HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE ARMED FORCES

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Summary:

The study of changes that human resource management is facing today is a difficult task. One way of dealing with this problem is to use non-standard methodological approaches, which include, for example, the analysis of metaphors present in the statements of an organization's staff. The aim of this article is to recall opinions of the management personnel in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland relating to the assessment of the human resource policy in the military. This article assumes that a metaphor influences both the way people think as well as actions they undertake, and moreover it is an important carrier of meanings. In order to illustrate this thesis, the article cites some of the images of organizations described by G. Morgan and the concept of metaphor by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson as the theoretical reference to considerations conducted in the article. The analysis is to determine whether the management personnel perceives the human resource policy in the Armed Forces as the structured and coherent process run according to certain rules, i.e. the efficient process, or vice versa - as chaotic and incoherent, and therefore - ineffective

Keywords:

management, organization, metaphors of organizations, Armed Forces

INTRODUCTION

The effective human resource management in an organization is one of the essential conditions for achieving its objectives. The way, in which persons occupying managerial positions address the issue of managing people, has a significant impact on their activity. The study of processes related to the management, taking place in an organization, can be conducted in various ways. One of them is the analysis of statements by

members of organizations that have the character of metaphor for the assessment of the phenomena associated with managing people.

We cannot talk and think about the reality without using metaphors. A metaphor is "a central component of a language used on everyday basis and, what is more, it affects our perception and action" [3, p. 7]. As claimed by J. Lakoff and M. Johnson - metaphors direct our lives [3, p. 7]. If someone uses a metaphor, this choice is not accidental, but remains in coherence with their views and the way of life. Thus, if someone says "Life is a jungle", he / she probably perceives other people and his / her place in life differently than the one who characterizes the reality in terms of "life is beautiful". If anyone describes his / her work using the phrase "it is just a way to earn money", while another person says "it's an important part of my life", we can guess that both of these ways of thinking about work will have different effects on those people's emotions, motivation, attention, assessment of successes and failures, etc. When learning metaphors present in people's statements we can better understand the significance of various phenomena occurring in their lives. Given this, the research problem referring to the management of military personnel was set in this article. The article is based on the research carried out in the framework of the project "Human capital management in the Armed Forces in the light of modern knowledge in the field of management"[1], and presents only small proportion of it. The research problem formulated for the purpose of this article reads: How does the personnel managing human resources in the military perceives the human resource management in the Armed Forces?

The aim of the analysis below is to evaluate the meanings present in the statements of the military organization's personnel on the human resource policy carried out within it. Seeking answers to the abovementioned question and the formulated research objective there were analyzed the opinions of respondents holding positions of command and control in the military. The hypothesis put at in connection with the above formulated research problem reads: "The respondents perceive human resource policy in the Armed Forces as a disordered process taking place according to the rules that are not clear or legible".

1. METAPHORS FOR AN ORGANIZATION

The reference to the metaphors in the description of processes in an organization allows for understanding meanings, which may not be available through other means of exploring the reality. Presenting an organization in a metaphorical way has its own tradition. It is described by, among others, L. J. Krzyżanowski citing "Retorics" and "Poetics" by Aristotle, as well as more contemporary philosophical approaches of Nietzsche, Cassirer, Wittgenstein, who emphasize the functions of a language in creating the reality [4]. G. Morgan broadly describes images of organizations seen in metaphors [7]. According to the author, an organization can be presented, for example, as a machine, a body, a brain, culture, politics, a mental prison, flow and transformation or a tool of

dominance. The characteristic of metaphors for an organization according to Morgan is presented below.

The understanding of an organization as a machine derives from the mechanistic way of thinking about people and the world around them. We expect, therefore, the precise operation of institutions that cater to various needs of people. Those working in an organization must start and finish work at a strictly determined time. Proceedings of personnel are carried out in accordance with specific standards and procedures. It happens that the work is mechanical, routine, performed under the same, repetitive procedures and activities. Thus, the staff is required to function as if people were part of a machine's mechanism [7]. This also applies to the realm of emotions. The personnel are trained to perform emotional work (this is especially evident in the sector of services) in such a way that, irrespective of the circumstances, employees express their emotion in line with cultural expectations [1]. M. Weber reflects recognizing an organization as a machine in his theory of bureaucracy, as does F. Taylor, who is thought to be a precursor of scientific management.

An organization can be presented by means of the metaphor for a body. Similarly to a living organism occupying an ecological niche to which it is adapted, an organization is conceived as better or worse adapted to the conditions of the external environment. An organization's staff has different needs (like an organism with simple and more complex needs), and the work should meet these needs in a manner considered by the people as satisfactory. It is essential in this approach to motivate individuals to work. The "human factor", i.e. a person with aspirations and needs, is no less important than tasks, objectives and procedures. Likewise, the formal structure of an organization is as important as its informal structure resulting from the nature of the relationships between people. The work, in addition to meeting the most basic needs, should make sense for a man, give the opportunity to develop and be creative. The earlier approach based on the authoritarian, directive management gave way to approaches of the participatory, democratic, management providing a sense of autonomy for people. Presenting an organization by analogy to a body implied the way of understanding it in terms of evolution – only organizations that are best suited can survive and some of them get eliminated in the process of competition [7].

Another interesting recognition of an organization is a metaphor for it as a brain that processes information. An organization, like a brain, must use information selectively, as well as learn, correct own actions and mistakes. The rationality of either a person or an organization is limited due to the fact that both systems operate on the basis of incomplete data, in the environment of uncertainty, are not able to foresee all consequences of decisions taken. The introduction of computers and bar codes caused that the work of some people employed in companies has become redundant. Working people have been replaced by automatically operating information processing systems. The way the brain is built and the properties of neural cells make a body capable of learning. Similar expectations are formulated towards an organization as a system, which should be "flexible", have redundancy used in the conditions of variation, properly respond to trends, correct mistakes, improve efficiency [7].

Organizations can be treated as cultures within the framework of which subcultures and cultural patterns exist and are maintained and passed on. The culture of a society shapes the culture of an organization. According to G. Hofstede, these differences can be described on the following dimensions: individualism - collectivism, masculinity - femininity, a small power distance - a large power distance, small uncertainty avoidance - large uncertainty avoidance, focus on the present - focus on the future, permission - restrictiveness [2]. The culture of an organization is founded on slogans, language, myths and tales as well as symbolism, manifested both at the formal and informal levels, operating explicitly or implicitly (through overt and covert functions) [7].

The organization can be understood as political activity. As is known, politics is associated with a conflict, power, different interests of individuals and groups. Such an approach to the meaning of an organization is in contradiction with the idea of rationality, to which - as many believe - its functioning is subordinated. In order to understand what is happening in an organization, one should take into account: whose interests are realized, who exercises authority and to whom it brings the greatest benefits. Rationality is always understood here as serving only to some specific individuals or groups, not to others. Thus, a lot of rationalities exist. These aforementioned phenomena (a conflict, power, interests) are present in every organization. Understanding an organization in political terms tends to analyze processes taking place within it in categories of identifying interests, sources of power, conflicts and ways of solving them. Depending on how the interests, a conflict and power are categorized there are distinguished the following approaches: "oneness", "pluralistic" and "radical". The concept of "oneness" emphasizes achieving common goals that integrate a team, a conflict is considered as undesirable and must be eliminated, and the concept of power is replaced with the concept of leadership and control. The "pluralistic" approach accepts the diversity of goals of individuals and groups. A conflict is considered as natural and inevitable; attention is drawn to its positive side. The authority is exercised from many sources, is significant and serves to resolve conflicts. In "radical" terms, a conflict of interest is understood as a clash between a management board and trade unions, which are conceived as entities of different class. A conflict and the division of power in an organization are deemed as the reflection of broader social processes, e.g. existing relationships between classes [7].

The organization as a mental prison is another example described by Morgan. This approach to an organization enables the study of unconscious processes and hidden control templates that make people function in an organization in an unsatisfactory way – they are adhered to inefficient behaviors and justify derogation from the rules. The metaphor of a mental prison allows the possibility of challenging the assumption that organizations operate in a rational manner. People's motivations are often founded on irrational emotions such as aggression, fear, greed or hatred, which are not recognized among organization activities, but rationalized, justified. Morgan gives the example of the outburst of anger, which can be interpreted as the result of fatigue or pressure on the part of superiors, and not as the manifestation of the irrational unconscious side of personality. The way in which an organization operates may reflect individual personality traits. For example, the compulsive character of a person's activity, characterizing

his / her functioning in life (perfectionism, rigidity of attitudes), translates into the style of acting in an organization and does not always bring good effects. Today, for example, there is recognized the relationship between personality traits of compulsive personality by Frederick Taylor and the human management system introduced in accordance with his theory, later called Taylorism [7].

An organization can be understood as a flow or transformation. This approach enables the study of the change that occurs in an organization, factors that are its source, as well as ways of influencing the change. Understanding the change may aim at finding the cause-and-effect relationships, identifying processes associated with the system capable of reproducing and maintaining itself (autopoiesis), or perceiving dialectical contradictions in processes taking place in an organization [7].

The metaphor for an organization as a tool of domination draws attention to how an organization links the phenomenon of the people exploitation to the modernity. An organization's staff, as the majority, works for profit, which is divided among the minority (a small group of people holding power). An organization is a tool of dominance. There are different ways of achieving domination by organizations physical force, a threat of punishment, a promise of rewards, the authority of a leader, or legal standards. "The hidden law of oligarchy" says that in the end from each organization, even if it is democratically managed, a group of people is emerged, who exercise power and are the biggest beneficiaries, since they realize, sooner or later, primarily their own interests. Seeing an organization as a tool of dominance is present in today's discussion on the power performed by international corporations, mainly in the context of their negative consequences, both for the lives of individuals as well as countries in which they operate [7].

Understanding metaphors of an organization allows for the diagnosis of its process and implementing changes. G. Lakoff and M. Johnson understand the meaning of a metaphor in the same way as G. Morgan does. According to the authors, a metaphor is not only "a means of poetic imagination and the rhetorical embellishment", but plays a fundamental role in thinking and acting [5]. The concepts we use to describe the physical and social world are mostly of metaphorical nature. Speaking about the reality with the use of metaphors is considered natural and accepted unreflectively, as it is clear that we see, hear or feel the touch, that we use our senses in exploring the world. Lakoff and Jonson say: "It seems that the power of understanding experiences through metaphors is another sense, just like sight, touch and hearing, and a metaphor provides a unique way of perceiving and experiencing a significant part of the real world. A metaphor is the same and equally valuable element of our functioning as the sense of touch" [5]. It is assumed in the aforementioned concepts that metaphors present in thinking have certain effects on individuals, which further affects the manner of operating. If we think of an organization as a *mechanism* (machine), as a *body* or as a *container*, it will have different consequences. If we use the metaphor of a *body*, we can say that the organization *develop*s or *degenerates, has rejuvenated,* or *grown old*. This is how we usually describe the processes occurring in living organisms.

If an organization is conceived as a *mechanism*, we can talk about its *parts, harmonious* (or not) *functioning, replacing / repairing* components. If we think of an organization as a *container*, which houses both what is valuable and what is superfluous, unnecessary, we can explain the pathologies of the organization using the metaphor of *a few worm-eaten apples. The worm-eaten apples* should be simply removed in order to remedy the situation, which means getting rid of individuals who are burdened with the responsibility for breaches, so that there are only *healthy fruit* left in the *container*. This way of thinking could make the causes of problems in an organization mistakenly identified with the influence of several individuals, while the sight is lost of the system factors, which are often the real reason for pathology [8]. The given examples of metaphors for an organization imply different ways of thinking about it, about its development, problems, dysfunctions, etc. [6]. If we examine an organization by analyzing metaphors, it is very important to recognize that the organization can be many things at the same time. This is aptly described by G. Morgan: "An organization similar to a machine, planned to achieve specific goals, can simultaneously be: a picture of an organizations able to survive in some kind of environments but not in others; an information processing system, which is proficient in a kind of learning, but not in other types; a cultural environment characterized by specific values, beliefs and social practices; a political system in which people are pushing apart in order to achieve their goals; an arena on which different subconscious or ideological skirmishes are fought, an artifact or manifestation of deeper social change; a tool used by some people to exploit others or to dominate them, etc." [7].

2. METAPHORS FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE MILITARY

The research in question contained in the article was conducted in 2015. The research sample included the management personnel of the Polish Armed Forces: commanders of military units and their deputies. The selected sample consisted of 102 respondents performing their service in military units, subordinate to: the Armed Forces General Command, the Armed Forces Operational Command, the Minister of National Defense and the Inspectorate for Armed Forces Support. The distribution of the socio-demographic variables of respondents is presented below. The criterion for the selection of the sample was the held position associated with commanding at the level of a military unit commander or deputy commander, or the position of a chief of a personnel section. There was used a questionnaire containing 40 closed questions on various aspects related to the management of human resource in the Polish Army.

Men - 93% - constituted the decisive majority of the sample. Women represented 7% of the respondents. Soldiers in the age range of 41-45 years (23%) dominated. The second largest group was people aged 36-40 years and 51-55 years (21%). The respondents aged 31-35 years constituted 18% of those surveyed, the persons aged 51-55 years - 17%. The respondents between 56-60 years, which is 2% of the sample, were the least numerous group.

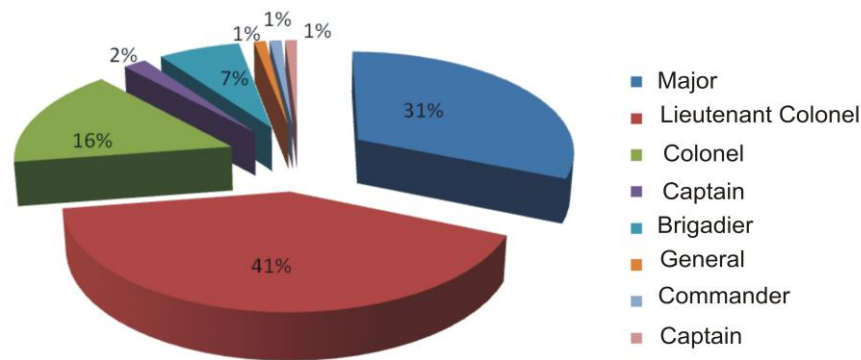The military rank is another factor differentiating respondents.

Fig. 1. Military ranks of respondents

Source: own study, military units, 2015 (N=102)

Most of the respondents belonged to senior officers (Major - General). Colonels were the largest group - 41%, followed by Majors - 31% and Lieutenant Colonels - 16%. Brigadier Generals accounted for 7% of the sample. The least numerous group was constituted by the soldiers in the ranks of: General (1%), Commander (1%) and Lieutenant Commander (1%). Younger officers - Captains - amounted to 2% of the respondents.

In terms of the criterion of reporting line, more than 60% of the respondents were subject to the units subordinated to the Armed Forces General Commander, nearly 1/5 to the Armed Forces Operational Commander. The Minister of National Defense and the Chief of the Inspectorate for Armed Forces Support were superiors for, respectively, 13% and 3% of the personnel involved in this study.

The distribution of the variable "position held" is illustrated by the Figure below.
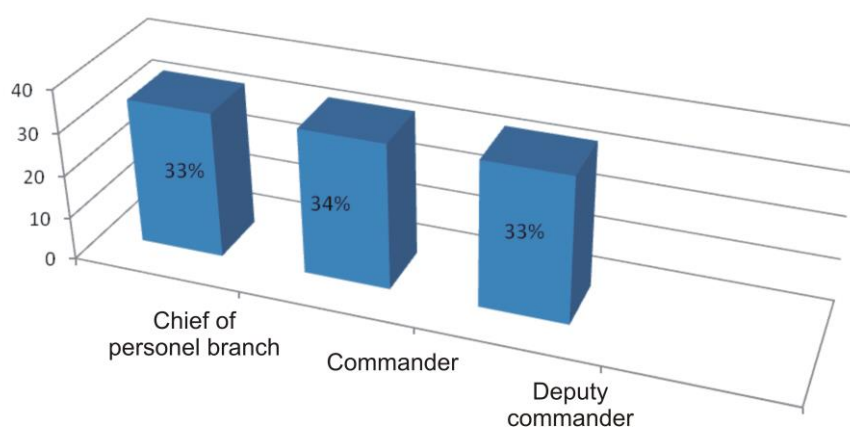

Fig. 2. The position held

Source: own study, military units, 2015 (N=102)

The persons in commanding positions - the total of 67%, dominated the research sample. The personnel branch chiefs constituted the remaining part - 33%.

Taking into account the experience in positions related to personnel management, the largest group consisted of the respondents who have held these positions from 16 to 20 years - 27%, followed by the soldiers occupying such positions no longer than 5 years - 21%. The persons having from 21 to 25 years of professional experience accounted for 18% of the sample. 15% of the soldiers reported professional experience from 11 to 15 years, 13% of them indicated from 6 to 10 years, and 3% had more than 30 years of experience in managing people.

The respondents were asked to indicate metaphors, which, in their opinion, best described the human resource management in the Armed Forces. When referring the theory of metaphors to the issue of managing people, one can expect that different implications may appear for management methods, depending on the ways this process is understood: *the perfectly and reliably operating machin*e or comparing it to *swimming in the murky water*, etc. The Figure below allows for recognizing the meanings attributed by the respondents to the personnel policy pursued in the military.
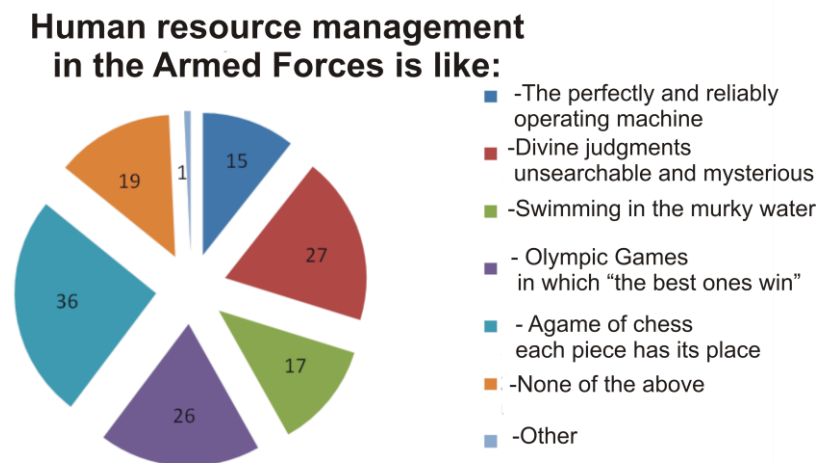

Fig. 3 Metaphors related to the human resource management in the Armed Forces[1]

Source: own study, military units, 2015 (N=102)

Most indications - 36 (26%) - focused on the metaphor for the human resource policy as "a game of chess - each piece has its place".

Playing chess is an activity run according to strictly determined rules. Players must follow the rules, including the principles of fair play. Chess pieces (pawns and figures) move only on the designated fields; one cannot make a move, which is not allowed, because an error causes a loss. A place taken by a chess piece depends on a player's decision, however it cannot be any place, but only one for which it is "entitled". The comparison of human resource policy to a game of chess, in which "each pawn has its

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[1] The diagram shows the number of indications; the respondents could give more than one answer.

place", may prove that the respondents perceive order in activities referred to human resource policy, aiming at deploying staff according to its competence, which means that a soldier can take only such "a place on the chessboard" to which he / she is entitled, because he / she meets conditions specified for a particular position. Appointing to positions, therefore, is subject to certain rules.

The second most frequent indicated metaphor was the comparison of the human resource policy to "divine judgments - unsearchable and mysterious" - 27 (19%) responses.

This could mean the conviction of the respondents that there are no clear rules in the sphere of personnel policy. Superiors or other entities ('divine judgments') decide on personnel changes, guided by random criteria. Going further, we can assume that behind such a comparison there are uncertainty of respondents, the conviction of their own helplessness and the lack of impact on the personnel's professional development, which cannot be sensibly planned. Any plans are verified by an unidentified "force majeure".

The personnel management in the army compared to the ancient Olympic Games, in which "the best ones win", was the third most common indication of the respondents - 26 (18%).

It can be assumed that the respondents in this way point to this aspect of management, which involves the selection of the best candidates for positions; those who are the most talented, the most experienced and highly motivated have the chance of success. Effective management can forge the best persons and give them a chance to take key positions in the organization. The comparison to the ancient Olympic Games can also suggest that fair play rules apply to the race for positions (since the ancient Olympics are put as a model of healthy sports competition).

In the research sample, 17 (12%) of the respondents compared the human resource management in the Armed Forces to "swimming in the murky water".

This could mean the conviction of the respondents that the chaos rules in the applied procedures, there is the absence of clear signposts or their volatility, and they feel lost. This choice may also indicate a sense of threat – "swimming in the muddy water" is sometimes dangerous. No one knows what "surprises" are hidden beneath the surface. It can also lead to confusion, because the activities are conducted without visible, legible signs. "Murky water" carries risk difficult to quantify.

The metaphor, which was indicated by 15 (11%) of the respondents, was "a perfectly functioning machine" to which the personnel policy was compared.

One can imagine that a machine that operates in this way is "soulless", however, it does not make mistakes, is reliable. It is not guided by subjective criteria, but it works according to a preset program, an algorithm, making it effective. It is a good instrument for achieving the goals set. The comparison of the human resource policy to a perfectly functioning instrument can be interpreted as the expression of appreciation for its usefulness.

Moreover, in the study 19 respondents (19%) said that none of the proposed metaphors described the essence of the process of human resource management in the Armed Forces.

The Table below is the summary of the results obtained.

Table 1. Metaphors used when describing human resource management

Organization as a machine Organization as a culture		Organization as a political system	
Metaphor	Number/Percentage of indications	Metaphor	Percentage of indications
A perfectly and reliably functioning machine	15 (11%)	"Divine judgments - unsearchable and mysterious"	27 (19%)
The ancient Olympic Games – "the best ones win"	26 (18%)	Swimming in the murky water	17 (12%)
A game of chess - each pawn has its place on the chessboard.	36 (26%)		
Total	77 (55%)	Total	44 (31%)
The sum		141 (100%)	

Source: own study, military units, 2015 (N=102)

The statement contained in Table 1 evidences that associating the human resource policy with the below attributes of a machine is the most frequent:

- compliance with the rules;
- order;
- predictability;
- utility.

The respondents' indications the attributes of the organization understood as a culture can be recognized, in which significant values include the competition and the principle of meritocracy - each one will be rewarded according to his abilities and merits, effort, motivation ("the ancient Olympic Games - the best ones win"). However, 1/3 of the indications suggest associations with the disorder, uncertainty and randomness. The choice of the alternative "divine judgments - unsearchable and mysterious" might mean that decisions taken by authorized bodies, i.e. endowed with the powers, have unclear motivations. One can therefore guess that at their core are particular goals of individuals or groups (typical for a political system), not necessarily the interest of the organization.

CONCLUSION

The general opinion of the respondents expressed in the metaphorical form on the human resource management in the military suggests that most of them associate the personnel policy with attributes such as: compliance with the rules, predictability, order and utility, which means that the organization operates like a machine - reliably and in accordance with procedures. The respondents in their statements also identify the meanings showing the characteristics of the culture of the Armed Forces organization expressed in the personnel policy - competition in the fight for positions, the principle of meritocracy. However, about 1/3 of the replies indicate that human capital management is based on the lack of clear rules, uncertainty and arbitrariness. The metaphorical comparison of the personnel policy to "swimming in the murky water" and "divine judgments - unsearchable and mysterious", though inferior in terms of the frequency of indications that associate personnel operations with order and predictability, may raise questions about what hidden functions met by the system of managing people in the military. This may suggest that the organization of the Armed Forces is in this case the same as a political system in which the "objective" rationality gives way to the particular rationality (i.e. Interests) of individuals or groups. The results obtained may indicate some dysfunctions exist in the organization, which should be more effectively diagnosed by the personnel section.

Referring therefore to the hypotheses formulated in the introduction to the article, it should be stated that it was not fully supported. When assessing the human resource policy in the military, most of the respondents used statements that prove its correct course. However, one third of the respondents indicated different meanings suggesting the lack of rules, chaos and arbitrariness, as those, which characterize the personnel policy in the military.

The presented research results should be treated only as a small sample of the study covering the social system, carried out through the qualitative analysis of metaphors present in statements of the organization's staff. The methodological approach can be seen as complementary to quantitative methods. It seems that this could be an interesting way to perceive meanings indicating the multidimensional phenomenon of the organization, its paradoxes and contradictions.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER