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**HAVE HAND GESTURES BECOME GLOBALIZED?**

**Master's Thesis**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research paper aims to examine whether emblematic gestures have become globalized. This hypothesis was based on everyday experience of globalization processes that have shrunk the world and brought closer people of different cultures, religions and languages. In order to test this hypothesis, questionnaires consisting of fifteen emblematic gestures were given to seventy participants coming from different parts of the world. The results show that members of cultures more similar to the American one (e.g. Australian participants) tend to interpret emblems more similarly to Americanized conventions. On the other hand, members of more conservative cultures (e.g. the Turkish participants) tend to interpret gestures like ‘the OK sign’ more readily according to their own local traditions, which is compatible to some degree to the previous research on emblems. The absence of complete non-understanding and an insignificant percentage of a low level of understanding imply that the chosen emblems are already used world widely. Finally, interpretations of those emblems whose usage is restricted to just one culture (or country) have shown how American popular culture has also successfully promoted distant cultures and their recognizable features (e.g. the case of a Chinese emblem used by martial art practitioners).

**KEY WORDS:** Globalization, Americanization, Culture, Nonverbal communication, Gestures, Culturally specific emblems.

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## INTRODUCTION

Everyday experience constantly proves that the world is becoming a smaller place. In the whirlpool of this important phase in human history called globalization, different cultures start to exchange goods, working forces, knowledge, and experiences (Karabegović n.d.). As a linguist, I was most curious about the possible scenarios that might occur when people of different backgrounds communicate and interact with each other. Since nonverbal communication is realized subconsciously most of the time, and is dictated by cultural conventions (Samovar et al. 2012, 266-306), I assumed that nonverbal signals like emblems could cause many misunderstandings in multicultural surroundings. Indeed, previous (and only such extensive) research on emblems conducted by Morris et al. back in 1979, showed that there were certain differences in the way that people from different European regions interpreted the same emblems (Kendon 2004, 337-339). This study was the starting point of my research because it helped me compose my own research, choose suitable emblems for the questionnaire, and also provided necessary data based on which I was able to analyze my own results and make conclusions about them.

Nearly forty years after Morris et al.'s research, world has become a much different place due to technology development and globalization. One of the features of globalization is the so called 'Americanization' of the whole world, which is evidenced in establishing English as lingua franca, promoting only American or European consumer preferences, and popularity of American popular culture, brands and lifestyle (McKenzie, n.d.). In terms of verbal intercultural communication, English language has become a neutral, safe and common ground for all the participants. I started to wonder if the same happened in terms of nonverbal communication, i.e. whether members of different cultures around the world have started to apply 'Americanized' usage and interpretation of emblems. Just as with the English language, the 'Americanized' system of emblems and their meanings might provide a safe ground as it is often illustrated in American popular culture which is heavily advertised and omnipresent in world media. Thus, multicultural interlocutors might tend to resort to the 'Americanized' interpretations of emblems due to their popularity, expansiveness and availability around the globe. The main purpose of this research is to examine whether members of different cultures have already acquired the 'Americanized' version when decoding emblematic gestures. In order to do so it was important to choose emblems which were proven to have 'localized' meanings in Morris et al.'s survey because the level of compatibility between their and my

results might imply that things have changed (i.e. that members of different cultures decode emblems according to the ‘Americanized standard) or that things have remained the same (i.e. that members of different cultures still decode emblems according to their local traditions).

This study consists of seven sections: introduction, theoretical framework, aims and hypotheses, methodology, results and discussion, and conclusion. Introduction provides a brief elaboration on how this research is realized based on the previous research and for what purposes. Theoretical framework gives most important information on the fundamental terms of the research – culture, globalization, nonverbal communication, gestures in general, emblematic gestures, and the intriguing origins of the emblems included in my questionnaire. Aims and hypotheses section explains the purposes of this research and establishes premises that are going to be defended or rejected according to the results. In methodology section, a reader can find basic information on the technicalities of the survey. In results and discussion section, all the relevant findings are illustrated through charts and tables, explained, and observed in terms of hypotheses. Conclusion summarizes all the greatest and relevant findings of the research, followed by bibliography section and Appendix where readers are going to find an example of the questionnaire and a list of gestures.

# 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section provides a review of the key terms of this research. In order to understand the reasons, aims and relevance of this research, it is important to describe and find links that exist between culture, globalization, and gestures (emblems).

## 1.1. Definition, particularities and importance of culture

Culture is a very complex notion that refers to the totality of activities, creations, thoughts and feelings of one group of people that live in a certain area and period of time (Jagić and Vučetić 2012, 19). Since this is obviously a broad category, dozens of different definitions of culture have emerged, and each of them has focused on different aspects of culture. I decided to choose the definition given by American Heritage Dictionary that says that ‘culture is the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought. These patterns, traits, and products are considered the expression of a particular period, class, community, and population’ (Tharp n.d., 2). To put it simply, culture is the total social heritage of a group of people; it is the way of living, thinking and arranging the world around us (Jagić and Vučetić 2012, 19). Each culture is indeed a system of meanings shared among a group of people and originating in common traditions, beliefs and norms that affect the way people perceive their environment and shape their interpersonal interactions (Jagić and Vučetić 2012, 15).

In order to think and discuss culture and its features more easily, it was necessary to break such a broad term into smaller fragments. Robert Gibson suggested three different models (an onion model, an iceberg model and a tree model) that illustrate and explain different layers of culture (Garcia Cruzata 2013, 15). The outer layers of the culture are called symbols (or artifacts) that include words, gestures, or objects that have a special meaning within a group of people (Hofstede 2011, 386-387). This category also includes food, clothes, tools, technologies, and all artistic forms, i.e. everything that can be experienced through our five senses. Since these are the outer layers of the culture, they are most easily affected by the external influences. This means that members of one culture borrow more readily symbols and trends in diet or fashion, for example (Hofstede 2011, 387). The next layer consists of heroes and rituals that might help understanding better the mentality and way of living of one group of people (Hofstede 2011, 387). Heroes portrayed in songs and legends usually possess a set of values that are highly praised by a group of people (Hofstede 2011, 387), which means that an observer might understand better the value and the moral system of that

particular culture. On the other hand, rituals are important social activities that connect members of the same culture and make a visual representation of people's beliefs and main preoccupations (Hofstede 2011, 387). The deepest layers, or the core of the culture itself, are values that dictate people's actions, thoughts and feelings, but also define people's attitudes about the world and people's relationships (Hofstede 2011, 387). Unlike the outer layers that are visible (but not necessarily interpreted properly by foreign observers), values remain completely implicit and invisible (Hofstede 2011, 388). People both learn and apply them unconsciously, which means that, for most of the time, they are not even aware of them (Hofstede 2011, 388). Members of one culture do not question why something is perceived as beautiful or ugly, moral or immoral, normal or abnormal, natural or unnatural in their culture; they rather unconsciously learn and live by them.

Despite largely the same biological traits and similar physical habitats, people construe different systems of attitudes, values, tendencies and behaviors (Spencer-Oatey 2012, 10). Earlier scholars tried to explain these differences in cultures by defining culture as innate, i.e. as a construe that people are born with (Spencer-Oatey 2012, 7). However, culture, i.e. how we think, feel, act and behave, is learned. The learning and mental programming take place from the moment of birth until around the age of 10 (Hofstede 2011, 389). During this period, a new member of culture observes, adopts acceptable patterns of thought, action and behavior, and stores explanations and attitudes about the world that were provided by their parents, family, and teachers (Hofstede 2011, 389). This whole process is highly implicit and realized completely unconsciously. Children learn from their parents (family and educators), just like their parents learned from their parents – it is an unstoppable cycle that ensures great stability and slows down possible changes in culture (Hofstede 2011, 389). It is interesting to mention that, although it is not encrypted in humans' biology, culture might affect and provoke certain biological processes and reactions (Spencer-Oatey 2012, 7). This is most obvious in terms of food where the same dish might cause delight or vomit in members of different cultures due to the cultural norms and ideas behind them.

One of the basic features of culture is that it is shared by a group of people. In order to be a member of one culture, one should act in accordance with their society's system of beliefs, norms and behaviors (Spencer-Oatey 2012, 8-9). However, it is important to emphasize that the extent to which each member of the same culture acquires sets of beliefs, attitudes and cultural codes varies, which means that members of the same culture are not going to act, behave or live identically, "but would rather show 'family resemblance'" (Spencer-Oatey



2012, 9). Variations in culture internalization occur due to individual's traits (e.g. preferences, personality, etc.) but also the fact that all people do the mental programming on several levels (e.g. a gender level, an age level, a social class level, etc.), and belong to several different (sub)cultures at the same time (Spencer-Oatey 2012, 8). Previous studies on culture had regularly omitted and neglected individualistic components of culture members, which only contributed to stereotype consolidation and fixation (Spencer-Oatey 2012, 9). Although culture represents a heterogeneous construct, it is a highly logical and organized system in which all the components are connected (Spencer-Oatey 2012, 14-15). Thus, change in one component will affect other components as well. Changes most often occur after the exposure to external influences – members of one culture borrow ideas, technologies and behaviors from other cultures (Spencer-Oatey 2012, 14). Borrowing and exchanging of experience, knowledge and ideas are constant, which means that cultural elements (especially the ones on the outer layers) might be deleted, modified or advanced gradually over a period of time (Spencer-Oatey 2012, 14).

Culture plays an important role in identity formation. However, it is just one of the components that affect the sense of belongingness to a certain community of people. Other important components are race, ethnicity, nation, etc. (Spencer-Oatey 2012, 18-20). In the past, culture was incorrectly equalized with these terms, especially with the term nation. Indeed, there are many similarities between these two: same language; same legal, economic and schooling systems, etc. (Spencer-Oatey 2012, 18-19). However, culture and nation are not the same. The best way to illustrate differences between them is to take examples of Latin America and the US (Spencer-Oatey 2012, 18-19). The first example illustrates how culture might exceed national borders – even though there are numerous nations (e.g. Chileans, Mexicans, Bolivians, etc.) in Latin America, they all belong to Latin American culture due to the same language, religion, mentality, expressiveness, etc. (Spencer-Oatey 2012, 18-19). On the other hand, there are numerous cultural groups existing in the US (e.g. Native Americans, African Americans, etc.) that belong to the same, i.e. American nation (Spencer-Oatey 2012, 18-19).

## **1.2. Globalization and its influence on culture**

People of different backgrounds, religious beliefs, moral standards, languages, and skin colors have been interacting, clashing, and cooperating with each other ever since the ancient times (Lončar 2005, 95). What connected them was commerce, an activity that meant

exchange of goods, but also ideas, knowledge and experiences. Apparently, the nature and intensity of these intercultural relationships have changed over the course of time due to social, economic, technological and political transformation and advancements (Rahimić and Podrug 2013, 24). All of these have shaped the world as we know it today – the world that is connected and smaller than ever due to the processes of globalization.

Globalization is a complex and ambiguous process that encourages economic and political interactions between countries that make a platform for mutual cultural bonding (Jagić and Vučetić 2012, 16-17). Deep changes in social systems, lifestyle, behavior patterns and everyday living and working surroundings have been propelled by globalization (Jagić and Vučetić 2012, 20), the process of modeling the world as a global unity in which the universal values are shared by all the members of the world society (Božilović 2014, 532). It is often said that globalization of this scale would be impossible without technological and informational revolution that enabled cheap and fast production (of goods), transportation (of goods), and intercultural communication (Rahimić and Podrug 2013, 24). As the definition says itself, global trends and their effects can be observed from the economic, political, and cultural point of view (Jagić and Vučetić 2012, 18). Indeed, the economic and political aspect of globalization had been extensively discussed in the last few decades, while the latter one had often been neglected. The reason behind this lies in fact that it is much easier to observe and measure changes in economy and politics in comparison to the changes in cultural patterns that are much more sensitive and less explicit (Jagić and Vučetić 2012, 20). In terms of economy, globalization is usually highly praised for an increased trade, open world market, erasure of borders, brutal competence, cheaper and fastened flow of the capital, adjusted production systems, etc. (Jagić and Vučetić 2012, 18). In terms of politics, globalization is seen as a progressive process that celebrates cosmopolitanism (erasure of national borders) and democracy, and is noted for international organizations and institutions (Jagić and Vučetić 2012, 18). International organizations are a form of partnership that exists between the member countries - they exceed national borders and participate in making decisions that affect the whole world (Jagić and Vučetić 2012, 18).

Beside goods, capital and people, it is also customs, traditions and other cultural patterns that flow across national borders (Karabegović n.d.). These external cultural patterns might be perceived as either enriching or threatening to the norms and values that are already established in one culture (Karabegović n.d.). Some believe that cultural diffusion and unification are positive processes that decrease nationalism, bring people of different cultures

together, and establish a more peaceful world (Jagić and Vučetić 2012, 20-21). However, many believe that cultural unification is a dangerous idea that might result in the loss of identity (both individual and collective) and cultural diversity that makes this world an interesting and exciting place (McKenzie n.d.). Indeed, multinational corporations and world mass media promote heavily mostly American and European products, brands, trends, and popular culture on the global level (Globalization101.org - Culture, n.d., chap. 6). Such practice might endanger cultural heritage, local traditions and unique peculiarities of one's society that need to be preserved since they are essential in identity formation and sense of rootedness (Božilović 2014, 538-539).

Globalization is sometimes referred to as Americanization (Westernization) or McDonaldization, terms that indicate American cultural imperialism and dominance on the world scale (Globalization101.org–Culture, n.d., chap. 6). There are several reasons behind American dominance and influence: it is the third largest country by population (i.e. it has one of the largest markets in the world with 300 million consumers), it is one of the richest countries in the world (with 49, 965 GDP per capita in 2012), English is spoken as second and third language by half a billion people while almost one billion people use it to some degree, global media (e.g. CNN, FOX, Comedy Central, The Times, The Sun, etc.) is mostly held by Westerners (Globalization101.org–Culture, n.d., chap. 7). Maattougui (2013, 40) wisely refers to Kim Campbell's quote (when explaining this phenomenon) that said that "images of America are so pervasive in this global village that it is almost as if instead of the world immigrating to America, America has emigrated to the worlds allowing people to be Americans even in distant countries". Thus, American influence and dominance is undeniable, and is especially threatening to the smaller, developing countries that might not be able to protect their tradition, heritage, language, cuisine, festivals, etc. (Karabegović n.d.). Countries like France and China have imposed certain laws and regulations that protect their uniqueness and originality. For example, it is prescribed by law how many foreign movies are allowed in French cinemas which helps promote local actors and directors (Globalization101.org–Culture, n.d., chap. 6). On the other hand, China has banned more than 2,000 English loanwords and names of brands, and also closed a Starbuck office that was placed in the Forbidden City, one of the most sacred places in Chinese culture (Globalization101.org – Culture, n.d., chap. 6).

Differences in culture and cultural patterns are going to become more obvious in the years to come, and thus are going to provoke many more conflicts around the world (Jagić and

Vučetić 2012, 20-21). The best way to illustrate this statement is to take an example of the clash of Western and Islamic cultures that are contrasting to each other in their very roots. Western cultures promote democracy, secularism, inclusivity, erasure of anything traditional and outdated, while Islamic cultures promote religion, local identity and sense of community, nationalism, and exclusivity (Globalization101.org-Culture, n.d., chap. 25). Recent migrations have proven that these two civilizations and worlds have not yet reconciled two opposed ways of thinking nor found a formula for peace, stability, and mutual understanding.

Issues like economic inequalities, terrorism, environment pollution, low health care standards, endangered human rights, protection and preservation of cultural identity worry and preoccupy an ordinary man despite homogenization of the world (Ljajić, Meta and Mladenović 2016, 41). Beside, virtual realities, consumerism and constant chase for better employment or salary have caused people to morally decay, become superficial, and neglect emotional and interpersonal relationships (Ljajić, Meta and Mladenović 2016, 44-45). Furthermore, competence of the work market and instability of global economies have caused people to start feeling uncertain and depressed. Due to these reasons, people around the world suffer from anxiety and stress, while the rates of substance abuse, suicides and homicides only grow with time (Ljajić, Meta and Mladenović 2016, 57).

In order for an intercultural communication and interaction to be successful and effective, it is important to learn about other cultures and their peculiarities (Jagić and Vučetić 2012, 22). It is easy to be intolerant, ignorant and disrespectful to 'others' simply because they are different and have their own ways of organizing life and business. However, it is much harder to learn and understand that variety is natural and desirable. Instead of mocking, stereotyping or acting as a member of the superior culture, it is more fulfilling to read about or visit other cultures, to learn and adapt to something new and perhaps useful, to live open-mindedly and to respect others (Jagić and Vučetić 2012, 23). By learning about others, exchanging ideas and knowledge with them, one can truly understand and start to cherish one's own culture (Jagić and Vučetić 2012, 23).

### **1.3. Nonverbal communication**

From the very young age, we are taught how to speak, write and read according to the rules of grammar and orthography. Besides, there are few similar proverbs and phrases found in various languages around the world that indicate how important a word can be. One of the most famous such sayings is 'One right or one kind word can grant you the heavens and open

many doors'. Many psychology experts have also emphasized the possible negative effects of insensitive verbal utterances that might hurt more than actions. However, if one starts to observe more closely how people behave and interact with each other, one is going to realize that spoken words might be delusional, false, and limited. If one mutes the spoken words, one is going to discover the whole new language, i.e. the silent language of nonverbal communication (Morain 1978, 8). This type of communication has an important and significant role in humans' interactions and coexistence that is equal to that of verbal communication since both are parts of the great communicative system and have the same purpose, and thus could not exist without one another (McNeill 1992, 11). Even though people tend to think more about when, how and in front of whom they are going to verbalize their thoughts, they communicate nonverbally to a much greater extent. Numerous studies have shown that more than 65% of the total daily communication is realized through nonverbal cues and signals (Morain 1978, 8). Other surveys have claimed that the percentage of nonverbal messages has been even higher with results ranging from 65% to 95% (Matsumoto, Frank and Sung Hwang 2013, chap. 1, 12). Unfortunately, despite these results, nonverbal communication and its cues are mostly overlooked and neglected in education systems and everyday life. Such attitudes toward nonverbal signals is perhaps due to the fact that nonverbal encoding (sending nonverbal information) and nonverbal decoding (receiving nonverbal information) take place on an unconscious level (Morain 1978, 23). People usually do not plan nor control how they are going to sit, walk, speak, touch or position themselves in the group of people. All of these activities and movements are produced spontaneously and unknowingly, while, at the same time, they reveal a lot about one's personality, inner thoughts and feelings, and also cultural, educational, economic, social, and religious background. Even though nonverbal communication has always had a status of secondary and accompanying feature of speech, people have always been interested in it. Chinese, Hindu, and Greek cultures understood the importance of nonverbal signals in 'reading' somebody's personality traits, intentions and feelings and providing persuasive argumentation and speeches (Matsumoto, Frank and Sung Hwang 2013, chap. 1, 5-11).

Without being aware of it, people still rely more readily on nonverbal rather than verbal signals, especially if the two of them are in disharmony and contrast (Matsumoto, Frank and Sung Hwang 2013, chap.1, 12). For example, one might tell a quite convincing and logical story, but nonverbal signals (such as avoiding an eye contact, playing with the pencil, or grabbing arms) reveal that one's story might not be true. When people simultaneously see

and hear things that are in discrepancy, they tend to believe their eyes and take the very nonverbal signals as the credible ones (Samovar et al. 2012, 267). This was observed by René Descartes who said: ‘To know what people think, pay regard to what they do rather than what they say’ (Samovar et al. 2012, 266). Indeed, long before people even engage in conversation and interaction, they tend to form opinions and attitudes about others. Although it is often repeated that a person should not be judged based on looks, clothes or posture, people still do that. Nonverbal communication refers to everything that is not said but is nevertheless crucial when it comes to judging and ‘reading’ the people and world around us. There are three classes of nonverbal communication: body language, object language, and environmental language (Morain 1978, 8).

Body language refers to motions that convey a specific communicative message or information, and it includes posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, touch, smell, distancing and paralanguage. Even though these motions are found in all the cultures around the globe, their frequency, duration, and appropriateness are highly influenced and defined by the culture (Samovar et al. 2012, 267). Just like different cultures have developed their own language systems, so have they developed their own body language codes and rules. Body language can reveal a lot about speaker’s inner states, thoughts and moods (Samovar et al. 2012, 280), and might also reveal a lot about speaker’s regional, educational, and social background (Samovar et al. 2012, 291). Object language refers to those nonverbal messages that are communicated through appearance, clothes, colors, jewelry, tattoos, piercings etc. (Morain 1978, 8). These means of object language might reveal a person’s economic and social status, education, profession, religious affiliation, moral standards, etc. (Samovar et al. 2012, 276-79). Furthermore, by dressing certain pieces of clothes or wearing certain colors, one can express one’s emotions, moods, and identity. Environmental language refers to architecture, lighting, the organization of living and working surroundings, and time (Morain 1978, 8). Environmental language means are culturally dependent and conditioned primarily by the geographical location and climate factors of the given culture.

#### **1.4. The world of gestures**

Gestures are body movements that are distinguished from all other aspects of nonverbal communication due to their role in everyday communication and human interaction (Straker 2006). Depending on their relationship with speech, gestures might simply accompany and

illustrate the speech or convey meaning on their own (Capone Singleton 2013, 59). The first ones are called co-speech gestures and they serve as punctuations that might illustrate, enhance, reinforce, complement or emphasize the accompanying verbal utterance (Study Body Language, n.d., "Body Language Gestures"). The latter ones are called emblems, i.e. the conventionalized symbols that substitute for words (Study Body Language, n.d., "Emblems – Part 1"). Regarding the importance and representation of hands in everyday life, it was only logical and natural for people to start gesturing with them in order to communicate with others (Study Body Language, n.d., "Hand gestures – The Basics"). This theory implies that early people first gestured in order to communicate with other members of their society, and that gestures were replaced by the speech at some point in human history due to numerous benefits such as using tools freely and addressing large and unseen auditory (Tierney 2007). Gesture and speech relationships have always been a matter of discussion and numerous studies. Xu et al.'s research (2009, 206664) has shown that both vocal-auditory and gestural-visual stimuli activate left-lateralized network of inferior frontal and posterior temporal regions. These regions of brain 'function as a modality-independent semiotic system that has a broader role in human communication since it links meaning with symbols like words, images, gestures, sounds, objects' (Xu et al. 2009, 20664). Thus, speaking and gesturing are intertwined in time, function and meaning, they are semantically and pragmatically co-expressive, and highly synchronous and complementary as they refer to different aspects of the same event (McNeill 1992, 23-26). Previous studies have provided various interesting observations on gestures: people find it more difficult to remember certain words when their gesturing is limited (Gawne 2017), children learn more words and show greater semantic processing and integration when they or their teachers gesture more (Capone Singleton 2013, 65), gesture eases thinking processes because the message conveyed in the gesture is expressed externally which relieves brain's resources and activities (Capone Singleton 2013, 67), gesture facilitates interactions and makes communication smoother (Xu et al. 2009, 20664), etc.

### **1.5. Emblematic gestures**

Emblems are a specific type of gestures that have an important role in human communication and social interactions (Xu et al. 2009, 20664). They are often called 'symbolic gestures', 'semiotic gestures', 'quotable gestures', 'formal pantomimic gestures',

etc. (Kendon 2004, 335). Among numerous provided definitions of emblems, the one given by Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen seemed to be the most precise and comprehensible: “Emblems are nonverbal acts which have a direct verbal translation or dictionary definition, usually consisting of a word or two, or perhaps a phrase” (Kendon 2004, 96). This definition shows that emblems are completely autonomous and independent of speech, which makes them highly useful and helpful in settings in which the speech is not allowed or appropriate, interlocutors are distanced, the participants do not want to interrupt the flow of the speech, or the verbal messages cannot be expressed without any ambiguity due to the external factors such as the noise, huge crowds and busy streets (Kendon 2004, 343-344). Unlike co-speech gestures whose main purpose is to intensify the meaning conveyed in verbal utterances, emblems communicate and encode meaning in and by themselves (Xu et al. 2009, 20665). The meaning that emblems convey, as well as their forms through which they are supposed to symbolically encode that particular meaning, are agreed-upon and shared by a group of people (Hasler et al. 2017, 27). Thus emblems are highly conventionalized and culturally specific (Hasler et al. 2017, 27), i.e. they are accommodated to the norms and standards of the culture in which they emerge (Xu et al. 2009, 20665). Due to the fact that emblems’ functions and forms are invented and agreed upon the wide community of interlocutors, their meanings remain consistent over a long period of time (Capone Singleton 2013, 60-61).

‘Quotable gestures’ are specific symbols found within cultures all around the world, which is due to their ability to convey meaning on their own (Matsumoto and Sung Hwang 2013, chap. 4, 79). Just like each culture develops its own patterns of behavior and thinking or language systems, it also establishes its own emblem vocabulary (Matsumoto and Sung Hwang 2013, chap. 4, 80). Emblem vocabularies then become one of the distinguishing features of the given culture (Samovar et al. 2012, 282) – they make members of the given culture feel connected and unique as they strengthen the collective identity (Study Body Language, n.d., “Emblems – Part 1”). Cultures exist in different ecologies and are defined by different experiences, which implies that the same or similar hand movements might be interpreted completely differently from culture to culture (Study Body Language, n.d., “Emblems – Part 1”). Thus, emblems are most easily recognized and understood when interlocutors come from the same culture, share common knowledge and experience the same events. On the other hand, intercultural communication might represent a potential danger since members of different cultures might produce and interpret emblems according to their own standards, which can lead to misunderstandings and even conflicts (Hasler et al. 2017,



34). According to Hasler et al. (2017, 27-8), there are four different scenarios regarding the intercultural communication and cultural differences in emblems: equivalence (two cultures use different emblems that convey the same meaning), equality (two or more cultures use the identical/similar gesture to convey the same meaning), confusion (two or more cultures use the identical/similar gestures to convey completely different meanings), and absence (members of one culture use an emblem that does not exist in other cultures).

Although cultural differences in the emblems' frequency, expressiveness and forms have been intriguing scholars for the past few decades, there had only been a few systematic studies dedicated to their analysis (Kendon 2004, 336). One of the most important studies was the one conducted by Desmond Morris and his colleagues, which was composed of twenty emblematic gestures that were shown to thirty adult males selected randomly in forty different locations (Kendon 2004, 337-9). Morris' contribution is enormous in that he formed the list of dozens of emblematic gestures, grouped them based on their commonality in each cultural group, and set apart widespread gestures from the varied local gestures (Axtell 2007, 11). Besides defining widespread and culturally specific emblems, Morris' research is so precious because: it showed that cultural differences in emblem interpretation do not necessarily stem from the differences in language nor are determined by regional boundaries; it showed that certain similarities in gestural codes and body language would always be found and observed regardless of the participants' cultural (and any other) background; it showed that it is impossible to list all the emblems specific to one culture accurately and precisely since there are many variations in the form and the usage of emblems even within the same culture (Kendon 2004, 337-9).

Cultural differences in emblems remain visible and persistent regardless of the processes and policies like imperialism, colonialism and globalization that have changed tremendously and significantly the world that we live in (Hasler et al. 2017, 28). However, recent observations have shown that some emblems have started to be interpreted differently from generation to generation within the same culture (Axtell 2007, 10). Since newer generations tend to perceive certain emblems in the manner of their American peers, these changes in interpretations have been related to the power and influence of American popular culture and TV channels that are broadcasted all over the world (Axtell 2007, 10). On the other hand, cultural similarities found in emblems stem from the universality in content themes such as rituals concerning salutation, interpersonal control, descriptions of one's own state, references to the actions or appearance of the other, insults, superstitious notions, etc.

(Kendon 2004, 339-40). These are all common aspects and instances of people's lives that are more easily, conveniently and effectively expressed through gestures rather than words (Kendon 2004, 339-40).

## **1.6. The etymology of the given emblems**

One of the many similarities between words and gestures is the fact that both can have a very long history of existence and usage. Just like etymologists try to reveal the roots of the words and the stories behind them, it is also possible to observe sometimes very long trails of the gesture appearance, development and utilization. It is necessary to have an interdisciplinary approach, which means that one should research historical, religious, and linguistic documents as well as arts such as painting and sculpture, on a quest of finding and defining the roots of a particular gesture. Similarly to the words, gestures can also be transformed in their shape and meaning that can be assimilated, changed, or abandoned. In this section, I am going to provide interesting backgrounds for most of the given emblematic gestures. As is going to be seen, some of them are older and some more recent, some of them are related to religious practices while others are not, some of them have preserved their original meaning and some have gained the new ones.

### **1.6.1. The raised clenched fist**

The raised clenched fist has been used as a collective gesture and a symbol of defiance, resistance and unity for a long period of time. It had been recognized by anthropologists that a raised fist might signify either a warning or self-defense (Andreucci 2017). This is a natural and instinctive reaction that includes raising our hands in order to protect important parts of the body like head, neck, and chest. It is worth noting that the clenched fist was recognized as a gesture of aggression and rage that is used immediately before the fight by at least a dozen of my respondents. I believe that the aggression and firmness associated to the clenched raised fist are the reason why this gesture has obscene meaning in certain countries and parts of the world, such as Pakistan and numerous Arab and Eastern Asian cultures (Aronson Fontes 2012, chap. 5, 85). Some authors believe that beginnings of the raised clenched as we know it today can be traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century France when revolutions were often and Romanticism reigned (Patton 2006). One of the first examples of the raised clenched fist is found on the painting "Liberty Leading the People",

one of the most important works of Eugene Delacroix, one of the most prominent Romanticist painters in general (Patton 2006). This painting depicts an allegory of Liberty that holds her right hand high in the air with a clenched fist in which she holds the French flag. Surrounded by people of all classes and social statuses, she encourages them to continue to fight for a brighter future. Here a clenched fist is not alone (as was indeed common until the 1960's), but is supported and accentuated with the French flag (Patton 2006). Together, they are the symbol of a union and solidarity of French people that fought for egalitarian and just French country (Patton 2006).

After finding its place in revolutionary imagery, the clenched fist was started to be used in the logos and brochures of numerous political parties and trade unions (Guy-Ryan 2016). Some of the examples are the Communist party (a clenched raised fist with the hammer and sickle), leftist political parties, Spanish Republicans and anti-Franco partisans, civil right movements (the most famous one being the Black Power Movement), white supremacy ideology, student demonstrations, feminist organizations and associations, and numerous revolutionary movements that emerged all around the world (Guy-Ryan 2016). It is amusing to see how this gesture has been used through different times and how it has served sometimes totally opposing parties and ideologies (Guy-Ryan 2016). The clenched fist has become an iconographic symbol for a variety of political and social battles that has found its place in visual 'dictionaries' all around the world (Andreucci 2017). Even though negative emotions such as rage or aggression can be attributed to this gesture, a raised fist more commonly conveys a bond among those who show and hold it rather than conveying menace or any malicious attentions toward others (McPhail 1991, chap. 5, 167).

In some African cultures, it is believed that a child is born with clenched fists because it holds the gifts of ancestors in them (Andreucci 2017). Among others, gift can refer to freedom (both physical and psychological) that was denied to African peoples (Andreucci 2017). They were the colonized ones, and their countries were overtaken by powerful and wealthy foreigners. Nevertheless, Africans knew they had to fight for their freedom, and exactly in these battles and struggles for independence, the raised fist emerged as a symbol of unity, resistance, and solidarity that were necessary to win (Andreucci 2017). Various African presidents that were elected after an independency gain had used this gesture as a symbol of victory and successful repeal of the oppression that African peoples had been exposed to (Andreucci 2017).

The raised clenched fist has also been used widely in the graphic arts for the purpose of spreading a particular propaganda, with one of the earliest examples being the logo of the Industrial Workers of the World, a labor organization that was one of the few to oppose capitalism and American involvement in the World War I (Andreucci 2017). Other examples include that from the times of the Great Depression when the raised fist, a symbol of unity and pride, had somewhat therapeutic property in a way that it boosted nation's spirit and invited all Americans to withstand difficult times (Borrero 2014, chap. 4, 68-9). Until 1967-1968, raised fists appeared together with tools, weaponry, smokestacks, and other objects (Patton 2006). However, this changed when Frank Cieciorca, a graphic artist from San Francisco, made posters with a bare raised fist (Patton 2006). The posters and the fist were created for the protests that were organized due to the Vietnam War back in 1967 (Patton 2006) and the arrest of the 'Oakland seven' (Cushing 2006).

In the 1960's, the raised fist had been primarily ascribed to the Black Power Movement, i.e. a civil right movement that aimed to facilitating and improving African-Americans' lives (Chadbourn 2016). It is quite fascinating and bizarre to read and listen about all the horrors, discrimination, and despair that African Americans experienced not that long ago. Charismatic leaders such as Martin Luther King (who preached peaceful protests) and Malcolm X (who preached extreme measures) were both raising their fists and thus sending the message of the importance of oneness, determination and a willingness to fight (Chadbourn 2016). Eventually, African Americans had gained their freedoms and rights, but the gesture of the raised fist became obnoxious and repugnant in the United States, where many (white) Americans perceived it as an aggressive and threatening symbol used by violent African American civil right fighters (Chadbourn 2016).

Even though the raised fist gesture and its usage have declined after the 1970's, it is an icon that has been reappearing ever since. It could be seen in protests such as 'Earth First' in 2004, 'The Occupy Wall Street Movement' in 2011, 'Black Lives Matter' in 2013, 'Women's March' in 2017, etc. (Cushing 2006). Raised fist's resurrection indicates that there are still many inequities and injustices to be fought against all around the world. Having this in mind, it is safe to say that this symbol of resistance and solidarity is going to be displayed as long as there are the oppressed and silenced ones.

### 1.6.2. The ‘O.K. gesture’

The ‘O.K. gesture’ or the ‘ring gesture’ is made when a thumb and an index finger are joined and slightly touching (thus forming a circle) while other three fingers are slightly spread and rounded (Bloyd 1990, 179). In Western cultures, this gesture has positive associations and can be translated as ‘everything is perfect/fine the way it is’ or ‘everything is in the right order’. On the other hand, the ring gesture represents one of the most offensive nonverbal signals in some parts of the world like the Middle East, Southern Europe, and Latin America (Regis 2008, chap. 12, 172). There are different interpretations on how this gesture emerged and entered our nonverbal dictionaries. Some claim that the ring gesture appeared together with the English expression O.K., a conclusion which was encouraged by the similarities in shape (Bloyd 1990, 179). Indeed, a thumb and an index finger form a circle, i.e. the shape that is equal to the shape of the letter ‘o’, while three slightly rounded fingers imitate the shape of the letter ‘k’ (Parrill 2008, chap. 8, 199). However, a credible source that would prove this theory has not been found yet. What is known is that the phrase O.K. first appeared in 1839, and was mostly popularized by American and British soldiers during the World War II (Bloyd 1990, 179). Even though there were no scientific evidence of the connection between the O.K phrase and the ring gesture, people started to use and combine them together (Bloyd 1990, 179). Others believe that this emblem was popularized by the scuba divers who gestured it to show that everything was in order (Flin, O’Connor, and Crichton 2008, chap. 4, 76). If they had used the thumb-up gesture for this purpose, they would have caused misunderstanding because others would not be able to decipher whether it was a gesture that confirmed everything was good or a gesture that said ‘Let’s swim up’.

Just like some other gestures that are going to be discussed later (e.g. the fig and the ‘rock and roll sign’), the ring gesture was used to ward off the evil spirits and negative energy (Bloyd 1990, 179). Back in the Roman times, this gesture denoted an obscene hand movement that imitated the rounded shape of the woman’s genitalia (Bloyd 1990, 179). By showing this gesture, people tried to invoke fertility and abundance, i.e. things that were threatened by the evil spirits (Bloyd 1990, 179). Their logic was to show this obscene gesture or wear it on their necklaces and amulets in order to deceive the evil spirit into looking at the symbol and forgetting about casting a spell (Bloyd 1990, 179). The obscenity behind this gesture has survived until the modern times as it is still seen as a heavy insult in countries like Brazil and Turkey (Radzicki McManus 2015). The ring gesture’s similarity with female genitalia and rectum is still being exploited for stating ‘screw you’ or referring to someone’s

homosexuality (Radzicki McManus 2015). In the series of American presidents that showed complete unawareness of the customs and nonverbal signals of those countries they visited (and thus embarrassed themselves), Richard Nixon found his place too (Radzicki McManus 2015). Back in the 1950's while he was travelling through Latin American countries, he visited Brazil. As he was getting out of the plane, he flashed the 'O.K. sign' and sent out the message for Brazilians to 'go and screw themselves' (Radzicki McManus 2015). Surely, it was an unintended act of insult, but it shows how important it is to prepare, learn and research before going to another country and culture.

The circular shape that is made by joining a thumb and an index finger has been attributed different meaning by members of different culture. In France and Belgium, the ring gesture might be interpreted as 'zero/worthless' depending on the region and respondents' age (Bloyd 1990, 179). In this case, the circular shape is related to the shape of the zero that denotes nothingness, not even a bit of something (Bloyd 1990, 179). On the other hand, the circular shape of the reversed ring gesture reminded Japanese people of the coins, so the previous research reported them using this gesture for 'money' (Hoang 2014). It is interesting that the 'O.K. gesture' is sometimes wrongly perceived and used as a baton gesture (Collett 2016, 89). Batons refer to gesticulations people might make unconsciously or consciously when they speak in order to facilitate their thought flow and speech production, and also to emphasize what is being said (Collett 2016, 89). Unlike other meanings that had been derived from the circular shape, it is the precision grip that is observed and taken into consideration here - when one is expressing ideas, one might join his thumb and index finger as if capturing, holding and accentuating them (Collett 2016, 89). Such batonized ring gesture was often used by Bill Clinton, and over time it became one of his authenticity stamps (Collett 2016, 89). This amusing case of an emblem perceived and used as a simple baton has been referred to as an example of 'emblem-blindness' (Collett 2016, 89).

### **1.6.3. The Thumb – up**

The thumb-up gesture is used when one wants to express his approval, satisfaction, excellence and agreement. This positive interpretation and meaning of the gesture is typical for the Western cultures. It is believed that such positive associations were encouraged by the fact that anything that is on top/above is better and of more quality, while anything that is down is considered to be bad and of less quality - e.g. heaven vs. hell (Bloyd 1990, 177). Just like many other emblems, the thumb-up gesture might also be interpreted differently in

different regions and parts of the world (Bloyd 1990, 177). Therefore, back in 1979, Desmond Morris observed and notified that this gesture can be interpreted also as number one, a rude gesture, and a hitch-hike signal (Fabry 2017). Popular culture and more precisely movies such as “Gladiator” and “Spartacus” made us believe that the thumb-up gesture was used back in the Roman times (Fabry 2017). In these movies, it is shown that a gladiator’s life depended heavily on the crowd’s gestures. If the crowd decided to spare a defeated gladiator then they would turn their thumbs upwards, but if the crowd decided to show no mercy toward a defeated gladiator then they would turn their thumbs downwards. Even though there had been numerous theories (and historical movies) claiming that this was true, recent evidence showed that the reality was quite different (Bloyd 1990, 177).

Thanks to a thorough analysis of the ancient gestures by Anthony P. Corbeill, it is now known that when the crowd decided to show no mercy to the beaten gladiator, they would show the thumb-up gesture (Cryer 2014, 176-7). Indeed, the thumb-up gesture was not a static one, i.e. the spectators would move it upwards, which is often interpreted as a gesture that imitated the act of stabbing the sword into the heart of the defeated gladiator (Cryer 2014, 177). On the other hand, when the crowd decided to save the defeated gladiator, they would put their thumb in the closed fist (Cryer 2014, 177). The gesture of the thumb turned upwards was known as *pollice infesto*, or the hostile thumb (Dunkle 2013, chap. 3, 134). There is a poem found in the *Anthologia Latina* that serves as a proof of the relations that existed between the hostile thumb and the gladiators’ doom (Dunkle 2013, 134). The poem describes how gladiators always had little hope even though their lives depended on the hostile thumb. The origins of the hostile thumb can be found in Romans’ beliefs and mentality, i.e. their tendency to equate the thumb with penis (Dunkle 2013, 134). If the thumb was seen as the symbol of male genitalia, then it would mean that this gesture was analogous to the middle finger, and that the spectators were giving ‘the finger’ to the defeated gladiator (Dunkle 2013, 134). It is apparent that the ancient and modern interpretations of the thumb-up gesture are quite different, or more precisely, totally opposing. Just like any other gesture that mimicked intimate body parts or sexual intercourse, the thumb also had apotropaic meanings, i.e. was used together with the fig and the ring gesture as a means of distracting the evil spirits from making any harm (Dunkle 2013, 134). However, at some point, the thumb was started to be perceived as negative and threatening. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the thumb-up gesture has gained its positive meaning of approval and triumph (Dunkle 2013, 134). It is important to remember that this ‘American’ thumb-up gesture has been popularized via

popular culture, and how it represents exactly the contrary in comparison to the Roman ancient thumb-up gesture.

The possible reason for incorrect interpretation of the thumb-up gesture could be found in early and incorrect translations of the phrases *pollice verso* and *pollice presso* (Bloyd 1990, 177). The first phrase was translated as 'thumbs up' instead of 'with a turned thumb', i.e. an exposed thumb, while the second phrase was translated as 'thumbs down' instead of 'with a thumb covering up the top of the clenched hand', i.e. the closed fist (Bloyd 1990, 177). One of the most famous Roman poets, Juvenal, wrote a poem that included the phrase *pollice verso* or 'thumb turned upwards' as a signal of showing no mercy to the defeated gladiator (Burns 2007, chap. 20, 414). Juvenal did not have to explain to his contemporary readers what he meant by this phrase since it was very well known among Romans. However, it remained ambiguous and unclear to the later readers that had been misinterpreting it for a long period of time, i.e. had thought of the turned thumb as turned downwards (Bloyd 1990, 177). The parallels could be drawn with movies such as "Gladiator" and "Spartacus" where the thumb-up gesture is used wrongly in a historical sense but is in accordance with its modern interpretations. These examples of misinterpretation demonstrate how each era and society have their own features and traits, and tend to see and perceive others through the prism of their own systems of values, customs and mentality.

The thumb was apparently quite significant and common in the gestures that were established in ancient times – it was pointed upward, turned downward, held hidden in the palm, or pushed between the index and middle finger (Corbeill 2004, 41). Due to its analogy and equalization with the phallus that is derived from its upright position (that represents the erectness) and its up-and-down motion that represents the act of intercourse (Corbeill 2004, 41) thumb was often used as an apotropaic symbol that was supposed to reject all the evil spirits and misfortunes. Sometime in the history, thumb's analogies with the phallus and sexual intercourse were started to be used exclusively as sexual, vulgar and crude insults (Corebill 2004, 41). Indeed, countries like Greece or Brazil and the major parts of South America and Arab world are famous for interpreting this gesture as an equivalent to the middle finger (Ting-Toomey and Dorjee 2012, 246).

#### **1.6.4. The thumb – down**

The thumb-down gesture conveys dissatisfaction, disagreement, failure, and dislike. There is no need to further discuss its origins as it clearly stands as the opposite pole to the



thumb-up gesture. In the previous section, it was explained how phrases *pollice verso* and *pollice presso* were translated incorrectly as the thumb-up and the thumb-down gesture, which has caused quite a little confusion. Historical evidence (Cryer 2014, 176-7) show that there were only two gestures used to indicate death or life of the gladiators – death was expressed through the thumb turned upwards (*pollice verso*), and life was expressed through the thumb pressing the fist or being hidden inside of the fist (*pollice presso*).

This contrast had been clearly distinguished in the dictionaries written between the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> and late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Fabry 2017). Then, in 1872, the popular French painter Jean-Léon Gérôme painted a piece of work entitled “Pollice verso” (Fabry 2017). This painting depicts a gladiator standing on the corpses of murdered gladiators, with a sword in his hand, and his body turned towards the spectators that all gesture the thumb-down. Gérôme was otherwise quite accurate in depicting historical events, but he made a mistake here: the title of the painting indicates the historical thumb turned upwards, but the spectators show the thumb-down gesture (Fabry 2017). Nevertheless, this painting popularized the thumb-down gesture, and was reported to be an inspiration for Ridley Scott’s “Gladiator” (Fabry 2017). The modern interpretation of the thumb-up gesture on which the thumb-down gesture and its meaning were based upon, was said to be popularized by British and American pilots during the World War I and World War II (Fabry 2017). As the American interpretation of the thumb-up gesture was spreading around the world, negative associations attributed to it were slowly being erased (Fabry 2017). This pair of gestures is one of the rare examples of hand signals that represent opposites, or two poles. However, the thumb-down gesture is used much less frequently than the thumb-up gesture, which is probably due to the rude, insensitive, and arrogant tone that is oftentimes related to this gesture (Royale 2015, under “Lesson Three”).

#### **1.6.5. The finger cross**

The finger cross is one of the most popular and long lasting superstitious gestures (Simpson and Roud 2000, under “C”). It is made by twisting the middle finger over the index finger while the rest of the fingers are bent. Superstitions usually stem from religious and cultural practices and beliefs, and refer to the numerous things that one is supposed to avoid or do in order to protect himself from the evil spirits or invoke divine’s intervention. One of the many superstitious customs that people acquire during their upbringing is the universally recognized finger cross gesture that is used for wishing and evoking good luck (Simpson and

Roud 2000, under “C”). It is said to be one of the most stated and recognized gestures in the Western world (Simpson and Roud 2000, under “C”) unlike in those parts of the world where Christianity has never come to life (e.g. Middle Eastern and Asian cultures), which is a fact that is often explained by its Christian origins. The crossed fingers are widely used in our culture as well, and are often accompanied by the phrase ‘Držat ću ti figu/fige’ (‘I will hold my fingers crossed for you’). During the time, this gesture has lost its religious importance and has gained one additional meaning: it is common to cross fingers (usually behind back) when one lies, and this is especially the case with young children (Gupta 2017). It is believed that crossed fingers can counterbalance the evil, harm and sin that are invoked by the pronounced lie (Gupta 2017). On the other hand, it is said to be an offensive gesture in certain parts of the world such as Vietnam, where it is regarded as a highly disrespectful gesture that imitates the shape of the vulva and represents an equivalent to the middle finger for its connotations and level of offensiveness (Gupta 2017).

There are two main theories regarding the crossed finger’s background. The first one goes back to pre-Christian times and refers to a Pagan worship of the sun cross, i.e. the cross that is inside of the circle (Keyser 2014). Members of early European cultures were fascinated by its force and sacred geometry, for which they started to ascribe powerful meaning and potency to it. Pagans strongly believed that good spirits rest at the very intersection of the two beams of the cross (Keyser 2014). Having this in mind, they started to form crosses with those who showed their support and wished for all the best. They would hold each other’s forefingers over one another’s, i.e. they would make a cross using their forefingers (Gupta 2017). It is believed that pinky promises and hand shaking stem exactly from this and other similar acts (Gupta 2017). The act of crossing the fingers ensured and locked a particular wish, while at the same time it secured the God’s help and protection in making the wish come true (Gupta 2017). During the time, Pagans realized that they could perform the act of crossed fingers on their own, and started to form it with both of their hands (Gupta 2017). Eventually, they started to perform it on one hand, using the index and middle fingers – a shape of the crossed fingers gesture that is used today (Gupta 2017). Second theory of the crossed fingers’ origins is related to the early Christianity (Gupta 2017). For the first four centuries, Christianity has been illegal and Christians were persecuted and murdered. It was not allowed to practice Christianity openly and freely, and in such difficult and dangerous times, early believers had to rely on secret codes and gestures, i.e. the silent language. Indeed, early Christians developed a whole range of different symbols to identify themselves and

recognize other fellowmen and followers. One of the most sacred and exploited gestures was the Ichthys (fish) symbol that was made by touching thumbs and crossing forefingers (Gupta 2017). Surely, crossing fingers was believed to be equally used and performed since the cross is one of the most essential symbols of Christianity that reflects power, oneness, sanctity and protection from Satan, sickness, black magic, and any other potential accidents (Gupta 2017). However, this theory does not explain how the crossed fingers became associated with luck. On the other hand, many scholars agree on the time of the emergence of the crossed fingers as we know them today. During the Hundred Years' War between France and England, archers started to cross two fingers that were used for releasing the bow (Gupta 2017). They did this because they had only one free hand and because it enabled them to ask for God's intervention and companionship in the upcoming battle (Gupta 2017).

Desmond Morris observed and demonstrated that the crossed fingers gesture is one of the most popular and recognized gestures in Great Britain and some parts of Scandinavia (Simpson and Roud 2000, under "C"). It has been also concluded that people would rather say the expression 'I will hold my fingers for you' than actually perform the gesture (Simpson and Roud 2000, under "C"). However, there is little evidence of the usage of this gesture in Great Britain before the early period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Simpson and Roud 2000, under "C"). Indeed, the earliest reference to this gesture was found in the Dictionary of Superstitions that was written by Iona Opie and Moira Tatem back in 1912, where it was listed as a gesture that is performed immediately after walking under a ladder (Simpson and Roud 2000, under "C"). Such relatively recent emergence and mention of this gesture, its distorted shape of cross, and limited usage raised questions and doubts regarding the theory of Christian origins of this gesture. It is only safe to say that both theories of the crossed fingers' origins should be taken with caution.

#### **1.6.6. The stop gesture**

When one raises hand vertically with fingers together and a palm facing the receiver, one is asking from the receiver to stop moving, talking or doing something (Royale 2015, under "Lesson Three"). This is usually perceived as an authoritative command or request that is most frequently made by parents, teachers and traffic policemen all around the world. Indeed, in some countries such as the United States, the stop gesture has flooded the traffic and can be seen on the road signs and traffic lights where it is used for its simplicity, clarity, and universality. The stop signal should not be interpreted as a defensive gesture, because it

is usually performed by authoritative individuals that are self-assured and in control of the situation and its course (Royale 2015, under “Lesson Three”). It is strongly believed that the stop sign has been used from the very beginnings of the human race, because this gesture embodies the metaphor for the wall or, as from the psychological perspective, the cane or whip (Royale 2015, under “Lesson Three”). As Royale (2015, under “Lesson Three”) explains, if the raised hand with an open palm represents the wall, then it should be interpreted as a barrier that should not be crossed. On the other hand, Royale continues, if the stop sign represents the metaphor for the whip or cane, then it should be interpreted as a powerful and commanding tool that can strike at any moment (although not to a degree that a raised forefinger conveys). The stop signal might be accompanied by additional motion or nonverbal signals which can then slightly change its meaning - for example, if the hand and fingers are leaning forward, it means that the person towards the palm is directed to, should either sit down or calm down (Royale 2015, under “Lesson Three”). However, if this gesture is made in a casual and careless manner, then it can be translated as ‘Talk to my hand’, which is the interpretation and usage common in modern times (Royale 2015, under “Lesson Three”). De Jorio (2000, 213) described one of the most representative examples of apparently long history of the stop signal that was found in Pompeii, or more precisely in the Sacrum of Casa di Felice (House of the merry one). An antique bronze sculpture from the 1<sup>st</sup> century depicts three Satyrs with their left hand raised in the stop gesture and their right hand placed on their hips (De Jorio 2000, 213). This is a very interesting artwork that proves that the meaning of the vertically raised hand with an open palm had been established long time before the new era and emergence of Christianity. There is no doubt that Satyrs’ left hands command visitors to halt and remain silent since the room in which they were placed was indeed sanctuary (De Jorio 2000, 213).

### **1.6.7. The raised index finger**

The raised index finger is one of the most authoritative and threatening gestures used primarily and most frequently by parents, teachers and animal instructors. It is a gesture that has been used for a very long time, a fact that is evidenced in the representations and iconographies of various Buddhist deities (Beer 2003, 229). Angry gods such as Akshobya and Black Hayagriva are usually depicted with their raised forefinger as a symbol of their wrathful nature (Beer 2003, 229). These and similar Buddhist gods are usually presented with other attributes (a noose, a hook, a scorpion), but one that indicates their nature in the most distinctive and comprehensive way is their raised index finger (Beer 2003, 229). The forceful

raised forefinger gesture is said to be a metaphor for the club or stick that is used for subordination of those to whom it is directed (Kuhnke 2012, 162). The raised index finger does not necessarily have to be a static gesture. Indeed, it usually means and includes some kind of motion, whether it means to move the index finger exuberantly from left to the right or back and forth (Kuhnke 2012, 162). When the raised forefinger is moved back and forth, it is interpreted as a threatening gesture that is usually seen when parents lecture and scold their children for doing something inappropriate, wrong or naughty (Kuhnke 2012, 163). On the other hand, when the raised finger is moved from left to the right like a metronome, it signifies a silent scolding and more of a warning that something should not be done or continued with (Kuhnke 2012, 163). Sometimes the index raised finger is moved rhythmically and synchronically with the words that are said, i.e. the motions of the index finger represent the beats (Kuhnke 2012, 163). This is very similar to the fight scenes where one strikes another with each pronounced word: 'I (strike) told(strike) you(strike) not(strike) to(strike) do(strike) that (strike)'.

It is perhaps significant to mention that the raised index finger is also used in different counting systems and thus can be used to denote different numbers. Counting with fingers varies and depends on the culture, ethnicity, region, etc. (Huang 2016). Just like any other variety that exists in the customs, beliefs, nonverbal communication and behavior, counting can cause misunderstandings too (Huang 2016). It is important to be aware of this in order to manage and adapt successfully to the new environment and norms. Huang (2016) emphasized the biggest and most interesting differences that exist in counting between different cultures. For example, Huang (2016) explains, Chinese use one hand only for gesturing numbers from 1 to 10 while Japanese count by the system that is contrary to the Westernize one: numbers are shown with bent, not raised fingers (a closed fist denotes number 5; raised little finger denotes number 4; raised little and ring finger denote number 3; raised little, ring and middle finger denote number 2; and raised little, ring, middle and index finger denote number 1). On the other hand, most Europeans use their thumb to denote number 1, index finger to denote number 2, and they end with their little finger that denotes number 5 (Huang 2016). In English speaking countries, such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, people commonly use their index finger to denote number 1, middle finger to denote number 2, and they end with their thumb that denotes number 5 (Huang 2016).

#### **1.6.8. The Moutza**

The moutza is an offensive gesture that is made with an open palm and five spread fingers. It is characteristic for Greek, Pakistani (where it is considered a heavy insult and curse that is usually shown by women) and some African cultures (Lefevre 2011, 88). Because of its shape and the way in which it is performed, the moutza is often included on the lists of the rudest and most confusing gestures that can cause misunderstandings and troubles for those who use it inappropriately (Lefevre 2011, 88). In Western cultures, this gesture is similar to waving, calling a cab, asking for a word in discussion, or grabbing something, and thus is perceived as a neutral and harmless gesture. However, in Greek culture it is translated as 'To hell with you' or 'You are a bag of crap', and is used as one of the most common offensive gestures (Lefevre 2011, 88). The moutza (or moetzta) is one of the most ancient gestures that exists and is still used in its original form and sense. It has been used since the Byzantine times when it was common to punish lawbreakers and delinquents by parading with them around the town (Lefevre 2011, 88). They were tied to the back of donkeys and forced to spread excrement and ashes on their faces or were driven in front of the furious crowd that would throw ashes and charcoal into their faces (Lefevre 2011, 88). The gesture name is derived from this quite brutal practice, i.e. from a Medieval Greek word 'moutzos' that meant ashes (Lefevre 2011, 88). Greeks often say par'ta (take these) and ór se (there you go) when gesturing the moutza in order to emphasize their frustration and poignancy (Lefevre 2011, 88). Over the time, the moutza has acquired few new overtones and implications, out of which the most often exploited is a sexual one where five extended fingers refer to the sexual acts that one who is showing it would perform with receiver's female family members (Lefevre 2011, 88). There are a double Moutza (a threatening gesture that anticipates fight) and a triple Moutza that includes both hands with addition of the extended food and is a mortifying insult (Lefevre 2011, 92-4).

### **1.6.9. The beckoning gesture**

Beckoning gestures, mafia and gang symbols, peace and offensive gestures, and greeting gestures (and protocols) are all emblems (Ting-Toomey and Dorjee 2012, 246). They all carry a meaning that can be translated directly into a verbal utterance. The beckoning gesture that has been listed in the questionnaire consists of a hand with a palm turned to the performer, with bent middle, ring and little finger and a thumb placed upon them, and index finger extended that is bent and moving back and forth. In most Western culture this particular beckoning gesture is used frequently and is translated as 'Come here/Come closer/Follow me' (Van Leeuwen et al. 2012, 54). However, in most Asian

cultures, this gesture is used for beckoning animals only, and is thus never used for people. Indeed, in these cultures it is common to beckon somebody by extending a hand vertically and turned downwards (to the ground) with thumb folded in the palm (or extended) and four fingers moving in a cab-calling or scratching motion (Van Leeuwen 2012, 54). The word *beckon* comes from an Old English word ‘becnan’ that referred to a gesture, a head-nod, and a glance of eye (Burrow 2004, 57-8). This word was changed to a shorter form *beck* in Middle English, which then led to the occurrence of the noun ‘beck’ in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Burrow 2004, 57-8). As can be seen, word ‘beckon’ had more diverse usage and meaning than it has today. The beckoning gesture is now used for ‘Come here/Come closer’, and it is its only usage. Burrow (2004, 59) gave example of the usage of the word *beckon* in a modern sense: ‘He settehym up ynhysette,/ And beckoned þeraftyr with hys hand’ (in Robert of Brunne’s “Handlyng Synne”). The verse in question describes a dying miser who wants his money beside his deathbed. Such texts and verses have led to defining beckoning primarily as a gesture that is made by hand and extended forefinger (Burrow 2004, 59).

As McNeill wrote (1992, 61), Desmond Morris and his associates concluded that this beckoning gesture (with a palm hidden from the receiver and an inviting index finger) had its opposite in the waving gesture (with a palm turned towards the receiver and all five fingers extended). Ever since these observations were made, many have recognized iconicity in different positions of the palms (McNeill 1992, 62). Palm hidden from the receiver signifies arrival, i.e. toward me to whom the palm is turned, while palm turned to the receiver signifies departure, i.e. away from me from whom the palm is turned away (McNeill 1992, 62). Even though there are differences in beckoning and waving rituals among cultures, it is interesting that each culture distinguishes them in the gestural code as well, where the two are commonly presented through totally opposing gesture forms (McNeill 1992, 63).

It is perhaps important to mention the study from 2014 realized by Genty and Zuberbühler, and explained by Clay and Genty (2017, 116). This project was an interesting one because it focused on analyzing human-like beckoning gesture in bonobos. It was observed that the beckoning gesture was produced when bonobos tried to achieve sexual connection, and was apparently inscribed in bonobos’ gestural code (Clay and Genty 2017, 116). While beckoning, bonobos also maintained eye contact (would turn over to see if the receiver is following them) and repeated the beckoning gesture if a receiver did not ‘catch’ the first signal (Clay and Genty 2017, 116). The beckoning gesture used by bonobos is both iconic and deictic, because it uses and represents the space/path that needs to be transgressed and it

shows where to come - the palm is turned and moved toward the producer of the gesture thus it means 'Here, toward me' (Clay and Genty 2017, 116). This discovery is quite significant because it proves how and in which context the great apes are capable of using and incorporating space in their gestural codes. It was thus assumed that the capability of understanding and referring to the space through gestures was also a feature of a common ancestor of great apes and humans (Clay and Genty 2017, 116).

#### **1.6.10. The fig**

The fig gesture has a long and interesting history. It is made with the thumb thrust between the index and middle finger while the ring and little finger remain bent. Together with various other gestures such as *mano cornuta* (the 'rock-and-roll' gesture), the fig represents the gesture that used to have an apotropaic function back in the ancient times (Corbeill 2004, 41). This means that it was used widely and regularly as the protective gesture that was supposed to ward off the evil spirits, the devil eye, malicious witches, and bad luck. The fig is made with the thumb thrust between the index and middle finger, which is an allusion to the heterosexual intercourse (Corbeill 2004, 41). Many authors have placed the origins of the fig gesture in south Italy, or more precisely the area around the city of Naples (Page 2011, 83-4). It was due to numerous found examples in sculptures and amulets found in Pompeii, an ancient city placed on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius (Page 2011, 83-4). Besides, the name for this gesture is derived from the Italian name for it – the *mano fica*. In this expression, the *mano* means the hand, and the *fica* (or *figa*) represents the female vulva (Ludden 2010, 105). However, the same gesture was found and observed in Egyptian, Greek and Roman cultures where it was a common feature of the protective amulets (Elliott 2016, 181). This demonstrates that the fig gesture had an exceptional significance for different cultures since antiquity.

Back in the Roman times, the fig was associated with fertility and eroticism because of its resemblance to a female vulva. It was often carried in the processions held during the celebrations of god Bacchus together with the phallus (Elliott 2016, 181). Such usage of the forms that resemble the act of intercourse or private body parts is explained with them being symbols of productivity, new life, and abundance (Elliott 2016, 181). The sexual act represented somewhat of a distraction for the evil spirits that were lurking and waiting for their next victim (Grimass 2003, under "Evil eye"). It was an act so repelling to the evil spirits that they would run away from any visual display of it. The evil spirits bring tragedy,



misfortune, poverty, i.e. everything opposed to the fertility, welfare, and opulence that are invoked by the intercourse (Grimass 2003, under “Evil eye”). The evil spirits disable the flow of the generative power while the intercourse allow and empower it (Grimass 2003, under “Evil eye”). For example, fig amulets found in the area of Naples were made of silver, an element associated with the moon goddess Luna, and blood coral, a sacred stone associated with the goddess Aphrodite (Yronwood n.d.). Such custom is an apparent proof of an apotropaic function of the fig amulets that were supposed to evoke female deities, i.e. their protective and generative powers (Yronwood n.d.). It is a well-known fact that female body and its capacity to reproduce were highly praised and respected ever since the Neolithic times, when many little, curvy Venuses were made (Yronwood n.d.). These little statues represented women and were associated with Mother Earth, i.e. the ability to carry and bring the new life.

Over the course of time, the fig gesture has almost completely lost its apotropaic function. It is still used in this manner in Brazil and Peru, where the fig gesture is incorporated on the small statues or lucky amulets (Marteau 2015, “The Love of Figas”). In most Mediterranean and Central Asian cultures, it represents an obscene and disdainful gesture that can be equaled with the middle finger (Marteau 2015, “The Love of Figas”). This interpretation of the fig gesture was also found in Dante’s “Inferno” (Elliot 2016, 181), where it stands: ‘At the conclusion of his words, the thief/ Lifted his hands aloft with both the figs/ Crying: ‘Take that, God, for at thee I aim them’” (Alighieri 1997, canto XXV). In Eastern Europe and Balkans, the fig gesture is translated as ‘You will get nothing’ (in Croatian, the phrase is ‘Dobit ćeš šipak’).

#### **1.6.11. The snapping fingers**

Finger-snapping (or finger clicking) most commonly includes sliding the last joint of the thumb against the last joint of the middle finger – an action that produces a loud sound. As is the case with any other gesture, finger-snapping also has its variations, so it is possible to see people sliding their thumb against their index or ring finger, or hitting the index finger against the joined thumb and middle finger (Kelm and Victor 2017, 131-2). The snapping fingers have a long history, and it is presumed that they were used in ancient Greece and Rome. Their first appearances were associated with dance and singing rituals, where the sound produced by making this gesture was used for enriching and supplementing the performance (De Jorio 1832, 275). Indeed, people still snap their fingers when they follow

the rhythm of the song they sing and dance to. Being related to the dance, music and celebration, it is no wonder that people started to snap their fingers when they were feeling joy and excitement (De Jorio 1832, 274). It is safe to say that finger snapping was a popular gesture back in the ancient times, since there are few well preserved examples of it in sculptures, vases, paintings, and literature (De Jorio 1832, 278). In visual arts, the snapping fingers can be portrayed with the hand turned toward the spectator, the hand turned in partial profile, and the hand turned toward the producer of the gesture (De Jorio 1832, 281). For example, the snapping fingers had always been presented as turned toward the gesturer on Greek vases, which did not allow for scholars to identify the gesture with utter certainty (De Jorio 1832, 282-3). However, considering its usage in ancient Greek, many scholars agreed that the gesture portrayed in the representations of dance and Bacchus' orgies, although hidden, was indeed the gesture of finger-snapping (De Jorio 1832, 283-4).

Finger-snapping can refer to a variety of different meanings – it can be used when drawing somebody's attention (e.g. calling a waiter) which is best to be avoided because it is perceived as disrespectful and rude; finding an answer (e.g. people snap their fingers when they solve a task, which is a response to a brainwave they receive at that particular moment); remembering or having remembered something (people snap their fingers as if they try to ease and fasten their cognitive processes); rushing somebody or something (Lewis 2012, 28). It is perhaps important to mention that this gesture can also refer to money (Ford 2006, 107), but in this case the snapping sound is omitted since last joints of thumb and middle finger are only brushing against each other (which is exactly how this gesture was presented in the questionnaire).

Snapping fingers has replaced clapping hands in more intimate environments, such as poetry sessions, conferences, promotions, and academy lectures (Rosman 2015). This fashion was initiated by beatnik poets who gathered in buffets and recited their poetry that stood against political injustices (Rosman 2015). There is something delicate, intimate and amiable in snapping fingers that enable the audience to express their approval and support without interrupting the speech or performance (Rosman 2015). Besides, snapping finger is more appropriate and sensitive when the theme and tone (of a recital/speech) is more tragic and darker (Rosman 2015). One-sidedness of the snapping fingers gesture is what contributed to its more frequent usage these days – it is practical to hold a mobile phone in one hand and record an event while snapping fingers on the other hand and thus expressing joy and support (Rosman 2015).

### 1.6.12. The 'hand horn' sign

The 'hand horn' gesture is one of the most popular gestures with numerous meanings and associations to it. It is made with the raised index and little finger while the middle and ring fingers remain folded and pressed with the thumb. The gesture is made in the vertical position and is analogous to the head of a horned animal (Elworthy 1895, 260). In modern times, it is recognized as primarily a symbol of rock and roll music (seen on numerous concerts worldwide) and Satanism. However, the hand horn gesture had a different function and meaning in the antiquity. Just like aforementioned *mano fica*, the hand horn sign and its origins are also related to the southern Italy, which is why this gesture is oftentimes called the *mano cornuta* in the literature (Elworthy 1895, 260). Archeologists have found an enviable number of hand horn symbols, out of which some were carved on the tools and devices (De Jorio 1832, 105). Back in the ancient times, the hand horn gesture had an apotropaic function, and was used in order to ward off 'malocchio', i.e. the devil eye (Elworthy 1895, 261). Apparently, hand was a significant and typical part of many charms, and it could be used solely or in a combination with an amulet - e.g. reaching or waving an amulet while making the gesture (Elworthy 1895, 261-2). This protective and potent gesture was pointed either forward (as if to poke the evil spirits' or witches' eyes with two raised fingers) or downwards (in order to imitate the hand horn amulets that hung downwards) as a means of keeping away from any harm, misfortune, and misery (Elworthy 1895, 261).

Despite numerous found examples of the horn hand accompanied by the phallus in ancient Roman bronzes and images, some scholars believe that the horns had been used for evoking prosperity and richness since the ancient Greek times (Elworthy 1895, 263). They list a few reasons for such claims: the existence of cornucopia in the form of the goat's horn that is so often displayed in visual arts and symbolizes 'the horn of abundance'; the appearance of the musical horn and Rhyton (a drinking cup in the shape of various horned animals such as bulls, goats, deer, etc.) that were both associated to Dionysus, the god of wine, fertility, vegetation, and women, etc. (Elworthy 1895, 263). It is interesting that this pagan symbol could be seen in various early Christian images, out of which the most discussed ones are those found in San Vitale in Ravenna (Elworthy 1895, 265). There, one can see the horned hand emerging from the skies and referring to the God who protects us from the evil, and also in the depiction of St. Luke who makes this gesture as if trying to protect himself and his bull (his attribute) from the evil (Elworthy 1895, 266). When one takes into consideration the hand horn's appearance in early Christian art but also in the portrayals of the Indian

goddesses, then one is safe to say that the symbolism of the horned hand has surpassed the religious faith (Elworthy 1895, 266). Its protective meaning and importance had been widely recognized and adopted.

If the horned hand is directed to a man's chin, it is translated as 'You are a cuckold' (Elworthy 1895, 262). This interpretation is usually associated to the Mediterranean and South American cultures, but it was a well-known offensive gesture used in the same manner in the 17<sup>th</sup> century England, which was affirmed through many examples in the literature (Elworthy 1895, 262). Even Shakespeare referred to it in his comedies "Merry Wives of Windsor" and "Much Ado about Nothing" (Elworthy 1895, 262). Such usage of the hand horn sign can be explained in two different ways: the bull's horns represent the wife's lover (the bull is a strong, virile animal) or the bull's horns represent the husband that is symbolically castrated (Lammle 2010). In the United States, the horned hand is used in different contexts and on different occasions. It is a common sign used by referees of American football to denote a 'second down' and also by baseball players who use it for 'two outs' (Axtell 2007, 17). The *mano cornuta* is also used by students and supporters of the University of Texas (Axtell 2007, 17). In 1955, student Harley Clark created the recognizable sign of horned hand that was supposed to represent the university's mascot Bevo, a Texas longhorn steer (Lammle 2010). The horned hand has also emerged as a symbol of heavy metal music thanks to an occultist band Coven that celebrated the outcasts and antagonists like the famous Satanist Anton Lavey who used horned hand as a sign of the Lucifer (Lammle 2010). However, the horned sign has been launched and fortified by Ronnie James Dio, the Black Sabbath's singer that adopted the sign from his Italian superstitious grandmother and decided to use it for its pagan origins (Lammle 2010). It might be important to also mention that a gesture similar to the *mano cornuta* is used in Chinese culture to denote number six (Huang 2016). The differences are observed in the fingers that are lifted – a Chinese gesture for number six consists of raised thumb and little finger (Huang 2016).

### **1.6.13. The hold fist salute**

The hold fist salute (or *Bào Quán Lǐ*) is a gesture that has been used for more than 3000 years. It consists of a clenched right fist that is overtopped by four fingers of the left hand (Mei 2014). The gesturer should hold hands in this position in front of his chest, point his thumbs away from himself (in Chinese culture, directing thumb toward yourself is perceived as an act of arrogance and egocentrism), and keep his elbows down (Mei 2014).

Although the hold fist salute might seem like a simple gesture, it is in fact a gesture that carries and expresses so much symbolism and history (Wallace 2014). The hold fist salute was first established and used among martial artists. Back in the ancient times, it was potentially dangerous to initiate any physical contact with the strangers and travelers because their true intentions could be malicious (Wallace 2014). Martial artists thus had to find the way, i.e. the gesture that would not require for physical contact but would express mutual respect for the skills, patience and reputation that the two passersby had (Wallace 2014). The clenched fist usually symbolizes the attack (or the preparation for it), but in this gesture it is covered with the left hand which means that the gesturer is saying that he is coming in peace and without weapon (Wallace 2014). The left hand then serves as a symbol of self-discipline and self-control that martial artists must gain - they should not abuse their martial skills and knowledge but rather use it for good causes (Wallace 2014). Over the time, the salute had spread across Chinese culture, and was used to express respect and welcome. The hold fist salute has survived for more than 3000 years and is still a common part of martial exercise, and is considered obligatory in public martial performances. Indeed, a martial artist should salute this gesture to masters, seniors, opponents, and an audience as an expression of respect and humility (Wallace 2014).

There are many different interpretations of the position of the two hands in this gesture. One says that the right clenched fist represents yang while the left hand represents yin - one might look soft on the outside, but his true strength comes from the inside (Wallace 2014). Another one says that the four fingers of the left hand symbolize Virtue, Wisdom, Art and Health (basic principles of martial skills) that embrace the aggressive right hand, which implies that a martial artist needs to practice both his spirituality and physical strength (Mei 2014). The last interpretation that I am going to mention says that the left palm represents the five biggest lakes in China while the right fist represents four seas that wash the Chinese shores – all martial artists that live within these borders are brothers and should be united (Mei 2014).

#### **1.6.14. The ‘V’ sign**

The ‘V’ sign is one of the most popular gestures and accompanying features on the photos of people coming from different parts of the world. It is performed with vertically raised index and middle finger, and the thumb that is placed against bent ring and little finger. This sign has a long and quite interesting history that provides an explanation for its quite contrastive meanings. The ‘V’ sign performed with the palm opened outward (to the

spectator) can be translated as victory, peace, or number 2 (Axtell 2007, 16). On the other hand, inward-facing ‘V’ sign is an equivalent to the middle finger in Great Britain and most of its former colonies such as Australia, New Zealand, etc., where it is translated as ‘Up yours’ (Axtell 2007, 17). Such offensive connotation of the ‘V’ gesture has its roots in French-English battles and wars that took place in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Gawne 2015). In the Middle Age, English army consisted of a troupe of longbow archers, i.e. a crucial and winning component that caused many sufferings to their enemies (Gawne 2015). Being their worst nightmare and biggest fear, French came up with an idea to cut off an index and middle finger to any English archer they would capture (Gawne 2015). In the battle of Agincourt, one of the numerous clashes between the French and English armies that took place in 1415, the English army won and held many French soldiers captivated (Gawne 2015). Drunk on their triumph and power, the British soldiers showed the inward-facing ‘V’ sign to French prisoners (Gawne 2015). In this context, the ‘V’ gesture represented a sweet revenge, mockery and poignancy – it was an offensive gesture that said ‘We won using these two fingers, now go screw yourself’.

The ‘V’ sign was popularized by Winston Churchill during the World War II (Gawne 2015). He would use both versions of the ‘V’ sign, sometimes showing inward-facing palm and other times showing outward-facing palm during his public appearances (Gawne 2015). Some argue that Churchill used the gesture wrongly by a mistake, but others believe that it was a deliberate act and that Churchill used a rude version of the gesture in order to defy the Nazi rule (Gawne 2015). The power and importance of the ‘V’ sign during the World War II go much further than being just a popular politicians’ trademark (Hackett Fischer 2005, 525-6). Indeed, this sign was a simple and easily performed gesture that soon became a symbol of resistance against the Nazis and their invading tendencies (Hackett Fischer 2005, 525-6). It represented a battle and hope for victory and liberation, two things that could not be separated from one another (Hackett Fischer 2005, 529). Victory meant freedom, and those who showed it actually expressed their solidarity and unity in fighting for free and democratic Europe and world (Hackett Fischer 2005, 529). ‘V’ sign became so significant that it was regularly played in Morse code at the beginning of BBC programs (Hackett Fischer 2005, 525). The interesting fact was that they used to play it together with the first few phrases of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, thus indicating that Germany had given numerous remarkable individuals in many different fields of sciences and arts (Boyle 2016, 54). During the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, the ‘V’ sign was widely used by the Flower Power movement

during their demonstrations against war in Vietnam (Royale 2015, under “Lesson Three”). Demonstrators raised their index and middle finger as a sign of peace, so much needed after the horrors of the World War II and the Cold War. It is believed that the hippies used a victory sign as a peace sign because they perceived and believed that life in peace was indeed a true victory (Royale 2015, under “Lesson Three”).

#### **1.6.15. The ‘Sei matto?’ gesture**

The ‘Sei matto?’ gesture is an Italian gesture used for expressing frustration, annoyance and amazement. Oftentimes, it is used when one is startled by somebody’s mindless or ignorant words or actions. This particular gesture is the only one from the questionnaire that includes hand and head movements and facial expressions that cooperate together in order to transmit and intensify the idea and meaning behind it. The ‘Sei matto?’ gesture consists of a hand turned downwards and leaned against the middle of the forehead, raised or knitted eyebrows, and flared nostrils. It might be accompanied with irritable questions such as ‘Sei matto?’ (or ‘Are you crazy?’) or ‘Sei stupido?’ (or ‘Are you stupid or what?’). Due to the lack of any valid source on the origin of this particular gesture, I decided to name it according to its belonging verbal translation. The ‘Sei matto?’ gesture is one of the couple of hundreds of gestures found and used in Italian culture. Indeed, Italians are known for being loud and using their hands vividly while communicating. As Donadio (2013) explains, some believe that the reason behind this lie in the once overcrowded and noisy places, such as Naples, that forced people to communicate and shift focus on themselves by using dynamic and extensive sets of gesture, while others believe that such rich gestural vocabulary had been established during the times of siege or foreign reign, when Italians were forced to communicate freely via nonverbal signals. Whatever the reason is, it is important to understand that gestures form a communication system that only contributes to the freshness, dynamics, intensity and vividness of the people’s interactions and information exchange

## **2. AIMS AND HYPOTHESES**

The main aim of this research is to find out whether globalization, as a process that has been marked by a significant promotion and impact of American popular culture, has

influenced the way that people decode emblematic gestures. In doing so, the most important thing would be to find out whether members of all other cultures other than American, have already acquired Americanized conventions and meanings when interpreting culturally specific emblems. The task is to measure to what extent they would interpret the given emblems according to the Americanized standard, and then to compare provided answers to the previous research on these symbolic gestures. Furthermore, one of the goals of this research is to observe whether participants coming from the Western cultures would show a greater tendency toward Americanized interpretations of the given emblems due to closeness, familiarity and resemblance (in history, language, political and educational systems, mindset, etc.) to the American culture. Consequently, another goal of this research is to examine whether participants coming from non-Western cultures would show a more limited application of Americanized interpretations of the emblems included in the questionnaire. The aims of this master's thesis are such that they strive to analyze whether globalization has affected cultural codes called emblems, but also whether there are differences in this trend when it comes to different corners of the world that have been participating in the process of globalization on different scales.

Main hypothesis of this research: Members coming from all cultures beside American will apply heavily promoted and popularized Americanized standards rather than the localized ones when interpreting emblems.

Auxiliary hypotheses:

- Members of Western cultures will interpret emblems more readily according to the Americanized conventions.
- Members of non-Western cultures will not interpret emblems more readily according to their localized conventions.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**



Regarding the cooperation and relationship between gestures and speech, all gestures can be distinguished as either dependent or independent of speech (Kendon 2004, 326-355). Codependent gestures cannot be observed or analyzed if taken out of context, i.e. they cannot be examined without the speech that they follow, complement and enrich. Thus, the best way to capture and gather examples of codependent gestures is to record the participants. However, this method requires certain professional equipment (camera or phone), usage of specialized computer programs (the ones that enable video editing and measurement of body movement frequency), and a lot of hours of video analysis. On the other hand, emblems are conventionalized visual symbols and are recognized (according to the cultural norms) in any format and context. In order to find out how respondents of different backgrounds interpreted emblematic gestures, I decided to compose a questionnaire that would consist of the images of more and less popular emblems used around the world. Indeed, due to its simplicity and clarity in both realization and analysis, I decided that a well-composed questionnaire would be the best and most suitable method for this research. Furthermore, it is important to note that I applied the convenience sampling method that does not require any established criteria in selecting participants. Basically, this kind of sampling consists of getting respondents wherever it is convenient, which means that everyone is invited to participate.

Having in mind the increasing number of tourists that visit Sarajevo during the summer months (and especially the Sarajevo Film Festival), my research took place in the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The survey was completely anonymous with respondents writing down only the country they came from, and it took place from July 24 to August 2, 2017. The respondents did not have many questions about the survey itself since everything they had to do was described briefly and precisely at the beginning of the question sheets<sup>1</sup>. In the end, I had to analyze the sample of seventy question sheets filled by the respondents coming from different parts of the world. Due to a diverse structure of my respondents, I analyzed the answers by classifying the respondents into five groups: the North American group (11 participants), the Australian and New Zealand group (11 participants), member countries of the EU and Norway (41 participants), the Turkish one (5 participants), and the Hong Kong one (2 participants). This classification was made based on the similarities and differences in geographical position, language, and history that exist between these cultures. All the

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<sup>1</sup> Conveying this research has been a very interesting and exciting journey during which I was constantly surprised by the kindness, willingness to cooperate, and enthusiasm that my respondents showed.

conclusions that I am going to make and point out should be taken with caution as the sample is too small.

The questionnaire consists of fifteen different emblematic gestures that were chosen according to their popularity in Western cultures and the results of the research realized by Morris et al. that showed that emblems are indeed culturally specific (Kendon 2004, 326-355). These are: the raised clenched fist (1), the OK sign (2), the thumb-up (3), the thumb-down (4), the crossed fingers (5), the stop gesture (6), the raised index finger (7), the Moutza (8), the beckoning gesture (9), the fig (10), the snapping fingers (11), the 'hand horn' sign (12), the hold fist salute (13), the V sign (14), and the 'Sei matto?' gesture (15). Some gestures were chosen due to their prevalence and popularity within Western cultures (e.g. the thumb-up, the beckoning gesture, the V sign, etc.) while others were chosen due to the variety of meanings that they have in different cultures according to Morris' observations (e.g. the OK sign, the Moutza, the fig etc.). Thus, the questionnaire was composed in such a way that the answers would show how well the participants know the emblems popular in Western world and whether they tend to interpret emblems that exist in their cultures in an 'Americanized' or local manner. The distinction between Westernized and local interpretations, their observation and measurement are the key elements of this paper. This means that the research results could show if the American norm for decoding nonverbal signals already exists and is accepted in other cultures (which would imply that emblems' meanings are becoming universal) or if the local 'vocabulary' of gestures is the prevailing one (which would imply that emblems' meanings are still diverse and depending on the local culture).

After the data was gathered and the participants were classified into five groups, the answers were analyzed quantitatively. There were several things that were checked: what group of participants was the most successful one when it comes to the interpretation of emblems in Westernized modus; what levels of understanding respondents showed; the percentage that each type of understanding had; which group of participants showed which level of understanding; and how compatible the provided answers for each of the emblems were. Indeed, these levels of understanding and compatibility between the provided answers and American interpretations might imply to what extent the Americanized standard for interpreting emblems has spread and has been adopted in cultures all around the globe.

There are no correct or wrong answers when it comes to interpreting the meaning of emblematic gestures. With this in mind, I decided to describe the provided answers as either compatible or incompatible. However, it was necessary to establish the norm according to which all the answers could be marked as ones that match or the ones that do not match. After getting familiar with the previous research, I decided that the norm would be the 'Westernized' one. This means that compatible answers were those that were based on the interpretation of gestures that is found, characteristic and popular in Western cultures, while answers described as incompatible ones were based on the gesture interpretation characteristic to non-Western cultures and societies. The 'Westernized' standard was chosen for two reasons. The first one is related to the assumption that the majority of the respondents would be from Western cultures, which means that I needed to include those gestures that are frequent and popular within these cultures. However, it is important to say that, regardless of their presence and popularity, the chosen emblems may also have different meanings in different Western cultures. The second reason was related to the process of globalization that has enabled Western (and especially American) standards to spread all over the world. American lifestyle, popular culture, fashion, English phrases, and fast food have become more preferable in comparison to the local traditions and way of life. With this in mind, I wanted to find out if the American interpretation of various emblems has also become the predominant one among those respondents that come from other Western cultures and non-Western cultures.

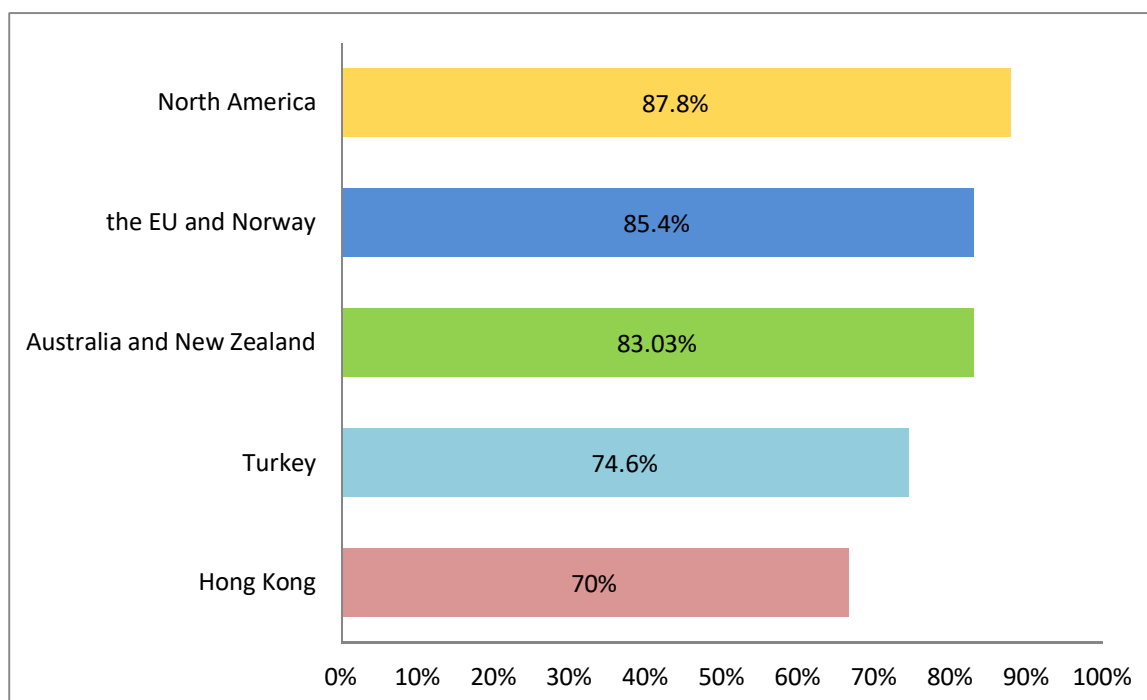
Some of the gestures were chosen deliberately because of their presence and popularity within Western cultures. Besides, the representations of these gestures are one of the most recognizable symbols of social networks like Facebook or Instagram. These are the OK sign (2), the thumb-up (3), the thumb-down (4), a vertically positioned hand (6), a raised index finger (7), a bent hand with a bent index finger moving back and forth (9), the 'rock and roll' sign (12), and the 'V' sign (14). It was assumed that the answers provided for these eight emblems would be highly compatible. As was mentioned earlier, these eight emblems have been promoted through American popular culture and social networks, and have become parts of our daily lives. However, according to the earlier surveys, some of them were interpreted quite differently in Eastern, African, and Latin American cultures. The goal was to test whether non-Westerners would interpret some of the mentioned gestures in their own way or in an Americanized modus.

On the other hand, some of the gestures were chosen deliberately because of their 'local' nature. What I mean by this is that three of the gestures from the questionnaire are characteristic and unique only to one specific culture. These are the Moutza (8), a hold fist salute (13), and a hand with fingers pointing downwards and set against the forehead in a vertical position (15). The first one is common and found in Greek culture. The Moutza has been used for thousands of years as an expression of rage and disgust. The second one is characteristic for a Chinese culture where it is used to express politeness and respect toward elder or important members of the society. The third one is unique to an Italian culture, where it is used to express frustration over someone's stupidity and ridiculousness. These 'localized' gestures have been included in survey because I wanted to learn if respondents would be familiar at all with the gestures coming from less popular and faraway cultures. My presumption was that the majority of the respondents had not been introduced to these three gestures previously, which would then imply that there are still many things to learn about other, not much promoted nor favored cultures and societies.

## 4. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Compatible answers rate for each group of respondents

Figure 1 represents the relation between respondents' answers and anticipated answers for each of the given nonverbal communicative signals. It demonstrates to what extent each group of respondents was successful when it comes to providing compatible answers. Gathered data and results are shown in percentage. As can be read from the chart, the results are the following: the most successful one was the North American group with 87,8% of compatible answers, the second most successful was the EU and Norway group with 85,2% of compatible answers, the third most successful group was the Australian and New Zealand group with 64,84% of compatible answers, the fourth place is occupied by the Turkish group that provided 74,6% of compatible answers, while the last place was taken by the Hong Kong group with 66,6% of compatible answers. It is significant to mention that the rates expressed in percentages should be taken with caution due to notable discrepancies in the numbers of participants found in each group.



**Figure 1.** Illustrated is the percentage of compatible answers provided by each group of respondents.

The results mentioned above could be described as somewhat expected. It was presumed that the North American, Australian and New Zealand, and the EU and Norway group would

achieve better results in comparison to the Turkish and Hong Kong group. Firstly, the first three groups share many similarities such as the language, religion, traditions, lifestyle, and wealth (all countries that were listed as respondents' home countries belong to the group of developed countries). Secondly, as was explained earlier, the majority of the emblems found in the questionnaire had been chosen deliberately because of their popularity and frequency among Western cultures. Finally, westernized interpretations of these symbols have been taken as the norm according to which all the answers were classified as compatible or incompatible. On the other hand, the latter two groups are quite different from the first three groups. Hong Kong is also a developed and rich country, but it belongs to Eastern cultures that share distinctive and contrasting set of values, traditions, beliefs and norms from those that can be found in Western cultures. Turkey is a developing country that has not yet become a part of the European Union, and is, in a way, on the crossroad where it has to choose between staying conservative (with a deep-seated respect towards religious and traditional practices) and becoming a modern democratic country and society.

The most successful group of respondents is the North American group that consisted of 10 respondents from the United States and one respondent from Canada. They gave 87.8% of answers that were compatible with the predicted ones. This is not surprising at all since the majority of the gestures included in the question sheets are very common and well-known in the American culture. Besides, Americanized interpretations for each of the given emblem were taken as the norm, which implied that it was only logical to anticipate the North American group as the most efficient group. However, North American respondents showed little knowledge of 'localized' gestures that are unique to Greek, Chinese, and Italian culture. According to previous research, American respondents were quite insensitive about gestures coming from other cultures and various meanings that a single gesture may have in different cultures. American culture is an individualistic one, which means, among other things, that they are universalistic, i.e. they tend to assume that their systems of values and customs are legitimate and valid for the entire world (Hofstede 2011, 400). Surely, this insensitivity about phenomena and customs of other cultures can be also explained with the fact that only 17% of all Americans had a passport back in the 2000, while a survey from 2017 showed that there were more than 40% of Americans with a passport (Amos 2018). This remarkable increase that has been taking place in the last twenty years is due to several different reasons. The first one is related to September 11 terrorist attacks that shook American general public since it was one of the most vicious attacks on the American ground since the World War II (Amos

2018). After the attacks, borders were closed, controls were intensified, and people had to apply for a passport. On the other hand, globalization and technology development have both promoted travelling and meeting other cultures as an eye-opening and refreshing experience, and enabled Americans to travel cheaper, faster and easier than ever (Amos 2018).

The second most successful group was member countries of the European Union and Norway. This group of respondents is the largest one with 41 respondents coming from the Netherlands (7 respondents), Austria (4 respondents), Spain (3 respondents), Portugal (1 respondent), Poland (1 respondent), France (1 respondent), Finland (1 respondent), Denmark (8 respondents), Germany (5 respondents), Norway (4 respondents), and England (6 respondents). All these countries belong to a Western world, so it was anticipated that the respondents coming from these countries would be highly successful. Indeed, this group provided 85.4% of compatible answers. Since this is the largest and most varied group of all, it is necessary to provide results for each country, i.e. how compatible answers were within each country: Denmark (111/120), the Netherlands (91/105), Austria (53/60), Portugal (13/15), Poland (9/15), Spain (37/45), (England (78/90), Germany (57/75), Finland (12/15), France (13/15), and Norway (51/60). The European Union is an excellent example of those traits that are essential components of globalization – borders are erased, and goods and people can travel more easily and with fewer costs. This means that the European Union citizens are connected more than ever and have an easy access to learning and meeting other cultures. However, most European cultures have long and rich histories and traditions, so it is no wonder that certain gestures have been interpreted in numerous and various ways. These differences are going to be described in one of the following sections, where I am going to analyze given interpretations for each gesture. It is important to emphasize that results in general, but especially those for Portuguese, Finnish, French and Polish respondents, should be taken with caution since they represent interpretations and awareness (of given gestures) of just one individual coming from each of the mentioned cultures. Therefore, it is not advisable to make conclusions about the entire culture because the sample is too small.

The third place was taken by Australian and New Zealand respondents who provided 83.03% of answers compatible to the anticipated ones. Having in mind that these cultures have deep and strong relations with Great Britain and the US in language, history, economics, trade, etc., it was expected that they would achieve quite high results, i.e. would provide interpretations compatible and similar to the Americanized ones. It was anticipated that certain answers would be different from the American ones; especially those for the gesture

under number 14 for which the anticipated answers were Peace and Victory. The latter one was reported to be the first choice of Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian respondents in the previous research and data. This was due to the fact that this gesture was popularly interpreted as Victory in the United Kingdom that was once a colonial force that appropriated Australia, New Zealand and North America among others. As results will show, this has changed over the course of time except in the case of a Canadian respondent, which implies that younger generations have rather accepted the Americanized meaning of the gesture. However, the results might have been different if the questionnaire had been filled by the members of older generations.

The fourth place is taken by respondents coming from Turkey who gave 74.6% of compatible answers. These results are surprising to a certain extent because Turkey is still a quite conservative country that does not give up their tradition and religious principles easily. Indeed, in the last few years many laws considering secularism and religious practices that were established by Kemal Ataturk at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been changed and adjusted in a more rigorous way. Conservative politicians tend to put restrictions on the external influences as a means of taking a complete control and introducing isolation. However, these results also proved that conservative politics cannot completely control the Internet or an access to it, especially in case of the newer generations that are well-educated in terms of modern technology. Additionally, young people are encouraged to study and gain work experience in other parts of the world, which enables them to enrich themselves with new ideas, perspectives, and vistas. According to the previous research, Turkish respondents interpreted gestures under number 2 and number 10 as strongly insulting and offensive gestures. The OK sign mocks or questions someone's sexuality, while the fig can be described as an equivalent to a middle finger in a Turkish culture. Since all five Turkish respondents were students in their 20s, it was interesting to see whether they would interpret these gestures in accordance to their traditions or if their answers would be westernized. The results will show if the popular trends have started to overtake this country that connects two worlds and two mentalities – East and West.

Two respondents from Hong Kong provided the smallest number of compatible answers (70%). One possible explanation for these results might be the distance (both physical and mental) between Hong Kong and the Western world. It is interesting to note that both of Hong Kong respondents named Hong Kong as their home country, but they also mentioned the USA in brackets (further explanations were not given). They, thus, evoked the



phenomenon of biculturals, i.e. people who engage in two (or more) cultures. Had the questionnaires not been graded according to the Americanized convention, two respondents from Hong Kong would have achieved higher results. Indeed, their knowledge of Hong Kong (Chinese) culture brought them negative points. On most other occasions, biculturals tend to be the ones in advantage. As the processes of globalization develop further, biculturals might take an important role in bridging two (or more) cultures as they are able to teach about other cultures, compare them, take what is best from both worlds, and reconcile them (Grosjean May 2011). However, those who stand between two (or more cultures) are said to have a double consciousness and portable roots, and it may be quite a painful struggle for them to achieve a cultural consolidation, i.e. to build a sense of home between them (Stevenson Moessner 2014, 91-2). Unlike bilinguals who can switch from one language to another in a blink of an eye, it is extremely hard for biculturals to completely switch from one culture to another, which is why they tend to manifest cultural blends most often in nonverbal matters such as greetings, hand gestures, and positioning oneself when interacting with others (Grosjean June 2011).

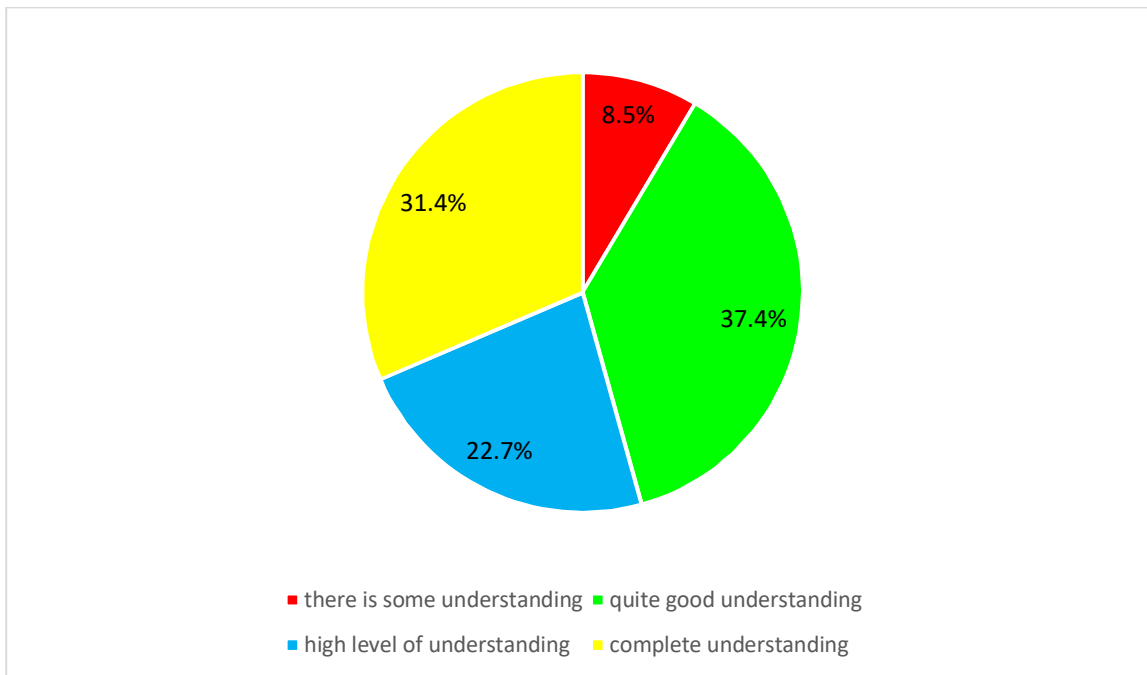
#### 4.2. The level of understanding

Table 1 represents the scale by which the respondents' answers were measured and classified into six different levels of (non-)understanding of the given images, i.e. nonverbal symbols. Each of the levels of understanding in fact represents the percentage of Americanized interpretations found in the provided answers. The more Americanized standards were applied when answering, the higher level of understanding the respondents showed.

**Table 1.** The scale of understanding (or the level of implementing Americanized standards).

THE SCALE OF UNDERSTANDING BASED ON THE COMPATIBILITY WITH AMERICANIZED STANDARD	
non-understanding	below 60%
there is some understanding	60%-70%
quite good understanding	71%-80%
high level of understanding	81%-90%
complete understanding	91%-100%

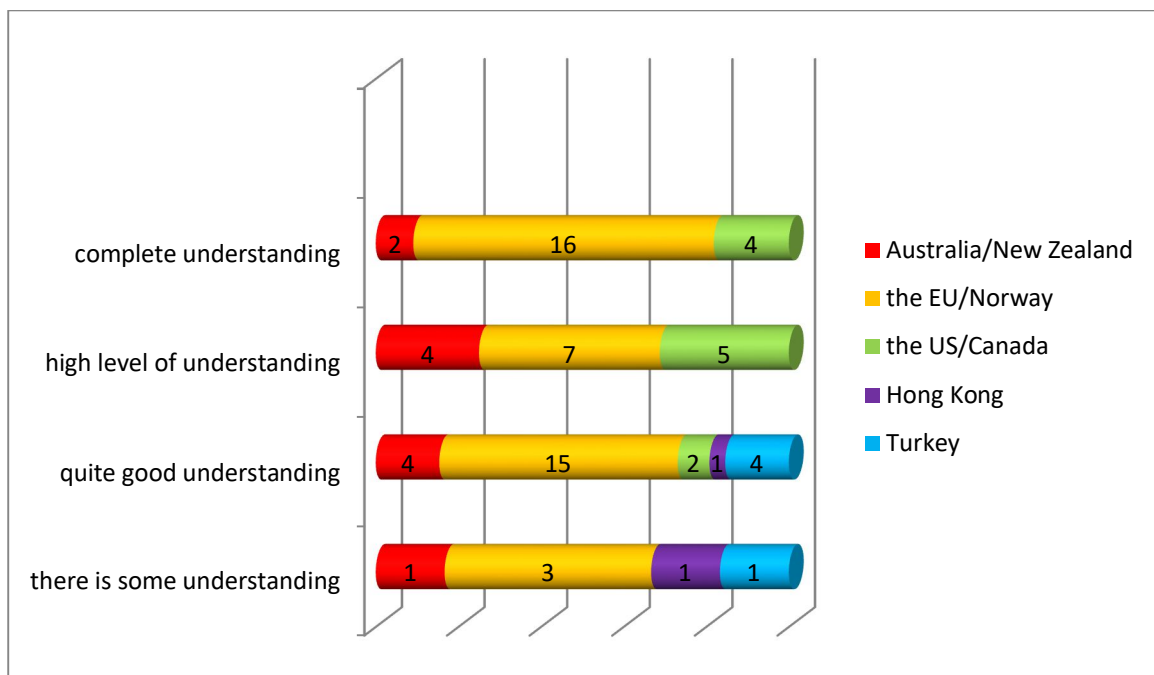
First level signifies non-understanding (i.e. 0-8 compatible answers), the second one indicates that there is some understanding (i.e. 9-10 compatible answers), the third one illustrates quite good understanding (i.e. 11-12 compatible answers), fourth level marks a high level of understanding (i.e. 13 compatible answers), while the last level represents complete understanding (i.e. 14-15 compatible answers). Answers marked as compatible (or Americanized) for each of the given emblems were: resistance/solidarity (1), OK/good (2), good/like (3), bad/dislike (4), good luck/lying (5), stop (6), wait/no! (7), come here (9), faster/I remembered/money (11), rock 'n' roll/Satanism/Texas Longhorn (12), peace/victory (14). Since 'local' gestures under numbers 8, 10, 13, and 15 do not exist in the American nonverbal vocabulary compatible interpretations for them would be the ones that referred to them as non-existing, and the ones that interpreted them in an Americanized manner. Answers marked as compatible for each of the given local emblems were: hello/number 5/talk to my hand (8), 'pull one's nose' (10), and martial arts (13). Gestures 8 and 10 share certain similarities with hand movements that are common in Western cultures (e.g. a hand with extended fingers is used for waving while a thumb tucked between an index and a middle finger is used in a game played with toddlers). Answers for gesture 13 that were related to martial arts, karate or kung fu were seen as compatible because these answers showed the influence of American popular culture and Hollywood that intensely promoted and distributed movies about martial skills, and thus were marked as one of the possible Americanized interpretations. Since gesture 15 does not resemble to any gesture found and used in American culture, only those answers that marked it as non-existing or unfamiliar were counted as the compatible ones. After applying rules of a 10-point grading system, I determined the percentage rates for each level of understanding based on the compatibility with Americanized standard. Finally, I installed gathered answers into these percentage rates.



**Figure 2.** Shown are the percentages of the rate of each level of understanding found across the total number of questionnaires.

Figure 2 shows how many questionnaires out of total number of filled questionnaires indicate non-understanding, some understanding, quite good understanding, high level of understanding, and complete understanding. Results are presented in percentages. The answers could not be identified as forms of non-understanding (below 60% of matching answers). As the chart shows: 8.5% of answers signified there is some understanding (6 respondents); 37.1% of answers displayed quite good understanding (26 respondents); 22.8% of answers implied high level of understanding (16 respondents); and 31.4% of answers indicated complete understanding (22 respondents). The results coincide with assumptions made before the survey took place. It was presumed that there would be no question sheets that would imply non-understanding since the majority of the chosen gestures are already very popular and frequent in our everyday lives. The majority of them have been parts and symbols incorporated in American popular TV shows, comic books, reality shows, social networks, etc. Thus it was anticipated that the whole world has started to interpret them in an Americanized manner due to their saturation in the pop culture and mass media. These results indicate that globalization, the process that is often referred to as Americanization, has already influenced our knowledge and interpretation of emblematic gestures. However, in Americanized standard, gestures under numbers 8, 10, 13, and 15 are not recognized. The hypothesis is that Americans and the respondents coming from other Western cultures would

not know the meaning of these gestures, which might reflect their lack of knowledge on ‘foreign’ emblematic codes. Such results convey that there is still room for learning more about nonverbal codes and cues of various cultures that are still mostly ignored and perceived as not very important. As the world is becoming more connected, our interests and needs are going to change, too. Many will travel, work, cooperate, and live in cultures quite different from their own where they will have to learn all the rules, including the nonverbal ones, in order to adapt and incorporate themselves successfully in the new communities and societies.



**Figure 3.** Represented and classified according to the level of understanding are each group’s participants. All five groups of participants (and their answers’ rates) are expressed in different colors.

Figure 3 demonstrates how many respondents from each group provided answers that indicate complete understanding, high level of understanding, quite good understanding, and some understanding. The chart shows the following:

- there is some understanding: one respondent from Australia/New Zealand, three respondents from the EU and Norway, one respondent from Hong Kong, and one respondent from Turkey;

- quite good understanding: four respondents from Australia and New Zealand, fifteen respondents from the EU and Norway, two respondents from North American group, one respondent from Hong Kong, and four respondents from Turkey;
- high level of understanding: four respondents from Australia and New Zealand, seven respondents from the EU, and five respondents from North American group;
- complete understanding: two respondents from Australia and New Zealand, sixteen respondents from the EU and Norway, and four respondents from North American group.

The results demonstrate that most respondents possess a high level of understanding of the given emblematic gestures. As was expected, the respondents coming from Western cultures (e.g. the North Americans, Europeans and Australians) showed the greatest compatibility with the anticipated answers with 22 questionnaires indicating complete understanding and 16 questionnaires indicating high level of understanding. Similar language, level of development, lifestyle, and education must have established similar emblematic codes and their meanings. On the contrary, Turkish and Hong Kong respondents achieved such results that indicated only quite good and some understanding. Positioned far away from the West, these cultures have kept their more traditional perceptions and meanings in comparison to those being closer to the Americanized propagation.

#### **4.3. The level of compatibility in interpretations for each emblematic gesture**

The first quotable gesture in the questionnaire is the clenched raised fist. The predicted answers for this gesture were: resistance/ power (to the people)/ solidarity. Some of the provided answers described it as a gesture of the Black Power Movement or as a gesture that represents the resilience against communist and any other repressive political systems and regimes. It is worth noting that respondents from Turkey, Finland and Poland interpreted this gesture as a symbol of resistance against communism, which is an evidence of hostility towards USSR that is deeply seated within mentalities of those who were once oppressed by such totalitarian political system or existed in its close vicinity. Participants gave specified answers and mentioned only one example of its use, but the meaning behind it is the same – it is used whenever people unite and fight together for their rights, freedoms and brighter future. There were 62.9% of compatible answers (i.e. 44 compatible answers), and 27.1% of incompatible answers (i.e. 26 incompatible answers). The highest number of incompatible

answers (11) described the clenched raised fist as a gesture that indicates anger or rage and anticipates a fight. Such interpretations are not surprising since human beings instinctively clench their fists when angry or frustrated. This is a completely natural reaction followed by the tense posture, stiff muscles, knitted eyebrows, faster heart rate and red face. However, the purpose of this research was to determine the emblematic meaning of the given gestures, which is why interpretations related to human beings' natural reactions were disregarded. Other incompatible answers (8) referred to the missing answers (participants did not give interpretations for this gesture or described it as not being used in their culture). The rest of the incompatible answers referred to it as a gesture that stands for 'Stop!' (3 answers), happiness over winning something (2 answers) or has an offensive association to it (2 answers). These results are in a relative coincidence with presumptions made before the questionnaire analysis. It was expected that the rate of compatible answers would be higher since this is a gesture used in many demonstrations and protests around the world, of which the most recent and world-known one was Women's March that took place in March 2017 and was oriented against Donald Trump and his insensitive comments about minorities and women's role in today's society.

The second emblematic gesture in the questionnaire was the 'OK sign' that was interpreted compatibly in 92.9% of the given answers (i.e. 65 compatible answers). This is a very common and worldwide known gesture for which the anticipated answers were okay/good/perfect. It was expected that this gesture would be one of the most compatibly interpreted gestures in the questionnaire considering its popularity and frequency in the American pop culture, and these results show exactly that. Some of the respondents provided compatible answers, but also written additional explanations such as 'zero', 'Look inside', or simply associated it with insults. When it comes to incompatible answers (ones that lack interpretations okay/good/perfect), it is worth mentioning that one North American respondent left a blank space, while one German respondent described it as 'Look inside', which is a reference to a very popular TV show called 'Malcolm in the Middle' in which the main characters try to deceive each other into looking through a circle made by the thumb and the index finger. This is interesting because it shows how popular culture, TV shows and the Internet trends can also shape our perceptions and interpretations of nonverbal signals. Although the mentioned TV show ended more than ten years ago, the 'OK sign' followed by the phrase 'Look inside' could be seen all over the Internet back in 2017. When something becomes viral on the Internet, everybody wants to be a part of it and show that they keep up

with trends. On the other hand, unlike Western cultures in which this gesture is mostly interpreted as the 'OK sign', respondents coming from Turkey associated quite different meaning to this gesture. Previous research listed this gesture as one that had different meanings in different cultures, drawing attention to Arabic and Middle Eastern cultures like the Turkish one, in which this gesture has an offensive meaning. Three out of five Turkish respondents translated it as a gesture that is used for LGBT persons, i.e. when one wants to insult another person by showing this gesture and thus insinuating another person's homosexuality. These results are interesting because they indicate that Turkey is a transitional country that still strongly holds to its traditions, beliefs, religious practices, and nonverbal codes. They also show that one should be careful when using this gesture with Turkish interlocutors because it is apparent that offensive connotations attached to it are still present and deeply rooted in the mentality of Turkish people. Beside Turkish respondents, there were one German and one Danish respondent who gave extra explanations on how this gesture can be interpreted in an offensive manner, i.e. they have interpreted it as 'perfect/very good', but also written that it could mean 'ass' in some cultures, such as French. This demonstrates that negative connotations that the 'OK sign' might have are not reserved only for Asian cultures. In fact, previous research reported that French and Belgian participants interpreted this gesture as a 'zero/worthless' to a significant degree. However, a French respondent did not interpret the 'OK sign' as a symbol of okay/good/perfect nor did he mention a Gallicized perception of the ring gesture. Possible explanations for the obscenity this gesture conveys in Asian and Latin American cultures can be found in the shape of the gesture which is similar to a rectum. Oftentimes, parts of the body and physical activities related to sex and secretion are 'captured' in gestures, and then used as highly offensive symbols. Most insulting emblems 'iconically depict some aspect of a taboo act' (Cienki and Müller 2008, 199). What cannot be said (or is too embarrassing to be said) aloud, is shown through the body movements (e.g. middle finger, the 'OK sign', the fig, a thumb moving up and down, closing nostrils with two fingers, etc.).

The third emblem in the questionnaire is a thumb up gesture that is one of the most famous gestures worldwide. The expected answers for this gesture were great/good/like. As was anticipated, this gesture was interpreted according to the expected answers in 100% of the questionnaires. This gesture might indicate agreement, happiness, success, and satisfaction. In postmodern times that we live in, thumb up is used for showing approval and likes on different social networks, such as Facebook, and has become a very important part of

our daily lives. Technology has enabled people to compose their new identities and characters in the virtual realities, i.e. a whole new persona that has a job, wears the finest clothes, enjoys travelling around the world, eats the most delicious foods, and lives the most meaningful life. People want their virtual representations to be perfect in order to be liked and praised by others. The number of followers and likes has become a sign of someone's worth, which, however, might have drastic negative consequences.

The fourth emblem is a thumb down, which constitutes a pair together with the thumb up gesture. A pair of gestures, in which one of them represents the positive and another one the negative pole, is a rare occurrence. Although this gesture is not used as frequently as the thumb up, it represents its counterpart and is easily recognized as a gesture that denotes everything contrary to the thumb up gesture. The predicted interpretations for this gesture were bad/weak/dislike. This gesture denotes disagreement, failure, and dissatisfaction. As it was expected, 100% of all the answers have coincided with the expected interpretations.

Gesture number five refers to crossed fingers, a gesture that has a very long history. Fingers crossed and their meanings have survived for thousands of years with only slight differences in form itself. However, the meaning is quite the same – it was predicted that fingers crossed are going to be interpreted as either a gesture that evokes good luck and happiness for future events or a gesture that is made when people swear and lie. There were 91.4% of compatible answers (i.e. 64 compatible answers), which is in accordance to the previous data and expectations. The finger cross is a very popular gesture that is often related to the beginnings of Christianity, a religion that is common in Western cultures. On the other hand, it was reported that members from Eastern cultures mostly could not recognize nor interpret it. When I analyzed answers provided for this gesture, I marked one German, one Hong Kong and two Turkish respondents that left it blank, and one Finnish and Turkish respondent that translated it as a 'peace sign'. This structure of respondents that did not interpret crossed fingers in an Americanized fashion shows that those respondents that come from Eastern (non-European) cultures showed least awareness and knowledge of this gesture. It is important to say that another Hong Kong respondent wrote: 'I guess it means good luck in Europe', which was taken as a compatible answer, but nevertheless implies that Eastern cultures normally do not use this gesture. The phrase 'fingers crossed' and a gesture itself have been widely used in many popular TV shows and movies, which resulted in an increased consciousness of fingers crossed (and its meaning) in Eastern cultures that had never been under the Christian influence.



The sixth gesture refers to the stop sign, which is made by raising one's hand with gathered fingers. This gesture is often seen in the traffic, where it can be seen on traffic signs or on crossroads where it is signaled by traffic policemen. The predicted interpretations were stop/wait, and it was speculated that the majority of the provided answers would be in coincidence with the Americanized decoding. This proved to be true as all seventy answers have described it as a stop sign, with two of the respondents that additionally emphasized that it is used mostly by the traffic policemen. It is not surprising that all the answers were compatible since we tend to make this gesture instinctively when we feel attacked or anxious – we raise our hand(s) thus making 'the wall' between ourselves and whatever it is that is making us uncomfortable. It is interesting that this gesture was not interpreted as 'Talk to my hand' or the 'number five' gesture even though they resemble each other very much. The reason behind this is probably the stiffness and rigor that a stop gesture form signals.

Gesture under number seven refers to the raised index finger for which the anticipated interpretations were 'No, do not do that/Wait/Last warning'. These instructions and requests are often made by parents and teachers all around the world. There were 85.4% of compatible answers (i.e. 60 compatible answers), which is not a surprising fact since a raised index finger conveys authority and inexorability. An index finger is a sign of warning and threat, and is directed to children and pets most commonly. There have been ten incompatible answers: three respondents from Australian and New Zealand group interpreted it as 'number one', three respondents from North American group interpreted it incompatibly (two of them referred to it as 'number one', while the third one left it blank), one Norwegian respondent left it blank, one Dutch respondent translated it as 'Shut up', and one German respondent defined it as a gesture that denotes 'disagreement with an opinion', while another German respondent described it as a gesture used for calling somebody's attention. The fact that people that come from English speaking countries start counting from an index finger might explain why five out of eight incompatible answers were given by Australian/New Zealand and North American respondents.

Moutza, a famous Greek gesture, is the eighth gesture in the questionnaire. Since it is a gesture that is unique to Greek, Nigerian and Pakistani cultures, it was assumed that it would not be recognized in the Americanized decoding system. Thus I decided to mark as compatible those answers that would indicate its absence (from the culture in question) but also answers like number 5/waving/'Talk to my hand'. This was proved to be a correct assumption, and it is worth mentioning that almost each participant provided some kind of

answer for this gesture that is common for the Western world. This is due to the shape of the Moutza gesture that is one that consists of an open hand with all fingers separated from each other. Thus the Moutza was interpreted as the gesture that might denote number five, waving or the 'Talk to my hand' by the majority of the participants. These answers and blank gaps were marked as incompatible answers. On the other hand, some participants interpreted as a gesture that means 'Help me and grab my hand because I am drowning' and 'I have a question' – interpretations that were not marked as the compatible ones. Had this questionnaire been analyzed according to different parameters and standards, the results that show that none of the respondents were familiar with the original meaning and origin of the Moutza gesture would have been taken as incompatible.

The ninth gesture can be translated as 'Come here/Come closer', i.e. a beckoning gesture that is used when we call for somebody. There were 90% of compatible interpretations provided for this nonverbal signal (i.e. 63 compatible answers). This is a very frequent gesture in Western cultures, where it is used regularly for calling someone, although it could be said that it is sometimes used as rather an intimate or seductive hand movement that signifies a strong desire for bonding and sexual intercourse. On the other hand, it is considered highly offensive to call somebody by moving a folded index finger forward and backwards in many Eastern cultures. This kind of beckoning is reserved for animals, so it would be quite insensitive to use it with people of Eastern origins. Indeed, one Hong Kong and one Turkish respondent left it blank, which might imply that they perceive it as a gesture that is not usually used in their cultures. In addition, one American, one Australian, one Dutch, and one Danish respondent also left it blank, which is probably due to the impression of rudeness and arrogance that this gesture might imply. Seventh incompatible answer was given by a Spanish respondent who interpreted it as a gesture that means 'Do not dare to', which is probably due to the extended index finger that apparently has a strong feeling of authority and rigorousness to it.

Fig is the tenth emblematic gesture on the list for which the given answers were quite interesting. This gesture has a long history that goes back to the Roman times. It had its own name and had apotropaic associations to it. However, fig is not commonly used in Western cultures, which is why I noted the missing answers and appropriations (e.g. 'Pull one's nose') as compatible answers. There were 77.2% of compatible answers (i.e. 54 compatible answers), out of which thirty-five answers were actually blank gaps or descriptions such as 'Not used in my culture'. Another eighteen respondents interpreted it as 'Pull/steal

somebody's nose', an interpretation whose origins are found in the West. However, the most interesting answers refer to those that were marked as the incompatible ones. Regarding the previous data that showed that the fig has negative and rude connotations in Middle Eastern cultures, Latin America and southern Italy and Sicily, it was assumed that Turkish respondents would provide offensive translations for this gesture, and this proved to be correct. All five of them interpreted the fig as a silent way of swearing and an equivalent to the middle finger that is so often used in Western cultures. These results show that it would be best to avoid using this gesture with Turkish interlocutors as it is obvious that they strongly relate it to sex and heavy insults. Besides the expected perspectives of Turkish participants, it was somewhat surprising to gather similar answers from German respondents (three of them identified it as a gesture that says 'Fuck you'), Austrian respondents (two of them described it as an offensive gesture that means something bad in Italy), a Spanish respondent (defined it as an insult which is perhaps due to participant's Moroccan origins, i.e. familiarity with Arabian world), Hong Kong and Dutch participants (both of them recognized it as a gesture that means 'Fuck you'), and an Australian partaker (defined it as the 'Brazilian Revolution', suggesting the fig's negative and rude meaning that is prevalent in this Latin American country). It is worth noting that I also found the translation 'You will get nothing' among the given answers. This interpretation is characteristic for Slavic cultures, and is often used in our country as well (especially with kids), where we translate it as 'Dobit ćeš ovo/Dobit ćeš šipak' (You will get this/you will get nothing). It is interesting that the Croatian phrase that accompanies this gesture also contains a type of fruit, i.e. pomegranate, that is known for its richness and abundance (in former countries of ex-Yugoslavia, one can often hear the expression 'Pun kao šipak', which means 'Full/Rich like a pomegranate'). The fig was interpreted in this manner solely by a Polish respondent, which is not surprising since he was the only representative of Slavic peoples that normally use this gesture in this particular way.

The eleventh emblem are the 'snapping fingers', a gesture for which the anticipated interpretations were 'Faster/ I remembered (I have got an idea)/ Money' according to the Americanized convention. The results showed that there were only 22 compatible interpretations for this gesture (i.e. 31.4% of compatible answers). These results are somewhat unexpected regarding numerous cartoon, TV show and comic book characters that snapped their fingers after finding the solution or in order to hasten something or somebody. When it comes to the answers that were rated as incompatible, it is interesting to note that the

highest number of them refers to the empty gaps (18 answers). After these comes the set of answers that perceived this gesture as a simple act of clicking next to music (16), which means that they only described the action itself, but not the meaning that this symbol might stand for. Finally, the rest of the respondents (14) explained it as a rather rude gesture we make when we call for somebody's attention, and was regarded as one that is best to be avoided.

Gesture under number twelve refers to the one where an index finger and a small finger are outstretched in a shape that imitates horns. 'Hook 'em horns', as it is called today, has a long history during which many different meanings had been attached to it. Nevertheless, expected descriptions for this gesture were 'rock and roll (or heavy metal)/ devil's horns (Satanism)/ Texas Longhorn'. This gesture is a very popular one, and can be seen mostly on the concerts and festivals worldwide, so it is not surprising that there were 85.7% of compatible answers (i.e. 60 compatible interpretations). Ten answers were described as incompatible, out of which five of them referred to the complete absence of any interpretation (one Turkish, Spanish, Polish, and two Australian participants left it blank). On the other hand, an American respondent identified it as a sign of peace, while a German participant recognized it as a gesture characteristic to Spiderman, which is another example of how influential pop culture might be when decoding nonverbal ciphers. Additionally, a Dutch respondent saw it as an angry expression which is probably due to the gesture's relations with devil and Satanism; a Hong Kong participant interpreted it as the number six because it resembles a Chinese way of showing this number; and an Australian respondent perceived it as a gesture that imitates the shape of the telephone. It is worth noting that only one American respondent identified it as a Texas Longhorn attribute, i.e. a gesture that is used by the students of Texas University during their baseball and basketball games. Furthermore, a Portuguese participant gave a compatible interpretation by writing down that it is the 'rock and roll' symbol, but he also added further explanations on how this gesture would have a completely different meaning had it been reversed, i.e. if the palm is turned to the producer of the gesture then it says 'You are a cuckold' to whomever it is directed to.

Gesture under number thirteen is known as *Bào Quán Lǐ* (or hold fist salute in English). It is an ancient Chinese gesture that is used for expressing respect, politeness and humility towards older or respected members of the society, such as professors or kung fu masters. It was expected that the majority of the participants coming from Western cultures would not be able to decipher this gesture appropriately. Considering this, a lack of explanation and

knowledge of this gesture was taken as compatible with the Americanized norm. Indeed, the results showed that there were 94.3% of compatible answers that refer to the missing answers or guessed interpretations. What was quite remarkable was that the majority of the respondents gave some kind of interpretation for this particular gesture. They found relations between this gesture and East, China, martial arts (kung fu and karate), and a greeting made just before and after a fight. Even though their descriptions were incomplete, the majority of the respondents were close or at least on the right track when associating this gesture to the proper part of the world (and culture). American popular culture has enriched our knowledge of martial arts and skills, and hard body and mind training that is essential in their mastering. Movies featuring Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan have apparently reached and become popular in all corners of the world. On the other hand, there were only four respondents (i.e. 5.7% of all respondents) that provided compatible answers (two from Hong Kong, one from England, and one participant from Australia). They related to it meanings of respect, politeness and gratitude. Hong Kong is a culture that shares many similarities and values with Chinese culture, so it was expected that two Hong Kong participants would provide compatible answers for this gesture. Australian and English participants obviously learned more about the nonverbal codes and rules of Eastern cultures in which gesturing is usually rare and limited.

The 'V sign' is the fourteenth emblem for which the expected answers were Peace/Victory. The assumption made based on its popularity, frequency and previous data was that this gesture would be successfully and compatibly recognized according to the Americanized standard by the majority of the respondents. Eventually, this proved to be true as there were 90% of compatible answers (i.e. 63 compatible answers). Variations in interpretation were found in: a Norwegian participant that described it as a gesture used when one asks for a word, a Spanish participant that defined it as a gesture that denotes something is fine, and an English gesture that interpreted it as the number two. According to the previous research, this gesture was described as a sign of victory in Great Britain, and thus in the former colonies and territories occupied by Great Britain. It was then anticipated that English, Australian, and New Zealand respondents would ascribe to it the meaning of 'Victory', but this was not the case. Only one respondent coming from Canada interpreted it as a sign of Victory, while the rest of the participants described it as a Peace sign. This should not be surprising since almost all respondents were in their twenties at the time, which means that they were young enough to be familiar and prone to the Americanized interpretation that has conquered the whole

world. It is necessary to say that results might have been different had the respondents been a bit older. Young people tend to follow the global trends more readily and easily, because otherwise they could feel as being left out from the world happenings and preferences. Everybody wants to be accepted and not distinguished from the majority, and this aspiration can be seen in the choice of gesture interpretations as well. Old and traditional customs are abandoned for the sake of jumping into the world of instant trends and tastes.

The last gesture can be referred to as ‘Sei matto/ Sei stupido?’ (Are you crazy/ Are you retarded? in English). This gesture is characteristic for Italian culture that is recognized as a highly expressive culture in which ideas become complete and rounded only when followed by various nonverbal cues. It was anticipated that the rate of the compatible answers for this question would be high since this gesture is not used outside of the borders of Italy. Up to 85.7% of the given answers that consisted of the missing and guessed interpretations were marked as the compatible ones. However, it is remarkable that there were ten unexpected incompatible answers (i.e. 14.3% of incompatible interpretations) that recognized this gesture as an expression of frustration over somebody’s ignorance, stupidity or light headedness. An Italian gesture is the only one from the questionnaire that is shown together with the entire upper body of the producer of the gesture. Facial expressions are innate and universal, which means that people express their basic feelings of happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, embarrassment, fear, etc. in the same way no matter what culture or background they come from. By observing closely photographed person’s face, careful participants were able to relate her gathered eyebrows, open mouth, widen nostrils and leaning forward posture to the feeling of annoyance and exasperation that are often caused by someone’s ignorance or lack of respect and tact. They concluded that this gesture must be directed to the source of frustration, and thus guessed correctly the original meaning behind the ‘Sei matto/ Sei stupido?’ gesture. It might be interesting to point out that two Turkish respondents explained how this gesture was a trademark of one of the most popular Turkish actors of all times, Sadri Alişık, which is another example of both the significance of the popular culture and the power that gestures have.

**Table 2.** The compatibility rates of emblems that are already widely used in American culture

Emblematic gesture	The percentage of compatibility with the Americanized conventions
The thumb-up, the thumb-down, the stop gesture	100%
The 'OK' sign	92.9%
The crossed fingers	91.4
The beckoning gesture and the 'V' sign	90%
The 'rock and roll' sign	85.7%
The raised index finger	85.4%
The raised clenched fist	62.9%
The snapping fingers	31.4%

**Table 3.** The compatibility rates of emblems that do not exist in American culture

Emblematic gesture	The percentage of compatibility with the Americanized conventions
The Moutza	100%
Bào Quán Lǐ	94.3%
The 'Sei matto?' gesture	85.7%
The fig	77.2%

## CONCLUSION

The main aim of this master's thesis was to test whether members coming from various cultures other than American will employ Americanized standards rather than the localized ones when interpreting emblems. The results showed that participants coming from Western cultures similar to the American one in language, history, religion, education, etc., gave a greater number of answers compatible to the Americanized norm. Furthermore, answers provided by these respondents indicated a high or complete level of understanding. This implies that gestures are becoming more universal and common primarily in those cultures that were the first ones to have embraced the processes of globalization. The percentage of each level of understanding found in the total number of questionnaires indicate that emblematic gestures are becoming more universal on the global level (this has to be taken with caution as there were only seven respondents coming from cultures significantly different from the West). On the other hand, more conservative, closed and distant cultures have only recently begun to allow for external influences and trends to emerge. Seven respondents coming from non-Western cultures proved this to be true because they only provided answers that indicated there was quite good or some understanding. Therefore, participants coming from Hong Kong and Turkey held the last two places on the scale of compatibility with the Americanized norm.

A comparison between these results and previous studies suggests changes in the way that people from certain cultures interpret emblematic gestures. For example, even though the crossed fingers are not commonly found in non-Western (non-Christian) cultures, one Hong Kong respondent showed that she was aware of its meaning and usage in the West by describing this gesture as the one that means good luck in Europe. Possible explanations for such interpretation could be the fact that the Hong Kong respondent is a bicultural or the fact that she learned about or experienced the American culture. Another example of the changes in interpretation is the beckoning gesture that is considered rude and inappropriate in Eastern cultures. The beckoning gesture was, nevertheless, interpreted as a gesture people use to call somebody over by four (out of five) Turkish and one (out of two) Hong Kong respondents. The third example is the 'V' sign that was interpreted as victory by only one (out of 18) respondent coming from the United Kingdom or one of its former colonies. New generations apparently traded the once dominant 'localized' meaning for the Americanized meaning that has spread all over the world. It is also worth mentioning that the Portuguese respondent chose to interpret the 'rock and roll' sign as such, and mentioned its localized meaning (i.e.



‘You are a cuckold’) only as a secondary option. Finally, respondents coming from Germany, Austria, Spain, Hong Kong, and the Netherlands showed they were aware of the offensive connotations that the fig gesture might have in some cultures. All these examples of little changes in perception demonstrate the power of globalization - people from different cultures start to exchange emblems and become more aware about differences in emblematic gestures (and their meaning) too.

On the other hand, the comparison between these results and previous studies indicates certain similarities, too. For example, three (out of five) Turkish respondents interpreted the ‘OK’ sign as a reference to somebody’s homosexuality. Moreover, one Hong Kong and three Turkish respondents did not recognize the gesture of the crossed fingers that is otherwise not used in their cultures. Compatibilities with the previous data could be observed in the raised index finger interpretations given by the participants coming from English speaking countries. As Morris noted, these participants tended to interpret the raised index finger as number 1 according to their counting system. This tendency was observed in the answers provided by five respondents coming from Australia/New Zealand and North American group. The highest compatibility between these and previous results was found in the interpretations of the fig gesture given by the Turkish respondents. A previous study showed that Middle Eastern and Arabic respondents tend to interpret the fig as a highly offensive way to say ‘Fuck off’ silently. All five Turkish respondents interpreted the gesture in this manner, which indicates that its insulting associations are still very strong and vivid in the mentality of the Turkish people. Finally, just like any other study on emblems, this master’s thesis also showed that there are some emblematic gestures that are limited to only one region, culture, or part of the world – gestures under numbers 8, 10, 13, and 15 and their original meanings remained unrecognized by the majority of the respondents. This indicates that the respondents coming from Western cultures other than American one and non-Westerners showed quite similar knowledge but also ignorance of the emblems to that of the American respondents. The level of unfamiliarity with the localized emblems is relatively the same among American, Dutch, Danish, Turkish, Norwegians, etc. The gathered data and its comparison with the previous studies showed that emblems and their meanings are becoming universal and shared by members of various cultures. This indication is based on the differences in interpretations that rather imply moving towards Americanized (Westernized) nonverbal conventions. However, in order to reach more certain conclusions, it is necessary to gather much larger groups of participants and conduct more stratified studies.

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## APPENDIX

Dear volunteer,

Thank You for participating in my Master's thesis research on how nonverbal signalling varies across cultures. What you have before you is an anonymous and short questionnaire throughout which you are supposed to name each of the depicted gestures or write what they signify in your country. If a single gesture has more than one meaning, please write them all down. If there is a gesture that is not used in the culture you are coming from, but you still know its meaning, please note it.

Country you come from: \_\_\_\_\_

1)



2)



3)



4)

5)

6)



7)



8)



9)



10)



11)



12)





13)



14)



15)

