Leopardi, Max Stirner, Ivan Turgenev, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Leo Tolstoy, Sigmund Freud, Franz Kafka, Martin Heidegger, Karl Löwith, Herbert Marcuse, Theodor W. Adorno, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Emanuele Severino, Gianni Vattimo and Umberto Galimberti. Such a list is sufficient for the purpose stated above; nonetheless, it is by no means comprehensive.

It should be emphasised that the concept of nihilism has been developed in every conceivable manner and has consequently assumed a variety of forms across numerous fields and disciplines. One is therefore confronted with a theme of immense breadth and complexity. Without presuming to exhaust the subject, among the various domains in which nihilism has exerted its influence, it is fitting that we mention metaphysics, epistemology, mereology, art (particularly contemporary art) and literature, as well as the existential and the moral spheres. The diverse nihilistic landscape has not spared the world of music. Indeed, nihilism permeates modern musical culture, with punk rock being emblematic of this, if we think of some of the most representative bands of this genre, such as Sex Pistols and Siouxsie and the Banshees (Healy, 2024).

It is precisely on music considered in relation to its broader social context — and more specifically on the case of Sex Pistols — that the present article intends to focus. This will be preceded by an analysis of the Beat Generation as a movement that was tinged with a nihilistic tone, where 'negation, refusal, and withdrawal

function not as passive retreats but as active forms of critique against thoroughly administered, conformist societies' (Giannakakis, 2026: 1).

2. Discussion

It may appear unusual that we should devote particular attention to nihilism expressed through music; however, our choice is motivated by the opportunity to examine a concrete phenomenon. Many other forms of nihilistic thought have remained confined within predominantly speculative and philosophical spheres, never emerging from the realm of abstraction. Owing to their highly theoretical character, such discussions often remained inaccessible, circulating exclusively within restricted intellectual circles and frequently resisting easy comprehension. Musical phenomena, by contrast, offer a more immediate interpretative framework and exert a direct influence upon the behaviour of young people, who often find inspiration and an outlet for their instincts, anxieties, uncertainties and existential crises especially in the type of music discussed in this paper. In the Introduction, we have mentioned punk rock, but nihilism also concerns other genres, such as the black metal one that emerged in Scandinavia in the late 1980s, which, according to the American Underground Nihilist Association, was characterised by 'nihilism and a heroic antisocial assertion of the self' (Michalewicz, 2007: 211).

In this section, we shall aim to demonstrate the extent to which ostensibly non-committed music becomes embedded within socio-cultural contexts, to the point of shaping entire generations through distinctive traits that influence lifestyles, mental structures and radical behavioural transformations. In this regard, one may recall the Beat Generation, which achieved worldwide prominence during the 1950s and 1960s, while also retaining its identity in subsequent decades. The merit for coining the expression belongs to Jack Kerouac, although he acknowledged that he had first encountered the word 'beat' through Herbert Huncke. The term derives from 'beaten down' (Varner, 2012: 1), indicating a condition of exhaustion or oppression, such as that experienced by the characters in Kerouac's 1957 play *Beat Generation*, centred upon the working-class inhabitants of New York's Bowery district (ibid.: 20). In the book *Conversations with Kerouac* (Aronowitz, 2005: 31), the writer explains that he initially understood the term 'beat' to signify 'poor and sleeping in subways'. Subsequently, while visiting the church in which he had received the sacrament of confirmation, he knelt in silence and realised that 'beat' also evoked 'beatitude' and 'beatific'. He therefore stated, 'I was beatific in the church', meaning that he experienced a profound sense of blessedness within that sacred space (ibid.). In a 1958 interview reported in the aforementioned source, Kerouac explained that being 'beat' entailed an awareness of life and religion, referring to the return to mysticism prophesied by Oswald Spengler and to visions of God facilitated, in some cases, through the use of narcotic substances (Wallace, 2005: 3-4). This latter aspect is likewise discussed by Varner (2012: 85) in the section entitled *Drugs*.

Before long, the term 'beat' became almost synonymous with rebellion and came to identify a specific social stratum engaged in the struggle to assert its rights. The Beat Generation consequently became a symbol of youth protest beginning in the 1950s, particularly in opposition to the Vietnam War. Subsequently, it expanded its activism to encompass racial, sexual and ethnic discrimination, adopting positions in defence of the less privileged social classes. Advocates of the Beat Generation encouraged spontaneous and extemporaneous creativity in the arts, while traditional methods, norms and standardised systems were rejected and opposed. Kerouac significantly valued instinctive creativity in music, above all in jazz, a genre conducive to reflection and therefore perfectly suited to the social sensibilities of the early Beat ideology.

The movement subsequently achieved widespread resonance across much of the globe and, by the time it faded, music had broadened its sphere of influence, becoming the ideal vehicle through which increasingly anomic, rebellious, nonconformist and libertarian generations could be shaped, often to the very threshold of anarchism. Several years later, a similar context proved to be remarkably fertile for the emergence of Sex Pistols, whom we have decided to discuss because, in our view, they perfectly embodied the imperatives of the Zeitgeist, i.e. the spirit of the age. Their live debut occurred in 1975, yet most of the United Kingdom remained unaware of their existence until 1st December 1976, when they appeared intoxicated during a live television interview and used extremely offensive language (Utton, 2012).¹ By the following day, the band made the headlines of many major newspapers. This incident, together with other forms of behaviour deemed unacceptable by their record label EMI — including insulting and spitting at people and airline staff during a tour — led the company to terminate their £40,000 contract after merely two months of adverse publicity generated by the group (Knewstub, 1977/2011).

Punk rock soon came to be regarded as 'unsophisticated, raw, and aggressive', while the manager of Sex Pistols, the shopkeeper Malcolm McLaren, openly declared his support for anarchism and claimed that the band sought to 'destroy society and start again' (ibid.). Such tendencies were portrayed by Derek Jarman in his 1977 film

¹ This episode is also documented on the official website of Sex Pistols: <https://www.sexpistolsofficial.com/bio/>.

Jubilee, described by Jeffries (2007) as a dystopian satire capturing the nihilism and politically provocative attitude of the punk scene; among other targets, the film mocked the celebrations of the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. Confirmation of what we have just asserted can be found in several of the band's lyrics, including the phrase 'no future' in *God Save the Queen*, together with 'I am an anti-Christ' and the imperative 'destroy' in *Anarchy in the U.K.*

One may reasonably ask why Sex Pistols achieved such notable success, despite proving little more than a meteoric phenomenon within the musical landscape, rising rapidly in 1976 only to self-destruct by 1978 (Kallen, 2012: 44).¹ They were widely regarded as a fraud, both because of the image they projected and, above all, because of their limited musical competence — a fact in which they themselves appeared to take pride during their performances. How is such a phenomenon to be explained? Not everything necessarily conforms to rational logic, particularly when one enters the inscrutable realm of individual and collective responses to external stimuli and provocations. Nevertheless, it appears certain that practical action exerts a far stronger impact than theoretical discourse, especially when the latter requires engagement with texts that are not always readily accessible and prescribes ethical or moral norms intended to improve interpersonal relations and society as a whole. It would not be unreasonable to argue that, in terms of behavioural transformation — above all, among the young — the impact of Sex Pistols and punk music was far greater than that of figures such as Auguste Comte, author of *System of Positive Polity* (1851-1854). Through this work, Comte inaugurated sociology and considered himself a new prophet destined to transform the obsolete structure of society by means of a positive religion. In effect, he conceived a form of 'social physics', by which he intended a new scientifically grounded ethics. Yet it is highly improbable that any theory should take root rapidly; indeed, it may fail to gain recognition even in the long term, as occurred not only with Comte but with many others.

Unfortunately, it is praxis that ultimately prevails, even though it frequently allies itself with the illusion that specific objectives may be achieved while bypassing the indispensable stages of gradual development. What is lacking is the disposition to accept the natural slowness required by any radical social renewal. Similarly, reason, perseverance and determination rarely become the foundations of social transformation. Instead, instinct alone governs action, demanding everything immediately and with minimal effort, precisely because it dispenses with intellectual and material commitment. Herein lies the explanation for the international success of Sex Pistols, who transformed instinct into their principal weapon: unconscious participants in, and products of, a nihilistic philosophy that was simultaneously pessimistic and decadent. Rejecting every law, rule, ethic, morality, religion and political ideology, they even expressed scepticism and disillusionment towards every revolutionary aspiration. Yet they themselves constituted a form of revolution, albeit unconsciously and devoid of any genuine certainty.

The behavioural and musical precariousness of the band also proved to be its principal limitation. As previously noted, the group existed only briefly and did not engage in significantly extensive concert activity. During their performances, they privileged aesthetics and improvisation over adherence even to the conventions found in rock music up until those years. Their basic criterion was to follow instinct, producing a form of sound-noise corresponding to the emotional state of the moment, with distorted power chords and a non-melodic way of singing at a relentless pace. In *The History of Alternative Rock*, Kallen (2012: 48) points out that Sid Vicious often performed while intoxicated and under the influence of amphetamines and heroin; he further observes that, since Vicious was incapable of playing the bass guitar adequately, his role was essentially that of a performance artist and 'quintessential punk rock maniac'. Politically, the band displeased both the Right and the Left alike, displaying deep contradictions in its spontaneous declarations and ostentatious use of symbols. Amid a confused amalgam of violence, total subversion, terrorism and anarchism, the group adorned itself with swastikas, images evoking Karl Marx and slogans such as 'chaos' (Savage, 2012).

Within this peculiar ideological syncretism and nebulous accumulation of fragmentary ideas, a nihilistic and decadent aura still remained unmistakable, immortalised in the song *God Save the Queen*, which concludes, as previously mentioned, with the emblematic phrase 'no future'. Despite everything, the band became an icon not only for its own generation but for many that followed. The main explanation for this lies in socio-economic conditions. For the United Kingdom, 1975 suddenly became an *annus horribilis*, even though only a decade had passed since the optimism linked to the flourishing era of Swinging London. To many young people, the future appeared profoundly precarious and lacking in any prospects amid a climate of total crisis: unemployment, recession and an economy on the brink of collapse characterised the latter half of the 1970s. Among the less affluent sectors of society, everyday hardship reached critical levels, eventually manifesting itself in intense protest movements bordering upon subversion and frequently encouraging acts of violence. A model capable of inspiring and mobilising such discontent became necessary, and Sex Pistols emerged as the ideal archetype. The

¹ These events are also reported on the official website of Sex Pistols: <https://www.sexpistolsofficial.com/bio/>.

aggression that characterised their concerts fuelled demonstrations that often escalated into genuine popular uprisings.

Yet a negative point of reference, such as Sex Pistols, could only generate further negativity. Consequently, although protest may have been legitimate, it frequently degenerated into violence devoid of constructive purpose: merely a release valve for disturbed emotional states, rarely animated by authentically cathartic aspirations or profound demands for social justice. What, then, is the key to understanding why the band became historically influential and attracted such widespread followers, despite their anomalous manner of “not making” music? Why should Sex Pistols appear in relation to the subject of nihilism, alongside figures whose cultural stature reached the highest intellectual levels?

The explanation lies in the fact that they represented a concrete reflection of the human psyche which, when confronted with obstacles perceived as insurmountable, often chooses the drastic solution of annihilating both itself and others through irrational and irreversible destruction. According to this logic, if evil prevails, it is preferable that it should extend to its extreme limits and engulf humanity as a whole, thereby striking even those genuinely responsible for it. At the same time, the interpretative core also resides in human maximalism, particularly during youth, when individuals desire everything immediately, without passing through demanding stages of strategic planning, rational organisation and educational formation prior to praxis. This would entail that, all things considered, the Leninist maximalist solution is better than the gradualism associated with Marxian thought, and so is Bolshevik maximalism in comparison with Alexander Kerensky’s Menshevism. For instance, in Italy many Marxists — who were not exactly Marxian in a strict sense — preferred the rigid ideological dogmatism of Amadeo Bordiga to the gradualist educational and cultural approach of Antonio Gramsci, whom the main representatives of the Italian Communist Party progressively marginalised. They reductively classified him as little more than an intellectual and journalist, co-founder of the Turin newspaper *L’Ordine Nuovo*, who concerned himself with communism only incidentally. Consequently, he was no longer seen as a true Marxist and therefore deemed incapable of pursuing the ideals of revolutionary radicalism. Similarly, against the gradualist Minimum Programme of Filippo Turati, the more radical Italian Left decisively opposed the Maximum Programme of the revolutionary socialists led by Benito Mussolini, who at that time was certainly more Leninist than Marxian.

From what has been stated, albeit in a highly-condensed form, it becomes evident that the political landscape, irrespective of historical period, is always immensely complex and far from cohesive. As a result, the possibility of planning a truly effective subversive revolution becomes virtually impossible. Therefore, it can be argued that it is inconceivable that the revolution associated with Sex Pistols could ever have laid the foundations for a genuinely destabilising political movement. In reality, theirs was a revolution of customs and lifestyles rather than of the masses, influencing only a certain segment of unruly and undisciplined youth. Squatters and reckless imitators of their idols, who were victims of unfavourable social conditions, pushed their reactive tendencies to extremes. These were individuals intent solely upon destruction, without any clear understanding either of the true targets to be struck or of how to transform society into a more equitable system. It must also be acknowledged that, alongside social hardship and youthful intemperance, another factor contributed to violence and uncontrolled deviance: mass psychology, which is invariably destructive, especially when exacerbated by excessive alcohol and drug consumption, as occurred both among the members of Sex Pistols and within the broader punk culture that emerged with them.

We would not wish our observations to create the impression that we are approaching the social phenomenon under discussion with critical superficiality. On the contrary, we believe that every collective phenomenon deserves rigorous analysis and interpretation free from prejudice. Punk should not be regarded as marginal, in that it constitutes, in its own way, a historical fact embedded within the persistent and often paradoxical dynamics that have always characterised societies across time and space. It would be far too simplistic to dismiss punk music merely as uncultivated and subversive. Even Adorno (2004), an eminent philosopher as well as an accomplished musician and musicologist, maintained in his work *Philosophy of Modern Music* that every musical product enters fully into historical dialectics. As such, it reflects the fears, anxieties, anguish and aspirations of a given age. How, then, could one fail to recognise punk music — particularly that of Sex Pistols — as the outcome of the pervasive nihilism characteristic of that period? As always, the interpretation of social events remains difficult and often elusive, owing to the complexity that defines reality as the product of the multifaceted dimensions of human behaviour. On the one hand stands the individual, naturally inclined towards solipsism (indeed, Thomas Hobbes, in *Leviathan*, explicitly emphasises humanity’s egoistic nature); on the other persists an enduring conflict among peoples as well as a humanity seemingly incapable of transcending the eternal dichotomy between exploiters and exploited. This disturbing structure of human society appears to admit neither a plausible explanation nor a justification, as though both categories were somehow physiologically indispensable to the very survival of the species.

3. Conclusions

Clearly, we shall not attempt to provide definitive interpretative keys to a phenomenon that has never appeared fully decipherable. Nevertheless, insofar as our abilities permit, we shall endeavour to explain the persistence of nihilism, the reasons why both individuals and masses retain bestial elements within themselves, the drive towards destruction at any cost, the increasingly concentrated monopoly of the planet's wealth, the exploitation of resources and the intensification of social inequalities. Frequently, the explanation is reduced to commonplaces that ostensibly say everything while in reality saying nothing, by identifying the cause in the fact that today's people and society have lost the values of the past. Although history demonstrates that the world remains fundamentally unchanged, it is nevertheless possible to propose an interpretative framework capable of clarifying why, over the past forty years, the social order has undergone such severe regression.

Returning briefly to punk, we can observe that, amid the general turmoil of the 1970s, it functioned as both expression and echo of nihilism through communicative processes that are characteristic of Postmodernism. As such, to outline the matter by means of two notions theorised by Vattimo (1983, 2019),¹ punk music played by no means a marginal role in facilitating the rise of 'weak thought', destined to supplant 'strong thought'. Every doctrine or ideology that has claimed to provide, once and for all, principles upon which to found the future comes under attack, as it hinders the natural dynamism and evolution of history. In essence, truth becomes a rather relative factor, and every form of certainty — whether religious, political or social — assumes blurred contours, lacking that fixity which, in the past, enabled it to assume a paradigmatic role. Nevertheless, the desire — whether conscious or unconscious — to radically alter the course of history within a short span of time causes one to lose sight of the true dimensions of the phenomenon, which can engulf both the existence and the role of the individual and of the community. Driven by instinct and ambition, little care is taken to make use of reason, with the risk of becoming victims of the very innovative forces that have been set in motion.

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¹ The concept of 'weak thought' is also discussed by Rovatti and Vattimo (1983).

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The Differences in Parents' Involvement Methods During Children's Piano Learning and Their Impacts

Liuyi Chen¹ & Yidong Lin²

¹ Manhattan School of Music, US

² University of Manchester, UK

Correspondence: Yidong Lin, University of Manchester, UK.

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Abstract

With the comprehensive implementation of quality education in China, piano learning has become an important choice for children's artistic enlightenment. As the core participants in children's piano learning process, parents' participation styles vary, and these differences have a profound impact on children's learning outcomes, interest development, and mental health. This paper combines literature review and empirical research to classify parents' participation styles into three types: controlling, accompanying, and permissive. Moving beyond descriptive categorization, this study systematically analyzes the multi-dimensional mechanisms through which these modalities mediate children's motivation, technical mastery, and emotional safety. By addressing the structural "feedback vacuum" inherent in early instrumental practice, the study deduces an optimal path for supportive participation. It argues that shifting the parental role from a technical micromanager to a meta-cognitive facilitator is crucial for sustained musical development, providing actionable insights for optimizing the family-based music education ecosystem. Multiple main body coordinated intervention can effectively promote.

Keywords: children's piano education, parental involvement, participation methods, musical literacy, multi-support system

1. Introduction

In Chinese piano education, over half of novice learners discontinue their studies within their first two years.¹ While this phenomenon is often attributed to declining interest or reduced motivation, it may also be linked to a structural challenge within early instrumental pedagogy: the disconnect between the technical demands introduced during weekly lessons and the realities of independent home practice. Unlike many classroom-based learning activities, piano study relies heavily on individual practice outside formal instruction. Because standard piano instruction typically provides only one to two hours of teacher supervision per week, most learning takes place at home, where immediate professional feedback and error correction are unavailable. This creates what may be described as a feedback vacuum—a learning environment in which students must practise without continuous expert guidance.²

The consequences of this situation are particularly significant for young beginners. Children often lack the self-regulatory skills required for effective independent practice, including the ability to monitor errors and

¹ Percival, G., Wang, Y., & Tzanetakis, G. (2007). Effective use of multimedia for computer-assisted musical instrument tutoring. *Proceedings of the International Workshop on Educational Multimedia and Multimedia Education*, 67-76.

² Wilson K and Pfeiffer PE. (2023). Feedback in augmented and virtual reality piano tutoring systems: a mini review. *Front. Virtual Real.*, 4, 1207397.

evaluate their own performance.¹ Without appropriate support, inefficient practice strategies and technical mistakes may become reinforced over time. In this context, external scaffolding within the home environment becomes especially important.

Among the various forms of home-based support, parental involvement has consistently been identified as a significant predictor of children's musical achievement, persistence, and engagement, particularly during the early stages of instrumental learning (Cheung, 2020; Kong, 2021). Existing research has identified multiple dimensions of parental involvement, including behavioural supervision, emotional support, and cognitive guidance (Zhang et al., 2023). While supportive parental engagement is generally associated with enhanced motivation and skill development, excessively controlling parental behaviours may undermine intrinsic motivation and negatively affect long-term musical engagement (Cheung, 2020, p. 145).

Despite these findings, important gaps remain in the literature. First, parental involvement is often examined as a broad educational construct rather than within the specific context of piano learning. Existing classifications provide limited insight into how different forms of parental intervention operate during daily home practice.² Second, the psychological and cognitive mechanisms through which parental involvement influences learning outcomes remain insufficiently understood. Finally, relatively little attention has been paid to how non-musician parents can effectively support children's piano practice in the absence of specialist knowledge.

To address these gaps, this study investigates how different forms of parental involvement shape children's piano learning experiences and outcomes. Specifically, it examines how parental scaffolding influences motivation, technical development, psychological well-being, and learning persistence during home practice. By developing a context-specific framework of parental involvement in piano learning, this study seeks to clarify the mechanisms underlying effective parental support and provide practical insights for reducing early attrition in piano education.

2. Types of Parental Involvement in Children's Piano Learning

This section categorizes parental involvement in children's piano learning using Baumrind's parenting-style framework. Baumrind conceptualizes parenting along two core dimensions: demandingness, referring to the degree of control, expectations, and behavioural regulation imposed on the child, and responsiveness, referring to emotional support, sensitivity, and respect for autonomy.³ Applying this framework to piano learning requires translating these general parenting dimensions into observable home-practice behaviours. Rather than viewing parental involvement simply as "helping with practice," the present study conceptualizes it as a structured pattern of interaction situated at the intersection of expectation and support. This approach yields three distinct forms of parental involvement: authoritarian (control-oriented), authoritative (autonomy-supportive), and permissive.

Table 1. A Classification of Parental Involvement in Children's Piano Learning

Dimension	Control-Oriented (Authoritarian)	Autonomy-Supportive (Authoritative)	Permissive
Demandingness	High	High	Low
Responsiveness	Low	High	Low
Practice Structure	Fixed and highly regulated	Structured but flexible	Unstructured
Communication Style	Directive and corrective	Collaborative and dialogic	Minimal
Feedback Pattern	Frequent monitoring and correction	Guided reflection and support	Limited feedback
Primary Learning Goal	External achievement	Skill development and engagement	Child-led participation

¹ McPherson, G. E., & Renwick, J. M. (2001). A longitudinal study of self-regulation in children's musical practice. *Music Education Research*, 3(2), 169-186.

² Samantha Caffull & Caroline Waddington-Jones. (2025). Understanding the achievement goals of adolescent instrumental learners. *Music Education Research*, 27(3), 260-271.

³ Baumrind, D. (1991). The influence of parenting style on adolescent competence and substance use. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 11(1), 56-95.

Parental Role	Supervisor	Facilitator	Observer
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2.1 Control-Oriented Participation

Control-oriented participation corresponds to Baumrind's authoritarian style and is characterized by high demandingness and low responsiveness. Within piano learning, this form of involvement emphasizes obedience, compliance, and measurable outcomes. Parental support is primarily expressed through regulation and supervision rather than emotional responsiveness. This framework manifests in three dimensions:

Temporal and Structural Rigidity. Parents impose highly structured practice schedules with fixed durations and predetermined goals. Practice is treated as a non-negotiable obligation, and musical tasks generally take priority over leisure activities or alternative pursuits.

Continuous Micro-Monitoring. Parents remain physically present during practice and closely monitor observable performance indicators, such as hand position, rhythmic accuracy, and note correctness. Feedback is predominantly corrective and focuses on immediate error detection and elimination.¹

Outcome-Driven Pressure. Practice is evaluated according to external indicators of achievement, including examination results, competition outcomes, and technical performance standards. Parents often place strong emphasis on measurable accomplishment, viewing these outcomes as primary indicators of learning success.²

2.2 Autonomy-Supportive Participation

Autonomy-supportive participation corresponds to Baumrind's authoritative style and is characterized by both high demandingness and high responsiveness. Rather than abandoning structure, parents combine clear expectations with emotional support and respect for the child's autonomy. The primary objective is to facilitate learning while maintaining motivation and psychological well-being. This framework manifests in three dimensions:

Cognitive-Paced Structuring. Parents organize practice according to the child's developmental characteristics and attention span. Practice is structured through manageable and achievable tasks rather than prolonged, highly intensive sessions.³

Dialogic Communication. Interaction is collaborative rather than directive. Parents encourage discussion, engage in joint goal-setting, and provide feedback in ways that support reflection and problem-solving. Error correction tends to focus on specific issues sequentially rather than correcting multiple problems simultaneously.

Autonomy Facilitation. Parents create conditions that encourage independent engagement with learning. Strategies may include progress-monitoring systems, practice logs, or informal performance opportunities that allow children to exercise choice and develop ownership of their learning process.⁴

2.3 Permissive Participation

Permissive participation corresponds to Baumrind's permissive style and is characterized by low demandingness and low responsiveness. In this model, parental involvement in home practice is minimal, and responsibility for learning is largely delegated to the child or the piano teacher. This framework manifests in three dimensions:

Delegation of Responsibility. Parents regard piano learning primarily as the responsibility of the teacher and the student. Although they provide material resources such as tuition fees and instruments, they rarely monitor learning progress or engage with the practice process.⁵

Absence of Structural Boundaries. Home practice is largely unregulated. Practice frequency, duration, and goals are determined by the child, with limited parental oversight or routine formation.

Feedback Withdrawal. Communication regarding practice and learning progress is limited. Parents rarely discuss

¹ Lu, Y., et al. (2025). Reciprocal Relationships Between Parental Involvement and Academic Performance in Early Adolescence: A Two-Year Longitudinal Study in China. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 54, 876–889.

² Kyna Monga. (2024). Pressure and Exam Stress: The Price of Perfection — Exploring the Psychological and Cultural Dimensions of Parental Pressure in Adolescent Exam Stress. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)*, 13(12), 271-273.

³ Ghanamah, R., Eghbaria-Ghanamah, H., Karmi, A., & Adi-Japha, E. (2022). Practice schedule and testing per se affect children's transfer abilities in a grapho-motor task. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 215, 105323.

⁴ Soenens, B., & Vansteenkiste, M. (2010). A theoretical upgrade of the concept of parental psychological control. *Developmental Review*, 30(1), 74-99.

⁵ Grolnick, W. S. (2009). The role of parents in facilitating autonomous self-regulation for education. *Theory and Research in Education*, 7(2), 164-173.

learning outcomes with either the child or the teacher, resulting in a lack of ongoing guidance and monitoring during home practice.

In many cases, permissive participation emerges not from opposition to music education but from practical constraints or educational beliefs. Some parents report limited time or energy for involvement, while others feel insufficiently qualified to provide musical guidance. Still others adopt a child-centred philosophy and deliberately minimise intervention in order to preserve the child's sense of autonomy.¹

3. The Multiple Influences of Different Parental Involvement Methods on Children's Piano Learning

3.1 Impact on Motivation and Learning Outcomes

Through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), parental involvement influences children's motivation by either supporting or frustrating their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.² Different forms of parental involvement therefore shape not only children's willingness to practise, but also the quality and effectiveness of their learning outcomes.

Under the control-oriented framework, parents impose high levels of external regulation and place considerable emphasis on achievement-related outcomes. Although this approach may increase practice time and generate short-term behavioural compliance, it often undermines the child's need for autonomy. Motivation shifts from intrinsic interest towards introjected regulation, whereby children practise primarily to avoid criticism, punishment, or parental disappointment rather than for personal enjoyment or musical satisfaction.³ From a learning perspective, intensive parental supervision may facilitate rapid improvements in observable technical behaviours, such as hand position and rhythmic accuracy, particularly during the initial stages of learning. However, because most parents lack professional pedagogical training, technical feedback may not always be accurate. Excessive intervention may also encourage dependence on external correction, making technical progress heavily reliant on parental supervision rather than the child's active engagement with learning.⁴

In contrast, the autonomy-supportive approach balances clear expectations with respect for the child's agency. By providing guidance while preserving opportunities for choice and self-direction, parents support both competence and autonomy needs. This form of scaffolding helps maintain intrinsic motivation and encourages children to view challenges as manageable learning tasks rather than external obligations. As a result, learners are more likely to persist through technical difficulties and maintain long-term engagement with piano study.⁵ In terms of learning outcomes, autonomy-supportive parents tend to facilitate practice rather than directly teach technique. By maintaining communication with teachers, helping children establish effective practice routines, and encouraging reflection on difficulties encountered during practice, they create a supportive learning environment while allowing professional instruction to remain the primary source of technical guidance. Although progress may appear less immediate, this approach often contributes to more stable and sustainable technical development over time.⁶

Conversely, permissive involvement relies largely on the child's spontaneous interest while providing limited instructional or emotional support. Although children experience relatively high levels of autonomy, they often receive insufficient support for developing competence. Because piano learning requires sustained effort and gradual mastery of increasingly complex skills, the absence of appropriate parental scaffolding may lead to repeated experiences of frustration or stagnation. Over time, these experiences weaken perceptions of competence and reduce motivation to continue learning, increasing the likelihood of disengagement and early withdrawal from piano study.⁷ At the technical level, limited parental monitoring and feedback may allow errors

¹ Uptis, R., Abrami, P. C., Brook, J., & King, M. (2017). Parental involvement in children's independent music lessons. *Music Education Research*, 19(1), 74-98.

² Güsewell, A., & Bailer, H. (2024). Who stays? Who goes? Motivation and tendency to drop out in music schools. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15.

³ Assor, A., & Tal, K. (2012). When parents' affection depends on child's achievement: Parental conditional positive regard, self-aggrandizement, shame and coping in adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 35(1), 249-260.

⁴ Pomerantz, E. M., Moorman, E. A., & Litwack, S. D. (2007). The how, whom, and why of parents' involvement in children's academic lives: More is not necessarily better. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(3), 373-410.

⁵ Güsewell, A., & Bailer, H. (2024). Who stays? Who goes? Motivation and tendency to drop out in music schools. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1378843.

⁶ Yalan, Y., & Sabri, S. (2026). The role of family in early music socialization: A systematic review of parental involvement strategies within the Chinese 'piano craze' context. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 15(1).

⁷ Evans, P., McPherson, G. E., & Davidson, J. W. (2013). The role of psychological needs in ceasing music and music learning activities. *Psychology of Music*, 41(5), 600-619.

to remain unnoticed between lessons. Without sufficient support in the home environment, ineffective practice habits can become established and difficult to correct, reducing the efficiency of skill acquisition and slowing overall technical development.¹

3.2 Impact on Mental Health and Parent–Child Relationships

Drawing on Family Systems Theory, the psychological impact of parental involvement extends beyond learning outcomes and shapes the quality of parent–child interactions during piano practice.² Because piano learning requires long-term commitment and frequent parent-child interaction, patterns of parental involvement can significantly influence children's emotional well-being, family dynamics, and the overall learning experience.

Under the control-oriented framework, parents often impose rigid expectations and closely monitor the learning process. As a result, piano practice may gradually shift from a learning activity to a performance-oriented situation characterised by constant evaluation. Children may become increasingly concerned about making mistakes or failing to meet parental expectations, leading to heightened practice anxiety and emotional tension.³ From a family systems perspective, repeated negative interactions during practice can generate recursive cycles of conflict, in which parental frustration and child anxiety reinforce one another. Over time, piano practice may become a recurring source of tension within the family, negatively affecting both emotional well-being and the parent–child relationship.

In contrast, autonomy-supportive participation tends to foster a more emotionally secure learning environment. Parents provide guidance while remaining responsive to the child's emotional needs and developmental stage. Because mistakes are treated as a natural part of learning rather than evidence of failure, children are more likely to feel accepted and supported during practice. This sense of emotional safety promotes open communication, reduces conflict, and strengthens mutual trust between parents and children.⁴ Consequently, piano practice is more likely to function as a shared educational experience rather than a source of family stress.

Permissive participation presents a different psychological challenge. Although overt conflict is less common due to limited parental involvement, children may receive insufficient emotional support throughout the learning process. When parents rarely engage with practice activities or discuss learning progress, some children may interpret this absence as a lack of interest in their development and achievements.⁵ In situations where learning difficulties arise, the absence of both guidance and emotional reassurance may contribute to reduced self-efficacy and feelings of discouragement. As a result, children may become less confident in their ability to overcome challenges and maintain long-term engagement with piano learning.

4. Practical Implications for Optimising Parental Involvement

Building upon the preceding analysis, effective parental involvement in children's piano learning should not be understood as either strict supervision or complete non-intervention. Rather, the central issue is how parents can provide appropriate support while preserving children's motivation, emotional safety, and learning agency. The following implications suggest how parental participation may be shifted from a control-oriented or permissive pattern towards a more autonomy-supportive model.

First, parents need to reconsider the educational value attached to piano learning. When piano study is treated primarily as a means of achieving examination results, competition success, or future academic advantage, parental involvement can easily become performance-oriented and emotionally pressurised. A more productive approach is to frame piano learning as a long-term process of aesthetic development, skill formation, and personal growth. This does not mean rejecting examinations or competitions altogether, but it requires parents to position them as part of the learning process rather than as the sole measure of success.

Second, appropriate parental involvement requires dynamic scaffolding⁶. In the early stages, children often need external structure to establish practice routines and manage basic learning tasks. However, this support should

¹ Creech, A. (2010). Learning a musical instrument: The case for parental support. *Music Education Research*, 12(1), 13-32.

² Creech, A., & Hallam, S. (2009). Interaction in instrumental learning: The influence of interpersonal dynamics on parents. *International Journal of Music Education*, 27(2), 94-106.

³ Haines, J. E., & Schutte, N. S. (2023). Parental conditional regard: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Adolescence*, 95(2), 195-223.

⁴ Kostić, S. M., Minić, J. Lj., & Rovčanin, E. E. (2020). Parenting styles as predictors of dimensions of self-efficacy in students of elementary music school. *Zbornik Radova Filozofskog Fakulteta u Prištini*, 50(2), 315-330.

⁵ Zhang, C., Leung, B. W., & Thibeault, M. D. (2023). A proposed model of parental behaviours of music practice: based on music majors' retrospective views in mainland China. *Music Education Research*, 25(5), 496-508.

⁶ Myruski, S., et al. (2022). Observed parental spontaneous scaffolding predicts neurocognitive signatures of child emotion regulation. *International Journal of Psychophysiology*, 177, 111-121.

gradually shift from direct intervention to guided independence as children develop greater technical familiarity and maturity. Parents should therefore focus less on directly correcting technical details and more on organising practice conditions, maintaining communication with teachers, and helping children develop manageable learning routines.

Third, parents should adopt more formative and process-oriented modes of feedback.¹ Instead of evaluating practice only in terms of flawless performance or immediate technical accuracy, parental feedback should recognise effort, concentration, improvement, and problem-solving. Mistakes during practice can be reframed as information for further learning rather than as evidence of failure. This perspective, consistent with a growth mindset approach,² can help reduce anxiety, sustain motivation, and support a healthier parent-child relationship during piano practice.

5. Conclusion

This study examined how different forms of parental involvement influence children's piano learning through the frameworks of educational psychology and music education. By applying Baumrind's parenting-style typology to the context of piano practice, the study identified three distinct patterns of parental involvement: control-oriented, autonomy-supportive, and permissive participation. It further explored how these patterns affect children's motivation, learning outcomes, psychological well-being, and parent-child relationships.

The findings suggest that parental involvement functions not merely as supplementary support, but as a critical mediating factor between formal instruction and home practice. While control-oriented participation may promote short-term compliance and technical accuracy, it often undermines children's autonomy and emotional security. Permissive participation, by contrast, provides insufficient structure and guidance to support sustained learning. Among the three approaches, autonomy-supportive participation appears to offer the most balanced framework, combining appropriate guidance with respect for the child's agency, thereby supporting both effective learning and positive psychological development.

More broadly, the study highlights the importance of reconceptualising the parental role in children's piano education. Rather than acting as technical supervisors or passive observers, parents may be most effective when functioning as supportive facilitators who provide structure, encouragement, and emotional stability while allowing professional instruction to remain the primary source of technical guidance. By fostering a learning environment that balances autonomy, support, and constructive feedback, parental involvement can contribute not only to improved musical development but also to healthier parent-child relationships and greater long-term engagement with piano learning.

Although this study focuses on piano education, its findings may also have broader implications for parental involvement in other forms of extracurricular arts education. Future research may further explore how parental participation interacts with factors such as age, learning stage, socioeconomic background, and teacher-parent communication in shaping children's long-term artistic development.

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¹ Henderlong Corpus, J., & Lepper, M. R. (2007). The effects of praise on children's intrinsic motivation: A review and synthesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 133(5), 774-795.

² Dweck, C. S. (2015). Carol Dweck revisits the growth mindset. *Education Week*, 35(5), 20-24.

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