Structuralistic Analysis of the Poems "The Lamb" and "The Tyger" by William Blake in Perspective of Binary Opposition

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Keywords: Structuralism, *The Lamb*, *The Tyger*, Binary Opposition

Abstract: This study employs a structuralist approach, particularly Saussure's concept of binary opposition, to analyze the symbolic and thematic structures in William Blake's poems *The Tyger* and *The Lamb*. These two iconic works are rich in symbolism and thematic contrasts, presenting a dualistic exploration of creation, morality, and divine power. By applying close textual analysis and interpretive methods, this research identifies and interprets the binary oppositions embedded in the symbols, structure, and themes of the poems. Key oppositions such as innocence versus experience, light versus dark, and creation versus destruction are systematically examined to uncover the underlying tensions that shape Blake's poetic narratives. Additionally, the study highlights the Romantic context of the poems, emphasizing their philosophical depth and their engagement with the complexities of human existence. This research contributes to the understanding of Blake's artistry while demonstrating the utility of structuralist frameworks in literary analysis, offering fresh insights into the dynamic interplay between form and meaning in poetry.

1. Introduction

Structuralism began with the thought of the influential 19th-century Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, father of modern linguistics. Structuralism assumes that all people share certain fundamental structural characteristics and the nature of structures is a binary arrangement [1][2]. It is closely associated with Semiotics, the study of signs, symbols, communication, and the construction and interpretation of meaning [3]. Structuralism presents itself as a science of humanity, aiming to uncover the underlying structures that govern various aspects of human existence, such as mathematics, biology, linguistics, religion, psychology, and literature [4]. In structuralist analysis, these structural systems are considered universal, implying that people from all cultures, throughout history, have employed some form of organizing principles to make sense of cultural phenomena [5].

According to Ferdinand de Saussure [6], a structure is any conceptual system that has the following three properties. Wholeness is the first. This indicates that the system works as a whole rather than just as a group of separate components. The second feature is transformation. This demonstrates that the system is dynamic rather than fixed. The system is open to new units, but when they do, the system's rules apply to them. Self-Regulation is another characteristic. This has something to do with change. The system can have additional components added to it, but no matter what is added, the system's fundamental structure cannot be changed.

Structuralism, also rooted in linguistics, delves into the underlying elements of culture and literature ^[7]. It originated from linguistic theories, aiding the interpretation of surface meaning in texts and ideas. With two core tenets, structuralists emphasize comprehending something by exploring its underlying structure and patterns. This means understanding concepts within broader structures and their interrelations. For instance, understanding a leaf involves studying its tree, demonstrating that grasping concepts goes beyond surface analysis ^[8]. Since language serves as the foundation of structuralism, it is comprised of underlying structures and patterns. A deeper study of language guides us in analyzing and comprehending literary works ^[9]. Ferdinand de Saussure argued that language is

DOI: 10.25236/ssehr.2024.004

a complex system of signs, and all words convey meaning constructed by the human mind (as cited by Key and Noble in 2017 ^[10]). Through language, we assign meaning to the objects around us, with these meanings specified through scientific principles.

Saussure's linguistic theory differentiates between "langue" (the idealized form of language) and "parole" (language as used in daily life) [11]. He introduced the concept of a "sign," comprising a "signified" (an abstract idea) and a "signifier" (the perceived sound/image). The smallest unit of meaning combines these elements, with the signifier being the word or sound and the signified being the mental concept it evokes. Saussure emphasized that there's no inherent link between a word and its meaning, making language arbitrary. Words gain meaning through contextual understanding within a shared system, reflecting their arbitrary nature. Structuralism's second tenet asserts that language is inherently relational. Understanding concepts, like an egg, requires considering their relationships with others. Language cannot be comprehended in isolation; it depends on comparisons with other elements [12]. Naming these elements is arbitrary, lacking inherent connections between words and concepts, as emphasized in structuralism.

Structuralist approaches to literary analysis have been widely applied across various genres, including novels, poetry, and broader literary themes. Studies on novels often focus on structural elements that define narrative frameworks and character relationships. For instance, Zhang [13] explores *Pride and Prejudice t*hrough a structuralist lens, emphasizing patterns of social interactions and thematic dualities within the novel. Similarly, Saddiah and Tarihoran [14] examine Rupi Kaur's The Sun and Her Flowers, highlighting the recurring motifs and textual structures that underpin her poetic expressions. In poetry, structuralist analysis often uncovers underlying formal and semantic patterns that contribute to thematic coherence. Murtaza et al. [15] analyze Wordsworth's Ode: Intimations of Immortality, revealing the poet's use of structural elements to reflect philosophical meditations on childhood and immortality. Tantowi and Nur [16] extend structuralist principles to American poetry, identifying formal constructs that shape meaning and cultural resonance. Similarly, Khan and Khan [17] apply structuralist techniques to John Donne's Sweetest Love I Do Not Goe, dissecting its intricate linguistic patterns and symbolic representations of love and mortality. Lastly, broader theoretical applications emphasize the utility of structural-semiotic methods. Abduganievna [18] explores how structural-semantic analysis facilitates the understanding of literary meaning, advocating for its significance in comprehensive textual studies. Together, these works underscore the adaptability and relevance of structuralist theory across diverse literary forms.

Structuralist approaches, particularly Saussure's concept of binary opposition, provide a systematic framework for analyzing symbols and their interplay within poetic texts. William Blake's *The Tyger* and *The Lamb* are ideal subjects for such an analysis due to their rich use of symbolism and thematic dualities ^[19]. These poems present contrasting depictions of creation, morality, and divine power, making them exemplary texts for exploring how symbols interact to construct narrative and thematic structures. By examining these works through the lens of structuralist theory, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of Blake's poetic artistry while also demonstrating the utility of structuralist tools in literary analysis. This dual focus not only highlights the significance of structuralist methods but also provides insights into the dynamic relationship between form and meaning in Blake's poetry. This study centers on these two objectives: firstly, to identify and analyze the symbols used in William Blake's "*The Tyger*" and "*The Lamb*" to reveal the characteristics of the respective poems; and, secondly, to provide an elaborative analysis of how Saussurian binary opposition, as found in the symbols, constructs the narrative structure of these poems by William Blake.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Binary Oppositions

Meanings in language can also be interconnected through the concepts of binary opposition ^[20] and the paradigmatic chain. Binary opposition, in which the essence of everything is revealed through opposition with something else that has no qualities at all, is one of the most significant applications

in structural and post-structural criticism ^[21]. The perception of each subcategory is correlated with its distinction from another object. This kind of distinction is interpreted as opposition. Our knowledge about things depends on our knowledge about what is in opposition with them ^[22]. For instance, cooking oppositions like raw and cooked, fresh and rotten, and rare and well-done constitute the foundation of Strauss's investigation ^[23]. Such associations instead reflect the systems that enable the human mind to rank its surroundings rather than the fact that is forced upon it. Although they both exist, structure and meaning are not necessarily compatible. According to Strauss, there is a fundamental structure to all artistic endeavors that can be seen in binary oppositions and that corresponds to the basic organization of the human mind ^[24]. Zimel believes that the binary oppositions are a way to overcome the oppositions and obtain the desired integrity ^[23].

Whitehead ^[25] asserted that the world is binary because, in the deepest meaning possible, it is both transient and eternal. The universe is binary because every fact is both material and mental. The universe is binary because each of its facts necessitates analysis. It is binary for, in every event, the formal pursuit and unity is unified with the objective's independence. The world is infinite because it should be ideally analyzed into various ultimate facts or as Descartes states "into various facts". The universe is unique because of its single appearance and totality. Thus, there is an opposition between infiniteness and unity. Throughout the world, the unity of the mutual affairs is predominant and this results in opposition.

Binary opposition does not only serve in language when it comes to conceptual understanding ^[26]. Many fields of studies use binary opposition as their tool in presenting their ideas. For example, there is famous concept like yin and yang in Chinese philosophy, angel and demon in religion like Christianity, to show concept of gender there is male and female in biology, etc. This shows that binary opposition is indeed indispensable and fundamental in every field of study including literature ^[27].

Speaking of literary study, there are many strategies which critiques may employ in order to have a critical and significant reading. Thus, the discovery of thematic binary opposition within a text may become one of the possible ways in grasping the intended meaning of the literary work or the readers' choice of interpretation. On the other hand, binary opposition may become author's way in presenting his/her works. Thus, binary oppositions can be considered very useful for both readers and authors. For the authors, binary oppositions help them establish, integrate, and highlight ideas and meanings within their works. For the readers, binary opposition enable them to have a big picture of a literary text as well as to get profound understanding of what is happening in a text.

2.2 Structuralism and Literary Work

The interconnection between structuralism and literary works lies in the fundamental recognition that language is the cornerstone of literature ^[28]. This understanding prompts the study of linguistic theories like Saussure's within the context of literature.

Firstly, language serves as the foundation. When we depart from the assumptions of liberal humanism, we acknowledge that literature is fundamentally constructed using language. To comprehend how literature functions, it is essential to gain insights into the workings of language itself ^[29]. Saussure, as a structuralist, approaches language as a systematic structure, which can provide valuable insights into the structure of literary texts. Secondly, linguistics and literary theory share a close relationship ^[30]. The concepts introduced by Saussure in linguistics readily lend themselves to the analysis of literature. Language, as a system or structure, forms the basis of both disciplines, making Saussure's ideas applicable to the study of literary texts. Thirdly, language should be connected to a wider Structure. In the structuralist approach to literary analysis, a literary text is not considered in isolation but is connected to a broader "structure." This structure encompasses elements such as the text's genre and universal narrative patterns found across different cultures. Structuralists explore texts for common themes and patterns, allowing for comparisons with other texts possessing similar or distinct structures.

Structuralism in literary theory, as outlined by Smithson [31], is characterized by several key features. Firstly, it places a strong emphasis on uncovering the underlying structure of a literary text,

going beyond its surface content. Secondly, it asserts that a text's meaning resides in the interrelationships among its constituent parts, highlighting the interconnectedness within the text. Thirdly, structuralism heavily relies on the concept of binary oppositions, where opposing pairs of ideas or concepts are integral to understanding a text's deeper layers of meaning [32]. Fourthly, it downplays the significance of the author's individuality and personality, prioritizing the examination of deep structures within the text itself [33]. Lastly, structuralists view literary texts as constructs, emphasizing that meaning emerges from the relationships among different elements within the text, rather than being inherent to the text alone. In essence, structuralism provides a valuable framework for exploring the intricate structures and underlying patterns in literary works, underscoring the central role of language in the construction and interpretation of literature.

2.3 Previous Application of Binary Opposition to Literary Works

Binary opposition has indeed been a prominent analytical tool in literary studies over the past decade [34]. Scholars and literary critics have frequently employed this concept to explore various aspects of literary works, including themes, character dynamics, and narrative structures. By identifying and examining binary pairs and the tensions between them, such as good vs. evil, light vs. dark, or male vs. female, researchers have uncovered nuanced interpretations and deeper layers of meaning in literature. This approach allows for a more profound understanding of how authors use contrasting elements to convey complex ideas and themes within their works. The paper Saussurian Binary Opposition as the Narrative Structure of Williams' Summer and Smoke discusses the application of Saussurian binary opposition as a narrative structure in Tennessee Williams' play "Summer and Smoke." It focuses on how binary opposition, a concept from Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistics theory, is utilized to construct the narrative and character development in the play. The paper analyzes various symbols and themes within the play, showing how they represent binary oppositions such as purity versus desire, restraint versus passion, and societal expectations versus personal desires. By employing Saussurian binary opposition, the paper reveals how these opposing forces create tension and complexity in the characters and plot of "Summer and Smoke," providing insight into the deeper meaning of the work.

The analysis of the Sesotho Folktale "*Kgubetswana Le Talane*" [35] utilizing the binary opposition approach provides a deep understanding of the narrative's underlying structure and themes. Through the lens of binary opposition, the folktale's central conflicts and contrasts come to the forefront. In this analysis, various binary oppositions emerge, shedding light on the narrative's complexities. These include life versus death, good versus evil, wisdom versus ignorance, and cooperation versus conflict. These opposing elements create tension and drive the plot forward, engaging the audience while conveying cultural and moral messages. Additionally, the binary opposition approach allows for an exploration of character dynamics. The characters often represent different sides of these oppositions, making their interactions crucial to the storyline's development. For instance, the protagonist may embody the values of wisdom and cooperation, while the antagonist represents ignorance and conflict. Overall, the binary opposition approach enhances the interpretation of "*Kgubetswana Le Talane*" by unveiling the underlying structural and thematic elements, providing a richer understanding of this Sesotho Folktale.

Another paper explores the pervasive theme of the "life/death" binary opposition in folk prose narratives. It delves into how folk narratives across different cultures and time periods have consistently depicted life and death as opposing forces. Characters and events in these narratives often embody this binary, with life symbolizing vitality, growth, and renewal, while death represents decay, finality, and the unknown. The paper examines the cultural and psychological significance of this binary, demonstrating how it serves as a tool for conveying moral, existential, and cultural messages. Overall, it highlights the enduring presence and importance of the "life/death" binary in folk prose narratives as a means of exploring fundamental aspects of the human experience.

Scholars and literary critics have often utilized the concept of binary opposition to delve into different facets of literary works, encompassing themes, character dynamics, and narrative structures. Structuralist approaches, especially Saussure's concept of binary opposition, offer a systematic

framework for analyzing symbols and their interactions within various forms of literature, including poetry. William Blake's poem "Experience and Innocence" prominently features opposites, echoing his belief that "Without Contraries is no progression." Elements such as Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate are seen as vital to Human existence. Therefore, it becomes imperative to examine the binary opposition present in Blake's two poems, "The Tyger" and "The Lamb."

3. Structuralistic Analysis of the Poems "The Lamb" and "The Tyger" in Perspective of Binary Opposition

This paper is qualitative in nature and adopts an exploratory design to delve into the literary poem "The Tyger" and "The Lamb" by William Blake in 1974 through the lens of binary opposition. The research design employed in this paper is qualitative, and the study utilizes close textual analysis along with descriptive and interpretive methods as research techniques to conduct a thorough textual analysis of the poem. Additionally, the study draws upon secondary sources, including various articles on the representation of structuralism and a literary review of William Blake's works.

William Blake's opposite perspective: "Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence (as cited by Hinkel ^[1])." is the main principle of his writing. He argued that any two states coexist in the human being as in the Creator. His belief emphasizes the importance of the tension and opposition between contrasting ideas, beliefs, and experiences in driving progress and growth. Blake believed that the resolution of contradictions and the reconciliation of opposites are necessary for achieving higher understanding and enlightenment.

"The Tyger" and "The Lamb" are two contrasting poems by the renowned English poet William Blake. These poems, though seemingly simple in their themes, carry profound philosophical and symbolic layers that align with structuralist perspectives. "The Tyger" explores the fierce and enigmatic nature of the tiger, posing questions about its creation and the divine forces behind it. The poem delves into the duality of creation and destruction, inviting readers to contemplate the complexity of existence. "The Lamb", in contrast, presents a softer and more innocent perspective, focusing on the gentleness and purity of the lamb as a symbol of innocence and divine creation. This poem explores themes of simplicity, humility, and the relationship between the divine and the innocent. In the structuralist framework, "The Tyger" and "The Lamb" can be analyzed through binary oppositions, such as innocence/experience, creation/destruction, and light/darkness. These oppositions reveal the underlying tensions and dualities inherent in the human condition, inviting readers to explore the intricate structures of meaning within the poem.

Both poems, when viewed through the lens of structuralism, reveal the intricate interplay of opposing concepts and underlying structures of meaning. They invite readers to explore the complexities of human nature, creation, and the relationship between opposing forces—all central themes within the structuralist framework.

3.1 Opposition from Perspective of Symbols

Table 1 presents a systematic examination of the symbols and their associated meanings within William Blake's poems "The Tyger" and "The Lamb." These symbols are analyzed from the perspective of binary opposition, a concept central to structuralism.

In "The Tyger," the signifiers, or imagery, evoke powerful signified meanings. The phrase "Tyger burning bright" conjures images of ferocity and intense evil, setting the tone for the poem. The line "In the forest of the night" creates a sense of darkness and mystery in the setting. The question posed in "What immortal hand or eye" reflects an inquiry into the nature of the Creator. "Dreadful symmetry" introduces a paradox of balance and fearsome evil, deepening the complexity of the tiger's image. Finally, the repetition of "Tiger, tiger, burning bright" reinforces the awe-inspiring and formidable nature of the creature.

Conversely, in "The Lamb," the imagery portrays a contrasting set of signified meanings. The "Little Lamb" symbolizes innocence, purity, and tenderness. "Gave thee life" underscores the act of

creation by a benevolent Creator. "Softest clothing woolly bright" conveys gentleness and comforting qualities. "Tender voice" further emphasizes the gentle and loving nature of the Creator. The line "Little Lamb, I'll tell thee" highlights the nurturing and instructive relationship between the Creator and the lamb.

This systematic analysis exemplifies the binary oppositions present within the poems, offering a deeper understanding of the contrasting themes and symbolic structures that contribute to the richness of Blake's work.

Signifier (Imagery) Signified (Meaning) "The Tyger" "Tyger burning bright" Ferocity, intensity of evil "In the forest of the night" Dark and mysterious setting "What immortal hand or eye" Questioning the Creator's nature "Dreadful symmetry" Balanced yet fearsome evil "Tiger, tiger, burning bright" Awe-inspiring and formidable creature "The Lamb" "Little Lamb" Innocence, purity, tenderness "Gave thee life" Act of creation by a benevolent Creator "Softest clothing woolly bright" Gentleness and comforting qualities "Tender voice" Gentle and loving Creator Nurturing and instructive relationship "Little Lamb, I'll tell thee"

Table 1 System of Sign

3.2 Opposition of Structure and Form

Dimensions	"The Tyger"	"The Lamb"
Stanza Structure	Six quatrains (4-line stanzas)	Five quatrains (4-line stanzas)
Meter	Trochaic and dactylic meter	Trochaic meter
Rhythm	Rhythmic and forceful	Softer and smoother
Imagery and Symbols	Tiger, fiery eyes, blacksmith's	Lamb, pastoral setting, child's
	hammer	innocence
Tone and Mood	Dark and questioning	Gentle and reassuring
Historical and Cultural	Romantic period	Romantic period
Context		

Table 2 Binary Opposition of Structure

between Creator and lamb

As illustrated in Table 2, there is a comparative analysis of the binary oppositions in the structural elements of William Blake's poems "The Tyger" and "The Lamb." These oppositions shed light on the distinct characteristics and thematic structures present in each poem:

Stanza Structure: In "The Tyger," the poem comprises six quatrains (4-line stanzas), while "The Lamb" consists of five quatrains with a consistent stanza structure. This difference in stanza length reflects the structural variation between the two poems.

Meter: "The Tyger" features trochaic and dactylic meter, resulting in a rhythmic and forceful cadence. In contrast, "The Lamb" primarily uses trochaic meter, creating a softer and smoother rhythm.

Imagery and Symbolic Meanings: "*The Tyger*" incorporates symbols such as the tiger, fiery eyes, and the blacksmith's hammer, evoking a sense of intensity and questioning. Conversely, "The Lamb" utilizes symbols like the lamb, pastoral settings, and childlike innocence, conveying a gentler and more comforting imagery.

Tone and Mood: "The Tyger" carries a dark and questioning tone, exploring themes of creation, destruction, and the existence of evil. In contrast, "The Lamb" establishes a gentle and reassuring

tone, focusing on themes of innocence, divine love, and the benevolence of the Creator.

Historical and Cultural Context: Both poems belong to the Romantic period, a literary and artistic movement characterized by a deep appreciation for nature, emotion, and individualism. This historical context influenced the themes and styles of both poems.

This comparative analysis of structural elements highlights the stark differences in tone, mood, and thematic focus between the two poems while emphasizing their shared use of binary oppositions to convey distinct messages and experiences to the reader.

3.3 Opposition of Themes

A comprehensive exploration of binary oppositions within the themes of William Blake's poems "The Tyger" and "The Lamb" are shown in Table 3. These oppositions reveal the contrasting dimensions through which the poems convey their messages.

Dimensions	"The Tyger"	"The Lamb"
Innocence vs. Experience	Embodies experience and	Represents innocence,
	fierceness	gentleness
Light vs. Dark	Linked to darkness and danger	Associated with light and purity
Creation vs. Destruction	Explores the concept of destruction	Explores the idea of creation
Questions vs. Answers	Raises questions without clear answers	Poses rhetorical questions
Childlike vs. Mature	Takes a more mature and	Narrated from a childlike,
	questioning stance	innocent perspective
Natural vs. Industrial	Invokes images of industry and	Evokes a natural pastoral
	craftsmanship	setting
Peace vs. Conflict	Portrays a world filled with	Conveys a sense of peace and
	conflict and danger	harmony
Softness vs. Hardness	Emphasizes hard and fierce	Emphasizes soft and gentle
	qualities	qualities
Heaven vs. Hell	Alludes to a darker, infernal world	Alludes to a heavenly realm

Table 3: Binary Opposition of Themes

William Blake's poems, "The Tyger" and "The Lamb," explore various binary oppositions that enrich their thematic depth. The first set of oppositions centers around innocence versus experience. In "The Tyger," Blake portrays experience and fierceness, embodying maturity and questioning, while "The Lamb" represents innocence and gentleness, capturing purity and childlike wonder. The second dimension revolves around light versus dark. In "The Tyger," darkness is linked to danger, enhancing the enigmatic nature of the tiger. Conversely, "The Lamb" is associated with light and purity, conveying clarity and goodness. The third binary opposition explores creation versus destruction. "The Tyger" primarily delves into the concept of destruction, unraveling the enigmatic forces that give rise to darkness and chaos. In contrast, "The Lamb" centers on the idea of creation, celebrating the act of giving life and nurturing innocence.

The fourth dimension addresses questions versus answers. "The Tyger" raises profound questions about creation and existence, inviting readers to contemplate these mysteries without providing clear answers. "The Lamb" poses rhetorical questions, emphasizing the inherent goodness and simplicity of creation. The fifth opposition considers childlike versus mature perspectives. "The Tyger" takes a more mature and questioning stance, reflecting on the complexities of life and the enigmatic nature of the tiger. Meanwhile, "The Lamb" is narrated from a childlike and innocent perspective, conveying a sense of wonder and simplicity. The sixth dimension examines natural versus industrial elements. "The Tyger" invokes images of industry and craftsmanship, alluding to the creation of the tiger through the blacksmith's hammer. In contrast, "The Lamb" evokes a natural pastoral setting,

emphasizing the simplicity and harmony of the natural world. The seventh opposition contrasts peace versus conflict. "The Tyger" portrays a world filled with conflict and danger, reflecting the fierce and destructive aspects of existence. In contrast, "The Lamb" conveys a sense of peace and harmony, highlighting the gentle and nurturing qualities of creation. Finally, the eighth dimension explores softness versus hardness. "The Tyger" emphasizes hard and fierce qualities, depicting the tiger as a symbol of strength and intensity. Conversely, "The Lamb" highlights soft and gentle qualities, celebrating the tenderness and purity of the lamb.

These binary oppositions within the themes of the poems reveal the complexity and richness of Blake's exploration, offering readers a profound tapestry of contrasting concepts to ponder and appreciate.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this essay has undertaken a structuralist analysis of William Blake's poems, "The Tyger" and "The Lamb," by examining them through the lens of binary opposition. The analysis has revealed that these poems, seemingly simple on the surface, carry profound layers of meaning that align with structuralist principles. They explore binary oppositions such as innocence/experience, light/dark, creation/destruction, questions/answers, childlike/mature perspectives, natural/industrial elements, peace/conflict, and softness/hardness. These oppositions enrich the thematic depth of the poems and invite readers to contemplate the complexities of human nature, existence, and the interplay of contrasting concepts.

Furthermore, the study has highlighted the significance of language as the foundation of both structuralism and literature. Language, as a system of signs, plays a pivotal role in the construction and interpretation of meaning within literary works. Saussure's concepts of signifiers and the signified, along with the arbitrary nature of language, underscore the importance of language in understanding the poems.

Overall, this structuralist analysis has provided a deeper insight into the poems of William Blake, demonstrating how binary oppositions and underlying structures contribute to the rich tapestry of ideas and themes presented in "The Tyger" and "The Lamb." It exemplifies the enduring relevance of structuralism in literary analysis and its capacity to unveil hidden complexities within seemingly straightforward texts.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the esteemed Professor, Dr. Hae Yeon Kim from Sunchon National University, for her invaluable suggestions and encouragement throughout the research revision process.

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