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CHALLENGES OF FACILITATORS IN MCE TRAININGS

5.1. How to anticipate vulnerabilities of participants?



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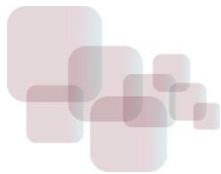
Illustrations from real life

A trainee after the analysis of a culture shock and the discussion in plenary remained silent until the moment of the final check in which she challenged the trainer to have offended her (to have affected one of her sensitive areas) with regard to the topic of gender difference. (IT)

When dealing with the issue of gender differences, during the debriefing of an exercise, I proposed the division of the group into males and females and a female student challenged me saying that neither of the two genders represented her and that she asked for the inclusion of a third group called 'queen'. (IT)

One of the participants came to see me at the end of the third day of training and told me that it had been very hard for her to participate in the training and that she had almost left. We had discussed identity tensions and the difficulties that can be linked to the migratory journey and adaptation in the country of arrival. I had invited the participants to look back on their professional and personal experiences. This had made her relive her own history of migration and she was not prepared for it (BE).

At the moment of collecting incidents a participant comes up with several stories about children with disability, yet none of them really good examples of incidents, but there is a feeling of vulnerability about her insistence on these stories. It turns out she has a child with disability (FR).



Some background theory

Vulnerable?

Some definitions:

The adjective "vulnerable" comes from the Latin *vulnus*, *vulneris* which means "wound" and which gave the Latin adjective *vulnerabilis* with two meanings: who can be wounded, but also who can hurt. The French language has kept only the first meaning of the word :

Vulnerable (dictionary le petit Robert 2009):

Who can be hurt, struck by a physical evil (place, vulnerable point); Who can be easily hurt, defends himself badly. To be vulnerable to someone's attacks.

The word is often associated with the word "fragility" in a semantic confusion that masks the specificity of this term (Ennuyer 2017). Several of the authors who have discussed this notion, however, do not see this semantic confusion between the two words. For the latter, the vulnerability of individuals bears above all the mark of the relationship to the other, it lies essentially in the exposure to the other. The word "vulnerability" differs from the word "fragility" by its otherness dimension, because being vulnerable implies the idea of being vulnerable to something or someone. "Moreover, rather than vulnerability as an attribute of a subject, it is preferable to speak of a situation of vulnerability in which that same subject is involved" (Ennuyer 2017).

*For Corine Pelluchon, "the fragility of the living imposes to overthrow the subject, to think of its identity as being characterized by the relationship to the other than oneself and to others" (Pelluchon 2010).

*Sylvie Pandelé very clearly specifies the difference between fragility and vulnerability: "If 'vulnerability' and 'fragility' both refer to a state - a state of precariousness, of weakness - that of fragility does not induce the otherness that the word 'vulnerability' implies: one is vulnerable to..., one is likely to be affected by..." (Pandelé 2011).

*Judith Butler, quoted by Ong-Van-Cung, insists on our interdependence and the precariousness of our lives. According to her, vulnerability - this fundamental dependence on the Other - is originally a linguistic vulnerability. Because being exposed to the Other is to be subject to interpellation, it is the fact that the subject is formed and recognized from the Other's address (Ong-Van-Cung 2017).

*In his article "Autonomy and vulnerability", Ricoeur uses the word fragility when he speaks of the figures of vulnerability: "autonomy is that of a fragile, vulnerable being". He particularly insists on the lack of language capacity in the process of vulnerability: "It is first of all as a speaking subject that our mastery appears threatened and always limited" (Ricoeur 1997).

* "Vulnerability always occurs in a dynamic and in the interaction between the person and his or her wider environment. Fragility due to an impairment or deficit of the individual may therefore not lead to a situation of vulnerability, thanks to an adequate environment (in the broadest sense) that can enable the individual to choose his or her lifestyle and to put into action his or her desires and values, even if he or she cannot put them into action alone. " (Ennuyer 2017)

In the context of training in the intercultural approach, what framework could allow the vulnerabilities in question to exist so that they become a tool of knowledge? How far is it relevant to anticipate in order to avoid hurting the other, and how far is it desirable to work on this vulnerability?

It is impossible to anticipate all the reactions of the participants and avoid touching their vulnerabilities, but it is possible - to some extent - to prevent situations of vulnerability. The training framework can be designed in such a way as to allow people who are confronted with a vulnerability



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to express it. This framework, if it is thought out in advance, makes it possible to go beyond spontaneous or personal reactions linked to one's history and sensitivity.

Especially in a training course that deals with contents that may refer the participant to something difficult in his or her experience, it is important to reflect on how the person can possibly talk about it, when and how he or she can make something out of this experience, and to what extent this situation can be a source of learning for the group and the person himself or herself.

Before starting the training, announce the content and possible risks and stressing that it is an experience that can concern everyone allows us to legitimize what we can feel and facilitates the willingness to live and share it. "We then find ourselves in a dynamic of accompaniment which starts from the recognition of our common vulnerability: "I can only truly meet others from my own vulnerability, even though I am affected by his. If our experience of the world remains immeasurable, the capacity to be affected by what is external is common to us. Vulnerable to each other, vulnerable to each other" (Zelinsky 2009).

The trainer himself towards the participant's vulnerability is in a situation of destabilization and unexpected and is confronted with his own vulnerability and sensitive areas. He may experience a situation of threat to his personal and professional identity (Cohen-Emerique 2017) and develop defensive reactions that may hinder the relationship and intervention with the person. Being attentive to one's own vulnerability (Zelinsky 2009), decentring oneself to become aware of one's own sensitive areas (Cohen-Emerique 2017) and one's emotions and the needs they express (Rosenberg 2015) as a professional allows one to set personal limits and prevent spillover.

To set this framework, the trainer will also need to be clear about the objectives of the training. This will make it possible to assess how much time and space can be given to a fragility expressed by one of the participants. The trainer will also be able to assess whether this can be learned for the whole group, or whether it is appropriate to offer the participant another space or time within or outside the training.

In the design of the proposed activities, care should be taken to check the coherence of the chosen methodology with the objectives (why this method for this content?), and to acquire the "intercultural reflex" (Verbunt 2005): does the chosen option allow the other to say as he sees himself or wishes to show himself (Ricoeur 1997)? To show the facet of his identity that he claims in the context of training (Camilleri 1990)? For example, when during a training sequence I suggest to the group that they divide themselves between men and women, what is my objective? Is it because I would like to work on the question of gender that I propose this division? To what extent does my frame of reference allow me to understand that this division can be normative for some participants?

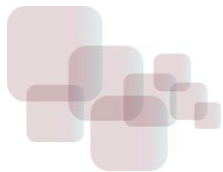
At the beginning of the training, negotiating a safety framework with the participants will allow to set up markers for possible excesses and to specify what can be said and how. Particularly in relation to work on critical incidents, suggest writing in advance to distance oneself from the situation, invite not to tackle subjects that are too sensitive (Cohen-Emerique, Rothberg 2015).

During the training, the trainer should be prepared for the importance of being attentive to group dynamics: taking into account the identities present in the group and the interactions between participants and the nature of their relationship (Bateson 1984; Watzlawick 1972), and gauging the possibility of building shared meaning through the situations worked through (Bateson 1984).

It will also be necessary to assess whether the group's resources and shared reflection can be a support for the more fragile person (Cohen-Emerique, Rothberg 2015). Especially in a heterogeneous group, the trainer will have to acquire "the intercultural reflex, i.e. the trainer must be very attentive to the slightest dysfunction in the learners and in himself. As soon as he is surprised by an unexpected reaction, he must ask himself the question "What happened?" and consider the possibility of the presence of two different cultural codes" (Verbunt 2005).

Thinking about the aftermath could also be interesting. If the trainer's reaction was not adequate, how and when is it possible to come back to the situation? How can this be learned from a "mistake", for the trainer and for the group?

Admitting one's mistake as a trainer can to some extent reassure the group that everyone can have "inadequate" reactions when their sensitive areas are affected. We are faced with a vulnerability that makes us close (Zelinsky 2009). This can also help to underline the relativity of the frame of reference (Watzlavich 1972), including that of the trainer.



Competences

What knowledge, skills, attitudes or even tools, techniques could serve as resource for the facilitator to overcome such situations?

KNOWLEDGE

- Sensitive areas for professionals
- Identity tensions (claimed/attributed identity; migrant identity tensions, identity and gender)
- Identity and acculturation strategies
- Systemic approach to adult learning
- Relational approach
- Heterogeneous group dynamics

SKILLS

- Knowing how to move away from one's own frame of reference and being able to communicate about it, in order to put it into perspective with the participants.
- Become aware of one's own sensitive areas, which could prevent one from perceiving those of the participants.
- Be aware of the possible transfer between the experiences (migration, gender...) of the trainer and the participant. To what extent this experience can help to understand the participant's experience, or to a certain extent an obstacle.
- Knowing how to question, listen, reformulate (active listening, questiology, NLP)

- Know how to set up the safety frame beforehand:
 - Create a space of confidentiality
 - the trainer is clear about the objectives, issues and difficulties of each activity
 - shares this framework with the public, it prepares them for potential difficulties.
- Inform that this is a training device that leads to work on oneself and insist on individual sovereignty: choice to participate or not to participate in a proposed activity, especially in a short training device where one has less time to get to know oneself and feel confident with the group.
 - prepare participants not to choose incidents in which they are too involved or encourage them to talk about them in a conscious and attentive way.
- Know how to take the context into account: in a group where participants work in the same team, one may feel more difficult to reveal one's migratory journey and sensitive areas.
- To know how to evaluate at the time the relevance of making the participant's vulnerability an object of work during the training according to the objectives of the training and the participant's availability to work on it.
- Know how to bounce back: having the theoretical knowledge and emotional distance to deal quickly with the participant's reaction by being able to treat the situation as a learning tool. If relevant.
- Plan for the "unexpected" in the programming, in order to be able to deal with an unforeseen reaction of a participant, and in this case address a topic that was not foreseen, if deemed relevant to the training objectives.
- Know how to set up a training framework that does not reinforce stereotypes (e.g. traditional binary gender vision) but that promotes the expression of the identity claimed by the participants

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- Attitude to perceive the limit of the relevance of anticipating the participant's sensitivities: "To what extent is it useful to anticipate the participant's vulnerabilities"?
 - Risk of "over-anticipating", locking participants into a stereotypical vision (he is a migrant, he could be sensitive to...)
 - To a certain extent, questioning the vulnerability of the participant can help him or her to find new answers and can be an important source of learning for the group and the individual.
 - The trainer should assess :
 - its ability to deal with its own vulnerability in this unforeseen situation and to be able to provide a security framework that allows these vulnerabilities to be expressed.
 - identities in presence
 - of the group's dynamics
 - the availability of the person concerned
 - Show empathy, be attentive to:
 - non-verbal language,
 - feel how far one can go in inviting participants to explore one's own frame of reference.
Especially when dealing with the contents of identity and identity tensions with a migrant audience.
 - Knowing how to identify the other person's emotions, knowing how to make room for it, making it easier for the other person to stay with his or her emotions.
 - Gauge his or her ability to distance himself or herself from the participant's emotions, to what extent can I let myself be touched without being overwhelmed by the other's emotion and continue to do my job as a trainer?
 - Knowing how to identify the need that may lie behind repeated interventions and how to express it, or how to live with it over the course of the training.
 - Balanced posture of humility: knowing how to recognize one's "mistake" to allow the group to feel more at ease in sharing the shocks and "mistakes" made in professional practice.
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- Error can be a source of learning: it can be explicitly announced to the public and become an object of reflection and work.

TOOLS / TECHNIQUES

- Ask for feedback at the end of each module
- Specify that what the trainer says is not a dogma but is conditioned by his frame of reference.
- Clearly identify the objectives when I propose an activity in sub-groups=> criteria for distribution according to objectives. Why separate H and F? For which objective? Do I have the time, the capacity to bounce back if the gender issue arises?
- Imagine a presentation activity at the beginning of the group (e.g. a game of 6 questions) in which we can allow the group to say its identity as we see it.
- Propose to write down critical incidents before sharing them with the group, to allow the participant to take distance from emotions.
- When writing down critical incidents, make it clear that the critical incident can be shared and worked on with the group, so that everyone is aware of what they are willing to share or not (avoid too personal situations most of the time).
- NVC tools to facilitate the expression of emotions and the fact that one can stay there.

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5.2. Taking care of Trainers' own sensitive zones



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Sensitive areas activated during culture shocks: the trainer's values are affected.

"Children should not dance": One participant brings the following culture shock: parents ask their 8-year-old daughter, for religious reasons, not to take part in the school feast performance (collective singing and dancing of the whole class) because, as the parents say, it is "haram to dance".

"Religious radicalization": During several training sessions, critical incidents are reported, which seem to be linked to issues of religious radicalism (a doctor leaves the door open when his patients are women, professionals do not wish to eat with their colleagues who drink wine at the table, ...).

The above incidents show two examples related to religion and to what Cohen Emerique calls the fear of "a return to archaisms". We could also have mentioned values related to autonomy, equality (of participants), the relationship to knowledge (especially the participatory approach, critical sense), etc.

The intercultural trainer does not give this type of training by chance. He is often driven by values of solidarity, "living together" (sometimes with a somewhat idealised image of the public from "minorities"). It is therefore not surprising, for example, that racist comments from participants shake it up. Not to mention that these are behaviours on which the trainer will often not be able to do much to bring about change...

Feelings of powerlessness, feelings of incompetence, difficulty in continuing the training: by being affected in one of these sensitive areas, the trainer is sometimes destabilized, to the point of feeling threatened in his professional identity. He may then find it more difficult to take on skills that seem important to him in his job:

Difficulty in taking a step back, in decentring, and a feeling of inconsistency between what he transmits and the way he behaves.

His view of the audience could change, with the participants with whom he has experienced culture shock, he could have difficulty in remaining attentive, not judging, keeping a sufficient distance to remain in a process of reflection and not just emotional reaction. Or to have difficulties in getting the participant to move off-centre when the latter brings back shocks that also shock the trainer and touches him in one of his sensitive areas.

Feeling helpless: overwhelmed by his emotions or/and his difficulty in taking a step back, he is no longer able to support the participants in their learning process and in particular to ask pertinent questions about the shocks brought about.

Eventually, he may experience "mental fatigue" in the long term.



Challenging the trainer: a sensitive area for a trainer who is being challenged in his professional identity.

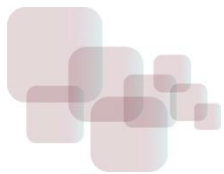
However, as my colleague Marc André (now retired but who was for a long time an intercultural approach trainer at CBAI) told me, the trainer is not only touched in his sensitive areas related to his cultural background. One of his main sensitive areas is related to his professional function: when he feels he cannot reach his objective, when he feels he cannot get the participants to try the approach, then he is touched. Among the main resistances, there would be:

The "activist" participants, who are there to spread their ideas, or rather their ideologies, and are not ready to hear other frames of reference, nor to shift their focus.

The participants who are in a difficult organisational and/or institutional context: preoccupied by this context (team in crisis, ...), they do not have "the head" to get into the intercultural approach. Their first wish would be to talk about their team difficulties,

The "captive" participants: they did not want to come to training, they were forced to.

Alongside this resistance from the participants, the trainer may be confronted with another difficulty linked to his personal identity: participants contest the fact that he is a man, a woman, young, old, from a bourgeois background.... His legitimacy is questioned on a factor over which he has no control (and which affects his personal identity).



Some background theory

Sensitive areas are, as Margalit Cohen Emerique tells us in her book, those "guiding images" referred to by Chombart de Lauwe (1967). They are "powerful representations, not always conscious but highly charged with affects because they are anchored in the cultural foundations of the personality, in its unconscious dimensions such as parental and sexual identifications. Moreover, they draw their content from the ideological foundations of our modern societies". Surprisingly, then, they are at the bottom of the iceberg, if we take up Kluckhohn and Murray's (1948) famous metaphor: it is very often on them that our visible behaviours are based and give them meaning. Once affected, it is our personal and group identity that is threatened.

Margalit Cohen Emerique has grouped these guide images into sensitive areas to which she attributes two origins: the return of the repressed (in a culture shock, we find ourselves faced with

behaviours that have become taboo, often repressed since childhood) and the return to archaisms (the other returns us to behaviours that seem to us to be the opposite of the achievements of modernity, in particular the values of social progress, equality between men and women or the education of children without corporal punishment. The fear here is therefore of a "backtracking").

Gilles Verbunt will also present many sensitive areas based on observations gathered by professionals (notably literacy or FLE teachers) working with a migrant or refugee audience.

Hofstede (1980), after carrying out a quantitative survey in a firm based in 40 countries, identifies 4 dimensions that could be a source of failure in human resource management: distance to power or hierarchical distance, avoidance of uncertainty, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity.

Being affected in a sensitive area destabilizes us. The risk is then, for the professional as well as for the user, to judge and reject the one who threatened us, cancelling any relationship of trust. For the professional, this means passing judgment on the public, having a negative image of them, or wanting to save them to "bring them back on the right path".

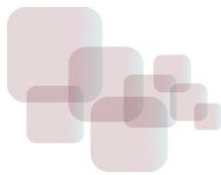
In some cases, the threat affects the professional: he or she feels threatened in his or her function, or even incompetent. Cohen Emerique then speaks of the "identity threat of the professional": the foundation, the values on which his missions are based are called into question. The professional often does not know how to react and comes to "forget" his knowledge. The discrepancy between the expected and received scenario (we are referring here to the work of Ervin Goffman on the question of loss of face) is so strong that it is as if he were "stunned". Feeling threatened, the professional may want to defend flagship values more and want to convert the public to his values. This is doubly problematic: the public is then infantilized, and insufficiently heard, or even becomes the "object" of our work before being the "subject" of it.

For professionals who see users as "victims" (which is also problematic), the "victim" becomes the "persecutor", and the professional will go from "saviour" to "victim" before sometimes becoming in

turn "persecutor", to use the dynamics of the "dramatic triangle" (Karpmann) developed in Transactional Analysis.

A phenomenon of resonance, to use a concept from systemic analysis, could also occur: the shock of someone who is affected in one of his sensitive areas resonates in another individual. This could happen in moments of "double shock": I am shocked by the fact that my interlocutor is shocked by what I said to him. For example, I am shocked by the shock my interlocutor experiences when I tell him that I do not believe in God. His faith makes my vision of life without the existence of God or any other religious belief resonate more strongly with me.

Finally, to what extent could the issue of transfer and counter-transfer play a role in this issue of sensitive areas? To what extent are we more affected in our sensitive areas when we transfer the paternal image, for example, to the person who created it?



Competences

Individual:

1) Skills to have/develop when sensitive areas are affected by values, linked to our cultural affiliation

Getting to know yourself, decentrate yourself:

Getting to know oneself better in order to know one's own sensitive areas helps the trainer to take a step back more quickly and to know, as soon as certain shocks are stated, that he is, for him, "on slippery ground": he will have to be careful to avoid any judgement that is too quick, or reaction that is too strong.

No longer be afraid of our emotions

The problem is not so much that the trainer is affected in his sensitive areas, but that he knows how to recognize it and do something about it. To do this, we must avoid running away from the emotion that assails us. The trainer must be able to take an introspective look at his relationship with

emotions: am I ashamed of being angry, sad? How do I acquire the strength to let myself be touched and then do something with it?

This path will also allow the trainer to no longer be afraid of the emotions of the participants. He will then be able, in front of a very moved participant, to speak about this emotion, without being embarrassed, and without risking, by his silence, to create a headlong rush (not dealing with the possible culture shock) or to reinforce a taboo on what will have been said (or not said, which can sometimes be worse).

Humility: it is more a question of knowing how to be

The trainer must undoubtedly be able to recognize his own fragilities, his difficulty sometimes to go beyond his emotions, i.e. to take sufficient distance. The recognition of this fragility will become a strength for him because it will allow him to better understand the participants of the training courses, their difficulties to go off-centre, their sometimes very emotional reactions. Linked to this skill is also the ability to accept what is: "that's how it is, I did my best, I don't have control over everything". It can even become a strength: using examples related to one's weaknesses in training, to make participants work on their own sensitive areas.

2) Skills to be reinforced when the trainer's professional identity is called into question:

Upstream, have a clear and sufficiently solid framework:

The more the trainer has a solid or at least sufficiently constructed framework, the more he will be able to remain motivated, continue his work, or even "get up" when he feels challenged in his competence. This framework is:

The meaning he gives to his work: his values, the political and social aims of intercultural training.

The pedagogical framework of the training: its aims, objectives, methods...

The modalities of collaboration, when working in pairs, with a colleague

Awareness of one's own limitations (what he is less able to do in his job) and strengths.

This framework can therefore be broken down according to the different levels of Arduino's grid: institutional, organisational, interpersonal, and personal.

Knowing how to adapt to the public and its possible resistances

The trainer must be able to move away from his usual teaching methods, to modify them, to add or remove certain work sequences, to organise them differently. However, be careful not to deny



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yourself and be clear about what is essential to transmit (we return here to the question of the pedagogical framework).

About the team and the institution

Supporting each other among colleagues, setting up supervisions

The institution should, if necessary, set up supervision for trainers, allowing them to talk about the difficulties encountered. In this way, words will be said, and a step back can be taken. Putting words on its sensitive areas and the destabilization experienced in training should be done between fellow trainers, without always needing a supervisor, provided that "everyone plays the game" and is able to say what is difficult for them.

Techniques/tools:

Meta-communicate:

The trainer could meta-communicate about what is happening to him or her: "I am touched by what you are saying here". Putting words on a discomfort is sometimes better than leaving a confused feeling, which can be interpreted in any way by the participants.

When the trainer feels that the sensitive area that affects him or her might resonate with other participants, then it could be worked on: (for example) why are we so often affected by incidents related to gender relations, religion...? In this way, his meta-communication will not only be directed towards him ("what is happening to me?") but also towards the group ("what is happening to us?").

Finally, when participants are resistant to the training because their context is difficult, that they did not want to be there..., the trainer will also be able to meta-communicate: "I feel uncomfortable, you didn't really choose to be there, let's still try to have a good day (or the least bad day possible) from our resources".

If the training is given in pairs, the trainer can "withdraw" and ask his colleague to take over the analysis of the situation.

Ask in a team of trainers meeting to be able to go back over a situation where the trainer was affected in his sensitive area and see how to act in this situation. The team will also be able to allow him/her to be less alone in his/her difficulty, especially his/her feeling of incompetence.

Request supervision if necessary.

And finally, to remember the moments of training that were great...



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5.3. Facing Different types of resistances



Panni Végh (Artemisszio Foundation)

Illustrations from real life:

We have collected several episodes where the trainers felt their participants were in resistance at one point of the training. They comprise a wide range of situation, here are five as an illustration:

"A participant during the analysis of a critical incident (related to water and Ramadan) raised her hand and expressed her objection in its categorization as a critical incident that came as a result of cultural differences. She was an experienced worker in reception centers for asylum-seekers, so it was shocking for me as a trainer to listen to her disregard a quite "easy" matter of culture shock that created a critical incident."

"A trainee after the analysis of a culture shock and the discussion in plenary remained silent until the moment of the final check in which she challenged the trainer to have offended her (to have affected one of her sensitive areas) with regard to the topic of gender difference. From that moment on, she no longer actively participated in the training"

"When dealing with the issue of gender differences, during the debriefing of an exercise, I proposed the division of the group into males and females and a female student challenged me saying that neither of the two genders represented her and that she asked for the inclusion of a third group called 'queen'."

"Trainees refuse to follow the trainers' instructions during an outdoor activity, a walk in the countryside where they have to do some exercises. They declare that they are too tired and do not carry out their mandate by living the moment like a tourist trip."

"Small groups of participants were filling out an analysis grid about the identities of protagonists in a critical incident. We heard one of the participants comment a question, which invited to identify similarities and differences "this is silly, why does it matter that one is Turkish and the other French, maybe they are very similar" And later on "why to make such a big fuss about these culture shock experiences??"

"During a training course for teachers and social workers, a trainee with high academic preparation and significant experience (psychologist) challenged the fact that our theoretical contributions were not very thorough and that they had little space at the expense of activities in subgroups and exercises."

"During a training for social workers, we presented the 10-point analysis scheme in a 3-day initial training and the participants in the course of working in subgroups were unable to use it effectively, constantly asking questions of understanding and objecting about the excessive complexity of the activity"



Some background theory: What is resistance?

What we are focusing on is the phenomenon when a trainer or trainer team observes (verbal and nonverbal) signs of failure in delivering the activity or pedagogical aims in case of one or more participants. It can be rooted in different reasons and has various forms. We will examine some of them focusing our attention on the adult training and education environment tackling questions of intercultural dialogue. In the context of intercultural communication and conflict resolution one can face situations, activities or discussions where her values, norms and usually communication

strategies are challenged. The flexibility to adapt to this type of learning environment, to cope with uncertainty is diverse, our strategies vary based on our former experiences and also depending on the learning environment – how much we feel comfortable to be vulnerable and uncertain.

Manifestations and signs

The most common sign that a student–teacher relationship is not working is when a student resists participating in class and becomes defiant or oppositional (not trying to engage in a debate about the content but expressing strong feelings towards the trainer, ex saying “I think this is a bullshit”) Adults however might sometimes manage their behavior and manifest more refined signs:

- a. withdrawal from participation in certain situations (takes part in the activity but not expressing any opinion, even in cases when the trainer asks the person personally/everyone has their turn to speak)
- b. lack of motivation to participate (procrastination on mobile phone)
- c. metacommunication (avoiding eye contact with the trainer(s), turning away from the focus of attention)
- d. (inadequate) jokes that hijack the conversation (speaking about the invisible and visible aspects of culture and one participant highlights/asks about the importance of the shape of the iceberg model that resembles of a female boob)

Impact on the facilitator and the process

Resistant behavior can directly challenge the trainers' authority and competence, creating a threat for both the positive and negative face. They might feel frustrated and offended and might feel irritated when a resistant participant takes the attention of the group how to bring back the focus on the session's content.



Roots of resistance

Relation with authority

In a way, the mere existence of difference in the position of power or authority implies the possibility of resistance: power "over" someone seems to pose a choice between obedience – submission or disobedience – resistance. The seminal social psychology experiments explored this dynamic, in situations where an authority figure asked the participants to carry out tasks that were either contrary to their consciousness (e.g. Milgram²) or merely devoid of all sense and pleasure (e.g. Auzoult). In these experiments, disobedience - resistance – is explained by "psychological autonomy" implying a critical attitude to authority, a sense of agency and responsibility from and control over one's actions (Auzoult 2015:49). Amongst the situations above the one where participants refuse the "outdoor activities" may be an illustration of this dynamic. However, autonomy may not be the best explanatory factor in our context: intercultural trainings rarely invite participants to perform activities against their consciousness or that appear blatantly meaningless. So the resistances we face may have other sources. Instead of threatening autonomy, our processes may threaten the identity of participants.

Face threats

² Detailed in Milgram, S. (1974). Obedience to authority. New York: Harper & Row.

Face and facework are notions that were created by the social psychologist Ervin Goffman (Goffman 1959). Face is the public self-image that every person tries to protect. The two main needs are the positive face: that refers to the need to receive recognition for the role / identity that one is representing, and the negative face that refers to one's autonomy, freedom to act within a relationship. Positive face concerns the desire to be liked, appreciated and approved, while negative face refers to the desire not to be imposed, intruded or otherwise put upon. Face threatening acts may hinder any of these two types of needs, though in our context threats to the positive face are more common. A typical example would be if a participant makes a comment which the others reject.

Identity threats

Identity threats can trigger resistance in two ways; through direct threats to the value of certain identities and indirectly by questioning meanings, practices, norms that are linked to participants' constitutive identities.

Threats to value and recognition

Social identities are categories that we place ourselves in that are shared with others such as race, sex, religion, and sexual orientation to name a few (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). "People experience social identity threats when they are confronted with situations in which they perceive one or more of their social identities are attacked" (Holmes, Whitman, Campbell, & Johnson, 2016). One response for the threat can be derogation (when an individual engages in derogation by criticizing or denouncing the attacker to mitigate the identity threat and discredit the attacker (Holmes:2017) but withdrawal can also happen, as in the situation above concerning gender identity. This same phenomenon may also be behind the episode where participants withdraw behind racist or xenophobic positions³.

³ The next section focuses on this narrower branch of resistances

Threats to meaning, value, practices

Intercultural trainers rarely pose a direct threat to professional identities of participants, yet, this can occur indirectly triggering the same need for symbolic defense. In three situations listed above we can detect signs of such threats: in the complaints of the psychologist for insufficient theoretical basis, and in different objections concerning the analysis grid and the idea of “dwelling on culture shocks”. Such situations happen because elements of the method may question some important tenets of the professional framework. For instance, the MCE method may threaten a psychologist’s because it’s insistence to look for answers in the cultural references and the context of the persons, not in their life history, personality or pathology, as psychologists are often trained to. For social workers the method can question their conception of neutrality and objectivity, or their “culture-blindness” (the idea that “culture” does not matter if we all behave “respectfully” and “professionally”).



What can we do?

There are different ways we could prevent or reduce the effects of face threats or identity threats. To reduce the face threat of the confrontation with one’s built-in biases such as stereotypes, prejudice and also with one’s ethnocentrism, we can stress that these are “normal” phenomena, and that we are all in a learning process to become more aware of them. We should avoid a self-presentation strategy where we appear completely devoid of such phenomena and share her own experiences of working through these biases. To avoid threats to autonomy or meaning, we should

make sure that participants see the purpose of the different activities we propose, and they don't need to follow them merely on the basis of our authority.

To avoid identity threats, we can be attentive to valorize all present identities in the workshop, minority identities as well as majority identities. When presenting elements of the method which we suspect can imply threats to professional identities, we can open these mindfully, discussing together the implications and salvaging the potentially threatened identities (we can stress the capacity for change and development of the professional norms). Some facilitators propose the freedom to "opt out" of some activities, as a means to ensuring a sensation of autonomy and control of the participants. But the risk with such a technique is that more participants could follow (by conviction or simple solidarity) the opting out person and we would miss an interesting learning opportunity. An alternative could be to remind participants to be aware of their own reactions and express feelings of uncertainty, confusion or threats as these may point to interesting or even critical aspects of the learning experience. To allow participants to express their feelings of threat but also to allow them to better understand where these come from, we can use floating objects (images, "empathy chair"...), i.e. any game or object that is a media and allows to talk about oneself through an object and to put oneself in the place of the other (which also leads to talking about oneself).

Finally, we should also be aware of our own reactions facing a resistant participant in a training situation to avoid the threat of our own positive face and possible reactions that could escalate the situation.



Competences

What knowledge, skills, attitudes or even tools, techniques could serve as resource for the facilitator to overcome such situations

KNOWLEDGE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Z0XS-QLDWM>

(Goffman – performing self explained)

Concept of identity threats, forms of identity threats (e.g. Breakwell, Vignoles)

SKILLS

- Strategies to avoid Face Threatening Actions, treatment of face threats (e.g. Holmes, Brown and Levinson)
- Building up a safe environment, trust and credibility
- Avoiding need for closure in difficult situations, resisting the urge for spontaneous retaliations on face threats.

ATTITUDES / FOCUS

- Acceptance and patience towards participants' learning processes and positive curiosity about the sources of their resistances.

TOOLS / TECHNIQUES

- Group framework at the beginning of the training to establish trust, good collaboration. Presentation of the types of methods we'll propose, so that participants understand their meaning, in particular concerning playful activities based on drama games.
- Explain the potential "identity threats" the method may trigger, agree on a consensual way of treating such examples (possibly establish a "security charter" together)
- Reframe intercultural competence as an acquired skill, emphasizing the learning process of awareness of stereotypes and prejudice.

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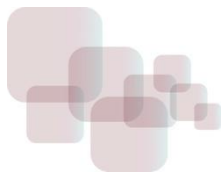
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5.4. Deconstructing rigid racist positions

Diana Szántó (Artemisszio Foundation)



Illustrations from real life

During a decentering simulation activity, a participant makes transphobic statements and declares "This is my opinion and I don't want to change it".


Facilitators feel they couldn't deconstruct the statements (IT)

A participant brings up openly judgmental / racist statements (about the Roma "making children only for the family allowance") and does not react to counter-arguments, nobody can step up against her (HU)

Facilitator choses a critical incident hoping to use it to deconstruct prejudice against the Roma but instead the whole group aligns behind the prejudice. The case is about a Roma father stealing wood in the forest in the winter to heat. Participants (policemen) only see the fact of theft, confirming the prejudice of Roma stealing (HU)

Facilitator works in a class of primary school students, facilitating a workshop on migration. He overhears one comment of a child "I wish the boats were bigger, then more of them could drown at a time". (HU)


Some background theory: What is racism?

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Racism, according to the Cambridge dictionary, is "the belief that people's qualities are influenced by their race and that the members of other races are not as good as the members of your own, or the resulting unfair treatment of members of other races."

In racism, we find therefore a belief system supposing the existence of separate races, and a widespread social mechanism, which pushes people to favor their in-group to the out-groups, creating an imaginary hierarchy. This definition is a good enough starting point, but it remains ultimately unsatisfactory as it excludes the question of power, paradoxically naturalizing racism, locating it in human nature, rather than in social structures.

The concept of race

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In a strict, scientific sense racism is a theory based on the belief of significant, immutable and inherited differences between humans distributed according to their belonging to groups defined by their members' dominant phenotypical characteristics. Contemporary science rejects the objective existence of these categories. People do look different but their physical aspects do not necessarily reflect their ancestry. Skin color variations are subtle and gradual, they do not fit into a rigid racial categorization. DNA sequencing revealed that all living humans are related amongst themselves ([Fullwiley 2007](#)). Everyone has the same collection of genes, with slight variations from individual to individual, rather than from group to group. Not only modern humans are closely related, but they all trace back their ancestry to Africa. What is called "scientific racism" or "racialism" is not scientific in the sense of being proven by science, rather, it combines scientific methods with non-substantiated theories in order to sustain and support an ideology. (Rose 2007)



In-group versus-out-group and the logic of ethnocentrism and othering

Looking at various human groups from preindustrial small-scale ethnic groups to modern nation states, ethnocentrism, i.e. the preference of the in-group to any out-group seems to be a constant. Often, unconsciously or overtly the own group is used as a definition for full humanity. Small scale, pre-national ethnic groups often use for self-identification an ethnonym the meaning of which is "human" or "man". This is the case of the Wayana in the Amazonian rain forest and of the Inuit in Alaska. But even in modern national societies everybody is to some extent ethnocentric, as it is very difficult not to apply the norms learned in the in-group to other groups. If the own group is the standard, others are necessarily coming out poorly from the comparison. One consequence of ethnocentrism is that an implicit hierarchy is set up between groups establishing a graduated concept of humanity. Others through this prism do not only look different but are sensed as a little bit less human than those belonging to one's own group, no matter how one's own group is defined. Social categories help people to understand themselves as opposed to others and to decide where to put their allegiance in this game of categorization. "Othering" refers to the social-psychological process of classifying or representing a person or a group as radically different, not quite like humans (US), supposing that there is one "natural" way to be human and that is "OURS" (Powel et al. 2016). What differentiates othering from ordinary (and probably universal) ethnocentrism is the capacity of the othering subject to project its world view and mode of classification on the object of othering. In this way, being "othered" means to be obliged to see oneself through the prism of the othering subject (Fanon 1952). Othering happens usually across hierarchical lines and only those on the higher end of the hierarchy have the capacity to transform othering into domination. Othering therefore is inseparable of power, the power of representing dominated groups as radical others, making appear a relative perspective as an objective hierarchy.



Fictional hierarchies

Scientific racism supposes the objective existence of identifiable and separate "races", i.e. fixed and distinct categories of people whose phenotypical difference is explained by their different biological origins. The combination of the racial thinking with the tendency of othering generated racism. Racism as a theory links observable physical characteristics with the moral or intellectual qualities of a person or a group. Biological determinism - which is in the core of racialism - postulates these qualities to be immutable, subject of indelible transmission from generation to generation. The appearing hierarchy between groups is therefore presented not as an outcome of historical process of domination, but as a fix, immutable and unquestionable "fact", rooted in "nature". (Rabinow and Rose 2006)



From racialism to everyday racism

Everyday racism is not necessarily rooted in scientific racism -it is not strictly tied to the belief of the objective existence of races - but it carries on the ideology of separation and hierarchy. Everyday racism is rooted in a sense of superiority, it is observable in attitudes, opinions and acts diminishing another person based on their supposed belonging to another group. These beliefs and the behavioral patterns they produce do not only cause psychological harm to the victims of racism. They play a primordial role in legitimating and maintaining inequalities. Racism is therefore inexorably oppressive. We can talk loosely about "racism" even in a case when the "other" group's definition is not based on biology. Some authors (Wikan 1999) argue that in the liberal world order, culture and religion came to substitute the scientifically discredited notion of race, playing the same role of creating, legitimating and maintaining social hierarchies between social groups. Everyday racism manifests in negative prejudices, belittling or hostile attitude and systematic discrimination affecting dominated groups.

It is in this sense that we can liken to racism discrimination affecting other than racial or cultural groups, such as trans-, or queer people, or people living with disabilities.

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Institutional racism

Institutional racism is the expression of prevailing beliefs, attitudes, and prejudices within an institution about the inferiority of certain groups. Even when these beliefs are not explicit or conscious, the rules, norms and the dominant institutional culture might contribute to maintaining the status quo and its oppressive nature.

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Essentialism

Racist thinking and culture are often veiled, camouflaged and ignored even by the perpetrators. It is therefore useful to reflect on the observable traits of racist discourses and practices. Something that connects different variations of racism is essentialism. "All racism is an essentialism" (Bourdieu 1980) What is essentialism? At first sight, it is an innocent philosophical idea. It stipulates that things have an essential quality that make them what they are. Tables altogether must share some sort of tableness that define the essence of what makes a table.

When applied to society, essentialism objectifies and reify groups, it presents them as if they had closed boundaries and they were unchangeable through time, rooted in a common origin and going towards an equally common immutable destiny. Essentialism creates specific ideologies: the ideology of tradition, the ideology of boundary and the ideology of purity. Essentialism abhors mixity, border-crossing, change and fluid identities. Essentialist views of nation, race and gender naturalise the global political order, and the social position that men and women, black and white people occupy in the social structure.



What makes these ideologies attractive?

Racism thrives because many a time it is invisible. It is part of the hegemony, i.e. of the world as we learned to read it. Certain circumstances however make it more acceptable and more predominant. The political climate influences a lot the way people interpret the social world around them. The first, most obvious answer to the question why people are racist is that because they live in societies defined by racist structures defended tacitly or openly by racist institutions. But there are other reasons of course.



The need to belong and the need of a valued social identity

Contrary to what we might imagine, it seems that, at the end of the day, the main interest of prejudice is not to devalue the other group, but to protect and enhance our own. Indeed, the long evolutionary journey of our species has taught us the paramount importance of belonging to groups. Our survival depended on the ability to collaborate and coexist with others, possibly people quite similar to us. This intimate existence within groups has several consequences for human development: we have developed coherent modes of functioning and symbolic universes, which we can call "culture". Dependence on our group has anchored in us the need for the concrete, material and symbolic protection of our group and our culture. These needs are reflected in the dynamics of social identity and ethnocentrism (Maalouf 2001). Ethnocentrism helps us to maintain a faith in the coherence of our world and to believe in our superiority. This is a relatively easy way to build a positive social self-identity, therefore it is difficult to resist its temptation.



Blame the victim

Racism is based on a concept of society where hierarchical differences are naturalized and explained as the result of inherent qualities of the identified groups. This social theory makes it very difficult to understand the “bad luck” of subaltern groups otherwise than as their own fault. Blaming the victims of discrimination, racism, oppression reestablishes coherence in a situation of evident disequilibrium and exempts from taking collective or individual responsibility for the prevalent inequality. It can also contribute to a positive social identity because if everybody deserves his or her lot, then I surely did something well to be a bit higher on the ladder.



Identity threat

It would be logical to imagine that people who themselves suffer oppression are more empathic toward those who are more oppressed than they are. Interestingly, often the opposite is true. The fear of falling further “down” and being equated with those groups who are socially more ostracized creates a need of separation. This explains why white poor plantation workers and later industrial workers were seduced by the ideology of racism in the United States and in South Africa. It also explains the often observed symbolic separation between the established migrant groups and the late comers. More a social position carries the threat of a devalued social identity more there is a temptation to believe in one’s superiority on the basis of belonging to a superior social group. This tendency can also be exploited by the elite, by pitching the subaltern against each other (Mbembe 2017)

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Crisis mode

Deeply rooted racist beliefs in society together with discriminating institutions, natural ethnocentrism and predisposition for othering constitute a fertile breeding ground for racism. The need for a valued social identity contributes to the naturalization and reification of social hierarchies. Luckily, there are also contrary tendencies in society. People are beings endowed with solidarity, empathy and a sense of ethics. The tension between these two tendencies is the driving force of history. Historical forces also influence the way in which people perceive "otherness". In times of a perceived threat of the social and cultural order, people tend to respond with more inside looking and are naturally more nervous. In those uncertain times, essentialist ideologies can create a sense of false security, a secure point to hold on. Especially if the political class is ready to exploit people's fears. Ongoing social crisis can create revolutions, or a conservative, backward looking, purity-venerating, mobility-fearing culture, fostering and at the same time exploiting racism.

What can we do?

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Framing

In a training with the explicit aim of fostering intercultural understanding, an assumed racist position may be interpreted as a sort of resistance. Indeed, some of the participants may come from a cultural, political background to which the liberal, cosmopolitan, social-justice-based premises of the training constitutes already an identity threat. It is even surprising that participants from this political spectrum come to our training. We should take this as a rare opportunity as we usually do not talk to this group. We found it useful in our work to start every training with a clear position taking. We announce at the very beginning that this training is rooted in a particular political philosophy and we do not claim to represent the unique truth. At the

same time, we ask the participants to open their mind to this approach as our aim is to share this world view with them. We also insist, that although we are ready to relativize our position, the facts we will share are confirmed by science, journalistic research or ethnography. This initial clarification usually cuts short a lot of potential subsequent criticism. We also make sure that we frame the training as a professional development exercise. We underlie that our aim is not to make participants "better persons" but to help them do their jobs better.

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Trust

In every training trust-building between the trainers and the participants is a key element. This is even more true for the cases where a solid basis of a shared value system is lacking between the two parties. Building trust is still possible in these circumstances. Trainers should use all available means – using verbal and body language, searching for any possible common ground, humor and positivity - to build rapport with the participants, during the whole course of the training, especially in its introductory phase. Two trainers facilitating together might contribute to create good personal relations as their different styles might appeal to different participants. It is also important to create an atmosphere of acceptance. Trainers should show example of non-judgmental attitude. Accepting ethnocentrism as natural and universal might help lift culpability and reduce resistance.

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Expertise

Acceptance should not mean that every opinion must be accepted as legitimate, it means rather that no person is attacked personally for opinions that others do not share. Debate based on arguments is allowed and must be encouraged. The trainer has a chance to win in those debates only if he or she can demonstrate professional expertise, recognizable and irrefutable superiority of knowledge. Therefore, they must be prepared in the areas that the training touches upon, with a solid basis of both theoretical and empirical knowledge. Only acknowledged

competence can give them sufficient authority to fix certain limits to verbal and behavioral reactions which might offend others – this without renouncing of the general principle of acceptance. Professional authority can only be maintained by sincerity. If the trainer does not know something, it is better to admit it right away. Finally, the trainer should be flexible in their professional goals. They should evaluate where the group is in order to set the goals where they would like to take it. This evaluation should be constantly monitored and if necessary, revised. Participants usually come to this training in order to find themselves slightly destabilized. Radical destabilization might trigger radical resistance or withdrawal.



Help recognize racism

Although some participants take a conscious racist stance, not many would be happy to be called racist. Everyday racism is usually only visible by the victims or by those who consciously monitor it. People need help to realize when they meet racism or when they are being racist without wanting it. Racism is a complex phenomenon, so instead of fostering a climate of guilt and forced political correctness, it is necessary to share information about the nature of racism, of its historical origin, manifestations, its variations. This can be an interesting and inspiring path of discovery for the participants.



Foster solidarity and empathy

Valued moral principles contribute to a positive social identity. Valuing openly a culture of solidarity and empathy might elevate the value of antiracism and interculturality within the group. Solidarity with subaltern groups can be enhanced rationally by explaining the mechanisms of oppression or emotionally, through story telling. One of the best possible means is creating situations of encounter and dialogue with members of the oppressed groups.

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Competences

What knowledge, skills, attitudes or even tools, techniques could serve as resource for the facilitator to overcome such situations

KNOWLEDGE

- Theories of social identities and social categorization, including knowledge about the nature of prejudice, discrimination, ethnocentrism, othering and racism. Theories of biopower, structural violence and hegemony
- The history of Western racism, including 17th travelers' account, slave trade, colonization, 19th century scientific racism, social Darwinism, eugenics movements, racial segregation and fascism
- Facts as arguments refuting the naturalization of race. Science refutes the existence of races
- Knowledge about types of othering from a historical Western perspective: the idea of the primitive and the savage, exotism, orientalism, the idea of progress drawing a line between modernity and backwardness
- Knowledge about how historically the rise of modern racism in the West coincided and got intertwined with the rise of capitalism.

SKILLS

- Capacity of decentering, contextualization, empathy and emic understanding, debate-culture

ATTITUDES / FOCUS

- Active listening, assertive communication, capacity to step back, assessing the situation, setting the pedagogical goals with respect to the needs of the group, reinforcing the

positive self-image of the group (and the participants) as having and defending important social values.

ATTITUDES / FOCUS

- Facilitation techniques, questions to the group, fact based communication, use of concrete examples, exotisation (displacement) of the problem (instead of the Roma, let's speak about Native Americans), finding a minimum base for solidarity, simulation games, videos, thematic webpages.
- For health workers: <https://structuralcompetency.org/>
- Using "experiential experts", i.e. members of oppressed groups speaking about their experience is also a powerful means.

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5.5. When the training does not become applied in practice



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Questions of cognitive dissonance: the student's questions are not pertinent (or contradictory) with respect to the content that has been dealt with in the training course up to that moment.

Some examples:

Often when teachers are present among the students, there is someone who asks the following question: "ok, I understand, but when I enter the classroom tomorrow morning, what exactly should I say?"

"I liked the course, all nice and interesting, but when do we deal with other people's cultures?"

These kinds of behaviours, on the part of trainees, are often linked to the difficulty of decentering with respect to their cultural and professional identity (professional models). It is also the difficulty to question certainties because of a deep-rooted presumption of values and cultural supremacy, dictated by cultural ethnocentrism.

Another explanation for these reactions is a limited and stereotyped concept of what training should be, especially if it is aimed at adults, and how the learning process always takes place in adulthood.



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The trainees seem to have understood the meaning of the training, but after some time there is no impact on the procedures of the service in which they work.

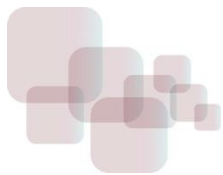
An example:

"It is important for us to work on intercultural relations, but we are convinced that the most important thing to interact with foreign users in our services is to use mediators".

Even the concept of change is often linked to cultural or professional models that are difficult to discuss or accept to integrate with other worldviews.

It often happens that the individual or group of colleagues who have been trained in the intercultural approach are not in a position to transfer what they have learned into their working practice and become a vehicle for change within their organization. This is often determined by the constraints of the corporate culture and governance system within which they operate. Practices, consolidated procedures and rigid regulatory and communication models prevent them from embarking on a path of evolution in an intercultural perspective. More often than not, what has been learnt in training requires a profound revision of the style of service delivery, as well as of the (not only) communicative strategies acted by individuals and the company collective. This change may also be conditioned by the seniority or level of preparation of the managers who govern the organization, as well as the low level of decision-making or proactive power of the figures who have followed the training course. The organizations with which we collaborate are often highly hierarchical, with little vocation for change and adaptation to the ever-changing social and cultural conditions. Not infrequently the same founders sit at their top, now elderly, self-referential, unprepared to question the values and interpretations of the world thanks to which they have acted for so long. In this way the new approach to intercultural relations remains an individual learning without succeeding in positively contaminating the organization and producing change in the outcomes of relations with users or within the working group.

A widespread vision in the social services sector is that the Other is someone I have to assist, a needy person and not a person with values with whom to build symmetrical relationships. compensation/recognition. This is another limitation of the organizations and social environment in which we operate as trainers. The other culturally different from us is often perceived as a person in 'difficulty', 'marginalized' who needs our help to fit in and integrate with 'our' socio-cultural system. He is not welcomed as a resource that brings diversity, capable of enriching the new cultural context. It is not perceived as an equal interlocutor, a protagonist to be valued and can bring positivity, but as a 'needy' who lacks culture, knowledge and resources. Often the organizations that deal with cultural diversity or the reception of immigrants belong to the world of emergency social intervention, characterized by a pauperistic and welfare approach. We speak of third sector globalism, to explain how often Western organizations engaged in social and intercultural issues still show a widespread disparaging and devaluing approach to the cultural systems of the South. The relationships implemented are in most cases relationships of help, of satisfaction of basic needs and not of empowerment of social protagonism and of the bargaining power of people coming from different cultures. The other is not a person to be listened to and understood, but someone of whom we already know everything, who must adapt and change in order to be accepted and survive in the new context.



Some background theory

What training model to propose? What is the meaning of training and learning for an adult? We do consider training an interactive system where processes and training paths must lead to transformation: of the participant, the trainer and the training itself. Training is also a relational path in the sense that it takes place constantly in relation to a context (specific and/or general) and in the exchange ("with" and "between" other systems) not only of automatic and a-temporal "specific knowledge", but also of "stories", background, ideative genesis, metacommunications, metaphors, conceptual networks,... If we accept the principle (or intelligence) that nothing is isolated in the universe and everything can influence (govern) others and be

influenced by them - even if in ways not always immediately and clearly perceptible by man - we can come to see in a new light, scientific and sensible, concepts that until now have been confined in the spheres of mysticism and religious thought. And an approach such as the systemic approach, a principle such as that of global interdependence, aims to bring together the divided reality, to make us feel closer, more "related" to one another, more sharing in the fate of mankind. Homeostasis says, the less you change the better is. Growth says: it is always possible to change for the better. These two forces express the eternal confrontation between order and disorder, between the need for predictability and the search for the indeterminate, the new, the unknown; between the need for reassurance and dependence and the desire for novelty and autonomy. Even if homeostasis and growth may seem to be opposing tendencies, in reality they are not, because they both aim at the well-being of the system: if they diverge it is because they conceive differently what is meant by "well-being" and how it is to be achieved.

Why can we meet the cognitive dissonance? The concept of complementarity and the centrality attributed to (self-)organizational processes, definitely question the programming approach for predefined and homogeneous objectives. The question is not marginal especially with respect to the theme of the "intercultural relationship" which, for its very sense of operating (global, interdisciplinary and transversal), cannot be reduced to a closed and separate "disciplinary area" and "taught" by fragments of unity and certain objectives. This would in fact reproduce the structure of that causalist and quantitative thought that eliminates the complementarity between mind, body, environment and relationship (the "connecting structure", Bateson would say), since the dimension of the "ecological self", that self in relation to what surrounds it, is lost in our culture. The problem, evidently, is not that of "what" to convey (the contents) and in "what better way" (the microdidactics) through ad hoc training (the training room), but rather to hook the necessary and fundamental plans of contents and method to the wider horizon of the "im-pertinent" questions of a curious learning system: the why every trainer (even by chance) has to deal with. The intercultural relationship is essentially a metaphorical pedagogical and methodological paradox: how to "teach", in fact,



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something that not only refers to specific and quantifiable cognitive learning, but rather makes them functional tools of the broader "learning to learn" and its subjective, interactive, strategic attitudes related to probability, the unexpected and co-adaptation? The intercultural relationship is not "a matter" that can be placed in a defined time and space: it is the global and observable context of a more general attitude, related to the perception/construction of the own, common, possible and sustainable future "with and between" living systems acting in a context. In fact, there is no "matter" or sphere of pertinence without the emotional, cognitive and evolutionary relations that define the systems themselves as "difference" (Bateson 1980).

The change itself is neither knowable nor programmable. The world is made up of systems that observe and interact with each other. There is not one part that changes the other, but interacting parts that are perturbed and modified according to their organization and structure. The training is therefore a 'connecting structure', which favours the construction of contexts that connect otherwise isolated elements.

The change has a procedural nature and is closely linked to the change in content and premises. Some general assumptions may be:

Change is a transformation;

Those who change are not individuals but individuals in contexts and these are in perennial evolutionary movement, they are a structure over time;

There are useful and less useful reality readings. The training tries to favour those that facilitate the perturbation of the system and allow the construction of contexts that favour the integration of ideas, abilities, possibilities, languages, strategies, behaviours and paths.

We try to create a soft protective cushion that doesn't filter the ugliness of the world but gently train us to its roughness.



Competences

KNOWLEDGE

- systemic approach, relational approach, overcoming an interpretation that is limited to the reading of basic needs,
- knowledge of the migration phenomenon (understood as a phenomenon and process and not as an emergency problem)
- organisational systems and the possibility to influence/modify them

ABILITY, SKILL, KNOW-HOW

- better define personal objectives at the beginning (time to check that the objectives are well formulated: neuro-linguistic programming)
- create more moments of intermediate verification, thermometer of sensations but also verification of objectives
- what contradicts this request with respect to the contents of the course?
- During the training, the trainer show him/herself as a model of some specific skills and knowledge useful in the professional context of the participant. For this reasons, he stresses some aspects:
- highlight that this is not a course that provides you with the "magic wand", but more easily represents the beginning of a path that is "obligatory", as well as "individual", in the sense that each, compared to his starting point, to the resources available, its own characteristics (individual, cultural, character...) will have its own gait, its intermediate goals, its breaks... This is why the course should be presented as a non-exhaustive opportunity, from which everyone will be able to enjoy-absorb-take... what they want/receives

- Insist and shows that it is not only about knowing and being able to do, but also (and above all) knowing how to be. The personal-interior change depends on me, not on the organization of which I am part or the job I have been entrusted with.
- Know how to distinguish between job description and personal attitude

ATTITUDES/ FOCUS/ SENSITIVITY

- Listening, empathy, stimulating questions, ecological communication
- Knowledge of the migratory experience and/or the experience related to the inferiority-minority status
- Awareness of one's own non omnipotence, of one's own fallibility, of considering oneself an opportunity among many (in the panorama of training) and that all this can represent a strong point more than a criticality, putting the theme of the course as an example of interaction that requires the mutual construction of meaning, the one between trainer and students, which is real, present, visible and visitable/handy. What we can have / make available is us and the here and now.

TOOLS / TECHNIQUES

- Dialogue relationship tools, to ask metamodel questions, to listen and rephrase, correct formulation of objectives, suspension of judgement.
- The stages of the migrant of A. Perotti and C. Edelstein
- The characteristics of W. Sombart's migrant
- The characteristics of the intercultural (and the "evolutionary scale") of Camilleri
- Italian Emigration Theme Film
- Photography of reality: tools to apply to the organization from the point of view/informations of the participant. Including:
- Identity card / Genogram / Constellation/ History / emblematic figures / learnings steps/ appreciative inquiry applied to the institution / mission and vision/ organisational culture / rewards and punishment system /implicits....



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