

Chapter 9

Educational provisions in Second Reception Communities for Unaccompanied Foreign Minors: what is the value of intercultural perspective in theoretical references and educative practices? Results from a qualitative research in Emilia-Romagna

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9.1 Introduction

My chapter will focus on the second reception communities' daily educative practices for unaccompanied foreign children, which are minors coming from different and disadvantaged parts of the world. The majority of them are male who came to different countries (including Italy) where they are perceived as "foreigners". This is the most synthetic identikit of a very complex reality. Even if it is not a new phenomenon, it is also true that it has increased in the last few years. The start of this phenomenon is linked to the European population's movements just after the Second World War, but in the last few years it has become a wider reality because of major conflicts near to the western European countries (Biagioli, 2016). The coming of unaccompanied foreign children in Italy has become a constant characteristic of migration; in 2016 we registered a growing trend in the total of immigrant's landings, both in absolute and relative terms (Unar & Idos, 2017).

There are different ways in which scholars define this children's category and these definitions have also changed through time, with significant consequences both for their rights and future's possibilities (Agostinetto, 2017). Therefore, the life's stories of these minors are very different and so are also their needs and wishes. What makes these children similar is that they migrate during their adolescence; sometimes close to their 18 years old, in other cases when they are more than 18's, trying to hide their real age to access to those specific benefits for minors who run away from war and poverty, going through awful journeys both from a physical and psychological point of view (Unar & Idos, 2016). Their stories can be linked by the research for better life conditions both for themselves and their family. They are often children who came in Italy with a specific "family demand", which means that the family stays in the country of origin, hoping for the economic support of the son (Rigon, Mengoli, 2013). However, they not always left their country of origin with this particular "demand". As I already specified, this is a very complex reality, which cannot be described only in a few characteristics.

They often run away from violence and war, from the lack of future possibilities, from hunger. Because of these reasons they came across the desert and the sea, exposing themselves to several risks. In the end, they arrive in Italy with a future to build (Muscarà, 2015). In other cases, they chose to leave because of dramatic personal and familial reasons. To pay attention to this variety of stories help us to apply a very important criterion of intercultural education, which is to carefully consider the specific characteristics of each person. This means to try to embrace both similar and particular elements and always take into account the point of view of the subject. We also must consider that these children often have tragic life experiences which might elicit emphatic and solidarity actions, except for the fact that they are also “foreigners” and they often have different physical characteristics from those which are still prevalent in the Italian context. Therefore they are included in a category of people which still suffer from discrimination, which comes from fear, mistrust, refusal and aggression. Therefore the approach with them could be contradictory, mixing both hosting and hostility.

It is also important to underline that a democratic society should have the ability to create the highest level of participation for all, involving everybody in public affairs. Intercultural education promotes pluralism and participation (Bolognesi, Lorenzini, 2017) which are fundamental elements of a democratic society. These values are those who remember us to consider all the children (included unaccompanied foreign children) because they might be future citizens. A positive integration in the social fabric is the necessary condition for the positive evolution of a civil society which promotes the value of tolerance (Genovese, 2002; Bolognesi, Lorenzini, 2017), pluralism, participation and interaction between people with different cultural and experiential backgrounds.

To fully achieve the protection of unaccompanied foreign children it is also necessary an interdisciplinary approach focused on legal protection and educative practices. Indeed, it is also necessary a specific commitment to transform the negative perceptions against the migratory phenomenon in general, which are widespread in the social context. Focusing on the educative perspective, the adults which have an educative responsibility are involved in different levels (Agostinetto, 2017). Therefore, I am going to present you some of the results of a research project which has also focused on the educative approach in second reception communities for unaccompanied foreign children in Emilia-Romagna, Italy. I decided to realize this research project not only because of the increase of the phenomenon but also because of the real interest of the students who attended my Intercultural Education courses (especially Social and Cultural Educators) and because of the relevant connections between this thematic and the intercultural perspective education. I think that thanks to empirical studies, I can also include a teaching objective for those who are going to work with these children. I hope that they could be able to recognize and respect their rights to reach a positive integration in the social context where they come. We also must project a positive hosting in the short term and a positive integration in the medium and long-term, whereby we might be able to contrast risk factors (i.e. social marginalization, negative prejudices, organised crime, etc.). Because of that reason, we must promote the potentialities of the subject, which not also means a burden for the society of arrival, but also a resource.

9.2 The research project

The research project's context: Emilia-Romagna, Italy

This qualitative research project was realized in Emilia-Romagna, Italy. The Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies published data about the presence of unaccompanied foreign children in all the Italian regions (updated on 31 of December 2017). Emilia-Romagna was in the 5th place, with 5,6% of unaccompanied foreign children (1.017 boys and girls). It shall be preceded by Sicily with 7.988 children (43,6% of the total), Calabria with 1.443 (7,9% of the total), Lombardia with 1.216 (6,6% of the total) and Lazio with 1.049 children (5,7% of the total). Focusing on the unaccompanied foreign girls, Emilia-Romagna was in the 4th place with 63 girls (5,1 % of the total). In the first place, we have Sicily again, with 732 girls (58,7% of the total). Calabria follows Sicily with 65 girls (5,2% of the total), Lombardia with 65 girls (5,2% of the total) (Labour Ministry, 31/12/2017).

Emilia-Romagna is a very active hosting region. In February 2018, it starts a teaching training for those who are involved in this field (educators, social assistant, health professionals, etc.) to try to create discussion's moments to make the reception more efficient in a systemic way. Emilia-Romagna as Region states that want to be an excellence in this field, promoting competent and pragmatic reception's realities²⁵.

9.3 Research methodology, objectives and research questions

This qualitative research wanted to deepen know unaccompanied foreign children's reality starting from the point of view of those who daily work with them: educators and coordinators of second reception's communities. The principal objective was to understand their educative practices in Emilia-Romagna. The focus was on the way in which these practitioners wanted to share their experiences and expertise. Therefore, the analysis focused on the representations and reflections of the participants. The structured interview was the research instrument (Corbetta, 2015), used to deepen some topics. It was considered a coherent research instrument thank to whom we had the possibility to gain the information about educators and coordinators' professionally. The interview's scheme (same questions for all the respondents) was used in a flexible way, let the respondents have the possibility to freely answer and to dedicate more time in some parts rather than others (Lorenzini, 2012, 2013). The interview's scheme was composed by 70 questions with several thematic sections: personal data, professional experience, representation about unaccompanied foreign children, daily life, relation with family of origin, autonomy support, emotional well-being, relationship between children and educators, relationship among minors, relation between minors and society, discrimination's episodes (Cardellini, 2018), schooling, work experience, integration project, unaccompanied foreign children's future, educational perspective. The flexible use of the interview scheme allows the

²⁵<http://www.anci.emilia-romagna.it/formazione/Qualificazione-del-sistema-dei-servizi-accoglienza-e-integrazione-dei-minori-stranieri-non-accompagnati-MSNA> (last access: 12 February 2018).

interviewer to have a certain freedom in following the question's sequences or not, even choosing to ask more questions if deemed necessary.

9.4 The reception's communities and the respondent's characteristics

The interviews were realized between February and April 2017. They were audio-taped and totally deregistered. The sample was composed by: 30 interviews (16 men and 13 women) in 10-second reception's communities²⁶ in 5 cities of Emilia-Romagna: Bologna, Ravenna, Faenza, Ferrara, Modena. We realized 3 interviews in each community duration of about 2 hours (1 interview for the coordinator and 2 educators). We only had a female's community. All the communities were quite diverse because of different elements: degree of autonomy, number of users, daily life organisation, educational practices.

The communities were chosen by a non-probabilistic sampling, by directly contacting several second reception's communities, asking them if they were available to collaborate in this research project. All the contacted communities accepted to participate. The respondents gave us their time in their work field.

Among the respondent's characteristics we have: a great prevalence come from the North of Italy (17 subjects) and only a few of them come from the Centre and South Italy (10 subjects). Indeed, one respondent came from Romania, one from Albania and one from Morocco. They were between 27 and 54 years old, with a prevalence of 30-year-olds. Their work experience with unaccompanied foreign children was from a minimum of 1 year and even more of 17 years. Their training courses were quite heterogeneous, with university degrees and even only high school certificate. The university degrees were also quite heterogeneous: Psychology, Philosophy, Law, Political Sciences, Veterinary, International Relations. Only 10 on 30 respondents affirmed to have an educative university degree.

The educative perspective of the respondents

In this paragraph, I will report some of the results of the interviews, respecting the respondent's privacy. I will analyse some of the interview's topics, highlighting both the relevant and frequent elements and the counter-trend opinions. I will support my analysis with the respondent's words, by including some pieces of conversation to try to make my analysis clearer²⁷. Indeed, I will develop some consideration inspired to the intercultural educative perspective. I will focus my attention on the respondent's narration about their educative criteria, paying attention the intercultural perspective searching for its presence both in a theoretical and practical sense.

²⁶ Second reception community: it is a residential and familiar service which include an educative approach. In these communities, qualified professionals are present to support children in his own autonomy and empowerment research project (Conferenza delle regioni e delle province autonome, Accordo sui requisiti minimi per la seconda accoglienza dei minori stranieri non accompagnati nel percorso verso l'autonomia, 2016).

²⁷ I translated these pieces of conversation from Italian to English, but I will include the original version in note. Some linguistic modifications have been necessary for the sake of clarity.

When we ask the respondents if they referred to an educative perspective in their daily work with unaccompanied foreign children (even personally or as a group decision) the majority of them affirmed not to refer to any specific educative perspective:

E: "Well, not specifically". (9 Educator, F, Girl's community, high educative intensity, Modena) ²⁸⁻²⁹

Other respondents seemed quite surprised in front of this question:

E: "Not to my knowledge. For the moment... we have not an educative perspective. Do you mean a theoretical framework? Not now. We have not this directive yet, we only have internal rules and coexistence rules, daily routines...we have not yet..." (20 Educator, M, Reception's Community for children and adolescents who are getting away from their families of origin, Errano, Faenza)³⁰

Others specify that they have not an educative perspective because they did not study education. Other states that they have an educative perspective only "theoretically", but not in their practices. Furthermore, the "theoretic" educative perspective seems not to be so "educative" because the respondent mentions psychological and psychoanalytical authors:

C: "I honestly don't. I have this theoretical perspective for many years...when I came here, maybe Roger's perspective. But now we try to answer to the boy's needs and characteristics".

I³¹: "And you?"

C: "Me? I don't think I have... I don't think I refer to any specific psychological of educative theory" (19, M, Coordinator of Reception's Community for children and adolescents who are getting away from their families of origin, Errano, Faenza)³².

E: "Well... do you want to see the Service Charter? Well, we started with active education, where the minor is responsible for all the situation. After that, we move to the relational systemic theory and now we are changing. We participate in some meetings to focus on the needs. Well, it's all about to be into the relationship with these boys, trying to make them the protagonist of their life paths. I don't know how many colleagues

²⁸ E: Cioè una specifica, no. No (9 Educatrice Comunità per ragazze ad alta intensità educativa, Modena).

²⁹ Some other information: E: Educator, C: Coordinator. F: Female, M: Male. Each interview was coded with a specific progressive number. Specific information about the Community are also included.

³⁰ E: No. Non che io sappia. Per ora non abbiamo... prospettiva pedagogica, cosa dici una corrente di pensiero? No, per ora no. Diciamo che non abbiamo ancora questa direttiva, ci limitiamo ad avere un regolamento interno e delle regole di convivenza, delle abitudini quotidiane... però non abbiamo ancora... (20 Educatore Centro di accoglienza per bambini e adolescenti allontanati dalle famiglie, Errano, Faenza).

³¹ Interviewer.

³² C: Sinceramente... no. Sulla carta c'è quella, ancora rimasta da molti anni, da quando sono arrivato io, quella Rogersiana, però poi alla fine adesso sempre più si va a... si cerca di rispondere alle caratteristiche di ogni ragazzo. I: E tu in particolare?

C: Io in particolare? mmm... non credo di avere... di rispondere proprio a una teoria psicologica o pedagogica particolare (19 Responsabile uomo Centro di accoglienza per bambini e adolescenti allontanati dalle famiglie, Errano, Faenza).

explicit their theories...they say Winnicott, Bettelheim...” (18 Educator, F, Educative Community, Bologna)³³.

Even if they affirm to get their degree in a humanistic university (even education), they often say that they work following “sensations”. In a specific case, the respondent (who studied education) states not to refer to any educative perspective and he also expresses devaluation against theoretical aspects with a hyper valorisation on experiences and practices:

E: “I studied Education, I passed my exams and I left with 3 exams to pass. The most beautiful thing that I learn in all these years of school – even if it’s not like the book teaches – is the role-playing. This was the best thing I learned. I worked in that period. There were people who didn’t know what it means to have someone in front of you...only “nice words”. The educative work is like that. It’s another thing. [...] The role-playing was the only interesting thing. It was really complex, but I saw its functioning. I see that if you work you can reach your objectives, but if you don’t work you have no idea. They quit in front of the first strange things” (15 Educator, F, Apartments Group with High Level of Autonomy, Faenza)³⁴.

Among the respondents, we found a widespread affirmation which was “everyone has a different approach”. From this affirmation, we can deduct that every educator has his own approach, which is the mix of experiences, competencies and personal training. Therefore, it seems that the request of an “educative perspective” was perceived as a “rigid rules to follow” and not as a criteria of reference which does not offer definitive solutions but only coursed to follow in a flexible way.

C: “No, well...I try to follow my perspective which is a mix of educative experiences, personal ideas, educative training, other experiences in communities...so there is not a specific perspective which we follow. Indeed, I believe that a specific perspective with these children who came from different cultures it’s quite complex...we cannot follow only one perspective. In my opinion, the best way is to speak and supervise them and try to move on proceeding with attempts, even with the knowledge that it’s not a random attempt, but a specific moment where you can learn something. So, even if it goes wrong you can use other ways and if it goes well you can do it again and...you must be flexible.

³³ E: Mah... guarda, ah vuoi vedere la carta dei servizi? ...dunque, siamo partiti con la pedagogia attiva, con il minore che è responsabile della situazione, passando per la sistemica relazionale e alla fine sono queste attualizzate un po’, abbiamo seguito degli incontri un po’ fatti anche sui bisogni. Mmm... tutto questo alla fine si riduce all’esser soprattutto nella pratica relazionale con i ragazzi e nel cercare di farli diventare protagonisti del loro percorso di vita. Poi, non lo so quanti colleghi dicono quali teorie li ispirano, dicono Winnicott, Bettelheim... (18 Educatrice, Comunità educativa, Bologna).

³⁴ E: No, io ho fatto Scienze della Formazione, ho fatto tutti gli esami, poi ho mollato a tre dalla fine. La cosa più bella che mi hanno insegnato in tutti sti anni di scuola, che poi alla fine no, non è come sui libri, è il role playing, quella è stata in assoluto la cosa migliore, e la differenza. Io allora lavoravo, tra chi lavorava e chi non aveva un’idea di cosa volesse dire avere di fronte qualcuno di vero che non sono le belle parole, la parte pedagogica, si fa così, si fa così... no, non c’entra proprio niente, è tutta un’altra roba [...]. Il role playing è l’unica cosa perché era una situazione di ruolo interessante, complessa eh, però io ho visto che chi lavorava il punto lo portava a casa, gira e prilla ce la fa, chi non lavora non ne ha un’idea, si ferma di fronte alla prima frase storta o strana che ha detto e non va da nessuna parte (15 Educatrice Gruppo Appartamento ad Alta Autonomia, Faenza).

It's more important to have clear objectives rather than an educative perspective in this kind of communities" (12 Coordinator, M, Second reception community, Bologna)³⁵.

In other cases, some respondents highlight the importance of an educative perspective focused on the person's needs:

C: "Ehhh, no. Personally... in my opinion... well... my cooperative... an educative perspective focused on the person... isn't it? So... we must take into account the person. Well... living the life with the person... trying to understand his own needs. I honestly don't have a specific perspective".

I: "Do you have a psychological approach? "

C: "I like when the boy wants to say something to me. For me it's important – from an educative point of view – trying to understand what the boy wants to give you; trying to understand his real needs. The boys often say something, but they are saying to you something else. I also have to understand what I feel. There are some boys which transmit to you lots of anger and if you are not able to listen to them, you follow only the anger. So, it's like to try to understand...well, we talk about transfert which is to try to understand what the boy is transferring to me and what I'm transferring to him. Well... eehh... (silence)... it's also to understand your role in the relationship, what is your role? What I'm doing? What is my role in this relationship? What am I for?" (1 Coordinator, M, High Autonomy Community, Bologna)³⁶.

The intercultural educative perspective

No respondents mention the intercultural educative perspective. When we ask them if they refer to the intercultural educative perspective we obtain lots of negative answers. In some cases, they said that they didn't refer to this specific educative perspective, in other cases they also explain why:

³⁵ C: No, eh... di mio diciamo che eh... provo ad avere una linea che è un mix di esperienze pedagogiche fatte, di idee personali, corsi di formazione, esperienze di altre comunità eh... quindi non c'è una linea specifica e definita che seguiamo, anche perché credo con un linea precisa ben definita con minori stranieri non accompagnati che arrivano da... diverse culture, anche molto distanti è complicato, seguire una linea sola... Secondo me, il modo migliore è quello di parlarne, supervisionarsi e andare avanti un po' a tentativi anche sapendo che non è un tentativo a caso ma un tentativo che ti debba insegnare, quindi se vedi che non va, provi altre modalità, se vanno li salvi e li replichi e... devi essere mutevole, l'importante più che la linea pedagogica in strutture come queste, è avere gli obiettivi chiari (12 Coordinatore Comunità seconda accoglienza, Bologna).

³⁶ C: Eeeee... no. Io person... nel senso che secondo me c'è... la... emmm... la cooperativa ha... un fondamento pedagogico basato sulla persona, no? Quindi sul... tenere al centro dell'attenzione la persona in quanto tale. Eeee e sul vivere la quotidianità insieme alla persona per poi poter capire i bisogni della persona. Però io onestamente non ho un riferimento.

I: Un approccio psicologico?

C: A me piace molto il... sentire quello che il ragazzo... cioè, per me è importante dal punto di vista educativo capire quello che il ragazzo sta trasmettendo. Capire il suo bisogno reale, perché spesso i ragazzi dicono una cosa, ma te ne stanno dicendo un'altra. Capire anche cosa io sento verso il ragazzo. Nel senso che a volte ci sono dei ragazzi che ti trasmettono della rabbia e tu non li ascolti e vai dietro alla rabbia che ti trasmettono. Quindi riuscire anche a capire eeee... si parla di transfert, cioè riuscire a capire che cosa il ragazzo mi sta trasferendo e cosa io sto trasferendo a lui. Eeee... quindi comunque... mmm... (silenzio)... cioè riuscire a mett... riuscire a capire all'interno della relazione qual è il proprio ruolo. Cosa sto facendo? In questa relazione qual è il mio ruolo? A che cosa servo all'altro? (1 Responsabile Comunità ad alta autonomia, Bologna).

C: *“(silence) Honestly, I don’t know this perspective very well so...I don’t... (silence)”*
(1 Coordinator, M, High Autonomy Community, Bologna)³⁷.

In some cases, the “no” answer was motivated by the absence of specific training related to this educative perspective or, from the point of view of a respondent, by the widespread presence of a “clinic approach” compared to the educative ones. He also expresses a very critical opinion, asking for the need for a “specific training”. Because of privacy reasons, the following piece of conversation will not use the acronym identifying of community and work role:

C: *“We have a problem with our teamwork, because [name] has not a professional qualification. He’s doing a course to become educator...a course of a few months, so I don’t know how these courses work from a theoretic point of view. [Name] is a psychologist and she’s studying to become a psychotherapist and she’s not interested in those theories related to children. She’s working here until she graduates. [Name] worked only as pizza-getter. I ask for specific training courses with academics [...] If everybody knew these theories maybe we could activate a conversations to try to understand what we are doing and why...we have a little pamphlet that we give to the social assistants to ask them to send the children and you can read here that we use a “context and familiar approach” but I think that nobody knows what it means. This is a problem. Thanks to our weekly meeting we can follow a common line, working on the life experiences, but we need a theoretical basis that we miss now. We need a specific training. I think that the problem is also a “clinic approach” in education and it’s what happens here³⁸”.*

The few answers which affirm that intercultural education is a reference point, are motivated in different ways; among them, the importance given to the different elements which are considered linked with “different cultures”:

C: *“Yes... yes, yes. Every year our cooperative gives us the possibility to answer to our training needs and this year we ask for the knowledge of cultures. Of course, we need*

³⁷ C: (silenzio) Sinceramente io non la conosco bene, quindi non... (silenzio) (1 Responsabile Comunità ad alta autonomia, Bologna).

³⁸ R: Ma qui c'è un problema relativo alla nostra équipe nel senso che... [nome] non ha nessun titolo, sta facendo adesso un corso per diventare educatore, un corso di qualche mese, quindi non ha un'idea dal punto di vista teorico di queste cose. [nome] è una psicologa, sta studiando psicoterapeuta e non ha un grande interesse di teorie riguardanti i minori, lei sta facendo questo lavoro intanto che non si laurea. [nome] come unica esperienza professionale precedente era un portapizze... (a bassa voce). Ho fatto richieste specifiche di formazione con dei professori [...]. Se tutti conoscessero queste teorie potremmo aprire un dibattito per capire che cosa stiamo facendo perché... qui c'è un libretto che è quello che facciamo vedere agli assistenti sociali per farci mandare i ragazzi c'è scritto che seguiamo un approccio ambientale, di tipo familiare, eccetera come approccio bla bla bla, così. Però di fatto penso che quasi nessuno di noi operatori sappia esattamente di che si tratta. Questo è un problema poi ovviamente grazie alle riunioni che facciamo tutte le settimane riusciamo a seguire una linea e lavorare i vissuti e le varie cose però comunque ci vuole una base teorica che di fatto al momento a molti manca. È necessaria una formazione specifica. Il problema è una deriva clinicista nell'educazione si riporta un approccio clinico quando invece deve essere educativo. Ed è quello che succede qua.

social knowledge, but we also need to know cultures which are totally different from ours, so you're in difficulties to understand some behaviours rather than others. In some African cultures there are a huge prevalence of religious aspects, for example, ...you're struggling trying to understand since you really know that elements... So, we ask for the possibility to have a specific training in different cultures, because we often see them as something too far from us" (19, M, Coordinator of Reception's Community for children and adolescents who are getting away from their families of origin, Errano, Faenza)³⁹.

From these words, we can see both the training need and the idea that to understand unaccompanied foreign children's needs and point of views, educators need to know "cultures". In relation to this, it is also important to highlight some critical considerations. We can share that to know the most important "cultural elements" could give to educators some keys to understanding thanks to whom they can improve their ability to understand specific behaviours, especially in the first phases of the relationship where it could be also linguistic difficulties. However, from an intercultural perspective, only the knowledge of cultural aspects cannot be enough (in some cases it also could be misleading). What we need it to ask to ourselves what kind of idea of "cultures" undergoes these demands, considering that cultures are not homogeneous entities, they are not static and immutable (Sirna Terranova, 1998; Bolognesi & Lorenzini, 2017); cultures are not rigid elements and we cannot clearly pre-define all the ways in which subjects engage with cultural aspects. Values, rituals and traditions might pass down in the same way or they also can change. They can assume different forms related to specific familiar contexts or they can change after migration experiences or when the subject meets other lifestyles. During migration, the country of origin's habits might remain the same (even become more rigid), but they can also be modified, mixing themselves in relation to the new context. Therefore, searching for the "typical" into a culture it could be both interesting and useful and it also could generate a process of stereotyping which is a high-risk, especially in education, because we risk imprisoning the subject in false representations, not consider himself in his uniqueness. It is inappropriate to think that all those who come from a certain place have also the same beliefs, values and habits (Lorenzini, 2015). Therefore, what we can do is to discover what cultural aspects are important for that person, what is their meaning and how those elements are mixed with his/her own life. The educator should relate with these peculiarities, helping these guys to be aware of the possibility (no obligation) to develop a positive relationship with their origins.

Other intercultural elements mentioned by the respondents are: mental and practical flexibility in their daily educative approach, the ability to question the rules, trying to understand behaviour not only referring to the "cultural elements" but also to the journey that

³⁹ C: Sì... sì, sì. Ogni anno la cooperativa dà la possibilità di soddisfare fabbisogni formativi dell'équipe... abbiamo richiesto tra i vari bisogni formativi quest'anno, appunto la conoscenza di alcune culture in particolare. Perché comunque, al di là delle conoscenze sociali che puoi avere, alcune culture sono davvero profonde o comunque totalmente diverse dalle nostre che fatichi a capire dei comportamenti piuttosto che altri. O anche in diverse culture, magari africane, sono presentissimi gli aspetti religiosi, per dirne una... che tu fai fatica a comprendere finché non appuri che quelle cose lì... Quindi, abbiamo cercato di richiedere sta possibilità per avere delle informazioni generali almeno di diverse culture, perché ci sembrano veramente dei mondi molto distanti dai nostri. (19 Responsabile uomo Centro di accoglienza per bambini e adolescenti allontanati dalle famiglie, Errano, Faenza).

these boys often made through the sea (especially referring to the traumas). On these aspects we highlight a specific positive attention:

E: "It's so important [referring to the intercultural approach]. Especially because we have boys coming from different cultures..."

I: "What is its influence in your daily educative practices?"

E: "It's a mental and practical flexibility, which means constantly question our daily work and what we offer to them, rules, conflicts, even our representation of a conflict...trying to go beyond what the boys are doing at that moment or his behaviour. We try to understand the logic which undergoes this appearance, under this behaviour. There is culture, there is a journey, traumas..." (2 Educator, F, High Autonomy Community, Bologna)⁴⁰.

It seems relevant the ability to try to understand the other's point of view, trying to get inside his skin. It highlights the importance to "observe things in a different way". It means to put into practice the "cultural decentralisation", which is to go beyond the "Western thought".

E: "We try to do that. It is a cultural mediation... we often miss some information... We assume that we value and interpret using the "Western thought", so lots of things escape us and we need someone who teaches us to observe in a different way. The deeper we go, the more we need teaching about how things could be observed in a different way" (17, Educator, F, Educative Community, Bologna)⁴¹.

The intercultural approach in practice

The educative approach seems quite absent in the words of the respondents, especially the intercultural one. Only a few of them referred to that approach only after the interviewer's request. In these cases, some important elements emerged, but they might be better conceptualized. The tendency to separate theory and practice is quite dominant in the respondent's word. Therefore, we search if these theoretical aspects were present in their daily work. The educator's role goes deeper than the only material, alimentary, hygienic and health support because of the significant relationship which is activated among them and the children, thanks to which it is possible to have personalized projects related to the different characteristics

⁴⁰ E: È importantissima [la prospettiva interculturale]. Noi poi, avendo ragazzi di culture differenti...

I: Come si riflette nelle prassi quotidiane avere questo riferimento?

E: In una flessibilità sia operativa che mentale, che principalmente porta a una messa in discussione continua e rapida nel lavoro quotidiano. Sia delle attività proposte, delle regole, dei conflitti sorti, delle supposizioni fatte dinnanzi a un conflitto sorto, di fronte all'impressione che il ragazzo in quel momento dà, o dell'atteggiamento che pone, cioè la logica è che dietro a quella facciata, dietro a quell'atteggiamento c'è la cultura, c'è un viaggio, c'è una vita, dei traumi... (2 Educatrice Comunità ad alta autonomia, Bologna).

⁴¹ E: Cerchiamo di farcela. Da una parte proprio mediazione culturale... di mancanza di informazioni che abbiamo noi... Cioè, partendo dal presupposto che valutiamo e leggiamo tutto col pensiero occidentale, molte cose ci sfuggono e ci deve essere insegnato a leggerle in modo diverso. Per quello... più andiamo avanti più abbiamo bisogno di una sorta di... di... insegnamento a leggere in modo differente le cose (17 Educatrice, Comunità educativa, Bologna).

of these boys. We also try to analyse this specific aspect through this question: *Are there any aspects of children's culture or experience of live which are accepted in your daily activities?*

In this chapter, we cannot go into the details of all the emerged themes and I shall confine myself to comments two particularly significant elements: food and religion.

Food

Respondent's considerations of this thematic are quite different. Only in a few cases, educators express the necessity to respect children's food preferences, as if it was a limit which the educator has to suffer:

E: "There are some nationalities which impose food to you. Nigeria, for example. Well, it is quite difficult to meet each other halfway when we talk about food, because it's a very important thing for them. [...] Yes, you also can conflict with them because of food..." (9 Educator, F, High Level of Autonomy Female's Community, Modena)⁴².

E: "It's quite impossible to eradicate their food habits, [...] it's hard to eradicate their way of cooking" (16 Coordinator, M, Educative Community, Bologna)⁴³.

Can we ask ourselves why we shouldn't accept specific food preferences? Why have we to eradicate a way of cooking, especially if we know that this is connected with his own origin? In this statements, intercultural education is absent with no respect for the pre-migratory experience of these boys. In other cases, educators highlight the difficulty to find some ingredients. It also seems difficult for these educators to modify their habits, maybe because they are also used to work with Italian users. To meet these children is the change to explore different eating habits and that we can also go to different food shops:

E: "We give them the possibility to reproduce their cultures, their dishes...with what we can afford. They not always make this request and when it happens it was done badly...so they give that up, let's say".

I: "Did you propose that, or did they ask you?"

E: "They ask. We search to respect their traditions. Now we have six Muslims and...of course it was initially quite complex because we always buy pork, meat which they...bacon...cold cuts. Now we search for other foods. Yes, we search to..." (21, Educator, F, Reception's Community for children and adolescents who are getting away from their families of origin, Errano, Faenza)⁴⁴.

⁴² E: Ci sono alcune nazionalità che ti impongono proprio questa roba qui. Tipo la Nigeria. Mmm si fa fatica a non venire incontro soprattutto per i pasti e per il cibo perché è una cosa molto importante... per loro. [...] Sì, se non c'è vuol dire che vai a uno scontro con loro su questo... (9 Educatrice Comunità per ragazze ad alta intensità educativa, Modena).

⁴³ E: L'alimentazione purtroppo viene molto difficile da sradicare, [...] è difficile sradicare il loro modo di cucinare (16 Coordinatore/Educatore, Comunità educativa, Bologna).

⁴⁴ E: Sul cibo abbiamo dato la possibilità di riprodurre, diciamo, con il poco che possiamo permetterci di avere delle loro culture, i loro piatti. Però non è sempre richiesto e quando è stato fatto è stato fatto male, quindi anche loro ci hanno dato un po' su, mettiamola così.

In some cases, educators refer to religious motivations related to their food habits:

E: "Well, first, because of religious reasons. Half of our guys are Muslims, so they have different food habits. Indeed, they have moments of prayer and we search...they cannot eat pork, so when we have something with pork they have always something different. Or, if they have to go to the Mosque, we accompany them. Lots of them pray at home. They not always have to go to the Mosque to be... so, if they need we accompany them" (20, Educator, M, Reception's Community for children and adolescents who are getting away from their families of origin, Errano, Faenza)⁴⁵.

It is also important to observe that some educators affirm that they are available to modify rules and daily organisation in relation to unaccompanied foreign minor's needs, respecting what it a priority for them. This also mean to try to find possible mediations:

E: "Sometimes they ask for ingredients which we don't find in Community, especially if there is a specific and important event. Or, for example, we have lots of Muslims which made the Ramadan, the fasting's month. So, we adapted, and we agreed that it was not a problem, on the contrary! When I take turns, even at night time, I liked to stay with them, eating together and follow their rhythms. So, yes. They make some demands and we try to value, appreciating this diversity richness" (3, Educator, M, High Autonomy Level Community, Bologna)⁴⁶.

In other cases, respondents underline the importance to respect food's tradition to support their origin culture and to connect those who participate during these moments:

E: "We did more than once cooking's cycles. So, for example, on Thursday evening there was someone who cooked its specialities. So, we eat Pakistani, Afghan, Nigerian,

I: lo proponete voi di solito o sono loro a proporlo?

E: Sì, sono loro che propongono. Noi cerchiamo in tutti i modi di rispettare le loro tradizioni, ora abbiamo sei musulmani e ovviamente... inizialmente è stato un po' complicato perché noi ordinavamo sempre maiale, carni che insomma loro... pancetta, affettati di ogni tipo... adesso ci siamo un po' più improntati su altro tipo di cibo. Però sì, cerchiamo di... (21 Educatrice Centro di accoglienza per bambini e adolescenti allontanati dalle famiglie, Errano, Faenza).

⁴⁵ E: Innanzi tutto le questioni religiose. Diciamo che... la metà circa [dei ragazzi] sono musulmani quindi ci sono delle abitudini alimentari diverse, poi ci sono momenti di preghiera e noi compatibilmente con le possibilità... per quanto riguarda il cibo non possono mangiare maiale per cui quando c'è qualcosa... con il maiale... per loro c'è sempre qualcosa di diverso, o se devono andare a pregare in moschea li accompagniamo... però molti pregano qui in casa in certi momenti della giornata. Non necessariamente devono recarsi in moschea per essere dei... per cui in base alle loro esigenze quando c'è bisogno li accompagniamo (20 Educatore Centro di accoglienza per bambini e adolescenti allontanati dalle famiglie, Errano, Faenza).

⁴⁶ E: Sono gli stessi ragazzi ad avanzare..., sì, anche sulla cucina ogni tanto ci chiedono ingredienti che qui in comunità non troviamo però sì, sì, sì... quando c'è qualche festa particolare, no? che è molto sentita per loro, allora sì. Oppure, noi abbiamo diversi ragazzi musulmani e fanno il Ramadan, il mese di digiuno, no? e noi ci siamo adattati, abbiamo deciso tutti insieme che non era un problema, anzi, e quindi io quando mi trovavo a fare i turni e anche quando facevo le notti, mi piaceva stare con loro, mangiare con loro e seguire un po' i ritmi, no? Quindi sì, loro avanzano delle richieste e noi cerchiamo di valutare però apprezzando sempre anche questa ricchezza della diversità (3 Educatore Comunità ad alta autonomia, Bologna).

Gambian, even Italian. It's a way to support their origin culture through food. It's one of the easiest ways. Indeed, we drink a typical tea together, which is made with some herbs. So, we stay together with the same glass, African-style...we also risk hep c (laughing) or tuberculosis...no, well...nobody has these medical problems, but we are available to risk if it means to be together" (12, Coordinator, Second Reception Community, Bologna)⁴⁷.

Food is a privileged channel (Parisi, edited by, 2013) to promote everybody relations, even those of educators:

C: "They include you, in the sense that they say to you: "Come on, eat, eat! Just taste it. Is it spicy? Don't you eat spicy food? We eat a lot of spicy food". They always try to bring their culture to you. Not only food...for example, in the night time we are all happy and we dance. African dance is fantastic and they teach you. They are happy when they see that you dance as they do" (7, Coordinator, M, High Level of Autonomy Female's Community, Modena)⁴⁸.

Cooking according to traditions it is a way to promote relationships with the newcomers:

R: "Typical food preparations...so there are moments where we always eat pork, because of the Albanians which are carnivores... (laughing). There are other moments, like that one, in which you came and it seems to be in...Dakar: perfumes, spices, etc. During food preparation you also can relate with the boy who just comes... kitchen is a very helping place. When you are here and you cook together, well...this helps a lot to know each other..." (22, Educator/Psychologist/Coordinator of the Community, Ravenna)⁴⁹.

Through food it is also possible to bring attention to personal stories, promoting interpersonal exchanges:

⁴⁷ E: Sì, abbiamo fatto più di una volta dei cicli di cucina diciamo culturale, popolare di origine. Quindi non so, il martedì sera e chi proveniva da un posto cucinava le proprie specialità, okay? Quindi, abbiamo mangiato pakistano, afgano, nigeriano, gambiano e anche italiano. È un modo per supportare un po' la cultura attraverso il cibo, che è uno dei canali più facili che ci sono e poi beviamo insieme un tè tipico loro, che viene fatto attraverso delle erbe, quindi ci mettiamo lì in gruppo con lo stesso bicchiere, come si fa un po' all'africano... rischiando epatiti varie (ride) o tubercolosi... no tipo... eh... no, vabbè, nessuno ha questi problemi dal punto di vista sanitario, però si corre il rischio pur di stare in sintonia anche su questo... (12 Coordinatore Comunità seconda accoglienza, Bologna).

⁴⁸ ... ti includono, nel senso che ti fanno "Dai assaggia, assaggia, vedi com'è, tu mangi piccante? non mangi piccante? da noi si mangia tanto piccante" cercano molto di portartela qua la loro cultura ma di farla anche assaggiare. Non solo il cibo ma anche solo... non so alla sera siamo tutti felici e vogliamo e, c'è il ballo, il ballo africano è fantastico, quindi ti ti insegnano... poi rimangono anche molto contente quando vedono che c'è qualcuno che ci si mette lì e fa come fanno loro (7 Responsabile Comunità per ragazze ad alta intensità educativa, Modena).

⁴⁹ C: ... preparazioni anche tipiche, per cui ci sono i periodi in cui mangi sempre maiale, perché ci sono gli albanesi che sono carnivori... (ride) ci sono periodi, come adesso, in cui entri e sembra di stare... a Dakar: effluvi, spezie, eccetera. Lì [nella preparazione dei cibi] viene molto bene, diciamo che riesci a... interagire anche con il ragazzino arrivato da pochissimo... la cucina è un ambiente che aiuta moltissimo. Quando sei lì, cucini insieme, prepari, eh... aiuta moltissimo anche a conoscersi, a relazionarsi... (22 Educatore/Psicologo/Referente pedagogico Comunità, Ravenna).

C: *“We try into the kitchen. It’s integration, let’s say. There are lots of psychological values related to food, care, food-culture...It’s about helping them to express themselves, bringing them back to their culture by cooking their ethnic food. Then, they can also explain when they eat these foods, how they eat, because...this is a way to let them see that we take care of them, both to who they were and who they are. This is a way of integration because here we have a small community, but we have 2 Bengalis now, 5 Albanians and this is one of the ways to help them to integrate. They also choose the menu [...]. Especially during festivities where we let them buy extra food for their typical dishes. This helps to take care of the moments where we are all together. It helps to integrate the group”* (13, Coordinator, M, High Autonomy Apartment Group, Faenza)⁵⁰.

Religion

Respondents state that they are available to respect and welcome boys’ religious practices and rituals, even modifying community daily routines and organisations, to let them attend Church or Mosque:

C: *“Among their religious practices there are five daily prayers. Even at night time, there is someone who woke up at 3 a.m. for...well, let’s say that it’s a coexistence question. Sometimes Albanians said that this alarm clock is quite annoying”*.

I: *“Is this a conflicting reason?”*

C: *“Actually, no. They respect each other”* (4, Community Coordinator, Bologna)⁵¹.

From the interviews, lots of religious references have emerged:

E: *“Most of them are Christians, few are Muslims and you notice them especially during Ramadan and that’s all. [...] Otherwise, you don’t hear them because F., A. and W. pray here. They don’t ask to go to the Mosque. Nigerians...especially on Sunday...because it’s like a party for them, so every Sunday you hear this thing”* (9 Educator, F, High-Intensity Educative Community, Modena)⁵².

⁵⁰ C: Principalmente ovviamente proviamo nella cucina. E' anche una cosa di integrazione, diciamo, sia perché coinvolgendo... cioè... ci sono molte valenze psicologiche riguardo al cibo accudimento, cibo cultura, quindi farli esprimere e riportarli alla loro cultura appunto facendo cucinare loro cibi etnici e facendogli poi spiegare in quali occasioni si mangiano, come si mangiano, perché... è un modo per fargli vedere che siamo interessati anche a loro, a quelli che sono stati e che sono. È un modo per integrarli con gli altri ragazzi perché qui è una comunità piccola ma comunque abbiamo due bengalesi al momento, cinque albanesi e questo è uno degli stratagemmi diciamo per aiutarli a integrarsi... Sicuramente tramite il cibo... almeno una volta a settimana facciamo cucinare qualcosa di etnico. Il menù è deciso dai ragazzi [...]. In particolare, per le festività diamo la possibilità di comprare cose extra per i piatti tipici delle feste, che poi servono a creare momenti di condivisione e integrazione del gruppo (13 Responsabile uomo Gruppo Appartamento Alta Autonomia, Faenza).

⁵¹ F: Tra le pratiche religiose c'è questa delle 5 preghiere giornaliere. Quindi anche di notte c'è chi mette la sveglia alle 3 per... qui è, diciamo, una questione che riguarda la convivenza. Quindi sì, quello è un elemento che alcune volte, i ragazzi albanesi ci dicono “beh, effettivamente sentire questa sveglia e... alle 3 è un po’ pesante”.

I: È motivo di conflitto questo?

F: In realtà no... i ragazzi tra di loro si rispettano molto (4 Responsabile Cooperativa, Bologna)

⁵² E: Sono cristiane la maggior parte, sono poche mussulmane che vengono, mussulmane le senti soprattutto nel mese del Ramadan, basta. [...] Del resto non si sente perché F., A., W.... pregano qui dentro, non chiedono di

Thanks to the coexistence in Community, boys and girls could experience different ways to be Muslims. With the support con competent educators, it is also possible to develop mutual understanding:

C: “There is a very interesting question which has opened a continuous debate, because theoretically, we have all Muslims...Bengalis and Albanians. However, Bengalis are observant, while Albanians are Muslims only because they have Muslim families, but they even don't know how to pray, they don't know religious rituals, they don't respect precepts because they eat pork. They don't pray five times a day, they don't go to the Mosque, they like alcohol, etc. This opens a debate among boys and the debate has been solicited by us. For example, those who came from Asia, where Islam is very cultural eradicated, they don't even know that it exists a secularisation and that a person can define himself religious without practice. It's only a cultural thing and this is very interesting...” (13, Coordinator, M, High Autonomy Educative Apartment Group, Faenza)⁵³.

9.5 Conclusions

In the theoretical framework of Intercultural Education, we refer to an education which is able to support integration without eradication (Genovese, 2002). Therefore, those who experience migration in young age have the possibility to learn another language, rules and values without suffer of an assimilation and homologations process. They can find places which welcome they specific familiar relation's experience, cultural references and life paths. Focusing our attention on experiences, life's stories and single experiences it might be the way to stop to only focus on stereotypical cultural elements. Therefore, intercultural education focuses not only on “cultures” but especially on people which recognize themselves within that cultures. Second reception communities are places of integration and interaction between people with difference cultural backgrounds. It might be an opportunity to give not only material assistance, but the chance to start positive relationships in the respecting of their own origin. Educators should reflect on themselves in the relationship with the Other and his own characteristics to questions their theoretical model and educative practices. Relations – if oriented in an intercultural sense (Fiorucci, 2017) – could be a precious chance for social

andare in moschea. Le nigeriane, soprattutto la domenica, perché poi per loro è una festa... quindi tutte le domeniche senti questa cosa (9 Educatrice Comunità per ragazze ad alta intensità educativa, Modena).

⁵³ C: C'è una cosa molto interessante, che ha aperto un dibattito continuo e interessantissimo, perché teoricamente sono tutti musulmani i nostri ospiti, bengalesi e albanesi, però i bengalesi sono osservanti dei precetti diciamo della loro religione mentre per gli albanesi è solamente, diciamo, un'etichetta che hanno perché le loro famiglie sono tradizionalmente musulmane ma di fatto non sanno neanche come si fa a pregare, non conoscono i rituali, non rispettano i precetti perché mangiano la carne di maiale, non pregano cinque volte al giorno, non vanno in moschea, non disdegnano gli alcolici se ne avessero l'opportunità eccetera... Questo ha aperto un dibattito fra i ragazzi, invitato da noi ovviamente, perché ad esempio quelli che vengono da realtà rurali dell'Asia, dove l'Islam è radicato proprio nella cultura quotidiana, non hanno idea che esiste una secolarizzazione e che uno si può definire di una religione senza praticarla, solo per una cosa culturale, e questo è stato un elemento interessante... (13 Responsabile uomo Gruppo Appartamento ad Alta Autonomia, Faenza).

integration. Social communities might be a reference point to those who have a migration background during the delicate phase of migration transition where subject needs to facing with new language, habits, educative practices and stile-life.

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