

Edited by Loretta Fabbri and Claudio Melacarne

Understanding Radicalization in Everyday Life



**Mc
Graw
Hill**

Edited by
Loretta Fabbri and Claudio Melacarne

Understanding Radicalization in Everyday Life



The book was published with the contribution of the Department of Social, Political, and Cognitive Sciences of the University of Siena related to the F.O.R.w.A.R.D Project “*Training, Research and Development of ‘Community Based’ Strategies to Prevent Radicalization and Support Integration*” (ID 85990) funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research through the Call for Proposals “Establishment of Italian University Networks in Implementation of Cooperation Agreements between Italian Universities and those of States Parties to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation”.



Copyright © 2023

McGraw-Hill Education (Italy) S.r.l.

Corso Vercelli, 40 – 20145 Milano

Tel. 02535718.1 – www.mheducation.it

The rights of translation, reproduction, electronic storage and adaptation in whole or in part by any means are reserved for all countries.

Due to the intrinsic characteristics of the Internet, the Publisher is not responsible for any variations in the addresses and contents of the Internet sites listed.

The Publisher has done everything possible to contact the rights holders of the images that appear in the text and remains available to those who could not be contacted.

Names and trademarks mentioned in the text are generally deposited or registered by their respective firms.

Photocopies for the reader's personal use may be made within the limit of 15% of each volume/issue of a periodical upon payment to the SIAE of the fee provided for by art. 68, paragraphs 4 and 5 of Law no. 633 of 22 April 1941.

Reproductions made for professional, economic or commercial purposes or for any use other than personal use may be made following specific authorization issued by CLEARedi, Corso di Porta Romana 108, 20122 Milan, e-mail info@clearedi.org and website www.clearedi.org.

Portfolio Manager: Daniele Bonanno

Cover design: Feel Italia, Milano

Cover image: © Vitalii Vodolazskji/Shutterstock

Print: Digital Team Srl, Fano (PU)

ISBN: 9788838659423

Printed in Italy

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 - 27 26 25 24 23

Index

Introduction *by Loretta Fabbri and Claudio Melacarne* vii

Radicalization and multidisciplinary research

Chapter 1 – Learning to live in multicultural contexts.
Transformative Theory contribution
by Loretta Fabbri 1

Chapter 2 – The compromise of nonviolent radicalization.
The story of Jack, a (luckily) resigned extremist
by Claudio Melacarne 15

Chapter 3 – Fear and prevention. The ambiguous role
of the feeling of ‘fear’ in contemporary judicial
systems *by Roberto Mazzola* 43

Chapter 4 – ‘Don’t be afraid’: preventing discrimination
through intercultural education
*by Marco Catarci, Massimiliano Fiorucci,
Maria Chiara Giorda, Gennaro Gervasio,
Manfredi Merluzzi and Paola Perucchini* 59

Chapter 5 – Terrorism and radicalization: pedagogical
orientations *by Sergio Tramma* 79

Chapter 6 – Juvenile extremism: integration and
educational models *by Milena Santerini* 93

Chapter 7 – Recommendations in Preventing Violent Extremism in Higher Education: A Thematic Literature Review <i>by Sarmista Das</i>	109
Chapter 8 – Social Media Contributes to Radicalization. How to Prevent its Expansion? <i>by Juan Carlos Marcos Recio and Jesús Miguel Flores Vivar</i>	125
Chapter 9 – Radicalism and radicalisation within the new Cold War in the Persian Gulf. A view from Tehran <i>by Michele Brunelli</i>	143
Radicalization and social contexts	
Chapter 10 – Actors, interventions, integration strategies: the practices of reception operators <i>by Francesca Bianchi and Miriam Cuevas</i>	195
Chapter 11 – Intercultural co-existence strategies and identity positioning within a regional train: an educational perspective <i>by Carlo Orefice</i>	185
Chapter 12 – Transformative Inclusive Learning in multi-diverse Schools. An intersectionality-based approach <i>by Alessandra Romano</i>	203
Chapter 13 – Multicultural School System: lens on problem-based learning as a method for in training teachers <i>by Mario Giampaolo and Nicolina Bosco</i>	227
Chapter 14 – Cultural and religious plurality in Italian schools: Countering the threat of violent ‘radicalisation’ through an intercultural and interreligious approach <i>by Mohammed Khalid Rhazzali and Valentina Schiavinato</i>	239

Chapter 15 – Consequences of conspiracy theories on political efficacy and political participation <i>by Marika Rullo and Giovanni Telesca</i>	259
Chapter 16 – Radicalization and Management of the Educational Valencies of Security in Criminal Enforcement <i>by Francesca Torlone</i>	277
The Authors	307

Introduction

*Loretta Fabbri
Claudio Melacarne*

The term radicalization has been used over the past decades with different interpretations. Coolsaet used the “catch-all concept” (2011, p. 261) to define the trend that many constructs use one idea in reference to different phenomena. Radicalization has, for many years, been synonymous with terrorism, with a particular focus on violent radicalization rather than radical meaning/thinking. Many other meanings in this sphere have been developed and used. For example, Schmid notes that even within scholarly and public debates not all forms of political violence are all-terrorist or all-extremist (Schmid, 2011).

Widespread uses and abuses of the term radicalization have appeared in the media and more broadly in the public sphere. This has created confusion regarding the various meanings of the term, and ultimately delegitimizing the role that some forms of radicalism have had, throughout history, in promoting democracy and social justice. It is therefore important to reaffirm the distinction between violent radicalization and nonviolent radicalization (Schmid, 2011).

We know that radicalization should not necessarily incorporate the idea that a subject performs a violent act, or that the radical position assumed may be connoted a priori as negative or dangerous.

Radicalization is a situated phenomenon. Developing a radical point of view is a variable that can be understood and evaluated in connection with rights, community practices, and the opportunities people have to discuss and contrast these ideas.

People can adopt radical ideas, although they may be considered radical with respect to the social or collective norm, they are not necessarily extremist or contrary to democratic norms and values. Radicalization can also lead to different legitimate forms of democratic coexistence if the dialectic debate is allowed into a social context. What is considered radical in a social, cultural and specific historical time cannot be considered so in another. Some nonviolent radical people have played an extremely positive role in their communities, as well as in a wider political context. They have generated forms of political action based on participation, advocacy programs, awareness campaigns or groups of consciousness that grow through dialectics or critical reflection. Sometimes the progress in societies and civil rights has been the result of some form of radical thinking.

But radicalization might also be better understood as an evolutionary process. Many people develop radicalized thinking through a specific life experience in a spectrum that can in no way reach violence or be closed to other points of view.

People experience radicalization more or less consciously as the result of a process of sedimentation of meanings and perspectives that can become rigid and impermeable to debate, dialectics and confrontation over time. Violence can be an expression of this extreme state, where violence is interpreted as the only or right way to assert and to impose an idea.

This book has been developed around this debate of radicalization, and the authors are aware that this notion of radicalization could be difficult to comprehend as the subject is convoluted and at times contradictory. But the intent of this collective work is not to propose a dictionary definition of radicalization or stabilize a positional idea about it. We would like to propose some studies to support a deeper and more complex understanding of this phenomenon called radicalization through seeing it through different points of view. In the following chapters there is not one unique scientific area involved or different levels of analysis. We have adopted a multidisciplinary approach to show the complexity of a part of this scientific debate and we explored the phenomenon through a theoretical and empirical approach. Some of the authors describe qualitative and quantitative research connecting radicalization with other constructs developed in sociological, psychological, educational studies. Other researchers develop ways to understand radicalization from a

theoretical point of view. They have attempted to find connections among theories rather than reduce it to one singular framework.

There is, however, a common frame of work that guides the chapters of this book -the concept that the first way to prevent and contrast the use of violence in the radicalization processes is through education. We well know the importance of the security approach and that collaboration is necessary, but goals can differ and likewise so can methods of prevention. In the book's title we have used "everyday life" as a reminder that radicalization takes place in the initial stages of informal learning contexts. Peer groups, family, sport teams, workplaces and social media are spaces where people can radicalize their positions. In these spaces of everyday life, we can find companions, authorities, and beliefs ready to validate more radical ideas. This book, divided into two principal parts, aims to explore the phenomenon of radicalization with special attention to the influence of informal learning processes. The first part consists of chapters that use a theoretical framework while the second part presents empirical research. We think that this division can help the reader understand both challenges: which theories and constructs could be developed to better understand the radicalization processes? What are some examples of radicalized experiences in social life?

We hope that social workers, educators, psychologists, politicians and other professionals involved in prevention can find examples and new words for describing their work, and to plan new programs, activities and interventions.

Each one of us can potentially develop personal, political, religious, or ethical perspectives that could be considered extreme, at least from others' points of view.

Radical views only become problematic when they legitimize, encourage, or validate violence or forms of extremist behaviors, including terrorism and acts of hatred which are intended to promote a particular cause, ideology, or worldview. Individuals going through a process of radicalization can encourage, assist, or commit violence in the name of a specific system of beliefs because they are convinced that their assumptions are absolute and exclusive, and not framed within a personal or social history that can be re-read and re-negotiated.

1

Learning to live in multicultural contexts. Transformative Theory contribution

Loretta Fabbri

Using the theory of transformative learning as a perspective that helps people to question and transform the codes of understanding and interpretation that they have acquired throughout their lives in different social contexts and through which their own experiences and actions are given meaning, the contribution presents and justifies the scientific and methodological background that made the F.O.R.W.A.R.D. project possible.

Following this theoretical framework, the approach to the topic of radicalization is "rethought" as a construct related to ordinary contexts, a micro-phenomenon resulting from ordinary rather than extraordinary interactions. This hypothesis allows to shift the focus from extremism, such as violence and terrorism, to a broader field, referring to the set of processes that are shaped in daily interactions between individuals in specific public arenas and geographical locations on which the project has focused. This allows the different communities involved to develop inclusive interpretive models of diversity management.

Key Words: Transformative Theory; Radicalization; Multicultural Contexts; Italian Transformative Learning Network

1.1 Transformational Perspectives

The translation of Mezirow's text (2003) in Italy and his subsequent participation at seminars in several Italian universities significantly influenced the debate on adult education. Since then, communities of research practices have emerged that identify with the scientific family of studies related to transformative learning (Fabbri, 2018).

Transformative theory focuses on the conditions that facilitate the ability to create transformations from learning, which is done through activating processes that reflect upon the premises through which we interpret everyday life events within social and organizational contexts. It is a theory built upon transdisciplinary and experiential logic, capable of combining the most important contributions around a unique theme and offering the methodologies necessary to support and facilitate learning in adults.

It was within a socio-constructivist perspective of learning that my colleague, Maura Striano, and I first encountered first Mezirow's book, "Learning and Transformation" and later Jack Mezirow himself. We invited Jack Mezirow to Italy and were able to discuss the appeal and scope of a perspective that identifies learning as a path for the transformation of the perspectives with which subjects validate how they interpret the world.

According to this theory, learning takes on transformative value when conditions are created that allow subjects to decontextualize their own ideas and representations and become more aware of their own actions (how they came about, in what specific situation, what consequences they produced), increasing the degree to which they are open to and listen to others' perspectives. The transformative perspective aims to help people question and transform the codes of understanding and interpretation that they have acquired throughout their lives in different social contexts, and through which they give meaning to their own experience and actions.

According to transformative theory, pre-reflexive acquisitions, promoted mainly by parents and socialization process, constitute the background of speech and codes through which the world around us and established relationships are read and interpreted. The sociocultural context in which a person is born and lives transmits keys of interpretation that, if on one hand simplify confrontation with reality, on the other simultaneously modify it based on patterns and plots of meaning external to it. It is in the "world of life", the "everyday universe of social activity that we take for granted" (Mezirow, 2003, p. 72), that the subject learns, through socialization and cultural reproduction, that set of norms, values, and beliefs that serve as benchmarks in the relationship with the environment; he learns social relations and self-knowledge. The process of socialization forces all of us to inherit distorting assumptions. Childhood events can induce the adoption of certain prohibitions and assumptions. Rules, inherited meanings, become increasingly tacit, acting in our lives without

our awareness. Reflective learning brings these psychological assumptions to the level of consciousness and initiates an inner dialogue that separates the past and symptoms of anxiety from our present adult self. However random, limited, or unreliable the patterns and perspectives of meaning we acquire in childhood may be, we have the possibility to make a critical evaluation and take corrective action.

Transformative theory studies are present in communities interested in working primarily on learning from experience. The specific contribution is to be able to delineate how reflection enables the retrieval and rational analysis of one's experience in a process of explication and critical revision of those assumptions on which knowledge is structured and justified. Knowledge is, in fact, the result of a continuous interaction between the objects of experience and that "complex of culturally transmitted and linguistically organized interpretive structures" (Mezirow, 2003) that the subject applies to a reality that would otherwise be chaotic and meaningless.

Beyond Mezirow's original position, additional orientations within transformative theory have developed. Taylor (2008), through empirical analysis of the literature, identifies what he considers to be the key elements in fostering transformative learning. He reconstructs two theoretical frameworks within which different trajectories fall freely:

(a) in the first context, espoused by Jack Mezirow, Laurent Daloz, John Dirkx, Robert Kegan, and Patricia Cranton, there is a set of theoretical orientations that highlight personal transformation and growth, where the unit of analysis is first and foremost the individual, and there is little attention given to the role of context and change in the transformational experience. The basic elements of this orientation are critical reflection, interpretation and critical processing of experience through a rational approach;

(b) in the second context, espoused by Elizabeth Tisdell, Juanita Johnson-Bailey, Mary Alfred, sees promoting transformative learning as a process of social change where individual and social transformation are intrinsically linked.

Building on these assumptions, we wondered whether the socio-constructivist approach could find a promising trajectory to contribute to the development of reflective communities in the transformative

paradigm. The search for devices that can cultivate transformative processes in different social contexts is common. Approaches related to situated learning, cultivation of communities of practice (CoPs), and transformative learning converge in the same question: how to support the development and the empowerment of individuals and communities through the activation or enhancement of learning processes?

In this scenario, the most recent branches of Transformative Learning theory have been developed with communities of researchers who have used research constructs from the unification of Mezirow's original theory (2003) with studies on organizational learning (Argyris, & Schön, 1998), communities of practice (Wenger, 2006) and situated learning (Lave, & Wenger, 1991). Specifically, these positions outline the scientific coordinates of the *Italian Transformative Learning Network (ITLN)*¹, which is found within a network of relationships and exchanges with the *International Transformative Learning Association (ITLA)*², the *Hellenic Transformative Learning Network (HTLN)*³ and *ESREA Network Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education (TEAE)*⁴.

1.2 Rethinking approaches on radicalization

This is the scientific and methodological background from which we began when managing the F.O.R.W.A.R.D. project (MUR ID: 85901)⁵. This project was born with considerable attention paid to the growing phenomena of radicalization that has manifested in many areas of the world since the tragic events of the 2001 attacks.

¹ The Italian Transformative Learning Network is headquartered in Italy. It was founded in 2016 by Loretta Fabbri, Paolo Federighi, Maura Striano, Monica Fedeli, Claudio Melacarne.

² The International Transformative Learning Association is headquartered in the USA, organized based on the sociocratic model and is headed by Aliko Nicolaidis, ITLA Director.

³ The Hellenic Transformative Learning Network is headquartered in Greece and presided over by Alexis Kokkos.

⁴ The Network ESREA Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education was founded in 2022 and follows the distributed model of communities of practice. The Co-Convenors are Saskia Eschenbacher, George Koulaouzides, Alessandra Romano and Dina Soeiro.

⁵ For further information: <https://www.forwardproject.unisi.it/>.

The approach we have taken is associated within a matrix of research areas linked to the contribution of transformative theory (Mezirow, 2003; Amiraux, & Fabbri, 2020; Sabic-El-Rayess, & Marsick, 2021) and intersectional approaches (Crenshaw, 2017; Colombo, 2020) to understanding the radicalization processes.

We began by analyzing the meaning of difference from a constructionist view that does not reify its nature by interpreting it as a monolithic, unchanging, self-consistent, homogeneous entity with clearly delineated boundaries. Rather than seeing difference as something uncritically assumed, its colloquial, historical and sociocultural origins, which are difficult and complex, can be pondered. According to this approach, which we can call processual, the social production of difference is continuously devised, re-created and discussed through a constant and recursive flow of attribution of meaning (Benhabib, 2002). It is not difference, as such, but the way in which some of these concepts and not others are used and placed within a shared system of meanings that allows us to define who “the other” is (Hall, 2013). Differences are not characteristics that people possess, which distinguish them from one another or direct their actions, but something that individuals do and create in an effort to give order to their experiences (Colombo, 2020). Thus, the focus shifts to “the ways in which difference is brought into being and used, who uses it, in which contexts, for which purposes and with which results” (Colombo, 2020, p. 11). Reflecting on how ethnic-cultural differences are discussed, who talks about them, in which formal and informal contexts and with which goals and effects becomes relevant. It calls attention to how differences are the result of routines, implicit or explicit choices, admixtures, adaptations, mediations, conflicts, and actions; of actual practices and conduct in power struggles that often reproduce the status quo of the dominant group (Wieviorka, 2013). It is within the spaces and places of everyday life (Wise, & Veleutham, 2009; Colombo & Semi, 2007) that it is possible to investigate the most direct forms of the micro-construction and deliberation of difference. The focus shifts to that set of routine encounters with difference that can only potentially increase and exacerbate the sense of distance between individuals with different ethnic-cultural backgrounds. (Amiraux, & Araya-Moreno, 2014). It is about giving space to that set of ordinary micro-phenomena and micro-practices of social life, promoting

the analysis of small spaces and the repertoires of micro-actions that are enacted in these places.

Within this framework and through knowledge building based on comparison and empirical studies, we have tried to construct intersectional interpretive paradigms capable of capturing the elements that impact this phenomenon. The spectrum of studies on everyday multiculturalism has promoted comparative research between experiences set in different geographical locations using the school, the neighborhood, the park, the prison, or the train as contexts of critical inquiry.

1.3 Precritical thinking and radicalization

The mandate of the Forward project (MUR ID: 85901) arose with an intent focus on the growing phenomena of radicalization. Against this backdrop the proposal was to look at what the organization-structuring of learning processes in multiethnic societies implies, and the place in which it happens.

The literature on the topic of radicalization available to us allowed us to highlight broad use of the basis that may or may not include violent actions directed at other groups and/or people, or early stages of radicalization. Regarding the radicalization debate, we took the research position of an approach committed to the conceptualization of radicalization as a construct within ordinary contexts, a micro-phenomenon resulting from ordinary rather than extraordinary interactions (Amiriaux, & Araya-Moreno, 2014).

Our perspective has been that of seeing micro-radicalization as a form of assimilation of precritical thinking (Mezirow, 2003). Precritical thinking is the stage of our thinking in which the categories by which we read the world are taken for granted and certain, ontologically true, and not historically generated. Radicalization, in this sense, is a theoretical category and an emergent phenomenon from high-density multiethnic contact practices, which can be understood within the field of learning studies as a social phenomenon (Wilner, & Dubouloz, 2015).

This approach focuses on the conditions through which individuals, organizations, and communities can be supported to develop inclusive practices. It is a perspective that is concerned with the ways through which

learning can be used as a transformative device (Mezirow, 2003; Taylor, 2012). The transformation of perspectives of meaning occurs through the contacts people have in everyday life contexts. Relational plots emerge that can offer practical knowledge of how and under what conditions "contact" produces possible forms of coexistence. Forward's central hypothesis is that communities should be supported in developing inclusive interpretive models, or rather, in learning new perspectives of meaning that enable them to experience structurally multiethnic forms of interactions.

A chapter in the book 'Learning and Transformation' is subtitled "Why Learning Leads to Change." This subtitle summarizes our hypothesis (Mezirow, 2003, p. 147). Whether we want it or not, we are a society that needs to develop cognitive and emotional structures. Previous world models are no longer sufficient for us to live in high diversity contexts. It is a matter of developing the ability to relate perspectives that appear independent of each other. It is what psychologists call inter-paradigmatic operations.

When Mezirow recalls three models of learning (precritical, critical, and postcritical) he proposes a method to investigate and understand the ways through which people adopt old patterns of meaning to interpret the challenges of multiethnic societies. Mezirow, referring to Phil Mullins and a sample of theology students he had followed, identifies subjects whose only fear is the idea that certainties can be questioned and therefore see new ideas as threats rather than opportunities. They are pre-critical students, a category that can also be extended to part of the citizenry or more generally in-groups. They regard traditions other than their own as alien and misleading and find foreign value systems curious or outlandish, while recognizing that they are fully part of "human" reality. The following paragraphs outline two case studies that we intercepted as part of the research conducted with the Forward project and that are considered promising for substantiating the theoretical-conceptual framework outlined so far.

1.3.1 The "Empty School"

In field investigations (Fabbri, & Melacarne, 2020), we have encountered case studies where schools are emptying out due to the presence of students with migrant backgrounds exceeding a certain "threshold" level.

Parents withdraw their children from a school where that “threshold” level of presence becomes intolerable for them, as “foreigners” are perceived as a threat and obstacle to their children's path of education. The children, in turn, translate this assumption with a perspective of discriminatory meaning and action. The partner with whom they play soccer suddenly becomes a danger to their own future careers.

"In the past month I have been having meetings with parents who are interested in enrollment, and I always come to this point where I am afraid that the outcome won't be so promising. We always experience a small drop in enrollment, especially regarding the Italian neighborhood residents, who might choose other educational institutions over this one. However, what I can say with pride about the institute is that it is an institute that continues to work well for each one of the school populations that it has. It does a good, in fact a very good job, with Italian kids. It does a good job with newly arrived foreign kids, and it does a very good job with Italian-born children of foreigners. This is an excellent result, if taken and analyzed well, but it remains somewhat hidden by the fact that in the absolute total values, they construct a misleading representation. Having 45% of our pupils from foreign backgrounds lowers the total levels, even if the individual child is doing a very high-quality course." (Fabbri, & Melacarne, 2020, p. 38).

Looking at this situation from the perspective of learning processes, it emerges that the fears, conflicts of interest and encountered values focus in on a sense of threat which is felt in the face of visible and intrusive forms of difference. Parents' depictions are built on the data of increasingly exponential growth and presence of students with migrant backgrounds. This example is significant because it highlights how, in the face of conflicts of interest and value, reductionist processes and instrumental logics are activated rather than processes of collective inquiry through which new views can be perceived, de-ideologize arguments, find data and evidence to found different points of view and open up to processes of knowledge building.

"Then there is a problem that is a problem of perception, since there are so many foreign children the widespread opinion is that this is a school which now works on minimal levels; it works for foreigners, works by lowering expectations, which is not true because the data say it is not true" (Fabbri, & Melacarne, 2020, p. 41).

Schools, therefore, become one of the terrains that magnify (Piette, 2003) the issues running through and characterizing multicultural societies and, on the other hand, confirm the convergence toward national models of integration, albeit historically created and conceived as different. School also turns out to be the ideal arena in which an illustration of how the interactions that occur there organize and define teaching and its

transmission, sometimes formally, sometimes informally (Hirsch, & Amiraux, 2016). How do teachers take ethnic-cultural diversity into account in their pedagogical actions? Are the parents who withdraw their children from schools that have, in their opinion, become too multi-ethnic aware of the educational implications this decision has on their children?

1.3.2 The Neighborhood

In the *Forward* field studies, we homed in on a neighborhood located in central Italy that had historically been inhabited predominantly by the elderly, teachers, factory workers, and housewives, yet in the past twenty years has fundamentally become a neighborhood with a high multi-ethnic rate.

It is one of the neighborhoods of a medium-sized town in central Italy in which foreign residents amount to 12,536, compared to a total population of 99,179 (ISTAT data as of 01.01.2019). This is a widespread snapshot of those places that have long incorporated multiculturalization processes and yet are still grappling to find ways to manage diversity. Foreign nationals represent 12.6% of the total population, within the territory of reference the neighborhood is in.

This neighborhood was selected because its area is the symbol of a transformation that has rewritten the scenario of sociality for years. At times obvious signs of distancing, phenomena of marginality and socio-cultural hardships have been manifested, but it has also presented interesting aspects of community learning based on daily negotiations and the knowledge that arises from interactions among shopkeepers, generations, and families, even when those involved bring different traditions, aesthetics and values.

Incidents of hostility and complaints of disorder filed by citizens and the public administration have increased over the past 10 years. At the same time, citizens and associations have promoted neighborhood advocacy initiatives that can be defined in what Twelvetrees calls 'actions with the community,' aimed at its empowerment, and 'actions for the community,' aimed instead at increasing the representation of emerging demands from institutions, using territorial advocacy reasoning (Twelvetrees, 2006).

As in many other urban contexts, in just a few years the composition of neighborhood under study's population has radically changed, a

phenomenon that in some cases has become a reason for conflict on several fronts: the environmental quality in which one lives (one's neighborhood, one's street), social control of space, relationships among different communities, and the perception of cultural diversity within commercial establishments. In this context we can hint at some emerging and widespread views, simplified below with phrases gathered from field observation:

"I saw this park built; it is now invaded by foreigners" (person of about 70 years of age).

Viewing immigration as a problem to be solved from both security as well as social angles is a generalized interpretation we detected. We witnessed groups organized into security committees to combat degradation, where the relatively explicit assumption was that the immigration present in cities was a problem to be solved by activating collective problem-solving processes, clouded by prejudice and stigmatization. Hence the reductive question oriented by a perhaps short-sighted instrumentalism: how to solve the problem of immigration?

Often it is the positioning of an issue, especially by key groups with the power to influence the meaning of the systems at play that create stories, like personal war stories. Threatening phrases echo in informality and sometimes in public discussion:

"The park is invaded by black drug dealers. It isn't safe anymore, their presence degrades the community, the property value is going down."

"They should not have more rights than us. It isn't our problem if they have too many kids and are poor. They must respect our rules. Their religions are backwards, their lifestyle incompatible with ours."

Our hypothesis is that much of the rhetoric coming from institutional measures and public debate, and the kinds of arguments used to represent the neighborhood, are based on an insufficient definition of the problem itself and often use an inadequate system of categorization.

These few sentences are from Mestre, Padova, Milano, and Arezzo (Mantovan, 2016; Marianna, 2012; Balduzzi, & Servetti, 2017; Fabbri, & Melacarne, 2020), but are recurring themes even in the scientific national debate (Welsh, & Swain, 2002), and give measure to the perspective of meaning in which we are emerged.

Citizens behave like amateur social science scholars, and are likely to produce conservative charlatans having only themselves for reference,

distorting reality according to their own convenience (Nisbet, & Ross, 1980). Theories and beliefs, once formulated or adopted, tend to persist despite the presence of empirical data that contradict them. It is therefore true that narrative does not just describe, it creates and generates the possibilities of future discussion (Bruner, 2002). Generally, only conservative evidence is used to support emerging theses while the rest is confined to being an exception that confirms the rule, encompassing the predominant, generally shared beliefs and attitudes. Ideologies can include a little bit of everything: from sophisticated theories to blind prejudices, such as racism, sexism, and nationalism. Above all, hegemonic ideologies define the limits of a debate, set the political agenda, impose the arguments and terms and exclude opposing ideas.

These limits degenerate the dialogue, reducing it to a series of rigid, prefixed stereotypes that deceptively simplify the complexity of social life. When scholarly literature highlights all the contradictions that characterize the immigration debate, it calls into question the stigmatization of the public discourse regarding immigration-security, immigration and degradation, immigration and the threat toward the dominant religion. When viewed from the perspective of transformative theory these are forms of pseudo-rationalizations.

The hypothesis we have supported so far sees the promotion of transformative paths in workplaces, communities, and educational settings as a promising avenue for people to learn how to live together in a society with a high rate of multiethnicity, and how to contain the processes of radicalization and micro-radicalization through the stimulation of conversations that permit distorted perspectives to change. The question to be addressed then is not about immigration as if it were a problem to be solved through containment and the imposition of rules deemed universally valid. If anything, it is about asking how cities (Yang, 2012; Longworth, 2007), neighborhoods and all actors involved learn to deal with difference (Taylor, 1994). Otherwise, the risk is that we will be faced with urban legends that spread from city to city, without learning the lessons obtained from the interesting experiences that some people have already experienced and lived.

References

- AMIRAUX, V., & ARAYA-MORENO, J. (2014). Pluralism and Radicalization: Mind the Gap!. In P. Bramadat, & L. Dawson (Eds.), *Religious Radicalization and Securitization in Canada and Beyond* (pp. 92-120). Toronto: Toronto University Press.
- AMIRAUX, V., & FABBRI L. (2020). Learning to Live in a Multiethnic Society. *Educational Reflective Practices*, 1,5-17.
- ARGYRIS, C., & SCHÖND. A. (1998). *Organizational learning. Theory, method, and practice*. Milano: Guerini e Associati.
- BALDUZZI, G., & SERVETTI D. (edited by) (2017). *Voglia di democrazia. Progetti di quartiere e deliberazione pubblica a Novara*. Novara: Interlinea.
- BENHABIB, S. (2002). *The Claims of Culture. Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- BRUNER, J. (2002). *Making stories: law, literature, life*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- COLOMBO, E. (2020). *Sociologia delle relazioni interculturali*. Roma: Carocci Editore.
- COLOMBO, E., & SEMI, G. (2007). *Multiculturalismo quotidiano. Le pratiche della differenza*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- CRENSHAW, K. (2017). *On intersectionality: essential writings*. NewYork: The New Press.
- FABBRI, L. (2018). L'approccio trasformativo e trans disciplinare alla ricerca educativa. *Nuova Secondaria*, 10,84-87.
- FABBRI, L., & MELACARNE, C. (2020). Learning and unlearning in everyday life contexts. The case of a multiethnic neighborhood. *Educational Reflective practices*, 1,18-54.
- HALL, S. (2013). The Spectacle of the "Other". in S., HALL, J., EVANS, & S., NIXON (Eds.), *Representation*, (pp. 215-287). London: SAGE.
- HIRSCH, S., & AMIRAUX V. (2016). Grandir dans la communauté juive: une comparaison de quatre approches pédagogiques. In M. MC ANDREW et al., (Eds.), *Judaïsme et éducation. Enjeux et défis pédagogiques*, (pp. 143-158). Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval.
- LEAVE, J., & WENGER, E. (1991). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- LONGWORTH, N. (2006). *Learning cities, learning regions, learning communities: Lifelong learning and local government*. New York: Routledge.
- MANTOVAN, C. (2016). La governance dei quartieri multietnici ad alta conflittualità sociale: il caso dell'area di via Piave a Mestre. *Archivio di studi urbani e regionali*, XLVII, 116, 5-26.
- MARIANNA, P. (2012). *Storie di immigrazione: geografia dell'alterità in un quartiere periferico a Milano*: CLUEP.
- MEZROW, J. (2003). *Apprendimento e trasformazione. Il significato dell'esperienza e il valore della riflessione nell'apprendimento degli adulti*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- NISBET, R., & ROSS L. (1980). *Human Inference: Strategies and Shortcomings of Social Judgment*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- PIETTE, A. (2003). *Le fait religieux. Une théorie de la religion ordinaire*. Paris: Economica.
- SABIC-EL-RAYESS, A., & MARSICK V. (2021). Transformative Learning and Extremism. In J. WALKER, G. MAESTRINI, & S. SMYTHE (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Adult Education in Global Times Conference*, Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (pp. 636-638). Ottawa: Casae.
- TAYLOR, E. W. (2008). Transformative Learning Theory. In MERRIAM S. (Eds.), *Third Update on Adult Learning Theory: New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* (pp. 5-15). New York: Wiley.

- TAYLOR, E. W. (1994). Intercultural Competency: A Transformative Learning Process. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 44, 3, 154-174.
- TAYLOR, E. W., & CRANTON, P. (2012). *The Handbook of Transformative Learning. Theory, Research and Practice*. New Jersey: Wiley.
- TWELVETREES, A. (2006). *Il lavoro sociale di comunità. Come costruire progetti partecipati*. Trento: Erickson.
- WELSH, R. O., & SWAIN W. A. (2020). (Re)Defining Urban Education: A Conceptual Review and Empirical Exploration of the Definition of Urban Education. *Educational Researcher*, 49, 2, 90-100.
- WENGER, E. (2006). *Comunità di pratica. Apprendimento, significato e identità*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- WIEVIORKA, M. (2013). The re-enchantment of universal value. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36, 12, 1943-1956.
- WILNER, A., DUBOULOZ C. J. (2015). Homegrown terrorism and transformative learning: an interdisciplinary approach to understanding radicalization. *Global Change, Peace, and Security*, 22, 1, 33-51.
- WISE, A., & VELAAYUTHAM, S. (2009). *Everyday Multiculturalism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- YANG, J. (2012). An overview of building learning cities as a strategy for promoting lifelong learning. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 18, 97-113.

2

The compromise of nonviolent radicalization. The story of Jack, a (luckily) resigned extremist

Claudio Melacarne

This chapter aims to discuss different perspectives used to describe radicalization. There is not a clear and unique meaning about the word radicalization and this work cannot solve this issue. It compares some keywords to draw and to limit the spaces usable for understanding the complex debate on radicalization.

A result of this first work is to find a deep connection among radicalization studies and adult education. In particular, the construct of informal learning seems to be effective to help professionals and researchers to understand radicalization from the point of view of the person radicalized.

A short biography will be used as a case study to describe how everyday life can generate an environment where people could informally learn how to think radically and eventually risk transforming these thoughts into violent acts.

Key Words: Radicalization; Education; Informal Learning; Prevention

2.1 Introduction

The present study is situated at the intersection of two traditions of study. On one side we have “radicalization and terrorism studies,” in which extensive and well-documented literature has developed aimed primarily at understanding terrorist phenomena, the link between this and public policies, dominant cultures, policy measures and economic systems (Antonelli, 2010). On the other hand, it intercepts Adult Education studies, particularly referencing critical-emancipatory theories in which

radicalization is interpreted as a particular form of the adoption of pre-critical thinking (Fabbri, Romano, 2021). For some years now these two notions have begun to confront each other and engage in dialogue, to find spaces and ways to build a common language and multidisciplinary models in order to interpret radicalization.

Many studies ascribable to the first tradition have attempted to describe the factors that can generate and nurture radicalization phenomena but often stray by resorting to second-tier sources, producing knowledge derived, for the most part, from data already in the possession of decision makers or security officials. Even though these studies increase scientific knowledge and debate, they risk having a limited impact for those who work in the field and often use primary sources, prompting them to consider the scientific discourse on radicalization a product of knowledge that is already largely known. However, the advantage of this research is that it contributes to building descriptive knowledge (how big is the phenomenon of radicalization within a given community?) and acknowledgement, and studying the practices implemented in different social contexts (what prevention practices have developed?).

However, adult learning studies have also become increasingly involved in understanding radicalization phenomena. In recent years they have seen promising development, likely due to decreasing tension regarding specific issues of religiously-motivated terrorism and a broadening of the semantic scope of the term 'radicalization,' which was initially closely associated with the term 'terrorism'. Psycho-educational studies have made it possible to shift the focus from how to anticipate a terrorist act through intelligence strategies or the collection of preventive data considered to be predictable 'signs' of violent behavior, to strategies that make the most vulnerable people resilient, help communities avoid polarizing public discourse, and train school and social service professionals in managing cultural diversity. It was a chain of thought that succeeded in developing models and deductions in the attempt to answer the question "how does a person become radicalized?" It has offered a potential tool for reading into the process of the phenomenon that develops in stages, in levels of commitment or in the development of increasingly rigid thoughts and actions, exclusive and impermeable to diversity. Some argue that these steps have proven ineffective in predictive terms as there is no linear model that can be used to anticipate people's intentions, let alone be valid as an

interpretation which disregards the kind of radicalization (religious, political, cultural, etc.) or the cultural context in which it takes shape. By recovering some contributions from both of these traditions, the present paper aims to analyze some categories used in the scholarly debate (radicalization, extremism, counter-radicalization, disenfranchisement, etc.) and try to circumscribe a specific field of study of psycho-educational studies on the issues of prevention of radicalization. This area of research and intervention shall be labeled 'micro-radicalization'. Following the analysis, albeit reductive and partial of the scientific literature, an excerpt from an individual's personal history will be used as a case of a lifepath that has undergone stages of radicalization, sometimes close to violent radicalization, yet without ever escalating to violent extremism or much less terrorism. This story certainly has no value in terms of generality and transferability. Nonetheless, it seems to us a good example of how 'micro-radicalization' can manifest itself and how educational studies can make an important contribution in terms of prevention and de-radicalization.

2.2 Radicalization/Extremism

A first terminological clarification concerns the occasional use of the two terms radicalization and extremism. It is noted and agreed that currently there is no universally accepted definition in the academic world and at the institutional level of the concept of radicalization. This concept is by no means as solid as many presume. The Expert Group on Violent Radicalization established by the European Commission in 2006 carried out a review of the literature to try and formulate an interpretation which we succinctly quote: "the radicalization is a context-bound phenomenon par excellence. Global, sociological and political drivers matter as much as ideological and psychological ones" (Alonso, et. al., 2008, p. 7). Schmid states, "To disentangle radicalism and radicalization from related terms like extremism is an important task if we want to keep the concept analytically useful and not just a political container term used by political players as pejorative labels to place some distance between the middle ground they claim to stand on and the presumed far out position of selected political enemies" (Schmid, 2013, p. 7).

Again, Schmid (2013) reminds us that 'radical' people are not violent per se, and although they may share some characteristics with extremist, or extremist violent people (e.g., alienation from the state, anger over a country's foreign policy, feelings of discrimination, etc.), there are also important differences. For example, radicalization also often assumes the ability to accept discursive dialectics as a method of seeking a solution or pursuing a political goal or, in general, a transformation of the status quo. The radical person contemplates the possibility of constructing a space in which there are also differences and can apply critical thinking to his or her own perspective. Consequently, a radical attitude need not result in violent behavior (Moghaddam, 2009).

Extremists most frequently engage in projects aimed at creating a homogeneous society based on ideological or dogmatic principles. They attempt to construct a conformist living space by considering any opposition or minority a threat to be fought, and, if possible, to marginalize or eliminate. This point is what distinguishes radical people from extremists, according to Schmid. The former accept diversity and believe in the power of reason rather than the stability and superiority of dogma.

“While radicals might be violent or not, might be democrats or not, extremists are never democrats. Their state of mind tolerates no diversity. They are also positively in favor of the use of force to obtain and maintain political power, although they might be vague and ambiguous about this in their public pronouncements, especially when they are still in a position of weakness. Extremists generally tend to have inflexible ‘closed minds’, adhering to a simplified mono-causal interpretation of the world where you are either with them or against them, part of the problem or part of the solution. Radicals, on the other hand, have historically tended to be more open to rationality and pragmatic compromise, without abandoning their search for getting to the root of a problem (the original meaning of ‘radical’ which stems from *radix*, Latin for root). Radicalism is redeemable – radical militants can be brought back into the mainstream, extremist militants, however, much less so” (Schmid, 2013, p. 11).

A first partial conclusion of this reflection leads us to think that it could be misleading to think about the distinction between violent extremism and nonviolent extremism. This is because while the radicalized person may or may not engage in violent acts, we cannot say the same for extremism, which needs to use some form of violence to assert its position. A

consequence of this reasoning stems from the fact that a considerable part of the literature on terrorism tends to equate radicalism with violent extremism and consequently both phenomena with terrorism.

The concluding thought some scholars arrive at is this. The indiscriminate use of the term terrorism to identify phenomena such as nonviolent radicalization, violent radicalization, and extremism has led to a dangerous derivation in which the natural processes of change from below, of social pushback and critique and of social dialogue also come to be delegitimized. Ultimately, the creation of an indistinct "radical-extrem-terrorist" category is almost always applied to non-'institutional' social actors, a fact that does not allow for a critical analysis of what is called the "radical milieu" (Schmid, 2013, p. 1), that is, the radicalized environment.

A further distinguishing criterion is the possibility that democratic systems manage radicalization differently from extremism. While there is a possibility that radical thinking be present in the community or controlled spaces be created within which the evolution of radicalization processes can be managed and monitored, it is much more difficult to view extremism as a phenomenon that can be reconciled with pluralism of ideas. Two radical (nonviolent) positions may see the democratic dialectic as a means of assertion while two extremist positions see dialectic as an obstacle to the confirmation of one position at the expense of the other.

According to Schmid (2013, p. 14) we should recognize that there are some forms of violent resistance to political oppression that, although they may be deemed illegal under domestic law, may be accepted under international humanitarian law. It is therefore believed that it is not useful to use the terms indiscriminately, especially since the ethical and moral yardstick changes in relation to political action in a social context. What from outside a community may be interpreted as an 'emancipatory' phenomenon may at the same time be labeled as 'terrorist' by the institutional establishment.

In closing this reflection, a shared definition of radicalization is as follows: "an individual or collective (group) process that often begins within a situation of political polarization where the normal dynamics of institutional/public dialogue, tolerance between political actors and divergent interest groups are abandoned by one or both sides for tactics of conflict. These may include (i) the use of (nonviolent) pressure and coercion, (ii) various forms of political violence other than terrorism, or (iii)

acts of violent extremism in the form of terrorism and war crimes. This process is generally accompanied by adherence to an ideology far from the mainstream or status quo-oriented positions toward more radical or extremist positions involving a dichotomous worldview and acceptance of an alternative focal point of political mobilization outside the dominant political order because the existing system is no longer recognized as appropriate or legitimate." (Schmid, 2000, pp. 678-679).

We can agree that "radicalization" is not only a socio-psychological aspect and a scientific concept but also, and more importantly, a political construct introduced into public and academic debate mainly by security agencies facing a focus predominately on religiously motivated terrorism. From this analysis we can recover a definition that testifies to the difficulty of aligning words with such complex phenomena:

"radicalization refers to a complex, dynamic, and nonlinear process of change in an individual's mindset that, over time, causes a significant alteration in an individual's worldview, perception of external events, and understanding. When these changes occur, they may be reflected in the individual's behavior, which could eventually, in some people, escalate to the point of engaging in violence, violent extremism, or terrorism."

Radicalism is an old term, partly coined by the British, and used later during the French Revolution. Radicalization can be defined as the set of practices and discourses that tend to divide and separate a group, network, or community from the rest of society, also including organizations with goals of countering the social order and values that oppose or contradict traditional views. Under this conceptualization, group radicalization can be perceived as the collective process that produces and sustains a new and sometimes violent ideology. Thus, radicalization is both a social and an individual process (Winter & Feixas, 2019) as it also refers to a personal and profound change in beliefs, which can lead an individual to use violence to support ideas, beliefs, and convictions.

Studies by Winter and Feixas (2019) describe how there is no automatic overlap between extremism and radicalization. While all terrorists are radicalized, not all individuals who are radicalized take part in terrorist attacks or become violent extremists (Wiktorowicz, 2005). As many studies have testified, people who have had active experiences in terrorist organizations have, fortunately, later abandoned these experiences by re-joining society while maintaining radical positions.

People may hold political, ideological or religious views with which many others may disagree, perhaps to the point of finding them distasteful or even unacceptable. Nonetheless, they have the right to hold these views and, in fact, express them insofar as they act within the law. As long as this remains the extent of their radicalism, there is a well-founded expectation that under normal circumstances democratic states will not take action against them, coercive or otherwise.

In the European Union the right to stand up for one's views is legally sanctified in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which protects freedom of expression. In the United States, a similar right to freedom of speech is guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. In addition to national and regional legislation, equivalent concepts of freedom of thought and expression are upheld in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Radicalization is thus a borderline term close to many others, including terrorism and extremism, which often tends to be direct and descriptive of the cause that motivated it (e.g., Irish Republican terrorism, or Palestinian terrorism, or leftist terrorism) or the terrorist group that perpetrated it (e.g., Irish Republican Army (IRA) terrorism, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) terrorism, or Red Brigades terrorism). The basic components of terrorism are now generally recognized, for example: using threats of violence motivated by a political or ideological goal, the goal of creating widespread fear such as death and destruction, and the goal of targeting civilians.

The net result of all this terminological complexity is the blurring of boundaries between radicalization, extremism, violent extremism and terrorism in terms of the behaviors, tactics, techniques and procedures associated with each.

2.3 De-radicalization, Disengagement, Counter-radicalization

De-radicalization and disengagement from a terrorist group and its ideology are commonly considered to be one and the same. The term de-radicalization refers primarily to a cognitive rejection of certain values, attitudes, and viewpoints that have been assumed by a person or group

and that move and direct their actions, sometimes even using violence. De-radicalization is akin to an educative process aimed at changing an opinion, a set of meanings or values. This juxtaposition sometimes leads us to think that de-radicalization occurs before disengagement. That is, we assume that there is a change in perspective and later we expect there to be a behavioral departure from the violent terrorist or extremist's violent *modus operandi*. This is a classic constructivist view, in which behavior is a secondary variable to the transformation of the meaning of perspectives. Schmid argues that this is not necessarily so. John Horgan and Tore Bjørgo have convincingly argued that there is no clear evidence to suggest that disengagement can bring with it de-radicalization, nor is there clear evidence to support the argument that de-radicalization is necessary to generate disengagement (Bjørgo, Horgan, 2009, p. 28). For example, it seems that most ex-terrorists or violent extremists have not changed their perspectives and theories about the world that much. In other words, disengagement without de-radicalization might be a goal to pursue as an acceptable consequence. It is unlikely that a person would step out of his or her social comfort zone (e.g., a group, a community that supports a cause through the use of force) and simultaneously abandon personal beliefs and worldviews or society. Horgan concluding an empirical survey states that "although almost all respondents could be described as disengaged, none of them could be said to be de-radicalized" (Horgan, 2008, p. 139). In extreme circumstances, disengagement often occurs without de-radicalization. For example, Gordon identifies a progressive, four-step transition from declarative disengagement (making explicit and acknowledging that one no longer wants to be part of a group or community) to behavioral disengagement (changing one's personal habits of conduct), organizational disengagement (leaving the group) and, in some cases, de-radicalization i.e., change in outlook, values and beliefs (Clubb, 2009).

For Pressman (2009), de-radicalization can be achieved in the event that there is a rejection of ideology, a rejection of violence as an instrument of political action, the replacement of violent goals with nonviolent goals, and the development of a reasoning that makes the context in which one lives less polarized. With respect to disengagement, on the other hand, one may start from the acquisition of a perspective in which violence is considered a failed strategy or one develops disillusionment with

political/religious/charismatic leadership. One changes ideology and loses trust in the reference group and thinks that one can only grow if one leaves the extremist or radicalized community.

While de-radicalization refers to programs that generally focus on radicalized individuals or groups of suspected or convicted terrorists with the goal of rehabilitating and reintegrating them into society (or at least deterring them from further use of political violence), counter-radicalization moves into the dimension of prevention. It seeks to keep people who are not radicalized but, for example, vulnerable, from developing forms of radicalization that lead to violence. Counter-radicalization attempts to not use coercive or repressive methods but works more in an educational dimension. Horgan defines counter-radicalization as a set of policy measures and intervention practices aimed at changing the individual or social conditions that could push some individuals towards the path of violent extremism or terrorism.

Thus, the primary focus of counter-radicalization efforts is not on terrorists but rather on strengthening and enhancing community resilience. Some common goals of counter-radicalization programs are: a) to support the transition from violent extremism to nonviolent actions, b) to give voice to all positions expressed in a dialectic and to create spaces for public discussion of 'local' rather than 'general' issues, and c) to support communities that are more open to dialogue and confrontation.

2.4 Informal Learning and Radicalization

The idea of studying radicalization in the light of theories on informal learning matured within the Forward project, funded by the Italian Ministry of Education from 2019-2022, and within a multidisciplinary research group that included colleagues from different countries and scientific fields.

There are numerous definitions of informal learning in the literature (Hager and Halliday, 2006) which refer, in particular, to any learning that takes place outside educational institutions, i.e. in everyday life and work contexts. Informal learning can be considered the learning that occurs in unstructured, experiential and non-institutional places (Watkins, Marsick, 1992) and happens wherever individuals feel a need, motivation and opportunity for learning.

Specifically, informal learning is characterized as a process that is:

- integrated with daily routines;
- stimulated by an internal or external stimulus;
- not necessarily consciously triggered;
- generated by chance;
- inductive of reflection and action;
- inevitably connected to the learning of others (Marsick, Volpe, 1999).

In fact, learning that occurs in natural settings without externally imposed curricula or without any formal educational pathway represents the most widespread and common form of learning present in everyone's life. The spontaneous nature of a form of learning that can occur anywhere in daily life makes its recognition particularly difficult, especially in those settings such as schools where there is an increasing trend moving toward certifying even informal learning with systems of competency.

Marsick & Watkins (1990) dedicated some of their most extensive research into describing, defining, and developing a more comprehensive understanding of informal and incidental learning. The authors start from a comparative description. "In contrast to formal learning, informal learning refers to the natural opportunities of learning that occur every day in a person's life, when the person controls his/her learning" (p. 350). Marsick categorized the types of informal learning to include "self-directed learning, social learning, mentoring, coaching, and networking, learning from mistakes and trial and error" (p. 350). Watkins developed a theoretical framework, or model, to understand how the process of informal learning takes place. Informal Learning means reaching out to the person in the next cubicle and cultivating relationships through networking, coaching, and mentoring. It also takes place in varied self-directed ways by reading reports, newsletters, and memos, and by conducting research.

2.5 The story of Jack, a (luckily) resigned extremist

My father died when I was four years old. While he was dying, I was sent to the country for a month because he had cancer. You know that country stuff, he was dying at home, etc., illness was something to hide, to keep away from the children. When I came back, when they brought me back home, he was gone. You can imagine the climate, my mother, my sister

who was older. Anyway, in this gloomy climate the man of the house was me. I had to somehow manage this situation, I was trying to convince myself that I was in the same situation as them but clearly I wasn't able to. But it was also mutual, they probably couldn't cope either.

At one point I finish middle school and they tell me to choose the school I want to attend (because I do well in school, especially in Italian), but my mother makes a certain point: although I would like you to attend a high school, better to attend the technical school for hospitality since it's a boarding school.

Now I have realized years later that she was also struggling to cope, so if I left it was better and so I went to this boarding school in Bergamo, I was 14 years old and my livelihood was by being a cook. Until my third year I was a cook in the summer, but by this time I was already living away from home because I was in boarding school, then in my fourth and fifth year I commuted a little bit to Milan. Then I enrolled in college, political science, and I started attending and took a few exams and started to get closer to the political groups in the university, the subdued ones. Why political science? I wanted to be a police commissioner or a journalist. It's funny, but oh well. I was a person with no reference group, and especially at university I was an alien. Not because it was a very different world, I took my exams with an average of 28 out of 30. Twenty exams in the first three years, then I approach the student struggles, the ones in the 1980s, protests and politics not as a profession but as a way of life. That's why I didn't approach parties like proletarian democracy. I liked the discourse but didn't feel comfortable with it. That was until I got to know the autonomous collectives where there were guys who were actual runaways. There was ideology but basically there were all these people looking for a place in the world, in things, and they were total extremists.

Then it happens that at one evening, with the organizations, I take part in an occupation (of living quarters), where people from the suburbs come, families that are bad off (but also not) united to fight a classist society. I go in with them and occupy. An occupied house, premises where a couple of times a week we used to have political meetings, where there was a machine to cyclostyle leaflets, for our leafleting. Let's say the initial ideology was basically an autonomous communist kind of ideology, a workers' autonomy (where there were also foreigners). I follow this, I like these occupations (I have no home).

I commute. In 1984 I started living in the central station, sleeping on the trains, because on my commute home-Cremona-university-Milan I had no chance to have social interactions: the problem was that the last train left at 09:00 in the evening, so I couldn't go with that train because it meant not having a social life, not knowing anybody (the world I was in at the university was basically a very middle-class world).

One night I stayed in an occupied house that was cleared out the next morning. I begin to see that the occupants have a community idea: let's occupy together, live together, do things together etc. I, who do not work, find myself among my peers. Politics (although I used to believe in it), doing politics becomes a price to pay for having a community. I did several occupations, in Milan, I had become an expert in home occupation (I knew that the crime "occupying" is a misdemeanor if you don't get caught while doing it) my specialty was smashing locks, always abandoned private houses and stuff like that. In '86/85 I started confronting anti-nuclear issues, I participated in demonstrations where we took a lot of blows, especially in front of the Caorso (Piacenza) power plants. Then in 1986 I participated in the demonstration in Montalto di Castro where I got arrested, under surreal circumstances and surreptitious charges. A stupid thing: after the demonstration I went to look for some of my fellow protesters (I went because I was considered the one with the most respectable face) at a truck stop. I enter the premises where there were only uniformed policemen...I try to get out, but more uniformed policemen arrive so I go to the counter, I say, "a coffee" but I can't pronounce anything else. I get loaded into an armored car, arrested on charges of having blunt weapons (which I did not have). I did 10 days in jail and then got out, on probation for six months, and had to sign in three times a week in Cremona where I practically didn't even live anymore. Since I worked in Milan once a week I would take the Milan - Cremona train to sign in at a specific time, 04:56.

In Milan I was a cook, in an establishment of a Red Brigades sympathizer, one who in the courtroom when he was convicted said the famous phrase 'he who is born square cannot die round'.

With a small group of friends from the collective I entered the Leoncavallo social center. I started to be a delivery guy with a cooperative we had set up inside Leoncavallo, where many were considered flankers of the BR Walter Alasia group. The activities carried out were mainly self-financing

concepts for political prisoners and their relatives. We believed that the detained brigade-ists were inside for political reasons. I was against terrorism, however, out of curiosity our autonomous group had some form of dialogue with other groups that we later found out were bordering on terrorism, meddling in aiding and abetting terrorist groups.

Among us people circulated who had done jail time or ex-factory collectives, I don't know if they were ex-Front Line (armed gangs) who maybe had some trouble with the police but shit no, so our idea was let's start again from the bottom let's work on post-industrial society, theoretically. It's not that we were against illegality, I mean from my point of view illegality was a tool that in the moment you say, I want to change the drug law, I say it incorrectly, but it was already a battle. I plant marijuana, it's illegal. But in short, I believe that housing is a universal right and since in Milan, I don't remember the times it was said, there are 300,000 empty office apartments vacant, we go to occupy.

After that if you want to throw us out let's talk about it, you have to give us a place. I did an occupation in Porta Ticinese, we were evicted by the municipality, then negotiated with Pillitteri (mayor protempore) they sent us all to Bruzzano in a big estate, in a big residence. For a year we all lived there: how cool! Then they gave all the families a home, while we youngsters were just taken out.... So, you occupied another one and so on ... I lived in Via Quadrio in Milan where there was a former factory that had been abandoned for thirty years, there was no water, there was shit, basically we carried water canisters, I illegally latched onto electric lines stuff like that...for all the gigs... Then we squatted on Lancetti Street, it was a 12-story building that had never been used, so we went in, it was a nice week. Somehow, we knew it was illegal what we were doing, however it highlighted the housing contradictions.

I liked that stuff like that, I liked being in these collectives in these communes. I received my sentimental education. When you leave home when you are 13, you are not well and you can't go back because there are terrible relationships. I loved my mother, but I'd forget to call her, even for three months in a row, and when I did call it was trouble. Once I went to Spain with a friend, he didn't have a train ticket, so I gave him mine, I hitchhiked back from Spain and my mother looked for me for three days with the carabinieri because no one knew....

Violence for us was considered an acceptable weapon only in the case of self-defense: when we were having marches and the police charged us you could respond because they charged me. I don't charge them, I mean I don't know how to say it but it's a little bit different. Or there are fascists, the fascists stab one of us in front of the Leoncavallo. The result: going around and trying to beat them all up. It was a done thing, I mean, so you go to the skinhead headquarters and you take them all out, so then they don't bust your balls anymore, and we had the same talk with the drug dealers in the neighborhood because our concept was "neither heroin nor police" (it was in our slogans). Inside Leoncavallo the consumption of soft drugs was allowed, that is, weed. It was not allowed to sell it, was not allowed to consume and deal hard drugs, so we used to regulate this. When we had a concert at Lambro Park that was called "black" the police came because we had been attacked by armed drug dealers....

I remember the Leoncavallo eviction, I was inside and with my group and we had decided to resist, we couldn't get thrown out like all the social centers that got evicted and, since we knew the exact day (we had guessed it the day before the eviction because the police had put up signs not to park), so we locked ourselves inside and then got on the rooftop to wait as early as 06:00 in the morning. We made barricades of barbed wire and tires which we set on fire, then used molotov cocktails (which we threw on armored vehicles) but the police came in... anyway. Then (funny...) I saw later that there was a circular hole on the roof, that was the hole they came in through. I remember opening the door of the place, two uniformed policemen ran towards me then the one behind me (who later became a judge...) took the molotov cocktail and threw it... nobody was hurt, half were arrested on the spot and half escaped and were then caught inside an oratory nearby. The episode set off a big scuffle (which never ended) in which they said that we, with our resistance, had destroyed the collective and we started hating each other, because we were a collective of the arrested: you are the ones who escaped, molotov-throwing assholes.

The level of suffering and violence was acceptable so long as it was in self-defense, and especially against things, today by violence we mean youth gangs, we were not a gang.

In the self-managed social centers there were also people who jumped the ditch of discourse and were willing to take up arms and revolt to join terrorist formations (in the front line for example).

At that time, I assumed I would end my life in jail, very very quickly, I had 7 trials for Leoncavallo, from stealing water, electricity, hijacking streetcars because at a certain point during the eviction I welded the tracks. They almost acquitted me: I explained in court that I had connected the water because toilets without water bring plague, a community cannot live without water, it is a basic right like electricity. Nonetheless, I became a convicted felon and a criminal record doesn't help with work. So, I was rounding up in field work, our way of making a living was doing related work but also making do...

Many turned to robbery, then they started dealing cocaine i.e. they really became thugs, some were arrested several times....

We used to do expropriations: for example, a bathroom fixture store fails, we look if there is something inside that we are interested in and we take it ... it's a level of legality/illegality i.e. I don't know how to say it, but for us, that level, it was a right social balance. Different from those who went to rob, for example those who robbed paninari (rich kids), fascists with full wallets... that happened too, but I didn't really do that because I have a problem with violence.

In fact, I remember going to the funeral of a friend, one of our kind from those days, a year ago. I remember people flinching, me being out of the loop led to me being called a traitor, even though it is 30 years later. I'm shit to them, but not just because I left, but because before I left, according to them I bargained.

I remember that with some of these people I had lived with in Via dei Transiti, which was an occupied house, they evicted me twice from that house and I always returned to the same apartment because of a Swiss insurance company, a ground floor apartment, the former porter's cottage, here the police smashed everything I had, the toilets and they bricked up the windows. I fixed everything, both loo and windows: we were a self-help community, that is we worked as one, if someone was sick I would bring him oranges....

I stopped working as a cook, I was a proofreader, a porter/delivery guy and then I set up a cooperative, a moving cooperative inside Leoncavallo that had a double function: we bought vans that we would later use to do moves and processions... we smashed up a lot of that furniture.

A friend of mine who lived in the occupied house and who had just graduated was a proofreader and asked me if I wanted to take her place. I

lied, I said I was a proofreader for hunting and fishing magazines, and so I started doing this proofreading job. After a year or so a tax audit comes to the company, because out of 30 people there was not one hired employee, so a big mess: the owner was forced to hire everyone. He could have shut down and left, but it was a business that was working, in fact all the executives left but the journalists and the proofreaders stayed on. I'll make it quick, after two years I became the CEO of that place and the office in Rome. Since I had the keys to the office I could write in the evening. Then, in '99 I quit my job and went to work for Mondadori as editor of Mondadori Gialli, I had published and said I was running an editorial service. They said ah fuck, we could use a guy who does this kind of internal stuff, too, who can run the editorial collection. In 2002 they gave me the job of director of kid's books which was a group of people in Verona. Then I got tired of being an executive and discussing accounts and quit. While I was an executive, I was writing. I wrote three books and then I got my first film and I said to myself, "Alright, now I can live," so I quit.

Let's say that one needs a lot of political and collective experience if they decide to go into business management, but what made things work was also the fact that I was passionate about new technologies. The world was changing from that point of view, I have it in me, because before the Internet came, I (my group), a banker and a computer scientist, three of us set up a network that united all the autonomous social centers through old connectors, and at night we exchanged messages. The next morning you see the message and so there was a big debate about how and who runs the network.

There was sharing of ideals and things but rendered us dominated, but before I was Jack running around and sleeping on trains, now do something of he sees the results of, at least initially and at a short distance, you say the world is bad we have to fight etc., then not a fucking thing changes. Basically, you were always doing the same things, I watched people getting older doing the same things, always drinking the same beer, in the same place, and this thing nauseated me. I saw gutter punk kids who didn't know where to go, and us "we can't accommodate you here, go away, what the fuck do you want?" These guys were wandering around and many were really dying, and you say to yourself, 'fuck but I am responsible for them' so much so that the first book I wrote was called "Beware of the Gorilla." It was, how can I say, a penance for all those who had died, I wrote about

them, I was talking about these kids who were dying. But the thing that may be changed me most of all was random. I went to get a hamburger at McDonald's and I found a guy, an old buddy of mine, frying potatoes. "I have to fry potatoes eh I have to work," he had disappeared, and nobody gave a shit. I couldn't accept that someone that had sat next to me in the parade, in "battle" was now frying potatoes at McDonald's, you don't understand how bad this stuff is!!!

Better this than stealing, I could see myself among those who fry potatoes. Shit, of course I may end up like that, too and nobody will give a shit, but it's always more honorable to fry potatoes than to go to jail...I had this fear of solitude.

Everything works fine when you're inside, but only as long as you're inside the community, the moment you get out you're nobody. So, I say to myself I'll get out now and I got out. THE result is that I lost all my friends -- the ones with whom every night we were organizing at the community center, in the morning at six we would get up and go pass out leaflets.

My first problem was Wednesday, I want one day a week, I go to see a different thing, I go out, I go dancing, I am mentally marked because I have a hole in my general culture, in those 10 years I never went to the movies, I didn't go to the theater, I read newspapers but I didn't listen to other music and so, for example, all the hits of the 90s I don't know them and that's funny.

It's the famous point of no return when you basically can't go forward anymore, because on one hand you are so compromised on the other hand it's the others who prevent you from going back. Being inside radicalization means being able to understand not the point from which you cannot escape but the point of no return and violence towards people, that is that cold moment when you say, well let's go shoot this guy's legs, that is: on one hand there is a story that tells me, "you all think alike" but usually inside, so this mechanism, there is always someone who manipulates or tries to manipulate is actually the one who has one foot in and the one who sometimes gets saved because he leaves.

Then some of us, who could also be me, had rational cognizance of what was being done (sometimes even big fuck-ups) but in any case others were doing it, for example going with bats to demonstrations (then you have to put the bats inside a bin because the police search you before the procession).

If you go you take a risk but you're part of it, if you don't go and you don't know but somebody goes and does it it's still bullshit, a lot of people did bullshit etc. Some people were coming from work, somebody was graduating or something and so they got exposed, then life resumed its course and they left.

Being able to put two words together allowed me to be a proofreader but if it weren't for that stuff then the alternative was when I get out of there (Leoncavallo) I go to be a porter i.e. I remain marginalized. The more time passes the harder it is then to fit in. The issue is, I don't want to end up bad being a thief, rather I organize and study, if you see the House of Paper the boss is the smarter one, the professor, not the porter....

Our collective guilt (I'm talking about my generation) is that you expect total failure and then you end up going to be a brigader or frying potatoes, those are shitty choices that have a reason with what's left inside, that is, we fight for a better world in which we would all be better off. Then you realize that you burned the best years of your life to go fry potatoes for a multinational....the problem is that we were betrayed because we said together we will do great things instead I continued to mind my own fucking business while you remained a loser, you went to fry potatoes. This is unacceptable, this is betrayal. Have you seen the movie, or have you read the book, "A Clockwork Orange?" The book has a different profile, contrary to the movie, the main character begins to think about starting a family, in the book he becomes deradicalized. A violent teenager who sees a picture of an infant on an advertisement and he begins to look at this child no longer as something to be kicked but as something he would like...

2.6 The study of microradicalization

The term/concept "micro-radicalization" was initially used by the studios Baily and Edwards (to describe that social process that legitimizes "the set of small actions of a journey toward forms of radicalization, which nevertheless may never reach a form of violent radicalization" (p. 276). This is a non-analytical paper, however, it departs from the literature of a few years ago to highlight the predictive trait of 'small actions,' of the need to develop knowledge even about those contexts of everyday life that generate violent but not egregious acts, sometimes linguistic, symbolic,

that build ideological or belief-based barriers amongst people. These researchers believe that in a sense these small actions can generate legitimate forms of radical thoughts, and it is these that become invisible over time. It is a reversal of analysis, for a long time the point of view has been general-particular, geopolitical-local, cultural-individual. At the same time, this is how Wilner & Dubouloz (2015) add that micro-radicalization is a process embodied in the informal learning processes, emphasizing that not only does it happen by small steps, invisible at times, but they become part of life, of the way of inhabiting the world.

More recently, this term has also been recovered in the pedagogical and educational sphere, developing a perspective of reading micro-radicalization based on the critical-emancipatory tradition (Caramellino, Melacarne, Ducol, 2021).

According to Wilner and Dubouloz (2015) micro-radicalization is a theoretical category and an emerging phenomenon understandable primarily from the study of multiethnic high-density living and working practices, and from studies of adult education. It is a relationship between education and radicalization that has been present in scholarly debate for many years. For example, Brookfield and Holst (2001), building upon some classic socio-political studies, conducted numerous studies to understand how and why people develop an exclusive/radical thinking perspective or behavior. In this research, they studied the forms of radicalization that produced emancipation and social progress, positive change of rights, and broadening of cultural perspectives in an inclusive sense.

Wilner and Dubouloz (2015) sought to connect adult learning theories, particularly Mezirow's (1991) theory, to the study of the processes of radicalization, of shaping those personal and community factors that make constructive dialectics between divergent positions more difficult. Wilner and Dubouloz (2015) use the construct of 'violent transformations' to argue that adult learning theory can help explain radicalization, political violence and in some cases even the processes that lead to terrorism (p. 420). At a recent edition of the 2011 Transformative Learning Conference, the two scholars presented some of the first research on this topic, theoretically connecting the construct of radicalization with that of transformative learning.

Radicalization then becomes a phenomenon much more connected to everyday life practices, to the experiences of separation and discrimination

that we witness and in which we are sometimes immersed in the concrete contexts of life and work. It is, for example, adult learning theories that are redefining this field of study, shifting the focus from macro readings of political, cultural and religious radicalization processes to the study of contextual and 'micro' situations.

This is an interpretation based on the idea that micro-radicalization is the "negotiating process by which people produce meaning, manifesting a transformation of perspectives of meaning in an exclusive, rigid and defensive sense" (Fabbri & Melacarne, 2020, p. 25), which leads to disruptions of 'contact' and limits the possibility of experiencing a positive dialectic (Mezirow, 1991). This is a very open field in which "micro-radicalization is not necessarily generated by an ideology or meta-representation; the process begins when a disorienting dilemma does not generate the need to learn but rather a stigmatized, intimidating, or pseudo-rational response. [...] In a broad sense, the process of micro-radicalization is the everyday experience in which people create relational boundaries, disrupting interactions and polarizing their views" (Caramellino, Melacarne, & Ducol, 2021, p. 16). The context of micro-radicalization thus becomes everyday life, as the fabric in which contradictions can become grounds for exclusion, estrangement, and the production of micro-radicalizing practices.

This interpretation made it possible to avoid readings of radicalization phenomena as 'essential' properties of theories, religions or systems of political thought. Most importantly, it has laid some groundwork for distinguishing very different areas of potential educational intervention (de-radicalization, disengagement, monitoring, primary/secondary/tertiary prevention). Micro-radicalization brings us back to the negotiated nature by which people produce meaning or not, allowing us to consider it as a transformation of perspectives of meaning in an exclusive, rigid, defensive sense and thus placing us in a position to reflect and manage it as learning processes, which if uneducated can take undesirable directions (hate speech, hate incidents, conspiracy theories, racial discrimination acts, etc.).

2.7 Socio-cultural distortions of radicalization studies

In October 2012, Kundnani (2012) conducted an extensive literature review to understand the guidelines characterizing radicalization research within the academic debate. His study showed how radicalization research has generated a stereotypical and widespread view of Muslim populations that have increasingly been seen as suspect communities, noting that since 2004 an emerging trend has tended to conceptualize radicalization with respect to at least four different reading points: (1) a psychological-cultural disposition; (2) a theological process; (3) a theological-psychological process; and (4) a security model. The scholar argues that the term radicalization has become central to terrorism studies and public debate and has been used more as a socio-political, and sometimes ideological lens, rather than a scientific construct; as the introduction of policies to counter radicalization have been accompanied by the emergence of an industry of government-funded consultants, analysts, scholars, entrepreneurs and self-appointed community representatives who claim that their knowledge of the radicalization process enables them to propose interventions in Muslim communities to prevent extremism (Kundnani, 2012, p. 3).

Kundnani (2012) thus develops a critical stance on the use of the term in that the historical contingency that led governments to focus on containing Islamic radicalization developed an ambiguous concept of radicalization, which was primarily used as a new lens through which to view Muslim minorities.

Silva's (2018) study likewise argues that "the circular relationship between government anti-radicalization research and the media reflects a broader concern with the thematization of radicalization as a predominantly religious issue, affecting (primarily) Muslim communities" (Silva, 2018, p. 51).

Waldmann (2010) argues that the meaning we attach to the term radicalization is the result of political and social processes that involve a collectivity of people beyond the terrorist group itself and cannot be understood in isolation. Although their violent campaign necessitates forms of clandestine operation, most terrorist groups remain connected to a radical environment in order to recruit new members. Furthermore, they depend on shelter and assistance provided by this supportive environment,

without which they are unable to evade persecution and carry out violent attacks [...] By sharing the core elements of the terrorists' political perspective and experiences, the radical environment provides political and moral support (Waldmann, 2010, p. 1).

Based on these studies, it is possible to argue that a bias-saturated concept has been constructed which, in turn, structures government practices introduced to combat radicalization, resulting in discrimination and unjustified restrictions on civil liberties (Kundnani, 2012). These studies argue that radicalization is not an understandable process when the term is used as a label to identify a certain type of people. Radicalization is a social process in which both those who promote radical social actions and those who consciously create the social gossip that fuels it (Amiriaux, 2016) are responsible for.

In conclusion, we can attempt to gather initial reflections based on the two previously stated directions regarding the evolution of the scientific debate. The first tendency, aimed at associating the term radicalization with the phenomena of terrorism, has likely undermined the possibility of also studying and investigating those everyday life contexts that could become precursors of violent radicalization phenomena. In the background are studies that we will now call micro-radicalization which focus on trying to understand how informal educational processes support the sedimentation of precritical thoughts impervious to dialectical confrontation (Mezirow, 1991). The second tendency to circumscribe radicalization to the religious or politico-religious sphere has vitiated the scientific debate, which for some scholars has become somewhat influenced by the cultural temperament of the time, sometimes going so far as to legitimize measures of political intervention and thus losing the argumentative force offered by the scientific method. This second trait has thus pushed the debate to focus on and study religiously motivated forms of (terrorist) radicalization, rather than the multiplicity of precursor phenomena and the educational implications of these processes (Antoniacci, Gambacorti-Passerini, Oggioni, 2019).

Within this dual trajectory there are multiple investigations that testify to an increased permeability of the scientific debate to accommodate different readings of the radicalization phenomena, incorporating the forms of closure and extremism of everyday thinking and practices, and recognizing highly promising contexts for preventing forms of violent

radicalization (or processes of implicit education in the use of discriminatory thinking) in daily life, the family or work, for example. It is within this third strand of studies that it becomes increasingly interesting to develop a reflection on the role that families and parental systems can play in processes of preventing radicalization phenomena. In particular, the following paragraphs will examine primarily those contributions that have highlighted the role that the family can play in predicting, anticipating, and transforming the systems of meaning that lead to violence.

2.8 Conclusions

Since 2001, in Europe and worldwide, we have witnessed an increase in terrorist acts¹, a phenomenon that has consequently increased scientific attention to the study of 'radicalization processes'. Within this area of study that has recovered traditions related to security studies and the social, psychological and educational sciences, at least three cross-cutting and shared points of analysis can be traced: (a) the term radicalization has become synonymous with terrorism, losing its ability to describe phenomena of social transformation driven by nonviolent radical thinking; (b) radicalization has been associated with religiously motivated violent radicalization, provoking social stereotypes and discrimination on religious grounds; and (c) the unit of study of radicalization has remained the individual, and consequently policy measures have promoted programs primarily geared toward the prevention of individual violent acts.

In the custom of the Italian language, the term radicalization is described as that process which moves toward radical positions or solutions, beyond compromise. The origins of the term, however, stem from the Latin *radicalis*, placing it in the realm of a process that leads back to the root of something, to its origin, to its causes. In Anglo-Saxon circles, the use of the term radical has been understood as that broad orientation of ideas appearing in the socio-economic sphere around the 19th century, initially used by opponents of electoral system reform at the time who contemptuously called 'radicals' those who expressed views deemed 'intransigent' or who participated in movements committed to a profound transformation of society. Thus, the word 'radical' has been used in

multiple meanings, including as a synonym for the promotion of democratic values and as a catalyst for emancipatory movements.

Within the political and then scientific debate, however, the term goes beyond having been established first and spread later. In one respect, it has borne a semantic reduction. Progressively the term 'radical' has been used, contradicting its etymology, to label an individual or group of individuals as radicalized or in some circumstances as terrorists. Radical has thus been supplanted over time by the construct of radicalization, which has increasingly taken on a somewhat distorted meaning by referring to the process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs, to the point where the concept of radicalism coincides with that of terrorism. Thus, radicalism, which for decades was also associated with movements of social and cultural renewal, has become, especially in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attack on the Twin Towers in New York City (USA), the key construct for describing what Huntington (2000) called the representation of the new world orders as clashes of civilizations or, as Desmarais, Simons-Rudolph, Brugh, Schilling, and Hoggan (2017) have pointed out, the new lens through which to reread radicalization with the process of asserting terrorist phenomena. It has become, in the collective imagination, a conceptual framework for describing how and why individuals come to adhere to extremist ideologies and perpetrate violent acts of a political, religious, or other nature.

To further understand the evolution of the construct, it is recorded that numerous articles have been published since 2014 through which it is possible to try to understand the direction that the scientific debate on this issue has taken. Desmarais and other researchers (2017) analyzed 250 scientific articles published from 1990 to 2015, finding that only 20 percent of these produced new and original data through empirical research, while 80 percent of the research used existing literature as the primary source of analysis. Desmarais' work suggests that we should read critically and place radicalization studies historically since many of them made use of primary sources produced within particular historical contingencies.

More recently, extensive literature has emerged attempting to build a repertoire of practices put in place to prevent and manage radicalization processes, among which and of particular interest is the report of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). In this, 34 training practices were surveyed in 2019 for front-line practitioners of radicalization-prevention

phenomena. Similarly, in the 2018 volume 'De-Radicalization,' the *Rivista Italiana di Intelligence* (Italian Intelligence Review) restored the term to its original state with experiences and perspectives of emerging theorists on the topic. Thus, there has been a shift from the association between radical and social emancipation/transformation to the connection between radicalization and terrorism, to the third semantic wave fueled by the language of analysts and insiders, in which radicalization has become primarily a predictive indicator of religious extremism, blurring even more with fundamentalism that associates religiously motivated terrorism and radicalization (Sedgwick, 2010).

References

- ALONSO, R., BJØRGO, T., PORTA, D.D., COOLSAET, R., KHOSROKHAVAR, F., LOHLKER, R., RANSTORP, M., REINARES, F., SCHMID, A., SILKE, A., TAARNBY, M., & VRIES, G.M. (2008). *Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism: A concise Report prepared by the European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation*.
- AMIRAU, V. (2016). Visibility, transparency and gossip: How did the religion of some (Muslims) become the public concern of others?. *Critical Research on Religion*, 4 (1), 37–56.
- ANTONACCI, F., GAMBACORTI-PASSERINI M.B., & OGGIONNI, F. (2019) (Eds). *Educazione e terrorismo. Posizionamenti pedagogici*. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- ANTONELLI, V. (2010). L'esperienza dei patti per la sicurezza nel biennio 2007-2008. In A. PAJNO (Ed.), *La sicurezza urbana*. Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli.
- BAILEY, G., & EDWARDS, P. (2016). Rethinking Radicalization: Microradicalizations and Reciprocal Radicalization as an Intertwined Process. *Journal for Deradicalization*, 12, 255-281.
- BJØRGO, T. & HORGAN, J. (2009) (Eds.). *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement*. Abingdon, New York: Routledge.
- BROOKFIELD, S. D., & HOLST, J. D. (2011). *Radicalizing Learning: Adult Education for a Just World*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- CARAMELLINO, D., MELACARNE, C., & DUCOL, B. (2021). Transformative Learning and Micro-radicalization. In A., NICOLAIDES, S., ESCHENBACHER, P., BUERGELT, Y., GILPIN-JACKSON, M., WELCH, & M., MISAWA (Eds.), *Handbook of learning for transformation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- CLUBB, G. (2009). Re-evaluating the Disengagement Process: the Case of Fatah. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 3(3), 25–34.
- DESMARAIS, S. L., SIMONS-RUDOLPH, J., BRUGH, C. S., SCHILLING, E., & HOGGAN, C. (2017). The state of scientific knowledge regarding factors associated with terrorism. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, 4(4), 180-209.
- FABBRI, L., & ROMANO, A. (2021). Processi di radicalizzazione e prospettive trasformativa. *Educational Reflective Practices. 1-Special*, 8-20.
- FABBRI, L., & MELACARNE, C. (2020). Apprendere e disapprendere nei contesti di vita quotidiana. Il caso di un quartiere multietnico. *Educational Reflective Practice*, 1, 18-54.
- HAGER, P., & HALLIDAY, J.(2006). Recovering Informal Learning: Wisdom, Judgement and Community. *Lifelong Learning Book Series Vol. 7*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.
- HORGAN J. (2008). Deradicalization or disengagement? A process in need of clarity and a counterterrorism initiative in need of evaluation. *International Journal of Social Psychology*, 24(2).
- KUNDNANI, A.(2012). Radicalisation: the journey of a concept. *Race & Class*, 54(2), 3-25.
- MARSICK, V.J., & VOLPE, M. (1999). The nature and need for informal learning. *Developing Human Resources*, 1, 1-9.
- MEZIRROW, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- MOGHADDAM, F. M. (2009). De-radicalization and the staircase from terrorism. In D. CANTER (Ed.), *The faces of terrorism: Multidisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 277–292). Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- PRESSMAN, D. E. (2009) *Risk Assessment Decisions for Violent Political Extremism*. Public Safety Canada.
- SABIC-EL-RAYESS, A. (2021). How do people radicalize?. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 87, 102499.

- SCHMID, A. P. (2013). Radicalisation, de-radicalisation, counter-radicalisation: A conceptual discussion and literature review. *ICCT Research Paper, 97(1)*, 22.
- SCHMID, A.P. (200). *Thesaurus and Glossary of Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Terms*. London: FEWER.
- SEDGWICK, M. (2010). The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion. *Terrorism and Political Violence, 22(4)*, 479-494.
- SILVA, D. (2018). "Radicalisation: The Journey of a Concept Revisited". *Race & Class, 59(4)*, 34-53.
- WALDMANN, P. (2010). *Radicalisation in the Diaspora: Why Muslims in the West Attack Their Host Countries*. Madrid, Elcano.
- WATKINS, K.E., MARSICK, V.J.(1992). Building the learning organization: a new role for human resource developers. *Studies in Continuing Education, 14(2)*, 115-129.
- WIKTOROWICZ, Q. (2005). *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- WILNER, A, & DUBOULOZ, C.J. (2015). Homegrown terrorism and transformative learning: an interdisciplinary approach to understanding radicalization. *Global Change, Peace, and Security, 22(1)*, 33-51.
- WINTER, D. A., & FEIXAS, G. (2019). Toward a constructivist model of radicalization and deradicalization: A conceptual and methodological proposal. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*, Article 412.

Fear and prevention. The ambiguous role of the feeling of 'fear' in contemporary judicial systems

Roberto Mazzola

The chapter intends to examine how the feeling of fear linked to religiously motivated terrorism has conditioned the production of legislation and influenced the case law orders.

Key Words: Fear; Judicial System; Religions; Security

Charlie Hebdo, Bataclan, Isis, foreign fighters. Seven years ago a jihadist terrorist group attacked the heart of Europe. Aside from expressing the correct and appropriate set phrases, the European Council's reaction, and especially the individual EU member states under attack, was essentially to strengthen, update and deploy its legal arsenal. While a state of emergency was declared in France under the provisions of Article 16 of the Constitution, the European Council, in turn, approved the Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism which was designed to confront the issue of "foreign terrorist fighters". It was opened for signature at the international conference in Riga on October 22, 2016. The primary function of this document was to transform several acts into crimes, including: intentional participation in a terrorist group, receiving terrorism training, traveling abroad for terrorist purposes, and financing or

organizing such travel. The purpose of the agreement was not only to harmonize European legislation and facilitate cooperation among states, providing a network of contact points at the national level to enable information to be exchanged quickly between police forces and intelligence, above all there was an implicit and hidden motion to frighten the antagonist into understanding that for the institutions of the European Council and all the Contracting Parties, the fight against terrorism was and would continue to be a vigorously pursued priority, even notwithstanding certain fundamental principles.

Although the term “fear” is not part of the technical-legal lexicon, it does, between the lines, reside in the background of Western legal systems; especially in sanctions of a penal nature whose precise purpose is to threaten the infliction of suffering (Antolisei, 1980, p. 1). As Hobbes observes (Pacchi, Lupoli, 2001; Greco, 2021, p. 39), in the absence of a power that compels citizens to behave, that threatens them with a prospect of suffering, principles such as solidarity, justice, restraint, mercy, in short, doing unto others as we would have them do unto us, would not be respected because they contradict natural passions which tend to let pride, partiality, envy and the spirit of revenge prevail (Greco, 2021, p. 141; Nussbaum, 2020, p. 125). Swordless pacts, Hobbes observed, are empty words because they are incapable of giving security to the associates, subject(s) or citizen(s) (Pacchi, Lupoli, 2001, p. 139), because the English philosopher's ethical-anthropological horizon rested on the conviction that the human actions enacted out of fear of norms, both individually and communally, are actions that could also be avoided (Pacchi, Lupoli, 2001, p. 139).

For Hobbes, therefore, only fear has sufficient strength to hold society together: «the maker of great and enduring societies is (not) the benevolence that men (nurture) one another, but the fear they (nurture) of one another».

In this perspective, fear does not betray the individual; on the contrary, it complements it. It is not the antithesis of civilization but the full realization of it.

«Fear was to represent the keystone of a people's community, the essence of associated life. (...) It was to attend to the needs and desires of the people and be perceived as a bastion in defense of the most valuable achievements of civilization. Fear had to be transmitted and utilized by taking full advantage of the dimension of theatricality. It is, in fact, based on deception, the magnification or even exaggeration of danger by the state», whose job it is to choose the objects of fear by determining what to fear and what not to fear. Beginning with the consideration that the way to conceive of a distinction between good and evil is left to the sensibility and culture of those who must make it; the only shared value that unites all men is therefore the notion of fear. It serves as a useful common code of ethics for people who lack them.

«In the absence of a broader complex of moral obligations and spontaneous cooperation on the part of rulers, the idea of founding submission upon fear of royal authority would have proved a vain hope. Hobbes concluded that political fear should not be understood as a surgical instrument in the hands of a distant ruler, but as a structural element of collective life, continually sustained by the conscious participation of subjects, the ruling elite in civil society, and institutions such as the church and universities» (*Paura. La politica del dominio*, 2005, p. 33, 35, 40, 42).

Obviously, an efficient *State of fear* can only exist on the condition that there are clear laws and compulsory punishments. In this sense, the principle of legality among its various functions also contributes to strengthening the *fear state*, where, in contrast, anomia would only increase arbitrariness and disorientation by bringing the sense of fear closer to the *State of nature*, which is certainly effective on the emotional level but much less so on the social level. In this sense, for Hobbes, and for all those who consciously or unconsciously draw on his thought, *political fear* is useful because it helps to secure a vital ingredient of earthly happiness for society. Hobbes, therefore, reverses the usual interpretation of the notion of fear. It is not a dehumanizing force capable of destroying a member of society's will, on the contrary, it is a source of virtuous behaviors from which the whole community can benefit; it has preventive force.

«Fear is a disciplining force that tames destructive and dispersive impulses. (...) Fear gives the individual integrity and consistency, reminding him what really matters» (Robin, 2005, p. 44).

Those who are afraid, in other words, are people capable of harboring suspicion, paying heed, and organizing themselves so they no longer need to be afraid. It is thus decidedly better than the *State of Nature* in that it is controllable and is ultimately intended to improve the quality of life of all those who willingly accept to live in fear of the power of the State in order to escape the fears and anxieties associated with the *State of Nature*, which, instead, neither protects men nor does it enable them to secure their own good, but, on the contrary, compels them to never let their guard down in pursuit of their own good. In the latter case, in fact, man feels

¹ «La disponibilità a compiere questo sacrificio ci coglie impreparati. Hobbes» -observes P. Legerzi, *Reazioni al terrorismo. Vulnerabilità, paura, rischio e pericolo*, in Il Mulino, 2000, p. 1025 - «è il primo studioso che ha analizzato la mobilitazione della paura sia come leva per la dominazione da parte del sovrano sia come garanzia che il sovrano deve dare ai suoi sudditi: difenderli dalle loro paure».

nothing but primary fear, one that forces “the individual (...) to think only of his own fear and survival” (Robin, 2005, p. 48). Under such conditions fear betrays its authentic function, for if a sovereign “hopes to use fear to pacify instead of excite the political climate, to instill tranquility instead of awakening hatred, he must ensure the individual a better life than that which could be found in the State of nature. (In this sense) the supremacy of law is essential to achieve this goal” (Robin, 2005, p. 50).

For these reasons, Western culture of the Greco-Hellenistic tradition feels the need to give itself a system of law and perceives the need to transform the wrath and ferocity of the *Furies* into *Eumenides*, or rather, into beings which were ‘benevolent’ toward the political community and democracy. In the *Oresteia* (Beta, 2007) Athena convinces the *Furies*, goddesses of vengeance and wickedness, to evolve into benign forces. She does this by telling them that they will be revered by the people of Athens, considering them as protagonists for the health of the community.

«Athena's move seems to formalize that the legal system should incorporate and honor retributive passions, as it is generally interpreted. These passions remain unchanged; they simply have a new house built around them. The Erinyes agree to submit to the constraints of the law, but their dark and vengeful nature remains unchanged» (*La monarchia della paura*, 2020, p. 68)

The *Furies* therefore do not change in nature and continue to be frightening, only that the political authority of Athena persuades them to channel their action in the interests of the *Polis*. This is a controlled and domesticated fear. To do this, to tame their strength and constructively channel the fear they produce, they are offered incentives to participate in the governance of the city: a place of honor, the reverence of the citizens, but all this will only be possible if they are able to adopt a new range of feelings, replacing revenge with benevolence and hope.

In truth, the two trajectories, secular and religious, converge at a common conceptual point, albeit by different ways. They both substantiate the idea that punishment that is not only retributive, it is part of a structure built on prevention and salvation and works for the good of human beings.

All this applies not only to secular rights. In fact, legal systems and norms that are directly or indirectly traceable to religious rules and principles are also familiar with the dynamics of fear, even if in different terms. Here the

need to equip oneself with rights comes from soteriological motivations and not from the need to curb *Chaos* and the primitive forces of nature. The dual logic 'submerged'/'saved' thus becomes central in understanding the dynamics of fear and its part in searching for 'salvation'. Those who have always sought and known God need not fear, need not be afraid because they will have a place at Christ's side and thus salvation, which is the place of grace "where the lush earth is covered with grass in green flowering pastures" (Le Goff, 1982, p. 43). Those who, on the contrary, have rejected God's voice and scorned his commands must be *afraid* because they will be punished with penalties proportionate to the sins they have committed. In truth, these two trajectories, secular and religious, eventually converge at a common conceptual point. Although they take different routes, they both substantiate a notion of punishment that is not only retributive, it is inscribed within an organization of prevention-salvation working for the good of humankind.

From the Third Century AC, Clement Alexander and Origen were able to work out a fusion of Hellenistic culture and Christianity in the cultural melting pot that was the port of Alexandria. On one hand, the foundation of their respective doctrines was derived from the tradition of certain pagan Greek religious and philosophical currents, and on the other from an original reflection and reworking of the Bible and Judeo-Christian eschatology. From ancient Greece, particularly Plato, the two philosophers had inherited the belief that punishments inflicted by the gods are not dictated by wrath and vengeance but a means of education and salvation, and constitute a process of purification. Origen and Clement, as is the entire Judeo-Christian tradition, thus derive that 'punish' and 'educate' are synonymous, and that all chastisement is necessary for the salvation of men and women (Le Goff, 1982, p. 63-64).

Therefore, fear is needed, but only to serve the purpose of salvation, education, and the social rebirth of women/men. Still in the 18th century Bentham as well as Howard, and, on this side of the Channel, Mirabeau, associated the idea of punishment with that of penance, consolidating the idea that it was not enough to threaten the infliction of punishment if it was not accompanied by the will to improve, through discipline, the offender. Not surprisingly, Howard wanted a reform of the prison system

inspired by the most reasonable monastic precedents such as individual separation of prisoners, compulsory labor, and religious education (Merle, 1985, p. 89).

This would all seem clear, yet the hidden role ‘fear’ plays in continental legal systems is more ambiguous than it might seem. In one sense, the law uses fear by controlling and limiting its effects: the *Furies* turned into *Eumenides*. Then again, the certainty of law and the principle of strict legality and all the institutions through which the modern Rule of law is stated and articulated serve to distance the fear of impulsiveness and blind violence of the *State of Nature*. Law, in other words, acts as a taming force of fear.

Even in this case modern legal science has merely re-elaborated what Plato had already made clear in the *Critique*: “one should not hold in the highest regard living as such but living according to virtue and justice” (Reale, 2000, p. 123). This is the monition on which the function of fear shall be instilled and directed to fellow citizens, especially younger ones.

«It isn't living to be held in the highest regard, but living well», and living well means doing so according to virtue and justice, but this can only be achieved through respect for and fear of the law. It is not by accident that in the so-called «Prosopopoeia and Discourse of the Laws. What are Laws and the State and why the true citizen must respect the Laws», for Plato the citizen is such by virtue of the laws and therefore depends on them because without them the Polis will collapse: «or does it seem to you that that City can still exist and not be entirely subverted in which the sentences passed have no force, but are dismissed of their authority and destroyed by the work of private citizens?» (Platone. *Critone*, 2000, p. 123, 127, 139, 143).

The law is what matters more than anything else.

The latter is to be esteemed «more than to a father one must carry out what it dictates to endure, silently. (...) And he who does not obey (...) commits injustice in three ways: first, because he does not obey us who have begotten him, and because he does not obey us who have brought him up; because after having agreed to obey us, neither does he obey nor does he try to persuade us that something is not well done, while, on our part, we propose and do not command harshly to carry out what we command» (Platone. *Critone*, 2000, p. 151).

Laws can most certainly be changed if unjust, but only within the law itself and never trampling on it.

Obedience to the laws, whether they are unjust or appear to be so, is worth far more than the anarchic act of the one who tramples on them, because, in that case, he counterposes injustice with more injustice, falling into grave moral error. This is certain, and as the best doctrine points out, it becomes an integral part of the very idea of security.

«Even Peces Barba», notes Bonetti, «has recently observed that certainty of law is part of a broader fundamental value, that of security understood as tranquility, the absence of fear and certainty in the face of the distrust produced by the highlighted fulfillment of deep needs» (*Società del rischio e sovranità costituzionale*, 2006, p. 812).

The natural and instinctive fear of being harmed by uncertain events is so present that the 'precautionary principle of uncertain risks' has been developed, which together with the precautionary principle of preventive action provided for in Art. 174 of the EC Treaty governs the policies of the European Union. The precautionary principle, which first entered international law with the fifteenth principle of the 1992 Rio Declaration on the Environment, implies that scientific uncertainty regarding the consequences of a given action in the event of risk of serious irreversible damage should not serve as a pretext for postponing the adoption of appropriate and cost-effective measures, including those aimed at preventing environmental degradation. Three years later in February 1995, the Barnier Act introduced it into French law, defining it

«as the principle that the absence of certainty, taking into account current technical and scientific knowledge, must not delay the adoption of effective and proportionate measures which, at an acceptable economic cost, aim to prevent the risk of serious and irreversible damage to the environment» (*Società del rischio e sovranità costituzionale*, 2006, p. 816).

If we are talking about environmental sustainability in this case nothing prevents extending the paradigm to forms of social sustainability as well. Therefore, the state in its many branches must offer certainty and serenity to the fellow man both by giving him refuge, allowing him to escape both the talons of an unkind and feral nature and the dangers inherent in man's evil nature, that dark side inside every human being: *homo homini lupus*. The law must also be frightening, but reasonably so.

The problem is the law has often failed to fulfill this mandate. It has more than once betrayed this purpose by transforming itself into an instrument

aimed at instilling 'terror' and 'primal' fear. 'Terror' *secundum legem* is even more nefarious than the *State of nature* in that, at its core, it undermines the belief that law is a tool of civilization and growth and a force opposed to the breakdown of social norms and disorder. If people generally have the right to fear nothing from the outside, they also have the right to fear nothing from the law, judgments, administrative acts, or legal doctrine which, being a source of law, influences the actions of legal practitioners.

Nevertheless, *primary fear* often takes over law and uses it as its tool for purposes other than justice. "In the early years of the Cold War, fear of communism served to downsize New Deal legislation. Black fear of white domination and white fear of black domination endorsed policies and regimes of racial segregation" (Robin, 2005, p. 9 ss.; Diamanti, 2008). In 1938 the racial laws in Italy were passed based on discriminatory petitions of genuine racial hatred.

In such cases the law becomes functional to evil, a tool directed to deny rights and freedoms, or at the very least to lead to drastic redrafting. Here fear is transformed into terror because it is connected to the most savage instincts of the despotic ruler. Contrary to Hobbes, who channels fear toward compliance with laws, institutions and moral obligations, the despot, for Montesquieu, excludes and nullifies every institution by making only his fierce will prevail. Despotic terror cannot benefit the political community because it feeds on distant and politically selfish zeal. Terror that produces large amounts of fear within the political community, and with it the law which becomes its vehicle, is the antithesis of political life itself. It entails the stillness of death and the disappearance of all internal debate within society. Terror/fear derives from the uncontrollable need for nothingness and destruction (Lefebvre, 1987). However, despite radical differences between the two theoretical frameworks, Montesquieu and Hobbes share one common denominator: for both "the fear of a more radical and debilitating form of fear should push the individual to submit to a more civilized and protective state" (Robin, 2005, p. 57). Liberalism, as well as the notion of the *Rule of law* and *pluralism* in Montesquieu, was born to escape fear and terror. Despotic terror in the latter's theoretical framework serves to justify liberal government. The stronger the

despotism, the more the need to escape it grows. However, and herein lies the paradox, the more freedom and pluralism grows, the more the cases of despotism are strengthened and multiplied, the more the demand for repression and limitations of freedom and rights grows. With Montesquieu came the belief that terror and fear were synonymous with barbarism, and the antidote was to be fully found in liberalism. Thus a new political and literary aesthetic was born; a new rhetoric in which the allies of terror were distance, irrationality and darkness and the enemies were social intimacy, reason and light.

In such cases man is faced with a force multiplied in power with little chance of success. Primordial fear, always latent, finds a powerful ally in the legal system. Disgust toward certain categories of people, social envy, hatred, and rage toward certain people or communities dress up as legality, justifying themselves through laws, verdicts, or the formalization of acts and administrative procedures elevating 'fear' as a constitutional principle to a fundamental norm. The norms of postwar constitutional charters and those of international law should be interpreted in this perspective. They have been endowed with terms that go beyond the sole purpose of preventing society from slipping into the savagery of a *State of nature*. The experience of the totalitarianisms of the 20th century has forced the creation of systems that control law itself from the *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* syndrome. How can one trust a legislator or judge when they are capable of transforming themselves into systematic builders of evil?

The truth is that the naïve belief that law is a bastion against incivility has completely disappeared from the European consciousness after WWII, regardless of the differences between the two theoretical frameworks regarding the relationship between law and fear. Since then, all legal systems have run for cover to protect themselves from degeneration of the law itself. The absolute, almost religious faith in the principle of legality as it has been considered up to now: a true act of faith in the law based on the conviction that the force that animates it has a foundation in the strength of moral conscience and in the irrepressible human values inspired by goodness and piety has most definitely broken down (Zagrebel'sky, 2008, p. 18). In short, a moral approach to the principle of legality pushed to the point of heroism to respect the law anyway, even if it is unjust. This

approach is not entirely convincing today. Zagrebelsky, not surprisingly, wonders to what extent such an interpretation of the function of law is sustainable. In particular, he asks to which point can a jurist justify an unjust law in the name of legality, and above all, should jurists give in to whim taking the form of a legal norm? Can legal practitioners become mere executors of force put in the form of law? In truth, it is evident that even Calamandrei would never have extended his definition of law as an expression of solidarity, generality and abstractness to the racial laws of 1938 founded on principles exactly antithetical to those conceived by the Florentine jurist (Fubini, 2008, p. 1-8).

The praise of the law post-Holocaust can thus only be made if it refers to a law whose regulation is an expression of a certain kind of power and a certain set of values. The praise of the law should be addressed, in other words, only and only

«to that law which requires a certain structure of intent contained in such acts of imperium: generality and abstractness, to which only virtues such as reciprocity, solidarity, etc., which are completely unrelated to measures that create discrimination, can be referred» (*A 70 anni dalla promulgazione della legislazione detta razziale*, 2008, p. 9).

In truth, what Calamandrei feared were theories of 'Free Law' that could justify any value as a legal norm as long as it was an expression of popular will and strong ideologies. Free law, as it was known to Calamandrei, was in truth anything but. It was a strongly ideologized law "a right that fed directly into 'socialist legality' or Nazi *Volksgesetz*" (Fubini, 2008, p. 13).

Such law fed on strong values that should have endured at any cost, so much so as to justify the use of any means or instruments. In his address at the International Congress of Civil Procedural Law in Florence in 1950, the concept of legality was enriched with substantive elements of political and social justice. "Law is no longer a neutral concept usable by any legislator: it is constitutional law" (Fubini, 2008, p. 21). A law that no longer expresses just any order, it becomes an order marked by precise substantive directives, this too of positive law. From this perspective, the very notion of the Rule of law takes on a special significance. It is intimately linked to the ideas of democracy and freedom, and for both to exist the people must

trust the laws of the state and feel them as their own, “as if arising from their conscience, not as imposed from above” (Fubini, 2008, p. 22).

The fact that law must always be put into doubt, especially from a preventative perspective, appears even stronger where guarantees and protections of fundamental human rights against man himself are used, claiming to combat the insecurity generated by fear with the subjectiveness and uncertainty of law. The notion of ‘protected democracy’ (Di Giovine, 2005; Pace, 2015, p. 19) and the logic of ‘Reason of State’ (Galantino, 2010; Nicotra, 2021) reevaluated in recent times in European and North American Public Law testifies as to how strong the impulse of ‘primary fear’ is in determining security policies in contemporary legal systems, and how equally strongly the majority of the public is attracted to witnessing portions of their freedom and rights sacrificed in the interest of their own personal tranquility, which has little to do with social peace.

It is necessary and important to have some fear of the law. The psychology of ‘anomie’ (Dahrendorf, 2005, p. 17), that is, lack of acceptance of the laws of society, does not benefit the political community and civil society. The dialogue between Socrates and the law, as it has already been pointed out, shows how essential it is to respect and fear the law. Today's civil society and political communities cannot escape confrontation with the problem of the weakness of the authority of law. Faith in the law, awareness of the need for respect of rules and norms for social development, but at the same time personal development of each fellow citizen, are profiles of the same philosophical literature that have fallen into disuse. Law has little hold on the consciences of the greater part of society because it has lost authority. It can no longer instill awe and respect. This is because of several reasons. First, there is a pedagogical problem. Weak civic education, especially in the southern part of Europe, affects the interdependent weakness of law (Sciolla, 2008, p. 803-820, 263). There is also a cognitive problem. Nomogenetic spread brings with it widespread ignorance of the law and the weakening of this tool as a means of social discipline. The fact that the Italian Constitutional Court has revised the principle *ignorantia non excusat* regarding knowledge of criminal norms shows, following a tradition deriving from medieval scholasticism, how an excessive production of legislation does not benefit the authority of law. Moreover,

the provided abstract model, typical of laws, has weakened in favor of forms of regulation of social and interpersonal processes based on a belief system of orthopraxy linked to charismatic figures and mediated through the persuasive and covert role of the media.

What, then, is to be said about fear of law? i) That to a certain extent it is not only a state of mind but is the prime mover of legal dynamics on several occasions; ii) that a minimum amount of fear is necessary for society to function properly; iii) that fear is closely linked to authority, and the latter to the authorities who exercise it. Fear without authority can turn into extremism and abuse; iv) that an excess of fear is counterproductive for the government and unacceptable by modern constitutional organizations because it ends up contradicting its own assumptions.

This being the case, which model of legislation is needed to effectively prevent the phenomena of religious and cultural radicalization? Exclusively punitive or predominantly preventative? Should they instill fear because the logic of fear is the only one that can contain the phenomena of violent radicalization? In the face of phenomena of this nature, is the preventative approach based on dialogue and confrontation useful or is it just a waste of time (Petrini, 1996; Ceri, 2003)?

It is not easy to answer these questions, insofar as the coexistence of different types of legislation within the same system makes it difficult to understand whether certain advancements in combating violent radicalization are attributable more to the punitive model, the preventive one or a hybrid of both.

It is easier to affirm that any legislative policy that passes in the name of security, invoking fears and apprehensions, implying the sacrifice of basic fundamental rights that have been recognized by international law or individual constitutional domestic laws, shall be answerable to both public opinion (at least those still convinced of centrality and mandatory fundamental rights established at the heart of liberal democracies) as well as national (Viglio, 2020) and international judiciaries which could decide to deem invalid (as in the case of Guantanamo with confessions obtained

under strong psychological pressure²) or as an exception to the principle of due process under Art. 6 ECHR.

Equally objective today appear to be increasingly frequent laws where, alongside punitive regulations, are exquisitely preventative regulations inspired by a ratio of good practices and intentions of a pedagogical nature that help the person who committed the crime understand the degradation of their behavior. Thus Law No. 7/2006³, in addition to introducing a new crime, that of infibulation as provided for in Articles 583 bis and 583 ter. of the Criminal Code, concerned with (Art. 7) preparing 'international cooperation programs' within the framework: "of the development of cooperation programs conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in particular programs aimed at promoting women's rights in countries that, despite national prohibition of female genital mutilation, it is a practice that continues. In any case, without new or increased burdens on the State, training and informative projects aimed at discouraging such practices, the creation of anti-violence centers that can shelter young women trying to evade it or for women trying to protect their daughters or relatives who are minors are to be provided, in agreement with the governments concerned, among the local populations".

² The military judge charged with the job of judging Ben Laden's driver decided to refute part of the confessions made by the accused in 2008. "According to the 'New York Times', Captain Allred decided to reject the statements made by the accused at the base of Bagram, Afghanistan, after his capture at the end of 2001, because he established that Salim Hamdan was bound 24 hours a day, was in complete isolation and that a soldier put a knee between his shoulder blades and ordered him to speak. The military judge, on the other hand, found that the confinement at Guantanamo Bay did not constitute "inherent duress" as argued by the defense, and therefore allowed the use of Hamdan's statements taken at the base in Cuba. Mr. Allred further stated that the prosecution should produce Hamdan's interviews to show the conditions under which they were conducted", in Guantanamo, the justice system rejects confessions obtained under severe duress", in *Le Monde* on 22.07.08 <https://www.lemonde.fr/ameriques/article/2008/07/22/a-guantanamo-la-justice-rejette-des-aveux-obtenus-sous-une-forte-contrainte_1076159_3222.html> (seen on 23/06/2022). See also: M. Bellazzi, *The "Patriot Acts" and the limitation of constitutional rights in the United States*, in *Politica del Diritto*, 4 (2003), pp. 681-706.

³ Law 9 January 2006, n. 7 "Provisions concerning the prevention and prohibition of practices of female genital mutilation", in G.U. n. 14 on 18 January 2006.

In short, clearly a policy of 'fear' that is completely disengaged from fundamental rights will inevitably overflow into inconsistency and injustice, just as a policy of protecting and safeguarding rights that completely disregards the dimension of fear and dread will surely prove weak and vague.

References

- ANTOLISEI, F. (1980). *Manuale di diritto penale. Parte generale*. Milano: Giuffrè.
- BELLAZZI, M. (2003). The “Patriot Acts” and the limitation of constitutional rights in the United States. *Politica del diritto*, 4, 681-706.
- BONETTI, P. (2006). Società del rischio e sovranità costituzionale. *Il Mulino*, 5.
- BETA, S. (2007). *Tragici greci. Eschilo-Sofocle-Euripide*. Torino: Einaudi.
- CERI, P. (2003). *La società vulnerabile. Quale sicurezza, quale libertà*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- DAHRENDORF, R. (2005). *The reopened society. From the Fall of the Wall to the Iraq War*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- DIAMANTI, I. (2008). *La sicurezza in Italia. Significati, immagine e realtà. Seconda indagine sulla rappresentazione sociale e mediatica della sicurezza*. Bologna: Fondazione Unipolis.
- DI GIOVINE, A. (2005). *Democrazie protette e protezione della democrazia*. Torino: Giappichelli.
- FUBINI, G. (2008). A 70 anni dalla promulgazione della legislazione detta razziale. In *Rivista telematica* (www.statoechiase.it), 1-8.
- GALANTINO, M. (2010). *La società della sicurezza. La costruzione sociale della sicurezza in situazioni di emergenza*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- GRECO, T. (2021). *La legge della fiducia. Alle radici del diritto*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- LEFEBVRE, G. (1987). *The French Revolution*, Italian translation. Torino: Einaudi.
- LEGERZI, P. (2000). Reazioni al terrorismo. Vulnerabilità, paura, rischio e pericolo. *Il Mulino*.
- LE GOFF, J. (1982). *The Birth of Purgatory*, Italian translation. Torino: Einaudi.
- MERLE, R. (1985). *La pénitence et la peine. Théologie, Droit canonique, Droit penal*. Paris: Cerf.
- NICOTRA, I. A. (2021). Stato di necessità e diritti fondamentali. Emergenza e potere legislativo. *Riv. Ass. it. Cost. (AIC)*, 1.
- NUSSBAUM, M. C. (2020). *La monarchia della paura. Considerazioni sulla crisi politica attuale*, Italian translation. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- PACE, A. (2015). La sicurezza pubblica nella legalità costituzionale. *AIC Associazione italiana dei costituzionalisti*, 1, 1-68.
- PACCHI, A., LUPOLI, A. (2001). *Leviatano o la materia, la forma e il potere di uno Stato ecclesiastico e civile. Thomas Hobbes*, Italian translation. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- PETRINI, D., (1996). *La prevenzione inutile. Illegittimità delle misure ‘praeter delictum’*. Napoli: Jovene.
- REALE, G. (2000). *Platone. Critone*, Italian Translation. Milano: Rusconi.
- ROBIN, C. (2005). *Paura. La politica del dominio*. Milano: Bocconi University.
- SCIOLLA, L. (2008). La classe senza regole. *Il Mulino*, 2.
- VIGLIO, M. (2020). *La malapena. Sulla crisi della giustizia al tempo dei centri di trattamento degli stranieri*. Torino: Ed. Seb.
- ZAGREBELSKY, G. (2008). A Troubled Apology of the Law. In S. CALAMANDREI, (edited by), *Piero Calamandrei. Fede nel diritto. Saggi di G. Alpa, P. Rescigno, G. Zagrebelsky*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.

'Don't be afraid': preventing discrimination through intercultural education

Marco Catarci
Massimiliano Fiorucci
Maria Chiara Giorda
Gennaro Gervasio
Manfredi Merluzzi
Paola Perucchini

This chapter reflects on the semantic confusion and limitations of discourse on radicalization that often fuel stereotypes and prejudices, accelerating the spread of historically rooted social fears such as those related to cultural and religious diversity. We do not dwell on actions and techniques for preventing processes to which at least the media has given too much attention. Instead, we propose intercultural education as the best approach for achieving lexical and conceptual cleansing and preventing discrimination - above all Islamophobia, as shown by the results of the PriMed (Prevention and Interaction in the Trans-Mediterranean Space) project - thereby laying the foundations for rich and varied social and cultural ties. The interdisciplinary perspective is based on different methodological approaches and on various recent contributions in the literature, particularly in the field of pedagogy, psychology, sociology and history.

Key Words: Religious Fundamentalism; Radicalization; Intercultural Education; Islam

4.1 Fundamentalism, radicalism, radicalization

The debate (also academic) on the terms fundamentalism, radicalism and radicalisation constantly runs the risk of being fuelled by a combination of lexical and conceptual confusion, widely varying interpretations and a series of ambiguous exchanges. Studies on these individual terms, conducted only recently, are hampered by epistemological and interpretative obstacles.

Over the last fifty years or so, religious fundamentalisms have been compared and observed from different perspectives (for a summary see Giorda, 2012): since the pioneering *Fundamentalism Project*, scholars from various academic fields have shed light on their characteristics, instruments, objectives and internal and external relations. Critical analyses have multiplied, especially since 2001, even inspiring cinema and television. Examples include the 2006 documentary film 'Jesus Camp' directed by Rachel Gradi and Heidi Ewing; it narrates the dynamics and relationships within the Kids on Fire School of Ministry, a summer camp located near Devil's Lake, North Dakota, run by pastor Becky Fischer. Another example is the Netflix miniseries *Unorthodox* created by Anna Winger and Alexa Karolinski in 2020: based on Deborah Feldman's 2012 autobiography, it tells the story of a young Hasidic Jewish woman who flees from Brooklyn to Berlin.

In Italy, after the pioneering work *Fundamentalisms* edited by Pasquinelli (1993), the 1998 work by sociologists Guolo and Pace, *I fondamentalismi*, is undoubtedly an important reference work that other scholars have repeatedly built upon, reworking, updating and enriching it with case studies. From our perspective, it has the merit of having highlighted the hybrid nature and fleeting confines of any definition that has attempted, in vain, to fix and crystallise dynamic, constantly changing phenomena. Religious fundamentalisms change, even according to the historical, cultural and sociological context in which they take shape, whether they be neo-evangelical Protestants, groups belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood or ultra-Orthodox Jews.

In the last decade, probably in response to the developments of Isis/Isil/Daesh (and the series of massacres largely linked to a certain type of jihadist violence), the term 'fundamentalism' has given way to 'radicalism' - an even more ambiguous and politically marked term - which,

especially in the media, ended up becoming a synonym for any extremist phenomenon and, in the end, for terrorism. Even the lexical distinction between the terms radicalism and radicalisation is not always clear, let alone agreed upon. While radicalism is the outcome of the consolidation of a relationship with violence, radicalisation is a process. According to Guolo and Pace (1998, pp. 41-55), the removal of Islam as a founding element of nation-states (and their utopia) and the spread of Western political ideologies and modernity are elements that triggered Islamic 'radicalism'. More recently, as Guolo (2019) states, convinced that the hegemony of the social sciences in the Anglo-Saxon environment has also given a push, "the term radicalisation has gradually imposed itself in academic language, in fact replacing [the term] fundamentalism, in vogue in the last decades of the 20th century" (p. 38). The processual nature of (violent) radicalisation helps both in theoretical analysis as well as in empirical observation and prevention operations.

First of all, it is useful to reflect on how, while fundamentalism refers to a group, a community, an *enclave* that closes in on and structures itself (Squarcini & Tavarnesi, 2007), radicalisation is almost always an individual phenomenon: it is the person who radicalises himself and completes a path in which it is possible to trace the resurfacing of certain attitudes driven by feelings of exclusion, humiliation, frustration, marginalisation and anger. As Khoshrokovar expertly explains on the basis of his study of prisons, foreign fighters and young people from the 'banlieues' (Khoshrokovar, 2002; 2014; 2016; 2021), radicalisation occurs in several stages: pre-radicalisation, identification with radical movements, indoctrination, and direct involvement in violent actions, in some cases even in groups.

Guolo (2019) notes how:

The term radicalisation describes the process through which an individual, or a group, undertakes violent forms of action linked to an extremist ideology, whether political, social or religious (Borum, 2001; Wilner & Dubouloz, 2010), which aims to fight and overthrow the dominant political and cultural order. For one to be able to speak of radicalisation, therefore, it is necessary for violent action to be accompanied by an ideology, understood as a 'total worldview', that legitimises it (p. 37).

Originating in the context of *Radicalisation and Terrorism Studies* (Antonelli, 2021, p. 18 et seq.), academic debate has often been prompted, and sometimes influenced, by the institutional and practical needs of

campaigns for preventing and combating violence. This has only multiplied the limitations and pitfalls of research, both from a methodological and hermeneutical perspective. As Antonelli (2021) suggests: 'In this view radicalisation is therefore a two-faced process characterised by a strong degree of ideological ambiguity in its basic assumptions: it is in fact a research programme strongly oriented towards the scientific optimisation of social control, an implicit consequence, which brings with it the inevitable stigmatisation of everything that is not "moderate" within the dominant discourse, even if it has nothing to do with terrorism or the acceptance of political violence' (p. 43).

The repeated semantic twists and distorted use of concepts - dictated by illiteracy or instrumental use - therefore remains a problem that is exacerbated by the often indiscriminate and uncritical use by the media: there are countless examples in the Italian panorama alone. Antonelli (2021) aptly asks: 'If, historically, the radical person may or may not be in favour of violence as a method of political struggle and looks to the root of social problems in order to eradicate them definitively, why is this term and the associated radicalisation [*to which we can also add radicalism, ed.*] now mainly used to refer to terrorism and terrorists?' (p. 11).

4.2 Multiplicity of forms and different degrees of radicalization: the Italian case

Because it impossible to definitively cleanse and clarify concepts, we shall only call for lexical surveillance and shall identify any personal or collective processes that trigger physical (but also psychological) violence inspired by a certain way of understanding a certain religious culture, movement or current. This shall help delimit the discussion and distinguish this complex phenomenon from other types of violence against oneself or others inspired by political ideologies or other forms of belonging. Reduced to these terms, the starting point for the study is verifying the existence of this phenomenon, its perception and its repercussions, before attempting any interpretation or asking, along with Kepel and Roy, whether it is a question of radicalisation of Islam or 'Islamisation of radicality' (Guolo, 2019). Another order of problems arises when referring to the Italian context, namely the gap between what is perceived and what is experienced,

between the issues and needs that are raised top-down by security (and securitarian) policies and the real urgencies that are expressed in a bottom-up perspective and that threaten the possible coexistence of diversity. Distortions, stereotyping processes, mystification, and above all overvaluations are some of the key words that allow us to understand this gap. The crucial question is therefore whether the violent radicalisation of religious individuals or groups (in particular Islamic) is a widespread and dangerous social phenomenon in Italy.

We agree with the thesis of Berardinelli and Guglielminetti (2018) which points to the specificity of Islamic radicalism/fundamentalism in Italy, rather than to a 'delay' in its emergence (a category that merely postpones, dilutes in time): 'In recent years Italy has not suffered jihadist terrorist attacks, with the exception of the failed attack of a suicide bomber, Libyan immigrant Mohammed Game, who attempted to blow himself up in front of the "Santa Barbara" barracks in Milan: the place from which Italian soldiers had left for ISAF missions in Afghanistan. Shouting "Out of Afghanistan", the 35-year-old Libyan engineer suffered severe injuries to his hand and eyes, and slightly wounded the young soldier guarding the barracks' (p. 28).

Italy is one of the nations with the lowest frequency of episodes of religious, in particular Islamic, violence: the 129 Italian foreign fighters at the end of 2017 (according to data from the Ministry of the Interior) seems to confirm this trend (Guolo, 2019; Marone & Vidino, 2018), despite the media hype surrounding, for example, the case of Maria Giulia 'Fatima' Sergio, a fighter and 'recruiter' on behalf of ISIS who was convicted in absentia in 2016 after disappearing into Syria (Serafini, 2015).

Guolo (2019) ascribes this Italian peculiarity to, among other reasons, the stratification of the age cycle: this is due to a more recent migratory phenomenon, the migratory geography, with the absence of suburbs or ghetto-suburbs, the absence of ethnicised and potentially radicalised centres, since even the cases of Ravenna and Latina are not comparable to the neighbourhoods that exploded or are at risk of exploding in other European countries. Even a chaotic, poorly managed migratory, cultural and religious super-diversity and its consequent fragmentation would provide a kind of mitigating factor to the clustering of closed, militant groups in enclaves and to community grouping according to ethno-national identity. (Berardinelli & Guglielminetti, 2018; Alicino, 2020). In Italy, the

'generations after the first' are dynamic and 'in-between' models of identity (Giorda & Hejazi, 2019). Other factors (Guolo, 2019) include the complex, variably structured nature of Islamic associationism at both local and national levels, as well as the smooth functioning of investigative and intelligence apparatuses (Berardinelli & Guglieminetti, 2018; Alicino, 2020). The overvaluation mentioned above is well expressed in the case of prisons (Sonnini, 2019) and schools (Giorgi & Iannaccone, 2019; Giorda & Giorgi, 2019, false reports on the presence of Islamic schools) and has recently been empirically confirmed by the difficulty (with respect to other European countries) in finding individuals at 'risk of', or who had embarked on, radicalisation paths of a religious and in particular an Islamic nature to take part in an experimental deradicalisation project coordinated by one of the authors. Although this overvaluation is not based on objective data, it does fuel fear of the 'other'.

4.3 A short history of long lasting and topical fear

While this chapter does not aim to reconstruct the history of fear in terms of collective psychology, we shall nevertheless mention some topics and stages of contemporary developments in social fear and the geopolitics of fear (Graziano, 2021), referring to Italy in particular.

One may well ask whether the increasingly frequent use of categories such as those described may be functional in fuelling widespread social alarmism, with useful and dangerous consequences. It may be dangerous because of the possible ethical-social repercussions or useful because it transmits a simplified message, one aimed at fomenting a climate in which external and internal threats are perceived as continuous. It fuels a fear (consider Todorov, 2009) that ends up prevailing over other widespread social sentiments, to the detriment of constructive, common policies. Todorov (2009) skilfully offers us a picture of contrasting values and identity representations that goes back diachronically through the centuries and highlights how it is not something peculiar to the present. Delumeau's (1995) studies on fear in the West reveal how this has always been a category in Western societies, even though in his analysis, both on a descriptive and conceptual level, his reasoning referred to a transcendent

plane linked to the dimension of the unknown and the religious, as well as to that of guilt and sin.

Todorov's proposal (2009) actually goes one step further, placing itself in a global geopolitical framework with modified equilibria (another element of insecurity and a lack of points of reference) that exacerbate the widespread sense of uncertainty. There is no longer a distinction between 'East and West' or between 'North and South', but between countries 'dominated by resentment' and countries 'dominated by fear', thus also foreseeing a strengthening of populist, nationalist and xenophobic phenomena. Todorov (2009) stresses how Europe is today gripped by a fear of Islam, one that may trigger violent reactions and lead to a double paradox: on the one hand the 'fear of barbarians risks turning us into barbarians' and on the other 'it makes our adversary stronger and us weaker'.

Fear is a lens through which the historical process and our current society can be read diachronically. If, as Prosperi (2021) states, 'to tremble is human' and a certain amount of fear has characterised our species throughout history, the response to individual and collective fears does not have to take one direction only. He portrays the fears of mankind, which emerged especially at times of pestilence, and associates the fear of the unknown and the transcendent with the fear of evil and of not being able to control it, shifting collective fears to an eschatological and ethical level. After all, there is a vast iconography of 'sin and evil' that inevitably feeds the intellectual constructions we use to understand our lives, both social and individual. Prosperi's analysis (2021) inevitably helps explain the present, unveiling the ancient emotional and cultural, not just economic, roots of our globalised modernity and highlighting what, in his view, we really have to fear, namely a horizon of economic inequality, cultural impoverishment, and environmental plunder. The plague brought to light, as in every age, popular conspiracies and strategies of the powerful, as well as attacks on the scientific system as we know it, penitential processions, the spreading of miraculous potions and the search for scapegoats. Prosperi's warning invites us to look beyond and recognise fear in its deepest and most hidden aspect as a form of domination, a poison of the mind for which the only possible remedy is knowledge.

According to Sandel (1998), the 'anxious times' began in the second half of the last century, starting with the oil crisis of the 1970s (years also marked by the rise of religious fundamentalism); these were years of fear, loss of

control and widespread dismay in which people searched for shelter and protection (also spiritual). As is well known, the spread of a greater sense of precariousness and the end of unconditional confidence in economic development contributed, in the so-called western world and certainly in Italy, to revitalising spiritual research and strengthening religious groups, blocking the ongoing process of secularisation and the decreed 'death of God' (Bruce, 2002). These were crucial years for the 'success of fear': as Gardner (2008) recalls, many sociologists ascribe the beginning of the obsession with risk, safety and precaution to that period. In the third millennium, with the 2008 *annus horribilis*, Sandel's 'anxiety' 'became the *Zeitgeist* of our age' (Graziano, 2021, p. 10), with a multiplication of fears that intertwine, self-feed and influence (Moïsi, 2009).

From an academic perspective, in a July 2019 interview Furedi referred to the culture of fear: 'A lot of people think it means that people fear more than in the past, but that's not really the case. Because there is no way you can measure how people feared in the past, if it's more or less. What it really means is that we certainly talk more about fear than ever before. The most important aspect of "culture of fear" is that everything in life seems to come with a health worry. Everything is seen as a threat. The human experience itself is increasingly seen as threatening in areas that in the past were seen as quite normal.'¹

In 2019 Furedi states: 'I led a research project a few years ago on what the European people are scared about, and it turns out that they are not really scared about the big headline fears, like global terrorism or global warming. The only media topic that they are really scared about are crimes, but otherwise it's all about insecurity to do with money, unemployment, pensions, worries about the children. Very banal things. Climate change have become so politicized and ritualistic that people have been switched off from taking it seriously'².

In Italy, in 2018, *Primo Rapporto sulla Filiera della Sicurezza in Italia* (First Report on Security Apparatus in Italy) by Censis and Federsicurezza noted that "Crime continues to be considered a serious problem, reported by

¹<https://forward.recentiproggressi.it/it/rivista/numero-14-paura-coraggio/interviste/artefici-del-nostro-destino/>

² <https://forward.recentiproggressi.it/it/rivista/numero-14-paura-coraggio/interviste/artefici-del-nostro-destino/>

21.5% of Italians, in fourth place after unemployment, indicated by 52.4% of the population, tax evasion (29.2%) and excessive taxation¹. In 2021, in the second Report, the most widespread fear was obviously linked to frequenting crowded places, public transport, and places of possible contagion. Attacks, jihadist terrorism and radicalisation were not even mentioned.

Yet fear of Islam and Muslims is widespread, and Islamophobia exists institutionally, in the media and in everyday life. As stated in the SETA Foundation report *Islamofobia in Italia. Rapporto nazionale 2018*, 'the xenophobic and anti-Islam climate fuelled by traditional right-wing political actors, Lega Nord and Fratelli d'Italia, extreme right-wing movements (Casa Pound and Forza Nuova) and the more conservative sectors of mass media, such as *Il Giornale*, has had very negative effects at a social level by legitimising racist behaviour. Physical and verbal attacks on migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and Muslim citizens have increased both in the North and in the South, even leading to dramatic events¹³.

These observations, in addition to echoing previous studies (see e.g. Pfösti 2011; Proglione 2020), were also confirmed by Italy's bottom ranking in a recent survey among European countries (Pew Research Center, 2019 cited by Lipori 2020) on willingness to accept a Muslim in the family or as a neighbour.

This is not surprising, and we are not alone: the Eurobarometer survey on immigrant integration in the European Union (No. 469) shows that most Europeans tend to overestimate the number of immigrants residing in their countries. Italians estimate the immigrant population to be about three and a half times the actual figure (compared to a European average of 2.3 times the actual number) (EU, 2018).

4.4 Migrant, identity, roots: the power of words

While fear of immigrants and of Muslims in particular (or, in any case, of those who belong to a religion other than the majority religion) has been fuelled in recent years by various actors. The responsibility lies with many: the media, with its need to chase sensationalism and identify opposing

³ <https://confronti.net/2020/08/islamofobia-in-europa-e-in-italia/>

parties to increase its audience; the political world oriented towards easy consensus and the pursuit of polls and the (sometimes presumed) moods of public opinion without having the courage to steer them; the almost complete absence of the intellectual world, which has lost its voice and has been socially delegitimised after years of irresponsibly praising incompetence.

The results are there for all to see: the emergence of widespread xenophobia that increasingly gives way to explicit racism (Barbujani, 2006; Aime, 2016; Manconi & Resta, 2017; Lorenzini & Cardellini, 2018; Vaccarelli, 2015, 2018), the inability to interpret problems and issues in their complexity and with a long-term view (Ceruti, 2018), the sovereignty rhetoric of small states that is becoming increasingly entrenched in many parts of the world, and the inability to develop models of society that promote solidarity, participation, development, social cohesion and democracy.

The language, the words and the categories of analysis to address these topics have been depleted and impoverished. Words, as Nanni Moretti recalled, are important because he who speaks badly, thinks badly and must therefore be handled with care. In recent years sovereignty rhetoric has insisted a great deal on terms such as origins, roots, identity, culture, tradition, etc. Expressions such as: 'we must be proud of our origins, rediscover our roots, safeguard our identity and culture, defend our traditions' are amply used in public debate and everyday speech. Such statements emerge with increasing frequency: seemingly reasonable and obvious, they often mask something entirely different behind a veil of ill-concealed national pride. They are in fact expressions, notions and concepts that can also be very dangerous, especially when they are bent to logics of exclusion and hatred towards the other (Zuppi & Fazzini, 2019), falsifying history, manipulating events and crystallising dynamic elements that are fluid by nature.

The great historian Marc Bloch, aptly recalled by Montanari (2019), already expressed his concern about the ambiguity of the term 'origins' many years ago.

Does ["origin"] simply mean "beginnings"? That would be relatively clear - except that for most historical realities the very notion of a starting point remains singularly elusive. It is doubtless a matter of definition, but of a definition that is unfortunately all too easy to forget to give.

On the other hand, is 'origins' taken to mean the causes? In that case there will be no more difficulties other than those which are always inherent in the nature of causal inquiry (and even more so, no doubt, in the sciences of man).

But there is a frequent cross-contamination of the two meanings, the more formidable in that it is seldom very clearly recognized. In popular usage, an origin is a beginning which explains. Worse still, a beginning which is a complete explanation. There lies the ambiguity, and there the danger! (Bloch, 1969, p. 44).

The problem is precisely that of a dangerous ambiguity. The same applies to the widely discussed subject of 'roots'. Another historian, Giardina (2017), points this out very well, stating that it is a racist metaphor:

'Race is likened to a tree; it does not change. The roots of race are always the same. There are the branches of the tree, there is the foliage. And that is all.' The good intentions of the many who today appeal to the roots of peoples, federations, nations do not change the essence of the problem. Even if we were able to confine the resonance of that metaphor to a purely humanistic domain, we would always end up noting its misleading essence: by constructing a hierarchy of historic objects, separating the green branches from the dry, taking away the creative value of failed or spent experiences, we in fact commit a kind of historiographic eugenics (pp. XVI-XVII).

The full danger of these terms is lucidly addressed by Bettini (2011), who highlights the limits and, above all, the instrumental and demagogic uses of such terms. The roots metaphor evokes a number of elements that end up forming the basis of exclusivist ideologies. First of all, if taken literally, it tells us that we cannot be other than what we are, that our culture and identity are marked from birth. Moreover, it implies that traditions, like roots, are even biologically essential to individuals: one cannot do without them, on pain of death. Another weakness of the root image is that tradition is learned. It is not genetically inherited, nor is it transmitted through sap or blood, and like anything learned, it is passed on from generation to generation, and is sometimes modified due to historical and social changes or to individual choices.

Although there is a vast amount of literature on the subject of identity, many scholars (Aime, 2013; Maalouf, 1999; Prospero, 2016; Remotti, 2010; Todorov, 2009) are wary of this term and highlight its danger: 'Each of us should be encouraged to accept his own diversity, to see his identity as the sum of all his various affiliations, instead of as only one of them raised to the status of the most important, made into an instrument of exclusion and sometimes into a weapon of war' (Maalouf, 1999).

It is therefore necessary to foster a critical reflection in the country on the notion of cultural identity, on the plurality of our affiliations, on the

problematic nature of cultures and national histories, and on the danger of inventing traditions. "'Traditions' which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented.'" (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2002, p. 19). Educational and training contexts must start taking this into account.

4.5 Which educational models? Intercultural education

From an educational standpoint, it may be useful to start from the important considerations by Jacques Delors in the volume *Education: the Treasure Within. Report to the UNESCO by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century*. The main element that emerges from the Delors Commission report is that our model of development is a model of economic growth that is no longer sustainable in two aspects: man's relationship with the environment and natural resources; and the relationships of social exclusion, not only at an international level (between the world's north and south) but also within individual nations. It highlights the need to make a turnaround and opt for a model of sustainable development (new relationships between man and the environment in which he lives and among people). Education, according to the report, should favour the transition from 'economic growth' to 'human development'. In addition to suggesting a discontinuity with the dominant model of development, the report proposed some changes to educational models, which should be able to respond to certain challenges and major tensions of the contemporary world:

- the tension between global and local: people must become citizens of the world without losing their 'histories' and while still playing an active part in the life of their nation and local community;
- the tension between universal and specific and the globalisation of culture;
- the tension between tradition and modernity, also in relation to innovation in science and technology.

These tensions call for an education with a social reference model in which there is a fundamental shift from the idea of social cohesion to the idea and conditions for effective democratic participation, as required by the challenges of globalisation, i.e. a shift from local community to world

society, with aspects of interdependence involving the environment, linguistic plurality and migration.

An educational process that encourages full citizenship and democratic participation should therefore focus on at least three main aspects:

- the local-global relationship (the idea of planetary interdependence and relationships, networks, international bodies);
- the perception of exclusion processes within the current development model, which generates social conflict and places democracies, where they exist, in serious danger;
- interculture, which underlies at least four pedagogical objectives: *fostering mutual understanding; developing a sense of responsibility; encouraging solidarity; creating the conditions for accepting spiritual and cultural differences.*

As we know, the Delors Commission identified four pillars of education:

- *learning to know, reconciling a sufficiently broad general culture (the 'passport to lifelong learning') with the in-depth study of a small number of subjects;*
- *learning to do*, emphasising the shift from the concept of skills to that of competences and the possibility of alternating school and work;
- *learning to be*, recalling the topicality of the recommendations contained in the Faure Report (UNESCO, 1972);
- *learning to live together, learning to live with others*: the real novelty of the report, which emphasises the importance of developing knowledge of other peoples, their history, traditions and spirituality, and from this, creating a new mentality that, thanks to an awareness of growing interdependence and a shared analysis of the risks and challenges for the future, stimulates the implementation of common projects and the intelligent and peaceful management of inevitable conflicts. Although some consider it a utopia, it is nevertheless one vital to breaking the current dangerous course fuelled by cynicism, resignation, and the resurgence of xenophobia and racism.

Education thus poses the question of how one learns to live together, how to foster the ability to 'place oneself in another's shoes', how to learn to plan together, prevent and transform conflicts by developing a culture of

acceptance (Grassi, 2019) and coexistence. These recommendations appear even more relevant today in the face of a global world that makes our societies increasingly multicultural, heterogeneous and socio-culturally highly complex (Zoletto, 2019). In this context, the limitations and criticalities of the main migrant integration models adopted by different countries, which almost always and at best move narrowly between assimilationism and multiculturalism, emerge. Another road is that of interculturalism, which some consider to be an obsolete path but which we wish to repropose with conviction because it has never been pursued seriously and assiduously.

Within the European Union, the different strategies for promoting an intercultural approach to education have been grouped by the European network Eurydice into different categories, which include *the promotion of processes through which relations between people of different cultural backgrounds are analysed and given explicit form in school curricula*, with three levels of intercultural focus: (a) learning of values of respect and, in some cases, of antiracism within the context of cultural diversity; (b) the international dimension, with an in-depth study of contemporary cultural diversity in historical and social contexts; (c) European integration (Eurydice, 2004, 2009).

An intercultural perspective can be adopted not only in compulsory education, but also in university education and continuing education, as in the case of PriMed Project activities.

4.6 Educating against fear, preventing discrimination. The PriMed project

The issues addressed lead us to consider the importance of education in reducing fear of diversity and hate speech and in deconstructing stereotypes and prejudices. As Race (2018), among others, has highlighted, prejudices and stereotypes must be reduced through dialogue and education, which are essential tools for dealing with the complexity of plural (multicultural and multireligious) societies. The reduction of prejudices and stereotypes occurs through knowledge of 'different' cultures and religions and the ability to 'put oneself in the other's shoes' and understand the other's point of view, an ability which develops through

contact with the 'other', whether direct or indirect (Allport, 1954; Hewstone & Voci, 2009; Hodson & Hewstone, 2013), as also highlighted by the Jo Cox Committee on Hate, Intolerance, Xenophobia and Racism of the Italian Chamber of Deputies (2017). Stereotypes and prejudices develop in childhood and increase with age, and are influenced by the media, family and peers (Bigler, 1999; Brown, 2010; Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick, & Esses, 2010). Schools and other educational institutions are therefore the preferred contexts in which to deconstruct prejudices and stereotypes and to promote active and democratic citizenship (Gabrielli et al., 2019; Fiorucci, 2015). Various studies at the international level have verified the effectiveness of school interventions in reducing discriminatory attitudes towards the 'other' (among the most recent, Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014; Ulger, Dette-Hagenmeyera, Reichle & Gaertner 2018), highlighting how the most effective strategies are contact and adopting another's perspective or developing the ability to put oneself in the other's shoes.

The training programmes promoted by the Roma Tre University unit within the *PriMed project - Prevention and Interaction in the Trans-Mediterranean Space*, financed by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research in 2019 for the prevention of religious radicalisation, were developed in this perspective. This project involves a network of 12 Italian universities and 10 universities from member countries of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The aim is to respond in an interdisciplinary way to the knowledge base and operational needs of integration processes in Italy and to the fight against radicalisation through scientific cooperation and by training young people and operators.

The work of the Roma Tre unit began with discussion and interdisciplinary dialogue among members (from different disciplines: history, pedagogy and psychology) on the project topics. This led to the experimentation of two advanced training courses for teachers and school managers, and for public administration staff, as well as a workshop for university students on interaction among diversity, peaceful coexistence in public spaces and mediation. Approximately 50 students took part in a study trip to Rome; half of those attending came from the OCI universities involved in the project. An autumn intensive course dedicated to narratives on the

Mediterranean was attended by students from all the countries bordering this sea⁴.

In particular, the study trip, involving students from different cultural and religious contexts, was a visit to religious places of worship in the 'super-diverse' urban space of Rome, with continuous comparison and exchange on the different realities and experiences. The theme of 'fear' was also central to the training activities proposed, especially in the workshop entitled '*Paura del diverso, paura del possibile*' ('Fear of the 'Other', Fear of the Possible') organised in 2021. The aim of the workshop was to introduce students to the history of Western representations of Islam, also comparing them with other religious traditions. The theme of fear of Islam is certainly topical, but it was flanked by the theme of fear within Islam, also looking at the possible causal relationship between such Islamophobic representations and the radicalisation trajectories of Muslims in Europe and in Muslim-majority countries.

It is our conviction, as we have argued also on the basis of the literature from various academic fields, that fear of the other and of diversity is at the root of the various forms of radicalisation: education, in its various forms - formal, informal and non-formal - is the key to confronting this fear and dismantling it to enable dialogue in a plural society.

⁴ All activities that have taken place under PriMed are documented at: www.primed.miur.it

References

- AIME, M. (2013). *Cultura*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.
- AIME, M. (ed.) (2016). *Contro il razzismo. Quattro ragionamenti*. Torino: Einaudi.
- ALICINO, F. (2020). *Terrorismo di ispirazione religiosa. Prevenzione e deradicalizzazione nello Stato laico*. Roma: Apes.
- ALLPORT, G.W. (1954). *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- ANTONELLI, F. (2021). *Radicalizzazione*. Milano: Mondadori.
- BARBUJANI, G. (2006). *L'invenzione delle razze. Capire la biodiversità umana*. Milano: Bompiani.
- BEELMANN, A., & HEINEMANN, K. S. (2014). Preventing prejudice and improving intergroup attitudes: A meta-analysis of child and adolescent training programs. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 31*(1), 10-24.
- BERARDINELLI, D., & GUGLIELMINETTI, L. (2018). Preventing Violent Radicalisation: The Italian Case Paradox 28. *International Conference Multidisciplinary Perspectives in the quasi-coercive treatment of offenders (Specto), 7th Edition - Groups with Special Needs in Community Measures*. Bologna: Filodiretto pp. 20-33.
- BETTINI, M. (2011). *Contro le radici. Tradizione, identità, memoria*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- BIGLER, R. S. (1999). The use of multicultural curricula and materials to counter racism in children. *Journal of Social Issues, 55*, 687-705.
- BLOCH, M. (1969). *Apologia della storia o mestiere di storico*. Torino: Einaudi.
- BOMBARDIERI, M., GIORDA, M. C., & HEJAZI, S., (Eds.). (2018), *Capire l'islam*. Brescia: Morcelliana.
- BORUM, R. (2001). Radicalization into Violent Extremism. A Review of Social Science Theories. *Journal of Strategic Security, 4*, 7-36.
- BROWN, R. (2010). *Prejudice. Its Social Psychology*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- BRUCE, S. (2002). *God is dead. Secularization in the West*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- CAMERA DEI DEPUTATI – XVII LEGISLATURA (2017). *Commissione Jo Cox sull'intolleranza, la xenofobia, il razzismo e i fenomeni di odio*.
- CERUTI, M. (2018). *Il tempo della complessità*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina.
- DELORS, J. (1997). Nell'educazione un tesoro. *Rapporto all'UNESCO della Commissione Internazionale sull'Educazione per il Ventunesimo Secolo*. Roma: Armando.
- DELUMEAU, J. (1995). *La paura in Occidente. Storia della paura nell'età moderna*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- DOVIDIO, J.F., HEWSTONE, M., GLICK, P., & ESSES, V. M. (Eds.), (2010). *The SAGE Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2018). *Special Eurobarometer 469: Integration of immigrants in the European Union*.
- EURYDICE (2004). *L'integrazione scolastica dei bambini immigrati in Europa*. Brussels.
- EURYDICE (2009). *L'integrazione scolastica dei bambini immigrati in Europa. Misure per favorire: la comunicazione con le famiglie immigrate; l'insegnamento della lingua d'origine dei bambini immigrati*. Brussels.
- FIORUCCI, M. (2015). The Italian Way for Intercultural Education. IN M. CATARCI, & M. FIORUCCI, (Eds.), *Intercultural Education in the European Context: theories, experiences, challenges*. London, New York: Routledge.
- FUREDI, F. (1997). *Culture of Fear: Risk-Taking and the Morality of Low Expectation*. London: Cassell.

- GABRIELLI, S., SZPUNAR, G., BENVENUTO, G., MARICCHIOLO, F., CATALANO, M.G., & PERUCCHINI, P. (2019). Riconoscere l'Altro a scuola: il caso dei migranti. *QTIMES*, Anno XI - 3, pp. 86 – 99. ISSN: 2038-3282.
- GARDNER, D. (2008). *The Science of Fear*. New York: Dutton.
- GIARDINA, A. (Ed.) (2017), *Storia mondiale dell'Italia*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- GIORDA, M. C. (Ed.) (2012). *Dio lo vuole! I fondamentalismi religiosi*. Torino: Sei.
- GIORDA, M. C., & GIORGI, A. (2019). Religious Minorities and Faith-Based Schools in a Quasi-Religious Monopoly- the Difficulties of Inclusion. *Religion & Education*, 46 (2) (special section: *Faith-based Schools and Religious Diversity*), 159-175.
- GIORDA, M. C., & HEJAZI, S. (2019), In between. Giovani musulmani ad eventi pubblici: il caso di Torino. *Protestantesimo*, 74 (3-4), pp. 235-248.
- GIORGI, A., & IANACCONE, B. (2019), I giovani e la scuola: ci si radicalizza a scuola? Un'analisi dei rischi e della prevenzione della radicalizzazione in ambiente scolastico. In M. BOMBARDIERI, M. C. GIORDA, & S. HEJAZI (Eds.). *Capire l'islam* (pp. 209-236) Brescia: Morcelliana.
- GRASSI, T. (Ed.) (2019). *L'accoglienza delle persone migranti. Modelli di incontro e di socializzazione*. L'Aquila: One Group.
- GRAZIANO, M. (2021). *Geopolitica della paura*, Milano: EGEA Boccini.
- GUOLO, R. (2019). Religione e radicalizzazione. In M. BOMBARDIERI, M. C. GIORDA, & S. HEJAZI (Eds.). *Capire l'islam*. Brescia: Morcelliana, pp. 37-51.
- GUOLO, R., & PACE, E. (1998). *I fondamentalismi*. Bari: Laterza.
- HEWSTONE, M., & VOCI, A. (2009). Diversità e integrazione: il ruolo del contatto intergruppi nei processi di riduzione del pregiudizio e risoluzione dei conflitti. *Psicologia sociale*, 1, 9-28.
- HOBBSBAWM, E.J., & RANGER, T. (ed.) (2002). *L'invenzione della tradizione*. Torino: Einaudi.
- HODSON, G., & HEWSTONE, M. (2013). *Advances in intergroup contact*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- KHOSROKHAVAR, F. (2021). Jihadism in Europe: European Youth and the New Caliphate. *Oxford Scholarship Online: June 2021*.
- KHOSROKHAVAR, F. (2016). *Prisons de France*. Paris: Robert Laffont.
- KHOSROKHAVAR, F. (2014). *Radicalisation*. Paris: Edition Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- KHOSROKHAVAR, F. (2002). *Les nouveaux martyrs d'Allah*. Paris: Flammarion.
- LIPORI, M. (2020). Islamofobia in Europa e in Italia. *Confronti*, 26/08/2020.
- LORENZINI, S., & CARDELLINI, M. (ed.) (2018). *Discriminazioni tra genere e colore. Un'analisi critica per l'impegno interculturale e antirazzista*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- MAALOUF, A. (1999). *L'identità*. Milano: Bompiani.
- MANCONI, L., & RESTA, F. (2017). *Non sono razzista, ma. La xenofobia degli italiani e gli imprenditori politici della paura*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
- MARONE, F., & VIDINO, L. (2018). *Destinazione Jihad: i foreign fighters d'Italia*. Milano: ISPI, Ledizioni LediPublishing.
- MINISTERO DELL'ISTRUZIONE-MI (2020). *Gli alunni con cittadinanza non italiana*. A.S. 2018/2019, Rome.
- MOÏSI, D. (2009). *The Geopolitics of Emotion: How Cultures of Fear, Humiliation, and Hope are Reshaping the World*. New York: Doubleday.
- MONTANARI, M. (2019). *Breve storia degli spaghetti al pomodoro*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- PASQUINELLI, C. (1993). Fondamentalismi 3/1993. *PAROLECHIAVE nuova serie di "Problemi del socialismo"* 3/1993.
- PFÖSTL, E. (2011). Between Fear and Integration: Islamophobia in Contemporary Italy. *European Yearbook of Minority Issues*, VIII, 1, 45-70.

- PROGLIO, G. (Ed.) (2020). *Islamofobia e razzismo. Media, discorsi pubblici e immaginario nella decostruzione dell'altro*. Torino: Edizioni SEB27.
- PROSPERI, A. (2016). *Identità. L'altra faccia della storia*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- PROSPERI, A. (2021). *Tremare è umano. Una breve storia della paura*. Milano: Solferino.
- RACE, R. (Ed.) (2018). *Advancing Multicultural Dialogues in Education*. Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- REMOTTI, F. (2010). *L'ossessione identitaria*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- SANDEL, M. (1998). *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- SERAFINI, M. (2015). *Maria Giulia che divenne Fatima. Storia della donna che ha lasciato l'Italia per l'Isis*. Milano: RCS Media Group.
- SONNINI E., (2019), L'islam in carcere e il mito del radicalismo. In M. BOMBARDIERI, M. C. GIORDA, & S. HEJAZI (Eds.). *Capire l'islam* (pp. 187-208). Brescia: Morcelliana.
- SQUARCINI, F., & TAVARNESI, L. (ed.) (2007). *Fondare i fondamentalismi. Esplorazioni critiche dei diversi modi del fondamentalismo nella storia*. Firenze: Società Editrice Fiorentina.
- TODOROV, T. (2009). *La paura dei barbari. Oltre lo scontro delle civiltà*. Milano: Garzanti.
- ULGER, Z., DETTE-HAGENMEYER, D.E., REICHLER, B., & GAERTNER, S.L. (2018). Improving outgroup attitudes in schools: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of School Psychology, 67*, 88-103.
- VACCARELLI, A. (2015). Razzismo. In M. CATARCI, & E. MACINAI, (Eds.). *Le parole chiave della pedagogia interculturale*. Pisa: ETS.
- VACCARELLI, A. (2018). Mala tempora currunt. L'educazione interculturale come sfida e come necessità. In L. AGOSTINETTO, M. FIORUCCI, & S. POLENGHI, *Diritti Cittadinanza Inclusione*. Lecce: Pensa Multimedia.
- WILNER, A., & DUBOULOZ, C. (2010). Homegrown Terrorism and Transformative Learning; An Interdisciplinary Approach to Understanding Radicalization. *Global Change, Peace and Security, 22, 1*, 33-51.
- ZOLETTO, D. (2019). *A partire dai punti di forza. Popolar culture, eterogeneità, educazione*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- ZUPPI, M. M., & FAZZINI, L. (2019). *Odierai il prossimo tuo. Perché abbiamo dimenticato la fraternità. Riflessioni sulle paure del tempo presente*. Milano: Piemme.

5

Terrorism and radicalization: pedagogical orientations

Sergio Tramma

Terrorism is a phenomenon that exists even when it does not manifest itself openly and tragically. In recent decades, terrorism has generally been tied to Islamic fundamentalism and has also appeared in Western countries. It has affected global scenarios, intertwining with other processes such as asymmetric globalization, the widening of inequalities, and westernization. It is a phenomenon that should be studied also from a pedagogical perspective, with particular attention to radicalization processes, i.e. the set of experiences that lead people to adopt terrorist ideologies and methods. Analysis should focus on urban areas characterized by strong economic and social marginalization, where terrorism sympathies can develop, especially among people with a family history of migration from an Islamic country. The local community is considered the place where global dynamics and general phenomena find their expression in the 'here and now' of their daily materiality and become life lived: from international migrations to delocalization processes, from cultural homologation to movements of resistance to such homologation. Terrorism also develops in opposition to modernity: in this sense it may be associated with all forms of integralism that harken back to a past characterized by an alleged communitarian dimension of material and spiritual union among people. Belonging and educational processes that can strengthen or weaken the sense of belonging become central to pedagogical discourse. What is hoped for is an education that provides students with the tools to unveil and critique their own affiliations and seek concrete, non-terrorist ways of criticizing the present.

Key Words: Terrorism; Radicalization; Belonging; Suburbs; Social Pedagogy

5.1 Terrorism and radicalization: pedagogical orientations

Terrorism is a phenomenon in which periods of latency are followed by others in which it tragically manifests itself. This alternation characterizes the general history of terrorism, simplistically defined as the set of political

and military phenomena of informal and/or asymmetric warfare (Gambino, 2005), as well as the specific historical events of significance occurring in a certain period or area of the world. This is the case of Islamic terrorism, which has also manifested itself in the West in recent decades: bursts of activity have alternated with periods of relative quiet.

It is a phenomenon that occurs in waves, one that has been and is still affected by numerous factors: from international strategic scenarios to the ability to generate sympathy and collaboration towards it, to the presence or absence in certain geographical areas of permanent structures and the ability to control a region (as in the case of ISIS) or to define partly non-territorial networks (as in the case of Al Qaeda) (Battiston, 2016).

When terrorism is inactive, it is by definition 'dormant'; it is a phenomenon that cannot be said to be extinguished as long as the conditions that make it a political-military resource persist. Because terrorism is generally not a direct expression of nation-states, it is difficult to establish relations with political-military authorities and negotiate the end of conflict.

5.2 Education and radicalization

In addressing the topic of radicalization, it is essential to acknowledge the presence of terrorism even in the absence of concrete acts, since the causes have not ceased to exist and there are still many local and global breeding grounds for those who believe that terrorism is an appropriate and effective strategy. Consequently, pedagogical attention *must* remain focused, albeit not paranoically, even in situations of (apparent) quiescence, when the temptation to consider terrorism extinguished or in the process of being extinguished is greatest.

One of the points on which pedagogical vigilance focuses is radicalization, i.e. the set of processes leading people to adhere to principles and values that embrace terrorist ideas and practices. What is understood by radicalization today? This is one of those terms for which one sense of the word or shade of meaning ends up excluding other possible meanings, becoming a descriptive-valuative term in which the procedural meaning corresponds to the content-/value-based meaning. In other words, the term radicalization, and all other associated terms, may acquire a negative or even extremely negative connotation, regardless of the intended use in

a given discourse. According to the Treccani online dictionary, radicalization is essentially 'The action of radicalizing, the fact of becoming radicalized, as a shift towards extreme points, towards radical positions or solutions, beyond any compromise: the *r. of political or trade union actions*.' Radicalization therefore understood as a process that leads from a centre to extremes, as individual and/or collective socio-political actions representing a quantum leap from a position of *moderate* criticism, acceptable in its methods and content, to one of *radical*, unjustified and unacceptable criticism that oversteps certain rules of civil coexistence, public debate and political confrontation.

Lately we have witnessed, both in common parlance and specialized language, a narrowing of the term's meaning, especially in periods of overt terrorism. This makes it almost impossible to apply the term radicalization to other fields, for instance to environmental issues, or to some fundamentalist sectors of non-Islamic monotheistic religions.

As Donatella Di Cesare writes, the word radicalization «has condensed in it an explosive charge; it contains in it the seeds of the terror to come. Security measures and intelligence services, following the criteria of an unprecedented semiology of radicalization - a presumed circumstantial understanding of destructiveness - attempt to insinuate themselves electronically into this antechamber of terror in order to intercept its premonitory signs, to monitor the birth of a new human type: the 'radicalized' being, sometimes also defined as born again». (*Terrore e modernità*, 2017, p. 97)

It is not simply a shift to extreme positions then, but something pervasive, which concerns the metaphysics of those transformations that seem almost to preclude all possibility of public understanding. Radicalization is a concept that, at least since 11 September 2001, and perhaps starting with the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79, the multiple nuances of which have been masterfully rendered by Ryszard Kapuscinski (2001) in one of his news stories, is associated with Islamic-inspired movements that have held and continue hold strongly antagonistic positions with respect to everything that can be traced back to what is generally and generically defined as the West. Especially after the attacks in European cities, radicalization can be understood even more disturbingly as the set of processes that lead people to espouse extreme political and cultural positions that find their operational outlet in acts of terrorism, especially those in which the suicide bomber becomes a martyr. This is a process that has also affected Europe, i.e. countries where the power of the state is exercised in a sufficiently

democratic manner, where most of the population belongs to non-Islamic monotheistic religions, and where the 20th century political oppositions that revolved around class division and conflict have diminished, if not completely disappeared. These countries are also characterized by large sectors of the population that have been directly or indirectly affected by complex past or recent histories of colonialism, liberation struggles, racism and migrations from predominantly Islamic countries.

Islamic radicalization has become a threat lurking in the shadows of Europe, one that must be addressed before concrete action is taken. It therefore necessary to identify and neutralize the processes, particularly the educational pathways through which the terrorist act is planned and committed, considering it both just and effective. One of the most problematic aspects in radicalization processes is that the object-victim of radical action is not considered an interlocutor with whom to discuss, negotiate or compromise because there are absolutely no shared values or principles. This feeling of being hated for non-chosen affiliations is disorienting. In other words, those who have historically always defined the rules of the game are assaulted with 'destructive' rather than 'constructive' criticism, becoming targets to be destroyed rather than reformed. Feeling hated is disorienting, especially when there are still broad, albeit reformed, convictions about the civilizing mission of the West, as expressed through the concept of exporting democracy, philanthropy of varying kind and through the declared intent, for example, of emancipating women elsewhere or of 'selflessly' promoting economic development.

5.3 Enemy territory

One of the effects of globalization has been to create war scenarios involving, sometimes almost instantaneously, regions even far away from those where the command centres, capitals, governments and citizens of the parties involved are located (Tosini, 2007, 2012). While this is not a novel effect arising in the 1970s, in the past only the great powers were able to modify equilibria in other regions: one need only think of the colonial war, the 'gunboat policy' and the two world wars. This situation was altered by the ability of non-state organizations, inferior in terms of warfare capabilities, to intervene militarily, inflicting significant damage in

'enemy' territories, even distant ones. This upended the scenario, as in the case of the paradigmatic 11 September 2001 attacks and of the operational nuclei that undertook guerrilla actions in many European cities in the recent past. Such cases highlight the multiplicity of possible relationships between local and global; they signalled the end of direct proportionality between distance from the enemy and national security, eroding the certainty that certain regions and those who frequent them would in any case be exempt from possible damage. In other words, much like in a famous book by Dino Buzzati (1940), the Tartars overcame the Bastiani fortress without Lieutenant Drogo noticing anything; they penetrated the region the fortress was supposed to defend, undertook terrorist acts and, above all, became a part of the scenario, self-replicating through the process of 'radicalization'.

This drastically changes the dangerousness of the places of everyday life. To grasp the depth of the changes that have taken place, it is useful to adopt the distinction that Battistelli (2016, pp. 34-35) makes among dangers, risks and threats. Danger is something exogenous, it concerns phenomena external to society, such as natural disasters, which cannot be attributed to any intentionality. Risks, which are also internal to society, are due to good intentions that may not have the desired effects or may have entirely negative outcomes, i.e. they are real or feared consequences of actions that should, at least from the proponent's perspective, be undertaken because they generate benefits for all or part of society (e.g. nuclear power plants). The third category of harm is that attributable to *threats*, i.e. harm deriving from intentionality, unlike the two previous categories. The distinguishing element is therefore intentionality: an individual and/or collective subject who deliberately inflicts harm on others. This, something more than uncertain risk or innocent danger, which can also be internal to the threatened society, is a matter of no small importance. In the first case, if the danger is considered to derive from the outside, defensive-educational strategies can be put in place that are based not on the simple us/them dichotomy but on the 'them-*certainly*-them' and 'us-*certainly*-us' dichotomy. In the second case, i.e. when intentionality is also peculiar to subjects within one's own social context, then the us/them becomes 'them-*certainly*-them' and 'us-*uncertainly*-us', where *uncertainly* stands for both the general perception of insecurity and the inability to

delimit safe territories. This aside, it is an us versus you that activates 'reciprocal paranoid projections' (Mariotti, 2019, p. 58).

There has been sort of equalization of opportunities among different parts of the world. As Noam Chomsky (2015, p. 23) wrote of the widespread, penetrating post-colonial presence of the West, the situation is no longer characterized by an overt, organized manifestation of colonial power. The same can be said for the situation in the West: the 'enemy' does not manifest itself through traditional forms, imagery and rhetoric. It exists but it is not clear where and how it can multiply, or when and how it can manifest itself. It is a question that goes beyond fifth columns in their own territory, infiltrators, 'traitors' at the service of enemies or the like. It poses the question of the conditions that breed endogenous threats, i.e. those experiences and pathways that lead to radicalization.

Among the many keys to understanding the phenomenon is the interplay between the absence of communities, lost communities and desired communities.

It can help understand Islamic political extremism, which promises, as Stefania Olivieri highlights, «to return to a traditional world where one's place and identity are certain and guaranteed, a world of origins cleansed of all contamination and contradiction' [the period of the Islamic State has provisionally kept its promise, A/N]. Modern society demands that individuals constantly, painfully compromise on a psychological level between their individual identity and their place in society. The promise of returning to their origins puts an end to the exhausting self-questioning». (*Adolescenza e radicalizzazione tra trauma sociale e fragilità individuale. Il caso della Francia*, 2019, p. 72)

The question of communities does not only arise in disadvantaged suburban areas, which can hardly be considered virtuous communities but rather forced collectivities. Community dimensions constitute a lack-desire-aspiration that is also one of the elements that make up the frame of reference for other types of radicalization processes and that produce an autochthonous and reactive 'fanaticism' defined by Federico Mello (2017, p. 27) as 'blind, absolute adherence to any idea, denying the legitimacy of any other option'. Mello (2017), referring to Anders Breivick, responsible for the Oslo and Utøya massacres in 2011, highlights how the perpetrator harkens back to a supposed golden age, a perfect, communitarian world with solid roots and a clear separation between us and them, with a culture of soil and blood, a widespread and penetrating religiosity, a life lived in an atmosphere of security and mutual solidarity, an idyllic world before it degenerated under Marxism, multiculturalism and

feminism (pp. 58-9). It is this mystical desire to return to the purity of origins and to purify the degenerate present that unites fanaticism and terrorism of varying kind in their common anti-modern essence. In this sense, one component that seems to confer cultural solidity and provide a theoretical frame of reference for an extreme choice such as terrorism is also the possibility of placing it within a frame of reference that sees the manichean opposition between the 'evil' of the present and the 'good' of the past, or in general between the evil of the here and now and the good of a temporal and/or spatial elsewhere. It is always a specific manifestation of us versus them, even when the act may be that of a 'lone wolf' who takes it upon himself to realise what he believes is society's mission, even when he has not been delegated by anyone to do so and fulfils it because he has been educated in this sense within a close or distant environment. This reactionary or nostalgic criticism of modernity is perhaps one of the areas in which to develop educational actions, disseminating fragments of 'rationality' and knowledge.

5.4 Draining the water to remove the fish

The metaphor of water and fish, which in Italy has often been used in relation to the 'armed struggle' of the 1970s-1980s, also applies to radicalization. The sense of the metaphor is clear: to eliminate fish one must drain the water in which they live and reproduce. Although an apt metaphor, it is also incomplete and therefore misleading. If the fish are the terrorists, or in any case the subjects one would like to neutralize, and the water is the environment that produces them, supports them, legitimizes them, etc. (in other words forms them), who and/or what creates this environment? One must first define the environment (according to the Treccani dictionary, the 'social, cultural and moral conditions in which a person lives') that encompasses the water-where-the-fish-swim. In other words, what produces the backing, convinced adherence, sympathy, recruitment possibilities, etc. (the water) enjoyed by radicalized subjects (the fish) or those about to be radicalized? That is, what are the 'second level' educational processes that such suburban areas bring about? The answer is important because it helps to identify the scenarios towards which pedagogical intervention should be directed, particularly those in

which actions of a promotional and preventive rather than rehabilitative nature can be implemented. This is also because radicalization is not a homogeneous, monolithic phenomenon. As Francesca Oggioni (2019, p. 77-78) points out, the stories are heterogeneous in terms of time, they may need years to mature, they are both individual and micro-collective pathways that take place in physical or virtual environments, and such heterogeneity opens avenues for action. Although radicalization has an ideological and value foundation, its manifestation is not exclusively violent: this makes it flexible but, at the same time also porous and permeable.

The environment in which the conditions of adhesion, sympathy for terrorism and its imitation mature are the specific living conditions of those areas in which global radicalization takes root, becoming local and materially lived. In both common and specialist discourse these can be traced back to the umbrella definition of social and cultural *suburbs*, one of the hearts of the matter and the main reservoir for directly or indirectly providing water to the fish in question. Here again there is an element that disorients: the radicalization hosted by and/or produced in the suburbs is that which occurs in one's own backyard, and for which unlike landfills or nuclear waste dumps, no imaginary or real NIMBY-style opposition is possible.

Examining the French situation, Stefania Ulivieri writes that it is a shared opinion among scholars that «radicalization questions the root causes underlying the social and cultural economic exclusion of a large segment of youth in France [...]. Radicalization is therefore a process that is confronted with the roots of one's own history, unravelling one's own personal formation and self: in the family with a painful, traumatic immigration history, in dormitory neighbourhoods without resources that can generate a sense of community and belonging, in schools which instil no hope but a negative image of oneself with a future in which opportunities are rare, if not altogether lacking» (*Adolescenza e radicalizzazione tra trauma sociale e fragilità individuale. Il caso della Francia*, 2019, p.71).

As Benslama (2012) states, it is no coincidence that the radicalization of young people (2/3 of the radicalized are 15-25 years old) occurs after a period of apathy and self-denigration marked by feelings of shame and inadequacy.

As mentioned earlier, the decision to adhere to radical Islam seems to regard mainly young people, as well as young women who must almost earn the right to be considered dangerous after their radical choice.

As Lisa Brambilla writes, «it is only recently that female terrorists have become the object of research, which has better clarified the paths and forms of their participation, the roles and responsibilities they hold within organizational structures, as well as the multiple effects of their presence and actions.» (*Terrorismo, genere, donna*, 2019, p. 135)

According to Donatella Di Cesare (2017, p. 98) the terrorist phenomenon as it has manifested itself in recent years can be studied on two different levels. The first ‘focuses on violent action’, that is, ‘on the one hand, this kind of research examines the technical means that make terrorism possible and modify it throughout history, down to the use of technology as a tool for terror; on the other hand, it looks on the devastating effects of terrorism, the slaughter and massacre that are produced by it’. The second level focuses ‘on the agents of terror, their personal histories, on the motives behind actions, and the choices that, in a complex play of mirrors that deploys their relationship with the world, have determined their individual trajectories and the ultimate goal that has driven them to violence before they took any step to action’. Research therefore focuses, on the one hand, on the analysis of terrorist strategies and techniques and appropriate countermeasures, and on the other, on individual trajectories that lead individuals to become interpreters of a political-military design, in some cases even turning themselves into deadly weapons (e.g. suicide bombers).

Pedagogy is interested in the second level of analysis, hopefully eschewing analytical and operational studies of deep, unconscious dynamics and of psychopathological undertones and the like to instead focus on the educational processes that can foster radicalization, both ‘rational’ and ‘emotional’, assuming that the two types are extricable. It is a pedagogical-social focus on an intermediate plane, which attempts to both describe and understand the phenomenon, i.e. the educational experiences that generate it, and to contrast it by trying to modify the system of such experiences. It is an intermediate plane in the sense that it is placed between the general political plane focusing on analytical strategies and response to the terrorist phenomenon, where the general players act, not always clearly and openly (i.e. the ‘global’ plane), and the plane of small individual stories within which a psychodynamic reading, and possible intervention, can also prevail. Such an intermediate plane coincides with the area in which global dynamics and general phenomena find expression in the present moment, revealing themselves in their daily materiality, becoming

life lived: from international migrations to delocalization processes, from cultural homologation to movements of resistance to such homologation. An intermediate area-plane displaying the general and, at the same time, the specific personal history of individuals, becoming collective histories, relational spheres and, again, the observable everyday materiality that is a candidate for transformation.

5.5 Pedagogical prospects

The pedagogical analysis of radicalization cannot be limited to processes that lead individuals and groups to espouse certain political views and practices and not others; other radicalization processes must be considered. There is not only the radicalization of individuals, but also the radicalization of situations, conditions and general scenarios. Asymmetric globalization, neo-liberalism, technocracy and meritocracy are all radicalizations, i.e. accentuating elements without brakes or correctives that weigh on the lives of groups and individuals, strongly conditioning their plans and possible choices. There are also other forms of radicalization to be considered: white supremacism, nationalism and populism. These are all rooted in the fear of others, particularly of foreigners and of those who do not accept a position of submission or adopt the perspective of those who have dominated and to some extent still dominate the world scenario. In this regard, reference should be made to the radical critique of Frantz Fanon (1961, 2015) and James Baldwin (1968).

What educational actions should be undertaken to eliminate, or much more realistically reduce, the risk of radicalization? What are the alternatives to a radicalising education produced intentionally or by living conditions? It is too easy to preach and extol the timeless virtues of inclusion, dialogue, mutual recognition and virtuous cross-fertilization in order to educate to active adaptation (through empowerment or resilience), harmless criticism and integration. It is equally unrealistic to believe that a set of (educational) actions can be interwoven to lead potential sympathizers with terrorist ideas and movements to espouse democratic values. This is an explicit and straightforward position summarized by Goffredo Buccini (2019) who, using the direct prose that characterizes journalism, warns against the 'sharia next door' that matures

and manifests itself 'in the interstices and outskirts of our metropolitan ghettos'.

Integration is required; this passes through the youngest and above all through the «liberation of Islamic girls from the oppression of males and their subculture' The rate of adherence to the democratic values of the States that welcome them can be measured precisely by this very obvious indicator: the freedom of women.» (Ghetti, 2019, p. 190)

Faced with a question of such depth, politics and economics, as well as pedagogy, must be given their due. Although the latter should not be considered the handmaiden of politics, it cannot address such a chaotic and complex situation autonomously. How can we educate against radicalization? It is impossible and would be very misleading to provide one definitive answer, to consider one better than all others. The answer can only stem from the educational-operational interpretation of the culture within which pedagogy reflects on this issue, formulating sufficiently credible and feasible options for action. The question therefore shifts from the search for 'what to do' (the local contexts and social circumstances determine this) to thinking about the cultural assumptions and worldviews that form the basis of our definition and assessment of radicalization and of appropriate countermeasures. In this context, the question of belonging, which is always present in any kind of social analysis, becomes crucial: it always oscillates between real and imaginary needs, between the search for collective superiority and the practice of subalternity, between acceptance and rejection of diversity. These are all issues that are inextricably linked to educational processes that can strengthen or weaken the sense of single-prevalent sense of belonging or of multiple and changeable belonging.

Education against radicalization may thus take place when proposed pathways lead to criticism of the existing 'system' of belonging, stimulating radicalization of a different kind (recovering the neutral value of the term), i.e. providing tools to rearrange the mosaic of players, to show that the divisions and conflicts apparently generated and reinforced by religious, national and ethnic issues and membership can be replaced by other transversal issues concerning work and living conditions, access to essential goods, the ability to exercise collective power to diminish inequalities, effective freedom, emancipation needs, social and civil rights.

It is after all, albeit in a totally different context, a question of having the opportunity and ability to realistically embrace the message, 'Workers of the world, unite!' in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. This work assigns more importance to one's position in the job world and the production process than to ethnic, national or religious identities.

The real problem is not the existence of Islamist radicalization, but the lack of other conceptions of life and the world that can produce a radical critique of neo-liberal globalization and that are appealing enough to be transformed into movements with a realistic chance of negotiating global and local strategic issues. It is also as a response to the westernization and self-westernization of the world, in its various neo-liberal or supremacist shades, which continues even in this new phase of multilateralism.

However, if pedagogical action strives to only weaken radicalization processes, on an analytical as well as operational level one must proceed by trial and error in theory and design. Official education, that which re-elaborates the social mandate of the 'state', is set up as an experimental and uncertain counter-education with respect to the directions of prevailing education: this applies to disadvantaged suburbs, or to suburbs that are in decline, as well as to those experiencing problems with crime. The same can be said for actions for legality (*against* crime) or for that weak concept that is citizenship. One educates for or against something by dealing with something else with a logic of promotion, i.e. by providing general tools for interpreting the economic, social and cultural context within which individuals move and act, and which constitutes their educational environment.

In conclusion, among the many movies that deal with the condition of the banlieues, there are two that are or will soon be classics: *La Haine* (Kassovitz, 1995) and *Les Misérables* (Ladj Ly, 2019). Shot 25 years apart, they are not academic works, nor do they wish to be. Instead, they are and will remain important material for understanding a place-time-historical issue. What are the differences in content between the two? In the first film, in the vernissage episode, the protagonists have negative encounters with non-police members of the other world, which generate ambivalent feelings in all those involved, and which certify relational failure. In the second film, the other world consists only of police officers; they only appear fleetingly at the beginning of the film in that illusory shared sense

of belonging represented by jubilation over the French national football team's victory at the 2018 World Cup. There is no other world beyond the banlieues, beyond those suburbs that pose as an all-encompassing educational experience comprising individual and collective lives. The reactive violence that is unleashed in the final part of the film, unlike in Kassovitz's film, has an objective, with specific declared goals. However, there is a pedagogical figure who guides the youths, starting from the principles of Islam. Is it an education that will lead to radicalization or away from it? It is a difficult question to answer, but one that must be considered.

References

- BALDWIN, J. (1968). *La prossima volta il fuoco*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
- BATTISTELLI, F. (2016). *La sicurezza e la sua ombra. Terrorismo, panico, costruzione della minaccia*. Roma: Donzelli.
- BATTISTON, G. (2016). *Arcipelago jihad. Lo Stato islamico e il ritorno di al-Qaeda*. Roma: Edizioni dell'asino.
- BENSLAMA, F. (2012). *La psicoanalisi alla prova dell'Islam*. Milano: Il ponte.
- BRAMBILLA, L. (2019). Terrorismo, genere, donna. In L. BRAMBILLA, A. GALIMBERTI, S. TRAMMA, (a cura di), *Educazione e terrorismo* (p.142). Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- BUCCINI, G., (2019). *Ghetti*. Milano: Solferino.
- BUZZATI, D. (1940). *Il deserto dei tartari*. Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori.
- CHOMSKY, N., & VLTCHER, A. (2015). *Terrorismo occidentale*. Milano: Ponte alle Grazie.
- DI CESARE, D. (2017). *Terrore e modernità*. Torino: Einaudi.
- FANON, F. (1962). *I dannati della terra*. Torino: Einaudi.
- FANON, F. (2015). *Pelle nere, maschere bianche*. Pisa: ETS.
- GAMBINO, A. (2005). *Esiste davvero il terrorismo?*. Roma: Fazi Editore.
- LY, L. (Director). (2019). *Les Misérables*. France: Srab Films.
- KAPUSCINSKI, R. (2001). *Shah-in shah*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
- KASSOVITZ, M. (Director) (1995). *La Haine*. Francia: MKL Distribution.
- MARIOTTI, G. (2019). Integralismo e distruttività. In N. FINA, G. MARIOTTI, *Il disagio dell'inciviltà* (pp.57-62). Milano: Mimesis.
- MELLO, F. (2017). *La viralità del male*. Milano: Baldini & Castoldi.
- OGGIONI, F. (2019). La radicalizzazione in carcere. L. BRAMBILLA, A. GALIMBERTI, S. TRAMMA, (a cura di), *Educazione e terrorismo* (pp. 77-94). Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- TOSINI, D. (2007). *Terrorismo e antiterrorismo nel XX secolo*. Roma-Bari: Editori Laterza.
- TOSINI, D. (2012). *Martiri che uccidono. Il terrorismo nelle nuove guerre*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- ULIVIERI STIOZZI, S. (2019). Adolescenza e radicalizzazione tra trauma sociale e fragilità individuale. Il caso della Francia. In BRAMBILLA, L. BRAMBILLA, A. GALIMBERTI, S. TRAMMA, (a cura di), *Educazione e terrorismo* (pp. 63-75). Milano: FrancoAngeli.

6

Juvenile extremism: integration and educational models

Milena Santerini

The phenomenon of young people embracing extremist causes calls for a reflection that considers educational, economic, and socio-political factors. Here I describe the forms of juvenile extremism (e.g., Islamist, white supremacist and left-wing) and the different approaches used by propaganda aimed at young people. These are true online and offline educational models that promote the world view of "radicalised" youth. The response to this complex phenomenon can be found in inclusive citizenship training and critical intercultural education.

Key Words: Extremism; Radicalization; Intercultural Education; Citizenship; School

6.1 Introduction

On the international scene, phenomena of extremist violence among youth are certainly not new but have acquired unprecedented political significance, especially since 11th September 2001. In this era of global terrorism, extremism and Islamist radicalisation have become equivalent the eyes of public opinion, though in actual fact the galaxy of violence includes many different manifestations. In recent years, the "generational" phenomenon of young people who embrace extremism has become particularly worrisome, first due to the expansion of Al Qaida, then the formation of Da'esh and the Caliphate, but also the growth for example of

violent right-wing extremist groups and movements linked to white supremacism (Vidino, 2021; Bronner, 2016).

Male and female adolescents in Europe and the rest of the world who embrace bloody causes or terrorism call for a reflection that considers educational, economic and socio-political factors. Here I consider the different forms of influence of extremist movements and the types of response to this complex variegated phenomenon.

6.2 The forms of juvenile extremism

Today we witness different expressions of rebellious or violent thought and action. These may be political, such as contestation of the system, religious or social (e.g. the *black bloc*). Extremism is not solely in the name of an idea; transgression in the form of adolescent gangs is a very dangerous form of urban conflict. For example, juvenile gangs, studied by social scientists since the first half of the 1900s in Chicago, today concern at least 4000 gangs with about 40,000 members in Europe¹. Immigration is obviously not the direct reason why gangs are formed, but it can lead to a build-up of risk factors, especially among second generation immigrants in degraded neighbourhoods.

Some of the gangs that engage in street violence are spontaneous groups; others are "imported" from abroad, especially from the United States, and sport names like *Latin Kings*, *Nieta* and *Maras*. These groups engage in acts of vandalism, illegality and violence, finding meaning in internal solidarity and fighting rival groups, from which members derive a feeling of security and belonging. Thus they have a protective function among peers and a defence function against a hostile environment and other "enemies" of similar age. Like Islamic radicalism, the gang offers recognisable belonging, which makes it attractive to second generation adolescents, who may have less support due to migration-related difficulties. Moreover, Italian minors have long been recruited in the ranks of organised delinquency, especially in the southern regions (mafia, camorra, n'drangheta).

Another particularly active galaxy is that of white supremacist extremism. The number of victims of aggression by such militants in the world is by

¹ <https://eurogangproject.com/>

now about the same as that perpetrated *ihadists*. In the United States, half of all hate crimes are race-related, i.e. mostly directed against blacks. The ideology, influenced by neo-Nazi circles, conceives an invasion of immigrants (in Europe and elsewhere) and the prospect of the “white race” being replaced by the newcomers. These extremist groups (*violent right-wing extremists*) are of various types: *Pegida* in Saxony, *English Defence League* in Great Britain, *Forza Nuova* and *Casa Pound* in Italy, groups of nationalists, neo-Nazis or supremacists mixed with ultraist football fans and hooligans, followers of “Uncle H” (Hitler), Blood & Honour, Aryan Nations and *National Alliance* in the United States.

Since 1995, the organisation *Stormfront* has recruited skinheads, militia and aspiring terrorists. In 2020, 24 exponents of *Stormfront* were sentenced in Italy after they had drawn up a list of “influential Jews” and published it online. Today the site has been blocked and its exponents tried and sentenced. Right-wing extremism is estimated to have thousands of *Facebook* pages in Italy. Not by chance the great majority express different types of antisemitism, also shared by those of opposite persuasion, in an amalgam of hate against Israel.

In the galaxy of left-wing extremism, we find the descendants of the dangerous terrorist movements of Europe of the 1970s and 1980s, and the anarchist galaxy, often inactive groups but nevertheless dangerous. Frequently fragmented into small groups, they uphold humanist ideologies (minority rights, struggle against brute capitalism, sexism, etc.), but may trigger violence and vandalism on occasions such as global summits. Their criticism of globalisation frequently degenerates into insurrectional acts.

These groups of different matrix and ideology have grown more communicative with time, sharing ideologies, platforms and in some cases defence and military training. They form true communities that bestow identity by building a sense of distance between “us” and “them” and they recruit people in a discreet but effective manner. Above all, they mimic aspects of recruitment procedures and methods of attack in a sort of “copycat” terrorism.

Finally, behaviours dictated by social self-exclusion and phenomena involving the risk of self-destruction are also extreme. Many youths, like *hikikomori*, have a pathological dependence on online communication and live shut up in the house. It is estimated that such cases increased by 30%

during the COVID-19 pandemic. The fact that the violence is directed principally against the self makes this type of problem even more alarming. It is therefore clear that the galaxy of juvenile extremism must be considered as a whole, as different phenomena with many common features. In the following pages, I pay specific attention to male and female adolescents who embrace violent or terrorist causes linked directly or indirectly to the world of Islam. The Middle-Eastern wars and especially the war in Syria have created a global cause to fight, as demonstrated by the phenomenon of young persons born or raised in Europe who embrace the cause to become *foreign fighters*. In recent years, new socio-educational analyses on the evolution of such extremism have gradually emerged and may also be useful for interpreting and fighting other forms of extremism (Santerini, 2020a, 2020b; 2021).

6.3 A phenomenon with multiple dimensions

A socio-cultural and educational approach not only requires intervening but also *preventing* young people from joining organisations that create identity but at the same time absorb fragile individuals, channelling them into radical social and political conflict. The topic is therefore how to increase the resilience of young people against the attraction of violent ideologies.

Analyses of the phenomenon of juvenile extremism in the world of Islam have delineated a much more complex picture than the simplistic "clash of civilisations". First of all, the idea that Islam is "naturally violent" and that it draws a propensity for continuous conflict from the Koran has been criticised. It would also be just as superficial to blame all these processes on the West. The topic is much more complex and involves Muslim desperation in the face of the social crises, the problem of political autonomy from religion, and the revolt of the young against the older generations still in power in much of the Arab world (Benslama, 2015).

If age is a common element in the jihadist galaxy, for example the majority of terrorists are young, and if many of them show social or mental distress, their histories do not necessarily involve poverty or exclusion. Indeed, some sons of affluent families express extremist ideas and actions. Although social exclusion, failure stories or drug dependence can play a

major role, no direct link between economic disadvantage and violence has been demonstrated. The number of young women who join these causes is increasing; they may be widows, orphans or fanatics, but their position remains subordinate.

More than a radical “attachment to roots” or presumed return to the authentic sources of Islam, the jihadist cause shows a process of deviation that Islamises self-destructive nihilism (Roy, 2017). The extremists are not devout subjects who delve into their faith but persons distant from the world of Islam who rediscover it, often on internet, in the search for a solution to their identity anxiety (Benslama, 2015, p. 51). The definition of “radicalisation” used for these youths does not mean extremization of the Muslim religion but is “*the symptom of a desire for roots on the part of those who no longer have roots or who live uprooted*” (p. 37).

It is not by chance that “radicalised” youths are recruited and connect increasingly with others through the web rather than in the mosque. Without having to go to the mosque, terrorists link up via internet and social networks or are converted in prison (Pasta, 2019). Thus the web is the place of the impossible, a dream world that invents an enemy, provides rudiments of the Koran and translates the resentment and desire for identity of many into a religious repertoire (Khosrokhavar, 2014, p. 74).

A non “monocausal” interpretation is therefore indispensable for a better understanding of these phenomena and ways to oppose them (Guolo, 2018).

The individual psychological dimension is interwoven with that of social and family vulnerability and juvenile utopianism. In recent years, the *Radicalisation Awareness Network* (RAN) has analysed these phenomena, considering two types of factor. Among the *pull factors* we find ideological motives, the attraction and fascination of violence, a search for heroism and redemption. Among the *push factors* we have social, political and economic remonstrances, sense of injustice, personal crisis, frustration and identity crisis.

In Italy, violent extremism has so far manifested in a limited manner. However, the risk factors which influence the new generations of Muslim faith are clearly present. One of the aspects to consider is the transmission to young people of a general resentment felt by the Muslim world, described with disease metaphors. It gives rise to a feeling of victimism that is fuelled by preachers of hate, a sense of being abandoned that

strengthens self-ghettoization. This creates the risk of passing from social closure in the peripheries of cities to mental and doctrinaire ghettos, an *apartheid* that does not come from outside but from inside.

In short, only by tackling the complexity of these multidimensional phenomena is it possible to consider “internal” psychosocial factors as well as cultural and geopolitical factors in order to construct prevention by opposing the extremist mentality. Studies that see Islam as naturally violent and preach a “new crusade” as the only solution, come to grief in such a fragmented situation, which underline the need to work patiently to foster inclusion, integration and intercultural dialogue (Santerini, 2017).

6.4 The approaches of extremist discourse

All organised groups work out their models for influencing individuals. In the case of criminal organisations and radical groups, communication of the models of thought and behaviour is specific because the approach is ideological and totalitarian. Such “educational” models are not based on openness, personal independence and freedom of choice but on conditioning. However, this type of influence is not necessarily based on coercion but requires the collaboration and acquiescence of members. “Radicalisation” requires persons who are convinced that group membership is the only possible choice in a hostile alien world.

Dounia Bouzar and Christophe Caupenne (2020) describe the world of *jihadism*, white supremacism and the extreme left. They describe the dimensions of the radicalisation process common to these three worlds. The first regards the “emotional anxiety-generating” approach; the second, individual cognitive change, and finally the role played by group relations (p.14).

The first step consists in creating persecutory emotions that give rise to anxiety. Newcomers are convinced that they live in an alien, hostile, threatening world. It is a paranoid view, common in the conspiracy mentality. Conspiracy mentalities have been on the increase for some time. They attribute the causes of contemporary problems to restricted power groups who exercise world dominion. Not by chance these movements are strongly anti-Semitic and accuse “Jews” of plotting to dominate the world, exactly as Nazi propaganda exploited the Protocols of the Elders of Zion

(the Protocols described a pact, signed in a cemetery, between influential Jews and Satan).

Viewing the world through the lens of conspiracy distorts reality. Psychologist Rob Brotherton (2017) names some elements of this mind-set, first of all a propensity for prejudice not confirmed by the facts. On the basis of (few) ideas that seem evident, the conspiracy theorist joins the dots, linking completely separate events (p. 97-103). The story follows the scheme of traditional myths, fables and legends. The recurrent archetype is the struggle between the powers of “good” and “evil”, the latter being mysterious entities that must be fought. Such stories engage anxiety and fear, shorting any rational fact-related process and bypassing any critical thought (p. 164-186).

It is not surprising that radicalised groups exploit this paranoid feeling of being surrounded by “evil forces” to justify extremism and violence. The youths involved must no longer trust anyone but their fellows and must even be wary of their family and friends, avoiding “corruption” by a world that deviates them from the path of true faith. Nor is it surprising that even in extreme right-wing, racist and supremacist groups, this narrative can be used to elicit fear of invasion by immigrants and replacement of “true Italians” with foreigners.

The second step regards changing the novice's view of the world to a binary view: black and white, good and bad, friends and enemies. By promoting withdrawal through insecurity, the manipulators kindle a sense of omnipotence and a process of “dehumanising others” (Volpato, 2011). Reducing the enemy to non-human can happen in many ways (others may be depicted as animals or pathological organisms and so forth). One of the most effective lessons of Nazi propaganda before and during WW2, learned by today's extremist groups, consisted in stripping people of their human traits. The purpose of the operation was to enable them to conduct acts of violence without the brake of the natural empathy that a human face sparks in people. De-humanisation makes it possible to harm or kill symbols, not persons, without remorse.

As shown by Bouzar and Caupenne (2020), induction of anxiety and insecurity and a changed view of the world are only the first steps. It is then necessary to create different socialisation, new relations that give security. It is necessary to create mimicry in the group, where everyone dresses and behaves in the same way. The community creates a fusional niche for

individuals who have become fragile; it is glorified for building an affective network around these persons (p. 97 et seq.).

Here the role of internet comes into play. As shown by Stefano Pasta (2019), the network creates weak bonds between young members of radical groups, bonds which to them seem strong. The recruiters know how to personalise messages in a network where all voices have the same weight and the authority of legitimate sources is absent. Young men and women who have grown up with internet may prefer the anonymity of the web and not fully understand the difference between online and offline.

Unlike al-Qaida, which uses the digital environment in secrecy, Da'esh chose the *Jihadosphere* and social networks as an instrument of global proselytism. At least half of its content is accessible. It is estimated that platforms spreading radical Islamist content on the social networks increased by 85% between 2015 and 2018, and recently small platforms are increasing as well (Munoz, 2019). Thus the worldview of ISIS becomes a genuine educational proposal that unites recruitment with personalised group affiliation, albeit often in solitude.

6.5 The educational models of radical propaganda

Recently RAN studied the propaganda strategies of extremist groups². Their communication must be very effective if it is able to win young persons to a cause involving violent methods and sometimes personal risk or death. On the Islamist side, the Caliphate episode seems to have lost steam, but the risk of terrorism has not decreased. The RAN found that common discourse includes some propaganda themes that are worth examining closely as true "training models" aimed at people who are joining the groups³.

² https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_pol_cn_most_often_used_narratives_stockholm_05042019_fr.pdf

³ Ritzmann, A. (22 March 2018). *A Tribal Call to Arms: Propaganda and What PVE Can Learn from Anthropology, Psychology and Neuroscience*, European Eye on Radicalization. Source: <https://eeradicalization.com/a-tribal-call-to-arms-propaganda-and-what-pve-can-learn-from-anthropology-psychology-and-neuroscience/>

First of all, the propaganda exploits the victimism and feeling of exclusion of young people, who are led to believe that they are threatened and marginalised because they are Muslims. This resonates with young second- and third-generation Europeans of immigrant families, who often face real integration difficulties. They are deceived into thinking that there are simplified solutions to the complexity of coexistence in immigration societies and that they can create their “own” space (the “*ummah*”), distinct from their surroundings. Criticism of the foreign policy of different countries also fuels this sense of injustice. This propaganda, which exploits victimism, also carries weight with right-wing extremists, who accuse governments of favouring “foreigners” to the detriment of “white” populations.

The propaganda discourse also offers protagonism to youths accustomed to marginality, asking them to become “fighters” instead of second-class citizens. Militancy also offers the certainty of eternal salvation. The biographies of many youths who chose terror and violence show stories of occupational, social and family failure, redeemed in this way. The legendary utopia of the victory of Islam in the world is an ideal that appeals to the desire for heroism and absolutes of many young persons.

In 2002, Georges Bensoussan published a heart-felt appeal on the spread of antisemitism in the peripheries of French cities, the *banlieues*. The book describes the dangerous situation of Jews in France, especially in schools (Brenner, 2002; Davet & Lhomme, 2018; Obin, 2020). Jewish pupils, threatened in class, have abandoned most public schools. It is difficult to talk of “intercommunity” tensions when Jews are only a tiny minority among French students and especially students of extra-European origin. Limitations on the freedom to declare oneself Jewish and to wear symbols like the kippah recall the mounting vexations with which antisemitism was expressed in history. The pyramid of hate has insults and derision at its base and at its tip the genocidal violence that Europe has unfortunately already known.

The conflict between Israel and Palestine has sparked a new form of antisemitism in the world (Santerini, 2005; 2019). Apart from legitimate criticism of the policies of the government of Israel, it is easy to slide into manifestations of true antisemitism when one hopes for the cancellation of the State or when one recalls ancient prejudice regarding the current confrontations.

The silence of the press and French political circles regarding antisemitism in the Arab-Muslim world has continued for many years. Yet there was an outcry when teacher Samuel Paty, was killed outside his school for discussing, in a civic education lesson, the case of the cartoons offensive to Mohammed published by *Charlie Hebdo*. France continues to be the scene of strong ideological clashes between those who point out the antisemitism of second- and third-generation immigrants and those who accuse the former of islamophobia. Debate on *laïcité* and the veil continues the background, among religious and cultural rights and identity claims, all of which have influenced political platforms.

Some denounce that this attitude of abstention allowed Islamism to penetrate into schools, Islamism in the sense of an extremist movement, not merely inspired by Salafism but also prepared to cut ties and stage anti-institutional actions (Obin, 2020). Effectively it is not so much a question of “conquering land” as of protecting the freedoms and rights of everyone.

In Italy, the picture has many more facets, and there continues to be no serious public debate on the question. However, it is time to seriously reflect on the permeability of adolescents and young people of migrant origin and Islamic religion to the preaching of hate. At the beginning, various elements suggest progressive disaffection with the values of secular citizenship. Although we cannot tackle the question of the veil or female head-coverings here, the women of families from countries with Islamic religion and culture, where oppression by the males of the family is evident, are subject to strong cultural changes (Pepicelli, 2014; Ricucci, 2017). Due to its polysemic nature, the veil can express free acceptance of religious sentiment, in the form of “submission” to God through sober and modest behaviour, but also “submission” to men. The key concept is that of honour, a value of patriarchal societies, threatened by the free behaviour of women, a vulnerable point of male “shame”. Male honour is indeed cast in doubt by women who are too free. It is necessary to distinguish between free religious choice and passive acceptance of traditions where covered women flatter male pride. Finally, there is the veil as symbol and flag against oppression of Muslims.

Young people of Arab-Muslim origin suffer the repercussions of global conflict. Joining the cause of Palestine, for example, is increasingly often linked to public demonstrations and expression of hate and antisemitism in the social media. It is therefore impossible to ignore that as a consequence,

in the long period, we run the risk of behaviours that progressively marginalise, albeit surreptitiously, the new generations of sons of migrants, who should rather be considered a resource for our country.

6.6 The path of citizenship and counter-narrative

To combat and prevent young men and women from embracing extremist causes means not succumbing to the populist narrative that promotes fear, division and apartheid. Above all, a united country needs integration, that can be obtained through schools, observance of human rights, citizenship training and encouragement of autonomy and critical thinking.

To fight the risk of new “anti-constitutional” generations, it is necessary to clear the minefield and begin to oppose the widespread xenophobia that creates second-class citizens. The dynamics of integration of new Italians, or rather new Europeans, differ according to case, time spent in the country, and above all the quality of the integration experience. In most cases these experiences are happy, but many have tasted vilification and rejection. For the latter, selective integration can indicate non-linear processes with many factors: the history of the first generation, the obstacles encountered in society and above all family capital.

In an aging society with low mobility, the second generations are a factor of social dynamism and opportunity that are difficult to classify using existing categories. The children of migrants are global by definition. However, the important role that young people of the new generations can play remains conditioned by whether or not they are able to obtain Italian citizenship. According to Law no. 91/92, the children of foreign parents born in Italy are not eligible for citizenship until they reach 18 years of age. They do not automatically become Italian citizens but maintain the nationality of their parents until they come of age.

Children, adolescents and adults who have been faithful to the new country where they grew up are not ensured the status of Italian citizen, whereas children and grandchildren of Italians abroad, who may not know the Italian language or ever have come to Italy, can obtain citizenship more easily. The “second generations” discover, contrary to everyday experience, that they are aliens in the country they know as their own.

So far there have been vain attempts at reforming a law that makes so many young people "foreigners in their homeland". It would be important to make schooling a requirement for citizenship, not as a further obstacle but as an intercultural operation fostering conscious and convinced citizenship.

Another measure that could undermine the attraction of anti-institutional causes would be to oppose hate directed at Islam, and in so doing, all other forms of hate. Discrimination and xenophobia towards immigrants and the Islamic world lead to victimism and resentment. Although the term "islamophobia" is in many ways inappropriate, anti-Muslim prejudice is thriving and is expressed by a spectrum of behaviours that range from associating all Muslims with potential terrorists and ignoring the diversity and plurality of the Islamic world, to resentment associated with racism towards immigrants of the "we" and "them" type, and the idea that Islam is totally incompatible with modern Constitutions.

This challenge can therefore be used to combat all forms of discrimination in order to avoid that separate world that we see growing in the peripheries of European cities and exacerbating the "friends/enemies" polarisation. It would be an error to underestimate the destructive potential for the social fabric of "all Islamic" neighbourhoods, of the uncontrolled proliferation of schools and centres in Italy and other European countries that foster exclusion instead of preventing it. It is fundamental to invest in integration. Considering all Muslims essentially separate from the rest and incompatible with democratic culture has the effect of reinforcing integralist tendencies from inside and weakening those who want greater individual freedom. This is an intercultural challenge that calls for united recognition (language, schools etc.) but cannot be allowed to degenerate into separatist communities that break society apart.

The elements I have listed suggest the need to open debate on the prevention of extremism among young people, beginning with social recognition, removal of obstacles to integration, and above all intercultural citizenship training (Fiorucci, 2020).

Schools and extra-scholastic environments can play an important role in many ways (Branca & Santerini, 2008; Cuciniello & Pasta, 2020). On one hand the approaches outlined above show that educational models promoting extremist ideas are very effective because they exploit strong emotions and feeling, especially in adolescent life. An education project

could start by working on the sense of exclusion and rejection that the hate manipulators arouse in their victims. The victimism of those who do not feel accepted can be overcome by a serious policy of social and political integration and with institutions such as schools which are inclusive and welcoming.

The class is the first place of encounter and democratic coexistence, where there should not be any fear of tackling divisive topics if they serve to build a new dialogue. It is a question of formulating critical intercultural education that does not propose assimilatory or paternalistic solutions or fall into the trap of moral relativism.

The feeling of being accepted also requires types of teacher training that counter widespread religious illiteracy, especially regarding Islam (Branca & Cuciniello, 2014). It is necessary to delve into historical-religious knowledge at all levels, from the history of the Mediterranean cultural fabric down to the present conflicts, and to write and choose textbooks free of stereotypes.

In theory, one of the aims of schooling is to teach critical thinking, but in the course of time this has often been replaced by stimulation of "suspicion". The conspiracy mentality linked to extremism can be deconstructed by serious analysis of the ("horizontal") web sources and by empowerment of young people so they do not fall prey to the idea that powerful dark forces decide everything in their lives.

"De-radicalisation" programmes therefore cannot be based solely on a sort of de-conditioning, but must be accompanied by an idea of society centred on trust and respect, in which there is the rule of law: only then can we clear away the encrustations that support the growth of diffidence and violent hate.

References

- BENSLAMA, F. (2015). *L'idéal et la cruauté: Subjectivité et politique de la radicalisation*. Paris: Lignes.
- BOUZAR, D., & CAUPENNE, C. (2020). *La tentation de l'extrémisme. Djihadistes, suprémacistes blancs et activistes de l'extrême gauche*. Bruxelles: Mardaga.
- BRANCA, P., & SANTERINI, M. (a cura di) (2008). *Alunni arabofoni a scuola*. Roma: Carocci.
- BRANCA, P., & CUCINIELLO, A. (2014). Scuola e Islam. In A. MELLONI (a cura di), *Rapporto sull'analfabetismo religioso in Italia* (pp. 283-300). Bologna: Il Mulino.
- BRENNER, E. (Ed.) (2002). *Les territoires perdus de la République*. Paris: Pluriel.
- BRONNER, G. (2016). *La pensée extrême. Comment des hommes ordinaires deviennent des fanatiques*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- BROTHERTON, R. (2017). *Menti sospettose. Perché siamo tutti complottisti*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.
- CUCINIELLO, A., & PASTA, S. (2020). *Studenti musulmani a scuola. Pluralismo, religioni e intercultura*. Roma: Carocci.
- DAVET, G., & LHOMME, F. (Eds.) (2018). *Inch'Allah. L'islamisation à visage découvert. Une enquête spotlight en Seine-Saint-Denis*. Paris: Fayard.
- FIORUCCI, M. (2020). *Educazione, formazione e pedagogia in prospettiva interculturale*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- GUOLO, R. (2018). *Jihadisti d'Italia. La radicalizzazione islamica nel nostro Paese*. Milano: Guerini e associati.
- KHOSROKHAVAR, F. (2014). *Radicalisation*. Paris: Editions Maison Sciences de l'Homme.
- MUNOZ, M. (2019). Selling the Long War. *CTC Sentinel*, 11(10), 31-36. Source: <https://ctc.usma.edu/selling-long-war-islamicstate-propaganda-caliphate/>
- OBIN, J.-P. (2020). *Comment on a laissé l'islamisme pénétrer l'école*. Parigi: Hermann.
- PASTA, S. (2019). Una lettura della "Jihadofera". L'importanza del Web e dei legami deboli nell'educazione al terrorismo. In F. ANTONACCI, M.B. GAMBACORTI-PASSERINI, F. OGGIONI, *Educazione e terrorismo. Posizionamenti pedagogici* (pp.23-34). Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- PEPICELLI, R. (2014). Letteratura e Internet: giovani donne musulmane d'Italia si raccontano e raccontano di emancipazione femminile, identità italiana e Islam. In E. PFOSTL, *Musulmane d'Italia* (pp. 161-190). Roma: Bordeaux.
- RICUCCI, R. (2017). *Diversi dall'Islam. Figli dell'immigrazione e altre fedi*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- ROY, O. (2017). *La santa ignoranza. Religioni senza cultura*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
- SANTERINI, M. (2005). *Antisemitismo senza memoria. Insegnare la Shoah nelle società multiculturali*. Roma: Carocci.
- SANTERINI, M. (2017). *Da stranieri a cittadini. Educazione interculturale e mondo globale*. Milano: Mondadori.
- SANTERINI, M. (cura di) (2019). *Il nemico innocente. L'incitamento all'odio nell'Europa contemporanea*. Milano: Guerini.
- SANTERINI, M. (2020a). The role of Education and Training in Preventing Violent Radicalization. *Gnosis*, (1), 82-89.
- SANTERINI, M. (2020b). Integrazione ed estremismo giovanile. In A. CUCINIELLO, S. PASTA (a cura di), *Studenti musulmani a scuola. Pluralismo, religioni e intercultura* (pp.70-78). Roma: Carocci.
- SANTERINI, M. (2021). *La mente ostile. Forme dell'odio contemporaneo*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.

VIDINO, L. (2021). *Islamisti di Occidente. Storie di Fratelli Musulmani in Europa e in America*. Milano: Bocconi Editore.

VOLPATO, C. (2011). *Deumanizzazione. Come si legittima la violenza*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.

Recommendations in Preventing Violent Extremism in Higher Education: A Thematic Literature Review

Sarmista Das

With the rise of radicalization among youth and young adults, higher education institutions are a promising venue for the prevention of extremism (PVE). The practice, philosophies, and approaches in PVE are diverse and at times divergent, making it challenging for practitioners, institutions, and policymakers to employ PVE at colleges and universities. Of particular concern are uncritical surveillance-based approaches to PVE that stigmatize groups.

This chapter is a thematic literature review of recommendations in PVE at higher education institutions. Key findings include the need for alternative approaches to securitized ones such as exercising critical thinking and teaching media literacy, challenging polarized views of populations, using counter-narratives, organizing careful debate and discussion, and providing a positive environment for students where they can explore plural identities and multi-group membership. Furthermore, since the subject matter in PVE is controversial, emotional, and potentially divisive, practitioners will need rigorous training in PVE.

Key Words: PVE; CVE; Higher Education; Extremism; Radicalization; Violence Prevention.

7.1 Introduction

Terrorism, violent extremism, and violent radicalization (TER) is a growing concern in youth and young adults in Western countries (Pistone et al., 2019; Sjøen & Jore, 2019). Young people are ideal candidates for extremists because they often do not know how to think critically or have an

awareness of alternative viewpoints, may not be able to assess the credibility of claims, and may crave a sense of belonging and identity that TER groups might promise their recruits (Ghosh et al., 2016). Education is a promising area for the prevention of TER (Gereluk, 2012; Hess, 2009; Scrivens & Perry, 2017); among them, higher education institutions present unique opportunities to intervene in TER (Dejean et al., 2016; Ghosh et al., 2016; Sjøen & Jore, 2019). This is because colleges and universities can represent a microcosm of society: they can help prepare students to participate meaningfully in society by helping students to think critically, can help students build a collective identity, and prevent destructive ways of thinking and behaving (Davies, 2014; Duckworth, 2015; Institut de recherche sur l'intégration professionnelle des immigrants [IRIPI], 2016).

Public perception of what is considered TER is dependent on a particular society's ideological views, which can change over time (Audet, Fleury & Rousseau, 2018; Schmid, 2013). The motivations underpinning TER are varied and not limited to a single nation, culture, or philosophy. TER is rapidly changing in response to world events; as such, effective prevention efforts must be flexible enough to adapt to changes while maintaining focus on the root causes of TER (Pistone et al., 2019).

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) programs exist and are ongoing, however, differences in approaches can make adopting programs and curricula challenging. Even within the studies of Violent Extremism (VE), there is ambiguity with the terms CVE and PVE. Efforts have been made to combine Preventative measures with Counteractive ones under the combined acronym P/CVE (Pistone et al., 2019). However, this thematic literature review makes the distinction between PVE and CVE, where "PVE programs seek to prevent VE ... from occurring, while CVE programs address the influence of VE which is already present" (Cliff, 2021, p. 12).

The purpose of this study is to identify, through a literature review, the recommended practices in preventing violent extremism in higher education institutions. Given the rapid growth of research that has been produced on the topic of PVE in post-secondary schools in recent years, there is a need to investigate and synthesize this research. This is also important because PVE programs have been criticized, and because the effectiveness and impact of PVE programs remain unknown (Aziz, 2017;

Castonguay-Payant & Geoffroy, 2020; Ghosh et al., 2016; Khalil & Zeuthen, 2016; Savoia et al., 2019).

A thematic review of the literature was conducted in 2021 using the databases ProQuest, EBSCOhost, Gale, and Google Scholar. A thematic literature review involves sorting the literature into categories and larger themes to reveal patterns in the literature. 46 articles and books are included in the review. The search was limited to papers that were peer-reviewed, written in English and French, and published between 2009 and the date of the review (2021) to situate the review in its timeframe. The keywords utilized in the searches were “prevent* violent extremism*” with “higher education” “universit*” “school*” and “college*”, “prevent* violent radical*” with “higher education” “universit*” “school*” and “college*”, “prevent* terroris*” with “higher education” “universit*” “school*” and “college*”, “counter* violent extremism*” with “higher education” “universit*” “school*” and “college*”, “counter* violent radical*” with “higher education” “universit*” “school*” and “college*”, and “counter* terror*” with “higher education” “universit*” “school*” and “college*”.

The results were included, analyzed, and summarized to determine the recommendations. They were then sorted into themes that were: a) to use approaches alternative to securitized ones (especially critical approaches); b) to provide teacher training and professional development; c) to discuss TER, analyze narratives, and present counter-narratives; d) to promote plural identities and a sense of belonging.

1. 7.2 Literature Review

Early intervention to radicalization is essential in PVE, and schools are important venues for such intervention to occur (Aly, Taylor & Karnovsky, 2014; Gereluk, 2012; Hess, 2009; Scrivens & Perry, 2017). A culture of tolerance, respect, resilience, and peaceful debate should be fostered in educational institutions to assist in this goal (Audet, Fleury & Rousseau, 2018; Castonguay-Payant & Geoffroy, 2020; Hess, 2009). Audet, Fleury & Rousseau (2018) point to “protective” factors that minimize the risk of radicalization, including:

Having a stable social network, be open to differences and tolerate diversity, having a good understanding of different religions, rejecting violence, having non-violent methods to express frustration, believing that the costs associated with violent radicalization are too high, having moral repugnance when faced with the use of violence, and demonstrating resilience. (p. 7)

Resilience has been investigated as an underlying and unifying theme to P/CVE efforts, though such studies have focused more squarely on the individual rather than on including institutions and other extraneous factors (Stephens, Sieckelinck & Boutellier, 2019). Schools may not be able to guarantee all these protective factors, yet they can attempt to offer students these protective factors through pedagogy, campus events, and through careful discussion (Audet, Fleury & Rosseau, 2018; Duckworth, 2015; Gereluk, 2012). Unfortunately, implementing PVE strategies in schools is not simple or straightforward, and if PVE efforts are treated without sensitivity, they can threaten the success of such efforts and create conflict (Duckworth, 2015; IRIPI, 2016; Qurashi, 2017). Many P/CVE strategies have not been evaluated, and evidence-based interventions are lacking (Khalil & Zeuthen, 2016; Pistone et al., 2019). Furthermore, implementing PVE strategies in schools is complex, and it is difficult to adapt rigorous academic studies to a simplified program (Qurashi, 2017). This is further problematized if PVE is created to support the ideology of the state (Qurashi, 2017). Coupled with security forces, schools can be co-opted to support political parties. Under these conditions, nation-wide or state-wide PVE programs are not ideal, especially when such programs fail to challenge negative views of groups associated with TER (Arshad-Ayaz & Naseem, 2017).

Britain's Prevent programme presents a poignant example of how securitized PVE strategies can create neocolonial tension. Prevent was first established in primary and secondary institutions in 2006 before being implemented in higher education institutions in 2015 (Thomas, 2020). Prevent has been criticized for unfairly targeting Muslims (Arshad-Ayaz & Naseem, 2017; Jamil, 2016; Qurashi, 2017; Shirazi, 2017; Thomas, 2020). Some of the pitfalls of Prevent include encouraging a surveillance-based culture that further stigmatizes Muslims by over-emphasizing Muslim-based extremism over other forms of radicalization such as right-wing extremism (Aziz, 2017, Jamil, 2016; Shirazi, 2017), and ignores research-based and community-based initiatives (Thomas, 2020).

Human rights are important for building resilience against radicalization (Sjøen & Jore, 2019), and yet securitization can potentially erode human rights (Bramadat, 2014). Individuals who are drawn to violent extremism often have perceived grievances that attract them to extreme ideologies (Borum, 2011). If these grievances include being viewed as terrorists, this would be counterproductive to PVE efforts (Dejean et al, 2016; Thomas, 2020). Teachers have also been involved in surveillance roles, which has had negative repercussions (Novelli, 2017; Sjøen & Jore, 2019). The surveillance of students breeds mistrust, creates a chilling effect, shuts down critical thinking, and can encourage students to seek other potentially violent avenues of expression (Thomas, 2020). Students might feel personally offended, misrepresented, or attacked in surveillance situations, which can cause them to disengage from learning and, in the worst case, become interested in extreme or radical ideas (Ghosh et al., 2016; IRIPI, 2016). Thus, surveillance is not a recommended PVE strategy (Arshad-Ayaz & Naseem, 2017; Bramadat, 2014; IRIPI, 2016; Novelli, 2014; Thomas, 2020).

7.3 Recommendations

7.3.1 Use Alternative Approaches Instead of Securitized Ones, Especially Critical Ones

Many studies recommend “soft” or alternative approaches to securitized PVE strategies (Arshad-Ayaz & Naseem, 2017; Bramadat, 2014; Carthy et al., 2018; Gereluk, 2012; Ghosh et al., 2016; Helmus, 2013; Jamil 2016; Novelli, 2017; Pistone et al., 2019; Shirazi, 2017). These approaches vary and can include teaching critical theory, political literacy, human rights, citizenship education, critical global citizenship education, media literacy, and peace education (Audet, Fleury & Rousseau, 2018; Davies, 2009; de Andreotti, 2014; Ghosh et al., 2016; Scrivens & Perry, 2017; Veil & Waymer, 2021). Of the alternative approaches, the most resounding argument is for promoting critical thinking skills and using critical theory (Castonguay-Payant & Geoffroy, 2020; Davies, 2009; Dejean et al., 2016; Duckworth, Dyrendal & Jolley, 2020; 2015; Gereluk, 2012; Ghosh et al., 2016; Hess,

2009; IRIPI, 2016; Lamont & Collet, 2013; Mikušková, 2017; Stoddard & Hess, 2016).

A critical approach is necessary in PVE efforts because the field of TER studies contains divergent philosophies that can be problematic. There is a lack of consensus on how to define the terms in TER, and any definition should not be considered neutral (Arshad-Ayaz & Naseem, 2017; Audet, Fleury & Rousseau, 2018; Gereluk, 2012; Pistone et al., 2019; Schmid, 2013). Because public discourse “creates simple, single narratives that reinforce a mythology around the events” surrounding TER (Gereluk, 2012, p. 86), schools, curriculum, teachers, and students are exposed to the sensationalist ideologies that proliferate public discourse. As instruments of the state, schools are deeply rooted in the political climate of the nation. Teachers, school staff, and pre-service teachers are not immune to indoctrination, radicalization, or prejudicial views, and so they must be taught to think critically about TER (Castonguay-Payant & Geoffroy, 2020; Gereluk, 2012; Hess, 2009; Mikušková, 2017). In addition to applying a critical lens to TER, teachers, staff, pre-service teachers, and students should practice self-reflectivity and self-reflexivity by critically reflecting on themselves, their positionality, and their privilege to mitigate the risk of indoctrination (Castonguay-Payant & Geoffroy, 2020; de Andreotti, 2014; Gereluk, 2012).

Issues of power should be examined critically even in the design and implementation of PVE programs (de Andreotti, 2014; Dyrendal & Jolley, 2020; Scrivens & Perry, 2017; Thomas, 2016). In much of the Western world as in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K., the political climate is intertwined with colonialism, Western domination, White supremacy, and neoliberalism (Gibbons, 2018; Humphrey, 2017). Neoliberalism can allow White supremacy to continue to go on undetected because neoliberal education “denies local and indigenous education through efforts to argue that education is a neutral, depoliticised space” (Gibbons, 2018, p. 922), when, schools are politicized and hegemonic. The denial of the existence of systemic discrimination and the claim of neutrality and objectivity is a myth that should be exposed (Humphrey, 2017). Often, Muslims, Arabs, and South Asians are viewed as terrorist threats while Right-Wing Extremists (RWE) are either not visible or not considered as true threats, despite the increasing prevalence of RWE (Aziz, 2017; Scrivens & Perry, 2017). To prevent violent extremism, PVE must address cultural grievances, educate

against the vilification of cultural groups, and dissuade polarized thinking that promotes the idea of a “clash of civilizations” (Gereluk, 2012; IRIPI, 2016; Scrivens & Perry, 2017).

Courses that develop critical thinking skills and civic education can help students become more resilient by promoting democratic citizenship and engagement (Aly, Taylor & Karnovsky, 2014; Dyrendal & Jolley, 2020; IRIPI, 2016). Some disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, literature, and psychology provide opportunities to learn and develop critical thinking skills (Dejean et al., 2016). Moreover, due to the proliferation of radicalization efforts online, students should develop media literacy, including digital and social media literacy (Audet, Fleury & Rousseau, 2018; Davies, 2009; Scrivens & Perry, 2017; Veil & Waymer, 2021).

7.3.2 Teacher Training and Professional Development

In addition to being trained in critical theory and practicing self-reflectivity and self-reflexivity, teachers, school staff, and pre-service teachers must receive carefully designed training in PVE (Audet, Fleury & Rousseau, 2018; Castonguay-Payant & Geoffroy, 2020; Gereluk, 2012). Professional development courses can be offered to help current teachers who want to address PVE in class (Audet, Fleury & Rousseau, 2018). Though training programs exist, there is a large void in teacher training regarding terrorism, extremism, and radicalization (Gereluk, 2012), and much of the available curricular tools available online have not been subject to rigorous evaluation (Savoia et al., 2019). Some core topics to include in any teacher training or professional development plan should include information to “debunk the myths” associated with surveillance approaches, particularly those that target minority student groups (Rousseau et al. 2016). Teacher training should also include nonviolent conflict resolution and encourage teachers to value tolerance (Davydov, 2015). Other recommendations in teacher training and professional development include peaceful conflict resolution and the ability to deal with the emotional impact of the subject matter. It is important to take the emotions aroused by controversial subjects to be addressed and not be trivialized (Castonguay-Payant & Geoffroy, 2020). Teachers should “develop places and times when reactions and fears can be expressed by students” (IRIPI, 2016, p. 19). Teachers must be trained to deal with the emotions that students will likely

face, and they should do so with empathy and care (Castonguay-Payant & Geoffroy, 2020). Emotional and psychological barriers exist for teachers as well (Duckworth, 2015), who may feel uncomfortable discussing these topics and may self-censor or feel “shaken” by the emotional experience of talking about these subjects (Castonguay-Payant & Geoffroy, 2020, p. 15). Thus, in addition to teacher training and professional development, support systems for teachers need to be established (Castonguay-Payant & Geoffroy, 2020).

7.4 Pedagogical Strategies

7.4.1 Discuss TER with Students Critically and with Counter-Narratives

In addition to learning critical thinking skills, despite the complexity of discussing TER with students, it is important to discuss the topic in class to develop a unified society, to understand extremism and what influences people to become radicalized, and to prevent radicalization (Castonguay-Payant & Geoffroy, 2020; Duckworth, 2015; Gereluk, 2012; Hess, 2009). Discussions about the terminology used in discussions of PVE will need to be addressed with students, including an understanding of the circumstances that give rise to terrorist events (Gereluk, 2012). Such information should not be reduced to single narratives (Gereluk, 2012). Instead, multiple points of view and counter-narratives must be given, as well as displaying how radical narratives are ineffective (Carthy et al., 2018; Helfstein, 2012; Gereluk, 2012; Schmid, 2013; Warrington, 2017). Counter-narratives are narratives that disrupt and challenge ideas that promote violence, stereotypes, and hatred (Carthy et al., 2018). Extremist narratives and counter-narratives can increasingly be found online (Scrivens & Perry, Warrington, 2017). Teachers should facilitate and moderate dialogue with students in a way where “students can be exposed to, engage with and contest many different historical narratives” (Duckworth, 2015, p. 109). Carthy et al.’s (2018) review on the effectiveness of counter-narrative interventions found that counter-narratives may “reduce overall risk factors for violent radicalization” (p. 3). The divisive narratives surrounding extremism and the events that fuel terrorism must be critically put in context with students. State intervention should not be the dominant

narrative, nor should dominant narratives go unquestioned (Scott-Baumann, 2017). Narrative destabilization is necessary for sustainable conflict resolution (Duckworth, 2015). Students should thus be given opportunities to critically examine narratives, view counter-narratives, and, when possible, create counter-narratives (Duckworth, 2015). Novelli (2017) has recommended the use of dialogical pedagogy to challenge the imperialistic views associated with PVE. An approach that encourages carefully considered discussions and debate around the issues can help stimulate critical thinking. Such pedagogy should:

Go beyond a pathological diagnosis that anyone that resists Western hegemony as either an enemy combatant, criminal or ill. A dialogical pedagogy that could open up this debate, sensitively and responsibly handled, would surely have more of a chance to bring fragmented communities together. (*Education and countering violent extremism*, 2017, p. 848)

Additionally, ample time should be given to students to discuss the issues. By creating opportunities for deliberation and discussion, students can better understand the complexity of the issues (Gereluk, 2012). They should also be given guidelines for how to debate and conduct disagreements peacefully (Castonguay-Payant & Geoffroy, 2020; Hess, 2009; Tibbits, 2019). By having this knowledge, students will be better able to discuss issues around PVE in a meaningful and respectful way.

7.4.2 Promote Plural Identities and a Sense of Belonging

Schools are also important venues for identity construction (Audet, Fleury & Rousseau, 2018; Dejean et al., 2016). Schools can also nurture empathy and resilience, collaborate with diverse groups, and help students feel a sense of belonging (Bramadat, 2014; Castonguay-Payant & Geoffroy, 2020; Davies 2009; Helmus, 2013; Hess, 2009; Thomas, 2020; Tibbits, 2019). Identity building is a crucial part of growing up, but it can also be a vulnerable time in a person's life (Audet, Fleury & Rousseau, 2018; Davydov, 2015; Lamont & Collet, 2013). There is a link between radicalization and difficulties in identity building (Dejean et al., 2016). Identity uncertainty coupled with moral or psychological suffering can further influence youth to seek radical ideals and identities (IRIPI, 2016). When students face identity uncertainty, radical and extreme groups promise to offer those students a certain identity and help them finally

belong to a group that understands them and their needs (IRIPI, 2016). When individuals perceive that they or people in their milieu are maligned and oppressed, they may be targeted for radicalization. This is because “terrorists thrive on narratives of oppression and injustice as a means of recruiting vulnerable individuals” (Aziz, 2017, p. 261). Resilience to radicalization can be attributed to education interventions that help individuals explore their identities, stimulate a secure sense of self, reduction of stereotypes, showcasing common identities, enabling multi-group membership, and preventing limited views of identity (Lamont & Collet, 2013; Rousseau et al., 2016; Sklad, Irmischer, Park, Versteegt & Wignand, 2021).

“Differences” in student beliefs, backgrounds, and identities need to be framed so that they are seen as opportunities for learning and coexisting. Diversity should be seen as a strength rather than a detriment to social cohesion. In Dejean et al.’s (2016) study, though students reported the importance of interacting with students from different backgrounds, these interactions came with feelings of discomfort. These feelings of tension can be further exacerbated by the way a teacher handles these issues and can drive students to silence themselves instead of challenging their emotions (Dejean et al., 2016). Focusing on differences can lead into divisive and dichotomous thinking and can make students feel like they are being victimized, excluded, or attacked, so it is important not to “Other” individuals or groups. Savoia et al. (2019) found that awareness and recognition of student diversity is essential as well as the awareness of systemic discrimination. Furthermore, attitudes should be aimed to promote ethnocultural diversity and acceptance (Audet, Fleury & Rousseau, 2018; Savoia et al., 2019; Tibbits, 2019).

Students need to feel safe and like they belong in effective PVE strategies (Audet, Fleury & Rousseau, 2018; Dejean et al., 2016; Davydov, 2015). A culture of non-violence and a positive social identity should be fostered at the institution and in the classroom (Davydov, 2015). An environment of self-respect, tolerance, and dialogue is needed so that students develop skills to interact authentically and peacefully with students of diverse backgrounds (Aly, Taylor & Karnovsky, 2014; Davydov, 2015). Such a positive and inclusive school environment can be created through community-oriented activities initiated through campus events, through student-lead initiatives, and in the classroom through discussion and analysis of

narratives and counter-narratives (Audet, Fleury & Rousseau, 2018; Duckworth, 2015). Some other ways institutions can create opportunities to discuss PVE include to promote activities that value diversity and harmonious intercultural relationships, to equip students so they can detect examples of polarization and indoctrination, and to collaborate with local organizations and stakeholders (Audet, Fleury & Rousseau, 2018).

A method to discuss values, identity, plurality, and respect is to devise a common code of values with students (Tibbits, 2019). It is important, however, not to ascribe a singular set of values or identity, or to essentialize all students into one category or that recommend “national” values, as doing so goes against the recommendation to encourage plural identities (Novelli, 2017). Tibbits (2019) has recommended discussion and meaningful debate to determine quasi-universal values across educational institutions as a strategy for PVE. Such values should be based on universal human rights, such as respect for others, solidarity, respect for diversity, and learning to live together.

In sum, “it is essential that the educational environment do as much as possible to fully satisfy people’s need for a positive social identity” (Davydov, 2015, p. 61). However, this identity should not be seen as fixed and exclusive. It should, instead, be framed as a “collective” identity and one that can be plural and hybrid. Students should feel like they belong and that they can adopt social identities that are hybrid (Davies, 2009; Lamont & Collet, 2013; Rousseau et al., 2016). This hybridity should not be seen as something that is negative or unnatural but one that is “inherent” and can help in social unity (Dejean et al., 2016). An example of hybrid identity construction is found in Lamont and Collet’s (2013) study, which found that Muslim American students construct “an alternative discourse that positioned the Islamic and democratic values of equality, respect, freedom, and education as compatible, albeit with some complications” (p. 433). The view of two “seemingly incompatible” cultures is a myth that must be challenged in PVE efforts; nuanced identities exist and there can be overlap. “Identity expression should be encouraged through prevention programs but with an emphasis on plural identities rather than a single identity” (Rousseau et al., 2016, p. 5). Students should be encouraged to belong to multiple groups (IRIPI, 2016). It is recommended to encourage “permeable cultural groups” which “promote identity flexibility so that students can feel able to be part of different groups” (IRIPI, 2017, p. 9). This

can be achieved through activities that involve the exchange and dialogue between groups, particularly those that are seen to be different from one another, and to break up “click-ish” groups during activities (IRIPI, 2016, p. 21).

7.5 Conclusion

Education is an important part of PVE; however, education programs alone will not prevent violent extremism and radicalization (Ghosh et al., 2016). One individual teacher or course cannot eradicate or prevent violent extremism. PVE must take a multi-pronged approach to be successful. PVE should be a collective effort with the many stakeholders involved, including students, teachers, staff, institutions, community groups, NGOs, and researchers (Castonguay-Payant & Geoffroy, 2020). PVE must address multiple forms of extremism that exist, including right-wing extremism, violence against women and sexual minorities, and anti-Semitism to name a few. Violent extremism is not just an issue of education, or lack thereof, just as it is not simply a social issue (Jamil, 2016). Violent extremism and radicalization are global problems that are political and discursive. To begin understanding TER, one must be self-reflective and self-reflexive by examining how PVE is connected to the world, and actively challenge views that seek to rob people and communities of their dignity.

Not only is there a gap in knowledge in PVE related to far-right extremist groups, the subject matter of PVE is constantly evolving at a rapid pace, which poses additional challenges to PVE research and efforts. Since the beginning of the global COVID-19 pandemic, online radicalization has proliferated. Pandemic lockdown measures lead to more people turning toward online communities to cope, including extremist communities.

Unfortunately, according to Andrews, “lockdowns have created the conditions for an intensification of already polarising fandoms in politics and activism online, as well as an intensification of the inequalities and exclusions within offline political activism” (*Receipts, radicalisation, reactionaries, and repentance*, 2020, p. 902).

Increasing Asian-directed hatred, the misogyny of the Incel movement, extremist QAnon conspiracists, and the normalization of “White” nationalism are a few issues of many that have become alarming new “trends” in radicalization.

It can be overwhelming to focus on so many kinds of extremism such as hatred against racialized people, religious groups, women, and sexual minorities. Though many forms of extremism threaten the fabric of society, a few common threads can shed light on how to tackle these diverse forms. Most forms of extremism “thrive on narratives of oppression and injustice as a means of recruiting” (Aziz, 2017, p. 261), rely on creating dichotomies between themselves and other groups (Dyrendal et al. 2020, p. 1), attempt to censor alternative voices, and appeal to people based on fear and misinformation (IRIPI, 2016). While there is no single panacea for radicalization and violent extremism, nearly all scholarship on the topic points to the importance of critical thinking. This is the common thread among the readings and is a key starting point in PVE in higher education settings.

References

- ALY, A., TAYLOR, E., & KARNOVSKY, S. (2014). Moral disengagement and building resilience to violent extremism: an education intervention. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 37*(4), 369–385.
- ANDREWS, P. (2020). Receipts, radicalisation, reactionaries, and repentance: The digital dissensus, fandom, and the COVID-19 pandemic. *Feminist Media Studies, 20*(6), 902-907.
- ARSHAD-AYAZ, A., & NASEEM, M. A. (2017). *Creating “invited” spaces for counter-radicalization and counter-extremism education*. In *Diaspora, Indigenous & Minority Education, 11*(1), 6-16.
- AUDET, G., FLEURY, R., & ROUSSEAU, C. (2018). *Comprendre pour mieux agir la radicalisation menant à la violence chez les jeunes. Guide à l'intention du personnel scolaire*. SHERPA.
- AZIZ, S. F. (2017). Losing the "war of ideas:" A critique of countering violent extremism programs. *Texas International Law Journal, 52*(2), 255-279.
- BORUM, R. (2011). *Radicalization into violent extremism I: A review of social science theories*. *Journal of Strategic Security, 4*(4).
- BRAMADAT, P. (2014). The public, the political, and the possible: Religion and radicalization in Canada and beyond. In P. BRAMADAT & L. DAWSON . (Eds.), *Religious radicalization and securitization in Canada and beyond* (pp. 3-33). University of Toronto.
- CARTHY, S. L., DOODY, C. B., COX, K., O'HORA, D., & SARMA, K. M. (2018). Counter-narratives for the prevention of violent radicalisation: A systematic review of targeted interventions. *Campbell Systematic Reviews, 16*(3), 1-37.
- CASTONGUAY-PAYANT, J., GEOFFROY, M. (2020). *Radicalisation, sujets sensibles et coconstructions des savoirs: Une recension des écrits*, CEFIR.
- CLIFFT, W. (2021). The case for defining CVE and PVE: How the NSCITF model can provide a general framework for the counter-terrorism field. *International Counter-Terrorism Review, 2*(1), 1-21.
- DAVIES, L. (2009). Educating against extremism: Towards a critical politicisation of young people. *International Review of Education, 55*(2-3), 183-203.
- DAVYDOV, D. G. (2015). The causes of youth extremism and ways to prevent it in the educational environment. *Russian Social Science Review, 56*(5), 51-64.
- DE ANDREOTTI, V. (2014). Soft versus critical global citizenship education. In S. McCloskey (Ed.), *Development Education in Policy and Practice* (pp. 21-31). Londra: Palgrave Macmillan.
- DEJEAN, F., MAINICH, S., MANAI, B., & TOURÉ-KAPO, L. (2016). Les étudiants face à la radicalisation religieuse conduisant à la violence : Mieux les connaître pour mieux prévenir. In EL-HAGE, H. (Ed.), *CÉGÉPiens, radicalisation et vivre ensemble* (pp. 23-31). Collège Rosemont.
- DUCKWORTH, C. L. (2015). *9/11 and collective memory in US classrooms*. Londra: Routledge.
- DYRENDAL, A., & JOLLEY, D. (2020). *Conspiracy theories in the classroom: Problems and potential solutions*. *Religions, 11*(494).
- GERELUK, D. (2012). *Education, extremism and terrorism: What should be taught in citizenship education and why*. Londra: Bloomsbury.
- GHOSH, R., MANUEL, A., CHAN, W. Y. A., DILIMULATI, M., & BABAEI, M. (2016). *Education and security: A global literature review on the role of education in countering violent religious extremism*. Tony Blair Institute for Global Change.
- GIBBONS, A. (2018). *Neoliberalism, education policy and the life of the academic: A poetics of pedagogical resistance*. *Policy Futures in Education, 16*(7), 918-930.
- HELFSTEIN, S. (2012). *Edges of radicalization: Ideas, individuals and networks in violent extremism*. CTC.

- HELMUS, T. C., YORK, E. & CHALK, P. (2013). *Promoting online voices for countering violent extremism*. Santa Monica: Rand Corporation.
- HESS, D. E. (2009). *Controversy in the classroom: The democratic power of discussion*. Londa: Routledge.
- HUMPHREY, D. (2017). *Removing the veil: Coats, neoliberalism, and the color line*. *Philosophical Studies in Education*, 48, 20-29.
- Institut de Recherche sur L'intégration Professionnelle des Immigrants (IRIPI) (2016), *Les étudiants face à la radicalisation religieuse conduisant à la violence: Mieux les connaître pour mieux prévenir*, Collège de Maisonneuve.
- JAMIL, U. (2016). *The war on terror in Canada: Securitized Muslims*. *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies*, 1(2), 105-110.
- KHALIL, J. & ZEUTHEN, M. (2016). *Countering violent extremism and risk reduction: A guide to programme design and evaluation*. Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies.
- LAMONT, S. & COLLET, B. (2013). *Muslim American university students' perceptions of Islam and democracy: Deconstructing the dichotomy*. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 46(4), 433-450.
- MIKUŠKOVÁ, E. B. (2018). *Conspiracy beliefs of future teachers*. *Current Psychology*, 37(3), 692-701.
- NOVELLI, M. (2017). *Education and countering violent extremism: Western logics from south to north? Compare: A Journal Of Comparative & International Education*, 47(6), 835-851.
- PISTONE, I., ERIKSSON, E., BECKMAN, U., MATTSON, C. & SAGER, M. (2019). *A scoping review of interventions for preventing and countering violent extremism: Current status and implications for future research*. *Journal for deradicalization*, (19), 1-84.
- QURASHI, F. (2017). *Just get on with it: Implementing the Prevent Duty in higher education and the role of academic expertise*. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 12(3), 197-212.
- ROUSSEAU, C., HASSAN, G., LECOMPTE, V., OULHOTE, Y., EL-HAGE, H., MEKKI-BERRADA, A., & ROUSSEAU-RIZZI, A. (2016). *Le défi du vivre ensemble: les déterminants individuels et sociaux du soutien à la radicalisation violente des collégiens et collégiennes au Québec*, SHERPA.
- SAVOIA, E., SU, M., HARRIMAN, N. & TESTA, M. A. (2019). *Evaluation of a school campaign to reduce hatred*. *Journal for Deradicalization*, 21, 43-83.
- SCHMID, A. P. (2013). *Radicalisation, de-radicalisation, counter-radicalisation: A conceptual discussion and literature review*. ICCT.
- SCRIVENS, R. & PERRY, B. (2017). *Resisting the right: Countering right-wing extremism in Canada*. *Canadian Journal Of Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 59(4), 534-558.
- SCOTT-BAUMANN, A. (2017). *Ideology, utopia and Islam on campus: How to free speech a little from its own terrors*. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 12(2), 159-176.
- SHIRAZI, R. (2017). *When schooling becomes a tactic of security: Educating to counter 'extremism'*. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, 11(1), 2-5.
- SJØEN, M. M. & JORE, S. H. (2019). *Preventing extremism through education: Exploring impacts and implications of counter-radicalisation efforts*. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 40(3), 269-283.
- SKLAD, M., IRRMISCHER, M., PARK, E., VERSTEEGT, I. & WIGNAND, J. (2021). *Social and civic competencies against radicalization in schools*. Londa: Palgrave MacMillan.
- STEPHENS, W., SIECKELINCK, S. & BOUTELLIER, H. (2021). *Preventing Violent Extremism: A Review of the Literature*. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 44:4, 346-361.
- STODDARD, J. & HESS, D. (2016). *9/11 and the war on terror in American secondary curriculum, fifteen years later*. In W. Journell (Ed.), *Reassessing the social studies curriculum: Promoting*

critical civic engagement in a politically polarized, post-911 world (pp. 15-27). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

THOMAS, P. (2020). *Britain's Prevent strategy: Always changing, always the same?*. In J. Busher & L. Jerome (Eds.), *The Prevent duty in education: Impact, enactment and implications* (pp. 11-31). Londra: Palgrave Macmillan.

THOMAS, P. (2016). Youth, terrorism and education: Britain's Prevent programme. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 35(2), 171-187.

TIBBITTS, F. L. (2019). *Deliberative democratic decision making, universal values, and cultural pluralism: A proposed contribution to the prevention of violent extremism through education*. *Prospects*, 48(1-2), 79-94.

VEIL, S. R. & WAYMER, D. (2021). *Crisis narrative and the paradox of erasure: Making room for dialectic tension in a cancel culture*. *Public Relations Review*, 47(3), 1-10.

WARRINGTON, A. (2017). *Countering violent extremism via de-securitisation on Twitter*. *Journal for Deradicalization*, 11, 258-280.

Social Media Contributes to Radicalization. How to Prevent its Expansion?

*Juan Carlos Marcos Recio
Jesús Miguel Flores Vivar*

Even though every society attempts to set its own criteria for identification, relationship and coexistence, human beings have never lived in such a dispersed environment. Starting with the control exerted by politics and religion throughout the Middle Ages, followed by the light shed by the Renaissance and up to the beginning of the Modern Society, decision-making lay in the hands of experienced and knowledgeable people of a certain age. Later on, in the 21st century, technology has disrupted the established standards and allowed citizens to take control of institutions. This is already a radical change in political systems and, consequently, in society itself. The advent and consolidation of “digitalization”, due to the importance of the Internet, social media and, more recently, artificial intelligence (AI), have had an impact on the worrisome radicalization processes experienced worldwide. This is because the Internet and, more specifically, social media became a sort of new agora, or public space, where young people identify with their peers –through doctrines and ideologies– and differentiate themselves from others. The social media has thus become the current space for social expression of diversity, a place to recognize differences and to advocate for inclusion in all spheres of society. However, different factors, such as alleged anonymity, have turned the digital space into the perfect scenario to promote and disseminate stereo-types and prejudices, hate speech, radicalization and violent extremism, among others. In this context, concern arises about the development of AI without the necessary ethical values considering the potential of this technology to promote hatred, racism and discrimination. This paper argues that the Internet, social media and AI are, therefore, an important field of application and study as they are one of the main hubs where hate speech is generated and disseminated, and analyzes how to curb these harmful phenomena that, although not new, are actually being absorbed by digital technologies.

Key Words: Changing society so as to stay the same; Radicalization Strategies; Communication Media and Radicalization; Social Media: all, with all; The role of AI in preventing radicalization

8.1 Introduction

Young people have been placing themselves in self-created niches, with different values from those of their parents' generation. Free –although bound by economic constraints that prevent them from becoming independent as their parents did–, they are now their own guides. They feel influential when they can open doors to the world they create, but they are subject to a capitalist system that encourages them to indulge in unrestrained consumption, and causes them to suffer when they cannot follow the pace of accelerated production and consumerism. This is their first frustration. That is why, in Europe, young people leave home many years after their parents were able to. According to a 2020 Eurostat report, the average age to leave the parental household was 26.4 years, with very similar differences between countries. A median age above 30 years was recorded in Croatia (32.4), Slovakia (30.9), Malta and Italy (both 30.2), and Portugal (30.0). Spain is also above the European average, with an age of 29.8 years. In contrast, Denmark (21.2 years), Luxembourg (19.8) and Sweden (17.5) recorded the lowest average ages, all of them under 22 years. The difference between the northern and southern countries is therefore noticeable, and has to do with a much more social policy, whereby young people and society at large are treated differently. For example, in Nordic countries it is easier to find rental apartments than in the south, thanks to policies aimed at helping people to become independent earlier.

The key word is emancipation. Young people want to leave their homes to experience life on their own. The impossibility of doing so is a source of frustration and even radicalization, because they constantly clash with their parents.

According to Informe Juventud en España 2020, “while in 2010, 53.3% of young people aged between 18 and 34 still lived with their parents; in 2019 a total of 64.5% were in this situation, i.e. 10 points more. Moreover, this could become even worse due to COVID-19” ((Youth Report in Spain 2020).

Considering this scenario plus the unemployment figures it is difficult to raise expectations for the future. This is the breeding ground where young people struggle for their rights and demand a fairer society. What do well established people think –those with a secure job and good living conditions? Are they willing to let that change? Would they support young

people (their children) in changing society? They tend to think about youth as radicals who want to overthrow the system. Which system are they talking about, if the one they have inherited is useless or unfavorable? They must, therefore, create their own, at the expense of their needs.

Could there be frustration? Sure, there will be. This has always been the case. However, their vision is far from being pigeonholed in the prototypes of established society. They break out of routines. They create their own paths. They avoid what previous generations accepted as valid. They bet on other ways of seeing, living, creating, communicating and accepting other people. But not everything is as wonderful as it seems. Sometimes, they are caught between the two worlds. They do not want to be like their parents, which they would hate, but they do not know if what they are facing is worse. So they try, they experiment and they decide. Those who cannot move forward feel an additional frustration that pushes them away from society. They feel socially excluded because they cannot keep pace with the world. Do the communication media contribute to this transformation process? Are the social networks on the Internet a meeting point for action and radicalization among the youth who hope for social change? The following pages offer some ideas about these two issues.

Today, society can no longer be measured by that yardstick. This is one of the most important changes, as young people have faced their own fate (or are doing so after COVID 19) cherishing those aspects that are meaningful to their generation, not their parents'. For example, baby boomers renounced many of their parents' materialistic beliefs. Their parents dreamed of a material world with a house as a primary residence complemented by another house by the beach or in the mountains, plus at least a couple of cars and vacations every year. Property is of the essence for that generation. Young people, however, realized that their parents' happiness was more fictitious than real -or so they thought- and they came up with their own codes for living. They prefer to share than to own. They prefer to use a product in a thousand different ways, because things were never shared before. Therefore, the starting point is clear: information and social media have changed society, to the point that the new generations have the decision-making power. This does not mean that they have become radicalized, for which purpose it would be necessary to understand in which layers of society coexistence is being jeopardized. There is, however, a clear trend that can be seen in issues such as cli-mate change,

the economic situation, youth unemployment and the struggle for a fairer society. In these aspects, young people have taken a significant step and have even become radicalized when the government attempts to stymie their aspirations.

8.2 Changing so as Not to Stay the Same

The changes faced by society during the two decades of the 21st century have clearly shown that the future is uncertain, especially for young people. This is not only attributable to the two economic crises and the COVID-19 pandemic. It is nothing new. Many thinkers have warned of a new model of society, or the unpredictable consequences, not only in climate change, the economic situation, permanent conflicts, but, in general, in a more civilized world without so many divisions in order to make it more egalitarian. The challenge faced by today's youth in identifying how to make their actions meaningful is reflected in the different societies analyzed by Jeremy Rifkin in his latest publications, in the cultural and historical levels proposed by Yuval Noah Harari, and in education and technical developments. It is no longer possible to switch off and go to sleep. It is not possible to unplug and let go. Now they are connected every minute, every second of their lives, with notifications coming in to their devices. Social networks have opened up the world and no window or door can close them. Now we can see the wood for the trees because there are people everywhere reporting on what is happening on the other side; because there is something else beyond the physical level. The virtual world is attractive because of what lies in its depths.

A citizen of the previous century could have thought likewise after having been through a World War and the misnamed "Spanish flu", a devastating global pandemic, like all pandemics of this type. One of the most common words in the last three years has been change, together with pandemic and COVID. Human beings are scared of being confronted with its meaning; they panic every time they hear transformation, move, alteration, variation, mutation, transfer, metamorphosis, transition, variability, swap, barter, permutation, exchange, fickleness, etc. The dictionary is full of words to express this concept because human beings get into routines and are afraid of changing them. However, society evolves in spite of its own

fears. Evolution has led to great achievements in terms of health, education, welfare, culture, arts, among others, but the differences between northern and southern countries remain the same.

We should assess the speed of change today, because that is what divides society into those who have access to everything, or almost everything with technology, versus those who lag behind and are marginalized because they do not fit the “basic package” of technological resources. Let's illustrate this with the communication media. Most people have enjoyed photography, and certainly radio, cinema and television as well. Now they are enjoying social networks, but is there a part of society that will be excluded from technological developments? How will they catch up? Who decides about their future? Will the laggards ask for compensation? Will they fight and become radicalized to meet their goals? What is the impact of the communication media on such transformation? Will social networks become the point of social connection that isolates rather than unites? In short, will there be a divided society that struggles to find common ground? Now, social media can mobilize millions of young people around the world, and can even overthrow governments. The so-called Arab Spring could be a good ex-ample of this. Between 2010 and 2012, a series of popular demonstrations took place in several Arab countries (Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, etc.). The demonstrators were demanding greater democracy and social rights and, even though some progress was made at first, not all of the demands have been met over time. What is left for these societies? Do they have any way out? However, a clear message came across: social media can mobilize society and, with persistence, they can even change the government. Even though this was not the case in the Arab countries, more recent events –such as those in Chile and Peru– show socio-political changes promoted by the citizens through social networks.

Hirshberg points to the changes and new environments in which people interact with the communication media and social networks through the Internet: “In just one generation the Internet changed the way we make and experience nearly all of the media. Today the very act of consuming media creates an entirely new form of it: the social data layer that tells the story of what we like, what we watch, who and what we pay attention to, and our location when doing so” (Hirshberg, 2019).

Are the communication media still the main point of reference for society, when social networks have won citizens over besides being entertainment?

Information is already ubiquitous. The fierce battle for content that five years ago pitted the major media against Facebook, Instagram, Google, etc., has been won by social networks. According to a Pew Research Center report, “seven out of ten Americans say they use social media, a percentage that has remained relatively stable over the past five years”. A survey shows that YouTube and Facebook are the most widely used online, with 81% and 69%, respectively. In addition, 40% of adults say they use Instagram and about three in ten report using Pinterest or LinkedIn. A quarter of the respondents reported using Snapchat, and similar proportions report being users of Twitter or WhatsApp (Figure 8.1).

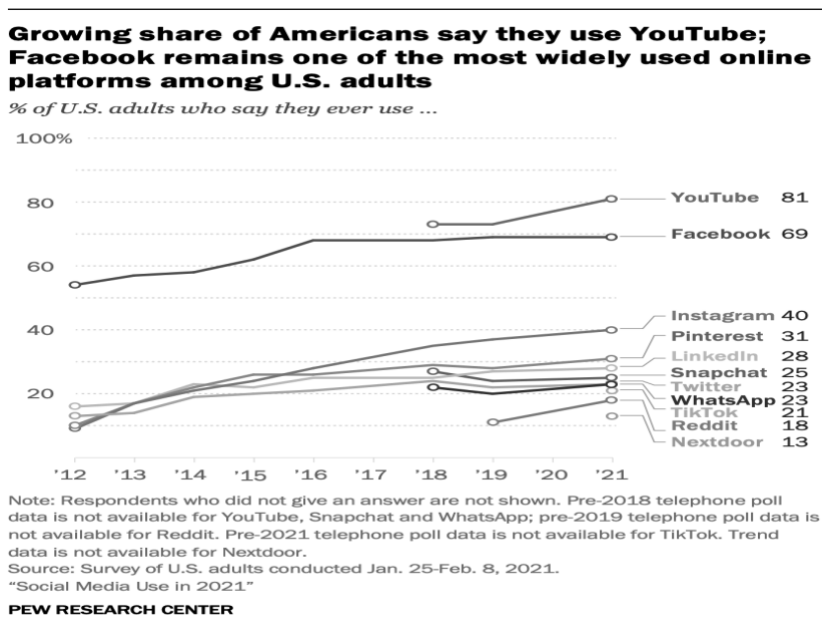


Figure 8.1 Use of the social media in the United States

The world is no longer seen through the eyes of the communication media, but through the people who are closest to us. Actually, journalists’ trustworthiness has been decreasing over the last two decades to the point that the information received from a friend became more valuable than the information from someone else in your favorite social network, and especially from a prestigious media outlet, although the pandemic has shifted this data: “Users’ trust in news and the media has increased to 44%

globally, i.e. six points more than last year, due to the coronavirus pandemic” (Reuters 2021). Still, social networks are ahead of the media when it comes to information consumption.

8.3 Radicalization Strategies in Today’s Society

Society can be assessed from many different angles. In a consumption-driven, welfare society that was once perfectly neat and organized ever wider cracks appeared through which the less privileged members fell, tired of being the outcasts of society. In the current scenario, the crystals of the kaleidoscope smoothly converge in a symmetrical pattern.

At least, it used to be so. Now, there is a gap in society when looking into the future. It could be argued that some societies have reached their maximum state of wellbeing, whereas other societies are far from the benefits they demand. Finally, conflicts and climate change have displaced millions of people, thus radicalizing society and jeopardizing coexistence due to the abolition of the established schemes and the narrowing of the profit margin they used to share in the 20th century.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a United Nations agency mandated to protect refugees and the displaced as a result of persecution and conflict, and to assist and promote lasting solutions. In recent years it has faced growing challenges in all countries, especially due to climate change, wars and confrontations. UNHCR sets out basic guidelines regarding the situation faced by the people displaced due to climate change: “The Global Compact on Refugees, affirmed by an overwhelming majority in the U.N. General Assembly in 2018, addresses this concern. It recognizes that “climate, environmental degradation and natural disasters increasingly interact with the drivers of refugee movements”. The long-troubling figures are now especially dramatic: “At the end of 2021, 89.3 million individuals worldwide were forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order” (UNHCR, 2021).

This situation is compounded for forcibly displaced persons (Figure 8.2): “By the end of 2021, there were already 90 million displaced people worldwide, including refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons” (Mena Roa, 2022). If these figures continue to grow, as shown in

the graph below, finding a solution to curb these displacements will require more than merely political commitment. Either we prevent the escalation or continue building a false society until the least favored people break out and demand their rights, better living conditions, stable work and a favorable environment in their countries to halt displacement.

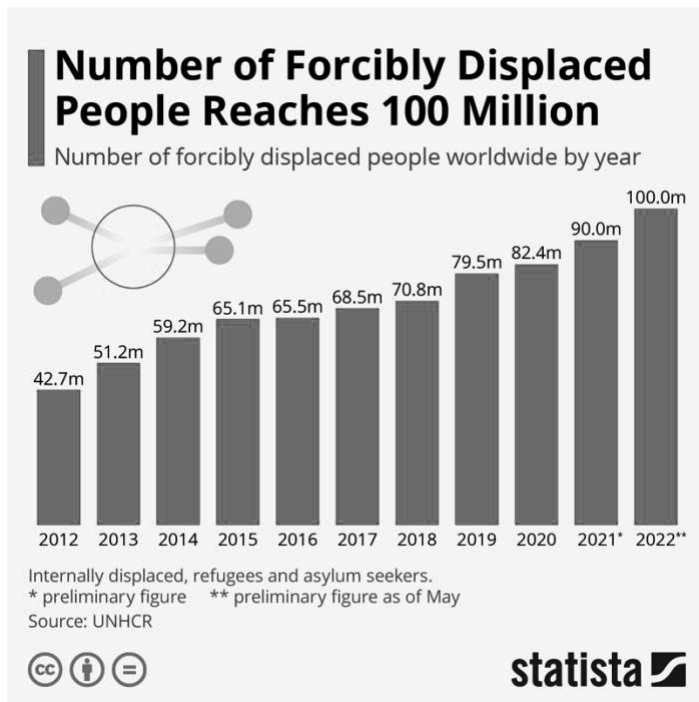


Figure 8.2 Forced displacement worldwide.

It is worth defining every concept because there is a tendency to mix or group together radicalization, terrorism, political violence, situations of economic marginality (Beck, 1997; Sant, 2019), together with the manipulation of public opinion for certain purposes (Perotti and Munt, 2021) and as an educational proposal to improve society (Freire, 1985; Suasnábar, 2012; Azqueta and Merino Arribas, 2020), including its multicultural aspects (Pérez Tapias, 2000; Pacheco, 2007).

Unfortunately, whatever deviates from the established standard becomes radicalized. In this case, young people who feel the need to be different and

have their own life experience are often labeled as radical in the way they live, experience and interact. Moreover, most of the time radicalization has a negative connotation. It seems that institutions do not work, that political leaders are influenced by economic sectors and that society is heading towards chaos to fight those who think differently. This is how balance is lost and radicalization takes over, in some cases without excuses.

- **Settlements on the outskirts of cities create marginal areas. What do the media say?**
- In some cases, they have been displaced to other parts of the city, and absorbed by the city itself, even if the purpose was to push them further away.
- This system has created self-regulating mechanisms that resort to violence to draw attention to their needs.
- The permanent conflicts experienced by the **settlements** near the big cities since the 1980s have never ceased to exist but are often invisible to the communication media until something significant happens, as will be discussed later. That is why the social media are used to call for meetings and demonstrations.
- In this case, politicians consider that it would be appropriate to stop the radicalization of these groups. This is difficult because they feel lonely and marginalized; they receive the support of their neighbors in strengthening

the common interest in securing their own space. Over the last two decades, positions have emerged to de-radicalize situations that are urgent for society.

What to do with those who are on the sidelines? Many psychologists have wondered about the passivity of politicians. Governing and lawmaking are not the same. Crozier argued in 1984 that society cannot be saved by decree, nor can it be changed and rejoined by the marginalized people who are locked away in the suburbs. How to prevent such a situation? Especially from a political perspective, by taking concrete actions that allow these alternative groups that are more integrated into society to live better, and prevent the growth of violent extremism (Jordan, 2009; Bourekba, 2021). De-radicalization is a technical, human and social process designed to reincorporate marginalized groups whose survival is at stake. Back in 2015, López Rodríguez, Paredes Sansinenea and Martínez Díaz provided some action guidelines. A case study supported by the Asociación de Víctimas del Terrorismo (Association of Victims of Terrorism) shows data to attempt social change. Thus, De León and De Miguel elaborate on potential alternatives to change what is happening in Spain and to stop it.

In short, the strategies to de-radicalize society must consist of concrete, simple and easy-to-apply actions. People only act when they see that they are not alone and that those who need their help are committed to action as well. Building a better society depends on each one of us. Moreover, if the communication media help by reporting and reminding society about the marginalization in their own city, perhaps the problem of coexistence could be understood.

In this context, social networks can also be valuable resources for preventive actions and awareness-raising. Just as they can generate violence, they can also promote peace and non-violence, as shown by different projects such as *Está en tu mano* (It's in your hands) and *Local Voices* (FEPSU, 2022). Education, together with digital literacy and ethics, will play a key role. In fact, many experts in educational innovation argue that, in today's post-pandemic times, a student's professional or academic success will depend on their ability to acquire skills, [...] and, above all, on their emotional intelligence and their capacity to cope with complex issues in a rapidly changing and increasingly demanding environment (Dominici and Flores, 2021).

8.4 The Communication Media and Radicalization: a Silenced Effort

Although it should be a priority for the communication media, whenever there is violence in the streets, problems in housing, health, work, etc., they generally support the position of minorities. The question could be: who owns the media and what interests do they represent? From this perspective, it is possible to understand how information is handled.

There is another possible answer: the social policies adopted by governments. The introduction of these policies always attracts the attention of the media, but there is little follow-up to check if the promised investments have been made and if those who received the benefits obtained any results. Some authors, including Sosa, suggest that the relationship between the communication media and violence should be built on the basis of freedom of expression.

A particularly significant aspect is how images are handled, and the use of photography and graphic resources. The media seek impact, sensationalism, the perverse look, attraction, attention, and they even

resort to the clickbait (Flores-Vivar and Zaharía, 2022) to get more and more users.

Images should be shown for the information they contain and not for the sensationalist, macabre content of certain conflicts, demonstrations, strikes, occupation of abandoned houses, etc. Seveso argues as follows: “from a seemingly rational construction of the news, the media dwell on systemic contradictions, conflicts and antagonisms, thus reinforcing and shaping visions and di-visions of the world” (Seveso, 2009, 17).

Perhaps it is time to give another graphic vision of today’s reality, and not only through images that deconstruct the collective photographic and visual memory of citizens.

Let’s not forget about the narratives (Aznar, 2019) used by the communication media, i.e. how things are reported, the intention underlying the information to be read or the podcast to be listened to. Journalists are required to have social awareness, but sometimes they should make a greater effort. It is never easy to face and confront information about conflicts, serious family and individual issues, homelessness and marginality, but that is why the media must be proactive and emphatic when creating content.

In fact, there is enough information to make social reality visible. Some international agencies, such as UNHCR or UNESCO, have been disclosing studies and results to align the data handled by journalists to the truth. If the media continues to silence reality, society will not evolve. Reality must be shown and minorities must be given a voice in times of conflict; otherwise, they will be displaced from the media and resort to other more radicalized strategies to get their message across.

Nonetheless, society is more and more silent. There are short-term protests, but no strong commitment to show other realities that are not covered by the communication media. In addition to staying active in the social networks, young people have to convince the media that their struggle and demands are inherent to their own generation. However, they have moved away from communication media and closer to social networks. This “betrayal” did not go down well with the media, who now barely consider their proposals.

8.5 The Social Media and the Challenge to Grow. All, with all

The current situation of communication media has been modified by social networks, especially in terms of information, politics, commercial communication, advertising and public relations. This meaningful transformation, however, conserves the essence of communication: to influence citizens (Information/Media), constituents (Politics) and consumers (Commercial Communication). Same purpose, different means of communication.

Social networks are a great amplifier, like a loudspeaker for actions that citizens perform, shape, change, modify and, most importantly, they have become more reliable than the media itself, as mentioned above. They are very influential and widely resorted to when it comes to testing products or understanding political ideas. We could even go a step further: social networks have feelings and form opinions because: a) they allow listening, i.e. they are quite active as opposed to what used to happen with the communication media; b) they allow conversation, meaning that there is an almost immediate response and an active debate among all stakeholders, and c) they allow recording and evaluating, so they contribute to, improve or change the course of the information as a starting point. They are a roadmap where all roads lead to one place: information. The message is created, users interact and then they abandon it and/or act by buying or voting when it comes to political campaigns. But how do social media add and bring value for everyone? Through the comments, especially the high-quality and positive ones, and also the critiques against the system, but not the radical comments that do not help to build anything. Value is also added by the content provided by users. They make their contributions after reading other contents and this opens the "threads" of communication. This is where displaced people can access connection and exert pressure. They can show how they live and struggle on a daily basis to become visible through social media.

Listening is one of the major outcomes, especially when it comes to negative comments, but not to useless insults or aggressions. The ultimate goal of these comments is to improve communication and change its path. In this way, the communication strategy can be tailored on an as-needed basis. Therefore, journalists must be attentive, and listen to alternatives,

proposals from the displaced and/or the needy to show more accurate information.

A Person's Value

The Globalization of Indifference

Society is often considered to be self-regulated, helped by citizens who abide by the rules, pay their bills and coexist. However, in spite of there being more information available, it is becoming increasingly difficult to integrate the new generations into an environment that is emotionally and economically beneficial to them.

According to José Mármol and his "globalization of indifference", many struggling unemployed young people and older adults ask themselves why they are trying to adapt. From reluctance they turn to indifference, as they cannot clearly see a future of work and coexistence. Adapting to society brings about more uncertainties than positive aspects.

Mármol hits the nail on the head when describing the society they face: "This new reality is postmodernism, marked by economic crises, excessive consumerism, loss of the bonds of solidarity, deep social inequality, rampant individualism, and lack of human commitment and ethics in political leadership and governance" (Mármol, 2019, 44).

It is quite striking that, when sharing becomes necessary to improve society, we do exactly the opposite. The uncertainty caused by economic crises and wars, especially Russia's war against Ukraine for Europe, makes human beings cling to their own benefits, instead of helping and sharing with those in need.

Also, how to face individualism in times of connection? In theory, by being even more connected and living with and within social networks, people should get to know each other better, contribute to others and value their comments, and feel they are an active part of social media. However, when analyzing their lives, reality seems quite different. Social media is like the mirror or the wardrobe in Narnia: when you come back, you tend to forget the other part, the one that serves to make a fairer and more balanced society.

Human beings should have other goals. We should let society adopt innovative approaches, and let other generations lead the way. We live in a disposable world. We should cherish the time we have lived, shared and created. We should not depend so much on the information received from communication media and social networks. Building a more balanced society will prevent young people from becoming radicalized and allow them to feel an important part of it for the first time. We should spend less time on social media if we cannot improve coexistence. Let's strive for equality to create opportunities for the new generations.

8.6 Challenges and risks of AI in the face of radicalization and polarization

An ever growing number of authors are warning of the harmful effects of social media. What they say, and how they say it, makes quite an impression. There are books about the algorithm of social networks and brainwashing, disruptive technologies (O'Neil, 2016; Lanier, 2018; Baños, 2020), there are papers describing a wide range of practices to manipulate public opinion on the Internet (Flores, 2019) and documentaries such as "The Social Dilemma" (Orlowski, 2020). It discusses seemingly trivial digital experiences, such as automatic recommendations, notifications and suggested posts, that are used as bait a billion times a day to monopolize people's time, i.e. a profitable product (attention economy) for companies, politicians, organizations or countries hoping to sell their products or ideas to vulnerable and hyper-segmented audiences (Senra, 2020). Therefore, the concern about socio-political content on social media has grown in recent years along with hate speech and radicalization, and political polarization is often cited as a key driver of democratic failure (Gidron, et al., 2020). Interdisciplinary sciences such as communication, education, sociology, linguistics, mathematics, philosophy and IT are coming together to study the phenomenon of growing radicalization in social networks in tandem with artificial intelligence. An article entitled "La inteligencia artificial puede medir la polarización política" (Artificial Intelligence Can Measure Political Polarization) published in the El País newspaper (Mayor, 2022), argues that natural language processing and automatic learning techniques can be used to analyze the comments posted on social media and, therefore, the polarization in democratic societies. This analysis requires the use of artificial intelligence, but al-so of human beings who react individually to a handful of comments labelling them as "emotional" or "non-emotional". This, in turn, serves to feed the automatic learning feature of the algorithm. The goal is to measure how much emotionality there is in the analyzed sample, and whether polarization prevails.

Another article published in Technology Review (MIT) by Karen Hao (2021) argues that scientists work to measure where each system fails, considering the barriers to understanding natural language. The use of counter speech and slurs by certain communities to become empowered are some of the reasons for this. According to Will D. Heaven (2020), the artificial

intelligence that specializes in processing natural language, such as GPT-3, is very good at imitating humans. But, in order to do this, it has to resort to the Internet, which is full of misuse and misinformation. GPT-3 (by OpenAI) was launched in the summer of 2020, striking everyone with its capacity to produce convincing human-like texts. Nonetheless, the main problem is that these AI technologies with deep learning neural networks also generate hate speech, sexism and homophobia, and racist diatribes. For example, the answer of the Philosopher AI (GPT-3) chatbot to a question about the problems in Ethiopia is: “The main problem with Ethiopia is that Ethiopia itself is the problem. It seems like a country whose existence cannot be justified” (Heaven, 2020).

Despite the latest developments in language AI technology, the most basic applications are still facing challenges: it is almost impossible to create a chatbot that is not racist, sexist or hateful. The following Table (8.1) shows some of the bots that have been involved in issues related to racism, classism and hate speech.

Table 8.1. AI Bots Involved in Hate Speech on the Internet

Area	Description
1. “Tay” (Microsoft)	Created in 2016, as part of an experiment to analyze how AI programs become “smarter” after interacting with network users. It was taken offline in March of that year after having triggered a sarcastic, sexist and racist diatribe.
2. “Meena” (Google)	Chatbot generated from conversational language (NLP) aimed at recognizing conversational patterns and having more humane conversations, taking context and even feelings into account. According to Google, Meena uses an evaluation metric called “Sensibleness and Specificity Average” (SSA) and it is among the top bots of the market as it is increasing its knowledge and understanding of language, thus becoming more and more human. However, it is not exempt from using offensive language.
3. “BlenderBot” (Facebook)	Facebook AI Research claims that this is the first chatbot that can simultaneously generate a long-term memory for continuous consultation, search relevant information on the Internet, and have sophisticated conversations about almost any topic. It also combines various conversational skills, such as personality, empathy and knowledge, in a single system. The model takes the relevant information gathered during a conversation and stores it in a long-term memory so that it can then be used in other conversations that can last days, weeks or even months. Like all chatbots created with GPT-3, the information gathered can include

	hateful, offensive, racist, homophobic slurs, found in many other types of content appearing on the web.
4. "Philosopher AI" (GPT-3 by Open AI)	Artificial intelligence that specializes in producing very natural language launched in the summer of 2020. People were surprised at how convincing and human-like its texts were. However, it was also accused of generating hate speech, sexism, homophobia and racist diatribes. When asked about the problems in Ethiopia, the answer was: "The main problem with Ethiopia is that Ethiopia itself is the problem. It seems like a country whose existence cannot be justified".

Therefore, the criticism against AI algorithms has led the BigTech companies to place more emphasis on the ethical use of their creations and bot prototypes, and actually to use them against the hate speech present in the social media. The following table (1.2) shows some of these AI algorithms.

Table 8.2 AI Bots Used to Stop Hate Speech

Area	Description
1. Perspective API (Google Jigsaw)	It allows users to flag infringing content in posts or comments. It is used on platforms such as Reddit and news companies such as The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal. It detects and prioritizes posts and comments for human review based on the level of toxicity.
2. SiftNinja (Two Hat)	Instead of manually moderating toxic UGC (user-generated content) within a social application or toxic comments on social profiles, the Sift Ninja bot removes all high-risk content. It works silently in the background, protecting communities from junk content such as hate speech, harassment, spam. Like Perspective API, it allows users to flag offensive content in posts or comments.
3. BETO (Bert)	BETO is a BERT model fed with a large Spanish corpus to give a vectorial representation of the text (embedding). BETO is similar in size to a BERT-Base and was trained with the whole-word masking technique.
4. XLM-RoBERTa (HuggingFace Transformers)	It is a model pre-trained in more than 100 languages with state-of-the-art performance in text classification (including hate speech detection). This bookstore also contains pipelines to which the aforementioned models can be applied to make predictions. For example, given a model trained in hate speech detection and any random text, the pipelines can generate the relevant label (in this case, Hate or Not Hate)

References

- ACNUR (2020). *Cambio climático y desplazamiento por desastres*.
- APARICI, R. (1989). *Lectura de imágenes*. Madrid: Ediciones De la Torre.
- AUXIER, B. & ANDERSON, M. (2021). *Uso de las redes sociales en 2021*. Pew Research Center.
- AZNAR FERNÁNDEZ MONTESINOS, F. (2019). El papel de las narrativas en los procesos de radicalización. In *Radicalización violenta: vías para la acción preventiva*. Sindéresis, 77-90.
- AZQUETA, A., & MERINO ARRIBAS, M. A. (2020). Análisis de los Planes de Prevención de la Radicalización en Europa desde una perspectiva educativa. *OBETS: Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, 15(2), 405-436.
- BAÑOS, P. (2020) *El dominio mental. La geopolítica de la mente*. Ariel.
- BECK, U. (1997). La teoría de la sociedad del riesgo reformulada. *Revista Polis México*, 1(1), 171-196.
- BOUREKBA, M. (2021). Detectar para prevenir: las estrategias de lucha contra el extremismo violento en España. *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, 128, 81-104.
- BURGUELIN, O. (1974). *La comunicación de masas*. Barcellona: ATE.
- CROZIER, M. (1984). *No se cambia la sociedad por decreto* (Pilar Montón), Documentación Administrativa, (200).
- DE LEÓN COBO, B., & DE MIGUEL YUBERO, V. (2021). *Manual para la prevención y detección de la radicalización*. Universidad Francisco de Vitoria.
- DOMINICI, P., & FLORES-VIVAR, J.M. (2022). La Gran Equivocación: Replantear la educación y la formación virtual para la “sociedad hipercompleja” del mundo global. *Comunicación y Hombre*, 18,23-38.
- FESU (FÓRUM ESPAÑOL PARA LA PREVENCIÓN Y LA SEGURIDAD URBANA) (2022): “LOCAL VOICES: prevenir el extremismo”.
- FLORES-VIVAR, J. M. (2019). Inteligencia artificial y periodismo: diluyendo el impacto de la desinformación y las noticias falsas a través de los bots. *Doxa Comunicación*. (29), 197–212.
- FLORES-VIVAR, J. M., & ZAHARÍA, A. M. (2022). La praxis del clickbait y de The Trust Project: riesgos y retos en los diarios digitales españoles. *Anàlisi: Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, 1-19.
- FRANK, M., ROEHRIG, P., & PRING, B. (2018). *Qué haremos cuando las máquinas lo hagan todo*. Artificial intelligence, bots & Big Data. LID.
- FREIRE, P. (1985). *La política de la educación: cultura, poder y liberación*. South Hadley: Bergin y Garvey, MA.
- GIDRON, N., ADAMS, J. & HORNE, W. (2020). How Ideology, Economics and Institutions Shape Affective Polarization in Democratic Polities. *Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA)*.
- GUBERN, R. (1983). *La imagen y la cultura de masas*. Barcellona: Bruguera.
- HEAVEN, W.D. (2020). El reto casi imposible de crear un chatbot que no sea racista y machista. *Technology Review (MIT)*.
- HAO, K. (2021). AI still sucks at moderating hate speech. *Technology Review (MIT)*.
- HIRSHBERG, P. (2019). *Primero los medios y luego nosotros. Cómo ha cambiado internet la naturaleza fundamental de la comunicación y su relación con el público*. Spagna: OpenMind BBVA.
- INFORME JUVENTUD EN ESPAÑA. (2020). Ministerio de Derechos Sociales y Agenda 2030, Madrid.
- JORDÁN, J. (2009). Políticas de prevención de la radicalización violenta en España: elementos de interés para España. *Revista electrónica de ciencia penal y criminología*, 11,5, 1-25.

- LANIER, J. (2018). *Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now*. Macmillan USA.
- LÓPEZ RODRÍGUEZ, L., PAREDES SANSINENEA, B., & MARTÍNEZ DÍAZ, M.V. (2015). *Estrategias para la desradicalización*.
- MARMOL, J. (2019). *Posmodernidad, identidad y poder digital. Las nuevas estrategias de vida y sus angustias*. Bartleby.
- MAYOR, L. (2022). *La inteligencia artificial puede medir la polarización política*.
- MENA ROA, M. (2022). *El desplazamiento forzado global alcanza los 100 millones de personas*, 24/05/2022, <https://es.statista.com/grafico/22051/numero-de-refugiados-y-desplazados-forzados-en-el-mundo-en-millones/>.
- NOAH HARARI, Y. (2015). *Homo Deus. Breve historia del mañana*. Barcelona: Debate.
- NOAH HARARI, Y. (2018). *21 lecciones para el siglo XXI*. Barcelona: Debate.
- O'NEIL, C. (2016). *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*. London: Random House.
- ORLOWSKI, J. (2020). *The Social Dilemma*. Netflix.
- PACHECO, R. (2007). La Ciudadanía Intercultural como Objetivo de una Educación Democrática Radicalizada. *REVISTA COMPLEXUS*.
- PÉREZ TAPIAS, J. A. (2000). Una escuela para el mestizaje: educación intercultural en la época de la globalización. *Aldea Mundo*, 4(8), 34-43.
- PEROTTI, F., & MUNT, J. (2021). *Redes sociales, radicalización política y manipulación de la opinión pública: las dificultades de la Public Choice para explicar la conflictividad que experimentan las democracias occidentales*. VI Congreso de Ciencias Económicas del Centro de la República, UNVM.
- REUTERS INSTITUTE (2021), *Informe Digital News Report*, Universidad de Oxford.
- RIFKIN, J. (2010). *La civilización empática*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- RIFKIN, J. (2019). *El Green new deal global*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- SANT MASSARRAT, L. (2019). Naturaleza y tipología de la radicalización. Radicalización violenta: vías para la acción preventiva. *Sindéresis*, 11-22.
- SAPERAS, E. (1987). *Los efectos cognitivos de la comunicación de masas*. Barcelona: Ariel Comunicación.
- SCHWAB, K. (2016). *La cuarta revolución industrial*. Barcelona: Debate.
- SENRA, R. (2020). "El dilema de las redes sociales" de Netflix: 5 secretos de los dueños de las redes para engancharnos y manipularnos, según el documental. *BBC News Brasil*.
- SEVESO ZANIN, E.J. (2009). Imágenes de la diferencia. Construcción subjetiva, otredad y medios de comunicación. *Fundamentos en humanidades*, 10 (19), 9-23.
- SIBILA, P. (2008). *La intimidad como espectáculo*. Buenos Aires: FCE.
- SOSA-MORE, G. (2021). *Violencia política y medios de comunicación: consenso democrático y radicalización de la esfera pública*. Memoria foro virtual: Violencia política en los medios de comunicación, 11-14. Consejo de Comunicación.
- SUASNÁBAR, C. (2012). ¿Pedagogos críticos, expertos en educación, tecno-políticos, o qué? A propósito de las relaciones entre Estado, políticas educativas e intelectuales de la educación en los últimos 50 años. In ZIMMERMANN, E., & M., PLOTKIN (Eds.), *Las prácticas del Estado. Política, sociedad y elites estatales en la Argentina del siglo XX* (pp.187-209). Buenos Aires: Edhasa.
- TIERNEY, A. J. (2020). Who's in Charge? Teacher Authority and Navigating the Dialogical-Based Classroom. *Reinventing Pedagogy of the Oppressed: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, 105.

Radicalism and radicalisation within the new Cold War in the Persian Gulf. A view from Tehran

Michele Brunelli

There are different levels of radicalisation and so different ways to promote a radical discourse. Al-Qā'ida or Da'ish groups relied on individuals to carry on their deadly projects. Anyway, radicalisation is not an exclusive prerogative of non-State actors, also Governments and Nation States use strategies aimed at reinforcing their political discourse and to strengthen ideas and ideals through radicalisation strategies. This is the case of the Saudi-Iran rivalry, in which the ideological discourse acquired some radical aspects in terms of doctrine, propaganda, politics and activities. These actions do not convert into a direct clash between the two geopolitical regional powers, but into a war by proxy, in a broader strategy which recalls the methods, the approaches and the policies put into action during the Cold War, rendering the Persian Gulf a new epicentre of for a new Cold War.

Key Words: Radicalisation; War By Proxy; Persian Gulf; New Cold War.

9.1 Introduction

When referring to terms-concepts such as "radicalisation" or "religiously motivated extremism," the first characteristic that is usually applied refers to a militant political Islamism which turns its every "effort" or, better "striving" toward a supposed war against the West; or more broadly to the *Dar al-Ḥarb*, the house of war, a dominion where Islamic rule does not reign and is thus imperfect by definition. This is undoubtedly a stereotypical view

that has been reinforced by the various trends of violent Islamism in recent decades. It is no coincidence that a continual reference to Dābiq, a rural location near Aleppo, was present in the foundations of the Islamic State's propaganda, this was the place where the forces of good and evil would face each other in the final battle, an event that would anticipate the Day of Judgment. The undeniable eschatological and apocalyptic message of this narrative contained in a *Hadīth* saw two opposing sides confront each other: the troops of the "Romans" or rather, the Byzantines (who in updated *Dā'ish* jihadist propaganda were now generally identified as Westerners) went against "an army from Medina, composed of the best inhabitants of the land,"¹ obviously emerging victorious and going so far as to conquer Constantinople (Rumiyah).

Based on this anti-Western tension, the then Caliph Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī built a solid narrative which combined two other key conceptual political-theological terms. One is *bay'a*, or an individual or group's recognition of the Caliph's unchallengeable *auctoritas* and its implied submission², and the other is *hijra*, or migration to Islamic territories to attract the highest number of believers and thus potential combatants within the new state formation. This all made the Islamic State the new point of reference for the entire Muslim community, the foundation around which the seventh century spirit and primigenial lifestyles of the golden age of the *al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn*, which represent the pure implementation of the Prophet Mohammad's message, the return to the roots of Islam and the Prophet's way of life, could be realised.

This project had to be of universal worth in the mind of the self-proclaimed Caliph al-Baghdādī. Therefore, the oath of allegiance (*bay'a*) was necessary, at least for all who claimed themselves to be "Muslims." This was an absolutist view, based on the evolution of Salafist thought from Ibn Taymiyya to Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, systematically turning towards *takfirism*, or the power of a Muslim to declare one of his co-religionists a disbeliever.

¹ The prophecy of Dābiq can be found in the *Kitab Al-Fitan wa Ashrat As-Sa'ah*, (Book pertaining to the turmoil and portents of the last hour), which is a part of a larger collection of '*ahadith*'. https://www.iium.edu.my/deed/hadith/muslim/041_smt.html#009_b41

² "BAY'A", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, II Ed. (henceforth quoted as *Et²*), vol. 1, pp. 1113-1114. In its actualisation see: Joas Wagemakers; "The Concept of Bay'a in the Islamic State's Ideology", in *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 9, No. 4, Special Issue on the Islamic State (August 2015), pp. 98-106.

This was a tool widely employed by *Da'ish*, in addition to applying it to non-Muslims it was used toward Shi'ism, enemies *par excellence*, as well as toward those Sunni Muslims who did not dogmatically follow the directions and norms set by the Islamic State.

This widened the rift within the greater Islamic community, accentuating the ideological clash between the greater Sunni majority and Shiite components. This is a rift that clearly preceded the birth, growth and fall of *Dā'ish*, survived it, and continues to be an intra-confessional clash in which the phenomena of political radicalization, propaganda and even actions then take the form of social uprisings, if not also, often indirect terrorist attacks or outright conflicts (as the Syrian, Yemeni or Iraqi scenarios prove) between the main representatives of the two movements: Saudi Arabia and Iran. This is a radicalization that has brought about kind of new Cold War at the heart of one of the most sensitive and economically important regions globally: that of the Persian Gulf.

9.2 A new Cold War in the Gulf between Iran and Saudi Arabia

There seem to be many similarities in the period of 1947-1991, the conventional dating of the Cold War, and what happened. From a political and international point of view events became more acute in the Persian Gulf region, even after the signature of the Vienna agreements. The fact that up until that time Iran had been burdened by international economic sanctions and surrounded by hostile powers, including the strong American military presence in the area, which positioned the country at the margins of the international community and prevented it from achieving its aspirations for regional leadership. Saudi Arabia was the country that benefited most from this instability. During the conflict between the United States and Iraq (1991-2003), it had absorbed Baghdad's quota of petroleum sales; with Iran out of the running they were able to emerge as the sole regional Gulf power in both economic-political and ideological-religious terms. However, many observers did not understand that the safety system built around Iran over the last two decades had progressively crumbled, and not as a result of Iranian power but, ironically, due to American foreign policy. In fact, from 2001 the United States had eliminated two of Tehran's principal adversaries who had helped in the containment of Iran, albeit

indirectly: the Taliban of Afghanistan, overthrown in 2001, and Saddam Hussein's regime, which fell in 2003. Once these two natural barriers on the eastern and western flanks had fallen, Iran's expansionist policies found an opening, particularly towards the west, by exerting leverage on the many Shia communities in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and even in Lebanon through Syria. This effectively created a large "Shia crescent", as defined by King Abdullah of Jordan³ who had warned against the danger of such expansion. It effectively enabled Iran to project its power from the Gulf, the Shia epicentre, right across to the Mediterranean coasts.⁴ The "Shia crescent" should not be exclusively considered in terms of authority or expansion: in part it can be seen as an attempt to assuage the deep trauma of isolation suffered by Iran during its eight-years' war with Iraq, when most Western countries and the Gulf monarchies supported, in different ways, Saddam Hussein's regime: from weapon supply to providing massive financial assistance in order to prolong the conflict, thus Tehran found itself surrounded and alone in the face of the enemy.

Iran's reappearance thus triggered a power struggle that incited a latent conflict between Riyadh and Tehran: hence all of the typical characteristics of Cold War, modified contingent based on contemporary conditions, reappeared in the regional arena. These characteristics included the presence of two regional powers in mutual opposition. With a quest for power over the area, the fundamental role of ideology and impossibility of a direct clash led to an armament race and the decision to use "war by proxy" in an attempt to damage the opponent's power. In addition, this new Cold War also used forms of conflict and methods that had developed

³ Robin Wright and Peter Baker, 'Iraq, Jordan See Threat To Election From Iran', *The Washington Post*, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2004/12/08/iraq-jordan-see-threat-to-election-from-iran/7e0cc1bc-aeb3-447a-bc9e-cfa5499699bc/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.6b3adea90f29

⁴ The first tangible demonstration of this expansion of power was seen in 2011, when for the first time, two ships belonging to the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy transited the Suez Canal and reached the Mediterranean for a training mission and to visit the port of Latakia in Syria. The Iranian mission provoked widespread alarm in Israel. See: Joshua C. Himes; *The Iranian Navy's Historic Mediterranean Deployment: Timing Is Everything*; Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 21 March 2011; <https://www.csis.org/analysis/iranian-navy%E2%80%99s-historic-mediterranean-deployment-timing-everything>; Anthony Chibarirwe; "Iranian Presence in Mediterranean Sea Alarms Israel", in *The Trumpet Brief*; 8 February 2018; <https://www.thetrumpet.com/16875-iranian-presence-in-mediterranean-sea-alarms-israel>.

during the post-bipolar period in addition to traditional methods that had been widely adopted by the major powers and thus able to substantiate their efficacy and validity.

In a way analogous to the Soviet Union and the United States on a global level, Iran and Saudi Arabia tried to expand their authority in a regional dimension using not only the instruments typical of “hard power” but also by adopting “soft power”. The ideological component was fundamental during the Cold War with the contrast between a liberal democracy versus Marxism-Leninism, and collectivism versus individualism. However, the dichotomy in this scenario was expressed in sectarian terms through two opposing and differing visions of Islam belonging to two minority factions within the complex Muslim religious doctrine: Shia Islam versus Wahhabism. The stakes at play in this area are very high because if one side should become dominant legitimacy would be confirmed not only regarding certain religious interpretations, it would also legitimise governments (as in the examples of Syria and Iraq in the case of Shia prevalence), or it could provoke revolts and uprisings against opposing regimes or governments (as in the case of Bahrein, in which the Shia majority of the population is dominated by the Sunni al-Khalīfa minority). In the case of an overall Sunni predominance, this segment of the population, with majority representation in Syria, could legitimately claim the right to govern the nation, a role that is currently held by the al-Assad Alawite-Shia minority. On the other hand, Shia supremacy could encourage activism on the part of minority groups, which, capitalising from the sectarian cause, would be induced to rebel against legitimate governments: the Zaydi in Yemen or the Shias in Saudi Arabia, above all in the eastern regions of Qatif and Al-Aḥsā’.⁵

In addition to the significant confessional dichotomy, which would empower mobilisation and possibly influence the uprising of enormous numbers of believers, the opposing spheres are also institutionally

⁵ Consider that in Saudi Arabia, the Shia represent about 10/15-25% of the population. The delta between the two percentages is due to the lack of precise information, in other words a census which could reveal the actual size of the respective community, because this could highlight the group’s effective power and enhance secessionist movements. For this reason, the Saudi-Arabian statistics office does not supply any data, and specifies just that the state religion is Islam. (<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/12/5-facts-about-religion-in-saudi-arabia/>; https://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/GulfReligionGeneral_lg.png)

polarised. On one hand there is an absolute, hereditary monarchy whose power is based on the clan-tribal links of the Āl-Saʿūd, the dynasty that has ruled Saudi Arabia from when the kingdom was founded in 1932, following the Emirate of Diriyah, the first true Saudi state. On the opposite shores of the Persian Gulf is Iran, Islamic republic, whose institutions are organised to guarantee free representation and a degree of balance between the state powers, even though there are still many rules that at times reduce actual personal freedom.

There is also an important overlying structural difference within the cultural dimension, a pivotal component of Iranian society and an element that genuinely hallmarks all its constituent classes. Iran boasts of centuries of poetic and narrative tradition, including the great and celebrated poets of classical Neo-Persian literature such as *Ferdowsī Tūsī* (940-1020), an exemplar of Persian epic poetry, and the mystics *Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī* (1207-1273) and *Ḥāfeẓ-e Shīrāzī* (1315-1390).⁶ Subsequently Iran has always asserted a (supposed) cultural superiority over other Arab populations, which they consider backward as they are prevalently comprised of nomadic and Bedouin peoples (in the disparaging sense of these terms) whose society, with prevalently oral culture and traditions, was generally illiterate and whose identity was entirely based on orality.⁷ The Prophet Muhammad himself was illiterate. In practical terms, Persia has always stood out for its wealth of cultural tradition in comparison to Arab countries. In many different areas it has always had a notable influence on the cultural heritage of its invaders, starting from the Greeks, later the Arabs, and then the Turks which is how this sense of superiority perceived by the population has been forged. Unlike the Arabic society on the other side of the Gulf, Persia was distinctive for its settled society whose power was expressed by the large Sasanian empire, with a solid bureaucratic and administrative structure, literary culture and love of poetry. Concerning beliefs, ten centuries before the advent of Islam the

⁶ Even during the Arab golden age, that of the Abbasid Caliphate, with the school of Damascus and the school of Baghdad (750-1258), the major poets and writers were Persian. Examples include *Al-Ghazali* (1058-1111), *Al-Tabari* (839-923), *al-Rāzi*, and *Ferdowsi* himself, even though there are a good number of outstanding Arab poets and authors.

⁷ For a detailed study on Iran's reluctance with respect to Arabic culture, see: Farnaz Seifi; "Why isn't Arab literature popular in Iran?", Middle East Institute; 12 May 2020; <https://www.mei.edu/publications/why-isnt-arab-literature-popular-iran>.

empire had a monotheistic religion, Zoroastrianism. In fact, many people believed that the Islamisation of Persia was a true culture shock, exacerbated by the collapse of the Sasanian civilisation itself. It should be noted that while Iran was certainly Islamised, it was never Arabised, retaining its ancestral pride and traditions, including religious aspects. There are many beliefs of Zoroastrian origin that survive within the Islamic Republic still today.

In contrast, the Sunni world, especially Saudi Arabia, has a dual approach to the Shia/Iranian world. On one hand it genuinely suffers from a cultural inferiority complex compared to Persia, while from the political – and therefore religious – viewpoint, the Sunni world, particularly Saudi Arabia, cherishes an analogous superiority complex. In its simplest terms, the new religion was born and grew in the peninsula. From here, the caliphates' armies set out to conquer the world, taking control of vast areas which extended – at different times of history – from the Spain of *al-Andalus* right across to the Indus valley. Mecca and Medina, two of Islam's holy cities, are today in Saudi territory, and, amongst his many titles, the Saudi monarch is also styled as *Khadim al-as-Ḥaramayn Šarīfayn*, Custodian of the Holy Mosques. Apart from the important historic and religious component that places this territory at the foundations of the birth of Islam, Saudi Arabia's perception of its own superiority is also substantiated by an objective economic and military superiority. Thanks to American assistance in the defence sector and its large military investments, seven times higher than those of Iran,⁸ Riyadh can now rely on a modern army despite it being numerically inferior to that of Tehran.⁹ However it benefits from a solid alliance with Washington, which has continued since 1945 following the so-called "Quincy Pact" which has made the Āl-Sa'ūd regime one of the pilasters of United States politics and hegemony in the area precisely from the Cold War years. This was an alliance that was given its definitive form

⁸ In 2019, Saudi Arabia spent 62.5 billion dollars on defence, as compared to the 9.6 billion spent by Iran. See: <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/Data%20for%20all%20countries%20from%201988%E2%80%932019%20in%20constant%20%282018%29%20USD.pdf>

⁹ Iran can count on 610,000 men in the armed forces (24% of the region's total), with an additional 350,000 reserve soldiers; this can be compared to the 227,000 men in the Saudi forces (9% of those in the region). The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2020*; Vol. 120, Routledge, London, 2020.

based on an agreement that could be summarised as “oil for arms” or, more accurately, “oil for protection”, which has managed to survive through many historical phases and crises, including some dramatic episodes such as the 1973 OPEC embargo which caused a global energy crisis right through to the devastating 9-11 terrorist attacks in which 15 of the 19 terrorists were Saudi citizens.¹⁰ Its armed forces are the best equipped in the region and represent a valuable tool for the country’s assertive foreign policy. Over the last few years, Riyadh has always been near the top of the global rankings in terms of military expenses and arms imports.

Another way in which the Cold War has taken contemporary form in the Gulf can be seen in the use of “war by proxy”. During the most acute phases of the 20th century’s bipolar confrontation, the two superpowers adopted a strategy that political scientist Karl Deutsch defined in 1964 as “an international conflict between two foreign powers, fought out on the soil of a third country; disguised as a conflict over an internal issue of that country; and using some of that country’s manpower, resources and territory as a means for achieving preponderantly foreign goals and foreign strategies”.¹¹ It is interesting that the definition of proxy war formulated by Deutsch, a political scientist of Czech origin, does not limit the use of this practice to the superpowers but refers more in general to two foreign powers, therefore expanding the definition’s field of relevance, giving plausibility to the use of proxy war even by regional players. In fact, this method is widely adopted by Iran and Saudi Arabia in order to inflict mutual damage while avoiding a direct conflict. The occasion that provided the opportunity for initiating this indirect clash was offered to the two opponents by the events of 2011. Both Tehran and Riyadh attempted to benefit from the situation the protests created which began to sweep across the Arab world, using them within the realm of proxy war.

¹⁰ For a detailed study of the alliance between the United States and Saudi Arabia, the vast literature on this theme includes: Parker T. Hart; *Saudi Arabia and the United States: Birth of a Security Partnership*; Indiana University Press, Bloomington; 1998; David E. Long; *The United States and Saudi Arabia: Ambivalent Allies*; Routledge, London; 2019.

¹¹ See: Karl W. Deutsch, ‘External Involvement in Internal War’, in Harry Eckstein (ed.), *Internal War, Problems and Approaches* (New York, NY: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964). Another useful reference is Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, “The strategy of war by proxy”, in *Cooperation and Conflict*, XIX (1984), pp. 263-273.

From the Iranian viewpoint, the local protests could have provided an opportunity to widen the fault line of a sectarian crisis within Saudi Arabia, utilising the Shia groups living in the eastern parts of the country to destabilise it from inside. On the other hand, Riyadh, whose prerogative was to maintain the status quo, leapt at the occasion to silence one of the most critical and dangerous voices expressing Shia positions: that of Nimr Bāqir al-Nimr. In fact, the opposing strategies revolved around this Saudi Shia Sheikh. Paladin of minority Shia rights in Saudi Arabia, al-Nimr had launched a staunch opposition to what he defined as “the authoritarianism of the reactionary al-Saud regime”. His religious centre, in the town of Al-‘Awāmiyah, had become a hot spot for anti-governmental activities, and from 2011, taking advantage of the news of tumults that were spreading through the Arab world like wildfire, al-Nimr prominently demanded greater independence for Shia majority regions, the liberation of *Hezbollah al-Hijaz* militants who had been imprisoned because they were held responsible for the terrorist attack on the Khobar Towers (2006), and the withdrawal of Saudi troops in Bahrein where they had been stationed in support of the Sunni Al-Khalīfa monarchy that governs the Shia-majority country. In a meeting with some American political officers, whose proceedings were published by WikiLeaks, as well as sharing “the conciliatory ideas such as fair political decision-making over identity-based politics, the positive impact of elections, and strong ‘American ideals’ such as liberty and justice”, al-Nimr supported “the right of the Saudi Shia community to seek external assistance if it were to become embroiled in a conflict”.¹² This was an obvious and unconcealed reference to Iran, which had provoked growing concern amongst the Saudis, already intensely alarmed about Iranian influence on their neighbour Iraq.¹³ Tehran thus tried to use the Sheikh’s power to damage the Saudi monarchy from within, using religion as a weapon that could have potentially had a notable economic impact. In fact, in the Shia-majority eastern regions of Saudi Arabia there are large oil production plants in which the labour is Shiite, and where a strike amongst the workers could have caused a partial block

¹² Meeting with controversial Shia Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, (C-CT7-00989); 23 August 2008; O8RIYADH1283_a; https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/O8RIYADH1283_a.html#

¹³ “Saudi King Abdullah and senior princes on Saudi policy towards Iraq”, 28 April 2008 https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/O8RIYADH649_a.html

in oil well activity. The worst scenario - that of secession - requested on many occasions by al-Nimr would have been a catastrophe for the monarchy in power.¹⁴ Alongside (or as an alternative to) the Shiite militants already active in the peninsula, such as the members of *Hezbollah al-Hijaz*¹⁵ (also known as *Ansar Khat al-Imam* - The companions of the Imam, referring to Khomeini- a true fifth column with significant contacts within Lebanon's "Party of God", al-Nimr, mobilizing when opportune, would have represented a pivotal destabilising factor had he been in the hands of Tehran.

Because of al-Nimr's ability to attract new followers through a precise recruitment and indoctrination strategy, which could have led to a process of violent radicalisation, Riyadh reacted with great severity.

There are two threats perceived by radicalized Shia elements: one purely confessional, the other a politico-social threat. The first, by introducing elements typical of Shia spirituality would, in the Saudi perception, undermine some of the fundamental tenets of Wahhabism, including the main one: that of *tawhīd*, the divine oneness. Even though Shiites are also profoundly and intimately monotheist, their worship of the chain of the Twelve Imams and their close kinship has rendered them ungodly in the eyes of the Wahhabis, if not even polytheists, in the vision of the Islamic State, who identify in 'Alī Khamenei the leader of the *Rāfiḍah*, the "rejectors"¹⁶ (*Dābiq Magazine*, no. 9, p. 67) or even *Tāghūt* (*Dābiq Magazine* no. 14, p. 29). These are overlapping elements of radicalisation and ideological extremism.

¹⁴ "Watching Bahrain, Saudi Shi'ites demand reforms", in *World News*, 22 February 2011, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-shiites/watching-bahrain-saudi-shiites-demand-reforms-idUSTRE71L33820110222>. Even earlier than 2011, al-Nimr had referred to the possibility of secession if the Sunni majority persisted in discriminating against and persecuting the Shiites. See: "Bomb-for-peace", *Al Haram*, 7 - 13 May 2009; Issue No. 946; <https://www.webcitation.org/65eZJ23ud?url=http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2009/946/re7.htm>.

¹⁵ For more details on the group, see: Toby Matthiesen; "Hizbullah al-Hijaz: A History of The Most Radical Saudi Shi'a Opposition Group"; in *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 64, n. 2, Spring 2010; Matthew Levitt, "Iranian and Hezbollah Threats to Saudi Arabia: Past Precedents", in *PolicyWatch* n. 2426, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 19 May 2015.

¹⁶ Shī'ite Muslims who reject (*rafḍ*) the caliphate of Muḥammad's two successors Abū Bakr and 'Umar.

Slightly different views are seen as a clear threat and devise a dangerous heretical hotbed in the Saudi Kingdom, especially given the religious *auctoritas* of the Saudi king whose titles and prerogatives include being *Khādim al-Ḥaramayn aš-Šarīfayn* - Servant of the Two Noble Sanctuaries or Protector of the Two Holy Cities. The Shia discourse relies on religious and social discrimination and is radical in the political field. Hetero-directed by Tehran since 2011 it has further been fomented and reinvigorated by the events that, along with the Arab uprisings, have often contributed to failed violent attempts at change from the Atlantic coasts to those of the Indian Ocean.

After months of revolts and violence in the Shia provinces in July 2012, al-Nimr and many of his followers were arrested. Ali Khamenei himself threatened serious consequences if the Sheikh was not released, increasing tension with Iran. However, on 2 January 2016 al-Nimr was executed alongside 46 other people, the highest number of executions in a single day since 1980.¹⁷ The execution gave rise to a wave of protests, especially in Iran, and provoked international consternation and outcry. In a macabre twist of irony characterizing the mechanisms of international politics, requests for Saudi Arabia's suspension from the Human Rights Council of the United Nations were made. Ayatollah Khamenei invoked "a divine revenge"; the Saudi Embassy in Tehran was set ablaze, and the Consulate in Mashhad was raided. Even though the Supreme Leader Khamenei himself quickly condemned the attacks on the diplomatic offices, Saudi Arabia politically retaliated, breaking off diplomatic relations with Iran.¹⁸

In addition to the conflict unfolding on Saudi soil, there were two other areas witnessing even more intense combat with the armed forces and militants of the two powers in the region indirectly opposed: Syria and Yemen. In Syria, proxy war transformed an internal conflict into a "local world war", a politic sciences oxymoron that nonetheless aptly describes the clash. Syria is a relatively small country crushed between the interests of global powers, namely the United States and Russia, and regional powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, and Erdoğan's ambivalent Turkey appeared,

¹⁷ "Saudi Arabia: Mass Execution Largest Since 1980; *Human Rights Watch*; 4 January 2016; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/04/saudi-arabia-mass-execution-largest-1980>

¹⁸ Matthiesen, "A Saudi Spring?" pp. 628–659; Saudi Arabia cut all ties with Iran, *Tabnak*, 3 January 2016, <https://www.tabnak.ir/fa/news/558403/کرد-ویدیو-کامل-قطع-را-به-طور-کامل-قطع-کرد-ویدیو>

as well. All these powers supported the various fundamentalist groups and militias that gave rise to a jihadist galaxy, prolonging the conflict for almost a decade.¹⁹ Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and the *Sepah-e Pasdaran*, with the "Holy Brigade" (*Nīrū-ye Qods* or *Sepāh-e Qods* – Quds Force), rushed to the aid of their Alavid Shia ally. In the attempt to make the operation "globally" Shia, showing that all Shia brethren were coming to the help of the Alavids, they also turned to militias such as the Lebanese Hezbollah, *Liwa Zainebiyoun* (لواء الفاطميون; Followers of Zainab Brigade) which consisted prevalently of Pakistanis from the Hazara ethnic group that had sought refuge in Iran in order to escape the growing persecutions of Deobandi and Salafi groups operating in Pakistan.²⁰ In fact, thanks to the increase in sectarian groups it was easier for Iran to recruit militia fighters, then united in the brigade and placed under direct IRGC control. Alongside the *Liwa Zainebiyoun*, the Iranian proxy forces also included a brigade of Afghan fighters, the *Liwa Fatemiyoun* (Fatemiyoun Brigade), also known as *Hezbollah Afghanistan*. In this case once again, the members of the brigade were from the Hazara ethnic group living in Afghanistan or recruited amongst the Afghan refugees in Iran. According to an enquiry by the *Wall Street Journal*, Tehran's government offered them a monthly salary of 500 dollars,²¹ in addition to a promise of citizenship.²² The Iranian press agency *Daneshjoo*, commemorating the martyrdom of young Afghans killed in Syria, provides valuable material to better understand the groups affiliated

¹⁹ For Western sources, see: Elizabeth O'Bagy; "Jihad in Syria", *Middle East Security Report*, Institute of War; Washington; September 2012; for Russian institutional information, see: *Anti-government extremist organizations in Syria*; The Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) - Российский совет по международным делам; 15/11/2006; <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/syria-extremism/>;

²⁰ Eamon Murphy; *Islam and Sectarian Violence in Pakistan: The Terror Within*; Routledge, New York, 2019.

²¹ Farnaz Fassihi; "Iran Pays Afghans to Fight for Assad: Offers Them \$500 Stipend, Residency Benefits", in *The Wall Street Journal*, May 22, 2014.

²² According to the Turkish press agency Anadolu: "Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has ordered that Afghan fighters fighting in Syria as part of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (IRG)'s Fatimiyyoun Brigade be granted Iranian citizenship, according to an Iranian official". <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/iran-to-grant-citizenship-to-afghans-fighting-in-syria/770377>

to Tehran and operating in Syria.²³ It reveals that in addition to Afghan fighters, the *Fatemiyoun* also encompassed Iraqi militants from the *Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq* (League of the Righteous), a branch of Moqtad al Sadr's *Jaish al-Mahdi* which had been operational since the dramatic period of political turmoil in Iraq in 2006, as well as the *Khaddam al-Aqeela*, *Liwa Zulfikar*²⁴ and *Abu al-Fadl al-Abbas*, also under al Sadr's area of influence, which had been fighting in Syria from the very beginning of the war. Partially completing this Shia galaxy of combatant groups mobilised to protect the sacred Shia sites in Syria – or rather to oppose the rise of Wahhabism and Salafism, also propounded by Daesh that considers these locations as sacrilegious – are *Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba'* (Movement of the Outstanding Ones of the Party of God), *Saraya al-Khorasani* (Khorasani Brigade), *Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada'* (Lord of the Martyrs Brigade), *Liwa Ammar Ibn Yassir* (Ammar Ibn Yassir Brigade) and *Liwa al-Yum al-Mawud* (Brigade of the Promised Day).²⁵ The very number of groups involved suggests the scale of effort made by Tehran in its attempt to increase its presence in Syria, in both political intermediation and organisation, by involving foreign players that could be easily manoeuvred and ready to defend the Islamic Republic's national interests.

Saudi Arabia followed the same technique of proxy war, enacting a dual strategy in order to hinder Iran's potential predominance in Syria. On one hand, it conducted political-ideological efforts encouraging the establishment of the *salafiyya* movement in Syria, by means of which it could expand its influence, while on the other it provided finance or the supply of weapons to groups of proven Wahhabi faith, such as *Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya* (or more simply *Ahrar al-Sham*; Islamic Movement of the Free Men of the Levant) and *Jaysh al-Islam*, which aspire to the foundation of an Islamic State and the establishment of the *Shariah*. These are large groups numerically, each of which can count on a strength

ويضيف التقرير أن لواء "فاطميون" يتكون من مقاتلين أفغان وعراقيين من ألوية "كتائب أهل الحق" و"خدام العقيلة" و"ذو الفقار" و"أبو الفضل العباس"، ويشترك في المعارك منذ انطلاقها بسوريا إلى جانب قوات النظام تحت مسمى "الدفاع عن الأضرحة الشيعية" من قبيل مقامي السيدة زينب بنت علي بن أبي طالب ورقية بنت الحسين، على حد تعبير الوكالة مقتل-4-إيرانيين-وأفغانيين-تابعين-لميليشات-الأسد/15/05/2014/iran/2014/05/15/ <https://www.alarabiya.net/ar/iran/2014/05/15/مقتل-4-إيرانيين-وأفغانيين-تابعين-لميليشات-الأسد/15/05/2014/iran/2014/05/15/>

²⁴ Phillip Smyth, *Liwa'a Zulfikar*, *Jihadology*, 3 February 2014.

²⁵ Nicholas A. Heras; "Iraq's Fifth Column. Iran's Proxy network"; *Policy Paper 2017-02*; Middle East Institute, Counterterrorism Series; October 2017; https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/publications/PP2_Heras_IraqCT_0.pdf

of approximately 15,000-20,000 men.²⁶ The Saudi efforts utilised financing as a lever in the attempt to coalesce the militant Salafi galaxy in Syria as much as possible, inducing the groups to merge, creating “fronts” and multi-brigade units that made it easier to coordinate and facilitate military activities under direct control. The project of polarizing rebel groups also accommodated requests from the *Ulama’* Association in Syria, which, in compliance with the *Al-Bunyan Al-Marsous* project, promoted the unification of militant Islamic factions in the field, and the organisation and alignment of their ranks into a single administrative and directorial structure in order to face the Assad army and to resist Iran’s “colonial plans.”²⁷ This fusion, whose focal point was represented by the *Jaysh al-Islam*, should have given rise to The Army of Muhammad (*Jaysh al-Muhammad*) with 250,000 men. Arming a force of this size may seem problematic and costly, but it is highly profitable in terms of political fidelity, so Saudi Arabia did not hesitate in providing assistance by means of a complex system of foundations and multi-step transfers to purchase weapons. Considering 2016 alone, Riyadh spent millions of dollars to purchase arms from Bulgaria (1 million in 2016 and 15 million in 2017), Serbia (11 million) and Croatia (5.8 million),²⁸ including a lot of Soviet-manufactured ammunition, warheads and rocket launchers which was certainly ill-fitted to the Saudi army as it was equipped with weaponry arriving from the United States (which nonetheless reached Syria with logistical assistance provided by the CIA²⁹ and subsequently distributed to

26

http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Syrian%20Armed%20Opposition%20Powerbrokers_0_0.pdf

27 بعد سحب الاعتراف بـ"الائتلاف" ... زمان الوصل " تكشف عن تأسيس "جيش محمد" السني (Zaman al-Wasl reveals the establishment of the Sunni Army of Muhammad); <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/41361>

28 For the value of arms imports, see the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) database “TIV of arms exports to Saudi Arabia, 2012-2019”. For a more detailed analysis, see also: Pieter D. Wezeman; “Saudi Arabia, armaments and conflict in the Middle East”; 14 December 2018 SIPRI; <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-background/2018/saudi-arabia-armaments-and-conflict-middle-east>

29 Lawrence Marzouk, Ivan Angelovski and Jelena Sviric; “Croatian Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia Fuel Syrian War” Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP); 21 February 2017; <https://www.occrp.org/en/makingakilling/croatia-sells-record-number-of-arms-to-saudi-arabia-in-2016/>

Syrian rebel groups). The United States then made an important contribution by means of covert operation Timber Sycamore, authorised by President Obama in 2013. According to the *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* the Government in Washington, by means of the Central Intelligence Agency, facilitated the transfer of weapons, ammunition and equipment for a value of a billion dollars to rebel Syrian groups in the hope of encouraging negotiations that could help end the conflict.³⁰ It was one of the largest military aid programmes for arming and training rebels since the CIA had supported the Afghan *mujaheddins* in their struggle against Soviet forces during the 1980s. The history of the Cold War thus seems to repeat itself, including its negative outcomes. In fact, just like some American weapons destined for the Afghan fighters ended up in the hands of the Taliban after the conflict, the weaponry systems intended for the Syrian rebels came into the possession of groups affiliated to *Al-Qā'ida* by means of *Jabhat al-Nuṣra* (Front of the Supporters). Paradoxically, the weapons that should have contributed to the fall of the Syrian regime, a fundamental player for Tehran and Moscow, ended up arming, with Saudi finance,³¹ one of Washington's and Riyadh's arch-enemies: components of the terror network constructed by Osama bin Laden.³²

Iran's military efforts, and likewise Saudi and American financial and military support, helped dramatically prolong the Syrian conflict which has reached its tenth year. In the same way, there seems to be no solution for the scenario in Yemen, the other theatre in which the two Gulf powers are engaged, where war has destroyed the country's social and economic structure, provoking famine and widespread cholera epidemics that have had terrible effects on the local population. Saudi Arabia is directly involved

³⁰ Shannon Dick, "The Arms Trade and Syria"; in *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*; 2 September 2019; <https://www.georgetownjournalofinternationalaffairs.org/online-edition/2019/9/2/the-arms-trade-and-syria>. See also "Behind the Sudden Death of a \$1 Billion Secret C.I.A. War in Syria"; *The New York Times*, 2 August 2017; <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/02/world/middleeast/cia-syria-rebel-arm-train-trump.html>.

³¹ "U.S. Relies Heavily on Saudi Money to Support Syrian Rebels"; 23 January 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/24/world/middleeast/us-relies-heavily-on-saudi-money-to-support-syrian-rebels.html>

³² "Trump Eyes Tax-Code Overhaul, With Emphasis on Middle-Class Break"; *The Wall Street Journal*; 25 July 2017; <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-eyes-tax-code-overhaul-with-emphasis-on-middle-class-break-1501027057>

in this arena. It is present in the field with two armed battlegroups and 2,500 men, as part of Operation Restoring Hope, assisted by many other countries including its closest Gulf allies.

Iran has adopted a dual strategy comparable to that of Saudi Arabia, utilising “hard power” in the form of indirect military support provided through tribal coalitions (“popular committees”) or secessionist groups such as *Aḥrār an-Najrān* (Free Ones of the Najran) or *Harakat Ansar Allah*, by means of the Guardians of the Revolution³³ or components of the Lebanese Hezbollah fighting alongside the Shia Houthi (*al-Ḥūthiyyūn*), as revealed by observations in the field.³⁴ An analysis of the weapons used in the Yemenite war theatre shows that Iran despatched drones and missile systems (know-how, operational concepts, and hardware) in order to launch attacks deep inside the territory or against Saudi aerial defences.³⁵ In the context of proxy war, Iran’s hard power is obviously limited to the supply of weapons, training and military expertise. Nonetheless, for Iran it is still crucial to contain and strike Riyadh on its weakest front, in the south, in order to induce Saudi Arabia and its Emirate (UAE) allies to keep their military capabilities engaged in what is essentially a long-protracted conflict. This echoes Washington’s actions against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, and Beijing and Moscow’s conduct with respect to the United States in Vietnam - cold War strategies that resurface.

However, since no troops have been officially sent to Yemeni territory there is commitment of lesser dimensions when compared to the other examples such as Iraq or Syria. It would indeed be difficult for Tehran’s government

³³ “Elite Iranian guards training Yemen’s Houthis: U.S. officials”, Reuters, 27 March 2015; <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-houthis-iran/elite-iranian-guards-training-yemens-houthis-u-s-officials-idUSKBN0MN2MI20150327>

³⁴ “Hezbollah leaders died in Yemen, says minister”; Middle East Monitor, 6 February 2020; <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200206-hezbollah-leaders-died-in-yemen-says-minister/>

³⁵ On the use of UAVs, see the Conflict Armament Research reports: “Iranian Technology transfers to Yemen, ‘Kamikaze’ drones used by Houthi forces to attack Coalition missile defence systems”; March 2017; <https://www.conflictarm.com/perspectives/iranian-technology-transfers-to-yemen/>; “Evolution of UAVs employed by Houthi forces in Yemen”; February 2020; <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/46283842630243379f0504ece90a821f> . Regarding weapon systems and Iranian technology utilised in Yemen, again see Conflict Armament Research and more specifically *آخر المساهمات التكنولوجية الإيرانية في الحرب اليمنية* (The latest Iranian technological contributions to the Yemenite war A/N) March 2018; <https://www.conflictarm.com/perspectives/العنوان-الناسفة-المتحكم-فيها-لاسلكيا>

to invest greater resources, or accept more tasks in supporting the Houthi movement, considering the economic crisis exacerbated by the fall in oil prices and the 2020 health emergency, in addition to its direct involvement in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, priorities in light of Iran's national interests. Tehran is also aware that a possible military escalation could lead to direct conflict with Riyadh, or could provide an excuse for the United States to attack Iran, something that the Americans have long been waiting for. As a result the ayatollahs are relying on two of the most important tools in Iran's soft power: political Shi'ism, mass media and social media.

Yemen is perhaps the only country outside the increasingly limited Iranian and Lebanese circles where the first wave of revolutionary Shi'ism – which assured the events of 1978-79 that led to the fall of the Shah and the foundation of the Islamic Republic – still survives. Local propaganda is steeped in Khomeini influence. Speeches today by Hussein Ḥūthī still represent the Shia movement's ideological point of reference and include extensive quotes from addresses by Ayatollah Khomeini. He additionally makes constant references to the struggle against colonialism and Zionism, typical of the programmatic directions adopted by Sayyed Hassan Nasr Allah, Secretary General of Hezbollah.³⁶ In fact, Tehran has attempted to attract the Zaydi community into its circles since the 1980's, giving many young Yemenis the chance to study and train free of charge in Iran, above all in the sacred city of Qom where, consequently, they came into contact with the new clerical directorship and the ideals of political revolutionary Shi'ism. Many of the past and present leaders of the Houthi movement emerged from this group. As a result of the intense activity by the Iranian Embassy in Sana'a, Tehran was able to open a series of schools and Twelver religious institutes, magazines and cultural centres in order to promote Jafarism (the Shia school of Legal Thought and Jurisprudence, from the name of the sixth Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, 8th century)³⁷ directly within the Arab country. Some of the students at the Twelver schools in Yemen came into contact with officials of the *Sepah-e Pasdaran* and were successively

³⁶ Mehran Riazaty; *Khomeini's Warriors: Foundation of Iran's Regime, Its Guardians, Allies Around the World, War Analysis, and Strategies*; Xlibris Corporation, Bloomington; 2016.

³⁷ On the doctrine of the sixth Imam, see: Robert Gleave, "Ja'far al-Ṣādeq ii. Teachings," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, XIV/4, pp. 351-356.

sent to special training centres that instructed them in military expertise.³⁸ Still today, Tehran finances a number of satellite channels broadcasting in Yemen, and helps to train a wide range of professionals in Iran, Lebanon and Iraq who are then employed in Yemeni media channels as experts in satellite transmissions, directors, cameramen, radio, television and press journalists, and above all, experts in social media management. The principal subjects to be exploited, which are mainly broadcast and amplified on Twitter and Facebook, are connected to the Saudi coalition's devastation and crimes against the civil population, particularly as a result of indiscriminate air strikes. The narrative tends to highlight the enemy's brutal and bloodthirsty behaviour. The Saudis and the members of the coalition supporting the official Yemeni government are always defined as *al-ghozan* (the aggressors) or *al-munāfiqūn* (منافقون; the hypocrites). These important points of reference, particularly from a religious point of view, because they appears in multiple parts of the Quran and identify the adversaries of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina, who, although they call themselves Muslims they adopt attitudes and behaviour in contrast with Islam.³⁹

However, many posts are also dedicated to tactical successes in the field obtained by means of Zaydi missile attacks. The content appearing in social media managed by the Iranians is generally in English, while that by the Shia Yemenis is principally in Arabic, in both the traditional modern version (*al-fuṣḥā*) and the local colloquial version (*al-Ammiyah*). Clearly there is a desire to give international visibility to the success of the attacks using a

³⁸ إبراهيم منشاوي; النفوذ الناعم: البعد الديني في السياسة الخارجية الإيرانية والحركة الحوثية في اليمن (Ibrahim Menshawi: "The Soft Influence: The Religious Dimension of Iranian Foreign Policy and the Houthi Movement in Yemen"); Arab Center for Research and Studies, 31 January 2016; <http://www.acrseg.org/39871>

³⁹ In the Quran there are many references to *munāfiqūn*, in addition to an entire *sura*, LXIII, which deals with the phenomenon of hypocrisy. It criticizes hypocrisy and condemns the hypocrites. It also exhorts the Believers to be sincere in their faith and perform acts of charity. The *munāfiqūn* are identified using various epithets in a number of other *surat* and they are considered as insincere or non-believers (II:8-16); those who refute the jihad (IV:77-80; They said, "Our Lord, why have You decreed upon us fighting? If only You had postponed [it for] us for a short time."); base and untruthful, because they say that they do not know how to fight (III:166-167); "misleading" (IV:113), "disbelievers" (IV:144); spies and traitors (V:41 "And when there comes to them information about [public] security or fear, they spread it around); they do not have faith in God, and they are willing to ally with the enemies of Islam (V:52); "perjurers" (IX:62, 74) and "mocking" (IX:65).

widely-spoken language such as English, but this is accompanied by an attempt to influence the Arabic-speaking communities, local society and supporters of the Houthi, or, more generally the communities and militant groups who feel hatred, or outright hostility, towards Saudi Arabia for its doctrinal concepts or its foreign policy. One of the most important reasons for the bitter opposition to the Saudi monarchy, as well as for the fundamentalist or jihadist groups, is its alliance with the United States. These Jihadist-Salafi groups represent an enemy on both fronts. In fact, in the Yemeni theatre, *Al-Qā'ida* and branches of the Islamic State exploit social vulnerability to attract new recruits and bolster the scarce numbers of their groups. The same media channels are used by the Saudis and the Yemeni government. In this case, the Houthis are disparaged, accused of war crimes against civilians and often described as inhuman.

Unfortunately the Yemeni scenario has for some time become a war of prestige in which the two regional powers, Saudi Arabia and Iran, are trying to obtain a political victory at the expense of the local population. Unlike the Syrian arena, which for a long time was under the scrutiny of the media and international public opinion. In part this was due to the involvement of the USA and Russia, both of whom were trying to reinforce their influence in the area, but further and foremost due to Daesh, a terrorist proto-state that also threatened the national security of Western countries and the stability of strategically-important regions due to their oil resources. Thus, the Yemeni conflict is for all effects and purposes a forgotten war. It is a conflict accompanied by complete indifference, just like the Iran-Iraq war in the past, for which the West and its Gulf allies considered essential that two of the contenders for regional authority should gradually wear each other down in a long war of attrition, exactly analogous to the situation for the Western powers during the Great War. Or, as in the case of the war in Afghanistan, another proxy war, which according to Zbigniew Brzezinski, *U.S. National Security Adviser*, was intended to ensnare the Red Army in what would become its Vietnam,⁴⁰ which is precisely what it became.

⁴⁰ National Security Archives: Memorandum for The President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Reflections on Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan," 26 December 1979; Washington DC. See also: Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*; Penguin, London 2004, p. 581.

Today the Saudis cannot accept the idea that a regime supported by Tehran could possibly take command of its southern border, and that in the future it could be able to control the entire territory of the southern Arabian peninsula. Riyadh was coaxed into forcefully and directly intervening in Yemen due to a perceived direct threat to its sacred territory. These operations are slowly sapping its resources, including its economy. On the opposite front, Iran has already suffered a series of significant political defeats: from the United States' unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear deal, effectively marking the end of the moderate government embodied by the Rohani Administration, to the killing of the key figure in Shia expansionism throughout the entire Middle East, namely Qassem Soleymani, celebrated in life as a living martyr and now the symbol of a disproportionate and ignoble struggle. As a result, both are in search of internal revival, which is usually exactly what transforms wars into protracted conflicts.

Unlike the traditional Cold War, the Gulf conflict is a multi-dimensional war with greater probabilities of becoming more intense because it is not founded on the pilasters of "Mutual Assured Destruction", and above all because it is less predictable. While the beginning of the end of the bipolar conflict was marked by the collapse of the *antifaschistischer Schutzwall*, commonly known as the Berlin Wall, built to mark and counterpose different political axioms which became a symbolic location of the Cold War, in the Zaydi context of the Near-Middle-East and that of the Persian Gulf there is no symbolic location to be demolished. The walls of this theatre seem to be far more durable than the Iron Curtain identified by Churchill at Fulton in far off 1947, because they are solidly built on a political basis but contain religious and sectarian foundations linked to identity.

References

- BAR-SIMAN-TOV, Y. (1984). The strategy of war by proxy. *Cooperation and Conflict*, XIX, 263-273.
- CHIBARIRWE, A. (2018). Iranian Presence in Mediterranean Sea Alarms Israel. *The Trumpet Brief*, 8 February 2018.
- COLL, S. (2004). *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. Londra: Penguin.
- DEUTSCH, K. W. (1964). External Involvement in Internal War. In ECKSTEIN H. (Ed.) *Internal War, Problems and Approaches*. NY: Free Press of Glencoe, New York.
- DICK, S. (2019). The Arms Trade and Syria. *Journal of International Affairs*, 2.
- HART, P. T. (1998). *Saudi Arabia and the United States: Birth of a Security Partnership*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- HERAS, N. A. (2017). Iraq's Fifth Column. Iran's Proxy network. *Policy Paper Counterterrorism Series*. Middle East Institute.
- HIMES, J. C. (2015). The Iranian Navy's Historic Mediterranean Deployment: Timing Is Everything. *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)*.
- LEVITT, M. (2015). Iranian and Hezbollah Threats to Saudi Arabia: Past Precedents. *PolicyWatch*, n. 2426. Washington Institute for Near East Policy.
- LONG, D. E. (2019). *The United States and Saudi Arabia: Ambivalent Allies*. Londra: Routledge.
- MARZOUK, L., ANGELOVSKI, I., & SVIRCIC J. (2017). Croatian Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia Fuel Syrian War. *Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)*
- MATTHIESEN, T. (2010). Hizbullah al-Hijaz: A History of the Most Radical Saudi Shi'a Opposition Group. *The Middle East Journal*, 64, 2.
- MENSHAWI, I. (2016). *The Soft Influence: The Religious Dimension of Iranian Foreign Policy and the Houthi Movement in Yemen*. Arab Center for Research and Studies.
- MURPHY, E. (2019). *Islam and Sectarian Violence in Pakistan: The Terror Within*. New York: Routledge.
- O'BAGY, E. (2012). *Jihad in Syria, Middle East Security Report*. Institute of War, Washington.
- RIAZATY, M. (2016). *Khomeini's Warriors: Foundation of Iran's Regime, Its Guardians, Allies Around the World, War Analysis, and Strategies*. Bloomington. Xlibris Corporation,
- SEIFI, F. (2020). *Why isn't Arab literature popular in Iran?*. Middle East Institute.
- WAGEMAKERS, J. (2015). The Concept of Bay 'a in the Islamic State's Ideology. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 9, 4, *Special Issue on the Islamic State*, 98-106.
- WEZEMAN, P. D. (2018). *Saudi Arabia, armaments and conflict in the Middle East*. SIPRI.
- WRIGHT, R., & BAKER P. (2004). Iraq, Jordan See Threat To Election From Iran. *The Washington Post*, 8 December 2004.

Actors, interventions, integration strategies: the practices of reception operators

Francesca Bianchi
Miriam Cuevas¹

The aim of this contribution is to analyse the working practices of operators in charge of receiving refugees and asylum seekers focusing on the relational processes involving professionals and the constant challenges they face. The study adopts essentially a microsociological approach to provide a cross-section of work activities undertaken by professional staff at CAS (Centro di Accoglienza Straordinaria - Emergency Reception Centre) and SAI (Sistema di Accoglienza e Integrazione - Reception and Integration System) facilities, drawing from typical examples from everyday life. To this end, we not only examined current academic debate but also completed a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews of SAI and CAS operators that enabled a close analysis of their professional activities. If the goal is the integration of forced migrants, what happens in actual everyday practice? Taking the operators' perspective, we try to shed light on possible dysfunctional elements, especially with reference to polarization processes and conflict.

Key Words: Social Welfare Services; Asylum Seekers and Refugees; Integration Pathways; Social Work

¹ Although this is a joint work, Francesca Bianchi wrote paragraphs 10.1, 10.3, 10.4.2, and 10.4.3, whereas Miriam Cuevas wrote paragraphs 10.2, 10.4.1, and 10.5.

10.1 Introduction

The reception of applicants seeking international protection is a multifaceted, complex issue which touches on a whole series of legal and economic factors, as well as psychological, social and cultural aspects (Accorinti 2020).

The aim of this contribution is more circumscribed: we wish to analyse the working practices of operators in charge of receiving refugees and asylum seekers, focusing on the delicate interaction between operators and beneficiaries. The study adopts essentially a microsociological approach to provide a cross-section of work activities undertaken by professional staff at CAS (*Centro di Accoglienza Straordinaria* - Emergency Reception Centre) and SAI (*Sistema di Accoglienza e Integrazione* - Reception and Integration System) facilities, drawing from typical examples from everyday life. To this end, we not only examined current academic debate but also completed a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews of SAI and CAS operators that enabled a close analysis of their professional activities².

Operators represent privileged interlocutors because through the organisation and daily implementation of reception services, as well as through direct relations with the guests, local institutions and/or other actors in the area, they actively help define the system itself, measuring its constraints, potential, results (OXFAM 2021, Annunziata 2017).

The focus is on the relational processes involving professionals and the constant challenges they face. What interventions and strategies do operators try to implement? How are the professional practices of those who work in Emergency Reception Centres or Reception and Integration Systems established today, after recent regulatory interventions? If the goal is the integration of forced migrants, what happens in actual everyday practice? To what extent is the goal of integration really pursued? What are the difficulties, dilemmas and/or critical incidents that arise between local communities and refugees? To what extent are there prejudices and stereotypes and/or manifest forms of polarisation and discrimination

² Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with operators, heads of reception projects and managers of cooperatives that have been working in the sector for about ten years. Eight third-sector organisations in the Arezzo and Siena areas were involved; three managers of cooperatives, three reception project managers/leaders and six operators/mediators were interviewed in June and July 2022.

among operators, local communities and those seeking protection? Some of the literature warns that reception facilities are once again being seen as places of containment and isolation, with low-cost labour services providing basic care (Marchetti 2016). Do respondents share this view?

Taking the operators' perspective, we try to shed light on possible dysfunctional elements, especially with reference to polarisation and conflict, in order to identify critical aspects. In addressing the topic of reception, we believe it is more useful to focus on any hidden aspects rather than on the known, widely discussed issues.

We will try to provide an overview of the social work and of the specific relational dynamics between professionals and those seeking protection. By considering professional paths and daily actions, it is possible to access those counter-narratives that, alone, enable us to understand the functioning of this important but complex sector of welfare. To do so, we choose to focus on a few issues that are particularly significant from the standpoint of reception policies and that, together, allow a better understanding of the complex phenomenon of integration³: from the educational relationship to the sharing of common norms and rules; from actions aimed at promoting coexistence among refugees to their support and orientation in daily life; from the development of skills to professional integration.

10.2 Reception operators: a changing profession

The vulnerability and uncertain legal status of applicants for international protection pose special challenges for reception and social services (Barberis Boccagni 2017).

In recent years, in response to the periodic 'refugee crises' (2014-2016),

³ The concept of integration, to be considered in its processual and multidimensional character (Ambrosini 2008), applies to different spheres of social life and implies not only the adaptation of migrants but also and above all their positive interaction with most members of the local community (Zincone 2009). It is a social process that does not depend on the implementation of integration policies alone, but on numerous conditions, labour market vitality, inclusion in educational and training services, social and health services and, in general, inclusion in the welfare system, as well as in civil society activism (Ambrosini 2008). Certain material conditions are a prerequisite for the effective integration of migrants: the radicalisation of cultural identities can arise due to the lack of such social integration within the host society (Catarci 2014).

reception has taken on greater importance in the Italian public agenda. It is well known that regulatory provisions on reception and integration have evolved in a fragmented and piecemeal manner (Giovannetti 2021). Operators are an essential part of the process through which migrants become part of the host society, playing a crucial role also in local communities (Giacomelli 2020); nevertheless, public acceptance of these professionals is rather low and subject to variations in public opinion on the issue of migration. Exploitation of the subject by the media and alarmist tones have precluded debate on the risks and opportunities stemming from the phenomenon of forced migration; the fragile reception infrastructures, subject to continuous regulatory changes, still mainly adopt emergency management methods. This places new demands on the role and practice of social workers, as the growth in the number of migrants is not met with an equal increase in resources and skills; operators must nevertheless address the specific needs of migrants, including linguistic, socio-economic and housing integration (Barberis Boccagni 2017).

Forced migrants represent an extremely fragile category of social welfare beneficiaries, given the coexisting conditions of vulnerability ranging from material deprivation to insecure legal status, in addition to various forms of discrimination. This combination of factors contributes to the complex challenges faced by reception operators (Barberis, Boccagni 2017).

The continued adoption of emergency measures to govern the phenomenon of forced migrations (Ambrosini Campomori 2020; Campesi 2018; Giovannetti 2019; Marchetti 2014) has led to a distinction between *first-line* and *second-line* reception, a lasting distortion of the welfare system that has inevitable repercussions on integration paths. In the first phase, applicants for international protection are placed in government centres and/or CASs (Emergency Reception Centres)⁴, where they are offered material reception, food, accommodation and some initial

⁴ CASs were established in 2012 as temporary (special) structures in response to the exceptional number of arrivals. Nevertheless, in a few years they became the mainstay of the reception system for asylum seekers and refugees, hosting more than 80% of those arriving, with negative consequences on the overall quality of services. These facilities, which represent the vast majority of those operating, are usually established by the prefectures and set up by third sector organisations or private economic entities on the basis of public tenders.

orientation services⁵. The second phase of reception, on the other hand, involving only a fraction of incoming migrants, takes place within the SAI (Reception and Integration System⁶) network, which in addition to providing board and lodging helps plan individual pathways and provides transversal services for the employment and social inclusion of migrants (Campomori 2019).

A good first reception can accelerate the integration of migrants into the social fabric. If foreseen already in the first phase, the legal assistance service, which aims to bring to light the (also painful) experiences of migrants, can favour the positive decision of the territorial commissions that grant international protection status (Barberis Boccagni 2017). However, due to the recent downsizing of public spending in this sector, it is not always possible to start the integration process in the CASs, which often provide material reception only, so that the facilities risk becoming detention centres in which to wait. Clearly, the quality standards of facilities depend largely on the discretion of the managers and the resources present in the territories (Cuevas 2020). Reception practices are highly heterogeneous in terms of quality and effectiveness, with differences on the organisational level and in professional knowledge (Barberis Boccagni 2017). In some cases, especially in the most “critical” years, a lack of expertise led to the inadequate management of some structures (Caponio Cappiali 2017, Costantini 2017). Consequently, faced with the complex challenges posed by the crises of recent years, the training needs of operators have grown significantly (Barberis, Boccagni 2017).

Taking charge of refugees and asylum seekers requires an intervention project that is not mere welfarism but a guaranteed long-term investment

⁵ Following the approval of the Security Decree (later converted into Law 132/2018), public resources were downsized and the cut was felt in some of the services offered by CASs, such as psychological assistance, Italian language instruction and intercultural mediation, compromising the quality of reception in these facilities.

⁶ The Reception and Integration System (SAI) consists of a network of local authorities that, in most cases, delegate the implementation of integrated reception projects to third sector organisations in the area. The system inherits the experiences and good practices of the old SPRAR (Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, established pursuant to Bossi Fini Law 189/2002), later renamed SIPROIMI (Protection System for Beneficiaries of International Protection and for Unaccompanied Foreign Minors, pursuant to Law 132/2018).

in the educational and linguistic sphere; integration does not translate into material reception alone but calls for a more personal approach that will facilitate the individual's access to services such as health care, vocational training and intercultural mediation, all of which will ease interaction with local communities. In scholarly debate, vocational integration is an example of integrated action alongside widespread reception and language integration (Ferretti 2017). Studies often highlight synergies among public bodies, vocational training centres and the third sector: this seems to favour job placement for beneficiaries while meeting local labour market demands.

Another aspect to be considered is the socio-psychological one. The dramatic and sometimes traumatic experiences of asylum seekers require an individualised approach centred on the uniqueness of each person's life history. In the relationship with the beneficiaries, cultural simplification and labelling practices may constantly arise as a direct consequence of power asymmetries between operator and migrant; likewise, some forms of language may reveal paternalistic attitudes or tend to infantilise the migrants (Barberis Boccagni 2017). The social interventions themselves may involve risks and distortions that must be kept in check.

Ultimately, the operators of both CASs and SAIs, albeit with significant differences, must fulfil their institutional mandate while balancing bureaucratic and relational aspects.

10.3 The complexity of social work in first-line and second-line reception of forced migrants

The operator seeks to support the beneficiary in achieving the main objective of the service, i.e. becoming autonomous, above all in terms of learning, and in particular in acquiring the relational skills that enable the development of ties (Tarsia 2018a), useful from the standpoint of developing social capital.

Recent debate also highlights a need to reflect on the new challenges. There is a strongly emerging need to reorient training courses, and it is becoming increasingly necessary to support operators, who must cope with situations that are much more fluid and unpredictable than in the past and which call for much greater pragmatism and flexibility than before.

Social services are a relational space (Donati and Terenzi, 2005; Donati, 2005) in which, during routine professional practice, knowledge and understanding are produced in response to the needs of people, the analysis of contexts and within applicable normative and organisational frameworks; it is well known that professionals in organisations operate in a conflictual arena (Galtung, 2009), in which they systematically analyse and address problems for which they must find case-specific answers (Tarsia 2020).

The reception projects and interprofessional teams, comprising different functions, tasks and professional profiles, are spaces of interaction in which operators feel disorientated by the stories they hear: they feel the fatigue and responsibility of successfully supporting people in a vulnerable condition and experience the importance of striving to consolidate their functional interdependence (Tarsia 2020). It is an activity characterised by a high level of personal and professional exhaustion and alienation, but it also represents a space in which to engage in reflexivity. As this type of social work is strongly oriented towards action and the need to find concrete solutions, reflexivity represents a resource and a peculiarity of a professional figure in the making (Barberis, Boccagni 2017, Accorinti 2020). The semi-structured interviews make it possible to explore information, beliefs and assumptions that make up the framework which operators use to define the helping relationship with the migrant. They provide interesting insights into the methods adopted in the everyday practice of helping beneficiaries adapt to their new environment (Tarsia 2018a).

A large part of the professional work has to do with the many critical issues that emerge daily and that affect relations between assistance providers and beneficiaries. One must remember that *“at the beginning many of them [the asylum seekers] arrive without anything. They have next to nothing, only the clothes on their backs, also because to make the journey, to arrive in Italy they have paid out every last penny and certainly many of them end up with nothing ... We try to buy the most important items immediately: clothes, food, personal hygiene products... Afterwards, if they request them, they can already start taking Italian language courses. Many courses are now online and they can even start with a smartphone at home... We slowly understand their needs: one needs to see a doctor because he has been tortured in Libya or a more specific doctor for the problems he has”* (E.R., operator).

10.4 Between light and shadows: issues, conflicts, challenges

10.4.1 Criticalities and contradictions in services

The contraction of financial resources foreseen by the latest regulatory interventions affects the organisational structure of CASs and their ability to start a path of inclusion for migrants: *“Working with few resources creates many problems. We had opened a training agency that dealt with language teaching but also provided psychological and social support. We were really taking charge. In assessing the person, in deciding which course to place him in, you had already traced a pathway...all this is gone now, we have dismantled everything. Now we have these guys in flats, we try to support them but have no resources to pay the operators. We are a social cooperative that respects the national collective agreement, which is important to us. But if you respect the contract, as you should, the hours are very few”* (F.T., cooperative manager).

The reduction of services and tools makes the integration process more complex, considering that in the past one could afford a genuine reception policy whereas today one mostly responds to the basic needs: *“With far fewer resources there are fewer services, and it is not very easy to do this kind of work without being able to offer some essential services. That is, one cannot do this work by offering only board and lodging, empathy is not enough...One needs training, help in integrating into the local area, in addition to the personal care of each individual, because we must not forget that each person has his or her own history that is quite painful, each person arrives with an enormous burden that is difficult to bear”* (F.T., cooperative manager). Guests have more difficulties than in the past, when *“the guys were given more resources in the sense that they took more courses, had more opportunities to learn a trade and gain experience, whereas today it is more difficult to have resources to do all this”* (E.R., operator).

Other organisations with long experience in the reception sector have been forced to close CASs precisely for reasons of economic sustainability, and not without consequences: *“After the security decree we closed the CASs but saw the projects to the end, making a loss. To rebel against the decree, we self-financed other structures. We couldn’t kick out the guys who were doing a traineeship and make them sleep in the street... We used to do training activities but suddenly had to stop...It was the destruction of good*

reception and a return to poor reception. Now the quality of the other facilities has been reduced to zero and there aren't even any inspections" (C.M.P., cooperative manager).

The remodelling of services under the regulatory measures also had an impact on the ordinary SAI reception network. As an operator states, *"teaching the Italian language is no longer compulsory. We find ourselves with people in the second-level reception who enter a six-month project, according to the regulations but who did not learn the language over the course of the previous two years during first-level reception in the CAS). And this creates so many difficulties for us. Working for six months with people who only know their mother tongue and who were illiterate in their country of origin is not easy. The young people who do not speak the language rely on compatriot friends in the area, which leads to closure of the network. Mutual help situations can arise among them but also exploitation. And this leads to other problems" (M.F. operator).* This phenomenon is confirmed by another operator: *"In the SAI we feel the change because we deal with those who have not gone to Italian language school. Just as there are young people who have already gone to school, there are those who are more adrift, who have not learnt the language and who then find work in agriculture even in grey areas. The waiting time in the CAS is suitable for learning. If you had learned Italian before, during first-level reception in the CAS, you could then complete a vocational training course in the SAI" (G.R., operator).*

As emerges from the interviews, economic cuts penalise the entire reception network: if the first phase is strongly penalized, even the second phase, which is known to have more services and is often considered to embody the good practices of 'widespread reception', is weakened.

10.4.2 Cohabitation as an arena for conflictual interactions

Professional teams are constantly faced with difficult, potentially conflictual situations. Examples that emerge from the interviews range from problems of cohabitation among beneficiaries to issues with the police and/or local communities, all situations in which obvious but, at the same time, inevitable forms of misunderstanding may emerge⁷.

⁷ Misunderstandings, notes La Cecla (1997, p.9), can become the space where cultures explain and confront each other, discovering that they are different: 'the misunderstanding is a border that takes

Compliance with rules is another critical area that operators must manage in a continuous balance between the function of assistance and that of control (Tarsia 2018b). From the moment they arrive in Italy, international protection seekers are subjected to procedures they are unfamiliar with and which may lead to conflicts with operators: *“They are loaded onto a bus and sent all over the country, but many times they do not even understand the process they have to go through...there is an operator who picks them out, then they are sent elsewhere and in this moment of uncertainty some lose their patience and become short-tempered, but slowly, explaining the path they will have to follow, when they understand that we are trying to help them...I personally have never had any major incidents”* (E.R., operator).

Subsequently, integration in the facility and sharing spaces with other beneficiaries can lead to unforeseen situations, which are not easy to manage: *“There is a lot of friction, there always has been. Daily conflicts concern the management of the house...issues like cleaning common spaces and respecting the rules’* (C.M.P., operator and cooperative manager). Critical situations, in the opinion of one interviewee, are *‘unpleasant, the guests call each other by nationality and not by name (even if for them it is a way of distancing themselves since they do not have to like each other). In this sense, the work of the operator, who promotes mutual acquaintance or implements mediation strategies, is fundamental’* (E.P., coordinator). Accommodation can become an area of conflict between operators and beneficiaries, but also among the beneficiaries themselves, who must live together and abide by rules of coexistence to which they are culturally unfamiliar: *“Some of the guys, having never had a bidet, wondered why the operators were angry because they did not leave it clean...They were not used to having a bidet and therefore to cleaning it! Some did not even have a toilet since they came from the street. The difference is the presence of the operator in the facility. If the rules of coexistence are not well managed by the operator, there is a risk of bigger problems arising. After all, we are dealing with adults who do not know each other...of different ages and*

shape. It becomes a neutral zone, a *terrain-vague* where identity, reciprocal identities can be established, while remaining separated precisely by a misunderstanding’. If the misunderstanding is part of the construction of knowledge and mutual acquaintance, from this point of view foreigners, by their very presence, force the native population to relativise their own value system, which, from then on, is no longer uncontested and without competitors.

cultures and it is not easy, [the conflicts] do not escalate if the operator works well" (C.M.P., operator and cooperative manager).

It is not always possible to contain fights: *"In one flat we had women who threw buckets of boiling water at each other and had to be hospitalised in Pisa, we almost had stabbings ... We have always tried to resolve situations without endangering the guest's path... In ten years, I think the Prefecture has never turned anyone away from us"* (F.T., cooperative manager).

There are those who point out that conflict in the CASs can arise due to the different ethnic backgrounds of guests: *"Maybe sometimes when we take these guys we don't know exactly which country they come from and so it sometimes happens that guys from different conflicting countries are put together... these conflicts therefore arise precisely because of the diversity.... For example, a Pakistani boy who joined the project a fortnight ago told me straight away that he didn't want to have anything to do with Afghans, and then there are also religious conflicts... a Muslim may have to share housing with a Christian... there are small quarrels or conflicts: even if they have never degenerated, it's not easy to reconcile their different ideas"* (E.R., operator).

Recourse to the professional figure of cultural mediator occurs *"when we cannot understand each other"* (E.R., operator) but this recourse is neither a given nor is it easy, and this has repercussions on the operator's role: *"In some cases, mediators who know all the languages within a large country cannot be found. Some 25- to 30-year olds are illiterate and do not know how to communicate even with compatriots, for example from Pakistan. The schooling rate is low, some have not finished primary school and only 1% have gone to university. Sometimes they do not even know English; a Nigerian gentleman I am following now speaks a little English but cannot read"* (E.S. operator).

Others narrate how there can be extreme cases *"represented, for example, by a flat with five women with children. That was a difficult situation. The women were tough and there was no way we could intervene. They teased the educators: they would say 'yes, yes' but then do whatever they wanted, and it was impossible to make them keep the house clean. There were a couple of dangerous situations in which two operators were locked inside the house for hours by a woman, they were almost segregated, and we had to call the police"* (C.M.P., operator and cooperative manager).

Mediators themselves are faced with issues and hostilities that are not easy to resolve: *"I am told 'at night this person spends time on the phone' but I can't get the room changed, we must stop using the mobile phone. This is why the mediator must also be creative in making suggestions and finding solutions; or there may be the case of a person who comes home and takes off his shoes and leaves them there while others do not want to, or even the case of a person who wants to eat in bed...there are those who pray at night and those who would like to sleep because they may have to wake up at 6 am to go to work. It is necessary to provide guests with logical answers and to use creativity, a resource which, however, is not very common"* (A.S., operator and mediator).

Sharing spaces often generates moments of tension and/or real fights, and it is especially in these cases that the role of the operator called upon to resolve conflicts comes into play. Often *"group work defuses tensions"* (C.M.P., operator and cooperative manager) or *"the joint intervention of the coordinator and mediator"* (E.B. operator and coordinator) or, again, *"the involvement of an authoritative member of an immigrant community in the area. In other cases, other professional figures are contacted when needed... For example, anthropologists and psychologists helped us to support both the beneficiaries and the operators and to understand the reference values and the meaning of the beneficiaries' actions...They were indispensable during the first health screening to which there is much resistance. Blood tests to monitor health status are not contemplated by the beneficiaries. Many of them do not know preventive medicine but only curative medicine"* (C.F., coordinator).

In conclusion, a relational and generative dimension of conflict tends to be widespread among operators, as they try to use innovative and creative skills that put the protagonists in a position to back down from their respective initial positions. Conflict can be considered a space to be explored, one in which the effects may be unexpected⁸. The assistance relationship between operator and beneficiary can thus be considered something more than the interplay among social actors who move beyond personal and social constraints: it is the interaction among people who choose within a complex network of relationships, one in which even the

⁸ Simmel had already spoken of conflict as a necessity of life itself and thus a physiological element of both individuals and society (Simmel 1989, Mongardini 1976).

broader issues of inequality, justice and poverty take on value in the individual operator's capacity for planning and action (Tarsia 2018b).

10.4.3 Integration: negotiating balances and building networks

In the first phase of the assistance relationship, the role of the operator *"is important to gain trust. I am the first to hear their needs. It is important to have sensitivity, empathy, and it is important to try to talk together (it's already something if the language competence is there) in the presence of the mediator"* (E.S., operator). It is a shared opinion that *"if a relationship of friendship and trust is created immediately, it is better and therefore I do not want to be distant but as open as possible. I am their friend, and they can turn to me for anything... Many of the guys are new and I try to understand their needs. Many of them ask for Italian books or dictionaries, and this makes me very happy, and I try to establish friendly relations with them. I may go out in the evening with them if I have time"* (E.R., operator).

The management of cultural diversity can lead to distortions and contradictions: the risk of ethnic interpretations on the one hand and differential treatment on the other is always lurking (Accorinti 2020, Tarsia 2020). Moreover, there may be cases of lack of awareness and misunderstanding of refugee behaviour. However, alongside the risk of reproducing implicit differential treatment, the encounter with ethnic diversity can also stimulate reflexivity about discriminatory behaviour. In this perspective, one operator recalls that *"we need to work on ourselves because we are socially conditioned by racial or gender prejudices, if I am not open I can hardly be effective and useful in working with migrants. I have to have a mind free of prejudices, but our culture is full of prejudices: if they exist within our society, imagine with respect to other cultures. We are the ones who must imagine ourselves in their culture. We Westerners take many things for granted. It takes a greater sensitivity to grasp certain demands that arise. For example, it is mainly Africans who have problems with medical examinations or drawing blood. We are often told 'you steal my soul': what is normal for us is not normal for them"* (E.S., operator).

Negotiations are continuous and some procedural dynamics tend to be recurrent: *"Closing the door during interviews can create discomfort and therefore the door must remain open"*. Situations of cultural conflict are also noted: *"The female mediator is poorly accepted, and some are annoyed*

because certain things are said by a woman and not a man" (E.P., manager). This aspect was confirmed by others: *"Many feel uncomfortable expressing themselves in front of a woman"* (A.S., operator and mediator). Some admit that *"you manage to codify needs more with experience than with training. If the beneficiary does not look you in the eye for him it is a form of respect, without experience, you might misinterpret"* (S.B., operator).

The interviewees specifically note the vulnerable condition of the beneficiary: *"The refugee is a person who has to rebuild his own self"* and in this sense *"the operators carry out social containment work. It is better for us to intervene than for him to be alone at the station: there is a good chance that his problems can be solved. We trust each other"* (E.P., manager). The traumatic experiences of applicants for protection frequently emerge: *"Once a guy told me that he did not want to share a room with two other men. Then it turned out that he had witnessed the murder of his brother in a room with three people"* (E.P., manager)

Despite the importance of the assistance relationship between operators and beneficiaries, integration processes cannot take place without the involvement of local communities, even through informal channels. In this regard, apart from some who are cautious in admitting that *"We have done a lot of projects, for example on food as a basic and common vehicle for all... We have involved the elderly to teach panzanella and typical local recipes to the young men. Nice...but then it ended there. Some elderly people in the villages invite the guys to eat at home, but only in a few cases"* (C.M.P., operator and cooperative manager). Most of the interviewees were optimistic: *"Many times we organise small festivals in our municipalities and then perhaps meetings in which our guys prepare dishes from their villages and share them with others, and these occasions help change minds. These events are their way of talking to others"* (E.R., operator).

The final evaluation, therefore, is in most cases positive: *"In the end, almost all of them have found a job, they have a house, they try to make a life here and to also bring their family here, since they are alone in the CAS. They have no relatives with them, they have nothing and so they try to do everything possible to bring their wives and children here, and many of them have integrated quite well"* (E.R., operator). They therefore highlight the cases of successful integration: *"Our satisfaction is to see one of our boys integrated. Seeing a guy who studies every day to learn Italian, who*

holds a driving licence or a permanent job, a house, maybe sharing it with someone else but a house, is hugely satisfying and we have many of these cases” (E.S. operator).

An important step in the process of building a network around the beneficiary is undoubtedly the job placement process. A good practice reported by interviewees concerns *“the identification of stakeholders in the area who can help beneficiaries find a job. In our case, the collaboration with the construction school, now formalised, is an important tool because it allows us to have a wide range of action. We recommend people who have good language skills and are interested or already have experience in that sector and want to undertake the training pathway, which often results in a stable work contract” (C.F. coordinator).* In other cases, the operators have to be watchful for labour exploitation and cases of ‘caporalato’ (the gangmaster system), noted by several interviewees. The manager of a cooperative recounts having intervened in a clear case of exploitation: *“I was pleased to see the awareness of being exploited and the guy’s attempt to claim his rights. I called the employer and told him I would go to the union, and in the evening the guy had his salary” (F.T., cooperative manager).* Also noted are cases in which *“the employer pretends to be a friend and then makes the guy work 15 hours a day for 300 euros. But then there are also good people. During a difficult period for one of our former guests, an employer hosted him in his home for months” (S.B., operator).* Once the first conflictual interactions have been mediated and deflated, living spaces play a very important role in achieving autonomy. There have been critical experiences, but also cases in which *“some beneficiaries took on the role of peer educators and were important in helping other guests attain autonomy. There have been cases of migrants who left the reception projects and again chose to share accommodation with other beneficiaries with joint contracts” (E.B., operator and manager).* Cohabitation appears to be essential *“because a young migrant who leaves usually creates a network of friendships and acquaintances, and it often happens that when they are about to leave two or three of them manage to find accommodation more easily and we help them do so through contacts in the area, associations, so they continue to share housing. They’ll learn to understand what it means to pay a bill...it is something that fosters integration” (E.S., operator).*

It is in these cases that shared accommodation, especially if supported by a good local network (Arlati 2021), can become a springboard for increasing autonomy and emancipating the beneficiary from the system (Semprebón, Vicari Haddock 2016). It is a way of interacting with the community and the territory, allowing the establishment of valuable reciprocal relationships through the exchange of material and/or relational goods (Tarsia 2018a).

At the same time, however, all operators agree that living accommodation is the most delicate part of the complex integration process, clearly highlighting the age-old problem of the absence of effective housing policies in our country. The economic crises have contributed to the housing crisis, with significant repercussions on the hardest hit segment of the population, which clearly includes migrants. The inability to pay high rents and to present the guarantees required by landlords and/or real estate agencies leads to social and economic elements that lead to significant processes of marginality and exclusion (Arlati 2021). Even the interviewed professionals complain of the strong reluctance and distrust expressed by private individuals in granting rental contracts to applicants for international protection: the fear that the rent will not be paid and/or concern for the upkeep of the house prevails, up to cases of outright racism. It is *“very difficult to find housing solutions for beneficiaries coming out of reception projects. The problem is that there is no public housing, and this generates competition for the few available properties. There is a lack of political will to develop social and public housing. It is a problem that generally concerns the poorer segments of the population, and migrants fit into these dynamics with greater difficulty... Reality is affected by the media-political narrative, and operators in this sense have an extraordinarily important leading role because it is they who must break down mistrust to create integration. That is why we must not be afraid of the costs of reception”* (A.B., cooperative manager). There are those who point out that in a few, exceptional cases, an employer’s guarantee can help obtain a rental contract (E.B., operator and manager), but also those who admit that *“from the labour point of view, the young people are hired because they do jobs that Italians do not do: here they are almost all welders and workers. They also earn good money, but the real problem is that they cannot find flats. And this is because there is so much racism. People don’t even trust the guys if they have a contract. I’ve been looking for a house for a year with a guy who earns 2000 euros a month because he*

has two contracts and he rightly tells me 'More than present proper papers and regular contracts what can I do? I can't change my colour...'" (C.M.P., operator and cooperative manager).

The transition from the reception project to a stable housing solution is therefore rarely immediate or straightforward. It highlights the difficulties in making a long-term plan and in strengthening those affective and relational ties with - and on - the territory that allow one to not only 'have a home' but above all to 'feel at home' (Arlati 2021, 98).

It is also for these reasons that the dynamics of polarisation and conflict between local residents and beneficiaries are always lurking: *"As soon as we rent a flat, the neighbours ask us 'but who will come here?' and when they realise that foreigners, in particular Africans, are going to live there, they start to change their attitude not only towards the guys but also towards us because every time we go there they complain about everything... Not all of them: there is a small village near us where the neighbours are very open and try to help the guys. Many of them have found work thanks to the neighbours and manage to integrate better, but in most circumstances they [the locals] are not very open... There are a lot of prejudices and for many it is difficult to overcome them... Many times I boil with anger because almost all the guys who have stayed in the CAS have tried to be as autonomous as possible... From the beginning they try to fit in... Many of them are willing and want to change their lives and fit in better in the country...as most people have these prejudices, they fail to understand the guy's potential"* (E.R., operator).

10.5 Conclusion

The analysis of the practices of reception service workers highlights the complex challenges of a relatively new yet constantly evolving professional figure. The first-level and second-level reception projects have provided insight into the processes of social construction of professional knowledge stemming from practical experience in the working environment, with specific reference to daily interactions with guests.

The interviews aimed to elicit operator responses with reference to their own professional practice, potentialities, criticalities and limits but also to the reflexive and creative practices that enable the development of specific, sometimes innovative (Tarsia 2020) and emancipatory knowledge.

After all, it is in everyday activities that the creative potential of social workers can emerge; in a contextual way, these draw on their own training but also on skills learned through experience in the field.

Conflict and polarisation between local residents and asylum seekers are a common problem mentioned by interviewees. As we have seen, the issue of living spaces represents the most significant and persistent challenge, even in the best cases of insertion in the workforce. The support actions implemented by operators tend to create paths of orientation and facilitation of living conditions that repay much effort and commitment, even if it is the home that proves to be the most effective tool in setting the refugee on course to achieving genuine autonomy and independence.

However, in interactions with beneficiaries, conflict can also be considered an opportunity to widen one's view, one that leads to understanding and change rather than to self-referential regulatory mechanisms (Tarsia 2020).

As can be deduced from some responses, conflict situations tend to stimulate not only a certain reflexivity with respect to one's actions but also repositioning and changes in one's professional practice: *"Being an operator forces you to change your point of observation, it is an exercise. Knowledge is one part...because if you don't study you don't know how to read situations, but learning to change perspective is fundamental. After this experience I personally learned to work with disability and to try to understand other points of view"* (F.T., cooperative manager). Faced with conflict, you *"continuously attempt to look for solutions until you find one, and when you find one, you know that it only applies to that case and to that person. This is the work of the educator"* (F.T., cooperative manager).

In conclusion, to use the fitting words of another interviewee: *"The operator is a tightrope walker: he must lead without taking over, show without forcing and accompany without pushing. Of course, in some cases the operator realises that he must push, so it is important to develop one's instincts and skills while finding time to reflect on what one is doing"* (E.P., coordinator).

References

- ACCORINTI, M. (2020). Accesso al sistema di welfare e ruolo degli operatori: quali cambiamenti nel sistema di accoglienza per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati. *Sociologia e ricerca sociale*, 122, 69-87.
- AMBROSINI, M. (2008), *Un'altra globalizzazione. La sfida delle migrazioni transnazionali*, Bologna: Il Mulino-
- AMBROSINI, M., & CAMPOMORI, F. (2020). La controversia dell'asilo: politiche di accoglienza e solidarietà contro i confini. *Politiche Sociali/Social Policies*, 2, 181-200.
- ANNUNZIATA, S. (2017). Fare spazio all'accoglienza. Una riflessione sul progetto territoriale di accoglienza integrata di Roccagorga. *Mondi migranti*, 1, 39-56.
- ARLATI, S. (2021). Traiettorie migranti: dal progetto SIPROIMI alla ricerca di un'autonomia abitativa. Percorsi di uscita dall'accoglienza tra difficoltà, risorse e testimonianze. *Educazione interculturale. Teorie, ricerche, pratiche*, 1. 91-100.
- BARBERIS, E., & BOCCAGNI, P. (2017). *Il lavoro sociale con le persone immigrate. Strumenti per la formazione e la pratica interculturale nei servizi*. Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli editore.
- CAMPESI, G. (2018). Between Containment, Confinement and Dispersal: The Evolution of the Italian Reception System Before and After the 'Refugee Crisis'. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 490-506.
- CAMPOMORI, F. (2019). La governance multilivello delle politiche di accoglienza dei richiedenti asilo e rifugiati in Italia. *Le istituzioni del federalismo*, 1, 5-20.
- CAPONIO, T., & CAPPIALI, T. (2017). La perdurante crisi dei rifugiati tra ipocrisia organizzata, solidarietà e crescente opposizione. In A. CHIAROMONTE & A. WILSON (Eds.), *Politica in Italia. I fatti dell'anno e le nostre interpretazioni* (pp. 189-207). Bologna: Il Mulino.
- CATARCI, M. (2014). Considerazioni critiche sulla nozione di integrazione di migranti e rifugiati. *Revista interdisciplinar de mobilidade humana*, 43, 71-84.
- COSTANTINI, E. (2017). L'impatto dei flussi migratori non programmati sui sistemi locali di assistenza sociale: relazioni tra enti locali e terzo settore. *Autonomie locali e servizi Sociali*, 3, 63-80.
- CUEVAS, M. (2020). Differenze territoriali nell'implementazione dell'accoglienza straordinaria: una mappatura dei casi critici. *Politiche sociali/Social Policies*, 2, 245-266.
- DONATI, P. (2005). Servizi relazionali. *Lavoro sociale*, 1, 131-140.
- DONATI, P. & TRENZI, P. (Eds.) (2005). *I servizi sociali relazionali. Invito alla sociologia relazionale. Teorie e applicazioni* (pp. 169-179). Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- FERRETTI, D. (2017). Il welfare locale alla prova delle migrazioni. Un'analisi dei progetti Sprar nelle città medie italiane. *Autonomie locali e servizi sociali*, , 95-107.
- GALTUNG, J. (2009). *Theories of conflict. Definitions, Dimensions, Negations, Formations*. Copenaghen: Transcend University.
- GIACOMELLI, E. (2021). (De)costruire la complessità del sistema di accoglienza: un'analisi etnografica dei servizi per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati nel modello trentino. *Autonomie locali e servizi sociali*, 1, 169-190.
- GIOVANNETTI, M. (2021). La riforma del sistema di accoglienza e integrazione per richiedenti e titolari di protezione internazionale. *Diritto, immigrazione e cittadinanza*, 1, 28-49.
- GIOVANNETTI, M. (2019). La frontiera mobile dell'accoglienza per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati in Italia. Vent'anni di politiche, pratiche e dinamiche di bilanciamento del diritto alla protezione. *Diritto, Immigrazione e cittadinanza*, 1, 1-29.

- LA CECLA, F. (1997). *Il malinteso. Antropologia dell'incontro*. Laterza: Roma-Bari.
- MARCHETTI, C. (2016). Le sfide dell'accoglienza. Passato e presente dei sistemi istituzionali di accoglienza per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati in Italia. *Meridiana*, 86, 121-143.
- MARCHETTI, C. (2014). Rifugiati e migranti forzati in Italia: il pendolo tra «emergenza» e «sistema». *Revista interdisciplinar de mobilida de humana*, 22, 53-70.
- MONGARDINI, C. (1976). *Il conflitto nella cultura moderna*. Roma: Bulzoni.
- OXFAM (2021). *'Isolata, rassegnata con le sole proprie forze'. L'accoglienza in Italia vista dagli operatori dei progetti territoriali. Radiografia di un sistema interrotto*, Tavolo Nazionale Immigrazione sul sistema di accoglienza.
- SEMPREBON, M., VICARI HADDOCK, S. (2016). Innovative housing practices involving immigrants: the case of self-building in Italy. *Journal of housing and the Built Environment*, 31,3, 439-455.
- SIMMEL, G. (1989). *Sociologia*. Milano: Edizioni di Comunità.
- TARSIA, T. (2020). La conoscenza tacita degli operatori Sprar: quando i problemi generano saperi. *Mondi migranti*, 2, 183-202.
- TARSIA, T. (2018a). Pratiche relazionali nella seconda accoglienza per richiedenti asilo. *Sociologia e politiche sociali*, 3, 127-147.
- TARSIA, T. (2018b). La seconda accoglienza come spazio conflittuale e le competenze degli operatori. *Educazione interculturale*, 2, 67-86.
- ZINCONI, G. (2009). *Immigrazione: segnali di integrazione. Sanità, scuola e casa*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Intercultural co-existence strategies and identity positioning within a regional train: an educational perspective

Carlo Orefice

The chapter describes research conducted in a specific intercultural coexistence context on regional trains in Tuscany (Italy). The research investigated conversations, interactions (verbal, para-verbal and non-verbal) and the spatial positions taken by railway inspectors, cleaners, conductors, reception staff and immigrant travellers (mainly north Africans) who travelled on those trains every day.

The conflicts, narratives and defended positions that emerged between the various actors show the importance of measuring the distance between representations of the Other and daily practice and of probing the emotions that accompany inter-ethnic encounters and guide mutual perception, comparing different ethics that become behaviours and attitudes, opportunities for contact and mutual experience. Although differences can be irritating, incomprehensible or conflicting, they help build a representation of immigration different from the socially dominant one, placing it in an institutional, professional and social framework. From the point of view of the railway employees involved, our current societies need to encourage reflective devices to enhance the role of practice in building knowledge, focusing on what employees do and produce, thus attributing importance to work experience that enables working knowledge to be collocated as empirically situated knowledge.

This double bond reminds us that knowledge is an adaptable resource, that we learn from experience, that we learn to solve new problems, and that human cultures are not stable, clearly circumscribed entities but continuously shared, contested and negotiated narratives.

Key Words: Knowledge Construction Processes; Professional and Educational Practices; Intercultural Coexistence; Immigration

“I am black, but I am”
(A passenger on train no. 3153)

11.1 Introduction

Although I am a commuter and for years the train has been an element of my geographic and social identity, this means of transport is the subject of the present research for reasons that go beyond identification with its rhythms and spaces. In an epoch such as ours, in which epistemological and methodological debate on ethnographic research in the field of education draws sustenance from the various contradictory instances of post-modernity and globalisation (Fiorucci, 2004; Anderson-Levitt, 2012; Portera, 2020), the ethnography of a regional train can bear witness, albeit limited and personal, to how intercultural mediation happens and the ways in which we build our meaning systems. Thus, there is a series of reasons for this essay, which make it not an autobiography (that I presume would only interest myself) but an auto-ethnography (Khosravi, 2019) that links my world with that of the different passengers encountered.

Here are some of the reasons. The first is that trains are a good setting for studying intercultural co-existence and therefore for trying to imagine ways to discourage the various racist tendencies of our society¹. Occasions for encountering “others” are hardly ever chosen but happen in the course of normal daily situations (school, the workplace, parks, restaurants etc.). This is also true for public transport, where different people come together in proximity and with “daily accessibility” (Hannerz, 1992). While the people one meets in such contexts may seem reassuring and safe because by the repetition of habits and daily routine, we experience a world that becomes familiar, on the other hand this tacit automatic behaviour and form of acquaintance are constantly called into question. We could say that in the

¹ Although 3 years have passed since I conducted this research, I cannot fail to underline that in Italy, “anti-citizens” (such as the poor, the homeless, illegal immigrants and non-identified asylum seekers) continue to be seen as a threat to the well-being of society (i.e. to “citizens”) and to be exposed to violence from the state (exercised by laws and regulations, political agreements etc.) and from private citizens (of course not all of them) who are not prepared or do not know how to tackle the “effort of contact”. Recent political debate on *ius scholae* is sad confirmation of this. According to *ius scholae*, foreign minors born in Italy or who entered the country before they turned 12 years of age and who have resided here legally and without interruption can acquire Italian citizenship.

train, the Other always has a sense and is usual and familiar, but not necessarily the same, leaving room for adaptations, conflicts and changes that anthropologist Clifford Geertz (2000) indicated when he wrote: “it is the distance from Others and the asymmetries between what we believe and experience that enable us to know where we are now in the world, how it feels to be there, and where we would like or not like to go” (p. 552). In my case, these asymmetries (a window left open, a loud conversation, the smell of food, clothes etc.) become a frame for exploring thoughts, relations and imaginaries, giving a dimension of existence to daily life, a dimension in which order is constructed and interpreted continuously, giving sense to our lives. This second reason, which is a corollary to the first, motivates ethnographies like the present one, where the train is a context ordered by continuous regulations and a space of continuous reconstruction and negotiation of practical knowledge to guide our thoughts and actions (Wenger, Lave, 2006). Thus, the *little things* we discuss with the persons who produced or prevented them remind us of our creative capacity for producing microscopic innovations to “mitigate” encounters with others. These facts also remind us that if as individuals we are stimulated in the right way, we can familiarise positively with new things and with change.

Coming to the third motivation for this research, these active and adaptive moments underline that what happens in our lives (the things we do and repeat, the environments we are most exposed to, the thoughts and feelings that most often reside in us, and so forth) is not part of a fixed script (Remotti, 2002), but a constant process made up of continuous changes of position (Khosravi, 2019): in these movements and variations, we acquire practical knowledge that permits us to become familiar with new things and changes. From the viewpoint of those who work in this context (inspectors, cleaners, conductors, customer services), it is not only a question of making what is alien familiar and what is unknown known, but of developing professionally and organisationally through reflection. For the organisations they belong to, it means valorising the concept of training as *situated* practice that can transform and facilitating processes of learning and production of shared knowledge in the occupational context (Fabbri, 2007; Torlone, 2021). This is a crucial element for the present study, since it valorises the role of practice in knowledge-building processes and therefore recognises professional figures as subjects who

learn from what they do, producing knowledge that makes it possible to interpret and solve problems encountered in daily life. As we shall see, pointing out the dimension of co-construction of meaning, with an accent on the fluid and dynamic aspects of the cultures people belong to, brings out the socially constructed nature of such interactions, making it possible to think of the subjects in question not in terms of cultural determination, but occupied in actively interacting with their environment.

The reasons here expressed motivate the choices made and produce an ethnographic study that developed in a physical, anthropological, and relational context. It is my hope that it can return a local dimension to the theme of intercultural co-existence and *situated* relation between individuals, and that it can enable us to think of cultures as shared, contested and negotiated narratives (Appadurai, 2001).

11.2 Look, listen, read – some considerations on method

The present research investigated a specific context of intercultural co-existence, namely that of some regional trains that ran between Florence SMN - Arezzo - Florence SMN (Regional train nos. 3153, 2307, 2314 and 3172), in the period 1st October to 23rd December 2019. Attention was focused on conversations, interactions (verbal, para-verbal and non-verbal) and spatial positioning of railway employees (inspectors, cleaners, conductors and customer service people) and immigrant passengers (mainly north Africans) who travelled those lines every day.

Being a commuter (I live in Florence and work in Arezzo), I decided to do an ethnography of daily life on these trains, because the stories, categories, and experiences I had seemed articulated, and not necessarily in the classical dichotomic we/them relationship. In documenting this context and in seeking to have an initial theoretical framework, I needed to go beyond a certain literature that seemed to me to consider the integration of immigrants in our country, relations between ethnic groups and racism-prejudice mainly through interpretative models that see and think of the Other as something fixed and unchangeable. This approach, centred on the counter-position between groups and not on their exchanges and contact, has many limits and does not seem to have contributed, at least in the immediate present, to helping a critical rethinking of the changed

conditions in which these encounters are taking form. On one hand, in fact, such an approach, comparing attitudes, behaviours and beliefs of the host culture with that of “hosted” ethnic groups, often undervalues the cultural position of the researcher (who is sometimes a carrier of distortions of which he is unaware), as well as infragroup differences, namely the richness and cultural variability within a *specific* cultural context. On the other hand, since such an approach pays little attention to analysis of the processes of construction and negotiation of meanings which shape the physical space in which relations between locals and immigrants happen, it provides an interpretation inadequate for critical analysis of contemporary society and its many challenges.

So in my attempt to (re)think the dense weave of cultural dynamics and models of interaction with interpretative schemes that do not consider human cultures as clearly circumscribed and stable, i.e. to be conserved against change by adopting a sort of mosaic of multiculturalism (Benhabib, 2005), the approach of qualitative situated research that seemed to me to be most significant was that of *participant observation*. I used this instrument because it involves immersion of the researcher in the study situation, considering him a subject with knowledge, awareness, and emotions (Orefice, 2018a). Since participant observation suggests an approach in which the scholar immerses himself in the society he wishes to study, becoming as familiar as possible with the ethical and practical schemes that involve its members on a daily basis, it seemed able to show that the human world is not objectively given but defined on the basis of the meanings that people, including the researcher, give it as they live it (Geertz, 1998). From this perspective, conducting ethnographic observations in regional trains coincided with experiencing what I was studying, “pretending” inside knowledge of that local world (with its aporias and contradictions) through stories and narratives that forced me to face less evident aspects of the social worlds with which I came in contact daily. Participant observation is aptly described by Erving Goffman in *On fieldwork* (1989), as a theoretical-methodological technique, starting with the details of real situations:

“It’s [a technique] of getting data, it seems to me, by subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation, or their work

situation, or their ethnic situation, or whatever. So that you are close to them while they are responding to what life does to them” (pp. 125).

The usual relational context on the trips featured a diversity of languages, habits, reference points and symbols. I was able to collect a body of data by the following means:

- a small pocket notebook (35 pages), where I made a record of group conversations and individual considerations I heard, as well as the various quotes found below, with date, train number and description;
- a series of sketches on four small sheets (25x15 cm) of the spatial positions taken by people in my carriage, with relevant notes on method.

I added notes to this empirical material that I could analyse later. Notes on theory in the pocket notebook enabled me to enter the setting and build and link old and new concepts, some recovered from previous training and experience in the field², bring elements worthy of further study to my attention or invite me to recognise an empirical example of a concept or theory in the action observed (*“Is ethnicity a marker of difference?”*). In the case of the sketches, the notes on method were questions/reflections through which I sought to solve difficulties that arose in the field, and that for me mainly had to do with not always being able to hear clearly what the different subjects were saying (trains are noisy, especially slow trains) and with the need to move, sometimes often, to *“follow the action”*. In these notes I included questions that I could not always answer (*“In which carriage is it best to sit?”*) and advice and strategies that seemed useful to improve the research method (*“Always keep the notebook out of the bag”/“Sit near the exit”*).

On the principle that *“if anything can go wrong, it will”*, my notes on theory and method gave me constant feedback between the activity observed, the method used, and the reactions of the actors studied. The material that the notes refer to and its subsequent analysis enabled me to draw elements useful for understanding the different models of intercultural co-existence

² See references, specifically the ethnographic research on mental health (Orefice, 2018a) and in hospital contexts (Orefice, 2018b). With regard to some of the methodological reflections, I refer to study of the development of field research methods in 19th and 20th century English anthropology (Orefice, 2011) and more generally to the origins of scientific anthropology (Orefice, 2008).

that were being enacted in the train carriages, as well as some indications regarding ways to reduce the distance between a stereotyped representation of immigration and the concrete modes of encounter/confrontation observed (Orefice, 2020). The already mentioned interpretative paradigm, based on counter-positions, proposes identifying differences between groups by considering them homogeneous, separate and non-interacting, while an ethnography of everyday life (Aime, 2014), being a method of field research, enabled me to let the situated social actors, who have daily interactions in specific, historically and culturally defined regional contexts, emerge as a study subject. From this point of view, what seemed central was the description of how, in these specific social situations, the creation and maintenance of shared meaning was articulated, how the experience was structured, and how the actions were made comprehensible and useful for the other social actors involved. In this direction, the narratives no longer concentrated on general things, but sought interstitial spaces in which to analyse the practices that mark the sharing of daily life.

Thus, ethnographic research enabled me to display the dialogic, social and polyphonic nature of culture, where the study sites become those in which people weave relationships or simply meet: neighbourhoods, court yards, markets and trains. Reflecting on our society using the instruments of ethnoanthropology was an attempt to share certain possible interpretations of its changes and breaking points. In its period of maximum expansion, anthropology united very heterogeneous elements under the name of "culture" (objects, types of kinship, etc.) and did not disdain to elevate them to indices of evolution, even when it admitted circulation of such traits from one culture to another (Orefice, 2008). Today the interpretative paradigm has of course changed (are we sure?), just as the context of reference seems to have changed: it is wider, globalised and in some ways interiorised thanks to communications technologies. Highly differentiated research methods have emerged, often with contradictory content and observation methods, but with the common feature of an awareness of no longer being able to count on a neutral objective viewpoint and of having to situate oneself *inside* one's descriptions (Giusti, 2017; Matera, 2020).

To conclude these considerations on method, the present study moves in a groove between two poles: the train as a well-defined social path, with

its fixed stops and consolidated routine, where the codified and ordered character of circulation requires that all travellers behave in a certain way, otherwise there are fines or the disapproval of other passengers. But as we shall see, despite these rules and the regularity of the timetable, trains are not a place of synchrony: people “occupy” it with their own meanings and according to their own rules. In the carriages, every biography is single and unrepeatable.

11.3 Becoming an observer of social interactions

The data and the notes that accompanied and sustained it enabled me to allow events and actions experienced over about two and a half months of participant observation to emerge. In the spaces indicated, where the frontiers and ethnic borders immediately seemed confused and hybridisation inevitably widespread, an element emerged with particular evidence in support of the qualitative situated research approach: cultures may be different, but nobody is radically alien or incomprehensible to others. This is important for at least two reasons.

From a methodological viewpoint, it reminds us that the Other is made feasible by elements he shares with the person who observes him: if he were totally incomprehensible, I would not perceive him as another in relation to me (in a certain sense I would not perceive him at all). Likewise, nor is he so similar that I identify with him, which would prevent me (as before) from discerning and being aware of the similarity. The ethnographic method exploits this interpretative “fracture”, allowing the plurality of possible worlds to emerge and making the construction of “daily multiculturalism” visible (Favaro, 2008), where people meet through different stories without any explicit model of plural co-existence, but by staging continuous adjustments and ambivalences.

Conductor (to passenger): Did you see where the woman who was seated here went?

Passenger (eating a bread roll): What woman?

Conductor: The woman who was seated here, who got up when she saw me.

Passenger (still eating): I don't know.

Conductor (impatiently): Excuse me, she was sitting here and she was eating too.

Passenger (looking at him): Ah, that woman! I don't know but the smell was good.

(Notebook p. 6, train no. 2307, 15.10.2019)

Now I come to the second reason/motive, which leads to a reflection on our present and the categories we use and interiorise to designate those who are “deviant” with respect to what we define “normal”. This idea, according to which a social subject incorporates, in the words of Michel Foucault (2014), the categories that serve to distinguish the socially accepted from what is perceived, designated and categorised as deviant, inverts the problem, leading us to tackle, not so much the definition of the Other, as the definition of me: a me defined by participation in social coordinates where others participate too.

So, in allowing stereotypes, prejudices, fears and beliefs to emerge, the train can tell us much about the basic problem that concerns us here: if cultures are not defined and are always the same, to produce transformative changes it may be useful to work on the “meaning perspectives” (Wenger, 2006) of their members in order to change some shared narratives. The following passage is an example of all this, and it shows us how participation in certain social coordinates can sometimes produce completely tacit representations.

Passenger A (in a loud voice): All the same, these Nigerians! All the same... only good for travelling without a ticket and eating at our expense!

Passenger B (seated on the opposite side of the train, with a large bag full of umbrellas): He isn't Nigerian...

Passenger A (irritated): Are you talking to me? Mind your business. I am talking about the one without a ticket. Perhaps he's your friend, eh? You without a ticket too? But you make money selling umbrellas [incomprehensible]...».

Passenger B (showing his ticket): I have a ticket... but I say he is not Nigerian.

Passenger A (shouting): Nigerians, Affricans, Chinese... you are all the same! [incomprehensible]».

(Notebook p. 13, train no. 3153, 20.11.19)

Returning to our reflections on procedure and method, it is possible to say that there were many provocative and sometimes aggressive signs of otherness in the trains studied. From these signs it was possible to obtain a series of research questions that the study attempted to answer, once it had clarified the relational networks between individuals and the sense of belonging of new and old passengers. In parallel, reflection on the daily work of the railway staff posed a series of questions and new interpretative hypotheses that could be investigated in future studies. Indeed, there are excellent studies on immigration that analyse the experience of immigrants but there is less data on interactions between the host culture and “hosted” ethnic groups in ethnographic studies conducted in contexts like

the present (Wise & Velayutham, 2009). Among the many available in Italian, we find studies on the process of integration of newcomers (Besozzi, Colombo, Santagati, 2009), increasing insecurity perceived by the Italian population (Di Giovanni, 2012) and the social, economic, cultural, occupational and housing conditions of foreign men and women who live in our country (Coin, 2009), but there is little on co-existence strategies or the daily effort that Italians and immigrants exert in building such strategies while travelling on public transport (Briata et al., 2018).

Cleaner (to a coloured woman with a stroller and bags, who is trying to descend from the train): Wait! Let me help you!

Passenger A (smiling): Thank you! I have too many things! [incomprehensible].

Passenger B (enjoying the scene and turning to an elderly man sitting next to him):

Eh... let's see if they manage!

Passenger C (turning to B and indicating his stick): If my legs were stronger, I would go and help them, instead of smiling like an idiot.

(Notebook p. 3, train no. 2307, 04.10.19)

Passenger A (indicating a coloured boy who is getting off): He got off, he got off!

Conductor (to the man): Yes, I can see [incomprehensible]. It is normal to get on and off trains...

Passenger A: But did you check his ticket?

Conductor (to the man, adjusting his hat): Ticket please.

(Notebook p. 28, train no. 3172, 04.12.19)

From this perspective, the train is a living space full of intrinsic and extrinsic meanings, where encounters are partly predictable, partly random, and where the post-modernity of our cities favours a blurring of borders but also fuels plural stories that interact in a restricted space, giving them sense.

11.4 Positioning oneself in the spaces, defining boundaries, negotiating meanings

In any place, the order in which the elements are distributed in co-existence relations, and therefore relationships, corresponds to a set of possibilities, rules and limits, the content of which is simultaneously spatial, social, identity-making, and historical (La Cecla, 1993). The identity of a place is therefore volatile: it may be based on its function, making places similar to each other (in a bar one has coffee, at the supermarket one does the

shopping etc.); but it may also preserve memories and biographies, making that place quite particular.

The plural identities of trains, regarded as everyday places, allow this second characteristic to emerge: the different environments that define them (in our case mainly the carriages) become the projection of the very particular stories of the persons who pass through them, whereas the various bodies structure meanings, by their position in space. Looking at trains through an everyday ethnography means looking at single local contexts of interaction, noting the links that individuals entertain with a space loaded with symbolic and affective nuances and values, semantically connotated but with meanings that go beyond the simple physical-geographic dimension. Ethnographic attention to setting makes it possible to conceive research situated in real and specific contexts, dispensing with the use of definite and determined cultural categories, focusing instead on the situations of contact and cultural interaction and analysing the concrete and mobile processes of negotiation of meaning and transformation of the social practices triggered there. Again, in this perspective, the trains described here should not be thought of as static places of cultural crystallisation (as in the anthropological field research tradition), nor as a simple declination of belonging (as political rhetoric suggests when it simplistically indicates the relation between the economic class of the means of transport and the social class of the passenger), but rather as a geography with mobile boundaries that are continually crossed and redefined.

Conductor (knocking on a toilet door, locked from inside): Ticket please. Ticket control if you don't mind.

Passenger A (from inside the toilet): Wait, wait [incomprehensible].

Conductor (still to the woman locked in the toilet): Please come out. Ticket control.

Passenger B (leaning against the window opposite the toilet; to the conductor): It's occupied.

Conductor (irritated; to the man): I can see that it's occupied!

Passenger B (to the conductor): You will have to wait. The toilet is a private place. Like the house.

(Notebook p. 31, train no. 2307, 16.12.19)

If, however, as we saw in the first example, the different social identities in a train carriage (conductor, passenger and so forth) lead to local construction of this space, there is also the inverse process which leads from the social construction of the place to the formation of social identities. We can therefore also see the identity of the train as the result

of a process of contact of the various passengers who inhabit and modify that space with variations in their culture, needs and desires.

Passenger A (to a coloured woman who is eating, with bags on her lap): Such aroma... is it good?

Passenger B (to the boy, who is eating too): This? (pointing) It is rice [incomprehensible], there is coconut, coconut.

Passenger C (to a cleaner who is passing in the corridor): What a smell! ... now these trains have become restaurants...

Passenger A (to Passenger C): What's the problem. Excuse me, here we are all eating. The important thing is to do it cleanly.

Cleaner (to the boy, with a gesture of complicity and satisfaction, as she/he continues): True...

(Notebook p. 7, train no. 2314, 16.10.19)

With regard to places in the anthropological sense, Marcel Mauss (2002), a scholar who continues to be extraordinarily pertinent, notes three fundamental traits: identity (the place has an identity and imparts specific social identity to those who frequent it, according to their specific ways of fruition), relation (the place creates organic sociality, i.e. acts as a place where people come together) and history (the place has a history, closely linked to the history of the groups that interact in or with it). All these elements are useful for imagining the relationship existing between the carriages of trains, as described, the subjects who pass through them and the various positionings they are involved in. If there is a link between the identity of places and that of individuals and groups, the places become part of the selves of the persons by virtue of their symbolic role: we can say that the sense of personal identity is derived from the environment, like that of social experiences (Rivlin, 1982).

Frequenting a place and entertaining a relation with it plays a role of indisputable importance in the construction of the self, as in the identification of other persons, intervening at biographical level with individual identities, and at historical level with collective identities. The proposed ethnography of daily life, in considering a number of trains in which locals and immigrants co-exist on a daily basis, seems fundamental for two reasons: for the human practices that contribute to that everyday routine and for the meaning that this space assumes for the individual and collective identity of those who frequent it.

Passenger A (standing, to a woman seated near a child): Excuse me. Is that place free?

Passenger B (pulling the child towards her): Certainly... [incomprehensible] come here! The gentleman has to sit down.

Passenger A (sitting): Thank you. You know at this hour it is difficult to find a place to sit.

Passenger B (making the child sit on her lap and pulling some bags towards her with difficulty): Certainly, one is at home only at home, even if the train is a bit like home.

Passenger A (smiling at the child): You are right. I take it so often that I know all the stops [incomprehensible] I could do it with my eyes shut.

(Notebook p. 14, train no. 2314, 21.11.19)

11.5 Railway staff and immigrant passengers – negotiating meaning, revising one's practices

An articulated representation of interethnic relations emerges from the empirical material gathered on regional trains and from my observations. Indeed, if on one hand there is the view of the immigrant as deviant with respect to the constituted pact of co-existence (“You without a ticket too? But you make money selling umbrellas”) and as “disturbing element” of a presumed ethnic group to defend (“Nigerians, Africans, Chinese... you are all the same!”), it is also true that these narratives reveal many composite experiences of relations between locals and immigrants showing a spirit of communication and exchange (“Excuse me, here we are all eating. The important thing is to do it cleanly.”) and in the case of railway staff, also showing evidence of professional “repositioning” based on specific critical incidents.

Conductor (to a woman): Tickets please... excuse me, your ticket?

Passenger A (trying to pass unnoticed, with headphones in ears): I get off... I get off at San Giovanni [incomprehensible].

Conductor (to the woman): Excuse me, do you have a ticket or not? If not you can buy it on board, at extra cost.

Passenger A (looking out the window, absently): No, no... I get off at San Giovanni.

Passenger B (sitting near the woman; he has a big bag that blocks part of the corridor; to the conductor): She is getting off now at San Giovanni. She says... (he is interrupted by the conductor).

Conductor (to the man, irritated): I'm not speaking to you but to the lady! Can I see your ticket.

Passenger B (to the conductor, pulling a ticket and some money out of his pocket): This is my ticket... I will pay the lady's ticket.

Conductor (to the man, embarrassed): Excuse me! To generalise is always a mistake... now for the lady's ticket.

(Notebook p. 9, train no. 2314, 21.10.19)

These non-sporadic “repositionings” enable conversations and exchanges that make it possible to conceive culture as a process, where everybody takes on the difficulty and makes the effort to change. By being committed to leaving space for confronting differences (however irritating,

incomprehensible or conflictual this may be), the subjects called in question become carriers of a constructive view of the world, according to which the forms of knowledge are always unavoidably local, and objects of investigation situated (Fabbri, 2007). From this perspective, by allowing culturally and unknowingly assimilated paradigms to emerge, the subjects trace new trajectories of participation among the shared practices of their community, negotiating new viewpoints and favouring deconstruction and reconstruction of their professional identity.

Conductor (during a check, speaking to officers of the Environment Protection Service EPS): They normally get off at Figline and San Giovanni. They sit at the end of the train [incomprehensible] so that I get to them as late as possible.

EPS Officer A (to the group): And can't they be intercepted when they alight?

EPS Officer B (to his colleague): That way they don't try to be smart. We stop them then.

Conductor (to the group): We cannot stop the train every time someone is without a ticket.

EPS Officer B (to Conductor): On the platform you can spot them at once; they have big bags and they come from the end of the train.

Conductor (to B, somewhat annoyed): You know those with big bags are not the only ones without a ticket.

(Notebook p. 11, train no. 2314, 07.11.2019)

Such “repositionings” show the effort of contact, revealing the social cost that reciprocal adaptation between cultures, lifestyles, customs, and ways of using public space often involves. In the course of this ethnography, often silently by a look or a particular bodily attitude, many railway employees worked to find shared narrative spaces, pushing beyond a certain type of newspaper and television alarmism that paints democratic co-existence between locals and immigrants as impossible (“Too many immigrants without tickets on regional trains”) and sees all immigrants as incapable of observing the rules.

Although linked to many variables, such as the relations allowed by various models of authority or by levels of responsibility or membership bonds, all these experiences give us an idea of learning, not in the sense of mere reception and memorisation, but as a cognitive activity characterised by processing of information, use of strategies, verification of hypotheses and a tendency to go beyond the limits of the immediate situation. This link reminds us that knowledge is a flexible resource for adapting, learning from experience, and solving new problems and that “culture is public because meaning is” (Clifford, Marcus, 2001, p. 12).

11.6 Conclusions

In a famous essay of 1993, James Clifford wrote “pure fruits go crazy”. The American anthropologist uses this expression to argue against the prophets of cultural homogenisation who sustain that all primitive places, indigenous peoples included, have lost their authenticity in favour of “modernity”, which he defines as “a sort of cultural incest”. If we draw inspiration from this controversy and return to the themes and problems that the contexts described in the present research brought to light, we can ask what it means to be “pure” at the beginning of the third millennium.

Personally, I am not a prophet of unremitting cultural homogenisation. As an educationist concerned with adult education, with special attention to learning processes and the creation of knowledge in a cultural setting, the ethnography of everyday life teaches me that change is disorder remodelled, so it is conceptually more correct to speak of specific paths of modernity, since every culture will find its way to conserve itself and to meet others.

The contemporary world, of which the carriages of a regional train are a metaphor, increasingly resembles a collage in which various elements, irrational at first sight, compose a rational whole. A closer look enables one to give the single pieces a collocation: therefore *doing* ethnography leaves the door open to surprises, to undoing interpretative syntheses, hitherto considered unassailable, becoming the science of cultural risk. As an instrument for detecting a plural world, participant observation shows that in an ethnographic sense, “identity is mixed, relational and inventive” (Clifford, 1993, p. 23). From this viewpoint, the train, with its enclosed, in some ways narrow spaces, has played the role of a magnifying glass, helping us to understand a little better what appears to be a paradox: nothing is more individual/subjective than a train trip, but at the same time nothing seems more social.

The narratives reported here, the conflicts that emerged and the defensive positionings lead us to imagine two future scenarios in these urban contexts. If the idea prevails that culture is a foundation, something to preserve from change, a plausible prospect that is much practised today is to isolate it in the multicultural mosaic described by Seyla Benhabib (2005). As we recalled, in this direction the effort is to build barriers that protect groups and cultures presumed to constitute clearly defined stable entities,

convinced that history can stop and that the stage reached cannot be changed without “loss” of our identities.

But if the idea of culture as a process, as proposed by Clifford, prevails, then the need and obligation become to take on the difficulty and to tackle the hard work that any change involves. This second path does not exclude conflict, but it stakes a bet on the idea that communication and exchange can produce something more positive for everyone involved. From the point of view of the railway staff, this could mean encouraging reflections that allow them to appreciate the role of practice in processes for building knowledge, underlining what they do and produce. Although it was not a priority of this research, what seems to me useful, and to valorise in future, could be the creation of a symbolic space where these employees can consciously process their daily experience with their colleagues. Giving their working experience particular importance as a source and field of training could focus on their occupational knowledge/know-how as empirically situated knowledge, sustaining it with forms of rational reflection (Fabbri, Melacarne, 2019).

The “liquid” nature of our society with its individualism and occasional xenophobia shows how important it is today to measure the distance between representations and daily practices, to plumb the emotions that accompany inter-ethnic encounters, to orientate reciprocal perception, and to compare different ethics that become behaviours and attitudes, occasions for clashes and discussion. Working to leave space for confronting differences – though irritating, incomprehensible, or conflictual – may help build a representation of immigration, alternative to the one socially dominant today, placing it in an institutional, professional, and social framework.

From this point of view, trains are socially interactive and socially rich places, where the lifestyles of different people exist and cross, generate critical life situations and accrue resources: a place where reality is continuously built, negotiated, and domesticated.

References

- ANDERSON-LEVITT, K.M. (Ed.) (2012). *Anthropologies of education: A global guide to ethnographic studies of learning and schooling*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- AIME, M. (2014). *Etnografia del quotidiano. Uno sguardo antropologico sull'Italia che cambia*. Milano: Elèuthera.
- APPADURAI, A. (2001). *Modernità in polvere. Dimensioni culturali della globalizzazione*. Roma: Meltemi (ed. or. 1996).
- AUGÉ, M. (2009). *Il metrò rivisitato*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina.
- AUGÉ, M. (2010). *Un etnologo nel metrò*. Milano: Elèuthera.
- BENHABIB, S. (2005). *La rivendicazione dell'identità culturale. Uguaglianza e diversità nell'era globale*. Bologna: Il Mulino. (ed. or. 2002).
- BESOZZI, E., COLOMBO, M., & SANTAGATI, M. (2009). *Giovani stranieri, nuovi cittadini. Le strategie di una generazione ponte*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- BRIATA, P., BRICOCOLI, M., & BOVO, M. (2018). Un bus come spazio pubblico. Multiculturalismo ed etnografia urbana a Milano. *REMHU, Rev. Interdiscip. Mobil. Hum, Brasília*, 26, 52, 167-188.
- CLIFFORD, J. (1993). *I frutti puri impazziscono. Etnografia, letteratura e arte nel secolo XX*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri (ed. or. 1988).
- CLIFFORD, J., & MARCUS, G.E. (2001). *Scrivere le culture. Poetiche e politiche in etnografia*. Roma: Meltemi (ed. or. 1986).
- COIN, F. (Ed.) (2009). *Gli immigrati, il lavoro, la casa. Tra segregazione e mobilitazione*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- DI GIOVANNI, E. (2012). *Migranti, identità culturale e immaginario mediatico*. Roma: Aracne.
- FABBRI, L. (2007). *Comunità di pratiche e apprendimento riflessivo. Per una formazione situata*. Roma: Carocci.
- FABBRI, L., MELACARNE, C., OREFICE, C., & GIAMPAOLO, M. (2016). "Se i medici sapessero, se i pazienti potessero". *Comunità di Pratiche di gestione della malattia oncologica. Educational Reflective Practices Journal*, 1, 116-137.
- FABBRI, L., & MELACARNE, C. (2019). How to train professionals for managing the contradictions of a multiethnic society. *Freedom from fear*, 15, 22-30.
- FAVARO, G., & LUATTI, L. (2008). *Il tempo dell'integrazione*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- FIORUCCI, M. (a cura di) (2004). *Incontri: spazi e luoghi della mediazione interculturale*. Roma: Armando.
- FOUCAULT, M. (2014). *Sorvegliare e punire. Nascita della prigione*. Torino: Einaudi. (ed. or. 1975).
- FRASER, B., & SPALDING, S., a cura di (2012). *Trains, Culture and Mobility: Riding the Rails*. Londra: Lexington Books.
- GEERTZ, C. (1998). *Interpretazione di culture*. Bologna: Il Mulino. (ed. or. 1973).
- GEERTZ, C. (2000). Gli usi della diversità. In R. BOROFKY (a cura di) *L'antropologia culturale oggi* (pp. 564-561). Roma: Meltemi (ed. or. 1986).
- GIDDENS, A. (1994). *Le conseguenze della modernità. Fiducia e rischio, sicurezza e pericolo*. Bologna: Il Mulino (ed. or. 1990).
- GIUSTI, M. (2017). *Teorie e metodi di pedagogia interculturale*. Bari: Editori Laterza.
- GOFFMAN, E. (1989). *On fieldwork*, in *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 18(2): 123-132.
- GOFFMAN, E. (2006). *Il comportamento in pubblico. L'interazione sociale nei luoghi di riunione*. Torino: Einaudi (ed. or. 1963).
- HANNERZ, U. (1992). *Esplorare la città. Antropologia della vita urbana*. Bologna: Il Mulino (ed. or.

- 1980).
- KHOSRAVI, S. (2019). *Io sono confine*. Milano: Elèuthera (ed. or. 2010).
- LA CECLA, F. (1993). *Mente locale. Per un'Antropologia dell'abitare*. Milano: Eléuthera.
- MANTOVANI, G. (2004). *Intercultura. E' possibile evitare le guerre culturali?.* Bologna: Il Mulino.
- MATERA, V. (2020). *Storia dell'etnografia: autori, teorie, pratiche*. Roma: Carocci Editore.
- MAUSS, M. (2002). *Saggio sul dono*. Torino: Einaudi(ed. or. 1923-24).
- OREFICE, C. (2008). *Introduzione all'antropologia evoluzionista. Critica e testi*. Pisa: Edizioni Del Cerro.
- OREFICE, C. (2011). Lo sviluppo delle metodologie della ricerca sul campo nell'antropologia inglese: l'evoluzione della fotografia e della cinematografia attraverso 'Notes and Queries on Anthropology', 1874-1951. In P. CHIOZZI (Ed.), *Etica e metodo. Considerazioni sull'antropologia visual* (pp. 55-95). Roma: Bonanno Editore.
- OREFICE, C. (2018a). The Experience of Things. Memory, Photographic Representation and Emotions in Psychiatric Field Research. In M. DOS SANTOS & J.F. PELLETIER. (eds.) *The Social Constructions and Experiences of Madness* (pp. 141-172). Amsterdam: Brill Press.
- OREFICE, C. (2018b). Il rapporto tra spazi della cura, strategie di gestione organizzativa ed esperienze di malattia. Una ricerca nei presidi ospedalieri oncologici attraverso il Photovoice. In L. FABBRI & F. BIANCHI (a cura di), *Fare ricerca collaborativa. Vita quotidiana, cura, lavoro* (pp. 105-125). Roma: Carocci.
- OREFICE, C. (2020). Etnografia di un treno regionale: pratiche discorsive e posizionamenti identitari tra professionisti delle FS e viaggiatori immigrati. *Educational Reflective Practices*, 1, 74-91.
- PORTERA, A. (2020). *Manuale di pedagogia interculturale. Risposte educative nella società globale*. Bari: Laterza.
- REMOTTI, F. (ed.) (2002). *Forme di umanità*. Mondadori: Milano.
- RESTA, P. (ed.) (2008). *Il vantaggio dell'immigrazione: un progetto per una cultura condivisa*. Roma: Armando.
- RIVLIN, L. (1982). Group membership and place meaning in an urban neighborhood. *Journal of Social Issues*, 3, 82-83.
- ROMANO A., & FABBRI L. (2019), Costruire infiniti mondi professionali. Prospettive trasformative. *Education Sciences & Society*, 2, 292-301.
- SCHIVELBUSCH, W. (1988). *Storia dei viaggi in ferrovia*. Torino: Einaudi.
- SIGNORELLI, A. (2006). *Antropologia urbana. Introduzione alla ricerca in Italia*. Milano: Guerini Studio.
- SIRIGNANO, F.M., PERILLO, P. (ed.) (2019). *La scuola delle culture. Riflessioni pedagogiche situate*. Bari: Pensa MultiMedia.
- TORLONE, F. (2021). *La formazione incorporata nei contesti lavorativi*. Firenze: Firenze University Press.
- TURNER, T. (1993). Anthropology and multiculturalism: What is anthropology that multiculturalists should be mindful of it? *Cultural Anthropology*, 8(4), 411-429.
- WENGER, E. (2006). *Comunità di pratica. Apprendimento, significato e identità*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina (ed. or. 1998).
- WENGER, E., & LAVE, J. (2006). *L'apprendimento situato. Dall'osservazione alla partecipazione attiva nei contesti sociali*. Trento: Erickson (ed. or. 1990).
- WISE, A., & VELAYUTHAM, S. (eds.) (2009). *Everyday multiculturalism*. Londra: Palgrave Macmillan.

12

Transformative Inclusive Learning in multi-diverse Schools. An intersectionality-based approach

Alessandra Romano

This chapter introduces an intersectionality-based approach to transformative learning in multi-diverse schools¹. Intersectionality is here articulated as a methodological framework, which intertwines positioning, cultural humility, and transformative learning in an emancipatory perspective. The last two paragraphs showcase examples of repertoires of practices that teachers and faculty can incorporate in their curriculum in the classroom for promoting a sense of belonging and equity.

Key Words: Intersectionality; Transformative Learning; Adaptive Teaching; Special Education

I have come to understand that much of what I took as neutral teaching practice actually functions to keep our courses less accessible to students from non-traditional backgrounds...

¹ We deliberately chose to utilize the term “multi-diverse” rather than “multicultural” referring to schools and Higher Education systems: we agree with García and Ortiz (2013) when they suggest that the construct of diversity has often been narrowly defined to refer to diverse abilities rather than the broader array of multiple social identities that are reflected in the use of multi-diversity (García, & Ortiz, 2013).

(Almost) all traditionally taught courses are unintentionally but nevertheless deeply biased in ways that make substantial differences in performance for many students
Nelson (1996, p. 165)

12.1 Bringing an intersectionality-based approach to Special Education in Multi-diverse Schools

The road to inclusion is really an intersection. Rather than being singular dimensions, categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, age, religious belief, and social class can overlap and intersect in dynamic ways that shape everyone's life (Barnett, & Felten, 2016). Design of societal-level arrangement oughta be inclusive to all but especially sensitive to the most marginalized and multiply disadvantaged. Individuals, groups and communities that are “othered” in multiple and intersecting ways - known as “intersectionality” (Crenshaw, 1991) - may experience multiple, non linear and intersecting binds of oppression, for which interventions that merely address or target one form of disadvantage per time fails to emancipate those from disabling barriers. This happens in society, in the workplace, in the public arena, but also in the classroom.

Race, ethnicity, sex, gender, disabilities, impairments, and sexual orientation are some examples of the social factors that can determine not only students' learning outcomes but also their response to teaching and their access to schools. These factors compound existing social inequities, but they do not exist independently of each other; rather they intersect with each other. A study by the European Association for Education of Adults (2019) posits that a challenge for adult learning in postmodern society remains the inclusion of underrepresented groups in adult formal learning processes. Because intersectional approaches consider multiple combinations of marginalization and (under)representation, they can help address such inclusion gaps (Hanson, & Fletcher, 2021). Intersectionality is compatible with goals of social justice and equity, diversity and belonging as they are values practiced within community-engaged schools and Higher Education.

Traditional multicultural education initiatives need to be reframed because they were not taking into account the multiple and intersecting ways in which students experienced school and university, breathing

racial/cultural/sexual/ethnic bodies (Hearn, 2012). Conventional initiatives of this nature are predicated upon limited ideas about race, gender, culture, ethnicity, ableism, and, therefore, are limited in their abilities to foster a more equitable school and Higher Education environment (Rivière, 2005)².

Consequently, an understanding of how this intersectionality influences learning outcomes is now key. Exploring these intersections emphasizes the need for an “institutional mindfulness and attention” to the plural, fluid, and intersecting identities of individuals in our classrooms. Against this backdrop, the chapter aims to help readers, particularly faculty, teachers, and adult educators, to develop the knowledge and capacities to do this urgent work. It describes an intersectionality approach to transformative learning in schools and Higher Education, which provides a critical analytic lens to interrogate racial, ethnic, class, physical ability, age, sexuality, and gender disparities and to contest existing ways of justifying these structures of inequality (Barnett, & Felten, 2016).

An intersectionality approach to special education and transformative learning has a few key-characteristics:

- a. it recognizes ways in which personal intersections of identities, biases, assumptions, and prejudices are consciously and unconsciously acquired in the socialization processes;
- b. it provides practices to develop critical consciousness by intentionally examining people’s dominant identities;
- c. it embraces inclusiveness by deconstructing whiteness and unmasking white/ableist/dominant privileges (Barnett, & Felten, 2016).

² In the special education field, part of the international and national literature is now deepening broadly conceptualizations of culture and diversity to explore how these mutually influence not only individual’s, family’s and/or community’s response to (dis)ability, but also how organization respond to the educational identities and needs of students from non-dominant sociocultural, racial/ethnic and linguistic communities (García, & Ortiz, 2013; de Anna, 2014; Mura, 2016; Caldin, 2022; Taddei, 2020). Special education is shifting towards a view of research itself as a “situated cultural practice”, positioned within the transformative, emancipatory, and collaborative paradigm (Caldin, 2022; Mura, 2022).

12.1.1 From the theory of intersectionality to intersectionality as a methodological framework

Intersectionality, which stems from critical race theory (CRT), is rooted in the epistemological and methodological premise that understanding power, oppression, and marginalization cannot be accomplished by looking solely at single dimensions of identities. Crenshaw (1989) coined the term to explain that various biological, social, and cultural identities interact dynamically and must be critically examined to fully intercept the basis of institutional discrimination and racism.

Intersectionality addresses multiple interlocking systems of oppression rather than examining inequities solely through a singular lens, such as sexism, ableism, racism, and classism (Crenshaw, 1991; Nash, 2008). Specifically, Crenshaw's legal study (1991) explained that women of color who experienced ordinary violence were oppressed systematically in ways that antiracism and feminism failed to address: the structure of law institutions forced those women to describe their injuries in terms of either their race or their gender rather than facing the complexity and overlap of both forms of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991; Nash, 2008). She argued that neither sexism nor racism were adequate to account for the nature of compound inequity. Analysing disadvantage with reference to only one of these vectors means what she termed 'single axis analysis' which 'distorts' the experiences of those impacted by more than one system of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). To explain the workings of multi-dimensional discrimination, Crenshaw employed the metaphor of an intersection between roads:

Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination. (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149).

Therefore, intersectionality is never additive (Nichols, & Stahl, 2020). The value of that insight started a three decades-long debate that contributed to the emergence of intersectionality as: (a) a heuristic, (b) a theory; and (c) a methodology (Nash, 2008). According to these perspectives, intersectionality as a heuristic means "an orientation to research that

focuses on revealing and responding to oppression and privilege in peoples' lives, by considering the effects of interpersonal interactions, and of socioeconomic and political structures" (Levac, et al., 2018, p. 25). It offers an interpretative lens for the analysis of the systemic power relations at work in peoples' lives. Intersectionality as a theory suggests that systems of power could be unpacked as a constellation of mutually supporting power structures where each uses the others to reinforce the collective effect of the oppression (Nash, 2008; Cho, & Ferree, 2010). The intersectionality as a methodological framework acknowledges the various identities that each of us carries (Allana, et al., 2021), and how these identities and multiple belongings intersect to bring about either oppression or privilege (Al-Faham, Davis, & Ernst, 2019). Individuals' multiple identities, such as age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, place of residence (rural/urban), can put learners in a position of relative power or disadvantage: each of these identities can also interact with other factors, thus reinforcing and compounding privilege, discrimination, prejudices, and inequities. Some studies have examined the intersection of race/ethnicity/ableism with school status and proficiency: other studies bring in consideration of ableism, wedging open conversations about the interconnectedness of disability with other multiple discriminations (Hamraie, 2013).

In acknowledging that intersectionality has been the subject of much debate and challenge, this paper advocates for an intersectionality-based approach to special education and transformative learning in multi-diverse schools and *Higher Education* systems, which applies to teaching practices, teaching philosophies, curriculum design, and outcome measures. When cultures and backgrounds engage within a school or Higher Education context, dynamics between positionalities, stories, privileges result in power relations that might be investigated only through an intersectional methodology. In other words, in an increasingly super-diverse world that is characterized by significant social, economic, and educational inequities, the development of an intersectionality approach to teaching in classroom is a strategic leverage for transforming teachers and educators' mindsets towards cultural humility practices that they might want to incorporate in their curriculum to support student transformative learning. In this regard, the final paragraphs showcase exemplary teaching practices and

methodologies - imbued by the intersectionality approach - that teachers and faculty might adopt in classrooms with students.

12.2 Cultural Humility as a leverage for an intersectionality approach to transformative learning

Research exploring the transformative dimensions of adult learning has blossomed in the past three decades. Despite this trend, transformative approaches in adult learning, research and teaching remain limited primarily to monoaxial vision of gender, race, and class dimensions (see Belenky, & Stanton, 2000)³. Meanwhile, intersectionality includes discussions of social structures, geographies, and histories that serve to build richer, nuanced descriptions of how privilege and oppression are experienced (Hanson, & Fletcher, 2021).

In our conceptual framework, the intersectionality approach to transformative learning is grounded in cultural awareness and cultural humility. Cultural humility refers to a “mindset” of constant curiosity without a sense of cultural superiority. Here we consider “cultural humility” as a subdomain of humility referring to the ability to have a humble and other-oriented approach to others’ culture (Rullo, et al., 2022).

Cultural humility is defined as a commitment to “continually engage in self-reflection and self-critique” (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998; p.118) when confronted with multiple diversities. It requires a high level of perspective

³ Belenky and Stanton (1998) presented their work at the *First National Transformative Learning Conference* and their work remains highly regarded in adult education (see Fleming, 2019). In their study, careful attention is paid to the voice of learners. Voice is the capacity to formulate thoughts and ideas, to express (voice) them and feel heard. Belenky & Stanton (1998) use the concept of “full circle conversations” in which people do not necessarily agree, but they talk with one another until they come to a place of new understanding, and this is central to creating environments that support the possibility of transformative experiences. Belenky (2000) acknowledges the importance of transformative learning but highlights the absence in transformation theory of an understanding of how to encourage and support learners whose starting position may be silent knowing or received knowing and move them toward more critical and contextualized engagements with the world. Belenky and Stanton (2000) argue that in the transformative learning rational discourse there’s a lack of interest for the gender inequalities and for the power dynamics that might hinder women to speak. Moreover, Mezirow’s critical discourse is not central to collective action, where connected knowing prevails, that means the ability to forge links and connections so that discussions allow participants to mirror and see themselves in a new light including as reflected by others (Fleming, 2019, p. 33; Romano, 2022).

taking that prompts the understanding of other people's thoughts and feelings (Galinsky, Ku, & Wang, 2005). It implies a critical process of self-examination that (a) seeks challenging conversations with others, (b) elicits critical reflection on systemic and internalized biases, privileges and social structures (Mosher, et al., 2017; Kramlich & Romano, 2020; Rullo, et al., 2022). Cultural humility is thus characterized by a personal commitment to the inner work of understanding one's own sociocultural identities and surrounding contexts as well as the understanding and willingness to redress power imbalances in all systems (Fisher-Borne, Cain & Martin, 2015)⁴. We argue that this commitment is not only individual but collective and leads to developing a culturally humble mindset or lens through which teachers, educators, and students can clearly see themselves, other people, and the interconnected systems to which we all belong (Romano, 2020).

For greater equity and liberation from oppressive systems, teachers, such as students, should recognize bias and injustice and skillfully act in ways that effectively improve opportunities and conditions for marginalized communities (Abdou, et al., 2022). For these reasons, we embrace the terms "cultural humility" and "transformative learning" as distinct yet interrelated concepts that inform an intersectionality-based approach to school inclusion.

Our focus is on how cultural humility might be a foundational skill for critical thinking and reflection. In this argumentation, cultural humility, indeed, favors at least two processes that are considered conducive to perspective transformations:

1. being aware and targeting cognitive biases and dissonance that keep individuals constrained within habituated thinking patterns;

⁴ Part of the literature on cultural humility investigates this construct as a protecting factor to prevent radicalization from the angle of education and the trust in democratic processes and institutions. Research on cultural humility found that it can improve intergroup relations, reduce intergroup aggression, and increase tolerance toward religious, ethnic and gender minorities outliers (AlSheddi, 2020; Mosher et al., 2017; Rullo et al., 2022). Cultural humility, indeed, orients individuals to successfully and non-judgmentally interact with outliers members. In a cross-sectional study by Rullo et al. (2022), cultural humility moderated the intergroup contact dynamics, suggesting that cultural humility could contribute to the promotion of contact opportunities (i.e., reduction of negative contact) (Rullo, et al., 2022, p. 180).

2. facilitating perspective-taking as a condition for the validation of prior knowledge and assumptions (Southworth, 2022).

Recent literature on transformative learning underlines that reflection in and of itself, which involves neither a novel experience, a dilemma nor an interlocutor questioning our way of thinking, is mostly ineffective in uncovering deficiencies in deeply held beliefs (Hoggan, 2016; Eschenbacher, 2020; Southworth, 2022). Southworth (2022) states that

“This is because our thinking is structured by a range of cognitive and epistemological biases that prevent a fair hearing of alternative viewpoints, including *myside bias*, which is of particular concern to the reflective reasoning process (Southworth, 2022, p. 48).

The general tendency of individuals is to frame the issue, the problem, the dilemma in a way that aligns with people’s prior beliefs, thereby ensuring the outcome of the reflection. Cognitive and epistemological biases, such as *myside bias*, are particularly prominent with subsequent problems because they often concern deeply held beliefs that are central to our identity, such as gender affirmation, cultural, political, and religious beliefs (*ibidem*). It’s almost “impossible to become aware of our own interpretive filters by using those same interpretive filters” (Brookfield, 2017, p. 61). To some extent we are all “prisoners trapped within the frameworks we use to assign meaning to our experience” (*ibidem*).

Our hypothesis is that when confronted with cognitive and epistemological biases, particularly related to multiethnicity, culture, gender, political faith, people who are aware about their cultural positioning and are working on their humility posture are committed to understanding the perspective of the others and to questioning their previously held assumptions. This helps to confront cognitive biases, such as *myside bias* and motivated reasoning, which can result in a state of doubt and ultimately in a change in one’s meaning schemes (Southworth, 2022). Perspective taking requires the ability to bracket beliefs, and a critical curiosity in the asking of revealing questions concerning someone else’s point of view. Getting ourselves out of familiar perspectives means to temporarily suspend all the instincts, frames of references, cognitive automatisms, and routinized scripts that we trust to guide us in making sense of the world around us (Brookfield, 2017, p. 108). hooks (2010) suggests that perspective taking is essential for critical thinking and asks her readers to embrace “radical openness” (p. 10).

In the articulation of his postmodern and critical perspective on reflection practice, Brookfield (2017) identified three phases of critical reflection:

1. The identification of the assumptions that underlie our thoughts and actions;
2. The scrutiny of the accuracy and validity of these assumptions in terms of how they connect to, or are discrepant with, our experience of reality;
3. The reconstituting of these assumptions to make them more inclusive and integrative of unfamiliar experience.

Those three steps are a formalization popularized by the Author. When critical reflection occurs, it is often unsystematically, situated in practice in a context that might be deliberately and intentionally stimulated through methods and techniques. Cultural humility is transversal to these three stages.

When facilitated, it helps teachers, adult educators and students to uncover their implicit biases, to analyze how social and cultural forces shape access to power and privilege. Cultural humility is entangled with positionality: each of us has intersecting “positions”, which combine in unique ways to model how we both experience the world and how the world experiences us (Merriam, & Bierema, 2014)⁵. From the intersectionality lens to transformative learning that we are unraveling, a central component of innovation is assessing and revealing one’s own “ideological positioning and personal values” (Ettling, 2012, p. 546). In order to be responsive to the diverse needs of individuals and systems, educators and teachers are asked to recognize those needs while also being aware of potential personal biases and systemic inequities that may be contributing factors, while engaging learners in critical reflection on them. Humility and awareness of personal positioning seem essential to (a) set the stage for dialogue among learners, (b) create the environment for

⁵ Positionality is a visible or invisible attribute such as ableness, gender, class, status, culture, age, race, religion, sexual orientation, language, and so forth: individual positionality is a mixture of the racial, cultural, ethnic, geographical cultures people belong to, and their position within the culture based on gender, race, economic status, geographical background, and the different levels of privilege and power (or oppression and discrimination) conferred accordingly (Merriam, & Bierema, 2014; Brookfield, 2017; Tisdell, 2011).

change to occur in all the organizational actors involved (Merriam, & Bierema, 2014), (c) prepare the road for unpacking biases, distorted assumptions and analyze layers of external oppression.

The concept of cultural humility, here outlined as fundamental component of the intersectionality approach to transformative learning, accounts for the fluidity, complexity, and evolving nature of human diversity and needs, while also challenging the systemic and institutionalized inequities that must be addressed (Fisher-Borne et al., 2015). Particularly relevant for education programs and special education, these constructs remind educators to be learners of their students' lives and values rather than simply welcoming students into the unexamined, hegemonic dominant curriculum practices in school contexts (Hinsdale, 2016; Ljungblad, 2021).

12.3 Towards a repertory of intersectionality-based practices for Equity and Belonging in Schools

Teachers have been slow to embrace the potential for inclusion offered by new modes of learning and teaching informed by cultural humility and intersectionality. While there are pockets of innovative activity emerging, in general there remains a degree of conservatism and resistance at both an individual and institutional level. Too often, these new developments are viewed as optional additions to the normal curriculum of schools and Higher Education institutions. There is still a widely held view that a culturally sensitive curriculum is inferior to conventional programs. It is a pervasive aversion to change, which limits the diffusion of knowledge, and too often discourages experimentation. What opportunities do students have to reflect? In what ways is that reflection guided, and how is that guidance graduated and informed so that students are challenged to think ever more deeply and independently?

Intersectionality offers teachers and faculty the opportunity to fully embrace the complexities of lived experiences and thereby develop teaching and learning practices that take those complexities into account, helping to address oppression in its various forms, not necessarily on micro-levels or macro-levels structures, but focusing on the hybrid and entangled

forms of domination (Hanson, & Fletcher, 2021). A starting point for ensuring that a school program or a university course is embedding intersectionality may include things such as:

1. regular self-evaluation and reflection on current teaching practices and assignments (e.g., investigating whether or not current culturally relevant practices and course materials are regularly updated and respectful of the multiple identities involved);
2. reflect on the extent to which the professors take time to get to know their students and allow them to know each other to build a collaborative classroom community. Faculty and teachers who practice inclusivity agree that having a “proactive” approach is better than a “reactive” approach; therefore, they need to design and implement initiatives that support power-sharing among learners, teachers, researchers, and all the organizational actors, attending to the individualized needs of the students to plan accordingly (Aiello, 2019).

In this direction, the intersectionality approach hereby articulated informs a teaching effort that tries to challenge the legitimacy of privileged institutions and counter their development through at least the involvement of three intertwined and entangled systems:

- professional development perspective: the adoption of intersectionality as a methodological framework recognizes that curricular decisions are political and that how material is chosen is influenced by the teachers’ philosophical outlook and predominant culture;
- organizational perspective: intersectionality as a methodology encourages teachers and learners to reflect about the consequences of chosen and practiced curriculum and to cocreate a “transformative redefinition” of organization practices, cultures and structures (Brookfield, 2017);
- student perspective: the intersectional methodology supports learners to: (a) assume a position or change based on evidence of cross-positionality, (b) exhibit open-mindedness, (c) seek options and different perspective taking, (d) show sensitivity and awareness of others’ feelings and knowledge.

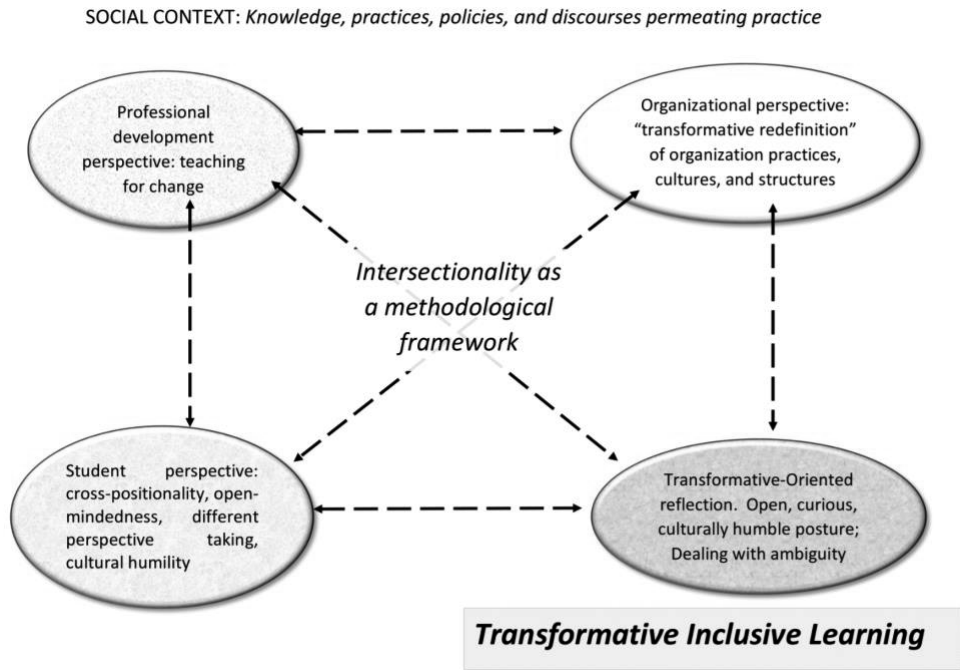


Figure 12.1 *The intersectionality framework for transformative learning.*
 Source: Personal Elaboration of the Author.

12.3.1 Striving for an inclusive and nurturing climate in the classroom. Cultivate the intersections

Starting from our work as scholars and as professors, we collected a repertory of reflective practices that are imbued by an intersectionality approach and that teachers and adult educators can apply in their curriculum. This repertory was referred to and adapted to Wlodkowski’s framework (2008), to Brookfield (2017) and Barnett and Felten (2016). It includes techniques for faculty and teachers to reflect on their assumptions

of their role as facilitator, on the students they teach, and on the teaching and learning processes. It also includes practices that teachers and faculty would incorporate in their work to help students develop cultural awareness and humility posture.

The strategies we collect are summarized in Table 12.1.

Practices for Inclusive and Transformative Learning in Classrooms

<i>Type of Practice</i>	<i>Learning Purpose</i>	<i>Strategies and Practices</i>
Self-reflective practices	To create space for challenging dominant discourse	a. to question – intentionally and often – how and why as teachers and educators we label people based on assumptions, biases, and prejudices b. to identify personal participation in systems of privilege in a predominantly ableist/white/male environment
Student-oriented practices	To explore the construction of privileged identities	a. to encourage transformative life experiences to be doors and windows into engaging in critical discourse and collective reflexivity about these experiences b. to reexamine the messages learned in historical contexts and experiences that shaped initial understanding of privileges and personal identities
Teaching practices	To engender an awareness of cultural forces and encourage feeling of connection among adults	a. to allow for introductions and provide an opportunity for multidimensional sharing b. to acknowledge different ways of knowing, different languages, and different levels of skill among learners c. to provide frequent opportunities for all students to present themselves on an equitable basis

Table 12.1 *A repertory of practices for cultivating intersections in the classroom. Source: Personal Elaboration of the Author.*

Harnessing the power of student contributions requires identifying strategies for students to engage in meaningful roles, listening carefully to learner needs and voices and figuring out how to mobilize their efforts from the bottom in building inclusive environments. Those practices promote actions for the inclusion of learners with disadvantaged backgrounds,

including newly arrived migrants, while supporting skills development and participation, and raising awareness about culturally nuanced values, engagement, and integration. They help teachers tackle social, economic, and political inequalities, and contribute to a comprehensive teaching strategy for inclusive growth. This also involves understanding and responding to the impacts of institutionalized discriminatory practices interconnected with bias and prejudice. Teachers, faculty, and educators who enter the work of practicing intersections from an asset-based angle have the potential to move beyond the rhetoric of valuing diversity and create ongoing, systematic, multidimensional change (Arcelus, 2011). We agree with Brookfield when he suggested that

“Isms, such as racism, ableism, classism, sexism, and other systemic discriminations are historically produced and systemically embedded: they comprise beliefs and practices entrenched in the school and university and are reinforced or dismantled only systemically” (Brookfield, 2017, p. 57).

12.3.2 Negotiating curriculum

Negotiating curriculum is the methodology that requires careful consideration of learners’ intersecting identities and belonging and being respectful of the same. Such an approach implies providing all possible options for cultural identity, ensuring that learners have the option to show their identification with social belonging, assuming a posture of genuine curiosity and openness.

We have co-created the description of the methodology for negotiating curriculum through three years of research in the field of inclusive and transforming teaching in schools and Higher Education, which drew upon the literature reviews on students’ engagement (Cook-Sather, Bovin, & Felten, 2014) on teaching for change (Taylor, 2012; Parker Palmer, 2017) and on transformative methodologies (Brookfield, 2017; Fabbri & Romano, 2017; Romano, 2021). Student or learner-centered teaching is discovering as much as you can about learners so the teacher can craft “an instructional sequence that takes them deep into territory” they feel they need to explore (Brookfield, 2017, p. 99). In this sense, negotiating curriculum creates bridges between their previous knowledge and skills and where the teacher wishes them to go.

Table 12.2 summarizes the core steps of the methodology of negotiating curriculum:

Table 12.2 Negotiating Curriculum

Steps	Learning Purpose	Strategies and Practices
1. Identify assumptions on teaching and learning	To establish challenging and attainable learning goals	a. to allow for introductions and provide an opportunity for multidimensional sharing b. to emphasize the societal purpose of what is being learned and its relationship to the students' personal lives and cultural situations c. to use goal-setting methods and encourage students to interact d. to adopt the K-W-L strategy to introduce topics and concepts – students identify what they <i>KNOW</i> , what they <i>WANT TO DISCOVER</i> , and what they have <i>LEARNED</i>
2. Challenge for adaptive learning	To deepen student engagement and adaptive decision making	e. to relate learning to individual interests, concerns, and culturally situated values f. to adopt invention, artistry, imagination, creativity, and enactment to render meaningful and affective learning
3. Ensure multiple modes of representations	To create opportunities for all students to feel valued, respected, and confident in their contributions to the classroom	g. to avoid cultural biases in assessment procedures h. to give opportunities to demonstrate their learning in ways that honor their strengths, multiple identities and sources for learning
4. Co-create partnership with students	To ensure that all learners are recognized as unique individuals with varying skill sets and strengths while simultaneously providing explicit and complete guidance to support their participation and success.	i. to embed 'stop and think' opportunities during class or in online modules. Provide a checklist and/or rubric for assignment objectives. j. to validate strategies for enhancing student participation. Examples of questions to pose are: i. <i>How are we prepared to think through issues of difference, power, privilege, and identity?</i> ii. <i>How do we connect what they are learning with their identities and commitment to areas of social justice?</i>

iii. *Who is and is not “at the table” in meetings and discussions?*

iv. *How are declared intentions and our actual actions contradicting each other?*⁶

Negotiating curriculum is at the core of practicing democracy to emancipate learners from previous assumed constraints. Creating a democratic classroom is the first step where learners have authority and participate in the decision-making process about becoming self-actualized and self-determining (Merriam, & Bierema, 2014). Negotiation implies negotiating vulnerability, building critical reflection. When teachers and educators teach from this angle, they can:

- a. share authority and decision making with students,
- b. discuss how power dynamics affect the curriculum,
- c. honor the experience of learners, equipping them with tools to analyze the effects of their background and status on social life,
- d. co-create environments where everyone has multiple opportunities to be heard,
- e. raise issues related to sexism, racism, multiple oppressions, discriminations and consider how society can be transformed through learning.

Previous research on the topic (see Nichols & Stahl, 2019) concluded that it is not enough to merely legitimize students’ voices through curricular interventions in the classroom: belonging happens when students in their true authentic selves are co-creators in the classroom. One evidence for this is the level of agentic engagement (Reeve, & Shin, 2020), which refers to students’ supportive input to the instruction they are supposed to receive. Agentic engagement is a purposeful, proactive and reciprocal style of interconnectedness that is critical for fostering student engagement (in terms of capacity of negotiation, participation in the activities, learning outcomes, achievement): “it is what students say and do to create a more motivationally supportive learning environment for themselves” (Reeve, &

⁶ These questions are designed to help groups and communities to be more self-aware of the power dynamics that structure teacher-student interactions and habitual communication (Brookfield, 2017).

Shin, 2020, p. 151)⁷. Agentic engagement is thus an affirmative value focused on creating environments that enable people, whatever their identity, background, or institutional position, to thrive, realize their capabilities, engage meaningfully in the classroom, and contribute to the flourishing of others.

An intersectionality-based approach to transformative learning in multi-diverse schools can benefit greatly from students' agentic involvement. Students' engagement, especially of those with relevant intersecting identities, right from the initial stage of the curriculum design, is essential to ensure that teachers address the topics and the issues that are relevant to these students and their communities. Inside the classroom, the student participation through those practices and strategies mentioned can deepen holistic learning: they develop their reflection on their own backgrounds, of the systemic forces that have shaped and continue to shape different life experiences, their attitude of curiosity and humility about the others, and their relationship with intersecting diversity.

⁷ Reeve and Shin (2020) argues that such as behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement are traditional types of engagement, agentic engagement is also a (fourth) type of engagement—but it is a uniquely proactive and reciprocal type. “With behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, the teacher offers a learning activity (e.g., a book to read, a homework assignment to complete) and students react by showing more or less effort, more or less enthusiasm, and more or less strategic thinking while working on the activity. With agentic engagement, the student speaks up and shows personal initiative in a proactive and reciprocal way” (Reeve, & Shin, 2020, p. 151).

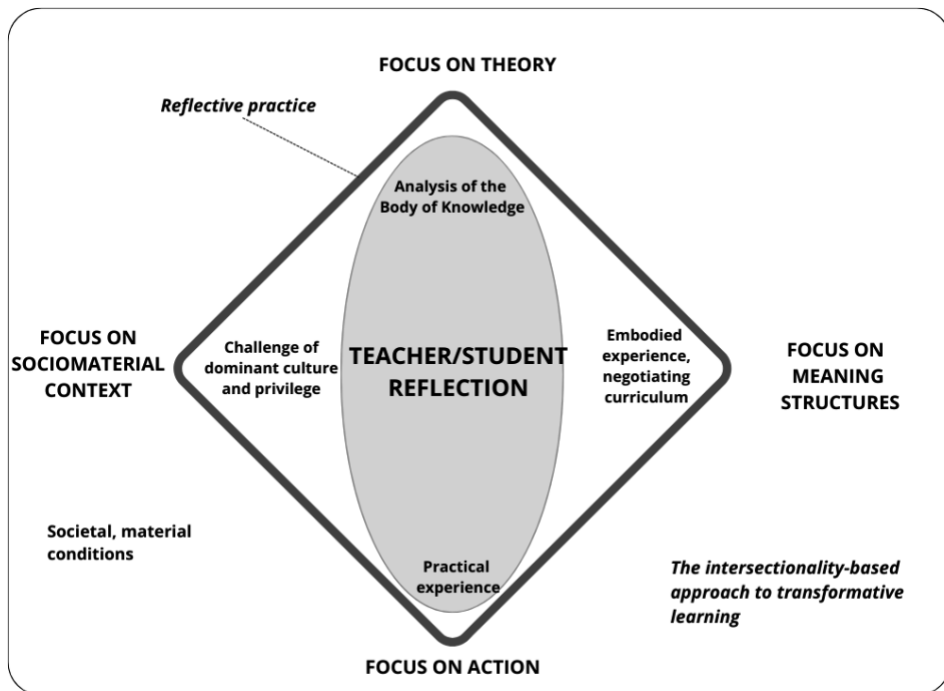


Figure 12.2 *The focus of teacher/student reflection in the intersectionality-based approach to transformative learning. Inspired by Malkki, 2022, p. 302.*

12.4 Conclusions

Given the increasing diversity of the student population, the intersectionality-driven teaching approach has the potential to revolutionize teaching and learning practices, and improve individuals, group, and community transformation of meaning schemes.

Intersectionality as a methodological framework for transformative learning could be embraced by adult education as an important lens to analyze learning dynamics and school contexts. It helps do three things: 1. It gives us a framework for critiquing inequity and discriminations; 2. It challenges dominant ideologies and polarized thinking, and 3. It seeks social emancipation and the elimination of multiple intersections of oppressions.

In summary, practicing intersectionality-based approach to transformative learning requires learner-partnered interventions, involving students as active participants so that intersecting identities can be explored through

promotion of agentic engagement in decision-making, including input into choices and preferences about the programme, and opportunities to understand the impacts of intersecting factors on learning outcomes. It connects multiple and various aspects of institutional life, both in schools and in academia, deeply engages communities and content, ameliorates individuals and organizations, addresses the critical questions while remaining open to criticism (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2014).

In our quest to provide an intersectionality-based approach to transformative inclusive learning, it is critical to remember that faculty, teachers, and adult educators need to cooperate together as authentic partners on multicultural alliances to co-create sustainable changes, which might be translated into our ever-evolving super-diverse society where everyone can feel welcomed, affirmed, heard, recognized and valued. Only through targeted interventions that proactively include learners and aim to increase awareness of intersectionality and its impact, can teachers start to deliver appropriate, sensitive, acceptable, and equitable courses.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

References

- ABDOU, A. S., DE PEDRO, K., DE ANDA, A., MERCED, I., & MAO, K. (2022). Nurturing cultural humility and responsiveness through restorative pedagogy in graduate education. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 33(2), 273-284.
- AIELLO, P. (2019). Teacher Education and Induction Period. Agentività del docente e sostenibilità di modelli formativi. *Nuova Secondaria*, 10, 58-61.
- AL-FAHAM, H., DAVIS, A.M., & ERNST, R. (2019). Intersectionality: from theory to practice. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 15(1): 247-265.
- ALLANA, S., SKI, C.F., THOMPSON, D.R., & CLARK, A.M. (2021). Bringing Intersectionality to Cardiovascular Health Research in Canada. *CJC Open*, 3 (12), Supplement S4-S8.
- ALSHEDDI, M. (2020). Humility and bridging differences: A systematic review of humility in relation to diversity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 79, 36-45.
- ANAND, T.S., ANAND, S.V., WELCH, M., MARSICK, & V.J., LANGER, A. (2020). Overview of transformative learning I: real-world applications. *Reflective Practice*, 21:6, 732-743.
- ANAND, T.S., ANAND, S.V., WELCH, M., MARSICK, V.J., & LANGER, A. (2020). Overview of transformative learning II: real-world applications. *Reflective Practice*, 21:6, 744-758.
- ANDERSON SATHE, L., COTTER ZAKRZEWSKI, T., LONGMORE, A., ROMANO, A., KRAMLICH, D., BRUNSTEIN, J., ET AL. (2022). *Listening for transformation: discovering third space and connection using a listening protocol*. In A., NICOLAIDES, S., ESCHENBACHER, P. T., BUERGELT, Y., GILPIN-JACKSON, M., WELCH, & M., MISAWA (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Learning for Transformation* (pp. 429-448). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- ARCELUS, V.J. (2011). *Transforming our approach to education: Cultivating partnership and dialogue*. In P.M., MAGOLDA, & M.B., BAXTER-MAGOLDA (Eds.), *Contested issues in student affairs: Diverse perspectives and respectful dialogue* (pp. 61 – 73). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- BARNETT, B., & FELTEN, P. (2016). *Intersectionality in Action: A Guide for Faculty and Campus Leaders for Creating Inclusive Classrooms and Institutions*. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus.
- BELENKY, M. F., & STAUNTON, A. (1998). *Women and transformative learning: Connected ways of knowing and developing public voice*. In J., MEZIROW, V., MARSICK, C.A., SMYTH, C., WIESSNER (Eds.), *Changing adult frames of reference: Proceedings of First National Transformative Learning Conference* (pp. 9–15). New York: Teachers College.
- BELENKY, M.F., & STANTON, A.V. (2000). *Inequality, development and connected knowing*. In J., Mezirow (Ed.) & Associates, *Learning as Transformation* (pp. 3- 34). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- BELLO, B.G. (2020). *Intersezionalità. Teorie e pratiche tra diritto e società*. Milano: FrancoAngeli
- BROOKFIELD, S.D. (2017). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher. Second Edition*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- BROWN, M., BROWN, R.S., & NANDEDKAR, A. (2019). Transformational leadership theory and exploring the perceptions of diversity management in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Theory & Practice*, 19(7).
- BUTLER, J. (2014). Replacing the cracked mirror: The challenge for diversity and inclusion. *Diversity & Democracy*, 17 (4), 6.
- CALDIN, R. (2022). L'arte dell'educare e dell'includere: riconoscimenti, attese, responsabilità. In R. Caldin (Ed.), *Pedagogia speciale e didattica speciale*. Vol. 2 (pp. 21-88). Trento: Erickson.

- CHO, H.Y., & FERREE, M.M. (2010). Practicing intersectionality in sociological research: a critical analysis of inclusions, interactions, and institutions in the study of inequalities. *Sociological Theory*, 28, 129 – 149.
- COLLINS, P.H., & BILGE, S. (2016). *Intersectionality*. New York: Polity.
- COLOMBO, E., & REBUGHINI, E. (2016). Intersectionality and beyond. *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia*, 3/2016, 439-460.
- COOK-SATHER, A., BOVILL, C., & FELTEN, P. (2014). *Engaging students as partners in learning and teaching: a guide for faculty*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- CRENSHAW, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago legal forum, feminism in the law: Theory, practice, and criticism*, vol. 1989 (139 – 167). Chicago: University of Chicago Legal Forum.
- CRENSHAW, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, Identity politics and violence against women in color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43 (6), 1241 – 1299.
- CRENSHAW, K.W., RITCHIE, A.J., ANSPACH, R., GILMER, R., & HARRIS, L. (2015). *Say Her Name: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women*. African American Policy Forum, Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies, Columbia Law School.
- DE ANNA, L. (2014). *Pedagogia Speciale*. Roma: Carocci Editore.
- ESCHENBACHER, S. (2020). Transformative learning and the hidden dynamics of transformation. *Reflective Practice*, 21(6), 759-772.
- ETMANSKI, C. (2007). *Unsettled: Embodying transformative learning and intersectionality in higher education: popular theatre as research with international graduate students* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Victoria).
- ETTLING, D. (2012). Educator as change agent: Ethics of transformative learning. In E.W., TAYLOR, & P., CRANTON (Eds.), *The Handbook of Transformative Learning* (pp. 536-551). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- FABBRI, L., & ROMANO, A. (2017). *Metodi per l'apprendimento trasformativo. Casi, modelli, teorie*. Milano: Mondadori.
- Fabbri, L., & Romano, A. (2021). *Intersezionalità e pratiche professionali*. In G., DEL GOBBO, & P., FEDERIGHI (Eds), *Professioni dell'educazione e della formazione: orientamenti, criteri e approfondimenti per una tassonomia* (pp. 197-209). Firenze: Editpress.
- FABBRI, L., BRACCI, F., & ROMANO, A. (2021). Apprendimento trasformativo, ricerca collaborativa e approccio *practice-based*. Una proposta per lo sviluppo professionale dell'insegnante. *Annali Online della Didattica e della Formazione Docente*, 13(21), 68-88.
- FENWICK, T., & EDWARDS, R. (2014). Networks of knowledge, matters of learning, and criticality in higher education. *Higher Education*, 67, 35–50.
- FISHER-BORNE, M., CAIN, J. M., & MARTIN, S. L. (2015). From mastery to accountability: Cultural humility as an alternative to cultural competence. *Social Work Education*, 2, 165.
- FLEMING, T. (2019). *Connected Knowing in Belenky and Honneth: Implications for Transformative Learning Theory*. In T., FLEMING, A., KOKKOS, & F., FINNEGAN (Eds.), *European Perspectives on Transformation Theory* (pp. 29 - 42). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- GALINSKY, A. D., KU, G., & WANG, C. S. (2005). Perspective-Taking and Self-Other Overlap: Fostering Social Bonds and Facilitating Social Coordination. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 8(2), 109–124.
- GARCÍA, S.B., & ORTIZ, A.A. (2013). Intersectionality as a Framework for Transformative Research in Special Education. *Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners*, 13 (2), 32-47.

- HAMRAIE, A. (2013). Designing collective access: A feminist disability theory of universal design. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 33 (4).
- HANCOCK, A.-M. (2007). When multiplication doesn't equal quick addition: Examining intersectionality as a research paradigm. *Perspectives on Politics*, 5 (1), 63 – 79.
- HANSON, C., & FLETCHER, A.J. (2021). Beyond the trinity of gender, race, and class: Further exploring intersectionality in adult education. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, 12 (2), 135-148.
- HARPER, S.R. (2009). Race-conscious student engagement practices and equitable distribution of enriching educational experiences. *Liberal Education*, 95 (4), 38 – 45.
- HATTIE, J., & CLARKE, S. (2019). *Visible learning: Feedback*. Routledge.
- HEARN, M. C. (2012). Positionality, intersectionality, and power: Socially locating the higher education teacher in multicultural education. *Multicultural Education Review*, 4, 38–59.
- HINSDALE, M.J. (2016). *Relational Pedagogy*. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education.
- HOGGAN, C. (2016). Transformative Learning as a Metatheory: Definition, Criteria, and Typology. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 2016, 66 (1), 57-75.
- HOOKS, B. (2010). *Teaching critical thinking. Practical wisdom*. New York: Routledge.
- HUNT, V., & ZAJICEK, A. (2008). Strategic intersectionality and the needs of disadvantaged populations: an intersectional analysis of organizational inclusion and participation. *Race, Gender, & Class*, 15(83 – 4), 180 – 203.
- JOHANSSON, C., & FELTEN, P. (2014). *Transforming students. Fulfilling the Promise of Higher Education*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- KRAMLICH, D.J., & ROMANO, A. (2020). Leveraging (the potential of) the multiethnic classroom: Using the constructs of cultural humility and safety to provide belonging for Cross Cultural Kid (CCK) refugees. *Educational Reflective Practices*, 1/2020, 146-178.
- LEVAC, L., STEINSTR, D. MCMURTRY, L., HANSON, C., BLAIKIE, G., & MUCINE, D. (2018). *Learning across Indigenous and Western knowledge systems and intersectionality: Reconciling research approaches*. SSHRC Knowledge Synthesis Report. University of Guelph.
- LIJUNGBLAD, A.-L. (2021). Pedagogical Relational Teachership (PeRT) – a multi-relational perspective. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 25(7), 860-876.
- LOPEZ, E. C., & BURSZTYN, A. M. (2013). Future challenges and opportunities: Toward culturally responsive training in school psychology. *Psychology in the Schools*, 50(3), 212-228.
- MÄLKKI, K., MÄKINEN, M., & FORSELL, J. (2022). Revitalizing Reflection in Teacher Education: A Digital Tool for Reflection as a Gentle Trigger for Transformation. In A., NICOLAIDES, S., ESCHENBACHER, P. T., BUERGELT, Y., GILPIN-JACKSON, M., WELCH, & M., MISAWA (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Learning for Transformation* (pp. 301 - 332). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- MERRIAM, S.B., & BIEREMA, L.L. (2014). *Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- MEZIRROW, J., & ASSOCIATES (2000), *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- MEZIRROW, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- MEZIRROW, J., TAYLOR, E.W., & ASSOCIATES (2009). *Transformative Learning in practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- MITCHELL, D., JR., SIMMONS, C.Y., & GREYERBIEHL, I.A. (Eds.) (2014). *Intersectionality and Higher Education: Theory, research, and praxis*. New York: Peter Lang.
- MOSHER, D. K., HOOK, J. N., CAPTARI, L. E., DAVIS, D. E., DEBLAERE, C., & OWEN, J. (2017). Cultural humility: A therapeutic framework for engaging diverse clients. *Practice Innovations*, 2(4), 221–233.

- MURA, A. (2016). *Diversità e inclusione*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- MURA, A. (2022). *Pedagogia Speciale: attualità e scenari possibili tra epistemologia e dimensioni operative*. In R. Caldin (a cura di), *Pedagogia speciale e didattica speciale*. Vol. 2 (pp. 89-98). Trento: Erickson.
- NASH, J.C. (2008). Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review*, 89, 1 – 15.
- NELSON, C.E. (1996). Student diversity requires different approaches to college teaching, even in math and science. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 40 (2), 165 – 175.
- NICHOLS, S., & STAHL, G. (2019). Intersectionality in higher education research: a systematic literature review, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 38:6, 1255-1268.
- POPE, R.L., REYNOLDS, A.L., & MUELLER, J.A. (2014). *Creating multicultural change on campus*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- REEVE, J. (2013). How students create motivationally supportive learning environments for themselves: The concept of agentic engagement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105, 579–595.
- REEVE, J., & SHIN, S.H. (2020). How teachers can support students' agentic engagement. *Theory Into Practice*, 59:2, 150-161.
- RIVIÈRE, D. (2005). Identities and intersectionalities: performance, power and the possibilities for multicultural education. *Research in Drama Education*, 10 (3), 341-354.
- ROMANO, A. (2020). *Diversity & Disability Management. Esperienze di inclusione sociale*. Milano: Mondadori.
- ROMANO, A. (2021). Il potenziale emancipativo della ricerca trasformativa. *CQIA RIVISTA*, 34, 51-66.
- ROMANO, A. (2022). Metodologie performative per lo sviluppo professionale dei docenti. *Italian Journal of Special Education for Inclusion*, 10(1), 225-238.
- RULLO, M., VISINTIN, E.P., MILANI, S., ROMANO, A., & FABBRI, L. (2022). Stay humble and enjoy diversity: the interplay between intergroup contact and cultural humility on prejudice. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 87, 169-182.
- SOUTHWORTH, J. (2022). Bridging critical thinking and transformative learning: The role of perspective-taking. *Theory and Research in education*, 20 (1), 44 - 63.
- TADDEI, A. (2020). *Come fenici. Donne con disabilità e vie per l'emancipazione*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- TAYLOR, E.W., & CRANTON, P. (2012). *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- TISDELL, E. (2011). The wisdom of webs a-weaving: Adult education and the paradoxes of complexity in changing times. In E.J. Tisdell, & A.L. Swartz (Eds.), *Adult Education and the pursuit of wisdom* (pp. 5-14). *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, N. 131. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Multicultural School System: lens on problem-based learning as a method for in training teachers

Mario Giampaolo
Nicolina Bosco

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has made explicit the socio-technological gap of Italian students and their families. Schools and teachers feel more than ever the need to reduce these differences, to find, as well as the right tool, effective design models, and methodologies to improve inclusion. The need for a trained faculty has never been stronger. This contribution describes the implementation of an online teaching model used in a training course that involved 23 teachers from schools in Tuscany, with the aim of promoting inclusion in highly complex multicultural educational institutions. Problem-based learning and case-based learning are the approaches implemented in the model discussed herein. The online training activities were carried out through the following steps: 1. Presentation of a case study, based on real problems of professionals' life; 2. Discussion in a virtual community about knowledge and previous professional experience; 3. Access to in-depth theoretical materials; 4. Proposal of an individual solution strategy. Data has been collected in the virtual environment. Results highlight the effectiveness of the model and the challenges facing multicultural schools in this period of emergency.

Key Words: Problem-based Learning; Teachers' Training; Multicultural School

13.1 Introduction

In this work, we will describe the implementation of an on-line problem-based model during the realization of a training course entitled: *Improving the quality of inclusion in high-complexity multicultural Tuscan schools*

through peer teaching activities and tutoring among teachers (FAMI Fund - Asylum Migration Integration Fund, Axis II), aimed at increasing the quality of school inclusion.

13.1.1 Theoretical framework

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is a learner-centered approach that allows the application of theories and skills to an authentic problem and the development of a possible solution. Since 1980, when this approach was first proposed in the McMaster Medical School in Canada (Savin-Baden, 2007), different authors described its characteristics (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980; Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Savery, 2006; Walker, Leary, Hmelo-Silver, & Ertmer, 2015; Dolmans, Loyens, Marcq, & Gijbels, 2016). Hmelo-Silver (2004) describes PBL as an instructional method in which students develop problem-solving skills trying to answer a complex problem. After understanding the problem, they can engage in self-directed learning because they understand what they need to learn to solve the problem. Once acquired new knowledge this can be applied to propose solution strategies.

The characteristics of the authentic Problem Based Learning (aPBL) (Barrows, & Wee Keng Neo, 2010) inspire the model presented in this paper. For the aPBL learning means managing problems that happen during the work. Authentic problems are chosen on the base of frequency, relevance, and importance in a field of application. Problems presented to students have to allow a free inquiry, favoring a practice or developing problem-solving skills. Students apply what they already know with the aims to comprehend and solve problems and during the learning process recognize the information they need. Using a variety of resources from different disciplines, new knowledge related to the problem is acquired through a self-directed learning process. Self-directed learning allows developing responsibility in students that are not dependent from the teacher anymore. New knowledge is structured by problems, facilitating the recall and the application in future problems. Students monitor and evaluate their progress in learning, and they also learn to give constructive feedback to the other members of the group. The learning process implies interactive discussion among students to share knowledge, ideas, and opinions. Doing so they develop team working, problem solving and

interpersonal communication skills.

Similar to the previous model is the Delisle's model of PBL (Delisle, 1997). It has the scope to allow the learning of core knowledge, to acquire the ability to use knowledge effectively in relation to problematic situations, to improve knowledge and develop strategies to cope with future problems. The model consists of a logic process that allows students to analyze and solve a challenging situation. Students connect themselves with the problem, analyze it, realize a task and evaluate the task. Developing his model Delisle defines the advantages of the PBL. It allows engagement of students, interdisciplinary learning, possibility for students to choose what to learn, collaborative dimension of learning, and increase of the educational quality.

The third model that composes the theoretical framework is called the Dutch model and was developed during the '70 at the University of Limburg in Maastricht (Schmidt, Vermeulen, & Van der Molen, 2006). The model presents seven steps that begin from the analysis of a problem to arrive at the individuation of contents that need to be studied or that have to be collected. These seven steps are:

1. clarify terms and concept not immediately understandable;
2. define the problem;
3. analyze the problem;
4. make a systematic list of explanation that are the result of phase three;
5. formulate learning objectives;
6. collect additional information outside the group of students;
7. synthesize and test new acquired information.

As different models of PBL have been developed for face-to-face learning so several approaches have been designed for on-line learning. PBL online is defined as groups of students that work synchronously or asynchronously to solve or manage a problem (Shani, Guerci, & Cirella, 2014). Different models of PBL online are briefly described in the table below (table 13.1).

Table 13.1 Types of online problem-based learning adapted from Savin-Baden, 2007, p. 31.

Type of online PBL	Description
Single module online at distance	This typology is designed as 1-12 week stand-alone modules developed for a

	specific focus.
Single module blended (campus and distance)	This typology provides flexibility and support, but also develops self-direction in inquiry.
Blended program	This typology is a full degree program with a focus on students' support during face-to-face seminars
Content management systems (CMS) for PBL online	This typology is a content management system developed to support PBL

13.1.2 The online problem-based learning model

The online Problem-Based Learning model proposed in this contribution (see figure 13.1) consists of three phases. The first is called *activation*. Students can read a scenario that presents a challenge for the reader or ask for the solution of a problem. In this phase students are invited to join a web forum in which they can use their prior knowledge to discuss the problem and share their understandings. Students can compare their thoughts with those of their colleagues in this dedicated virtual space. In the second phase called *appropriation*, students engage themselves in a self-directed learning process.

They can access a database of selected resources provided by the teacher or they can use the web and the on-line library database to find new material autonomously. The third phase called *reflection* allows the students to return to the initial problem on the basis of the new information gathered. They have to complete an e-tivities in which they have to propose more structured solutions of the problem. In the same phase they complete a questionnaire that helps them to understand how to transfer what they have learned in their professional context.

In practice, the authors of this paper applied this model on Moodle using resources and activities of the learning content management system. In the activation phase, learners read a written story using the resource page, then they have the opportunity to share their previous knowledge related to the story with other colleagues using a discussion forum. In the forum each participant has to write a brief post and comment at minimum two other participants' posts. We thought this specific task useful to generate interaction. In the appropriation phase it is possible to deliver participants the resources related to the core content of the module or to give them the possibility to search academic databases or the web to find learning

resources. In this second case once found resources participants had to explain the significance of the resource found posting in a second discussion forum. In the reflection phase we propose an e-tivity, a form to complete, that gives learners a structure to propose a possible strategy to challenge the problem and finally feedback about how to apply what they have learned in their work context.

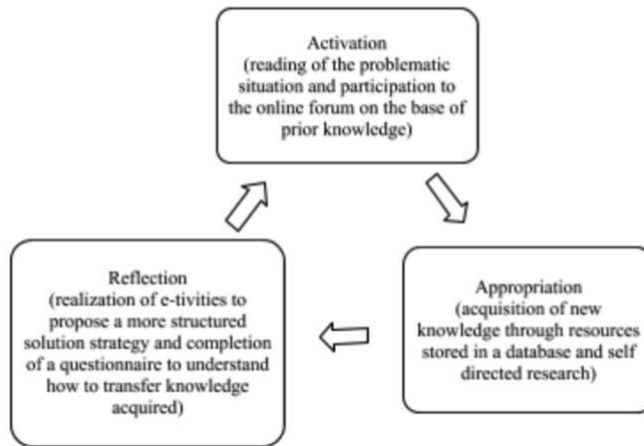


Figure 13.1 The on-line problem-based learning model used in the course

13.2 Methods and Procedures

The training course has been conducted using participatory methodologies based on conversation and dialogical confrontation (Giampaolo & Fabbri, 2019). The same structure has been implemented during the online sessions, focus of this work. The online sessions have been realized in asynchronous mode and involved 23 participants, teachers at schools contexts, in a virtual community. In the virtual community, participants discussed a critical event related to their own professional activities, implemented their own knowledge through in-depth theoretical research about the topic proposed and, at the end of the process, developed an individual strategy to solve the problem (Bosco, Giampaolo, Orefice, 2020).

Participants were asked to work on critical incidents or on significant instances of their work activities (Fabbri & Romano, 2017) in the virtual learning environment. Critical incident as a research method (Lipu, Williamson & Lloyd, 2007) have been used because *“it supports a straightforward qualitative approach, it offers clearly defined guidelines for data collection and analysis”* and, most important, it is focused on real-life professional experiences (Hughes, Williamson & Lloyd, p. 52, 2007). The online sessions are build using the online problem-based learning approach (Giampaolo & Fabbri, 2019) in which each participant:

- read an ad hoc scenario based on real-professional life (end emerged from the training course);
- share the opinion with others in a specific forum space using the previous knowledge;
- increase knowledge using the theoretical background materials;
- proposes an individual solution strategy to the problem, defining the actions to be carried out, the aims to be pursued and the social actors to be involved (Bosco, Giampaolo, Orefice, 2020).

The scenario contains two specific parts: the first describes the context and the challenge; the second proposes a challenge which needs to be solved. An example of the critical incident used in the virtual community is shown below:

13.2.1 Context

You work as a teacher in a high school. The school is located in a peripheral neighborhood of a 100.000 inhabitants city in the center of Italy. Students in the school are around 200 that have different cultural backgrounds. Most of them can be considered as second-generation immigrants with origins from Asian and African countries. Also, the percentage of students with disabilities is high, around 30% of the whole. School is very devoted to inclusion and every year the headmaster employs a lot of funds for activities to foster cultural integration. The most appreciated activity is a great show coordinated by a team composed by 6 teachers of which you are the leader.

13.2.2 Challenge

Two days before the show Jasmine's father Abdul, a Muslim 64 years old coming from Nigeria man, told you that his daughter will no longer take part in the show, because "...she is a girl and is inappropriate for her to act in front of all the students. As coordinator of the show, you need to find a strategy to solve this situation.

The implementation of the online PBL model provides a discussion among participants. In the virtual environment, teachers who belong to different schools and to different working groups can first reflect individually on the challenge and then with others.

Reflections collected in the discussion forum have been analysed using the lens of the interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, Flowers & Osborn, 1997) in order to explore how participants, create meaning about their experience in the virtual community using the online PBL model. Analysis of the data collected has been conducted as follows (Ben Hagai., Whitlatch & Zurbriggen, 2018): authors singularly read the text transcribed from the discussion forum and labelled the single sentence, used as a unit of analysis, when considered meaningful. Then he or she merged the labels in emerging themes. The themes identified by the single author have been then compared by the authors. The analysis led to the definition of two main themes: 1) promoting collaboration between school and family; 2) managing conflict.

13.2.3 Findings

In this section we describe the two main themes emerging from qualitative analysis. The table below (table 13.2) shows themes, their frequencies, and some examples of significant statements emerging from data. In particular, frequency reports how many times that specific theme recurred in the data analysis.

Table 13.2 Description of the qualitative data

Theme	Frequency	Example of significant statements
Promoting collaboration between school and family	9	...the dialogue between teachers and parents is a fundamental and complex moment in school life.

		...making the relationship between family and school simpler and more effective is possible if we build a mutual relationship of trust to guarantee a multicultural school characterized by clear rules and resources, understandable and shareable.
Managing conflict	5	I think that making a relationship with others you need tools for decoding situations and needs, in order to: reading and understanding the behaviours and events concerning them (which does not mean sharing them); looking for the most appropriate answers to "new needs"

The main themes emerging from data can be considered as the two sides of the same topic because represent the positive and negative aspects which characterize the multicultural school contexts. The scenarios allow participants to reflect on multicultural schools and its characteristics. Multiculturalism requires teachers to be prepared in order to: 1) promote a positive learning climate between students and 2) use specific competencies to manage conflicts. Schools, in fact, are the first institution attended by multi-ethnic students and their families. In this scenario, schools and teachers need to be able to identify strategies and tools to promote social inclusion. Some aspects, such as mutual enjoyment and sense of belonging can foster a positive school climate in schools and outside the classes and help teachers build an educational path that leads students to be open minded, and to promote intercultural dialogue and tolerance in multicultural contexts.

Another important aspect emerging from data corresponds to the management of the conflicts. This theme is referred to the complex relationships in which are involved all the social actors characterizing schools. The theme "managing conflict" has to do with the relationships among 1) students, 2) teachers and students, 3) teachers and families. In multicultural schools, teachers need to be competent also in building new relations with families. Participants principally highlighted the difficulties in interacting with parents, in particular with those who belong to a different culture. The socio-linguistic barriers may generate rigid boundaries, tensions and conflicts - latent and/or manifests - which can affect the success of the foreign student in his /her educational path. Each situation

needs to be understood and require specific solutions which can be shared with families in order to promote an inclusive multicultural school.

13.3 Conclusions

The online PBL model has been implemented in several training contexts from our research group. In this paper, we focused on the application of the online PBL model within a training course aimed at promoting multicultural competencies for teachers who work in multi-ethnic schools, in order to promote inclusive schools especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data show that the participation in the online course allows teachers to be more aware about the multicultural contexts. In particular, the structure of the model allows them to self-reflect on their own professional life and problems which characterize their work. Starting from this specific aspect, teachers had the possibility to learn how to manage problems that happen during their work, which are principally related to the emerging conflicts among students and parents coming from different cultures. The application of the authentic problems allows a free inquiry, favours the reflection of a new practice, and the development of problem-solving skills. In fact, teachers apply what they already know in order to solve the problem reported in online environmental learning and, through a process of analysis and learning, to comprehend how to solve the challenge. During the learning process, they recognize the information they need using a variety of online resources, such as the forum and the theoretical materials made available by researchers in the online environment. The materials provided and the discussion among professionals also coming from different schools, generating new shared knowledge that can be applied in the professional contexts. Thus, the online PBL model leads them to learn and develop effective intervention tools in order to: 1) work with disorienting dilemmas related to multicultural schools; 2) apply investigation procedures to manage the most complex cases emerging from their everyday professional life; 3) develop useful actions aimed at supporting individuals, groups, institutions, organizations through a multicultural perspective.

Considering the flexibility and the adaptability of the model, we can argue that the online PBL model can be applied in different training contexts and can be used with different professionals. Other elements of strengths can be detected. In particular, the online PBL model leads the opportunities to discuss in the online environment and, through the discussion, professionals can share opinions and strategies referred to real problems. The critical reflection that emerged from this process of analysis and learning fosters a “situated knowledge” that can effectively respond to professionals’ needs also which occurred in contexts of emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic that we are facing still today.

References

- BARROWS, H. S., & TAMBLYN, R. M. (1980). *Problem-based learning: An approach to medical education*. New York: Springer.
- BARROWS, H.S., & WEE KENG NEO, L. (2010). *Principles and practice of aPBL*. Springfield: Southern Illinois University School of Medicine.
- BEN HAGAI, E., WHITLATCH, A., & ZURBRIGGEN, E. L. (2018). “We didn’t talk about the conflict”: The birthright trip’s influence on Jewish Americans’ understanding of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 24(2), 139-149.
- BOSCO, N., & GIAMPAOLO, M., OREFICE, C. (2020). Us and them. An exploratory research on teachers’ representations in multicultural school contexts. *Educational Reflective Practices*, 1, 132-145..
- DELISLE, R. (1997). *How to use problem-based learning in the classroom*. Alexandria: Association for supervision and curriculum development.
- DOLMANS, D. H. J. M., LOYENS, S. M. M., MARCQ, H., & GIJBELS, D. (2016). Deep and surface learning in problem-based learning: a review of the literature. *Advances in Health Sciences Education*, 21(5), 1087–1112.
- FABBRI, L., & ROMANO, A. (2017), *Metodi per l’apprendimento trasformativo. Casi, modelli, teorie*. Roma: Carocci.
- GIAMPAOLO, M., & FABBRI, L. (2019). Online Problem Based Learning for the Professional Development of Educators. *International Workshop on Higher Education Learning Methodologies and Technologies Online* (pp. 41-53). New York: Springer.
- HMELO-SILVER, C. E. (2004), Problem-based learning: What and how do students learn?. *Educational Psychology Review*, 16(3), 235-266.
- HUGHES, H. (2007). Critical incident technique. In LIPU S., WILLIAMSON K., & LLOYD A. (Eds.), *Exploring methods in information literacy research* (pp.49-66). Chandos Publishing.
- LIPU S., WILLIAMSON K., & LLOYD A. (2007). *Exploring methods in information literacy research*. Chandos Publishing.
- SAVERY, J. R. (2006). Overview of Problem-based Learning: Definitions and Distinctions. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-based Learning*, 1(1), 9-20.
- SAVIN-BADEN, M. (2007). *A practical guide to problem-based learning online*. New York: Routledge.
- SCHMIDT, H.G., VERMEULEN, L., & VAN DER MOLEN, H.T. (2006). Longterm effects of problem-based learning: a comparison of competencies acquired by graduates of a problem-based and a conventional medical school. *Medical Education*, 40, 562-567.
- SHANI, A., GUERCI, M., & CIRELLA, S. (2014). *Collaborative management research. Teoria, metodi, esperienze*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- SMITH, J. A., FLOWERS, P., & OSBORN, M. (1997). Interpretative phenomenological analysis and health psychology. In L., Yardley (Ed.), *Material Discourses and Health-* London, UK: Routledge.
- WALKER, A. E., LEARY, H., HMELO-SILVER, C. E., & ERTMER, P. A. (2015). *Essential readings in problem-based learning*. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press.

Cultural and religious plurality in Italian schools: Countering the threat of violent 'radicalisation' through an intercultural and interreligious approach

*Mohammed Khalid Rhazzali
Valentina Schiavinato*

In international documents and guidelines, the educational and school environment has been identified as one of the privileged contexts for policies and interventions to prevent violent 'radicalisation' processes. The greatest emphasis is placed, in the most recent documents, on the promotion of an educational method based on open and peaceful dialogue, reflexivity and critical thinking, which helps to connote the school as a 'laboratory of democracy'. The chapter initially dwells on the very concept of 'radicalisation' and its use in political, media, but also scientific-academic discourses, proposing some reflections on its explanatory scope and on the 'risks' it introduces, through the conveyance of automatic and stereotyped associations and 'victimisation' processes. We then examine the case of Italian schools, characterised by cultural and religious plurality and by a significant presence of Muslim pupils, which leads to the request, coming from various sources (from the families of these pupils, but not only), to propose a new way of addressing the religious theme within school walls. In this sense, if it is possible to trace the proposal and implementation of virtuous projects and initiatives aimed at promoting an intercultural approach to study and the 'experimentation' of cultural and religious differences in daily life inside and outside school, nevertheless, at a national level, they lack organicity and systematicity, being more related to the initiative of individual school institutions. Lastly, the chapter goes on to analyse some project proposals recently proposed around these issues.

Key Words: Radicalisation; Intercultural Approach; Religious Pluralism; School.

14.1 Introduction

After 9/11, as is well known, a series of jihadist terrorist attacks took place in Europe: in March 2004 in Madrid and Brussels and, in the following years, mostly in various cities in France and the United Kingdom, as well as in Belgium, Spain, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands. Following these events, the issues of violent 'radicalisation' and the 'terrorist threat' pervaded political and media discourse, internationally and nationally. The international bodies and national governments, with the involvement of public and private bodies and organisations, have mobilised to draw up guidelines and policy documents and to implement projects to prevent and counter violent 'radicalisation'. They have been addressed to the various fields of public life, such as places of worship (mosques), prisons and the web, considered to be the most sensitive contexts, but also to educational environments and schools where young people, deemed to be the population segment at greatest risk, spend their time and train. The promulgation of policy documents and the planning and implementation of programmes have also called the attention of the academic world, which has been involved in the discussion of concepts - first and foremost the very concept of 'radicalisation' and its association with the religious, and Islamic, dimension in particular -, of the aetiological and intervention models exposed or implied in these documents and projects, and, again, of the relevance and effectiveness of the measures planned and implemented.

The contribution firstly gives an overview of the international and European scientific debate on the concept of violent 'radicalisation'. The Italian case will then be introduced with the presentation of some statistical data on cultural and religious plurality in schools. The regulations on the teaching of the Catholic religion (IRC¹) in state and paritarian schools and the policy and guideline documents about prevention will be discussed and the assumptions and models implicit or declared in some projects implemented in Italian schools will be analysed. Finally, in the light of what has been described, the contribution will offer some concluding reflections

¹ IRC stands for 'Insegnamento della Religione Cattolica' i.e. 'teaching of the Catholic religion'.

on the model of prevention of violent 'radicalisation' in schools based on the principles of interculturalism and the promotion of active citizenship².

14.2 Theoretical framework and European guidelines on countering and preventing violent 'radicalisation' in educational contexts

14.2.1 'Radicalisation' and violence: for a conceptual clarification

Coolsaet (2019) recently traced the birth and spread of the concept of radicalisation: "it was born as a political construct, first raised within European police and intelligence circles, boosted by the 9/11 attacks and finally embraced in May 2004 in an internal EU counterterrorism document" (*ivi*, p. 30). Since then, it has been used regularly, both in international and European institutional documents, in political (Kundnani 2012), media (Hörnqvist and Flyghad 2012) and common-sense discourse, but also in the scientific literature. The concept, however, retains strong traits of opacity and vagueness. Even academic texts often lack an explicit definition of what is meant by 'radicalisation' (Sedgwick 2010). In a general sense, institutional documents describe 'radicalisation' as the process, of variable length, that leads a person to approach and embrace 'extremist' ideas (in the social, economic, political, or religious spheres) that, in turn, could (not necessarily) lead to an aspiration to change the social order or to take actions that imply the use of violence for their affirmation. They also use the term 'radicalised', referring to people who have embarked on this path. In the use of the concept, however, some basic criticalities have been identified, with respect to its very definition, explanatory scope, and 'operationalisation'. Although it has also been used in scientific language, the concept of 'radicalisation' has been acknowledged to be

² The contribution is part of a long-term research experience, still in progress, which aims to explore how public institutions (with particular reference to the prison, hospital and school contexts) deal with the challenge posed in everyday life by the growing cultural and religious plurality of the Italian society. The reflections here proposed have been devised starting from an analysis of the scientific literature, institutional documentation (especially European Union and Italian State measures) and specific documentation on the projects proposed for schools, and from the re-elaboration of data collected by M. K. Rhazzali in the course of ethnographic work during his multi-year research activity. Some of the here proposed reflections were also published in an earlier contribution by the same authors (Rhazzali and Schiavinato 2021).

'simultaneously too narrow and too wide' (De Backer et al. 2019, p. 11) and, consequently, 'unfit for scientific purposes' (ibid., p. 51). The authors consider it 'too wide' because, being too vague, it refers to very different processes that can be traced back to different causes, on which researchers, on an international scale, have not yet reached a consensus. At the same time, it is assessed as 'too narrow' because it is specifically traced back to jihadist ideology and not systematically compared with other forms of radicalisation and switching to ideologised violence, as in the case of the political 'radicalisation' of the extreme right and the extreme left. With respect to the latter argument, since the concept of 'radicalisation' is often reintroduced in association with the Islamic world, it would lead to widespread prejudice and trigger or maintain stigmatisation and discrimination (De Backer et al. 2019; Macaluso 2016), bringing further distress and suffering to the labelled persons and, in this sense, even proving counterproductive (Lafranchi 2021; De Backer et al. 2019). These approaches, moreover, seem to underlie a linear model, which develops through the transition from attitude to behaviour change. De Backer and colleagues (2019) have developed, in this regard, the metaphor of the 'conveyor belt model', which illustrates the position of governments and institutional bodies based on "the assumption that extreme ideas constitute a logical first step towards terrorism and that individuals with grievances will first adopt extreme ideologies before committing acts of violence" (*ivi*, p. 50). However, the observation of 'real' cases has shown that this equation is far from automatic: embracing 'radical' or 'extremist' ideas does not necessarily lead to violent actions or acts of terrorism. On the other hand, those who commit violent and terrorist acts have not necessarily gone through a process of religious 'radicalisation' nor do they have a deep religious adherence or knowledge of Islam. As for the aetiology of the phenomenon, there is still no unanimous consensus, either in institutional documents or in the scientific literature. Some meta-analyses and systematic reviews (Borum 2011a, 2011b; Feddes and Gallucci 2015) have highlighted, in fact, how, beside aetiological models that focus mainly on individual processes, others have been proposed that focus on demographic, social, economic, and political factors.

More sophisticated positions argue for the need to develop multifactorial and multilevel models (Fadil et al. 2019; Guolo 2017; De Backer et al. 2019)

that take into account the complexity of the process. Khosrokhavar (2014) emphasises that there is no typical profile of the 'radicalised'; rather, the author calls for a focus on a careful analysis of the subjective dimensions, which he associates with processes of victimisation, linked to dynamics of exclusion and discrimination experienced on a social and economic level, which turn into hatred and are embodied in the use of violence. Benslama (2016), a Tunisian-born French psychoanalyst, also studies the deep dynamics of 'radicalisation', which he sees as a 'symptom' of suffering, which can also affect middle-class youth and not only 'the oppressed'. It is linked to the feeling of a lack of 'rootedness' and to an identity reaction that is achieved in the construction of a new self-image as a 'good Muslim'. Finally, also in relation to the operational models of prevention and counteraction, it has been highlighted how methods based on the formulation of check-lists of 'typical' signal behaviours or sentinel events have shown 'in the field' their limits and unreliability in recognising and distinguishing 'cases' of 'radicalisation' with violent outcomes, from 'simple' approaches to 'radical' positions or, again, to changes in personal or social life that have nothing to do with 'radicalisation' processes. On the contrary, they run the risk of proving counterproductive, fuelling the polarisation of ideas and a persecutory experience of what is perceived as a 'radicalisation machine' (De Backer et al. 2019).

14.2.2 Institutional measures on preventing 'radicalisation' in education: the school as a 'field of intervention'

Within a framework of recognition of the complexity and multifactoriality of 'radicalisation' processes and their expression in forms of violence, educational practices can become effective and far-seeing prevention strategies as they act on two macro-factors that have been recognised to underlie 'radicalisation': "resentment against society and the need for recognition" (Ghosh and Chan 2018, p. 337; Butler 2015). Already in the 2005 document "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council concerning Terrorist recruitment: addressing the factors contributing to violent radicalisation", the European Union identifies the educational context, and above all schools, as privileged areas for developing projects to prevent 'radicalisation'. The same document also promotes two lines of action considered fundamental: on the one hand,

"Integration, Inter-cultural Dialogue and Dialogue with Religions" (p. 6) and, on the other hand, "dialogue between States and Religions" (p. 7). A further important step, on 17 March 2015, was the signing of the "Paris Declaration" (Council of Europe 2015) on "Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education", by the European Union Ministers responsible for Education, and the Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. This document reaffirms the values ("respect for human dignity, freedom - including freedom of expression-, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights", *ibidem*) and principles ("pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men", *ibidem*) underpinning the European area. It also emphasises the strategic role of schools and teachers in promoting them in order "to prevent and tackle marginalisation, intolerance, racism and radicalisation and to preserve a framework of equal opportunities for all" (*ibidem*). Within this framework, other documents have been released that propose specific programmes, guidelines, intervention strategies and activities aimed at schools, teachers and students (Nordbruch, 2016; Nordbruch & Sieckelinck, 2018; Radicalisation Awareness Network, 2015; Davies & Limbada, 2019; Lenos & Keltjens, 2017, 2016; Young et al., 2014; Stieckelinck & Gielen, 2018). On the impulse of academic reflection and the guidelines of international and national organisations, therefore, a model based on a holistic educational approach is promoted, which builds the school as a democratic laboratory, based on open dialogue, reflexivity and critical thinking, on the freedom (also from an emotional point of view) to express different points of view, in a peaceful manner. From a theoretical perspective, Macaluso (2016) suggests, this approach can find support in the literature on peace education, according to which "education can play a significant role in mitigating conflict at three levels: [...] It can strengthen social cohesion and citizen trust in institutions (structural), improve interactions among students (behavioural), and promote inclusiveness and respect for diversity (attitudinal)" (*ibid.*). This educational method, according to the author, can provide the tools to resist the 'typical pull factors' of radicalisation processes.

14.3 The Italian context

Among the European countries involved in the elaboration and implementation of measures to prevent violent 'radicalisation' based on intercultural and interreligious dialogue, we also count Italy, despite the fact that it has not been directly affected by acts of terrorism and is considered to be only marginally concerned by violent 'radicalisation' processes, compared to other European countries. Italy, in fact, stands out for what has been defined by Renzo Guolo (2018; Di Motoli 2018) as a "beneficial delay" in the violent manifestation of jihadist 'radicalisation' processes and for a more limited number of 'radicalised', 'militants' or 'sympathisers' than other European countries, such as France, Belgium, Great Britain and Germany. It would be explained by some of its peculiar conditions: an urban and socio-economic landscape of small and medium-sized towns and a "polycentrism of production" that make it less affected by phenomena of urban marginalisation and extreme economic and social distress; its relatively recent history as a country of migration; the characteristics of a plural Italian Islam, whereby different origins and different religious schools make it slower and more difficult to adhere to the transnational ideology on which 'extremist' and violent ideas and actions are based. In this framework, therefore, the recommendations seem perfectly appropriate that support the importance of a preventive (rather than repressive and securitarian) approach, centred on schools and focused on the valorisation of cultural and religious plurality, and also on removing conditions of inequality, marginalisation, and discrimination that can lead to frustration and suffering, and potentially trigger processes of 'radicalisation'.

14.3.1 A culturally and religiously plural school

Over the last fifty years, public institutions in all the domains of daily life in which they operate (in schools, *in primis*, in healthcare, in administrative and social welfare services, in justice,...) had to manage a new, and for them unprecedented, form of complexity, linked to the plurality, given by the different geographical origins and cultural and religious systems of the 'new' Italian population. The transition from a country of emigration to a country of immigration (Allievi and Dalla Zuanna, 2016) accelerated

dramatically in the early 1990s, initially with a flow from neighbouring Albania. In recent years, a general demographic picture is emerging, characterised by a more negative balance, which is no longer balanced by the decreasing migration rate. The presence of foreign residents in the country, as of 1 January 2022, is 5,193,669, or 8.8% of the population (Istat 2022). According to the data referring to 2021, they come from 191 different countries. Regarding religious diversity, some recent estimates put the number of Muslims in Italy (as of 1 January 2020) at 2,687,000, or about 4.5% of the total (Ciocca, 2022). A key element of these numbers relates to the share of Italian (i.e., residents with Italian citizenship) Muslims, who make up about 47% of the total, and are growing relatively to foreign Muslims. This figure is made up of people who have acquired Italian citizenship and young people born in Italy but with a migrant family background³. A marginal percentage, however, is explained by the number of Italians 'converted' to Islam, estimated at around 106,000. According to these estimates, therefore, Islam represents the second largest religion in Italy, after Christian Catholicism. When looking at the age group that composes the school population, foreign students under the age of 18 account for more than a fifth (21.2%) of the total foreign resident population and 11.3% of the total number of resident minors (Italians and foreigners) in Italy⁴. A significant number of minors are those with a migration background, i.e. born or raised in Italy by parents of foreign origin. According to Istat data (2022), updated to 1 January 2020, they would be 1,312,512, or about 13.4% of the total population of minors resident in Italy. Of these, the vast majority (76.6%) are children born in Italy. Due to the principle of *ius sanguinis*, however, as many as 77.3% of those born in Italy still have foreign citizenship. More generally, minors who have not yet obtained Italian citizenship (whether born in Italy or born abroad and subsequently arrived here) are almost 80%. If considering the

³ In Italy, to date, the acquisition of citizenship is governed by the principle of *ius sanguinis*, i.e. the origins of one's parents. Children born of foreign parents residing in Italy, therefore, can only acquire Italian citizenship when they reach the age of majority, proving that they have resided in the country 'legally and continuously'. A foreign person may apply for Italian citizenship after a period of residence in the territory of at least ten years.

⁴ Elaborated on Istat database, National Institute of Statistics, www.istat.it (last access August 2022).

Italian school population⁵, children with a migratory background (both foreigners and those with Italian citizenship) have been estimated by Istat (2022; data referring to the 2019/2020 school year) at more than one million, or about 12.6% of the total school population. In recent years, the number of students who have acquired Italian citizenship has been growing, and, in lower school grades, the number of children born in Italy has increased, compared to those who arrived after birth.

This change, which is still in progress, takes on the character of a challenge, for which a clear and shared model of intervention seems to be lacking, one that promotes a truly fair and inclusive welfare system, and rather an 'implicit model of inclusion', not codified and integrated at a national level, is emerging (Ambrosini 2001). However, innovative, and virtuous local experiences do take place on a local basis, also thanks to an urban development that avoids the creation of 'ghetto' neighbourhoods or banlieues in large urban agglomerations and allows a certain degree of urban peace to be maintained (Coccia and Di Sciuollo 2020). The difficulty of this challenge is compounded by a further complicating element, which refers to the concerns, conveyed in political, media and common-sense discourse, of a 'terrorist threat' that is associated, very often automatically and uncritically, with a 'Muslim presence' that is attributed characteristics of 'extremism', cultural 'backwardness' and 'incompatibility' with 'our' cultural and value system. Generally speaking, moreover, in Italy there are still 'patterns of segregation' or 'subalternity', in the political, social and labour spheres, of migrants (compared to Italians) which, when it comes to Muslims, are likely to be even more accentuated, due to the stigma that accompanies their religion (Pace and Rhazzali 2018). In this sense, the school environment can be a particularly significant case and the data in this regard are worrying. The foreign origins of pupils, in fact, are correlated with a condition of greater disadvantage, which is apparent in a greater number of school delays compared to their peers of Italian origin (on average 30.7% vs. 9.6% in 2018, rising to 58, 2% in secondary schools) and school drop-outs (64.8% vs. 80.9% continue their studies after compulsory schooling) and with the choice of more vocational school curricula (only

⁵ We refer here to children and young people attending the school cycle comprising: pre-school (lasting three years, starting at the age of three), whose attendance is not compulsory; primary school (five years); lower secondary school (three years); upper secondary school (generally five years, or three or four years for some vocational education and training institutions).

29.9%, vs. 50.5% of Italians, chose to enrol in a high school in the a. s. 2018/2019), which provide a more direct entry into employment (Coccia and Di Sciuillo 2020).

14.3.2 Focus on the issue of religious education at school

A reflection on education in the religious sphere becomes particularly relevant today, in a pluralising context in which the religious dimension, and the reference to Islam in particular, is charged with meanings that belong to the semantic domain of conflict, even violent conflict, while remaining obscure and poorly known⁶. International scholars, in fact, recognise the importance of reflecting on religious education at school, since it can also work as a strategy to prevent violent 'radicalisation' (Ghosh and Chan 2018), if framed in an approach based on encountering and recognising the 'other', on critical thinking and reflexivity (Hull 2009; Jackson 2015). As we have already argued, in fact, an important element of the plurality in Italian schools is religious diversity. While representing itself as a country firmly rooted in its Catholic origins and characterised by a close relationship with the Church, in fact, Italy is undergoing a substantial change, linked both to "an internal pluralisation of the Catholic field" (Allievi 2020, p. 91), and to "a progressively greater presence of other religions, or other ways of being religious, as well as non-religious options, or of going outside the religious field" (ibid.), which affect both migrants and native Italians. Confirming this ongoing process, the data published by the National Service for the Teaching of the Catholic Religion of the Italian Episcopal Conference⁷ show that in the school year 2020/2021 pupils who choose not to attend Catholic Religious Education (IRC) hours are 16.6% of the school population in State institutes. The highest percentages are to be found in secondary schools of first grade (14.4%) and, above all, second grade (24.1%), with much higher values in Northern and Central Italy (21.2% and 16.7%, respectively) than in the South (3.1%) and in technical

⁶ See the data on religious illiteracy (Melloni, 2014).

⁷ Italian Episcopal Conference, National Service for the Teaching of the Catholic Religion. Students availing 2020-2021, Pdf file with the percentages of availing pupils at a national and macro-area (North - Centre - South) level. <https://irc.chiesacattolica.it/avvalentisi-2020-2021/> (last access August 2022).

and professional institutes, i.e. those with a higher percentage of students of foreign origin (CEI, SNIRC and OSReT 2016). The percentage of 'non-attending' students⁸, moreover, appears to be increasing over the years (in as. 2015/2016 it was 12.1%).

In spite of the efforts made and, as repeatedly reported, the success achieved in some virtuous local 'experiments', however, the Italian educational institution is still unprepared to manage the changes linked to the pluralisation of the religious field, also due to regulatory and structural constraints. On the one hand, in fact, the Italian legislative framework recognises a privileged status for the Catholic Church, with which special agreements were sanctioned in 1929, the so-called 'Lateran Pacts' of 1929, later reformulated in a new 'Concordat' in 1984 (made executive through Law 121/1985), in order to make them compatible with the fundamental principles of the Constitution and with the changes that have taken place in society. The Concordat of 1929 extended to all school orders the compulsory offer (but which can be attended at the discretion of individual students) of the IRC, considered the "foundation and capstone of public education" (Concordat between the Holy See and Italy, 1929. The new 1984 Concordat confirms what was stated in the 1929 text, emphasising the historical link with Catholicism: "The Italian Republic, recognising the value of religious culture and taking into account that the principles of Catholicism are part of the historical heritage of the Italian people [...]" (Law 121/1985). For students who choose to 'opt out' of this teaching, the school is required to propose alternative activities or allow them to leave school. Some of the other religions present on the territory have been recognised through so-called "Intese", agreements signed between their institutional representations and the State, which guarantee certain advantages including, at least theoretically, "the right to respond to any requests coming from pupils, their families or school bodies, concerning the study of the religious fact and its implications", with the costs being charged to the individual denominations (Ministry of the Interior 2013). This option is still effectively unexploited, even considering the costs this would imply for the religious communities. Islam, on the other hand, since no specific understandings have been signed, is considered as an "admitted cult", on the basis of an old, pre-constitutional legal provision (Law no.

⁸ In Italian they are called '*non avvalentisi*'.

1159/1929 and Royal Decree no. 289/1930), and, therefore, does not enjoy this privilege. However, in everyday school life, requests emerge, particularly from Muslim families, for an educational offer on the subject of religion that is also accessible to students who do not identify with the Catholic faith. Schools are faced with these demands in a situation of chronic lack of economic resources and fragmented intervention models, linked to the management of school autonomy, at regional and local level. One scenario, which may seem unrealistic but actually occurs not infrequently in Italian schools, is that of some Muslim parents choosing to have their children attend IRC classes, so that they may have "at least" some training in religious subjects (Coglievina 2017; Negri and Scaranari Introvigne 2008), which is in any case considered preferable to its total absence. On other instances, there are, often on a purely local level, projects and initiatives, even very ambitious ones, often carried out on the basis of agreements with secular or religious organisations, and aimed mostly at an introductory knowledge of 'other' religions or inter-religious dialogue (Colombo 2020; Canta 2013). These actions, nevertheless, do not succeed in changing the school system in a structural, organic and long-lasting direction, and, on the contrary, underline its shortcomings. In this respect, some research and action-research conducted in Italy emphasise the inadequacy of textbooks in dealing with issues concerning religious differences, proposing interpretations that are often inaccurate and stereotypical, as well as lacking declared and reliable sources (Cuciniello 2007; Lucenti 2015; Breigheche 2021) and point to the discomfort of teachers themselves, who do not feel adequately trained to deal competently with these subjects and to conduct the discussions that hopefully might emerge in the classroom (Cuciniello 2017; Cantù and Cuciniello 2012).

In the absence of a broader frame of meaning, of a consciously elaborated intercultural model and of an adequate 'toolbox', finally, the possible risk is that projects implemented with the aim of proposing initiatives to prevent violent 'radicalisation' will resolve themselves into irrelevant actions, when not counterproductive, coming to nourish even more a process of 'victimisation' and a persecutory experience in which Islam, instead of being recognised as one of the elements that make up the human, cultural and religious landscape of our country, becomes a reason for conflict and clash.

14.4 The intercultural 'antidote' to the risk of violent 'radicalism': an Italian model?

The spread of concern related to the 'threat' of extremism, radicalism and terrorism has led schools to establish prevention programmes centred on these 'hot' topics, inspired by European recommendations. In a previous contribution (Rhazzali and Schiavinato 2021) we discussed some of the interventions undertaken in Italy concerning the prevention of violent 'radicalisation' in schools. Among them, the training courses "For a didactic of prevention of all forms of violent radicalisation" were managed by Exit Società Cooperativa Sociale and offered to several Italian territorial school offices, starting in the 2017/2018 school year. These courses, in the same direction as other European experiences, proposed an approach closer to the "securitarian" front, focusing on the identification of radical narratives, even leading to "the identification and early intervention of individuals at risk"⁹. While this may be one of the possible approaches, others are conceivable that appear to be consistent with the school's educational mandate and with the Italian context (also due to what has been defined as a "beneficial delay"; Guolo 2018). These latter approaches propose that starting from the available resources and through a first-person involvement of all the parties involved, it would succeed in activating in students a concrete experience of relating to the various forms of 'diversity' that emerge in a 'plural' school, of constructive, reflective and critical dialogue with other possible worldviews, and of peaceful conflict management (Rhazzali 2018). A fundamental element, in this respect, is the active participation in the educational processes of minors with a migratory background, their families and communities, as social actors whose voice can bring new perspectives that herald new readings and interpretations of the school and social experience in general, but also demands that turn out to be, sometimes unexpectedly, shared and transversal. Paradigmatic is the case of the request for a more inclusive and broader educational offer on religious topics, which is also addressed to those who do not identify

⁹ Exit Società Cooperativa Sociale, Course "For a didactic of prevention of all forms of violent radicalisation", [http://www.marche.istruzione.it/allegati/2020/m_pi.AOODRMA.REGISTRO%20UFFICIALE\(U\).0002327.04-02-2020.pdf](http://www.marche.istruzione.it/allegati/2020/m_pi.AOODRMA.REGISTRO%20UFFICIALE(U).0002327.04-02-2020.pdf) (last access August 2022).

with Catholicism. Being protagonists and not passive users (and sometimes 'victims') of school life allows students and their families to experience a positive and constructive way of being 'citizens' who dialogue and work together with the institutions, instead of suffering those forms of marginalisation and exclusion that, as we have seen, can be a driving force behind 'radicalisation' process. This option is an expression, in the field of preventing 'radicalisation', of an intercultural approach that is now a shared conceptual and operational heritage in schools, also thanks to a consolidated tradition in the academic field of intercultural studies (Mantovani 2008), and of intercultural pedagogy and didactics in particular, which require an overall rethinking not only of the thematic corpus of contents, but also and above all of the 'ways' (of the 'how' as well as the 'what') in which they are treated in the classroom (Fiorucci 2011; Santerini 2010). This educational model is also proposed in the official documents of the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education 2007; Ministry of Education of Universities and Research 2015) and was sealed in the text of Law 107/2015 (the 'Good School'), which reaffirms the autonomy of school institutions

“to counter socio-cultural and territorial inequalities [...], to create an open school, as a permanent laboratory for research, experimentation and didactic innovation, participation and education for active citizenship, [...]”.

Among the priority educational goals of the school offer, moreover, the legislative text indicates:

“development of competences in the field of active and democratic citizenship through the enhancement of intercultural and peace education, respect for differences and dialogue between cultures, support for the assumption of responsibility as well as solidarity and care for common goods and awareness of rights and duties [...]”.

The intercultural approach is embodied in a body of interventions and good practices spread locally, although, as we have said, still not in a systematic and homogeneous way throughout the country. In the 2015 document "Diversi da chi?" (Different from whom?), in fact, it is the Ministry of Education itself that acknowledges this shortcoming, referring to the projects and interventions undertaken by schools on the theme of diversity and cultural and religious pluralism, especially with reference to minors with a migrant background:

“These experiences, built up in the field, offer a rich repertoire of indications and suggestions. But they are not always known and disseminated: it is therefore

necessary to move from the "buzz" of good practices to a strong and shared voice, developing a widespread and not sporadic training of school leaders and teachers, driven primarily by those who have been trained in the field."

Along this line of intervention, an innovative proposal has recently been offered, starting from the academic sphere, in implementation and on funding of the call of the MIUR "Establishment of Italian university networks in implementation of cooperation agreements between Italian universities and those of States belonging to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation" (Directorial Decree no. 3089 of 16/11/2018 - ID 82382). The funds were allocated to national projects on the prevention of violent "radicalisation" that, as the title suggests, included the involvement of academic institutions in OIC countries. Some of the initiatives implemented concerned advanced training courses aimed at the educational domain and the schools: the Advanced Training Course 'The Trans-Mediterranean space and the Islamic world: Integration in public spaces and in the school context" (years 2020 and 2021) offered by the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan and the University of Rome 3, in collaboration with the Universities of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation within the PriMED Project - Prevention and Interaction in the Trans-Mediterranean Space¹⁰ and the Master Executive Level I "Multicultural Diversity Management", curriculum "Management of educational processes in multicultural contexts", offered by the University of Siena within the project "F.O.R.w.A.R.D. - Training, Research and Development of Community Based Strategies to Prevent Radicalisation and Support Integration"¹¹. The originality of these proposals lies in the formula they have adopted, which, although it is situated within the framework of a plan of interventions aimed explicitly at preventing the processes of "radicalisation", in fact, in the arguments used, but also in the contents and methods of implementation, departs from an exclusive or priority focus on these issues, to mobilise, rather, a set of theoretical and practical

¹⁰ The PriMED project involves a network of twelve Italian universities, with the University of Eastern Piedmont as lead partner, and ten universities from OIC- Organisation of Islamic Cooperation countries (Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon, Algeria, Chad and Niger).

¹¹ The F.O.R.w.A.R.D. project (<https://www.forwardproject.unisi.it/>) is promoted by the University of Siena, in partnership with the University for Foreigners of Siena, Al Akhawayn University and Université Al Quaraouiyine in Morocco.

knowledge, which more broadly concerns the management of diversity and cultural and religious plurality in everyday life contexts. In this way, they propose to contribute, implicitly and explicitly, to deconstructing a widespread rhetoric based on the 'Islamic threat' which, as we have seen, runs the risk of exacerbating social conflict, fuelling, on the one hand, stereotypical visions and, on the other, experiences of victimisation.

14.5 Conclusions

The school in Italy, like other public institutions and like society in general, is characterised by considerable cultural and religious plurality, which, while on the one hand poses a challenge for the management of coexistence and daily interaction, on the other hand offers a unique opportunity for growth and enrichment. In the post-September 11 era and in the years following the terrorist attacks perpetrated in Europe, the themes of 'radicalisation' and the 'jihadist threat', disseminated internationally and in Europe in public rhetoric and the media, have emerged as a further critical element that, through the immediate and automatic association with the 'Muslim world', risks complicating the process of inclusion and citizenship, exacerbating conflicts and misunderstandings. The very interventions conceived as aimed at combating and preventing "radicalisation", particularly those proposed in the school context, risk, albeit unintentionally, feeding this equation between "Islam", "extremism" and "incompatibility" with "our" system of values, fuelling the same processes of "victimisation", and the consequent experiences of exclusion and resentment, indicated by the scientific literature as the "push factors" of "radicalisation". An alternative and critical model of prevention, promoted by European guidelines and proposed and adopted in Italian schools, is that based on an intercultural approach, centred on open and reflective dialogue, conflict management and the promotion of forms of active citizenship. These actions enable to foster the cultural and religious plurality that, as we have said, increasingly characterises the schools and, through direct experiences in everyday life as a student and citizen, they "teach" to confront different horizons of meaning, "disarming" the danger that experiences of marginalisation and exclusion bring about.

References

- ALLIEVI, S. (2020). Diversità religiosa e integrazione in Italia. Le conseguenze del pluralismo religioso. In B., Coccia & L., Di Sciullo (Eds.), *L'integrazione dimenticata. Riflessioni per un modello italiano di convivenza partecipata tra immigrati e autoctoni* (pp. 90-95). Istituto di Studi Politici "S. Pio V" e Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS.
- ALLIEVI, S., & DALLA ZUANNA, G. (2016). *Tutto quello che non vi hanno mai detto sull'immigrazione*. Bari: Laterza.
- AMBROSINI, M. (2001). *La fatica di integrarsi. Immigrazione e lavoro in Italia*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- BENSLAMA, F. (2016). *Un furieux désir de sacrifice : le surmusulman*. Paris: Seuil.
- BREIGECHE, N. (2021). L'Islam nei libri di testo scolastici: una sfida ancora attuale. In CENTRO STUDI E RIVISTA CONFRONTI (Ed.), *Per un islam europeo. I Balcani, la sponda Sud del Mediterraneo e il continente europeo: una storia da riscrivere*, 52-56.
- BUTLER, D. (2015). Why Europeans turn to jihad. *Nature*, 528, 20.
- CANTA, C. C. (2013). La pratica del dialogo in Italia. Ministero dell'Interno. Dipartimento per le libertà civili e l'immigrazione.
- DIREZIONE CENTRALE DEGLI AFFARI DEI CULTI. (2013). *Religioni, dialogo, integrazione*, pp. 71-79.
- CANTÙ, S. & CUCINIELLO, A. (Ed.) (2012). *Plurilinguismo. Sfida e risorsa educativa*. Milano: Fondazione ISMU.
- GHOSH, R. & CHAN, W. Y. A. (2018). The Role of Religious Education in Countering Religious extremism in Diverse and Interconnected Societies. In M., SIVASUBRAMANIAM, & R., HAYHOE (eds.). *Religion and education: Comparative and international perspectives* (pp. 335-351). Oxford: Symposium Books.
- CIOCCA, F. (January 2, 2023). *Musulmani in Italia: una presenza stabile e sempre più italiana*. *Lenius*.
- COGLIEVINA, S. (2017). Religious education in Italian public schools: what room for Islam?. *Stato, Chiese e pluralismo confessionale*, 29.
- COLOMBO, M. (2020). The Religious Dimension in Plural Schools: Institutional, Relational and Strategic Issues. In L., ZANFRINI (Ed.), *Migrants and Religion: Paths, Issues, and Lenses. A Multidisciplinary and Multi-Sited Study on the Role of Religious Belongings in Migratory and Integration Processes* (pp. 655-675). Leiden: Brill.
- CONFERENZA EPISCOPALE ITALIANA, SERVIZIO NAZIONALE PER L'INSEGNAMENTO DELLA RELIGIONE CATTOLICA AND OSSERVATORIO SOCIO-RELIGIOSO TRIVENETO OSRET (2016). *Insegnamento della Religione Cattolica nelle Scuole Statali Italiane. Nuova serie. Sintesi essenziale dei risultati a.s. 2015-2016*.
- COOLSAET, R. (2019). Radicalization: The origins and limits of a Contested Concept. In N., FADIL, M., DE KONING & F., RAGAZZI (Eds). *Radicalisation in Belgium and the Netherlands: Critical Perspectives on Violence and Security* (pp. 29-51). London: I.B. Tauris.
- COUNCIL OF EUROPE (2015). *Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education*. Informal meeting of European Union Education Ministers Paris, Tuesday 17 March 2015.
- CUCINIELLO, A. (2017). Contesti educativi di fronte all'alterità religiosa. *OPPIinformazioni*, 123, 38-49.
- CUCINIELLO, A. (2007). Islam tra testi e contesti. In C. BARGELLINI AND E. CICCARELLI (Eds.), *Islam a scuola. Esperienze e risorse, Quaderno ISMU*, 2, 117-128.

- DAVIES, L., & LIMBADA, Z. (2019). Education and radicalisation prevention: Different ways governments can support schools and teachers in preventing/countering violent extremism. *Ex post paper*.
- DE BACKER, M., AERTSEN, I., BOUSETTA, H., CLAES, E., DETHIER, M., FIGOUREUX, M., MOUSTATINE, A., NAGUI, F., VAN GORP, B. & ZOUZOULA, A. (2019). *Conrad – Constructive analysis on the attitudes, policies and programmes that relate to “radicalisation”. Final Report*. Brussels: Belgian Science Policy Office.
- DI SCIULLO, L. (2020). Modelli in frammenti e... frammenti di modello? Il singolare caso dell'Italia, tra segregazione esplicita e integrazione implicita. In B., COCCIA & L., DI SCIULLO (Eds.), *L'integrazione dimenticata. Riflessioni per un modello italiano di convivenza partecipata tra immigrati e autoctoni* (pp. 13-26). Istituto di Studi Politici “S. Pio V” e Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS.
- DI MOTOLI, P. (September 19, 2018). Conversazione con Renzo Guolo / Chi sono i Jihadisti italiani? *Doppiozero*.
- EIJKMAN, Q. & ROODNAT, J. (2017). Beware of Branding Someone a Terrorist: Local Professionals on Person-Specific Interventions to Counter extremism. *Journal for Deradicalization* 10, 176.
- FADIL, N., RAGAZZI, F. & DE KONING, M. (Eds.) (2019). *Radicalization in Belgium and the Netherlands. Critical Perspectives on Violence and Security*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- FIORUCCI, M. (2011). *Una scuola per tutti. Idee e proposte per una didattica interculturale delle discipline*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- GUOLO, R. (2018). *Jihadisti d'Italia. La radicalizzazione islamista nel nostro Paese*. Milano: Guerini e Associati.
- GUOLO, R. (2017). Il dibattito sulla radicalizzazione nelle scienze sociali. In S., ALLIEVI, R., GUOLO, & K., RHAZALI (Eds.), *I musulmani nelle società europee. Appartenenze, interazioni, conflitti* (pp. 51-79). Milano: Guerini e Associati.
- HÖRNQVIST, M., & FLYGHED, J. (2012). Exclusion or culture? The rise and ambiguity of the radicalization debate. *Critical studies on Terrorism* 5(3), 319–334.
- HULL, J. M. (2009). Religious education as encounter: From body worlds to religious worlds. In MIEDEMA, S. (Ed.), *A Religious Education as Encounter: A Tribute to John M. Hull* (pp. 21-34). Münster, Germany: Waxmann.
- JACKSON, R. (2015). *Signposts – Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education*. Strasbourg, France : Council of Europe.
- KHOSROKHAVAR, F. (2014). *Radicalisation*. Paris: Maison des sciences de l’homme
- KUNDNANI, A. (2012). Radicalisation: the journey of a concept. *Race & Class*, 54(2), 3-25.
- ISTAT (2022). Rapporto annuale 2022.
- LAFRARCHI, N. (2021). Intra- and Interreligious Dialogue in Flemish (Belgian) Secondary Education as a Tool to Prevent Radicalisation. *Religions* 12, 434.
- LENOS, S., & KELTIJENS, M. (2017). *RAN EDU’s Guide on training programmes ‘Effective and confident teachers and other school staff’*.
- LENOS, S., & KELTIJENS, M. (2016). *EX POST PAPER ‘Empowering and supporting teachers’ ‘Pedagogical role requires time and training’*. RAN EDU, 24-25 February 2016, Segerstedt Institute, Gothenburg.
- LUCENTI, M. (2015). La rappresentazione dell'Islam nei manuali: per una revisione dei curricula in direzione interculturale. *Formazione & Insegnamento*, XIII (2), rivista online.
- MACALUSO, A. (2016). From Countering to Preventing Radicalization Through Education: Limits and Opportunities. *The Hague Institute for Global Justice, Working Paper* 18.
- MANTOVANI (Ed.) (2008). *Intercultura e mediazione. Teorie ed esperienze*. Roma: Carocci.

- MELLONI, A. (Ed.) (2014). *Rapporto sull'analfabetismo religioso in Italia*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- MINISTERO DELLA PUBBLICA ISTRUZIONE (2007). *La via italiana per la scuola interculturale e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri. Osservatorio nazionale per l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri e per l'educazione interculturale*.
- MINISTERO DELL'INTERNO. DIPARTIMENTO PER LE LIBERTÀ CIVILI E L'IMMIGRAZIONE. DIREZIONE CENTRALE DEGLI AFFARI DEI CULTI. (2013). *Religioni, dialogo, integrazione*.
- MINISTERO DELL'ISTRUZIONE, DELL'UNIVERSITÀ E DELLA RICERCA (2015). *Diversi da chi? a cura dell'Osservatorio nazionale per l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri e per l'intercultura del Miur*.
- NEGRI, A. T., & SCARANARI INTROVIGNE, S. (2008). *I ragazzi musulmani nella scuola statale. Il caso del Piemonte*. Torino: Harmattan.
- NORDBRUCH, G. (2016). The role of education in preventing radicalisation. *RAN issue paper*.
- NORDBRUCH, G. & SIECKELINCK, S. (2018). Transforming schools into labs for democracy, A companion to preventing violent radicalisation through education. *RAN policy paper*.
- PACE, E., & RHAZZALI, M.K. (2018). Muslim Communities in a Catholic Country. In A. W., ATA, & J. A., ALI (Eds); *Islam in the West. Perceptions and Reactions* (pp. 241-259). New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press.
- RADICALISATION AWARENESS NETWORK (2015). *Manifesto for Education - Empowering Educators and Schools*. Amsterdam.
- RHAZZALI, M. K. (2018). La scuola e il rischio radicalizzazione: sintomi, indicatori e strategie di prevenzione. In C., BRESCIANINI (Ed.). *Sguardi simmetrici. Ragazzi che arrivano da lontano nelle scuole dell'Emilia-Romagna* (pp. 135-145). Napoli: Tecnonid Editrice.
- RHAZZALI, M. K., & SCHIAVINATO, V. (2021). Reflections on prevention of violent radicalization processes in the school context: an intercultural and critical approach. *Educative Reflective Practices, 1/2021*
- SANTERINI, M. (2010). *La qualità della scuola interculturale. Nuovi modelli per l'integrazione*. Trento: Erickson.
- SEDGWICK, M. (2010). The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion. *Terrorism and Political Violence, 22*, 479-494., 159-173.
- STIECKELINCK, S., & GIELEN, A.-J. (2018). Protective and promotive factors building resilience against violent radicalisation. *RAN issue paper*.
- YOUNG, H., HOLSAPPEL, J., ROOZE, M., DE WOLF, A., RUSSEL, J. & HASAN, U. (2014). *TerRa Toolkit. Community Approach to Radicalisation*.

Consequences of conspiracy theories on political efficacy and political participation

*Marika Rullo
Giovanni Telesca*

This chapter is aimed at exploring the role of conspiracy beliefs on perceived political efficacy and consequently on political participation. Indeed, recent findings suggest that conspiracy beliefs are indirectly and negatively related to conventional participation through external efficacy. However, some research suggests that not all the conspiracy claims are conspiracy theories and not all have the same potential for societal harm. Following the proposal by Wu-Ming 1, we propose to differentiate conspiracy beliefs in conspiracy fantasies (i.e., unrealistic, and universalistic conspiracy) and conspiracy hypotheses (i.e., plausible, and limited conspiracy), and to explore their effects on internal and external political efficacy and consequently on political participation. We predict that conspiracy fantasies and conspiracy hypotheses are two operationally differentiable constructs, that conspiracy fantasies can reduce perceived internal political efficacy and consequently political participation, whereas both conspiracy fantasies and conspiracy hypotheses can negatively predict external political efficacy and political participation. Results from one cross-sectional survey conducted in Italy partially supported our predictions showing that conspiracy fantasies (but not conspiracy hypotheses) are associated with lower internal and external efficacy, but only internal political efficacy mediates the effect on political participation. The implications of these findings are considered to better understand the psychology of conspiracy hypotheses and their social consequences and impact on political efficacy and political participation.

Key Words: Conspiracy Theories; Political Efficacy; Political Participation; Education

15.1 Introduction

With the recent COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in the diffusion, especially online, of a wide range of conspiracy theories, several of which have sometimes ‘justified’ extremely violent protest actions such as the anti-vax protests throughout Europe (Schraer, 2021; Broderick, 2021). In fact, the spread of conspiracy theories is today a particularly crucial problem given the impact that such beliefs have on individual and therefore collective behaviour.

Literature defines a conspiracy as any belief capable of explaining the ultimate cause of an event or significant event as the result of a powerful group’s secret plot (Bale, 2007; Douglas, et al., 2015; 2019; 2021; Swami et al., 2011). Psychological literature has amply shown how adherence to conspiratorial visions of reality increases during critical events, such as environmental tragedies, economic crises, or healthcare emergencies (van Prooijen & Douglas, 2017), which can represent a form of existential threat (see Terror Management Theory, Greenberg & Arndt, 2011). This threat fuels strong states of uncertainty about the future and increases ‘the demands for answers’.

For this reason, the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainty that this event has produced, not only from a healthcare perspective but also from an economic, social, and psychological perspective (Barua, 2020; Goodell, 2020; Nicola et al., 2020), has probably exacerbated the diffusion of these theories and their impact on democracies around the world, due to the massive use of social networks (Censis, 2021), which proved themselves to be powerful means of diffusion of fake news. Therefore, recently the renewed interest in the study of conspiracy theories has concerned not only the psycho-social origins of the diffusion of these theories but also the consequences of conspiracy theories in relation to their role in inducing feelings of alienation, powerlessness, and hostility towards society, increasing acceptance of the use of violence and reducing support for democratic actions (Lamberty & Leiser, 2019), thereby making such theories genuine ‘radicalization multipliers’ (Byington, 2019).

Nonetheless, in order to better understand how adherence to these theories influences collective behavior and can be a key factor in the development of radicalization processes, especially those related to forms of violent, non-normative political participation (Horgan & Braddock, 2010,

p. 279; Antonelli, 2021), it is useful to reflect on what these conspiracy theories are and what distinguishes them from suspicions about power and authorities. In this scenario, the aim of the present study is therefore to identify the beliefs, related to potential conspiracies, capable of having an impact on the political behavior of citizens by reducing feelings of political efficacy.

15.1.1 Definition of ‘conspiracy theories’ and its consequences

The assumption that unites widespread conspiracy theories is that several groups of power are hiding important information to advance their own interests, for the most part malicious (Douglas et al., 2017). Conspiracy beliefs identify an enemy (Bilewicz & Sędek, 2015) and may consequently trigger defence mechanisms supporting forms of discrimination. This definition of conspiracy theories has an implicit intergroup dimension (elite vs. victims), which is considered the central element that distinguishes them from other ‘suspicious’ beliefs (Cichocka et al., 2016; van Prooijen & van Lange, 2014). The identification of an enemy is a way in which these theories offer the illusion of being in control of an unknown and often threatening reality, simplifying it, and bringing its operation to light (e.g., Lewandowsky et al., 2012). However, the construct of the conspiracy theory as treated in socio-psychological literature sometimes seems broad and generic. There is often a tendency to tag every -more or less- legitimate suspicion about political decisions as a conspiracy theory too easily, with the risk of polarizing public debate around matters of social relevance. Nonetheless, socio-psychological literature still seems far from finding a clear, shared operative definition of the conspiracy theory, although several authors have raised a promising debate about the need to at least distinguish absurd theories from legitimate suspicions. Recently, several authors (e.g., Stojanov, & Halberstadt, 2019) have turned their attention to the content analysis of conspiracy theories in order to propose a more narrow definition of conspiracy theory. Stojanov, & Halberstadt (2019) have proposed, for example, distinguishing between a rational skepticism characterized by plausible suspicions (e.g., accusations of corruptions amongst public officials) from a tendency towards conspiracy characterized by unrealistic beliefs that are often the production of explanations of social or political events that contradict official explanations and anticipate a

secret collaboration between ‘powers with malevolent goals’ (e.g., Byford, 2011; Uscinski & Parent, 2014). This differentiation is fundamental, considering that, although it is true that some beliefs seem unrealistic and impossible to consider accurate, it is also true that plots may exist and may reflect all the situations in which groups of people work in secret to harm others for their own self-interest. For this reason, knowing how to distinguish when citizens are identifying valid reasons to doubt and suspect the operation of political power, even while attributing malicious intent to such power, and when instead some claims about power reflect an adherence to conspiracy, it is important to understand which actions of intervention and prevention to put forward and adopt.

For this reason, we propose to adopt a potential definition of the ‘conspiracy’ phenomenon that can distinguish false beliefs from plausible suspicions. This proposal does not come from scientific literature but rather from historical-fictional literature; nonetheless it can be used as an operative definition that should be empirically explored. The distinction between false beliefs and plausible suspicions in conspiracy is in fact advanced by WuMing 1, a member of the WuMing writers’ collective¹, in his book *‘La Q di Qomplotto: come le fantasie di complotto difendono il sistema’* (The Q in Qonspiracy: QAnon and Its Surroundings. How Conspiracy Fantasies Defend the System; Edizioni Alegre, 2021). The author differentiates conspiracy beliefs into two categories: conspiracy hypotheses and conspiracy fantasies. He argues that the first are useful for investigating plausible plots and possess typical characteristics including: (a) a specific goal, (b) a limited number of players, (c) imperfect implementation because reality is imperfect, (d) they end once uncovered and reported, (e) and they are considered in the light of the historical context in which they appear and are inseparably linked to it; while conspiracy fantasies investigate unrealistic plots that have very different characteristics from real ones such as: (a) a much more expansive goal such as dominating, conquering, or destroying the world, (b) a potentially unlimited number of players, (c) extremely consistent and perfect implementation, (d) they persist although described and reported in countless books, articles, and documentaries, (e) and they last indefinitely.

¹ <https://www.wumingfoundation.com/giap/what-is-the-wu-ming-foundation/>

15.1.2 Impact of conspiracy theories on political participation

Based on the differentiation above, WuMing 1 proposes a reading of the impact of conspiracy fantasies on the political behavior of citizens, hypothesizing, also based on empirical evidence (Jolley et al., 2018), that believing in conspiracy fantasies reduces the attention that people pay to real problems. Therefore, conspiracy fantasies become diversionary narratives (e.g., the chemtrail conspiracy theory) that seek the causes of social problems in small groups of 'powerful and corrupt people' and distract attention from real problems that have systemic causes and that may appear more complex and difficult to resolve (e.g., climate crisis), and therefore less motivating from a perspective of political engagement in public life. In this sense, conspiracy fantasies might drastically reduce the willingness to active political participation.

Other authors have already identified the effect that conspiratorial beliefs have in reducing feelings of political power (e.g., Jolley and Douglas, 2014) and convictions about political efficacy (Ardevol-Abreu et al., 2020) understood as 'the feeling that individual political action has, or may have, an impact on the political process' (Campbell et al., 1954).

Hence, paradoxically, despite research that has shown how adherence to conspiratorial beliefs is related to the desire to belong to a socially prestigious group, thereby satisfying needs of affiliation and self-worth (Douglas et al., 2017), it would be the illusion of being in possession of a special form of knowledge that makes those who believe in conspiracy fantasies more in control of reality than those who 'live in ignorance'.

Conspiracy fantasies may feed feelings of uncertainty that have repercussions for the perception of being capable of understanding social and political matters. In fact, those who believe in conspiracy fantasies would tend to be less convinced of their effective power to intervene in political life, or to develop a minor sense of political efficacy.

Political efficacy refers to the perceptions that individuals have about their abilities to influence political reality, both through political representations and through individual actions (Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991; Wolak, 2018). Political efficacy can be distinguished into internal political efficacy and external political efficacy. The first concerns the convictions related to the ability to understand, inquire about, and intervene in political life (Niemi et al., 1991). External political efficacy, instead, concerns the perceptions that

individuals have about the ability of the political system to respond effectively to citizens' needs and requests (Craig, 1982; Watts, 1973).

This construct, derived from political science, is very important for understanding citizens' political participation. Political efficacy, along with other variables such as trust in the government, is one of the most important factors in predicting adherence to forms of conventional political participation like exercising the right to vote or activist and associative participation (Craig, 1980; Jung, Kim, & Gil de Zuniga, 2011). In fact, the feeling of being able to have an impact on the political process through one's own elected representatives or through one's own actions plays a strong and positive role in encouraging participation in political life.

Therefore, considering that conspiracy fantasies undermine trust in political power (Jolley & Douglas, 2014; Lewandowsky, Oberauer, & Gignac, 2013), it is possible that people who believe in conspiracy fantasies may report lower external political efficacy. This conclusion was recently supported by a study of Ardevol-Abreu and colleagues (2020), who identified a negative correlation between conspiratorial beliefs and external political efficacy, regardless of the effect of other variables such as general political interest or trust in the government, in a sample of more than 5000 people in different countries around the world. Moreover, the authors demonstrated that this relationship can also explain the reduced propensity of such individuals to participate in political life in a conventional way, instead engaging in sometimes violent forms of political protest and participation. The authors of this study have also investigated the role of conspiracy theorism in internal political efficacy and consequently in forms of unconventional participation, but without managing to define a clear framework of the relationship between these variables. Indeed, if, on the one hand, believing in conspiracy narratives can give the illusion of being in possession of knowledge essential for understanding the social and political system and, thereby, have a positive impact on internal political efficacy, on the other, being persuaded that social phenomena and political power are the product of very sophisticated and complex conspiracy plots can reduce the perception of truly managing to understand what is happening in political life and induce lower perception of internal political efficacy. Therefore, the relationship between conspiracy theorism and internal political efficacy remains an open discussion of great interest. One of the goals of this study is to

investigate whether and how conspiracy theorism can impact participation in the democratic by reducing perceptions of internal as well as external political efficacy. Moreover, no empirical evidence so far has shed light on the role that adherence to conspiracy fantasies, and not necessarily to conspiracy hypotheses, can have on feelings of internal and external political efficacy and, in turn, on conventional political participation. For this reason, the research presented in this chapter proposes a first step to bridge this gap and put forward a proposal to develop research aimed at deepening the knowledge on less investigated elements of conspiracy.

15.2 Research

15.2.1 Objectives and Hypotheses

This study aims to address different objectives and research questions. The first objective of the research was to verify the possibility of distinguishing between conspiracy hypotheses and fantasies, based on a revised and adapted scale used to measure the general trend towards conspiracy (Leone et al., 2018). The second objective was to investigate the relationship between conspiracy fantasies, conspiracy hypotheses and internal and external political efficacy, and, consequently, their role in conventional political participation. The research questions of the present study can be summarised as follows:

Q1) What role do conspiracy fantasies and conspiracy hypotheses have in influencing the perception of internal political efficacy?

Q2) What role do conspiracy fantasies and conspiracy hypotheses have in influencing political participation?

Starting from these questions, we propose to verify the following hypotheses:

H1) Conspiracy fantasies and conspiracy hypotheses are two operationally differentiable constructs.

H2) Conspiracy fantasies reduce perceptions of internal political efficacy.

H3) Conspiracy fantasies reduce political participation, and this effect is mediated by reduced internal political efficacy.

H4) Conspiracy fantasies and conspiracy hypotheses have a negative effect on perceptions of external political efficacy.

H5) Conspiracy fantasies and conspiracy hypotheses reduce political participation, and this effect is mediated by reduced external political efficacy.

15.2.2 Methods

Participants. A convenience sample, intercepted via sponsored posts on Facebook, took part in the research and completed the questionnaire. The conditions for participation in the research were being resident in Italy and being over 18 years old. The group of participants subject to analysis consisted of 233 participants (89% women; Mage = 23.88; SDage = 9.75), of whom 83.3% had high school diplomas. The 89.3% reported a low-to-middle socio-economic status.

Procedure. Participants responded to an online questionnaire created with Google Forms. The ad used to find potential participants asked them to answer a brief questionnaire about their confidence in politics and other social themes. After providing informed consent to the conditions of the study and the treatment of personal data, the participants filled out the measurement scales (see Materials). Then they provided some demographic information (i.e., age, gender, level of education, socio-economic status) and reported their political orientation (from 1 'extreme left' to 7 'extreme right'). At the end of the questionnaire, participants were given a written debriefing to explain to them the goals of the research and remind them of the possibility to withdraw from the study after recording their responses. The research protocol was approved by the social science ethics committee of the University of Siena. The order of presentation of the measurement scales seen by the participants reflects the order of presentation of the scales described below.

Measures.

Political Cynicism. Confidence in the government and in the government's management of the current pandemic situation was measured through 4 ad hoc items with the 5-point Likert-scale (from 1, 'Strongly disagree', to 5, 'Strongly agree'). The items are: 'Money is the most important factor in influencing public policies', 'Politicians represent the general interest more than their own', 'Nobody can hope to remain honest once they get into

politics', and 'If a politician keeps their ideals and principles, they are unlikely to reach the top of their profession'. The scale showed a low reliability index ($\alpha = .42$).

Conspiracy Beliefs. Conspiracy beliefs were measured using the truthfulness scale associated with 10 affirmations about conspiratorial explanations of different events. Several items were drawn from Leone et al. (2018) while others were created ad hoc for this study. Participants indicated how truthful they believed the affirmations in the scale (fully listed in Table 15.1) to be, on a response scale from 1, 'Completely false', to 4, 'Completely true'. The scale showed a high reliability index ($\alpha = .70$).

External Political Efficacy. External political efficacy was measured by asking participants to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: 'The Italian political system responds to citizens' opinions effectively', 'Public officials and politicians in Italy don't care much about what people like me think' and 'Italian politicians do not consider what people think when they have to decide what to do' (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree; $\alpha = .60$)

Internal Political Efficacy. To measure participants' sense of internal political efficacy, we adapted three items from Niemi et al. (1991): 'I have sufficient ability to talk about and participate in political decisions', 'I can understand many political issues easily' and 'I have sufficient ability to understand political decisions' (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree; $\alpha = .87$).

Political Participation. To measure the degree of political participation we asked the likelihood (from 1, 'Very unlikely' to 5, 'Very likely') that the individuals would participate in the following activities in the future: 'Sign a petition', 'Attend political gatherings', 'Participate in a public demonstration', and 'Vote in the next elections'. The scale showed a low reliability coefficient ($\alpha = .50$).

Table 15.1 Items for Conspiracy Beliefs partially adapted from Leone et al. (2018)

Items for Conspiracy Hypotheses

1	The financial crises of recent years have been caused by risky choices by financial groups at the expense of citizens
2	The US government used the 9/11 attacks as a pretext for the war in Iraq
3	The multinationals that produce carbonated soft drinks enrich them with addictive substances
4	Some vaccines have side effects that sometimes outweigh the benefits
Items for Conspiracy Fantasies	
1	The so-called ISIS (Islamic State) does not exist, but it is only a creation of the Western secret services
2	The gay lobby has a plan to increase the number of homosexuals by spreading the 'gender theory'
3	Vaccines are a tool with which powerful groups would like to manipulate people's health
4	Some groups of a few powerful manipulate the destinies of the world
5	Coronavirus is a virus create by powerful groups to make an experiment on population control
6	For years, a plan has been in progress wanted by an elite of powerful that would provide for the ethnic replacement of white Europeans (Kalergi Plan)

15.2.3 Results

Factorial analysis. A principal components analysis with oblimin rotation for 10 items from the Conspiracy Beliefs scale (N = 233) showed a two-factor solution accounting for 45% of the variance. The first factor contained 4 items that referred to conspiracy hypotheses (eigenvalue 6.44, 13.9% of the variance accounted for). The second factor contained 6 items that referred to conspiracy fantasies (eigenvalue 5.65, 28.3% of the variance accounted for). Items for each factor are reported in Table 1.

Descriptive statistics and correlations. Descriptive statistics and correlations among variables are reported in Table 15.2. Correlations showed that whereas conspiracy fantasies were negatively and significantly related to both internal and external political efficacy, conspiracy hypotheses were significantly and negatively related to external political efficacy and positively related to political cynicism but were not significantly related to internal political efficacy. Moreover, in the present study, political participation was significantly and positively related to conspiracy hypotheses, negatively related to conspiracy fantasies, and positively related to internal political efficacy but not significantly related to external political efficacy. However, consistent with past research, political orientation (from 1 'extreme left' to 7 'extreme right') was positively and significantly related to conspiracy fantasies and negatively related to political participation.

Conspiracy fantasies, political efficacy, and political participation. To examine our prediction about the relationship between conspiracy fantasies and political participation and to investigate whether this relationship is mediated by decreased level of internal political efficacy, we used the PROCESS macro developed by Preacher (2008) (Model 4; 5,000 Bootstrap samples). In this mediation analysis we used age, gender, educational qualification, and political orientation as well as external political efficacy and political cynicism as covariates.

The results showed a significant model predicting political participation [$F(7, 225) = 5.28, p < .001, R^2 = .14$]. Conspiracy fantasies predict significantly lower political internal efficacy [$B = -.36 (SE = .09), p < .001$]. Also, internal political efficacy predicts more political participation [$B = .29 (SE = .07), p < .001$]. The total effect of conspiracy fantasies on political participation is significant [$B = -.36 (SE = .11), p = .003$]. However, when checking in relation to the effect of internal political efficacy, the effect of conspiracy fantasies is significantly reduced [$B = -.25 (SE = .11), p = .02$]. The estimated bootstrapped mediation confirms the indirect effect of conspiracy fantasies on political participation via the effect of internal political efficacy [IE = $-.10 (SE = .04)$, confidence interval [CI] 95% between $-.2063$ and $-.0302$]. The results of the mediation analysis did not change when covariates were not included.

Concerning the mediation role of external political efficacy (by using external political efficacy as covariate), the results of the mediation analysis showed that conspiracy fantasies were not related to external political efficacy when controlling for the covariates [$F(5, 227) = 9.05, p < .001, R^2 = .16; B = -.06 (SE = .06), p = .36$]. As a matter of fact, only political cynicism [$B = -.31 (SE = .06), p < .001$], gender [$B = .29 (SE = .10), p = .004$] and education [$B = .16 (SE = .07), p = .03$] had a significant role in predicting political participation.

Conspiracy hypotheses, political efficacy, and political participation. As far as concerns the results of the analysis conducted for testing the effect of conspiracy hypotheses on political participation via internal political efficacy, we found no effect of conspiracy hypotheses on internal political efficacy [$F(7, 225) = 2.35, p = .03, R^2 = .05; B = .16 (SE = .12), p = .16$] but a positive and marginally significant effect on political participation [$B = .24 (SE = .13), p = .06$].

The results concerning the role of conspiracy hypotheses on political participation via external political efficacy showed that conspiracy hypotheses had a significant effect on external political efficacy [B = -.37 (SE = .07), $p < .001$] However, external political efficacy did not have any effect on political participation [B = -.01 (SE = .11), $p .91$].

Table 15.2 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Age	23.88	9.75	-										
Gender	1.16	0.39	.35 ^c	-									
Education	3.20	3.20	.58 ^c	.30 ^c	-								
Political orientation	3.46	1.05	.02	-.06	-.03	-							
Socio-econ. status	4.42	1.03	.07	-.02	-.04	.09	-						
Political cynicism	2.76	0.61	.27 ^c	.16 ^a	.08	.00	.04	-					
Conspiracy hypotheses	2.74	0.48	.07	-.11	.04	-.06	-.04	.20 ^b	-				
Conspiracy fantasies	1.71	0.55	-.11	-.30 ^c	-.07	.23 ^c	.06	.07	.23 ^c	-			
External pol. efficacy	1.80	0.59	-.02	.17 ^b	.14 ^a	-.05	-.08	-.31 ^c	-.39 ^c	-.14 ^a	-		
Internal pol. efficacy	2.81	0.86	.35 ^c	.20 ^b	.28 ^c	-.12	-.12	.03	-.09	-.27 ^c	-.02	-	
Political participation	3.35	0.93	.13 ^a	-.01	-.02	-.25 ^c	-.07	.09	.18 ^b	-.19 ^b	-.11	.30 ^c	-

^a $p < .05$, ^b $p < .01$, ^c $p < .001$

Gender: 1 = female, 2 = male, 3 = other/nonbinary.
 Education: 1 = elementary school, 2 = middle school, 3 = high school, 4 = bachelor, 5 = master, 6 = PhD or other 3rd level.
 Socio-Economic Status: from 1 = lowest status to 8 = highest status.

15.3 Discussion

This cross-sectional study proposed a model that could highlight the relationships between conspiracy fantasies, conspiracy hypotheses, and conventional political participation through the mediation of internal and external political efficacy. In general, the results explain how conspiracy fantasies, beliefs about unrealistic and universal conspiracies, are a construct that is empirically distinguishable from conspiracy hypotheses, plausible suspicions about the operation of power. Consequently, their

respective influence on motivation to participate in political life by following conventional paths differs. In fact, there is clear evidence that conspiracy fantasies have a negative impact on conventional political participation; this can be explained by their role in reducing feelings of external and internal political efficacy. The proposed mediation model describes the relationship between these constructs, bringing to light how the effect of conspiracy fantasies in reducing conventional political participation is mediated by reduced internal political efficacy (i.e., the perception of being able to understand and intervene in social and political matters), but not by external political efficacy (i.e., the ability of the political system to effectively respond to citizens' demands). Thus, the results related to the role that conspiracy fantasies can have in feelings of internal political efficacy and consequently in political participation show that, in our sample, this relationship is negative and very strong. Indeed, although conspiracy fantasies can induce people to believe they are privy to important truths and special knowledge that can somehow increase their perception and understanding of social and political matters better than others, it is also true that being exposed to such disabling narratives of power and intricate explanations of social events can actually reduce perception of being able to truly understand political reality and even actively intervene in it. For this reason, despite the fact that the results of the present study indicate a negative effect on internal political efficacy, the role of conspiracy fantasies on feelings of political efficacy related to the dimensions of individual action still remains an important matter to explore and disambiguate, keeping in mind the conditions that can moderate this relationship (e.g., socio-demographic and culture factors, etc.). Findings about the role of conspiracy fantasies in reducing external political efficacy are in line with recent empirical evidence about the relationship between conspiracy theories and lack of trust in the activity of the political system, perceived as less able to respond effectively to the needs of citizens, which can lead to a reduced propensity to adhere to conventional forms of political participation. However, our results did not find an indirect effect of conspiracy fantasies on political participation via the reduced sense of external political efficacy. In relation to the research questions posed about the role of conspiracy hypotheses both on feelings of internal and external political efficacy, and on political participation, our results confirm a previously undefined framework that deserves more

exploration. In fact, if the hypothesis that conspiracy hypotheses can still act as a deterrent to external political efficacy because they bear narratives of power as an enemy element that cannot be trusted without reservations, the research questions about their role in feelings of internal political efficacy remains open. Our results seem not to show any relationship between conspiracy hypotheses and internal political efficacy, just as with different forms of political participation. Nevertheless, the results concerning the partial but positive role of conspiracy hypotheses on political participation may open new and intriguing lines of enquiry. Having legitimate and plausible suspicions about how economic and political authorities operate may, in fact, motivate people to question power by actively using forms of participation such as peaceful protest, petitions or participation in political elections. However, the results about the relationships between feelings of political efficacy and participation show how internal political efficacy is the main predictor of conventional political participation, as already widely established in the literature (Craig et al., 1980; Wolak, 2018).

15.4 Limitations and future research

Although the results appear to be an important empirical basis for the development of a new line of research that considers the difference between conspiracy fantasies and conspiracy hypotheses in light of their role in influencing the democratic life and political participation of a country, the current study is preliminary and not without limitations that future research will need to take into consideration and overcome. For this reason, the evidence found in this study must be interpreted with caution and in a preliminary fashion, as a pretext to advance a systematic reflection.

A very relevant limitation concerns both the sample and how it was selected. Indeed, our sample, which is mainly composed of women with a university education, may clearly have influenced the possibility of generalizing the results of our research. In fact, even considering the effect of gender in statistical analyses as a covariate and despite this effect not seeming to have interfered with the findings, it seems clear that a study that attempts to investigate the role of conspiracy theorism in individual

political participation behavior should look at a sample that can better represent the entire population potentially targeted by this phenomenon. The collection of data should follow a systematic sampling that is possibly remunerated, rather than a convenience sampling that thereby generates bias tied to individual interest in participating (e.g., a lower tendency towards suspicion, a greater propensity towards active participation, interest in politics and political participation, etc.).

There is a limitation related to the use of cross-sectional rather than longitudinal or experimental research. Indeed, having measured all the variables of interest and then explored the relationship between them, in a discretionary manner with statistical analysis, this may not be a completely suitable method for verifying the causal role of conspiracy theorism in the variables of interest. A longitudinal design would allow us to verify whether conspiracy fantasies are what reduce perceptions of political efficacy and participation, and not vice versa. Experimental manipulation (e.g., exposure to conspiracy fantasies) could also be a valid tool for ascertaining the causal relationships of the model we have proposed. Therefore, future studies should use research designs capable of overcoming the limitations of cross-sectional studies with the objective of establishing the existence of causal relationships that can account for theorizations in light of the observed phenomena.

Another limitation concerns both the measures related to political participation and control measures. Although it is true that voting and activism are two important criteria for establishing a certain level of political participation, it is nonetheless true that they refer to circumscribed, limited activities that may involve certain groups of the population and not others. In fact, participation may also include behaviors that are not always so explicit and standardized such as, for example, online activism and/or everyday commitment to non-formalized social causes (e.g., neighborhood committees) that may involve people, regardless of their age, with different but still intense gradients of involvement. As far as control measures are concerned, it is important for future studies to keep in mind also the general level of interest in politics and of other sociodemographic variables that may impact the variables that are the subject of the investigation, such as professional roles and living conditions (e.g., big cities vs. small towns, centre vs. periphery, etc.).

Finally, future studies should also explore the differences between different countries and cultural contexts, to be able to establish not only the generalization of their effects, but also which conditions make the negative relationship between conspiracy theorism and political participation via political efficacy less clear and explore which factors can act as moderators of such relationships.

Despite these considerations, this article contributes to studies that investigate the social consequences of exposure to conspiracy theorism and endorsement of conspiracy beliefs. In fact, the study empirically considers a factor that until now was not explored in this form, namely the differences between conspiracy fantasies and conspiracy hypotheses, and puts forward the idea that not all forms of conspiracy can be defined as such, and that consequently they do not all have the same impact on society and individuals.

References

- ANTONELLI, F. (2021). *Radicalizzazione*. Milano: Mondadori università.
- ARDÈVOL-ABREU, A., GIL DE ZÚÑIGA, H., & GÁMEZ, E. (2020). The influence of conspiracy beliefs on conventional and unconventional forms of political participation: The mediating role of political efficacy. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 59*(2), 549–569.
- BALE, J. M. (2007). Political paranoia v. political realism: on distinguishing between bogus conspiracy theories and genuine conspiratorial politics. *Patterns of Prejudice, 41*(1), 45–60.
- BARUA, S. (2020). Understanding Coronanomics: The Economic Implications of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.
- BILEWICZ, M., & SEDEK, G. CICHOCKA, A., & SORAL, W. (2015). Conspiracy stereotypes. In BILEWICZ, M., CICHOCKA, A., & SORAL, W. (Eds.), *The Psychology of Conspiracy* (1st ed., pp. 1–22). London: Routledge.
- BRODERICK, R. (2021). Italy's Vaccine Opponents Stormed Parliament and Dominated Social Media. *Foreign Policy*.
- BYFORD, J. (2011). *Conspiracy Theories*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- BYINGTON, B. (2019). Antisemitic Conspiracy Theories and Violent Extremism on the Far Right: a Public Health Approach to Counter-Radicalization. *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism, 2*(1), 1–18.
- CENSIS (2021). *Diciassettesimo rapporto sulla comunicazione. I media dopo la pandemia*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- CAMPBELL, A., GURIN, G., & MILLER, W. E. (1954). *The voter decides*. Row, Peterson, and Co.
- CICHOCKA, A., MARCHLEWSKA, M., & DE ZAVALA, A. G. (2015). Does Self-Love or Self-Hate Predict Conspiracy Beliefs? Narcissism, Self-Esteem, and the Endorsement of Conspiracy Theories. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 7*(2), 157–166.
- CRAIG, S. C., & MAGGIOTTO, M. A. (1982). Measuring political efficacy. *Political Methodology, 8*–109.
- DOUGLAS, K. M. (2021). COVID-19 conspiracy theories. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, 24*(2), 270–275.
- DOUGLAS, K. M., SUTTON, R. M., & CICHOCKA, A. (2017). The Psychology of Conspiracy Theories. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 26*(6), 538–542.
- DOUGLAS, K. M., SUTTON, R. M., JOLLEY, D., & WOOD, M. J. (2015). The social, political, environmental, and health-related consequences of conspiracy theories: Problems and potential solutions. In M. BILEWICZ, A. CICHOCKA, & W. SORAL (Eds.), *The psychology of conspiracy* (pp. 183–200). London: Routledge.
- DOUGLAS, K. M., USCINSKI, J. E., SUTTON, R. M., CICHOCKA, A., NEFES, T., ANG, C. S., & DERAVIDI, F. (2019). Understanding Conspiracy Theories. *Political Psychology, 40*(S1), 3–35.
- GOODSELL, J. W. (2020). COVID-19 and finance: Agendas for future research. *Finance Research Letters, 35*, 101512.
- GREENBERG, J., & ARNDT, J. (2012). Terror management theory. In P. A. M. VAN LANGE, A. W. KRUGLANSKI, & E. T. HIGGINS (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (pp. 398–415). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.
- HAYES, A. F. (2012). PROCESS: A versatile computational tool for observed variable mediation, moderation, and conditional process modeling [White paper].
- HORGAN, J., & BRADDOCK, K. (Eds.) (2011). *Terrorism Studies*. London: Routledge.

- JOLLEY, D., & DOUGLAS, K. M. (2013). The social consequences of conspiracism: Exposure to conspiracy theories decreases intentions to engage in politics and to reduce one's carbon footprint. *British Journal of Psychology*, *105*(1), 35–56.
- JOLLEY, D., DOUGLAS, K. M., & SUTTON, R. M. (2017). Blaming a Few Bad Apples to Save a Threatened Barrel: The System-Justifying Function of Conspiracy Theories. *Political Psychology*, *39*(2), 465–478.
- JUNG, N., KIM, Y., & DE ZÚÑIGA, H. G. (2011). The Mediating Role of Knowledge and Efficacy in the Effects of Communication on Political Participation. *Mass Communication and Society*, *14*(4), 407–430.
- LAMBERTY, P., & LEISER, D. (2019). “Sometimes you just have to go in” – The link between conspiracy beliefs and political action. *PsyArXiv*.
- LEONE, L., GIACOMANTONIO, M., WILLIAMS, R., & MICHETTI, D. (2018). Avoidant attachment style and conspiracy ideation. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *134*, 329–336.
- LEWANDOWSKY, S., GIGNAC, G. E., & OBERAUER, K. (2015). Correction: The Role of Conspiracist Ideation and Worldviews in Predicting Rejection of Science. *PLOS ONE*, *10*(8), e0134773.
- MING 1, W. M. (2021). *La Q di Qomplotto. QAnon e dintorni. Come le fantasie di complotto difendono il sistema*. Roma: Edizioni Alegre.
- NICOLA, M., ALSAFI, Z., SOHRABI, C., KERWAN, A., AL-JABIR, A., IOSIFIDIS, C., AGHA, M., & AGHA, R. (2020). The socio-economic implications of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19): A review. *International Journal of Surgery*, *78*, 185–193.
- NIEMI, R. G., CRAIG, S. C., & MATTEI, F. (1991). Measuring Internal Political Efficacy in the 1988 National Election Study. *American Political Science Review*, *85*(4), 1407–1413.
- PREACHER, K.J., HAYES, A.F. (2008). Asymptotic and resampling strategies for assessing and comparing indirect effects in multiple mediator models. *Behavior Research Methods*, *40*, 879–891.
- SCHRAER, B. R. (2021, November 27). Covid: Conspiracy and untruths drive Europe's Covid protests. *BBC News*.
- STOJANOV, A., & HALBERSTADT, J. (2019). The Conspiracy Mentality Scale. *Social Psychology*, *50*(4), 215–232.
- SWAMI, V., COLES, R., STIEGER, S., PIETSCHNIG, J., FURNHAM, A., REHIM, S., & VORACEK, M. (2011). Conspiracist ideation in Britain and Austria: Evidence of a monological belief system and associations between individual psychological differences and real-world and fictitious conspiracy theories. *British Journal of Psychology*, *102*(3), 443–463.
- USCINSKI, J. E., & PARENT, J. M. (2014). *American Conspiracy Theories*. Oxford University Press.
- VAN PROOIJEN, J. W., & DOUGLAS, K. M. (2017). Conspiracy theories as part of history: The role of societal crisis situations. *Memory Studies*, *10*(3), 323–333.
- VAN PROOIJEN, J., & VAN LANGE, P. (2014). Power, Politics, and Paranoia: Why People Are Suspicious of Their Leaders. In J. PROOIJEN & P. LANGE (Eds.), *Power, Politics, and Paranoia: Why People are Suspicious of Their Leaders* (p. iii). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- WATTS, M. W. (1973). Efficacy, Trust, and Orientation Toward Socio-Political Authority: Students' Support for the University. *American Journal of Political Science*, *17*(2), 282.
- WOLAK, J. (2017). Feelings of Political Efficacy in the Fifty States. *Political Behavior*, *40*(3), 763–784.
- WONG, A., HO, S., OLUSANYA, O., ANTONINI, M. V., & LYNNESS, D. (2020). The use of social media and online communications in times of pandemic COVID-19. *Journal of the Intensive Care Society*, *22*(3), 255–260.

Radicalization and Management of the Educational Valencies of Security in Criminal Enforcement

Francesca Torlone

The paper focuses on an analytical study of the processes through which it is possible to prevent radicalized behaviours in an inmate while they are serving their prison sentence. Specifically, the focus is on the ensemble of informal and embedded educational actions that penitentiary staff enact in several phases of criminal enforcement, and which can lead to both the prevention of the rise of pathways of radicalization and the abandonment of related criminal culture and behaviours. The matter addressed concerns the emancipatory or oppressive nature of the learning processes that are developed while inmates are serving their term in prison. To this end, we consider two phases of criminal enforcement: reception as managed in the first 24 hours of the 'new arrivals', and prison work placement of the inmates. For each phase we set out to identify the different kinds of educational actions, favourable and adverse, to which inmates are exposed on a daily basis in their penitentiary life.

Key Words: Adverse Educational Actions; Inmates Induction; Embedded Learning; Penitentiary Workplace Learning

16.1 The prevention of radicalization through management of educational actions in prison

The focus of this paper is an analytical study of the processes through which it is possible to prevent radicalized behaviours in an inmate while they are serving their prison sentence.

The focus is on the ensemble of informal and embedded educational actions that penitentiary staff enact in several phases of criminal enforcement, and which can lead to both the prevention of the rise of pathways of radicalization and the abandonment of related criminal culture and behaviours.

The matter that we have addressed concerns the emancipatory or oppressive nature of the learning processes that are developed while the inmate is serving their term in prison.

To this end, the phases of criminal enforcement under examination are:

- a. reception as managed in the first 24 hours of the 'new arrivals'¹;
- b. and prison work placement of the inmates.

For each phase we set out to identify the different kinds of educational actions, both favourable and adverse (Federighi in Torlone, 2016), to which inmates are exposed on a daily basis in penitentiary life, outside of scholastic, university, working, sports and cultural pathways. We are not concerned with formal or informal educational actions and activities here. Instead, our focus is on the learning processes embedded in daily life in prison, in the different kinds of activity that mark the passing of the hours and days of the lives of the inmates. Interest in such activities is related to their learning (or delearning) potential and the kind of learning processes that are released when said activities are implemented by security staff or simply due to the fact that they are prescribed by the procedures that regulate life in a prison. The way in which such processes are managed affects the likelihood of fostering processes of radicalization in inmates and of 'critical revision' for the transformation of their perspectives of meaning that guide their behaviours, relationship management, and visions of the world (Torlone, 2018). In other words, these processes are what determine 're-education' (Art. 27, Para. 3 of the Italian Constitution) responding to the criteria – or rather, the ultimate learning goals for the inmate – of

¹ According to the Italian Ministry of Justice, the definition of New Arrival refers to 'people experiencing detention for the first time; to young people who, once of legal age, transition from institutions for minors to the adult penitentiary circuit; to those who are facing detention a long time after an earlier experience of restriction' ('persone alla prima esperienza detentiva; a giovani che, compiuta la maggiore età, transitano dagli istituti minorili al circuito penitenziario degli adulti; a coloro che affrontano una detenzione a lunga distanza di tempo da una precedente esperienza di restrizione', Ministero della Giustizia-DAP, 2007, translation mine).

autonomy, responsibility, socialization, and integration (Art. 1, Italian Penitentiary Law).

Identifying the phases under examination in educational actions allows us to verify the conditions under which the inmate can be supported during the transformation of social-linguistic, moral-ethical, and philosophical perspectives of meaning (Mezirow, 2000). The perspectives subject to critical revision concern relationship rules, rules related to the execution of reception and to productive processes, and rules regulating the organization where the inmate is placed, and for which the inmate will be doing work.

From the interpretative perspective adopted, each of the phases of prison life considered here (reception and then prison work) takes the form of the ensemble of informal, embedded educational actions that penitentiary staff with formative roles create, carry out, and evaluate to promote new learning and new acquisitions, not only and not so much of a technical-professional nature, but especially of an ethical kind that affect the conduct of the inmate within the organization and in their relationships with others. The ethical dimension of the theory of transformative learning is particularly relevant in the penitentiary setting since the conflict between the perspectives of meaning of the 'educating' institution and those of the inmate risks being difficult to manage if self- and hetero-directed reflective and learning pathways do not lead to a change in behaviours and attitudes and to the abatement of social dangerousness.²

A second dimension of the interpretative perspective adopted here concerns the transformative learning potential that it is possible to attribute to every moment of reception – from the transfer to the institution to the management of the first night in prison – and every moment of each prison work placement – from the matching of the

² 'If the learner opts for a specific course of action based on a thoughtful discourse that the educator cannot ethically accept, the latter individual would do well to abstain from any further educational intervention' ('Se il discente opta per un determinato corso d'azione in base ad un discorso riflessivo che l'educatore non può eticamente accettare, quest'ultimo fa benissimo ad astenersi da ogni ulteriore intervento educativo', Mezirow, 2003, p. 198, translation mine). From a transformative perspective, an inmate's abandonment by whoever performs 're-educational' duties is legitimized on the grounds of the ethical conflict created between different perspectives of the individuals involved in the educational relationship. Should such a conflict remain unresolved, there is a risk of undermining the foundations of life in society since the transformation of perspectives has not been brought to completion.

inmates' job applications and the jobs on offer at the institution to the management of educational and learning processes at the end of the work experience.

Before analysing the educational actions for each of the two selected phases, it is worth clarifying the terminology regarding the concept of 'radicalization', given the variety of definitions, approaches, and models of analysis explored in the literature³.

The different meanings have in common the identification of radicalization with a process that leads an individual to adopt a system of extremist beliefs that legitimize, support, or facilitate the use of violence. Many definitions go further, adding further specifications: the goal to provoke a social change, or joining terrorist groups, etc. Here we refer to the perspective that considers radicalization as the way through which serious crimes against persons and against the laws underpinning social cohesion are legitimized. This definition allows us to gather together all inmates involved in the Forward study, whose results are presented in this contribution⁴. These are inmates who have committed serious offences against persons, including as members of organizations that share a system of extremist beliefs (Torlone and Federighi, 2020). For these reasons, we have considered inmates with diverse criminal backgrounds and ethnicities and attempted to understand the meaning attributed by each of them to reception and work experience during their transformative learning process.

In the chapters that follow, each of the two phases of criminal enforcement are broken down into actions analysed from an educational perspective. In the first case, the individual actions and operations that mark the first 24

³ See just some of the approaches studied in the literature: Melacarne, 2021; Stephens et al., 2021; Winter & Feixas, 2019; Crettiez, 2016; Doosje et al., 2016; Ghosh et al., 2016; Karakatsanis & Herzog, 2016; Hafez & Mullins, 2015; Wilner & Dubouloz, 2015; Schmid, 2013; De Pascalis, 2012; Trujillo, 2009.

⁴ The Forward project (2019-2021) – *Formazione, ricerca e sviluppo di strategie 'Community Based' per facilitare e supportare le pratiche di convivenza nei contesti multietnici* (the formation, research, and development of community-based strategies to facilitate and support the practices of coexistence in multi-ethnic settings) was coordinated by the Department of Education, Human Sciences, and Intercultural Communication at the University of Siena. The study arose from the training activities aimed at professionals and scholars of the penitentiary system. Thirteen directors and professionals and a group of five scholars of the penitentiary system participated in these activities.

hours of an individual's entry into prison are analysed; in the second, the macrophases that accompany the work placement of an inmate are defined. This is because each action, operation, or activity has the potential to generate transformative learning as a result of the ability of the penitentiary staff to manage the learning pathways of the inmates at every moment in which they are organized, in the case of both reception and of work.

The data that we report in this article are drawn from observation done in an institutions and the product of reconstructions done both with staff in charge of security and the treatment of inmates at three institutions in central Italy, and with managerial staff from two institutions and from the local department of re-education for inmates.

16.2 The educational valences of the actions for the induction of new arrivals in the first 24 hours of entry into an institution

The first moments of an individual's entry into prison determine the meaning that is attributed to their new condition, the pathway of construction of the inmate's new 'identity'⁵. This is in fact due to the informal educational actions that mark this phase of the inmate's induction: from the way in which they are received in the Registry Office and in the blockhouse, to the kind of information received and the way it is provided, to the preparation and development of personal searches, to the execution of medical care, etc. This phase plays a crucial role with respect to the inmate's life since the way in which it is managed affects both the start of the process of meaning attribution to the prison stay and, in extreme cases, the occurrence of suicide and acts of self-harm.

The duration of the induction varies according to the type of inmate and the type of prison. Nonetheless, it makes sense to keep in mind that the first 24 hours of the stay have a particular impact on the inmate's future

⁵ The new arrival must come to terms with the rift incurred by their entry into prison in their personal biography; they lose their social status, their role in society, and their sense of self. In many cases these are irreversible losses from which it is difficult to recover, even after release. With incarceration the subject acquires new multiple identities, which vary according to the individual's relationships in the new penitentiary context (Goffman, 1961).

behaviour and their educational pathways⁶ (Carson, 2021; Radeloff et al., 2021; Marzano et al., 2016; Blaauw et al., 2001).

Many studies also show how this time has an impact on the likelihood acts of suicidal or self-harm (HM Prison & Probation Service, 2021; DAP-Istituto Superiore di Studi Penitenziari, 2011).

The learning processes that concern the individual in the first 24 hours after their arrest and entry into prison are developed in relation to the actions that characterize this phase, namely:

- entry into the Registry Office and Infirmary and registration procedures;
- giving personal belongings to security staff for custody and search;
- information about incarcerated life from the prison networks;
- placement of the inmate in the intake room;
- assignment of the inmate to the prison room and the 'prison room group';
- placement of the inmate in the group of inmates with whom they will share their prison room,
- preparation and management of the first night in prison.

Below we summarize each of the actions, in an attempt to explicitly identify the operations that can be attributed a learning potential. For each, moreover, and just as examples, we indicate possible methods of management used by the penitentiary institution's staff that can guide the inmate's construction of perspectives of meaning.

16.2.1 Entry into the Registry Office and Infirmary and registration procedures

Having entered the institution, the new arrival is accompanied by police officers to the Registry Office. Here their data are collected and the ruling that justifies their detention is recorded; fingerprints are taken, a search is done, photos are taken, and questions are asked about possible problems

⁶'[...] certain factors often found in inmates facing a crisis situation could predispose them to suicide: recent excessive drinking and/or use of drugs, recent loss of stabilizing resources, severe guilt or shame over the alleged offense, and current mental illness and/or prior history of suicidal behavior. These factors become exacerbated during the first 24 hours of incarceration, when the majority of jail suicides occur' (U.S. Department of Justice-National Institute of Corrections, 1995).

living with other inmates. Finally, a personal file is created that contains the information about the individual and the monitoring to be carried out in the first weeks.

In this phase, the new arrival is first placed in isolation, waiting to know how and where they will be placed. They are then placed in transit areas for the time necessary to complete the New Arrival Service procedures. The new arrival has few interactions, and they are primarily with the security staff (registrars), medical staff for the initial risk assessment, and potentially with the inmates involved in work activities in the waiting area. In this phase, the interactions activated with the reception staff in the Registry Office are aimed at:

- taking fingerprints,
- gathering information about the new arrival's level of linguistic competency,
- making known the legal grounds of the detention to make sure the new arrival understands why they are being restrained according to the provisions of the Italian penal system and in consideration of multicultural aspects,
- and carry out the search.

The registrar may moreover ask questions of the new arrival aimed at learning about the existence of potential problems of personal safety or incompatibility with other inmates in the institution.

The learning potential that is released during each of these operations is related to the way that the Registry Office staff manage relations with the new arrival: greeting, attention paid through brief communications and gestures, the content of the communications, the looks and tones of voice used, the answers provided by the individual, the smells of the space where the new arrival is held. The formal communication that the prison workers use around the new arrival could keep in mind various elements:

- how to communicate,
- the order of communications,
- the method used to make the new arrival understand the new dimension of their restriction,
- the duration of communication, to avoid overwhelming the new arrival with too many instructions that may be forgotten and lead to a distorted sense of the condition of restriction, at times useless

- because it cannot be immediately applied to the new arrival's interpretative framework, which is in the process of definition,
- the paper-based, audio-visual, and electronic support to be used to provide information in different languages,
 - and the preparation of expressly created informational materials, in an immediate, accessible communicative style, also in different languages.

The intentional management of each individual operation by the penitentiary staff involved (security and health staff) supports the new arrival as they begin to construct their sense of the experiences they are having.

From an educational perspective, we consider the communication of the legal grounds of detention to be particularly important: conception of crime and criminally relevant behaviour varies from culture to culture and it is not always easy to make new arrivals understand the illicitness of behaviour that would not be punished in the same way in other legal systems.⁷ The penitentiary staff present in this phase can act so that the new arrival is continually supported in the collection and interpretation of events (a greeting, a phrase, a welcoming demeanour, a slight, a disparaging expression, cold and detached proceduralism) and in each of the micro-transitions that concern them.

The challenge for the penitentiary staff is related to their ability to guide the construction of meanings and sense-making platforms in the new arrival, through shared social practices. The sense of the experiences that the new arrival has in the Registry Office is the product of what they rework with their filters, values, and interpretative frameworks – from a transformative perspective – and construct as a function of their development and self-realization goals. The penitentiary institution can contribute to guiding these processes of self-formation, which go far beyond procedural obligations.

⁷ Our research revealed different situations in which new arrivals from different ethnic groups struggle to understand the criminal offence of drug possession, bigamy, and violence against spouses, and consequently to accept their restriction, which they experience as injustice.

Also important is the management of the multicultural dimension of the relationship with the new arrival during the reception and registration phase.

16.2.2 Giving personal belongings to security staff for custody and search

In this phase, the inmate needs to give their personal belongings to the security staff to have them stored in custody, with exceptions made for faith. They are divested of objects that are not permitted, which are stored until the day of release. This involves the removal of material goods and valuables that the individual has at the time of entry (money, wallet, bracelets, telephone, photographs, necklaces, watches, etc.). Its embedded delearning potential is related to the separation from objects of economic, affective, and identity value. The process of 'confiscation' for custody and search obliterates the relationship that the inmate has with their own past, with the multiple roles and identities inherent in their pre-detention life. As has been stated, 'confiscation' is a ritual that, through the loss of material goods that the inmate owns, symbolizes the start of the loss of self, determined *in primis* by the termination of affective, family, and social links: the whole institution raises a barrier between the individual who is deprived of freedom and the outside social world (Goffman, 1961).

The way in which the search is carried out, in addition to being compliant with legal requirements, should also be thought of in terms of the educational consequences that are unleashed on the new arrival as they experience them.

Some losses may be irreversible, especially in the event of long-term sentences, if the learning processes of depersonalization are not monitored and managed by the inmate: it is their power to monitor the anti- or delearning processes that allows them to reclaim their ability to structure their role and identity in light of the limitations imposed by prison.

Their identity, in its multiple dimensions, immediately starts to be defined through their relationship with other inmates and interactions with the all the prison staff and workers. The acts of search, 'confiscation', and future inspections⁸ are individual operations that each have a marked educational

⁸ In general terms, inspection is an activity aimed at finding possible traces of a crime or evidence of the crime itself. It focuses on people, places, or things. Search is a more invasive activity because it

valency – often in a negative sense – related to the rupture of bonds, physical intrusion, violation of the body, and humiliation, while respecting all procedural provisions. The inmate loses the private dimension of their person and transforms their sense of body.

The lack of freedom in action, the loss of autonomy related to the decision about what to keep and what to leave in custody, results in humiliation, frustration, and loss of the meaning of intimacy.

From an institutional perspective, the search and the subtraction of personal objects are aimed at safeguarding the regular course of daily life in prison, guaranteeing internal security, and preventing the risk of weapons, objects designed to injure or prohibited for the purposes of discipline, or other substances or forbidden things being introduced and owned by the incarcerated population. Prison staff could professionally manage this operation to guide the inmate's processes of the construction of meaning and make sure they understand the meaning of the search: in other words, the dimension of internal security also from the perspective of the incarcerated population; the ways it is carried out; the prison staff in charge of it; its duration; and the custody of the objects searched and the possibility of recovering them at the end of imprisonment.

16.2.3 Information about prison life from prison networks

This phase is characterized by the relationship that the new arrival immediately establishes with the prison staff with whom they come into contact. Each operator provides the information related to penitentiary life and to the codified rules that regulate relationships, actions, and behaviours among inmates and institutional staff. Style and methods of communication vary according to the individual prison workers.

Subsequently, in their relations with other inmates, the inmate will receive information about implicit rules in use, the result of tacit behaviours consolidated over time within the institution and the community of peers. This includes information about various aspects of daily life: acquisition of essential items, management of relationships, religious practices,

is aimed at finding and acquiring the body of evidence or the things related to the crime, or those things that are the payoff for the crime.

behaviours to adopt around different penitentiary staff, relations with the staff, and who to turn to and how to do so to get what is needed.

Having just entered the institution, the newly incarcerated individual is immediately involved in modes of communication that have their own specific nature from a linguistic and extralinguistic point of view.

With respect to the other inmates, communication is set up as a process of transmission and reception of information that occurs according to specific channels and reference codes. We consider these from the perspective of the signifier that the inmates use and the meaning that they attribute to it. Extralinguistic communication refers to the way in which the inmates speak. This is related to the content of the communication between them: voice, way of speaking, cadence, pronunciation, rhythm of the inmate who is communicating, tattoos, gaze, silence, and movements each represent a form of symbolic communication that the communicator uses and to which the receiving inmates attribute specific meanings.

In the first 24 hours the inmate has few opportunities to contact and communicate with their peers. These opportunities may occur in some detention spaces and at some times. The exchange of information in these circumstances is very quick, sometimes faster than the circulation of the information distributed in official sources. Often it is used to circulate content that would be hindered if expressed directly. The exchange of information goes through rumours, words, glossaries, proxemics: these are sufficient for transmitting various kinds of messages that the newly inmate reprocesses during independent learning and through their ability to self-direct their learning pathways, alone or supported by other inmates.

Each member of the prison staff, depending on their organizational role, could step in to guide the processes of attribution of meaning that are continually fuelled by the individual who has just entered the institution, also in their relationships with the inmates they encounter and with whom they immediately establish ties. Prison worker participation in such processes can be direct or mediated by other inmates that the institution supports in their role as peer guides. This requires the construction of a new organizational culture that thinks of the inmate as a resource for managing the educational valencies of everyday life in prison in certain situations for re-educational purposes.

16.2.4 Placement of the inmate in the intake room

In this phase, the inmate is assigned to a detention space to prepare them for their later placement in the prison room. The duration is limited to a few days (no more than 7). In the intake room, when available, other inmates selected by penitentiary staff could be present.

Institutions that place the inmate in an intake room have a further induction phases to preside over and manage for preventive and rehabilitative purposes. This can also be dictated by procedural requirements (waiting for the issuing of the court order validating the arrest or detention).

The learning potential of this phase is related to at least five elements:

- the decision about the opportunity for the inmate to spend several days in the intake room for observation, preparation for admittance to the prison room, and settling into the new penitentiary context;
- the decision in regard to the length of stay in the intake room;
- the placement in the single, or multiple occupancy where possible, room;
- the selection of peers to admit to the intake room and the formation of the intake group;
- and the creation of the group in the intake room.

The educational actions to be carried out recall the need to evaluate the opportunity to extend the entry time in the 'prison room group' on the basis of the inmate's specific requirements, tied to the need to get closer, settle in, and be supported during the processes of signification with a later phase.

16.2.5 Assignment of the inmate to the prison room and the 'prison room group'

In this phase, the inmate learns about their position in terms of the prison regime and the peers with whom they will share the prison room – if they are not bound for solitary confinement or high security.

In several institutions it is common practice for the penitentiary security staff – in accordance with the management – to select the room for the new inmate. The selection criteria of the physical space are based on the legal situation, the type of crime committed, or the type of inmate based

on behaviour or assumed roles. The criteria used to make up the '*prison room group*' include:

- the nationality of the roommates;
- linguistic abilities;
- the sharing of everyday life customs – e.g., the consumption of cigarettes;
- the financial situation of the group's members, considered a source of co-support for the new inmate, if in a state of need;
- the presence of *peer educators* on the team;
- the evaluation of the role that each member of the '*prison room group*' can take on with respect to the process of orientation and construction of the meaning in which the new member is involved;
- and the matching between the goals of orienting the newly admitted inmate and the ability of the members to support their processes of integration.

Relevant information is communicated to the inmate by the same staff who did the selection.

This phase serves multiple formative and learning roles tied not only to the selection of a space but especially to the construction of the group, with its learning potential for the inmate who is for the first time entering a room that is new to them, and entering a group foreign to them, of which the other inmates are already part. From an educational perspective, the choice of prison room recalls the powers that in this phase would be useful if they were exercised by the legal-pedagogical officer capable of analysing and monitoring the educational valencies that are released around the individuals involved in the dynamics of everyday life in the room and social life.

Building a team is an action with high learning potential, which should be designed bearing in mind the response that each inmate can formulate individually and the learning processes that can be released in every interaction and contact with each of the team's members. This means that the processes of educational transformation and the direction in which each inmate directs their learning processes are determined within the team relationship. The less the inmate's ability to monitor and direct is, the more their response is expressed in externally directed ways, steered by others and not necessarily in line with their own development goals.

From an educational point of view, the choice of prison room cannot be left to chance or to the pure informality of the learning processes between inmates that elude some penitentiary staff. There is no way that the inmate can remove themselves from the authorities and educational context of the team in the room. The challenge is to guide them within a programme framework defined with respect to each individual inmate. If each of the criteria in use for the establishment of the team is managed as part of a personalized educational programme, and the educational valencies embedded in the components of team life by the penitentiary staff are monitored, the learning processes directed and managed by the members of the team in the room can be avoided. Such processes are associated with the risk of results in terms of submissive behaviours, dependency, conflict, threat, and the recurrence of illicit acts.

Ultimately it becomes essential for the penitentiary staff to work with the group of inmates that is already established to manage the new arrival's construction of meaning.

16.2.6 Placement of the inmate in the group of inmates with whom they will share their prison room

In this phase of the *induction* the newly established inmate has relationships and enters into contact with various groups of inmates: from those with whom they share the spaces in the prison room to those whom they encounter in other prison areas and with whom they start to forge relationships. After assignment, the prison room group begins to be constructed in this phase.

The new inmate is introduced to the inmate 'leader' of the prison room group to which they have been assigned and to the other inmates. The learning potential of this moment is related to the way in which the new inmate is introduced, to the content and the duration of communication, to the setting used, and to the individuals present (inmates, peer educators, penitentiary staff).

The newcomer is told the rules of the rhythms and schedules of life inside and outside the prison room area, as well as the schedules and rhythms of work, both theirs – when they have it – and that of others who are already working. The learning outcomes begin to be generated at this time, as the new inmate starts to anticipate their way of managing the routine schedule

within a group and within the relationships in which they are starting to position themselves in view of 'alliances' and affinities.

The new inmate moreover learns the roles and responsibilities of the team they belong to, both with respect to its members and to the other ward or section teams. These acquisitions are tacit and developed through the informality of the relationships managed for the most part in the select circle of peers, which directs the new inmate's processes of creation of meaning.

A further kind of learning concerns the structure of relationships – formal and informal – that exist between the incarcerated population and their respective roles in the institution (for example, the duties of the 'scribe inmate' to access work or other services). In this phase, the new inmate starts to construct a map to situate the names and roles of the peers with whom they are forming relationships and anticipate how they will have to interact with each one, both in terms of their role and the goals they mean to pursue.

Finally, the newly admitted inmate learns the roles, for the most part implicit for the management of the information they access, both with regard to the other inmates and to the penitentiary staff.

The absence of interventions that look to orienting and guiding the new inmate's processes of construction of meaning leaves the management to the group of peers. If they are considered an educational resource, which the institution uses to help align the goals of orientating and 're-perimeterizing' the newly arrived inmate with organizational goals, the phase is likely to conclude without critical issues. But in the event that the interpretative frameworks of criminal assumptions prevail due to a lack of control and management of the informal processes of construction of meaning by the organization, it is likely that there will subsequently be critical events to manage.

The actions that can be activated by the penitentiary staff concern:

- the training of members of the teams to which the inmate belongs, so that these members carry out roles involving guidance, help, support, and orientation, but also manage observation and data collection and analysis related to the behaviours of their peers;
- the accompaniment and guiding of the newly established inmate as they collect data and construct frameworks that support them in the interpretation, comprehension, and relativization of the

- collection of information that they acquire during informal interactions;
- and the monitoring of the process of integration of the new inmate within the groups of peers, inside and outside the prison room, through the collection of information both by members of the team and by all the operators that oversee the movements and installations of the new inmate in prison areas at this stage.

Reducing the spaces of unpredictability of informal education in the relationships between incarcerated peers helps the penitentiary administration to intentionally manage the formative and learning processes of the newly established inmate and create the educational conditions that generate their processes of construction of meaning. The preventive role of this approach requires practicing or reinforcing forms of dialogue and listening around the inmates, who help the new inmate to construct filters for understanding the meaning of the restrictions and constraints of prison and to avoid violent behaviours in response to meanings unnegotiated with the penitentiary administration.

16.2.7 Preparation and management of the first night in prison

The first night is the moment in which the inmate concludes their first encounter with their new incarcerated reality. The encounter depends on the way in which each moment has been managed and by whom (penitentiary institution, other inmates). The inmate gets ready to spend the first night, the first sleep, the first darkness, on their own, along with the baggage of meanings constructed and developed over 24 hours. The first interpretations that the inmate reprocesses alone overnight are the lessons with which they set out to manage their new life starting the next day.

The educational relevance of this phase resides in the activities of reprocessing the knowledge and learning outcomes that the inmate has acquired in the 24 hours of their stay and contact in the institution, and the meanings that they built and attributed to each experience. The next day is a day with a new routine that the inmate is not always ready to face: it all depends on the lessons that have been acquired during the first 24 hours and their use during the continuing orientation process.

In this phase, too, actions are aimed at orienting the meanings with which the inmate is growing and constructing their new self, role, and multiple identity. Night, darkness, silence, smells, and sounds can contribute to the activation of meanings that the inmate is not always able to control. Placing the inmate who is preparing to spend the first night in prison with a 'first nighter' with support and observation roles, or activating other systems, could help the inmate to process the lessons acquired during the first hours of their stay at the institution within a frame of meaning in line with their aspirations (to be well, to create conditions for wellbeing). During this action it would be necessary to avoid leaving the inmate alone to construct the meaning of their current experience and of the one that is about to begin on the second day.

We would add another transversal phase to the ones already mentioned, which concerns the *management of the penitentiary community with respect to the newly admitted inmate*. Socializing with their peers involves moments of exchange that take place in the waiting spaces and the spaces where essential supplies are handed out, in addition to the spaces for prison stays. The filters that the other prisoners use to relate to the new inmate affect the quality of the relationships that the inmate is beginning to construct, on their own and with the support of the penitentiary institution.

On their first day of incarceration the individual is confronted with their community of peers and prison subculture. The first is often the tool that the inmates power to make up for the shortcomings of the institution. The inmates rely on it to get what they want (information, material goods, economic resources, access to networks). It is something that the inmate starts to learn about from their first moments in the institution.

Prison subculture is the ensemble of tacit customary rules, neither written nor formalized, of the standard values that regulate internal relationships between prisoners and influence the process of integration and the behaviours within the penitentiary community.

The learning potential embedded in interactions, communications, and membership in the community of inmates produces, from this phase on, a resulting generation of new perspectives of meaning about their position in the prison setting, or of validation or extension of their existing opportunities, if compatible with those the inmate already possesses.

Managing these dynamics from an educational point of view means, for the penitentiary administration, contributing to the creation of meaning that the inmate continually produces, directing it in order to promote the inmate's own orientation in the institution.

The actions that need to be activated, monitored, and evaluated concern the role that the institution grants to the 'peer educators' – that is, the inmates who perform roles concerning information, interpretation, orientation, the interiorization of rules, regulations, practices and behaviours at all times during the first 24 hours since entry into the institution. The selection, training, rostering and evaluation of the activities of the 'peer educators' constitute important moments for the construction of facilitating actions in terms of support and guidance in the construction of the individual's new identity and new positioning in the new prison setting, also in multi-ethnic and multicultural terms.

16.3 Educational valencies of the actions for the prison work placement of inmates

The learning potential of prison labour varies on account of the different types of work that can be performed by the inmate over the course of their sentence:

- work carried out in the inmate section (e.g., cleaning, preparation of applications and requests, management of current accounts, assistance of vulnerable inmates),
- work carried out in the interstitial zone between the detention area and the outside world,
- and outside work.

We do not consider internal manufacturing here because it was not in the institutions where we carried out our research activities.

We believe that the macrophases that each inmate goes through and that make up steps that generate reflective and transformative potential, also with a view to preventing radicalized thoughts, can be identified as follows:

- matching of the job application and offer,
- induction into the professional position,

- management of the educational and learning processes during the performance of the work activity,
- and management of the educational and learning processes at the end of the work experience.

We shall analyse them briefly to capture the educational dimension of each one.

16.3.1 Matching of the job application and offer

In prison there is a specific job market where different occupations meet people who are different in their culture, skills, abilities, and learning needs, also through work activity. It is in this phase that the inmate is associated with a particular type of work experience.

The ratio that establishes this association can be legitimized by the choice of the type of work with the learning potential that is richest and most coherent with the inmate's path of treatment, as well as most appropriate with respect to the type of crime committed and to the filters, interpretations and bonds that made it possible. Because of this, formative results start to be generated from the moment that the inmate starts to wait for their future professional experience, which often coincides with a moment where matching is negotiated. From this moment on, the inmate starts to formulate their first preconceptions about the type of work experience that awaits them and starts to be engaged in a process of attribution of meaning to what comes before they begin the work that awaits. We have no evidence about the impact that this phase has on later ones; but we can observe that at this point processes of construction of meaning by the inmate about their future work experience are already developing. These appear to be influenced by the *habits of expectations* with which the inmate usually attributes meaning to their encounters with the world of work. We can, therefore, hypothesize that through management of the different educational actions that occur during this phase, it is possible to encourage processes of construction of several new perspectives of meaning.

The first educational action concerns granting the inmate the possibility to work in view of their exhibited characteristics and assumed behaviour. The distributive rules of this phase are in part determined by objective and

uniform criteria, which we might say involve 'distributive justice' (the opportunity to have a minimum income, to leave prison spaces, to prepare for professional reintegration after the end of the sentence). At the same time, the skills acquired during earlier work activities and psychophysical conditions have an impact. But in the case of inmates of different nationalities there are other factors to take into consideration, related to the culture of work connected to their background. The culture of work varies according to, primarily, earlier work experience. Inmates of any cultural and ethnic background may not have ever worked because they come from subsistence countries and economies, or because they have always lived within criminal organizations or networks. There are also inmates that do not know the value of money, having never come into possession of it.

The second educational action concerns the choice of the most suitable type of work experience based on the inmate's cultural, professional, and criminological profile. The challenge involves the choice of the type of work with a formative and learning potential that adheres to the inmate's treatment plan.

As other studies demonstrate (Bernert-Bürkle et al., *forthcoming*), the problem does not concern the type and level of experience that can be acquired while working. Rather, it recognizes the capacity of work experience to give way to reflective processes and processes involving the construction of meaning that modify the inmate's original perspectives of meaning due to the crimes committed and rules violated. Our research highlights, for example, how the inmates share between themselves – and not with the penitentiary staff – constructions of meaning about the different types of work. These derive from the prestige and esteem that a job commands within the community of inmates due to the vital functions that it performs in daily prison life and due to the solidarity and mutual aid that it fuels with regard to the incarcerated population (e.g., the scribe inmate versus the guard inmate).

For the inmate, the matching phase is therefore a process through which the meaning of their future work experience is clarified, and their filters are potentially deconstructed, building systems of meaning through processes involving the reworking of their experiences. This is a case of identifying the critical moments that can be matched with formative actions conducive to reaching the learning goal of this phase, namely the participation of the

inmate in the choice of work experience as part of their treatment plan. The critical issues involve the management of the wait for work – overlooked from an educational angle – and the selection of the inmate – during which process it is the inmate who self-constructs the meanings of the tasks assigned and their adherence to self-development goals.

16.3.2 Induction into the professional position

The induction phase acts as the first introduction to working conditions, the sharing of rules to follow, and the analysis of meaning that the work experience can take on with regard to the inmate's perspectives on life and work.

The challenge of this phase consists of the possibility for the penitentiary staff to negotiate and manage the inmate's initiation of the process of constructing meanings tied to work. It is a phase that can also be interrupted by the absence of understanding between any of the parties, penitentiary staff included. The absence of an intervention that targets these goals leaves management to groups of inmates, risking the prevalence of interpretative keys determined by principles and criteria associated with criminal behaviours.

For prison jobs, the inmate's induction lasts 2-3 days and is an important time linked to the acquisition of knowledge about the rules related to the work to be done, to the organization they work for (the penitentiary administration), to the productive processes to be supervised, and to the underlying culture of work, to the tools needed and their sourcing and use, to the people with whom the inmate will interact (other inmates and ward assistants). For internal work, the inmate also engages with the figure of the agent 'in charge' who follows them throughout the duration of the job and plays a formative role in their experience, acting as their manager, evaluator, and supervisor, as well as guarantor of internal security.

This is a time during which the inmate must bring into play their own skills in understanding working spaces, relationships, the organization, and rules to be followed. Penitentiary staff and their peers contribute and compete in the construction and formulation of the inmate's decisions that will guide their plane of action during the execution of their professional duties.

The preparation for the induction happens primarily through the informal networks of social interaction between inmates, through which value

judgements, knowledge, and pre-recruitment assumptions about the rules of accessing work are shared. The network also determines guidance about the processes to follow in order to get specific work roles, about the service to be carried out, about the ways in which the work is performed, and about the roles played by the security staff and about their relative personality profiles.

The inmates who have their own personal development plan tend to create functional and coherent relationships between their next work experience and the work they will have after the end of their sentence. For these reasons, strong perspectives of meaning (e.g., a plan involving the continuation of criminal activity or the reconstruction of family and social life in different places from those that led to the inmate's criminal experience) determine and operate the acceptance or not of the proposed opportunity – that is, they guide the inmate's activity to one decision or the other. It is the phase of exploration of the options that envisage new roles, new relations, and new actions.

The educational actions that can provide support in this phase are related to the selection and hiring of the inmate and their introduction to the job position.

The communication of the selection results is a time where the reasons why a treatment activity proposal is formulated for one rather than another of the inmate applicants are made explicit. For the inmates who are candidates for internal work, it is the ward coordinator who is responsible for the management of the summons and the communication of the decision. This time can represent the ending of the negotiation phase between the inmate and penitentiary staff and the start of a new path through which the incarcerated individual constructs the meaning that the work experience will have for them. But there is no lack of instances where the work is refused, clearly highlighting the risks of managing the processes of this phase, which is dominated by factors different from those considered from a treatment perspective.

During the introduction to their job position, the inmate new to the role is always accompanied by a senior inmate and a penitentiary staff member with two roles: the first being to facilitate the processes of familiarization with the work setting and the organizational rules connected to the performances of duties (relating to process, cost, time, methods, and quality, values, and work ethic), and the second to do with security, control,

observation and evaluation, and possible support in the management of some activities (e.g., providing materials for cleaning). The induction may be skipped in the case of hiring inmates who are highly specialized in the assigned task due to previous work experience or certifications held.

In conclusion, the induction phase, while short, serves several functions that influence the later formative and learning process of the inmate, since:

- it is the moment in which the meaning given to the work experience to be undertaken is made explicit,
- the inmate is faced with the containers of knowledge and artefacts of the work setting and with the processes and rules that determine it,
- and the inmate participates in the processes involving the production of new knowledge in terms of products, services, organization, and internal or external clients.

At the end of the induction, the formative agreement is finalized and the expected learning outcomes are shared by the inmate engaged in their work-related learning path.

16.3.3 Management of the formative and learning processes of inmates during the execution of work

The meanings that the inmate gives to work depend, first of all, on the short- or long-term perspective from which the experience is considered. From a short-term perspective, work is seen as a chance to have money, a simple alternative to everyday prison life, and an occupation during a 'useless time'. The inmates who share an approach to work whose meanings are compressed to the short term tend not to consider the work experience as a learning experience. The work can become a tool for reinforcing their own competitive position within the prison, based on the possibility of managing money and services (this is the case of the inmate assigned the roles of scribe or prison bank account supervisor). Furthermore, working means leaving 'occupational apartheid', distinguishing oneself from the condition of inmate that other peers in prison have, becoming one the inmates who work. It is a transition in the life of the inmate that can generate various kinds of negotiation and conflicts. The inmate who works outside of internal prison services is

exposed to blackmail and threats and must therefore successfully embark on a transformative journey under conditions of potential social exclusion and fear.

The possibility of activating processes of transformative learning depends on the ability that the inmate has to access and manipulate the containers of knowledge and artefacts – material and immaterial – present in the workplaces.

The first distinction concerns the place in which the work activity is carried out: inside the prison (service or production activities), outside the prison but still within the outer prison wall (prison service activities), outside the prison, in organizations and businesses in the territory.

It is known that the kinds of work in which the inmates are involved require low levels of knowledge. However, any organization has its own rules concerning the relationships between people, the perks and incentives given to its staff, the prospects for improvement, the prestige of membership, and the content of work performed.

In conclusion, based on the evidence gathered during research, the inmate's management of transformative learning processes during the execution of work can happen through:

- the involvement of all staff involved in the crucial phases of the process, beginning with the authorized officer, during the observation of the inmate's behaviours and especially during the regular promotion of moments of individual and group feedback, through which to reconstruct the experience and meanings that it takes on from the inmate's perspective.
- the monitoring of the inmate's technical and professional formation and learning processes, in particular as regards the process of attribution of meaning to work experience. For internal work such formation is usually entrusted to senior inmates, both during mentoring and in prison. This part of the formative and learning process must be the goal of learning opportunities and dialogue managed by the security staff, aimed at the inmate's interpretation and reconstruction of meaning.
- the management of all types of errors, which is part of every work experience. In the case of work in prison conditions, the importance that errors connected to the production of goods or services take on has an equivalent, if not inferior, weight compared to

behavioural errors. Although the former can impact the quality of the activity performed and be corrected with the procedures set out by the organization, the latter call into question the re-educational treatment plan. They can uncover regressions from the pathway of construction of new perspectives of meaning that are expected to be the result of the work experience.

- the management of non-work time at the end of the working day is a moment that is part of the formative and learning pathway of the working inmate. Re-entry into the prison coincides with a moment of negotiation of meanings of the experience with other inmates.

16.3.4 Management of the formative and learning processes of the inmates at the end of the work experience

An inmate has multiple work experiences – especially inside the institution – and, predominately, short-term. They can be interrupted by the possible administration of a punishment, by a transfer, or by the conclusion of the experience and the initiation of a new work transition.

The transition perspectives that open up in this phase can favour the passage to better, worse, or similar work posts, or – because of punishments or transfers – to the loss of work opportunity.

The inmate sees this as a waiting period of particular tension, on which depend their future perspectives about life and work, their plan and prefigurations about their future life in prison and outside and about the conditions that contribute to determining it. It is at this time that the pathway taken reveals its results in the evaluation of personal goals reached and in the planning of further developments.

All this happens with the ex-working inmate inserted into the everyday routine of relationships and activities in prison life. It is a phase of deep discomfort that accompanies the wait to return to work, sometimes marked by acts of self-harm.

The ways in which inmates tackle this phase depend, other than on objective factors – physical conditions, age, distance from the end of the sentence, etc. – also on having defined or not their own personal plan for development and work and social reintegration. This is the result and driving reason for the continuation of the path of transformative learning

that accompanies the inmate until the end of the sentence. The plan is the material and immaterial artefact that gives meaning to the experience had, to the wait time, and to future work experience. The quality (also ethical) of the plan represents the result of the formative and learning path taken. For foreign inmates the construction of a personal plan presents further critical issues. The last work experience and then the end of the sentence can herald expulsion from Italy and place the inmate in new and unexpected scenarios: early repatriation relying on the penitentiary institutions of their origin country or key authorities, or a search to avoid expulsion to their country of origin due to the risks that it would bring. In conclusion, management of transformative learning during the concluding phase of work experience can be supported by formative measures aimed at the evaluation of the pathway completed by all the penitentiary personnel, together with the inmate, and their personal redesign of other educational actions.

● **16.4 Conclusions**

The informal dimension of the learning and actions that accompany new potentially emancipatory acquisitions throughout the entire 're-educational' pathway that marks each experience unfolds over the course of the sentence being served in prison. With respect to the phases of reception in the first 24 hours and of prison work placement, the management of each, from an educational perspective, requires constant negotiation of the meanings that the inmate attributes to each activity, action, and operation in which they are involved in everyday relationships. This negotiation requires the inmate to be able to carry out tasks and interpretative filters and activate the embedded educational valencies released during the development of each activity and relationship with security staff. The inmates who are incapable of independently managing such valencies and completing transformations of assumptions and perspectives remain socially dangerous and at risk of violent behaviour. The same formative and learning pathways constructed through prison reception and work can be used for criminal ends.

The success of transformative learning for the prevention of violent behaviours depends on the methods of managing interpretative and

negotiation processes by the inmate and by the role in these assumed by the security staff. Having identified the phases of the process that potentially ask the inmate to reconstruct new equilibria and meanings, we think it may be useful to set up a targeted learning action. Based on this result it is possible to attempt to construct a series of informal but structured educational actions, managed both by the security staff members presiding over every operation to which each inmate is assigned, and by the different players in the penitentiary system who facilitate the inmates' acquisition of new perspectives.

References

- BERNERT-BÜRKLE, A., FEDERIGHI, P., & TORLONE, F. (2023). *The fast track labour market integration of immigrants. Work-related learning of culture, language and profession*. Bonn: W. Bertelsmann Verlag.
- BLAAUW, E., KERKHOF, A., & WINKEL, F. W. (2001). Identifying suicide risk in penal institutions in the Netherlands. *The British Journal of Forensic Practise*, 3(4), 22–28.
- CARSON, E. A. (2021). *Suicide in Local Jails and State and Federal Prisons, 2000–2019 – Statistical Tables*. U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- CRETTEZ, X. (2016). Penser la radicalisation. Une sociologie processuelle des variables de l'engagement violent. *Revue Française de Science Politique*, 66(5), 176.
- DAP-ISTITUTO SUPERIORE DI STUDI PENITENZIARI (2011). La prevenzione dei suicidi in carcere. Contributi per la conoscenza del fenomeno. *Quaderni ISSP 8*.
- DE PASCALIS, M. (2012). La radicalizzazione del terrorismo islamico. Elementi per uno studio del fenomeno di proselitismo in carcere. *Istituto Superiore di Studi penitenziari*, 9, 1-136.
- DOOSJE, B., MOGHADDAM, F. M., KRUGLANSKI, A. W., DE WOLF, A., MANN, L., & FEDDES, A. R. (2016). Terrorism, radicalization and deradicalization. Current Opinion. *Psychology*, 11, 79-84.
- FEDERIGHI, P. (2016). Il carcere come città educativa. La prevenzione educativa dei comportamenti criminali, in F. TORLONE (Ed.) *Il diritto al risarcimento educativo dei detenuti*, Firenze: Firenze University Press.
- GHOSH, R., ALICE CHAN, W.Y., MANUEL, A., & DILIMULATI, M. (2016). Can education counter violent religious extremism?. *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, 23(2), 117-133.
- Goffman, E. (1961). *Asylum. Le istituzioni totali: i meccanismi dell'esclusione e della violenza*. Torino: Einaudi.
- HAFEZ, M., & MULLINS, C. (2015). The radicalization puzzle: a theoretical synthesis of empirical approaches to homegrown extremism. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 38, 958-975.
- KARAKATSANIS, L., & HERZOG, M. (2016). Radicalization as form: beyond the security paradigm. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 24(2), 199-206.
- MARZANO, L., HAWTON, K., RIVLIN, A., SMITH, E. N., PIPER, M., & FAZEL, S. (2016). Prevention of suicidal behavior in prisons: An overview of initiatives based on a systematic review of research on near-lethal suicide attempts. *Crisis: The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention*, 37(5), 323–334.
- MELACARNE, C. (2021). Dal terrorismo alla microradicalizzazione. Riflessioni per la ricerca pedagogica. *Educational Reflective Practices (1-Special)*.
- MEZIROW, J. (2003). *Apprendimento e trasformazione. Il significato dell'esperienza e il valore della riflessione nell'apprendimento degli adulti*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- MEZIROW, J. (Ed.) (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- MINISTERO DELLA GIUSTIZIA-DAP (2007). *Circolare G.D.A.P. 6 giugno 2007, n. 0181045, I detenuti provenienti dalla libertà: regole di accoglienza. Linee di indirizzo*.
- RADELOFF D., TEN HÖVEL M., BRENNECKE G., STOEBER F.S., LEMPP T., KETTNER M., ET AL. (2021). Suicide after reception into prison: A case-control study examining differences in early and late events. *PLoS ONE 16(8): e0255284*.
- SCHMID, A.P. (2013). Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review. *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague*. 2013; 4(2): 1.

- STEPHENS, W., SIECKELINCK, S., & BOUTELLIER, H. (2021). Preventing Violent Extremism: A Review of the Literature. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 44:4, 346-361.
- TORLONE, F. (2018). The Right to Educational Compensation of the Prisoners in the Italian System. *Hungarian Educational Research Journal-HERJ*, 8(2018), n.4, 52-69.
- TORLONE, F. (2016). *Il diritto al risarcimento educativo dei detenuti*. Firenze: Firenze University Press.
- TORLONE, F., & FEDERIGHI, P. (2020). Lavoro e apprendimento trasformativo in carcere. *Educational Reflective Practices* 2(2020), 5-36.
- TRUJILLO, M. (2009). Radicalization in Prisons? Field Research in 25 Spanish Prisons. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 21(4), 558-579.
- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE-NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CORRECTIONS (1995). *Prison Suicide: An Overview and Guide to Prevention*, National Center on Institutions and Alternatives.
- WHO (2007). *La prevenzione del suicidio nelle carceri*. Geneva: Management of Mental and Brain Disorders - Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse.
- WILNER, A., DUBOULOZ, C. J. (2015). Homegrown terrorism and transformative learning: an interdisciplinary approach to understanding radicalization. *Global Change, Peace, and Security*, 22(1), 33-51.
- WINTER D. A., FEIXAS G. (2019). Toward a Constructivist Model of Radicalization and Deradicalization: A Conceptual and Methodological Proposal. *Front. Psychology*. 10:412.

The Authors

Loretta Fabbri is Full Professor of Didactics and Methodology of Educational and Training Processes. She has conducted research aimed at studying the work practices and development devices of professional communities, with a focus on learning and knowledge construction processes in organizations. Her research work focuses on issues related to “Transformative Learning Theory”, “Reflective Practices” and “Active Learning Methodologies”. She is also interested in the study of multi-ethnic, high-density contexts and in the design of training methodologies for managing cultural pluralism in different life contexts. She is co-director of the international journal *Educational Reflective Practices* and co-founder of the *Italian Transformative Learning Network*, and she works with private and public institutions for continuing education programs. She is the scientific director of the F.O.R.w.A.R.D. project “Training, Research and Development of 'Community Based' Strategies to Prevent Radicalization and Support Integration” funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research.

Claudio Melacarne Ph.D, is Associate Professor of Social Pedagogy at the University of Siena. He is interested in studying professional development processes in organizations using educational and training research methodologies. His research interests include the study of everyday radicalization and micro-radicalization phenomena with a focus on the analysis of prevention practices. He is co-director of the international journal *Educational Reflective Practices*. He is coordinator of the PhD program in "Learning and Innovation in Social and Work Contexts" as well as scientific director and principal investigator of CeSPRA "Center for the Study and Prevention of Radicalization" at the University of Siena.

Francesca Bianchi Ph.D is Associate Professor in Sociology at the University of Siena, Department of Social, Political and Cognitive Sciences (DISPOC) where she teaches Sociology and Sociology of Inequalities and welfare. In recent years she

has been studying the new participatory and collaborative practices in daily life with reference to urban and social regeneration processes. She is a member of the Italian Association of Sociology (AIS) and participates in the International Sociology Association (ISA), ESPAnet Europe and ESPAnet Italia Conferences. She was visiting researcher at the University of Paris Sorbonne and University of Tours and visiting professor at the University of Paris Nanterre and University of Cork.

Nicolina Bosco Ph.D in Educational Sciences, is Assistant Professor in Experimental Pedagogy within the Department of Social, Political, and Cognitive Sciences at the University of Siena. Her scientific interests are focused on multiculturalism and radicalization in life and educational contexts, and experimentation and empirical evaluation of teaching-learning processes carried out in educational and training contexts.

Michele Brunelli is Professor of *History and Institutions of Muslim and Asian societies* and of *Conflict management and State building processes*. He is also the Director of the 2nd Level Master in *Preventing and combating radicalisation and terrorism, and fostering integration and international security (MaRTe)* at the University of Bergamo. Since 2018 he has been manager of the international project PRaNet – *Prevention Radicalisation Network*, financed by the Italian Ministry of Universities and Research, in cooperation with Algeria and Azerbaijan, which comprises, in addition to research activities, the planning and implementation of professional courses aimed at preventing violent radicalisation and terrorism for actors in security and local civil society. He works on themes involving the history, international relations and geopolitics of the Near and Middle East, the Persian Gulf and the Caucasus, with specific reference to security, regional stability, transnational criminality, terrorism and their resulting impact on European and Italian security.

Marco Catarci is Full Professor of Intercultural Education at the Department of Education, Roma Tre University. He holds a PhD in Education and collaborates with the Research Centre on Intercultural and Development Education at Roma Tre University. He is member of the PhD School in Educational Research and Theory and has been a member of the Italian National University Council. He is head of the Master program in Reception and Inclusion of Asylum seekers and Refugees at Roma Tre University. He has taken part in many national and

European research projects in the field of education. His major research interests include intercultural education, cultural mediation and inclusion of refugees and is the author of books, articles and research reports on these topics.

Miriam Cuevas is a PhD Student in Learning and Innovation in Social and Work Contexts at the University of Siena, Department of Social, Political and Cognitive Sciences (DISPOC). She graduated in Sociology and Social Research at the University of Florence. She participated in the research on migration in Italy conducted by the Interdisciplinary Research Unite on Migration (IRMI) of the Department of Political Science at the University of Florence. Her research interests concern migration and integration phenomena, the governance of reception and asylum, and the study of local welfare systems.

Sarmista Das is an English literature Professor at Champlain College Saint-Lambert in the greater Montreal region in Quebec, Canada. She is a researcher-practitioner from Project SOMEONE (Social Media Education Every Day), which is an interdisciplinary team of professors and researchers whose mission is to build awareness, create spaces for pluralistic dialogue, and combat discrimination and online hate, lead by UNESCO Co-Chair in Prevention of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism Dr. Vivek Venkatesh. Her research interests include literature, critical race theory, feminism, and preventing violent extremism.

Massimiliano Fiorucci is the Rector of Roma Tre University since June 2022. He is Full Professor in the scientific–disciplinary sector M-PED/01, he teaches general, social and intercultural Pedagogy. From December 2017 to June 2022 he was Head of the Department of Education Science of Roma Tre University, he coordinated the Board of Academic Chairs of Departments and he was a member of the Academic Senate of Roma Tre University. Within the Department of Education Science, he coordinates the CREIFOS (Research Centre of Intercultural Education and Development Education) and he has been Head of Second Level Professional Courses in “Intercultural Education”. Since January 2021 he has been National Chair of Italian Association of Pedagogy (SIPED). From 2018 to 2021 he was Deputy Chairman of the National Academic Board of Education Science (CUNSF). He was previously coordinator of the PhD in Pedagogy and of the Degree Course in Education Science. He is a member of the “National Observatory for the integration of foreign students and intercultural Education”

within the Italian Ministry of Education. His main research interests are in social and intercultural pedagogy with a focus on topics related to the inclusion of students from a migrant background, social inequalities and early school leaving along with general and social pedagogy, adult education, training needs analysis and quality of training. He has a scientific production of over 250 works.

Jesús Miguel Flores Vivar (PhD) is Professor of Journalism and Multimedia at the University Complutense of Madrid, Spain. His main research interests are disruptive technologies, specifically, Artificial Intelligence learning processes and the creation of new media. He has taught, conducted research and counselled institutions nationally and internationally, and currently participates in inter-university projects in Spain and abroad (Italy, Brasil, Colombia, Mexico, Perú). Since May 2012 he has been Director of the Research Group Internet Medialab and, since 2022, director of the Master in Multimedia Journalism Professional at Complutense University of Madrid.

Gennaro Gervasio graduated at the University of Naples 'L'Orientale', and is currently Associate Professor in History of the Muslim Countries in Roma Tre's Department of Humanities. Before joining Roma Tre, he was the Director of the Centre for Middle East and North African Studies at Sydney's Macquarie University (2009-11), and he taught and conducted research in Cairo at the British University in Egypt from 2011 until 2016. His research interests include secularism and Marxism in the Arab world, the history and politics of Islam in Europe, and civic activism and social and protest movements in the Arab World (especially Egypt and Iraq). He has recently co-edited a special issue on *Gramsci and the Uprisings in North Africa* (2021).

Mario Giampaolo (PhD) is Associate Professor of didactic and digital technologies at the University of Siena. The field of research that characterizes his work is that linked to digital technologies and their impact in organizational and social contexts. The research trajectory is twofold: the first focuses on the impact that digital technologies have on the professional development of school and university teachers; the second concerns the impact of digital technologies on the professional development of the educators, specifically the design, by the latter, of educational and entertainment products for the creative industry.

Maria Chiara Giorda is Associate Professor of the History of Religions at the University of Roma Tre, Department of Humanities (*Studi Umanistici*). She is a member of the 'Religion, Laws and Economies in the Mediterranean Space Research Center' and of the 'SHARP Project', an international group dealing with Shared Religious Places in different areas of the world. Her research topics are the geography of religions, the history of religious places, in particular monasteries, the relations between religious groups from a diachronic perspective with a focus on so-called minorities.

Juan Carlos Marcos Recio is Professor of Journalism and Information Sciences at the University Complutense of Madrid, Spain - Department of Library and Information Science in the disciplines of Journalism and Advertising and Public Relations, as well as in masters and doctoral degrees. His research includes topics related to communication, advertising, and libraries in international, national, and inter-university projects (Italy, Mexico, Costa Rica, Peru, Colombia, Argentina). For two decades he has worked as a journalist in various media. He is also creator and director of the Documentary Center for the Conservation of the Spanish Advertising Heritage.

Roberto Mazzola obtained his PhD at the University of Milan. He has been Professor at the University of Turin and now is Full Professor of *Ecclesiastical Law* at the University of Piemonte Orientale, where he teaches *Law and Religion* and *Intercultural Law*. He has been a visiting professor at the University of Paris XI, « Faculté de Droit et Economie Jean Monnet », and at Law School of University of Wien. He is a member of the scientific committee, "*International and European Forum of Immigration*" (FIERI) and he was Director of "*International Forum Democracy&Religion*" (FIDR). He currently works at the *European Consortium Church and State Research* and he coordinates the international project Primed. He has carried out research on Security and Religion in the European Law System, Relationship between Religion and Democracy, particularly through case law of the European Court Human Rights. Finally, his research includes topic of Religion and Migrations.

Manfredi Merluzzi is Full Professor of Early Modern History at the University of Roma Tre, Department of Humanities (*Studi Umanistici*). His research interests are in the cultural history of power and representation of it, Spanish Monarchy, Global History, Intercultural Dialogue and the construction of a new society in

Iberic America, Memory and Power. He is coordinator of a Red Columnaria network group. He is author of "Para la Quietud del Reino. Negociación y gobierno en el Perú (1533- 1581)", Vestigios 14, Murcia: Universidad de Murcia Servicio de Publicaciones, 2019.

Carlo Orefice (PhD) is Associate Professor of General and Social Pedagogy at the University of Siena. His main research interests are adult education, specifically learning processes and the creation of cultural knowledge. He has taught, conducted research, and counselled institutions nationally and internationally, and currently participates in inter-university projects in Italy and abroad (Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Spain). From October 2020 to October 2021, he was UNESCO "Adjunct professor" and member of the Italian Committee of the 3rd WORLD CONGRESS of TRANSDISCIPLINARITY (virtual mode).

Paola Perucchini is Full Professor of Developmental and Education Psychology and Director of the Department of Education of Roma Tre University. Her research - published in national and international journals and books - concerns: students' social adjustment in school; educational programs to reduce ethnic and gender prejudice; conceptual development and science education; teachers' belief; environmental psychology applied to schools; communicative e gestural development in infancy; and social cognition development. She was the co-coordinator with Gervasio and Giorda of the Roma Tre Unit in the PriMED Project.

Mohammed Khalid Rhazzali, PhD in Sociology of Intercultural and Communicative Processes, is Deputy Director of the Inter-University Centre for Culture, Law and Religion-FIDR. He is Researcher and Adjunct Professor of "Public Institutions, Diversity and Intercultural Mediation" and "Sociology of Islam" at the University of Padova. For over 20 years he has been involved in several national and international research and, recently, he has been scientific co-responsible for the international project "PriMED - Prevention and Interaction in the Trans-Mediterranean Space" and scientific head of the Padova local unit of the Erasmus Plus KA2 project "Les trajectoires des diaspora turque et marocaine en Europe" and has been visiting professor in various international universities (2012-2022). He is a research associate at the Institut de Sciences Sociales des Religions Contemporaines de l'Université de Lausanne and at the Centre CADIS-EHESS Paris. He was co-director of the Master's programme in "Studies on

European Islam” and of the Master’s programme in “Politics, Religions and Citizenship”, and currently he is executive director of the International Master's programme in “Religions, Politics and Global Studies” (In Arabic and English).

Alessandra Romano is an Associate Professor in Teaching and Learning Methods and Special Education at the Department of Social, Political and Cognitive Sciences of the University of Siena. She is the Co-Convenor of the ESREA Network on “Transformative and Emancipatory Adult Education”. She is the Scientific Coordinator and Leader of the Erasmus KA+ Project T.E.S.T. “Technologies for STEAM Teaching”. In both teaching and research, Prof. Romano’s focus is in generating conditions for adults, groups and teams to learn, grow and develop the skillful means for collaborative inquiry and organizational change. Her particular strands of research are transformative learning, experience-based methods and diversity and disability management.

Marika Rullo is a Researcher at the University of Siena where she teaches General Psychology, Psychology of Multicultural Processes and Group Psychology at the Department of Political and Cognitive Social Sciences. She obtained a PhD in Experimental Social Psychology from "La Sapienza" University of Rome, and has carried out research at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland and at the University of Kent in the United Kingdom. Her main research interests concern the study of intra- and inter-group dynamics, with particular reference to moral behavior and social identity. Specifically, she focuses on the role of social norms and social identification in the management of moral deviance. Other lines of research are related to issues such as the management of multiculturalism and discrimination in groups and organizations, and on the role of conspiracy theories on political participation and radicalization processes.

Milena Santerini is Full Professor of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education, Università Cattolica del S.Cuore – Milan, Director of the Research Centre on Intercultural Relations and of the Master in Intercultural Competences at the Università Cattolica. She was President of the Degree Course in Primary Education and the Master's Degree Course in Pedagogical Sciences and responsible for national research projects. From 2013 to 2018 she has been Member of the Italian Parliament and General Rapporteur on Combating Racism

and Intolerance of the Council of Europe, since 2020 National Coordinator for the fight against anti-Semitism.

Valentina Schiavinato obtained her PhD in Social and Personality Psychology. At the University of Padova, she has participated in several national and international research and action-research projects addressing the issues of intercultural relations, religious plurality and violent radicalisation. She has collaborated in the designing and coordination of the Master's programme in "Studies on European Islam", the training courses for Imams and Murshidat, the inter-university Master's programme in "Politics, Religions and Citizenship", and, currently, the International Master's programme in "Religions, Politics and Global Studies". Her research interests mainly concern cultural and religious pluralism in institutions, identity construction processes, and qualitative methods of social research.

Giovanni Telesca is a PhD Student in Learning and Innovation in Social and Organizational Contexts at the University of Siena. He graduated in Psychology at the "G. d'Annunzio" University of Chieti-Pescara and has been a Blue Book Trainee at the European Commission, where he worked in the Research, Innovation, and Test Development unit of the European Personnel Selection Office. His research focuses on the role of morality in determining pro-environmental behaviors and on the evaluations of moral deviants in pro-environmental contexts. He is also working on other research projects related to conspiracy theories and radicalization in climate activism.

Francesca Torlone is Associate Professor in General and Social Pedagogy at the University of Siena. She conducts research in adult learning policies and measures, institutional and organisational learning, embedded learning in workplaces and adult learning in prisons. She has coordinated international research groups and conducted research on organisational learning processes and informal embedded learning, and has supported individuals, teams, organisations, penitentiary institutions and regional governments in learning processes management.

Sergio Tramma is Full Professor of General and Social Pedagogy at the University of Milano-Bicocca, where he was president of the degree course in education sciences for two terms. His privileged research field regards the connections between education and transformations of contemporaneity, with a specific interest in changes in individual and collective subjects' life courses, as well as in increasing complexity and problematical aspects of educational environments, also concerning the consequent enlargement of professional educator's field of intervention. He is the director of some editorial series in the area of social pedagogy and the training of operators.

