

Athens Journal of Social Sciences

Quarterly Academic Periodical, Volume 8, Issue 3, July 2021

URL: <https://www.athensjournals.gr/ajss> Email: journals@atiner.gr

e-ISSN: 2241-7737 DOI: 10.30958/ajss



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Athens Journal of Social Sciences

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The *Athens Journal of Social Sciences (AJSS)* is an Open Access quarterly double-blind peer reviewed journal and considers papers from all areas of social sciences, including papers on sociology, psychology, politics, media, and economics. Many of the papers in this journal have been presented at the various conferences sponsored the [Social Sciences Division](#) of the **Athens Institute for Education and Research** (ATINER). All papers are subject to ATINER's [Publication Ethical Policy and Statement](#).

The Athens Journal of Social Sciences
ISSN NUMBER: 2241-7737- DOI: 10.30958/ajss
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The current issue is the third of the eighth volume of the *Athens Journal of Social Sciences* (AJSS), **published by the [Social Sciences Division](#) of ATINER.**

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Utilizing a Human Rights Perspective to Train Therapists in Sexuality and Sexual Wellness

By Shannon B. Dermer^{*}, Shea M. Dunham[±] & Molli E. Mercer⁺

Psychological associations require their trainees and professionals to work with diverse issues and diverse clientele, including sexual issues and sexual and gender minorities. While these organizations have been clear on their stance on non-discrimination toward sexual and gender minorities, research has demonstrated that most psychologists are not well trained on sexuality in general, even though educators and trainees believe sexuality is an important topic. Sexuality is a core aspect of human development across the lifespan. Although sexuality may be expressed differently across cultures, sexuality is a part of overall health and wellness for everyone. Sexuality is a broad concept that can include all types of sexual behaviors, sexual and gender orientation, sexual relationships, sexual pleasure, intimacy, attachment, and reproduction. It may be helpful for psychology to adopt a human rights perspective in their sexuality training. This perspective frames sexual rights as human rights and utilizes a sexual health and wellness framework. Utilizing this perspective, psychologists can focus on sexual citizenship from a global, rights-based, positive, and sexual wellness.

Keywords: Human Rights, Pedagogy, Psychology, Sexual Rights, Sexual Wellness.

Introduction

Optimal health and wellness incorporate aspects of the body, mind, and spirit—including one's sexual health and wellbeing. Sexual health encompasses (a) physical, psychological, and social well-being; (b) the possibility of engaging in safe, pleasurable sexual experiences, and; (c) being unrestricted by sexual coercion, sexual discrimination, or violence (The World Health Organization [WHO] 2015). Several international organizations have been at the forefront of advocating for sexual health and associated sexual rights. For instance, The World Association for Sexual Health (WAS) has emphasized sexual health as requisite to peoples' attainment of overall wellness and well-being (2014). The World Health Organization (WHO) has been advocating for sexual health since 1970s and embraces a definition of healthy sexuality that includes a multiplicity of sexual behaviors and expression (WHO 2015). These international sexual rights advocates conceptualize the expression of sexuality as an individual right fostering quality of life, creating equitable social interactions, and enhancing

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individual and social responsibility—all of which promote the probability of peace in a society (WAS 2014).

The WAS is an international organization representing sexological organizations worldwide and has been a vanguard of sexual rights advocacy since 1978 (known then as the World Association for Sexology). In their advocacy for sexual health, this organization created a declaration outlining sixteen sexual rights (e.g. the right to equality and nondiscrimination; the right to the highest attainable standard of sexual health, with the possibility of pleasurable, satisfying, and safe sexual experiences; the right to be free from all forms of violence and coercion) (WAS 2014). They are part of a growing movement that steadfastly view sexual rights as human rights (Miller et al. 2015, WAS 2014, WHO 2015). Acknowledging that sexuality, sexual health, and sexual rights are part of human rights compels people to guard, defend, uphold, and advocate for freedom to enjoy and express their sexuality.

Regarding sexuality, the American Psychological Association (APA 2017) has championed rights for sexual and gender minorities for over four decades. For example, in 1975 APA advocated to remove stigma associated with gay, lesbian, and bisexual orientations, adopted *The Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Clients* in 2000, and established the *Virtual Working Group on Restrictions Affecting Diversity Training in Graduate Education* in 2011. There are numerous policy statements on the rights of sexual and gender minorities (available at <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/policy>) and APA has the *Office on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*.

While APA and other psychological associations have focused on non-discrimination and non-violence for sexual minorities, there needs to be more training on sexuality overall. They have not focused on sexuality enough in their training for clinicians to feel comfortable discussing all aspects of sexuality with their clients, including sexual pleasure (Dermer and Bachenberg 2015, Tolman and Diamond 2014). Research has repeatedly demonstrated clinicians do not get adequate training in sexuality and are not comfortable discussing sexuality when they do discuss sexuality (Burnes et al. 2017, Hanzlik and Gaubatz 2012, Kelsey et al. 2011, Miller and Byers 2008, Miller and Byers 2009, Miller and Byers 2012, Mollen et al. 2018). Therapists and psychologists are required to understand basic sexual development and are not supposed to discriminate against sexual minorities.

Both the APA's Code of Conduct (APA 2017), the APA's most recent strategic plan (APA 2019), and the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA) policy on Human Rights and Psychology (accepted by the General Assembly of EFPA in July 2015) discuss psychologists' respect and protection of human rights. Yet, there is scant literature on training psychologists in a human rights perspective (see Patel 2019, 2020 for a discussion of human rights and applied psychology), and no literature in training psychologists in sexuality from a human rights perspective. Psychology has advocated for sexual minorities in their training, code of ethics, and political discourse, but has done so from a diversity and social justice perspective, rather than a human rights perspective. Adding a human rights perspective to teach about sexuality, sexual

health and wellness, and sexual rights may provide a pedagogical framework that has advantages over multicultural and social justice perspectives. The definition of human rights, a review of sexual rights as human rights, and an examination of how a human rights perspective can be used to train clinicians will be presented.

Human Rights

Human Rights are basic freedoms and rights inherent to all human beings and supersede social, political, and cultural values and norms (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA] 2014). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 and was created in an effort to prevent many of the atrocities of World War II (Patel 2019). This extraordinary document was meant to recognize the incontrovertible dignity and inalienable rights of all human beings, and is based on the ideas of freedom, justice, and peace (Patel 2019). The General Assembly, which created the UDHR, is the main policymaking arm of the United Nations (UN) and all Member States have representation in the General Assembly. Given the global representation in creating the UDHR and focus on all humankind, it is expected that governments and other political, social, legal, and educational systems have the duty to respect, protect, and advocate for human rights in a context of equality, non-discrimination, inclusion, and accountability (UNFPA 2014).

Sexual Rights as Human Rights

Compared to exploration of other rights, sexual rights are still relatively new in the human rights discourse (Parker 2007). In the public health sector, the inclusion of sexual wellness with the right to health was recognized as early as 1975 in a WHO Technical Report series (WHO 1975). In addition, the WAS, the WHO, the Sexual Rights Initiative (SRI), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), and other international organizations have been involved in promoting healthy sexuality and examining the importance of conceptualizing sexual rights as human rights. The SRI (2016) believes that it is the responsibility of every government to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights—including sexual rights. The WAS stated categorically that “sexual rights are human rights” (Kismödi et al. 2017: 1).

Sexual rights are universal human rights based on the inherent freedom, dignity, and equality of all human beings. Since health is a fundamental human right, so must sexual health be a basic human right. In order to assure that human beings and societies develop healthy sexuality, the following sexual rights must be recognized, promoted, respected, and defended by all societies through all means. Sexual health is the result of an environment that recognizes, respects and exercises these sexual rights (WAS 2014).

The IPPF (2008) has also declared sexual rights as a part of Human Rights in their document, *Sexual Rights: an IPPF Declaration*. They are committed to a human rights approach that includes sexuality. "...sexual rights are a component of human rights, which are an evolving set of entitlements related to sexuality that contribute to the freedom, equality and dignity of all people" (IPPF 2008: 10). Their declaration includes seven guiding principles and ten sexual rights. These principles and rights recognize sexuality as an integral part of personhood, non-discrimination and freedom from harm, the right to sexual pleasure for everyone, and limitations on sexuality should be few and when needed should be for the greater good, to protect other people's rights, and non-discriminatory.

All of these organizations believe recognizing sexual rights as human rights is an important step in improving the sexual wellbeing and health of people across the world (Kismödi et al. 2017). The inclusion of sexual rights as human rights is important because a human rights perspective compels people to guard, defend, uphold, and advocate for people's freedom to enjoy and express their sexuality (Kismödi et al. 2017). Human rights emphasize that each person is entitled to equal rights as a citizen of their country and as a global citizen (a member of the interconnected world).

The discourse about sexual rights has included the concept of sexual citizenship (Evans 1993, Richardson 1998, Richardson 2017, Richardson 2018). It includes the idea that people have a sexual contract with their governments, carried out through policies and laws, as a member of that nation (Richardson 2017). Writing from a public health and human rights perspective, Parker (2007) envisioned "sexual citizenship" as "only possible when all people have the right to pursue a satisfying, safe, and pleasurable sexual life" (973). The concept of sexual citizenship emphasizes how sexual rights can be granted or restricted by governments and the fight for formal equality should be at the level of national and global citizenship (Richardson 2000, 2018).

There is some criticism of utilizing a human rights perspective. For instance, Fabeni and Miller (2007) point to possible problems with including sexual rights under the right to health, including a history of political, legal, medical, and behavioral institutions medicalizing sexuality and limiting sexual rights to only those that directly relate to physical health. However, more recent views of health focus on wellness in a physical, mental, spiritual, and sexual sense. Furthermore, adopting a sex positivity framework to help ensure sexual rights provides a path for not just focusing on freedom "from," but also freedom "to." Freedom "from" fear is mentioned in the preamble of the UDHR (1948). It means that people should not fear violence and discrimination. Freedom "to" means justly expressing one's rights and is reflected in documents like the United States Declaration of Independence in the right to pursue happiness—the right to pursue wellbeing in a way that fulfills people without violating the rights of others. In this vein, the sex positivity model focuses on sexual wellness (Cruz et al. 2017, Dermer et al. 2019). Those working from a sex positivity model highlight non-pathological aspects of sexuality, informed consent, sexual pleasure, eroticism, open sexual communication, and freedom of sexual and gender expression (Burnes et al. 2017, Cruz et al. 2017, Dermer et al. 2019, Glickman 2000). Despite possible pitfalls, a human rights

perspective to sexuality provides a viable and interesting alternative to medical, diversity, and social justice perspectives typically used to teach about sexuality.

Psychology Training and Sexuality

Psychologists and therapists are trained in diagnosing sexual dysfunction, trained in their ethical obligations against discrimination, and expected to advocate for sexual minorities. Overall, applied psychology programs seem to train more about sexual orientation and related discrimination rather than sexual health and wellness (Burnes et al. 2017, Mollen et al. 2018). Both diversity and social justice frameworks are used to train psychologists and therapists about discrimination, violence, and oppression related to sexual and gender orientation and the intersection between a sexual minority status and other identities.

Multicultural and Social Justice Perspectives

Multiculturalism and social justice, while different in their approach to education and therapy in some ways, also share many commonalities. Both perspectives acknowledge the importance of diversity and recognize that oppression has a debilitating effect on mental health (Ratts 2011). They also both promote the need to develop multicultural and advocacy competent helping professionals, interventions that are culturally sensitive, and emphasize understanding the oppressive status quo. These approaches also have their differences. The development of multicultural and social justice competencies across mental health fields has exemplified the commitment to social change and remedying social injustice by assisting various mental health professionals to understand individuals', couples', families', and institutions' circumstances and concerns from a more ecological perspective (Constantine et al. 2007). Some authors believe that multiculturalism and social justice are synergic (Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky 2003). In reality, both perspectives are probably used in most training programs even if one is more emphasized.

Although it is not intended to go into an in-depth review of the history, development, or nuances of each approach, some basic differences will be presented in order to later discuss the advantages of using a human rights perspective to teach about sexuality. Multiculturalism focuses on gaining knowledge of various cultural identities and on sensitivity to issues of bias, discrimination, and oppression without ranking or comparing groups nor necessarily challenging contradictory perspectives between groups (Vera and Speight 2003). As multiculturalism pertains to the therapeutic relationship, it involves understanding cross-cultural relationships and developing awareness, knowledge, and skills as they relate to the ability to work in a diverse society (Pieterse 2009). Social justice, rather than focusing on knowledge of differences and how they might influence the therapeutic relationship, highlights how some groups are more or less privileged in society (Vera and Speight 2003). Social justice involves the intentional awareness of systemic forces of oppression that

includes a political component and speaks to an active engagement in redressing social inequities while aiming to provide full and equal participation by all groups. The central focus of social justice is to respond to systemic inequalities that serve to marginalize and disenfranchise various groups of people and should be designed to change social values, structures, policies, and practices that affect disadvantaged or marginalized groups (Pieterse 2009).

Regardless of the perspective, clinicians need to move forward in their approach to addressing sexual health and sexual rights (Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky 2003). The discussion of using multicultural and social justice perspectives was somewhat simplified, but the basic point was that they are not comprehensive enough to be the only frameworks used to discuss sexuality. When only these perspectives are used, the discussions are skewed toward only the freedom from bias, discrimination, violence, barriers, and oppression rather than also including a sexual health and sexual wellbeing perspective.

Utilizing a Human Rights Perspective to Teach Sexuality

The basis of seeing sexuality and sexual rights, not just reproduction, as part of human rights is because it is conceptualized as part of a holistic, comprehensive view of health. Besides sexual and gender orientation and their expression, sexuality can include eroticism, sexual pleasure, body image, masturbation, sexual behaviors/fantasies, sexual functioning, reproduction and reproductive health, attachment, intimacy, sexual knowledge and communication (and informed consent), and spirituality (Mollen et al. 2018, Robinson et al. 2002).

Sexual health is an approach to sexuality founded in accurate knowledge, personal awareness and self-acceptance, such that one's behavior, values and emotions are congruent and integrated within a person's wider personality structure and self-definition. Sexual health involves an ability to be intimate with a partner, to communicate explicitly about sexual needs and desires, to be sexually functional (to have desire, become aroused, and obtain sexual fulfillment), to act intentionally and responsibly, and to set appropriate sexual boundaries. Sexual health has a communal aspect, reflecting not only self-acceptance and respect, but also respect and appreciation for individual differences and diversity, as well as a feeling of belonging to and involvement in one's sexual culture(s). Sexual health includes a sense of self-esteem, personal attractiveness and competence, as well as freedom from sexual dysfunction, sexually transmitted diseases, and sexual assault and coercion. Sexual health affirms sexuality as a positive force, enhancing other dimensions of one's life (Robinson et al. 2002: 45).

A literature search produced no articles on using a human rights perspective to train psychologists and therapists in sexuality. There have been several studies, though, that point to the lack of comprehensive sexuality training for clinicians (Mollen et al. 2018). Despite the importance of sexuality to every human across their lifespan, neither educators (Swislow 2016) nor students feel adequately prepared to talk about sexuality in-depth.

Some clinical and counseling psychology programs include a course on sexual dysfunction or sex therapy, but usually they are offered as topics in other

courses or as an elective (Swislow 2016). In Mollen et al.'s (2018) recent survey of Canadian and U.S. doctoral counseling psychology programs, they found that 94.7 % of programs provided training on sexual and/or gender orientation, 76.3% had some training on sexual intimacy skills and intimate relationships, 15.8% reported included sexual pleasure, and 39.5% of respondent programs reported training in sexual functioning and behavior. Although 47.5% of respondents reported addressing sexual health, topics under this area seemed more related to sexual trauma and exploitation rather than focusing on positive aspects wellbeing. Finally, few of the programs reviewed different forms of sexual expression: sex toys (5.3%), pornography (7.9%), kink (15.8%), BDSM (15.8%), swinging (5.3%). Finally, the majority of respondents (78.9%) thought training in sexuality was important even though they did not think they have time to include more about sexuality and/or there were obstacles to providing more information about sexuality.

A human rights framework to sexuality would address many of the same issues as multicultural and social justice perspectives on a global level in addition to health and wellness as related to sexuality. "The term human rights framework refers broadly to human rights responsibilities, commitments, and principles, which are based in international human rights law" (Patel 2019: 114). Both a human rights perspective and applied psychology share a focus on health and wellbeing (Patel 2019). Using a human rights perspective forces psychology to look at the cause and context of sexual rights violations, not just the outcome and associated symptoms. Some principles that a human rights perspective on sexual rights and psychology share concerns about are: fairness, respect, dignity, autonomy, participation and inclusion, proportionality (of restriction of rights), equality, and non-discrimination (Patel 2019). Among other responsibilities related to human rights, psychologists have an obligation to understand, monitor, and research sexuality, sexual health, and sexual rights, and apply that knowledge to their work, institutions, and advocacy. Part of human rights is "right to the highest attainable standard of health with regards to sexuality and sexual health" (Kismödi et al. 2017: 21). This also includes the right to benefits of scientific progress and its application and the right to education on sexuality and sexual health.

A human rights approach can also contend with "conscience clauses" which allow for refusing to work with certain clients based on free speech and/or freedom of religion. One of the major obstacles to training in sexuality, besides the lack of comfort discussing sexual issues, has been religious and cultural objections to certain sexual acts, behaviors, and sexual and gender orientations. Accrediting bodies, governments, agencies, and professionals sometimes circumvent discussions of sexuality and limit sexual rights on the basis of morals (Kismödi et al. 2017). For mental health professionals, framing sexual and gender issues as diversity issues led to some progress in training professionals and serving clients, but it has also caused some problems. From a multicultural perspective, one set of authentically held cultural beliefs does not "trump" another set of authentically held cultural beliefs.

In the past, some of the accrediting bodies and codes of ethics left some room for refusing to serve SGM clients on the basis of a “conscience clause”. The current ethical standards of major accrediting and professional organizations of mental health organizations have closed that gap by expecting members of their organizations to get the training and supervision needed to work with all clients regardless of their sexual or gender orientations. In contradiction to professional ethical standards, several states in the U.S. have introduced conscience clauses that would allow students and professionals to refuse to provide services to clients if the clients’ goals contradict the professional’s religious beliefs. For example, in 2011 Arizona passed into law a Bill that allows trainees to refuse to see certain clients (Wise and Bieschke 2015). The American Psychological Association (APA 2017) has been at the forefront of protecting the ethical and accreditation standards requiring trainees be trained to work with diverse clientele, including LGBTQI+ clients. In the Fall of 2011 they established the Virtual Working Group on Restrictions Affecting Diversity Training in Graduate Education. The APA (2017) working group created five core tenants of training for APA: (a) Psychology has a compelling interest in meeting the needs of a diverse client population; (b) trainers are responsible for education and training; (c) trainers respect trainees’ developmental process and foster cognitive complexity; (d) attaining competence to work with a diverse public is not optional.

Although APA’s position is strong about the requirement to learn how to work with diverse clientele and serve diverse clientele, a human rights approach would help solidify that position. When teaching from a multicultural framework it is difficult to argue why one group’s values and beliefs supersede another group’s needs. When teaching from a human and sexual rights perspective, these rights are framed as basic freedoms and rights and take a meta-position to specific cultural and religious beliefs. A human rights approach means taking action to change cultural ideas and practices if they violate these fundamental rights.

Conclusion

The human rights perspective, applied to the realm of sexuality, although not without faults, has many of the advantages of multicultural and social justice frameworks with the added emphasis on sexual health, sexual wellness and sexual rights that should be afforded to all humankind. Educators training clinicians have the difficult task of helping trainees find a way to act ethically and justly toward the diverse issues they will face and the diverse clientele they will serve while balancing their cultural, personal, or religious belief systems (Wise and Bieschke 2015). Irrespective of individual beliefs, when people become psychologists and therapists they agree to be professionals who are well versed in sexuality, sexual health, and the accompanying rights.

Sexuality is a core aspect of being human, of human development, and of many intimate relationships regardless of one’s particular sexual wants, desires, behaviors, sexual orientation, or gender orientation. The global attention to sexual rights and the advocacy of global groups for sexual rights tend to be based on a human rights

perspective and could offer psychology an additional and powerful way to prepare clinicians, researchers, and educators to be aware of and support sexual citizenship. All humans have the right to live in a world where they enjoy the freedom to experience their sexuality in any way they wish without violating the basic rights of others.

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The Outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Plagues the World

By Guy Bäckman *

The focus is on the outbreak of covid-19 and the patterns inherent in it as they appear in valid statistics and current research. The approach relies on overall goals and strategies in combating the spread of the virus. The examination is placed within an interdisciplinary frame of reference, particularly social policy and economics. A primary and crucial goal of social policy is to ensure, within prevailing economic frames, equity and social justice in the pursuit of sustainable development. The new coronavirus (COVID-19), which was first detected in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, has been declared a global emergency by the World Health Organization, as the outbreak continues to spread outside China. As of the beginning of October 2020, the number of reported covid-19 cases around the world is about 34 million, and the number of deaths amounts to 860 thousand. The worldwide spread of coronavirus is severely affecting the global economy; millions of the global population are under some form of lockdown. The coronavirus pandemic, experienced as a severe shock, has caused not only economic difficulties but also social suffering and concerns for the infected individuals and their families, relatives and closest acquaintances. Increased concern, in connection with the economic slowdown, have given rise to new policies to combat the spread of the new coronavirus never before seen in humans. The policy actions range from social distancing that allow people to work online at home to the closing of borders. In the new emergency conditions, the values and goal orientations emphasize life and health as fundamental human rights. In addition to increased care provisions, other policy actions, such as relief package designed to ensure economic activities and the welfare and well-being of individuals and families, telemedicine, remote work and smart devices are used to enable visiting other people in order to return to normal. Although science guided by humanistic principles, has provided the knowledge to portray the state of the world and human conditions, the preparedness for combating the coronavirus pandemic and the treatment of people infected with the virus, have been found to vary among nations. Significant access barriers remain, especially in remote areas, including the cost of data as well as lack of understanding of foreign languages to manipulate devices and understand internet content. International responsibility and solidarity appear as primary guiding principles in connecting all policy actions to combat coronavirus.

Keywords: *Advanced technology, global economy, relief package, social distancing, access to data, social suffering, solidarity.*

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The Rapid Outbreak to a Worldwide Pandemic

The coronavirus, which was first seen in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, has quickly spread around the world. The focus is on the outbreak of covid-19 and the patterns inherent in it as they appear in valid statistics and current research. The approach relies on overall goals and strategies in combating the spread of the virus (WHO 2020, Armstrong et al. 2020). This examination is placed within an interdisciplinary frame of reference, particularly social policy and economics. A primary and crucial goal of social policy is to ensure, within prevailing economic frames, equity and social justice in the pursuit of sustainable development. Economics in hard times depend on social policy measures for new development (Banerjee and Duflo 2019, Sen 2010).

As of the beginning of October 2020, the number of confirmed covid-19 cases around the world is about 34 million, and the number of deaths amounts to 1 million, and according to statistics from Johns Hopkins University, US, the number of confirmed cases is increasing all the time. The World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020 declared covid-19 a pandemic, pointing to the rapidly increasing cases of coronavirus infections around the world and the sustained risk of further global spread (Worldometer 2020). The worldwide spread of coronavirus is severely affecting the global economy; millions of the global population is under some form of lockdown. The International Labor Organization (ILO) further estimates that 25 million jobs could be lost due to the coronavirus (ILO 2020). Coronavirus (covid-19) cases continue to rise rapidly across the African continent (WHO 2020a). In these parts of the world, the structures which characterize life (economic, social political and ecological) are different requiring well-adjusted policy actions. The potential for coronavirus to spread to countries with weaker health systems is a huge concern. Countries in Africa and in Southeast Asia are witnessing increasing fears of escalating coronavirus cases, as also in Russia and Eastern Europe. The outbreak has also reached the Nordic countries, where the total number of confirmed cases is lower than in other parts of Europe. The fight against coronavirus has paralyzed society and the economy. ILOs' most pessimistic scenario is that the observed increase in covid-19 cases worldwide forces to continue restrictions that would slow recovery. The scenario estimates job losses of 340 - 400 thousand (ILO 2020a, 2020b). The outbreak of coronavirus has resulted in directives and recommendations from authorities to people to protect themselves and to reduce the interaction that people have in order to minimize their chances of picking up the virus. Nowadays, society is more than ever immersed in a flow of technological innovations that shape our interactions and mediate our access to goods and services and to other individuals. The development of artificial intelligence, robotics, which in times of globalization and economic and social transformations, has led to analyses of the discontent of globalization (Stiglitz 2018) and to a "globotics upheaval" (Baldwin 2019: 4-5). The Internet of Things (IoT) device market is on the rise. The worldwide number of Internet of Things (IoT) connected devices is projected to increase to 43 billion already by 2023. With almost 2.5 billion monthly active users in the middle of 2019, Facebook is the biggest social network worldwide. Significant access

barriers remain, especially in remote areas, including the cost of data as well as illiteracy and lack of understanding of foreign languages to manipulate devices and understand internet content.

Social distancing as an infection control method among actions, ranging from, for example, prohibitions on gathering in larger crowds or crowded spaces to the closing of borders. This also refers to crowded or overcrowded spaces where people are living and functioning (WHO 2020, Papanikos 2020). People are allowed to work from home instead of in the office; schools are closed or switched to online classes, and communication with other people. The authorities are nowadays delivering information electronically. Barriers, however, to get access to data particularly exist in remote and poor areas. Changed circumstances with many restrictions have resulted in uncertainty in the business world; investments are not made or they are postponed. Private consumption is also changing. People have shifted to shopping online instead of visiting crowded places, shopping malls and supermarkets. The demand for health and hygiene products has especially increased, while consumption attracting attention or conspicuous consumption has no priority, i.e. consumption used to indicate economic status and accomplishments (Veblen 1953). Comparisons can be made with earlier presented ideas whether we live in a “joyless” and not in a “joyful” society, where comfort and pleasure clarify how people in different ways are in pursuit of satisfaction and thus happiness and wellness (Scitowsky 1992: 59). In the event that a longer period of restrictions is required to contain covid-19, the damage to the economies would be greater. The council of European Union has adopted recommendations on the gradually lifting of the restrictions of non-essential traveling into EU (European Union 2020). According to forecasts (e.g. OECD 2020: 6), economic activities and global growth will markedly decline in 2020. The outbreak of coronavirus has particularly damaged economic activities and growth in the large economies, China and the US, which are the engine of growth, commanding a majority of the global wealth. The gloomy development has caused further fiscal stress because of already expanded welfare commitments, which will even continue because of demographic shifts (Bäckman 2020: 102).

Policy Actions for Securing Health and Life

The coronavirus pandemic, experienced as a severe shock, has been a social burden causing not only economic difficulties but also social suffering for people because of stagnation of economic activities and mass layoffs. Recovery of the economy from the corona pandemic has led to much discussion among different experts and also in social media. The crucial issue is that we do not know exactly how the pandemic will play out (Anderson et al. (2020)). The main task facing the world right now is stopping the spread of the coronavirus. But even when the global public health crisis is under control and the global supply chain disruptions caused by covid-19 end, many large companies will experience uncertainty because it seems to be difficult to determine when business will return to normal. The idea of social distancing is difficult to realize in populous countries, where a

huge number of people live in low quality, semi-permanent structures, slums. Concerning the government and scientific directions it is pointed out that social distancing, for example, in India and at the African continent is very challenging (WHO 2020a). The Indian government issued a comprehensive advisory statement on coronavirus (Covid-19) on 16th March 2020, directing states across the country to take social distancing measures as a preventive strategy (Bhatt 2020). Until a vaccine is available, there is a need for actions on a broad front. The science, particularly because of progress in advanced technology and algorithmic solutions increasingly portrays the state of the world and human conditions, and reliable knowledge can be received for policy design. Efforts to develop an effective vaccine for Covid-19 are being made. Although a vaccine has already been tested on animals, an effective vaccine to protect people from coronavirus could be produced within a timeframe of at least a year (Ahmed et al. 2020). People who have recovered from infectious disease like covid-19 are generally left with blood that can be used to fight off a virus. Preparatory findings show the potential of such a blood transfusion (convalescent plasma) to treat patients with novel covid-19 (Duan et al. 2020). As the Nobel prize-winning economists, Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, have emphasized, good economics in hard times require actions on a broad front of social policies (2019: 262, 318; see also Mohan 2015: 125). It has been considered important to place social arrangements and opportunities in social policy within the frame of life satisfaction and happiness (Sen 1999, Easterlin 2006). As well as economic sustainability improves the level of living, the environmental justice and sustainability also secure not only public health and public safety, but even welfare and well-being. The developing countries are, however, in an insoluble dilemma, how to achieve and maintain sustainability without international help. Bail-out policies, i.e. financial help to countries in severe crisis and on the cusp of failure, to ensure that measures are done when it is economically necessary and in line with rules of bail-out principles and strategies of a world view based on facts (Rosling 2019).

Health policy and other policy actions to prevent transmission from symptomatic and non-symptomatic cases, are flattening the epidemic curve, changing it to a more normal distribution. The greater the reduction in transmission, the longer and flatter the epidemic curve, with the risk of resurgence because of changed behavior and customs among people or because different policy actions are set up. Through different restrictive policy actions, aiming to protect people, especially those with diseases like cancer, diabetes, heart problems and old people, cancelling large gatherings, restricting travel, increasing remote work and other measures, the epidemic curve can be flattened. Many countries have the implementation of relief packages on their policy agendas to stimulate economic activities and to contribute to the well-being of the labor force. The strategic preparedness and response plan, released by WHO on 3rd February 2020 outlines the public health measures that the international community is prepared to provide to support all countries to make provision for and respond to coronavirus. The document provides guiding principles for strategic policy actions (WHO 2020). In the US, a \$2 trillion coronavirus relief package has been designed to support the economy. The policy actions on a broad front aim to stop the outbreak

of coronavirus and get a recovery started. Bias in the models used for calculating the effects of implemented restrictions to address all problems in connection with the outbreak of coronavirus, increases the risk that the policy actions will not work according to the original plans, and a new wave of resurgence will emerge. During a resurgence period, the new curve is reshaped extending rightwards. After strong policy actions, the coronavirus pandemic will probably level off and the curve will flatten into a new shape. The way out from the hard times that the pandemic has caused, can either take a V- or a U-shaped form. After a bottom level is reached, a V-curve indicates successful policy actions and that a recovery process is rapidly beginning. A prolonged period of problems at the bottom of the U-curve continues before an upward slump starts again (OECD 2020, Carlsson-Szlezak et al. 2020).

Advanced Technology in a New Role

In the new circumstances, social policy and economics are pushing the boundaries further to promote freedom and opportunities, and to find optimal and cost-effective solutions to the choices for maintaining well-being in accordance with prevailing and preferred values. The use of advanced technology is, however, accompanied by risks and tensions for both service providers and users (Wright 2020). The advanced technology has already made great progress in the developing and designing of thinking and speaking robots to reduce involuntary loneliness and social isolation among, for example, sick children who cannot take part in school education (Sheffield 2017). The use of robots supplementing, or replacing, for example, therapists and social workers, does not perhaps provide the expected values attached to services in the form of human contact and a confidential relationship (Atkinson 2015: 117, Mohan 2018: 43). This development, mostly good but also bad, supports the decisions concerning social distancing during the continuous outbreak of coronavirus. Remote work as a new working style had been on the increase before the outbreak of coronavirus. During the coronavirus pandemic, people are allowed to work at home. Remote work enables a continuation of economic activities and maintenance of welfare. The progress in the development of artificial intelligence for newer and more advanced applications like emotional communication is entering a new era of computer-mediated remote touch, where it is possible to exchange expressions of feelings, for example, through hugs. The advanced technology may be ready to provide emotional support and hugs for people who are far removed from each other (Block and Kuchenbecker 2019, Mok 2018). As a result of increased education in techno-sciences, researchers have devoted research capacity to finding solutions to support humans through robot hugs. Information and ideas are spread like neurons in brain cells, contributing to a continuing connectedness to prevent idleness and social isolation (Goertzel 2016: 587, Christian and Griffiths 2016). The importance of remote touch is also emphasized as a tool in therapeutic work, which particularly is actualized in periods of exceptional times. When artificial intelligence is used to identify emotions, it can have negative consequences such as misunderstandings and dissatisfactions (Purdy and Daugherty 2017). As a consequence of the rapid

and revolutionizing development of advanced technology, telemedicine also referred to as telehealth or e-health will become more common, and information on its potential in care is frequently shared in social media (Goertzel 2016, Cooper and Matsuzak 2020). Telemedicine allows health care professionals to evaluate, diagnose and treat patients in remote locations using telecommunications technology. Telemedicine allows patients in remote locations to access medical expertise quickly, efficiently and without travelling. Thus, telemedicine provides convenience and cost-effective medical care. Telemedicine is fast becoming integrated into the daily operations of hospitals, specialty departments, home health agencies, private physician offices and the homes and workplaces of health care consumers around the world. In the globalized world telemedicine can help match medical care practitioners in the developed world with patients in the developing world, far from hospitals, let alone medical specialists (Cooper and Matsuzak 2020). Smart phone applications for “contact tracing,” i.e. to identify people who by chance are in the same physical place at the same time with a contagious patient, have been developed for use in some countries and are reported to be in further development, especially through the introduction of 5G networks revolutionizing new effective applications in smart cities (Dave 2020, Weeber 2020). Apple and Google have invested a great deal in launching a series of updates to their smartphone operating systems that will use Bluetooth signals to track potential coronavirus cases. Cybercrime is increasing, and cybercriminals may target data from public services and other institutions, as well as private information. Cybercrime conducted by hackers may paralyze the infrastructure or parts of it. Attacks that damage or put vital functions of society out of action, such as oil and gas, electricity, transportation, telecommunications etc. have serious consequences (Wirtz and Weyerer 2017, Baldwin 2019: 185). Technostress appears when people are forced to deal with streams of information, and computer addiction may exist among heavy users. Marginalization of the non-digital population, i.e., persons not able to adapt to rapid changes, has become apparent (World Economic Forum 2019).

Summary and Further Thoughts

The focus is on the outbreak of covid-19 and the patterns inherent in it as they appear in valid statistics and current research. The approach relies on overall goals and strategies in combating the spread of the virus. As of the beginning of October 2020, the number of reported covid-19 cases is about 34 million and the number of deaths is about 1 million around the world. The analysis is placed within an interdisciplinary frame of reference, particularly social policy and economics. A primary and crucial goal of social policy is to ensure, within prevailing economic frames, equity and social justice in the pursuit of sustainable development. The worldwide spread of coronavirus is severely affecting the global economy, millions of the global population are under some form of lockdown. In accordance with the core idea that life and health are fundamental human rights, policy actions have been taken, ranging from social distancing, that allow people to work online

at home to closing of borders. Private consumption is also changing as people shift to shopping online instead of visiting crowded places. Consumption attracting attention or conspicuous consumption is not given high priority; the demand for health and hygiene products has, however, increased. People equipped with communication devices have possibilities to arrange help in their everyday life, such as having their shopping brought to them.

Electronic communication with people in poor and remote areas is not easy because of lack of computer devices and inability to manage advanced communication.

During the difficult times of the coronavirus pandemic, economic activities are being stimulated by governmental relief packages; for example, the US has announced relief stimulus of \$2 trillion amid growing coronavirus fears. In times of crises good policies also include, in accordance with prevailing and preferred values, maintaining an adequate level of preparedness and risk management strategies. Based on advanced technology and algorithmic solutions, science increasingly portrays the state of the world and human conditions, and reliable knowledge can be received for policy design. The fast-spreading disease is likely to come to a halt as a V- or U-formed curve depending on how successful all the policy actions for “flattening the coronavirus curve” are. Some countries have, however, started to lift restrictions too early, implying risks for a new wave of coronavirus cases. According to reported plans and decisions from some countries to lift restrictions, the visible signs of the decrease in the severity of the coronavirus pandemic, as measured by death rates, has influenced decisions. The coronavirus death rate, however, takes into account milder cases. These estimates, without enough etiological facts, are therefore crucial to enable countries around the world to best prepare policy actions to curb the global coronavirus pandemic. All countries have not, however, succeeded to stop the outbreak of coronavirus and to protect people and their health.

The advance in technology has contributed to the mitigation of unwarranted economic and social suffering, while the progress has been of great help in planning and decision-making for increasing the effectiveness and optimal performance of policy actions. Technological change is widely regarded as one of the main drivers of long-term economic development, while the technological innovations have had far-reaching effects on people’s everyday life. The restrictions, fears and uncertainties have resulted in a changed pattern of contact and relations between people.

The most important result is that a new view of solidarity as a community connectedness and togetherness has emerged. This is also a new way to receive social support in the strenuous circumstances caused by the coronavirus pandemic. There are, however, great differences in access to broadband connections and use of the internet. A digital divide exists between individuals who have access to information and communication and those who lack access. Digital divide is obvious between less economically developed countries and more developed countries. Discrepancies are observed in different socio-economic groups and social-cultural contexts. Ecological issues including waste-related problems and climate change are much in focus and a matter of urgency. Global waste is

estimated to increase to 3.4 billion tons by 2050 from around 2 billion tons in 2016, the greatest increase is projected to be produced in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. People who are living near rubbish dumps or searching for things from such places, are endangering their health and well-being. Significant access barriers remain, especially in remote areas, including the cost of data as well as illiteracy and lack of understanding of foreign languages to manipulate devices and understand internet content. The out-break of covid-19 and its consequences have much been discussed in scientific circles, for example, in webinars. The crucial issue is, how to achieve and maintain inclusive growth, i.e. equitable opportunities for the populations.

The economy and the technology are embedded in everything when seeking ways to contribute to sustainable social policy and development. Fiscal stress, due to demographic shifts, has already put pressure on the welfare systems. For the governments this means a challenge to adapt policy design within the economic frames. An aging population, with far-reaching economic and social policy consequences, is increasingly apparent in many industrialized nations across the world. Intergovernmental cooperation facilitates the achievement of policy goals for management of diseases and crises. Social justice, solidarity, and equal values are guiding principles. According to forecasts, the global growth is estimated to be weak in 2020. In the advanced economies it also seems to be difficult to boost the worsened economic activities, reflecting the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, as well as worldwide tensions and crises, such as geopolitical tensions and conflicts in trade policy. The coronavirus pandemic has changed the world, and how to respond with policies of “hybrid strategies” to create differentiation in policy actions and to gradually lift restrictions. The European Union has adopted recommendations on the gradually lifting of the restrictions of non-essential traveling into EU. The ability to accept new visions and directions in further policy design of preparedness to meet crises and disastrous diseases is associated with good governance in partnership with all interested parties, both internationally and nationally. Policies oriented towards further development must above all be given high priority because today’s decisions will have long-term consequences.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to the reviewers for their relevant comments and suggestions that have improved the manuscript.

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A Mixed Content Analysis Design in the Study of the Italian Perception of Covid-19 on Twitter

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The digital era and the boom of social, user-generated and freely available and usable content on the Net has brought to the fore a classic technique, accused too often of being highly subjective and requiring a large amount of intellectual work. This technique is Content Analysis, which has seen an unprecedented explosion in recent years. In addition to the incessant flow, speed of diffusion and high volume of today's big data, the attention of social researchers – as well as of anyone interested in drawing information from this enormous proliferation of data – is shifting towards new possibilities. Among these we find that of having a notion of the contents conveyed, of the feelings expressed, of the polarities of big data, but also the chance to extract other information that indirectly speaks of the tastes, opinions, beliefs and transformations behind the behavior of the users of the Net. In fact, secondary data available on the Net, collectable through sophisticated query systems with API or with web scraping software, make it possible to accumulate huge amounts of this dense social data, from which it is possible to try to extract not only trends but real knowledge, in a quantitative as well as in a qualitative manner. This enriches the value of the results that can be produced with Content Analysis and limits, until disappearing, all the critical horizons that have classically left this technique in the shadows, allowing it to find new applicative dignity, validity and reliability (Hamad et al. 2016). In order to explain this evidence, the contribution that we will present attempts to prove that the return of Content Analysis techniques is not only due to the change in the scenario and in the data analyzed, but also to the ability of this technique to innovate and evolve, leading to open analytical perspectives beyond contingent changes. This can be demonstrated through the application of digital mixed content analysis to the recent Covid-19 outbreak and its development of the perception of the Italian population on a specific digital social platform, Twitter.

Keywords: *Digital Mixed Content Analysis Model, digital platform social data, Twitter, Italy, coronavirus.*

Introduction

Complex social phenomena that transit on the Net can be investigated with a technique that has found a renewed place on the social research scene just as big data is making its weight felt: Content Analysis. These phenomena require an epistemological and ontological translation into a multi-comprehensive approach

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like the Mixed Methods one. This means fitting into the debate introduced by Hesse-Biber and Johnson (2013), for whom “The exponential growth of “big data”, arising from newly emergent user-generated and streaming digital data from networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook, will place pressures on MM researchers to transform traditional modes of collecting and analyzing data generated from these sites. [...] In the coming years, big data methods and analytics may also drive and challenge MM researchers to rethink and innovate and produce new paradigmatic perspectives and research designs and structures. In turn, MM perspectives and praxis can provide models for interpreting and deriving critical insights that that may give a more complex understanding of big data that can bring a set of new questions and understanding to the trending data currently extracted from user-generated social networking sites” (2013: 107).

This is the reason why new applications, new software and new algorithms are being developed, allowing the extraction of the knowledge nested into digital data. All the characteristics of Content Analysis in its qualitative (Schreier 2012) and quantitative (from its birth, Berelson 1952, to the present day, Riff et al. 2019) versions, the contaminations with text mining techniques and the continuous interconnections with network analysis or geographical techniques, are being recovered. This brings to the attention of the social researcher the continuous evolution of the cognitive horizon which allows access to this new digital frontier of Content Analysis, a frontier that has led to the breaking down of the boundaries between qualitative and quantitative approaches, as well as among different disciplines, leading to the birth of forced hybridizations.

It was precisely from these considerations that, given the emergency generated by the spread of Covid-19, with this study we wanted to focus on social data in order to investigate the online perception of one of the populations most seriously affected by this catastrophe: the Italians. Furthermore, we will apply an innovative model devoted to investigating the multivariate nature of social data: a mixed content analysis model born from the reflections in this paper.

The structure of the essay provides the first two paragraphs dedicated to literature review which describes the evolution of content analysis, particularly in relation to mixed methods and the mixed approach in the digital content analysis. The third deals with the methodology, illustrating the analysis techniques and the criteria for the construction of the dataset. The fourth presents the case study of COVID-19 pandemic disease in Italy. The fifth and sixth paragraphs concern the results: the fifth based on a combination of a Lexical Correspondence Analysis (LCA) and a Cluster Analysis (CA) about Covid-19 Italian’s perception on Twitter, and the sixth relates to qualitative in-depth analysis of topic and social narratives. The paper ends with a paragraph discussing the results.

Literature Review

Content Analysis: Developments and New Scenarios

Previously used essentially for military purposes, content analysis assumed the status of a research tool in the 1950s after the publication of fundamental texts such as those by Lasswell (1949) and Berelson (1952). Content analysis has been defined as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Berelson 1952, Krippendorff 2018, Weber 1990). According to Krippendorff (2018: 13) content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use. Content Analysis has enabled researchers to sift through large volumes of data with relative ease in a systematic fashion (Stemler 2000). At the same time, the need to face the challenges posed by “old and new” kinds of data retrievable from the web has prompted those who move within the approach to borrow analysis techniques from other disciplines. Therefore, traditional techniques are being accompanied by non-traditional techniques (Herring, 2009). In this regard, two main families can be distinguished in the so-called *web content analysis* (Herring 2009): *digitized methods* and *digital methods* (Rogers 2013).

Digital methods play a fundamental role in interpreting the evolution of Content Analysis. In general, digital methods can be considered as a set of research and strategy approaches using data produced in digital environments to study socio-cultural changes (Rogers 2009, Caliandro and Gandini 2016). These differ from *virtual methods* (Hine 2005), also known as *digitized methods* (Rogers 2009), paradigms that studying *reality* by adapting social research tools to the Web (for example, the online survey). Rogers (2009, 2013, 2015) was the first author discussing the structure of digital methods. According to Rogers, using digital methods presupposes epistemological choices. This implies knowledge about Internet and the context of the Web network not from an ontological point of view (an entity separate from reality, therefore an object of study) but as a method resource to study people’s behavior and social groups. The potentiality of this digital approach to content analysis does not exhaust its potential only in this paradigmatic shift. In fact, it is in the practice of analysis that many other possibilities open up; one is that of the possibility of fruitfully approaching integrated analysis models typical of Mixed Methods Research.

The Mixed Approach

According to Cipriani et al. (2013), talking about the possibility of using Mixed Methods means referring to the “possibility of adapting and coordinating between them more investigation techniques, more types of elementary information, or different paradigms or approaches of a theoretical or methodological nature” (2013, 272). In other word Mixed Methods research centers around researchers being able to collect multiple data using different strategies, approaches and methods.

The desired results of this mixture have the characteristic of being more than the simple combining of the single methods in order to generate grander and more integrated research outcomes (Orina et al. 2015). Many fields of research, with their characterizing methods and techniques, have already experienced the potentiality of the combination of qualitative and qualitative research approaches to pursue the guiding methodological principle of integration. Nowadays, it is not only a question of methodological principle that addresses social researchers, but also the ever-growing relevance of the kind of data used, the information contained therein, the possible multilayers of reality which they lead to, and the undeniable need for integration between these pieces of reality to build ever more complete paths of knowledge. It should also be noted that the crossing of the quantitative-qualitative dichotomy is directly and indirectly supported by perspectives such as those of “live sociology” (Back and Puwar 2012) and of “punk sociology” (Beer 2014). They try to imagine, and direct to at the same time, the development of sociology in the digital world through new, even heterodox forms, compared to consolidated approaches. Furthermore, in a phase in which epistemologically naive approaches (i.e. data-driven) are being asserted, it is important for researchers to affirm their role by emphasizing the importance of facing a cognitive problem through complex approaches capable of giving better answers or to put it to better understand a situation (Creswell 1999).

The Mixed Approach in Digital Content Analysis

Using content analysis in the digital era in order to analyze digital content, such as that on social media, means being faced with old and new challenges. In the current research process, digital content analysis researchers must: formulate their cognitive questions and make the purposes of their analysis explicit; identify the source of the data and contents that they want to analyze; and then select them consistently to the delineated path. The analysis procedures, quantitative or qualitative or both, that they decide to adopt will depend on the hegemony of the research question (mixed methods perspective), but above all on the hegemony of the medium that conveys the contents taken into analysis (digital methods perspective).

Regardless of these considerations, the content analysis process will consist of the coding of raw data according to a classification framework. This framework, on the one hand, will, from the quantitative point of view, claim to extend and generalize the results. From a qualitative point of view, on the other hand, it will attempt to analyze the considered content more in depth. However, thinking that a cognitive question on complex data such as the digital platform social data can involve only one of these sides becomes an understatement. The Mixed Methods perspective is not only necessary, but in a certain sense mandatory.

In this regard, it is sufficient to think that already Holsti (1969), as well as the more recently retrieved claims by Schreier (2012) or Krippendorff (2018), stated that qualitative and quantitative content analysis are not discrete classifications, but rather fall along a continuum, a notion also used by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2011) to define the new horizon for social research methods in the light of the third

approach, the mixed one. Stressing the approach along this continuum allows researchers to extract greater opportunities to gain insight into the meaning of data. Bryman (2012), on this possibility of moving back and forth in the approach, states that, by definition, “content analysis is a research approach that can be situated at the intersection of quantitative and qualitative methods, a place where both methods can meet and that quantifies and qualifies the manifest and latent meanings of the data” (Hamad 2016).

Combining this understanding of content analysis with a solid mixed-methods design could allow the researchers to reach the maximum result from the massive growth of digital texts and multimedia data. Of course, it is true that for researchers using data from social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or similar) there are few guidelines for the collection, analysis, and evaluation of the various types of data.

Methodology

The cognitive interest that moves this study, in addition to demonstrating the return of Content Analysis in the digital environment, can be summarized in three specific research questions:

1. How has the spread of coronavirus directed, polarized and constructed the perception of the phenomenon faced by the Italian users of Twitter?
2. Which actors have been having the most pervasive communication impact on social perception?
3. What is the reasoning that built the social narrative of coronavirus on this social network? With the aim of finding adequate answers to questions so closely related to each other, as anticipated, a mixed content analysis design is required.

The research design at the basis of this proposal can be identified in the sequential nested model by Creswell and Plano Clark (2017). This model, which combines data collection and analysis of a secondary set of qualitative data in a traditional quantitative research design, has the main objective of strengthening the results obtained by integrating them downstream into the process.

It consists of a first quantitative extension phase with the application of an analysis on latency, or the Lexical Correspondences Analysis (LCA) aimed at pulling out of the original set of data the semantic dimensions of synthesis that can, at a later stage, lead to the application of a Cluster Analysis (CA) with T-Lab software aimed at identifying perception profiles of social users on the risk of coronavirus infection. Finally, a qualitative follow-up will help us to develop these results by building a concept map of actors, thematic areas, communication dimensions, and social narratives on the Covid-19 Italian's perception.

The results of the first phase were used to extract the axes or latent dimensions by LCA as the basis for a typology within which the groups obtained with the cluster analysis are projected as useful attributes for delineating the

different emerging profiles. This new distribution of the emerging perception was also enriched by the kind of actors involved and their importance by their number of followers, and the level of sharing and engagement generated by the analyzed materials.

This technique also allowed us to extract the most characterizing set of tweets for each group or cluster retraced with the CA, an extraction that was used to implement a second in-depth qualitative phase of analysis within which we applied a thematic analysis focused on the hermeneutic interpretation of each set of tweets by theme in order to detect new information about the way in which the main differences in communication can be distinguished, as well as kinds and styles of communication, polarity, intensity and direction of the traced perceptions. For each profile deemed relevant, 100 more significant tweets¹ (with in-group high value), were extracted and an in-depth treatment was started on them, which provided for the classification of the contents with the help of NVivo software and the creation of new attributes to be projected in the classification framework that gradually took form with the integrated results of the different quantitative and qualitative phases.

Furthermore, with NVIVO it was possible to reconstruct the maps of the emerging perception controlled on the basis of the arguments and the relationships that were generated among all these elements on the groups brought to the attention by quantitative analysis and this made it possible to also add a relational component, useful for understanding future developments and trends, to the produced framework.

In regards to dataset building, the hashtag extraction was supported by R extract tweet packages (rtweet) to locate current trends in digital content analysis on one of the most popular social media networks, Twitter, which made use of API to collect data. The data collection involved all the tweets about Covid-19 in Italian. It covered the period from March 5-15, when several important decisions relating to Covid-19 mitigation were made (DPCM 4 March 2020). Given the extension of the corpus and the limits relating to the API's Twitter (max 18,000 tweets per day), several daily extractions were carried out. The extraction keys were based on six hashtags, i.e. those that were potential or effective topic trends for the period in question:

- #coronavirusitalia and #coronavirus identify the main theme and, it is assumed, index a more popular and generalist communication on the theme (we could define it as knowledge-oriented);
- #iorestoacasa, #fermiamoloinsieme and #italiazonaprotetta could aggregate communication that was more interested in problem solving, i.e. about measures to reduce the virus risk (so this hashtag group we could call problem solving – oriented).

The final corpus consisted of about two millions tweets (including retweets). To facilitate mixed design, we decided to work on a more limited sample of

¹Significant compared to the groups emerging from the CA

10,000 tweets (without the retweets) randomly extracted respecting the hashtag proportions related to: Tweet daily number and Hashtag groups (Figure 1).

The daily tweet percentages suggest that from the first day of extraction until March 11 there was a progressive increase in 'Covid' tweets. The most active days were those from 8 to 11 (on average with more than 10% of the daily tweets). The high number of tweets is plausibly connected to the implementation of important lockdown orders in Italy, first in the North and then throughout the country. March 11 (after Italy's lockdown) was in fact the day with the most tweets extracted (just over 13% of the entire body). However, there was a slightly decreasing trend after that date.

Figure 1. Overview Table on Population, Hashtags and Sample of Tweets

PROPORTIONAL SAMPLING BY N TWEET DAY AND HASHTAG QUOTES							
POPULATION and QUOTES				SAMPLE			
DAY	n tweets	%	#coronavirus #coronaviritalia	#iorestoacasa #italiazonaprotetta #fermiamoloinsieme	#coronavirus #coronaviritalia	#iorestoacasa #italiazonaprotetta #fermiamoloinsieme	n tweets
05-mar	61693	2,9%	100,0%	0,0%	288	0	288
06-mar	140002	6,5%	100,0%	0,0%	653	0	653
07-mar	198527	9,3%	99,8%	0,2%	924	2	926
08-mar	234441	10,9%	66,8%	33,2%	730	363	1093
09-mar	281869	13,1%	60,6%	39,4%	796	518	1314
10-mar	262421	12,2%	65,1%	34,9%	797	426	1223
11-mar	284753	13,3%	81,8%	18,2%	1086	242	1327
12-mar	141442	6,6%	69,1%	30,9%	455	204	659
13-mar	143571	6,7%	69,2%	30,8%	463	206	669
14-mar	206125	9,6%	81,7%	18,3%	785	176	961
15-mar	190204	8,9%	85,9%	14,1%	762	125	887
tot.	2145048	100%	77,4%	22,6%	7738	2262	10000

Source: elaboration on R on tweet corpus

As the dataset was building, the automated extraction returned the tweet data related to 88 variables. However, we considered it sufficient to consider just 9 variables, i.e. those consistent with our research design. The 10,000-tweet dataset was built considering: *Display name*, *Verified account*, *Date*, *Time*, *Text*, *Text Width*, *Favorite Count*, *Retweet Count*, *User Followers* and *User Type* (built afterwards).

The *Display Name*, aka Twitter nickname, identifies the individual user and it is useful in defining users' classification.

Verified account is a useful variable for checking official accounts, such as media, opinion leaders, political organizations, etc.

The *Date* and *Time* temporarily place the tweet. The time is useful for specifying the daily range of the tweet, according to the classification: morning, afternoon, evening, night.

The *Text* is returned according to common Twitter standards which has just recently allowed users to exceed the standard 140 characters.

Favorite count, *Retweet Count* and *User Followers* are three quantitative variables discretized by five levels (quintiles). It is plausible to think of the first two as indicators respectively of the engagement and the sharing levels of the

tweet content, while the third variable refers to the popularity of the user and its centrality in the communication arena of the network.

User Type variable was constructed at a later time to define a typology of Twitter user, by a multi-criteria and controlled classification considering the five variables previously seen, i.e. Display Name, Verified Account and quantitative variables (Favorite Count, Retweet Count and User Followers). The variable was coded according to six classes: 'Common User' (lowest level of sharing, follower and engagement value), 'Intermediate User' (second or third level of sharing, follower and engagement value), 'Influencer' (fourth level of sharing, follower and engagement value), 'Top user' (highest level of sharing, follower and engagement value); Political User' and 'Official Information media' (defined only by Display name and Verified Account).

These variables were included in the LCA analysis models as supplementary attributes to better describe the lexical patterns emerging from the textual contents of the tweets.

The Case Background – COVID 19 Pandemic disease

A new coronavirus (COVID-19) was identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, declared to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020, and recognized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization on 11 March 2020.

The Italian coronavirus cases surged from hundreds to thousands within two weeks, from a few hundred in the third week of February to over 3,000 in the first week of March, marking the biggest coronavirus outbreak outside Asia (only China and neighboring South Korea had had more cases). The infections in Northern Italy then rose and many other countries in Asia, the Americas, and Europe traced their local cases to Italy.

On March 8, the Italian government announced the lockdown of 11 Italian towns identified as the worst affected, including ten in Lombardy and one in Veneto (DPCM 08 March 2020). Within two days, the quarantine was extended throughout Italy (*iorestoacasa* decree) as COVID-19 cases were detected across the country. The quarantine period would depend upon how soon the number of new cases and deaths would decline. Italy was the first country to announce a nationwide lockdown following the Wuhan coronavirus outbreak.

In such a critical context, models of crisis and emergency risk communication (Beck 2000, Napoli 2007, Reynolds and Seeger 2005, Renn 1992) suggest that it is crucial to understand the perception of risk of the population and the sources of information that they trust to enable effective communication.

Although international and national institutional actors attempted to plan communication strategies for the correct information to mitigate disease, there was a high risk of a spread of fake news, overflow and bad information, especially what was shared on the main social networks (Vaezi and Javanmard 2020). Rumors and misinformation can undermine many public health actions and should be debunked effectively (Betsch et al. 2020).

In our case, the relevant hypothesis is that the spread of information through different institutional or non-institutional sources contributed to polarizing Italian user perceptions about the emergency, from excessive fear and concern to a total lack of interest.

Therefore, it is interesting to construct the main semantic categories of the perception and representation of the disease. In this way, it will also be possible to consider any relationship between the epidemic outbreak and the change in people's perception and feelings to try to improve institutional communication and safety-oriented policies.

Findings/Results

The Quantitative Multidimensional Exploration of the Covid-19 Italian's Perception on Twitter

In this paragraph a multidimensional analysis based on a combination of a Lexical Correspondence Analysis (LCA) and a Cluster Analysis (CA) (Benzecri and Benzecri 1984, Lebart et. al. 1997, Greenacre 1984) was implemented. These are two techniques were used to reduce the space of mining contained in large sets of textual data as well as the dataset that we used for our analysis.

LCA, like all factorial analysis techniques, aims to extract new variables from the original matrix in order to summarize the information it contains. To understand which patterns represent the extracted factors it is necessary to understand which are the modalities of the variables/lemmas enriched by mining these factors in order to identify the concepts that account for the variability that they reproduced. It is for this particular characteristic of the used technique that we were able to extract two new synthetic dimensions of mining that allowed us to interpret the differences among the analysed content. The summary of the results of the LCA was achieved by performing the CA simultaneously, or on the new extracted variables. This technique regroups homogeneous elements within a set of data. In our case, CA served to group tweets characterized by a similar perception expressed with the use of similar words. These perceptions were identified thanks to the mining evidence that emerges from the LCA.

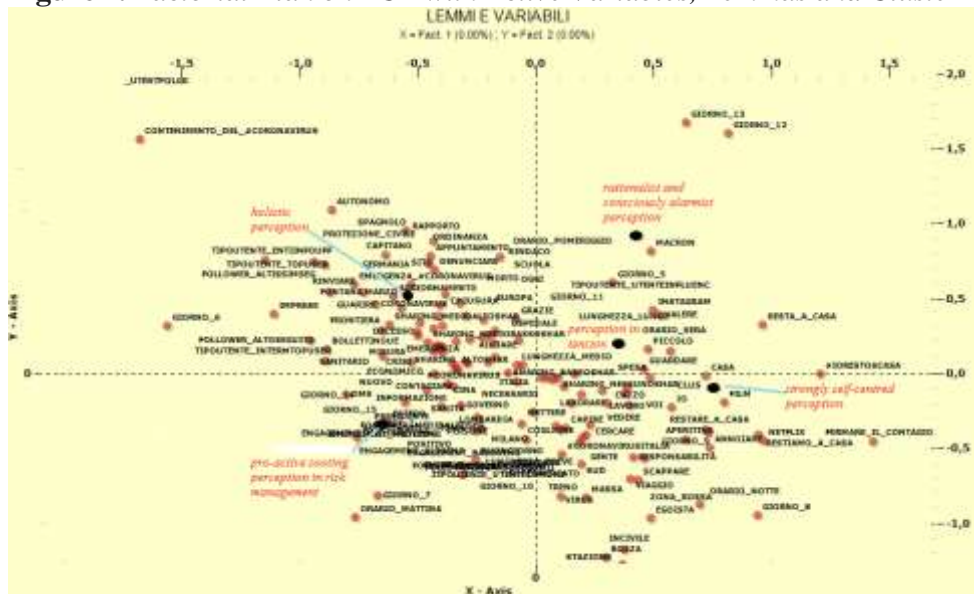
As mentioned above, the first result obtained with the application of the LCA is the delineation of two main synthetic dimensions of mining called factors. These factors can be crossed and used to build a new space of mining generated by this crossing. Figure 2 shows the crossing of these new dimensions, the meaning of which is built in the attraction and repulsion relationships among the active variables used for this analysis (type of user who posts the tweets, day on which they post and time slot and lemmas coming from the tweets text) that we used to describe the synthetized mining found on the new generated factors. Moreover, on the factorial plane obtained, there was also the projection of the cluster that we obtained through the application of a further statistical analysis on this dataset, the CA, which we will describe below.

The first factor is related to the opposition between the *private* and *public sphere* used as *direction of the expressed perception* in the analysed discourses. On the positive semi-axis, we find tweets mainly connected to the individual and private

sphere. Here we have lemmas such as *aperitif*, *Netflix*, *home*, and *boring*, that clearly describe individual experience. Meanwhile, on the semi-negative axis we find the terms *health*, *Companies*, and *OMS*, which refer to the public sphere. The location of user types is decisive. The common user addresses the private sphere while all other users and, in particular political groups or official and administrative bodies, address the public one.

For the second dimension we found an opposition among the focus of the constructed discourses among the tweets. On the semi-negative axis, we found tweets that refer to daily limitations, medical issues, and social measures. Here we have terms such as *responsibility*, *awareness* and *running away*. On the positive semi-axis, there are tweets related to health service support and communication about the health emergency. The lemmas that we find here are *containment of the Coronavirus*, *order*, *Civil protection*, and *measure*. For this particular distribution, the semi-negative axis seems to refer to the many areas affected by the pandemic and therefore to the *social emergency*, those on the semi-positive axis seem to have as their central focus only the health *emergency*. Health and social therefore are the semantic poles of the second factor which is related to the *type of emergency*.

Figure 2. Factorial Plan on LCA with Active Variables, Lemmas and Cluster



Source: elaboration on T-Lab on our 10,000-tweet sample.

These reflections led us to the question: what were the emerging perceptions regarding the experience induced by the Coronavirus emergency in the analysed corpus? We will try to answer this question by combining the evidence discussed above with the results of the cluster analysis shown in Figure 2. There are five groups extracted from the cluster and each one is characterized by a specific perception of the pandemic that derives from the collectively constructed narration by Twitter users in the first ten days of national lockdown.

The first cluster is located near the centre of the plane, collecting a very high part of the variability of the opinions expressed, but precisely for this reason also more common. It is not a coincidence that the characterizing type of user is the common one

who focuses on very different and seamless aspects. They are willing to describe and understand what is happening (with words like *understand*, *search*, *see*) as well as the narration of daily practices (referring to shopping, Instagram reports, etc.). This represents the report of the daily expedients for managing the individual quarantine, and, at the same time they also open to the sense of collective experience for which the motto 'physically distant but close in experience and hopes' holds true, thus also recovering the guidelines of politicians and other great actors who tended to want to give off an aura of relaxation in the general experience. The name that can be attributed to this group is that of *perception in tension* between the most intimate and individual dimension and openness to collective experience.

In the second group which is at the crossroads between a dimension tending to collective-public openness and a propensity towards emphasizing the discourse focused on the health emergency, we find the users to be the local and national political-administrative class, the official information and the top users thus defined for their wide following. The tweets here are the ones with the highest resonance and are mostly centered on a popular narrative. The words relating to this group refer to the multiple aspects of the epidemic crisis: to the actors (such as civil protection, local political actors, institutions, etc.) to the measures (with the use of the words *ordinance*, *measure*, *closure*) and to the consequences on the population (such as *deaths*, *isolation*, *therapy*). This is a complex narrative that touches various key points of this pandemic precisely because it is the prerogative of the users deemed to be the most influential with afternoon messages that coincided with the circulation of daily update bulletins. It follows that the emerging type can be defined as *holistic perception*.

The third group explicitly refers to the need for support to the healthcare system with words like *support*, *hospital*, and *medical staff*. The reconstructed narrative is based on informed opinions about the emergency experienced from a healthcare point of view and a more individual concern weighs not insignificantly. The high information content of these tweets is also motivated by the fact that they are mainly from users believed to be the influencers and therefore able to act on the construction of individual perception starting from the conscious restructuring of the pandemic narration. The result is a *rationalist and consciously alarmist perception*.

The fourth group is the one in which a *strongly self-centred perception* prevails and is in fact moved to the more private and individual side of the first constructed dimension. Here we find the tweets that lead back to the effects on the private sphere of the pandemic. The type of user close to this group is once again the common user who launches a narration focused on everyday things (*Netflix*, *aperitif*), the experience of quarantine (*boring*, *new habits*, *new way of working from home*), the dimension of prayer and recrimination (*awareness*, *but also running away*, *selfishness*). These were mostly tweeted in the evening and at night, leaving a glimpse of a search for greater intimacy even in a digital dimension of communication and interpersonal sharing.

The fifth cluster mostly focuses on more general medical emergency issues and technical medical issues. Mainly they were tweeted in the morning as they processed and digested, and condensed the updates released the previous day with the expectations and new ideas for pandemic management in the new day. The result is a *pro-active soothing perception in risk management*.

Furthermore, the division into five groups was functional in paving the way for the development of the qualitative part of this study. For each of the five groups, after identifying the posts that made them up, the most representative 100 posts per group were extracted and, on these, a qualitative analysis with NVivo was conducted on the emerging themes and on the social narratives that we will present below.

The Qualitative In-depth Analysis of Topic and Social Narratives of the Covid-19 Italian's Perception on Twitter

In the previous paragraph we dealt with the reduction of the semantic dimensions contained in the analyzed dataset, in this paragraph, on the other hand, will be dedicated to examining the emerging meanings in these semantic dimensions. This allows us to extract new information about the way in which to distinguish the main differences in the points made by users and emerging themes detectable from the set of analyzed tweets. Along with this, we will look at differences in the building of social narratives that emerge from changes in terms of communication type and style, sentiment polarities, intensity, and direction of the expressed perceptions.

In order to do this, we applied a hermeneutic analysis starting from the classification made possible thanks to the obtained axes or synthetic dimensions of mining generated with the LCA. These dimensions contemplate a first opposition among posts devoted to highlighting the *private* or the *public sphere*, and we also give a connotation as *individual* or *collective horizon* in the perception of the spreading of the pandemic, and a second opposition among the importance assigned to the *social* or *health* dimension of the *emergency*. To reach the profiling of the thematic areas and the type of social narrative traceable among the analyzed short texts, we also considered a series of other dimensions in which it is possible to detect differences or graduations in the way in which these emerge from the texts.

The first kind of differences considered stay in the primary type of communication which gives an impression to the analyzed post especially by highlighting the kind of producer of the message. Most posts could be assigned to an *interpersonal communication* generally conducted by *ordinary people* who give an intimate and emotional connotation to the messages spread (i.e. #day10: *I look out the window and everything seems so unreal. The silence outside reflects the loneliness I live inside #istayathome*- common user). To the opposite side, another considerable number of posts can be attributed to *public and institutional communication* where the main producers are the *institutions*, giving the messages an openness to the collective and the possibility of keeping together the attention focused on very different spheres involved in the pandemic (i.e. #doyourpart *Defend yourself and defend others, wear a mask, keep a distance of one meter and limit the outings to those strictly necessary* - institutional user). This openness and dynamic are also attributable to another kind of detected *communication*, the *political* one, used by politicians and local administrators that at the same time sometimes overlap the intimate and emotional connotation of the *interpersonal communication* (i.e. close to everyone's experience #togetherwe willmakeit - political user). The last difference could be traced in the *techno-scientific communication* mainly the prerogative of *scientists, technicians, and experts* both in health and in socio-economic measures aimed at curbing the crisis connected to the spread of the pandemic (i.e. *the search for antibodies for a vaccine continues*

#thesearchdoesnotstop #covid-19 - technical user - i.e. *the government is working hard, proposals are being examined to address the socio-economic impacts of this pandemic* - expert user). It follows that these types can be positioned along the continuum between private/individual and public/collective spheres. Therefore, we start from interpersonal communication until we gradually open up to different gradations of collectivity and inclusiveness. Still, along this dimension another continuum is stressed, the one that has the *purposes of the type of communication* as extreme, on the one hand aimed at the *maximum emotional and empathic involvement*, on the other hand aimed at the *maximum rational and conscious involvement*.

Graphically, we could represent that as follow.

Figure 3. Style, Type, and Purposes of Communication

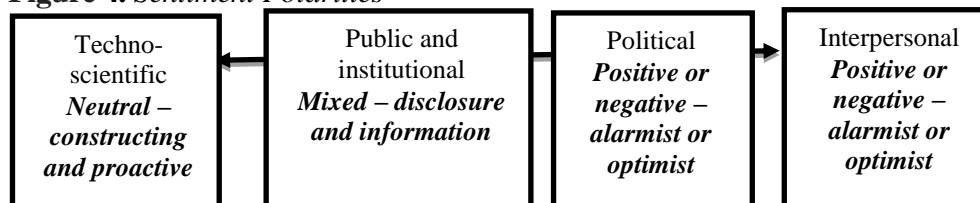


Source: our elaboration.

However, the analyzed posts can also be distinguished on the basis of the *polarity of sentiment expressed*. Although it is possible to identify the extremes of *negative* and *positive*, along this dimension we are not faced with different expressed gradations, but with *different combinations of intensities* in which either polarization is totally canceled, and therefore they are defined as *neutral*, or the polarities combine with each other, we will therefore define them *mixed*. In the text analyzed, if we could assign the neutrality connotation to techno-scientific and public and institutional communications which, on the other hand, are characterized by typical traits of disclosure and information in a constructive and proactive prospective, the mixed connotation is generally assigned to public and institutional communication that share the same traits, intended to be neither alarmist nor optimistic. The extremes of positive and negative are found in the styles of political and interpersonal communication, deliberately more marked and polarized than the other types of communication (i.e. #unitedbutdivided *this pandemic will teach us so much* - common user - *still hundreds of deaths* and #Conte *continues his dictatorship of imprisonment and terror* #businessandpolitics - common user).

Following the generated continua, another one could be produced:

Figure 4. Sentiment Polarities



Source: our elaboration.

As far as the *direction of the expressed perception* is concerned, a continuum can be identified in the projection made in the discourses in terms of referring to *past, present or future*. The reference to the past is more typical of technical-scientific and institutional discourse, aimed at a comparison between what happens in the present and how things have been dealt with and managed in the past (i.e. *will the Ebola vaccine case help in the fight ahead of us today?* - media user). But it is also a typical modality of interpersonal discourse, as it conveys the perception of the present to an anchorage with the past and to that refined return to normality that is typical of the past (i.e. *another friendless day, another empty day #ridemebacknormal* - common user). Experts, institutions and politicians refer to the present to comment on measures and situations, but also ordinary people in concentrating the narratives on how the pandemic is experienced here and now (i.e. *the first effects of the containment measures are starting to show ways out #everythingwillbefine* - media user). On the other hand, if scientists and institutions look with analytical rationality, politicians and ordinary people project hopes and expectations on it (i.e. *the dawn of a new day #restiamoumani* - political user).

The same trend holds the *focus to which the discussion refers* and highlighted as the second dimension of LCA synthesis: the focus on the *social or health* dimension of the *emergency*. Whether they are ordinary people, politicians, institutions or experts/scientists, each sphere touched by the emergency is metabolized and returned in the narratives of all the actors involved in different ways and with different intensities. Therefore, unlike the previous ones, these dimensions cannot be stretched along a continuum, but rather belong to the type of topic discussed. And this opens our qualitative analysis to the identification of the thematic areas connected to the characterizations of the discourse and narratives analyzed above.

The main thematic areas that can be traced in techno-scientific communication are: *Public communication on health emergency, Medical issues* and *Informed opinion*. These all belong to the health emergency especially in its impact on the population. The aim is the production and the spread of knowledge among all sectors of society.

The thematic areas most closely connected to the public and institutional communication are: *Institutional and digital communication, National measures, Measures taken for working, smart working and income, and Reflections and comparisons with other countries and risk management plans*. The topics run among social and health emergency concerns. The main aims are seeking answers, reasoning about future impact and activating awareness and responsibility in a population that needs to be better informed and adequately trained.

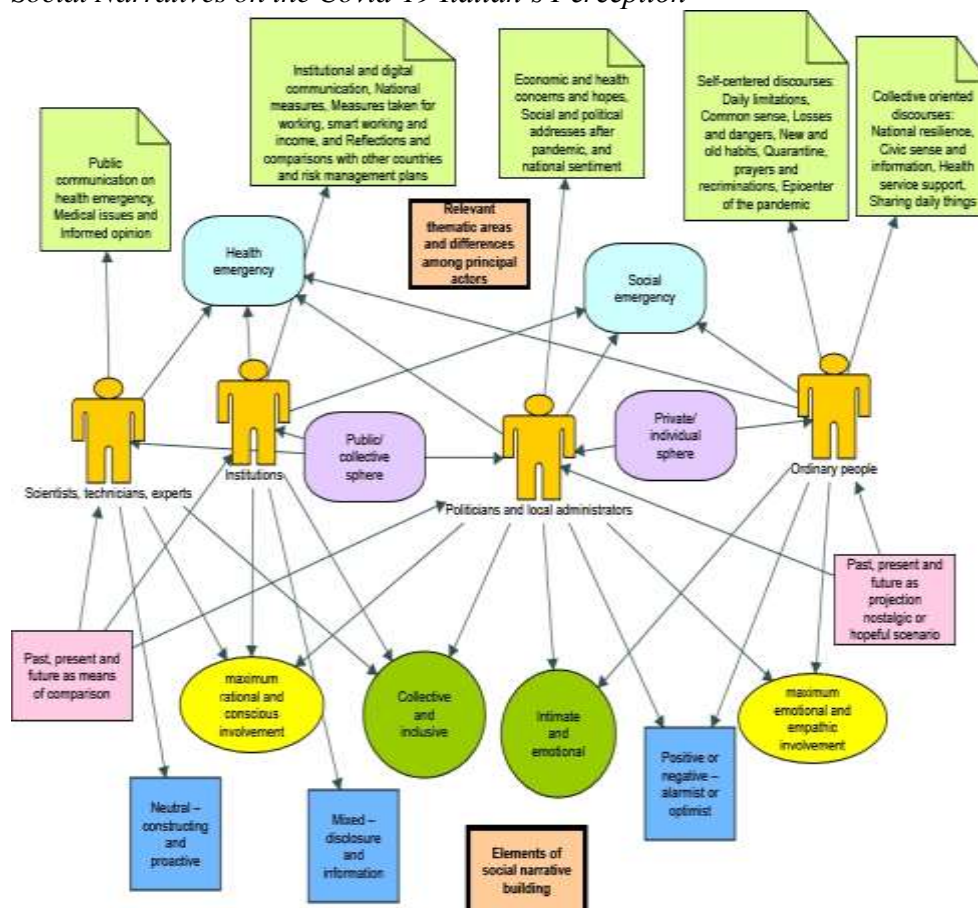
The political communication thematic areas, on the other hand, are: *Economic and health concerns and hopes, Social and political addresses after pandemic, and national sentiment*. Also in this kind of communication the topics run among social and health emergency concerns. But this time the main aims are to limit the damage, to active involvement due to the weight of the situation experienced and to build moderate confidence in the future.

Two kinds of thematic areas are more determinant in interpersonal communication. One is more self-centered and the other more collective-oriented. Falling in the first are: *Daily limitations, Common sense, Losses and dangers, New and old habits,*

Quarantine, prayers and recriminations, Epicenter of the pandemic. These are more recriminatory, outburst and negative discourses, more passive, characterized by the terror of the unknown, where the citizens are drifting at the mercy of events. Instead, in the second thematic area we find: *National resilience, Civic sense and information, Health service support, Sharing daily things.* These are proactive, support and positive discourses in which it is possible to glimpse a path for the way out. Here the discourse is focused on contingent activities as well as on the future perspectives projected towards returning to normal, focused on the understanding and respect for the rules imposed in a moratorium but proactive way. The dimensions of solidarity and support are determinant.

Before projecting all these characterizations in a general framework of classification suitable for integrating all the results obtained from the quantitative and qualitative phases of analyses, we are now able to synthesize the relationships found among all the recalled dimensions in a concept map.

Figure 5. *Concept Map of Actors, Thematic Areas, Communication Dimensions, and Social Narratives on the Covid-19 Italian's Perception*



Source: our elaboration with NVivo software.

Discussion and Conclusion

The last step that remains to be done in this analysis involves the integration of the results obtained. With the quantitative procedures, the synthetic dimensions of meaning traced with the application of the LCA have been identified. In order to create a basis for integration, a space of attributes was developed (for example of the conceptual matrices of Calise and Lowi 2010) that crosses these two dimensions, and on this the other elements traced with the other quantitative and qualitative analyses have been projected (see Figure 6).

The horizontal axis shows the contrast between the directions and the projections of the discourse on the *public/collective sphere* on one side and on the *private/individual sphere* on the other. Instead, the vertical axis represents the opposition in the focus of the speeches, on the one hand on the *social emergency* and on the other on the *health emergency*. In summarizing the terms of the discourse in this way, it is possible to understand which are the *prevailing narratives* for each quadrant obtained using both the groups of perceptions elaborated with the CA and the elements of the construction of the narratives according to the actors who produce them as attributes.

In the upper left quadrant where there is a focus on *health emergency* with prevalent openness to the *public sphere*, the prevalent narrative is the *collective and inclusive narrative*, which emerged during the in-depth analysis of the issues. In this space of meaning two groups of actors with their perceptions can find space. *Politicians* with their proposal for a predominantly *holistic perception*, as well as *ordinary people* when developing their discourse collectively orienting it towards a *corporate perception*.

In the upper right quadrant, which sees the cross between a focus on the *health emergency*, this time addressing a *private and individual sphere*, the prevailing narrative is the *rationalist and conscious* one. In this space of meaning we find the *scientists* who propose an *informed perception* and the *institutions* that propose, instead, a *responsible perception*.

In the lower right quadrant born from the cross between a focus on the *social emergency* and discourse oriented towards the *private/individual sphere*, we find a predominantly *intimate and emotional narrative* that is the prerogative of two groups: the *politicians* who propose themselves as representatives of the people, offering an *empathic perception* with each individual, and *ordinary people* who give the most intimate expression of their experience by presenting a self-centred perception instead.

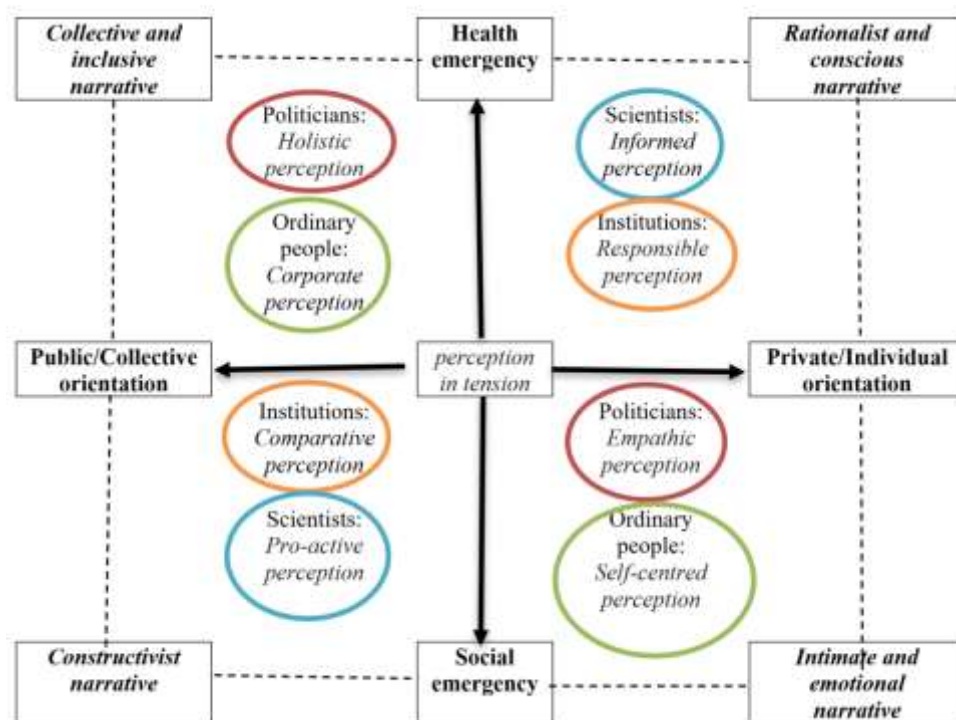
In the lower left quadrant that crosses, once again, a focus on the *social emergency* but this time with openness to the *public and collective sphere*, a *constructivist narrative* prevails. The groups that fall into this are mainly the *scientists* with their speeches focused on a *pro-active perception* in the resolution of the emergency, and the *institutions* that offer reasoning and delineation of future scenarios through a *comparative perception* with other countries, situations and types of emergencies.

As far as research limitations and further developments are concerned, obviously it is necessary to reflect on many points in order to validate the proposed framework, however it is assessable here for its power of theoretical synthesis to restore the vastness of the results in extension and in-depth – qualitative and quantitative –

produced for this study. In particular, we will show this result as a way of integration and visualization of results coming from a *sequential nested mixed content analysis design*, capable of accommodating qualitative and quantitative outcomes and allowing a certain order in the reasoning and interpretation of the – almost always complex – phenomenon chosen as a case study. All this awareness that we are reflecting on refers to a particularly delicate phenomenon whose evolution and impact are ongoing.

To help the reading of such a complex reality, our method proposal can be conceived as a starting point that opens up to new reflections and future developments, continuing to refine the results that can be pursued on both the research paths outlined and on the possibility of their increasingly precise integration. This is because the main research limit lies in the ability to balance the idiosyncrasy of qualitative choices in the pursuit of the extreme objectivity of the qualitative side. Although we tried to manage this feature, it remains a congenital characteristic of the approach to be implemented ontologically, pushing the pragmatic vocation that substantiates the approach and the possibility of presenting a study with the characteristics of the one carried out in these pages.

Figure 6. *Integrated General Model of Classification in the Italians' Perception of Covid-19*



Note: On the axes lie the synthetic dimensions that address social discourses, in the corners the type of narrative, in the quadrants the main actors with their perceptions developed in each specific attribute space.

Source: our elaboration.

Acknowledgments

This paper is to be considered the joint work of the commitment of the three authors, however the paragraphs on introduction, content analysis and quantitative analysis it must be attributed to De Falco; the paragraphs on mixed approach, qualitative analysis and the final integration to Punziano; and the paragraphs on methodology and case background to Trezza.

Our thanks to go to Barbara Saracino and the project *CHIAVE: Enhancement of cultural heritage* in collaboration with ACUME association for procuring mission funds and allowing us to cover the costs for research conducted by our group.

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Migration, Identity and Wellbeing in Melbourne Australia - The Idea of being Greek in Diaspora

By Maria-Irini Avgoulas^{*} & Rebecca Fanany[±]

Both maintenance and transmission of Greek cultural identity are central to people of Greek descent living in diaspora, regardless of whether the individuals involved are immigrants or the descendants of immigrants. The 'idea of being Greek' often represents a positive resource for personal and group identity, even though what constitutes being Greek may be different depending on the cultural lens through which it is viewed in the experience of each generation. Nonetheless, core domains associated with the concept of being Greek include the Greek language, the Greek Orthodox religion and various daily cultural practices. This paper will discuss findings across a number of recent studies undertaken in Melbourne, Australia taking an emic and etic perspective that all utilize the emergent methodology of narrative ethnography to explore migration, identity and wellbeing in the Greek community as well as the idea of being Greek in diaspora. The results suggest that there are emotional benefits associated with cultural identity and overall positive wellbeing and that, for those living in diaspora, whether migration was planned or not, a cultural community, cultural activities and membership in a distinct group are positive resources in fostering social connectedness. From a social perspective on health, this extends beyond the physiological/clinical elements of health and wellbeing and emphasizes the various social and intangible benefits of positive outlook and the very significant role that culture, and cultural practices play in the group social context by contributing to the perception of health and wellbeing in the Greek diaspora community across generations.

Keywords: Culture, identity, wellbeing, Greek identity, migration

Introduction and Background

Identity is a vital marker of who we are, regardless of age or gender, both as individuals and for populations in general. This is particularly the case for those individuals and/or groups living in diaspora, who may be experiencing issues of displacement, a loss of connection and a sense of not belonging. The idea of being Greek in diaspora will be discussed in this paper and domains such as the Greek language, Greek Orthodox religion and various Greek cultural practices will be further explored and elucidated. Findings will be presented from three studies undertaken between 2011 and 2016 in Melbourne, Australia. All participant information has been removed, and participants are referred to by number to protect their privacy. Ethics approval was sought and received for each of the studies, which conform to the Australian national guidelines on research ethics. This paper takes an emic and etic perspective using the approach of narrative

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ethnography. One of the authors is a Greek Australian researcher who was able to use her insider experience to investigate issues relating to migration, identity and wellbeing in the Greek community as well as the idea of being Greek in diaspora.

Methodology

This paper discusses three qualitative studies that were undertaken over five years. The data generated by all the studies was collected through in depth interviews in either English or Greek. In 2011, the first study entitled '*Cultural Understanding of Health and Adjustment to Cardiovascular Disease among the Greek elderly*' was undertaken. A total of 13 participants over the age of 60, took part in this project. All of the participants were recruited from the Fronditha Care activity group. This study specifically considers at the health beliefs of elderly Greek Australians and the way they understand health and disease. Of particular interest was the way older Greek Australians conceptualize cardiovascular disease and seek medical care in the context of their specific cultural views and attitudes towards illness and wellbeing. In 2012, the second study entitled '*Health Beliefs and Practices in Three Generations of Greek Australian Women in Melbourne*' was undertaken as part of the doctoral program of one of the authors (Avgoulas). This research explored health beliefs and practices in three generations of Greek Australian Women in Melbourne. In total 48 participants took part in the study, representing the immigrant, first generation, and second generation in Australia. Each generation spoke about the meanings they attributed to various life experiences associated with health, illness and wellbeing as they understood and experienced them. Finally, in 2016, the third study entitled '*Greek dancing as an aspect of cultural identity and wellbeing*' was carried out. A total of 19 participants from the Manasis School of Greek Dance and Culture in Melbourne took part in this study. The aim of this study was to understand the motivations and aims of participation who took part in Greek dancing while living in Diaspora.

Literature Review

Humanistic psychology came about in the mid 20th century, as a way of addressing perceived limitations in the theories of Freud in his work on psychoanalysis and Skinner in his studies of behaviorism (May 2000; Luce 1992). One of the main proponents of humanistic psychology was Abraham Maslow who is best known for his work on a set of needs that he proposed drove human behaviour in order of decreasing priority but increasing complexity. Maslow's hierarchy has been extremely influential as a means for understanding how individuals might achieve self-actualization and maximum potential (see Maslow, 2012). Like Maslow's, much of the work in the discipline focuses on the concept of the self which is taken to be unique. This idea was built upon by George Kelly (1991) in his theory of "personal construct" and Carl Rogers (1951) who was interested in the development of personality. His view holds that the individual

strives for self-actualization, self-maintenance, and self-enhancement in the effort to create a total self. While one of the main strengths of humanistic psychology has been acknowledged to be its focus on the role of the individual who is seen as having the ability to take control of his or her own life, it has also been criticized as being too subjective and difficult to objectively define or quantify because of the emphasis on unique experience (Schneider et al. 2015). Nonetheless, humanistic psychology remains important because of its emphasis on individual choice and responsibility. It also supports the development of the individual within a specific environment, that fits well with influential models and approaches in the study of health and disease (see, for example, Glanz et al. 2015).

One of the more influential sub-disciplines of positive psychology that has emerged since its inception has been positive psychology. Positive psychology focuses on the things that are viewed as making life worth living (Peterson 2006). As a discipline, its aim is to emphasize human strengths, rather than weaknesses, with special concern for positive states (happiness, joy, love), positive states (gratitude, resilience), and positive institutions. The origins of the field lie in the work of Martin Seligman, who developed the theory of learned helplessness based on his study of people with depression (Abramson, et al. 1978). One of the most significant benefits of positive psychology to the individual has been seen as its focus on the possibility of changing perspective which can lead to change in life satisfaction and quality of life. Among the findings of positive psychology that are relevant to the studies reported here relate to the importance of religion and spirituality; the centrality of strong social relationships as protection against the impact of life's misfortunes; and that empathy and compassion are as important as critical thinking in finding meaning and happiness in life (Lopez and Snyder 2009). While having many benefits for individuals in the context of therapy, positive psychology has been criticized for being too individually focused, placing too much emphasis on self-reporting, and potentially culturally and ethnocentrically biased.

Despite such criticisms, Seligman's (2011) PERMA model has been an influential tool.

In understanding individual well-being and life satisfaction. This model contains five factors that Seligman suggests are required for happiness. They are: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments. Seligman (2012) later updated his theory, suggesting that happiness can be analysed as encompassing three separate but related concepts, namely positive emotion, engagement and meaning, with the implication that these three of the original five PERMA factors are the most crucial in longterm happiness and a sense of well-being. The PERMA model provides a useful framework for understanding the views of the participants in the three studies that contribute to this paper. It is notable that the individuals involved overall show great contentment and satisfaction with their life and tend to perceive their experiences in a positive light. This outlook is shared across the generations and is especially significant among the older participants who experienced the hardships of immigration and integration into the Australian context firsthand. The perspective associated with their Greek background and culture seems to have a great deal to

do with this outlook on life, and positive psychology provides a means to better understand the dimensions of their view.

Findings

Many of the participants described a strong belief in God's will as significant in their life experiences along with the certainty that divine assistance was a real possibility. One older woman explained:

"God protected my son, he had cancer, was very sick. The doctors were giving me no hope. I prayed to the Virgin Mary and asked for God's help. My son's health returned. It was his fate and God's will for him to be okay." (Participant 8)

Younger individuals who were born in Australia expressed similar views about the importance of their faith. One middle aged participant described the things she hopes her children will maintain in future generations:

"I would like them to believe in Christ, the Virgin Mary and God, in our religion and culture." (Participant 1)

Regardless of age, the participants felt that their religious beliefs were central to their identity as Greeks and that the belief in the principles of the Greek Orthodox faith set them apart as a cultural group within the larger Australian context. One expressed this feeling as follows:

"Being Greek and of Greek Orthodox religion is who we are. We can relate to one another, the language, culture, and belief system." (Participant 6)

While a majority of the participants were born in Australia and, at the time this research was carried out, the immigrant generation had been in the country for decades, individuals of all ages perceived themselves as members of a distinct group that was different from the mainstream of the Australian population. For older individuals, this was associated with markers of Greekness that included origin in a specific location in Greece, speaking Greek as their first language, and the maintenance of Greek customs. For the younger individuals who had been born in Australia, many of these same markers of identity remained important, although their nature characterized the experience of their generation. The first Australian born generation, now middle aged, tend to be bilingual in Greek and English and share many of the attitudes and day to day behaviour as their parents who were immigrants. Their experience has often been colored by the difficulties their older relatives experienced as well as by their own perceptions of racism toward people who were not of English-speaking background. The younger participants, who represent the second Australian generation, tend to be English speakers who may speak some Greek but who generally do not have the facility in the language that their parents do. Their experience reflects the modern Australian context and is not significantly different from that of other people their age. They

have grown up in the period of Australian multiculturalism where policy and institutions are premised on the acceptance of immigration and the fostering of social cohesion accompanied by support for linguistic and cultural practices that are different from the mainstream (Soutphommasane 2016). Nonetheless, the perception that they are part of a distinct social and cultural group was very strong across the generations in this study.

Among the older individuals, their Greek identity was an integral part of their self perception that they strived to maintain against challenges from the larger Australian environment.

“My friends base is 95% Greek. I don’t venture out too much, out of my culture. Not that I don’t want to, I just can’t assimilate. I don’t identify with anything outside the Greek culture.” (Participant 5).

“I have maintained the Greek way, even after all these years. I have not taken on the Australian way.” (Participant 14).

Other participants, who were born in Australia, perceived their Greek identity in the context of the Greek Australian culture that they had learned from older relatives. While there can be no doubt that this cultural context has developed and evolved and, as many participants know firsthand, is now very different from what they have experienced when visiting Greece, it nonetheless represents true “Greekness” to them. At its heart is use of the Greek language, even in limited contexts, and participation in activities and practices they associate with being Greek in Australia.

“You hear about Greece all your life. That’s your heritage, your culture.” (Participant 10)

“It [remaining Greek] was easy because we could speak Greek with other Greek people. If there were not so many Greek people, if there was an area with only one or two Greek families, then it would be difficult.” (Participant 2)

“You need to be active and do Greek things to call yourself Greek. You need to connect with what is Greek.” (Participant 7)

Even younger individuals, despite being native speakers of English and fully integrated in the Australian lifestyle, tended to view their social experience in terms friends of the same cultural background as opposed to other people they might know.

“[I have] definitely more Greek friends. Some have been family friends, and then you’re friends with them as well. At school as well, everyone flocked together. We stuck with each other, because we are more like minded, we understand each other, and we can use the Greek slang in conversation. I think it would be familiarity because we have common grounds.” (Participant 5)

“I have definitely more Greek friends. It’s lucky, I guess, and I get along better with my Greek friends. We have things in common.” (Participant 8)

"At school, all my friends are not Greek, and, out of school, I have more Greek friends. I feel I connect more to my Greek friends and we understand each other better"." (Participant 8)

Greek dancing continues to be a popular social activity in the Melbourne community. The existence of dancing schools and groups can be traced back to the influence of the original immigrants who felt that this form of cultural expression was relevant in the Australian diaspora and encouraged their children to take part. Today, the forums for Greek dancing are well established and have come to have meaning for individual of all ages, although the idea that this activity is of special importance to older people remains common.

"Social aspects, making new friends and also physical activity. I have grown up in my family with dancing, my parents from a young age when I was in a stroller would take us to dinner dances. I have grown up in dancing and Greek music, and from a young age I was in a dancing group." (Participant 7)

"Performance is why we do this, the performance and the look in the eyes of the audience, they are amazed. Especially the old people they feel very connected. My family is very supportive of my dancing and has always been." (Participant 14)

"You can find the exercise part through the other hundreds of sports that exist, however with the Greek part you don't find that. I've never found that anywhere apart from Greek School, but not really, it's not the same, its more unifying even in the literal sense of holding hands." (Participant 18)

"Even though they [elders] are not dancing when they are audience, it will provide them with joy. They are so proud, even when they see their grandchildren but it's the same thing when they see strangers. We are automatically connecting and bonding, it could be a song, a dance, a memory. It's our culture and where they grew up." (Participant 14)

While the older participants were very concerned to ensure that their children and grandchildren knew and understood the Greek culture as their elders saw it, younger individuals were equally concerned about their ability to maintain the cultural context in which they had been brought up. In many cases, a central element of this concern was the loss of facility in Greek, which for older people, has tended to be the single most important marker of Greek identity. For many members of the Australian born generations, however, the difficulty of maintaining a separate cultural identity without language was clear.

The desire for continuity was stressed by older individuals.

"I am a traditional Greek person and I have tried to maintain the Greek way here in Australia. I feel nostalgia for Greece and I tell my children, when I die, I want to be buried in Greece, in Greek soil." (Participant 14)

"My children were part of a dancing group and, when they danced traditional dances, I felt pride. I sent them to Greek school to learn the language." (Participant 8)

The Australian born generations recognized the difficulty inherent in cultural maintenance in the face of pressures from the Australian mainstream. Members of the first Australian born generation saw this challenge as a responsibility placed on them by their parents and reflecting their elders' experiences of migration.

“The Greek language is an association to being Greek. That’s the most important [thing] that I want to maintain and continue. It will be challenging if I marry a non-Greek person.” (Participant 14)

“Yes, it’s important because it’s who you are. You’re born here but you’re Greek and you want to put it into your kids.” (Participant 3)

“It’s my identity. It’s who I am, and I want to pass it on to my children because I know, with every generation, you lose quite a lot of it and more if they marry outside of the culture, which I’m hoping doesn’t happen. We’re sounding a lot like our parents. I want my children to marry someone who is Greek Orthodox.” (Participant 5)

“It’s important to maintain religion, language and culture.” (Participant 4)

The younger individuals, who are members of the second Australian born generation, feel the pressure to remain “Greek” as well but are also aware of their integration into the English-language context and the role of their elders in maintaining Greek identity in diaspora. One younger individual expressed this dilemma as follows:

“I love my Greek heritage and I want to carry it on, but if my Greek isn’t great, I’m worried that my kids won’t speak great Greek. Or even if I teach them and send them to Greek school, they would be 3rd generation, and I’m worried about losing it. I always say to my mum, I don’t want to lose it. I like saying I’m Greek-Australian and, when people ask me what nationality, I am, I am Greek. I’m Greek defiantly. I’m proud to be Greek and I’m scared to lose the traditions. Without my grandmother, how would I know?” (Participant 6)

Another younger individual reflected on the lack of knowledge and cultural depth felt by many younger people of Greek background and the need to address this by active participation in the Greek community.

“Maintaining identity is so important and essential to keep our culture alive. We need to participate and do Greek things and speak Greek and saying γιαγιά [grandmother] and παππού [grandfather] isn’t enough. In order to keep the Greek title, we need to participate and be a member, make a conscious effort.” (Participant 19)

Discussion

The experience of people of Greek background in the Australian diaspora is notable for the degree of acculturation and success in the English-speaking context

that has characterized the community (Tamis 2005). This is particularly significant because of the circumstances that brought the majority of Greek immigrants to Australia following World War II and the Greek civil war. Largely, these individuals had little formal education and few job skills. Adjustment to their new social and cultural context, which included a need to use the English language, remains a common bond among older people in the community and a source of shared understanding about the importance of community and social networks encompassing people of similar background and heritage. For the first and second Australian born generations, pride in their Greekness is the norm, despite a gradual lessening of specifically Greek practices and way of life. The change to Australian ways has been accompanied by a loss of ability to use the Greek language in all domains. Many of the youngest members of the Greek community no longer speak Greek, if language facility is measured by the ability to communicate in all contexts with ease and naturalness, and are native speakers of English. Interestingly, the definition of what it means to “speak Greek” seems to have shifted and has specific dimensions that reflect the experience of each generation, ranging from speaking a most exclusively Greek among members of the immigrant generation, bilingualism among members of the first Australian born generation, to speaking almost exclusively English with the use of limited Greek words and terms among the youngest members of the community. Nonetheless, the individual who took part in this study, despite recognizing current problems and challenges for the future, are uniformly optimistic about the continued existence of a Greek community in Melbourne and express happiness and satisfaction with their life and identity as Greek Australians, or Greeks in Australia as many of them choose to see themselves.

In their perceptions, it is possible to discern the three components of happiness as described by Seligman (2012): positive emotion, engagement and meaning. Across the generations, significant positive emotion was obtained from the cultural heritage of the participants. Doing Greek things and being Greek, regardless of the specific form these things took for any given individual, was a source of pride, contentment, and enjoyment and was seen as a way of contributing to the community in an important way. Similarly, individuals of all ages and experience tended to be heavily engaged in the community, through attendance at Greek institutions such as church or Greek school, by taking part in Greek activities such as traditional dancing groups, or in personal social networks of friends and family. This last was extremely important to participants of all ages who distinguished in their feelings between their social relationships with other people of Greek background and those with individuals from other cultural groups. Every element of their perceived Greek identity was meaningful to the participants, although it should be noted that the nature of the main elements of this identity did differ among individuals of different ages. As noted above, for the immigrant generation, identity centered on maintenance and preventing change in linguistic, religious, cultural, and social behaviour, with their experience in the Greece of their youth providing the standard against which this change was measured. For younger individuals who were born in Australia and who were integrated into the English-speaking mainstream, Greek identity focused on certain

specific elements of behaviour that existed alongside and in conjunction with other behaviors that were not different from those of other Australians. Nonetheless, the perception of meaningfulness of their Greekness was strong in individuals of all ages and was frequently expressed, both directly and indirectly.

In light of this situation, it is perhaps not surprising that the participants in this study described feeling happy, among friends of Greek background, participating in Greek activities like dancing and religious occasions, using the Greek language, and eating Greek food. In addition to the specific elements that constitute Greek culture in Australia, the younger individuals had learned a sense of pride and developed a sense of superiority of their culture from the older members of the community, which was central to their views on the meaning and importance of cultural maintenance and which also served as a source of well-being. These attributes were perceived as a source of strength by all the individuals involved, again suggesting the relevance of the principles of positive psychology in understanding the experience of Greek diaspora in Australia. This experience is a personal perspective of each individual involved but also has an important shared dimension that reflects the experience of each generation in its own social and cultural context. In this sense, the personal aspect of the experience is central and can be understood through an analysis of the emotions associated with Greekness by those involved.

Conclusion

The experience of migration that underpins the shared cultural experience of the Greek diaspora in Melbourne provides a strongly influential source of generally positive emotion for its members that is based on a perception of Greek identity in the English-speaking context of Australia. The positive associated with identity are recognized and appreciated by members of the community of all ages and have persisted despite successful integration into the social and cultural mainstream and exist even among older individuals who experienced hardship as a context of migration, cultural disruption, racism, and perceived status as outsiders. Younger individuals tend to be very much aware of the influence on their thinking from these older relatives, but it is notable that the elements of the experience of migration that have been transmitted are largely positive and have not focused on the negative elements of the migration experience. As a result, the conceptualization of Greek identity in Melbourne has come to result in the emergence three related factors suggested to give rise to happiness within the perspective of positive psychology, namely positive emotion, engagement and meaning. This circumstance may be related to the notes successful integration of people of Greek origin in to Australian society, which is an important characteristic that sets this cultural community apart from some of the others that make up the modern Australian nation. As such, the Greek community can be seen as a successful example of identity maintenance and development within the context of multiculturalism whose experience and perspective may suggest new insights into the understanding of migration, life in diaspora, and well-being.

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