

Review of: "Collective Guilt and the Search for Meaning in Post-Communist Albania: An Existential Perspective"

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This well-written manuscript promises to be a useful contribution to the literature and helps deal with some existing gaps. I have a few, relatively minor, comments that the authors might consider in revising the paper.

The claim in the abstract that "this study emphasizes how crucial appreciating these processes can be, both on personal levels and collective ones, when striving to move beyond the heritage of the past and create a better future" is too broad to be useful.

Introduction, para 1. The term "communist block" is problematic. I think the authors intend "bloc" but I am not sure who would class Albania as being in the Communist Bloc in 1989 even though it was a communist state at the time. Moreover the ructions were experienced in Yugoslavia (which was normally seen as non-aligned) and in China (which was not regarded as part of any Soviet-led "bloc" at that time). Why not change "throughout the communist block" to "in communist states"?

Introduction, para 2. "The aftermath of experiencing such an emotion can lead to either favorable or unfavorable outcomes based on how it's assimilated into one's perception and psyche (Roccas et al. 2006)". I appreciate the idea is attributed to Roccas et al but the terms "favorable and unfavorable" are highly loaded and probably too vague to be useful for readers. For example, we can ask "favorable for whom"? The sense I get from the discussion is that negative consequences relate to negative emotions, but is a negative emotion necessarily a negative consequence (I agree they tend to be)?

Methodology, para 2. "Participants were recruited through self-selection," Explain further in a line or so. How is self-selection even possible? The researchers must at least have made details of the study available to potential participants. Participants cannot simply decide one day to participate in a study on collective guilt and meaning making without having the possibility of that participation advertised to them.

Methodology, para 2. Mention the sample size here. It is worth stating the numbers here and saying "11 of the participants were women and" (if it is true) "9 were men". We shouldn't just use a binary divide unless that reflect participants' responses and identities.

Methodology, para 3. "This took two weeks." Maybe clarify this to say "This took place over two weeks."

Literature review. The concept of meaning making seems a bit underdone. I am not sure what changes to suggest other

than an updated literature search.

Results, generally. It would be normal to include some deidentified and translated quotes to show how the themes were expressed. I would also appreciate some more detail as to what the participants were expressing guilt about. A lot of the research on collective guilt and/or group-based group focuses on (historical) acts that participants are not personally responsible for (even by way of omission). I get the sense from this manuscript that some (or all) participants may, in this case, feel culpable for their participation in and support for the regime and others felt that more indirectly. There is nothing wrong with that focus but it needs to be clear whether, what we might term, direct participatory guilt and indirect guilt play out in the same way.

The same can be said about the sense of abandonment from leaders and fellow citizens. Abandoned when and how? If they were abandoned after the end of communism then that is not an antecedent for guilt about the communist regime.

Discussion. This a strong section.