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This volume describes the ideational effort required to design and implement a training-course model for "Experts in proximity violence". The Pilot project design has envisaged a framework where the concepts referring to broad reflections on the topic have be related to the professional skills to be trained. Proximity violence concerns multiple forms of gender-based violence which conceal, in turn, more subtle, intimate and viscous forms of dependence. The course was based on modules and availed itself of a "mixed" methodology, where theoretical lectures were interwoven with experiential workshops.

During the first six months of 2019, over 800 Italian, French and Spanish operators engaged on the migratory front, attended the courses. The model presented in the first two chapters of the present volume was accompanied and corroborated by a set of ex-ante and ex-post questionnaires. The first set, illustrated in chapter three, aimed at pin-pointing the training needs of the operators and stakeholders to whom it was administered and who then attended the course.

The ex-post questionnaires, presented in chapter four, regarded an appraisal of the course provided by those who had participated in and completed the course, and confirmed the positive achievement of the goal established by the Provide Project (*Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020*): that of defining a structured curriculum capable of addressing the problem of proximity and gender violence by providing adequate training, appropriate tools and skills to be used by professionals to identify, prevent and treat the phenomenon.

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THE PROVIDE TRAINING COURSE

Contents, Methodology, Evaluation

Edited by Ignazia Bartholini

FrancoAngeli
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1. An introduction: "to train and to be trained"

by *Ignazia Bartholini*

1.1 The PROVIDE training course

This volume, published after the end of the various editions of the PROVIDE course designed to train operators as experts in proximity and gender-based violence, contains an account of the courses. The courses were created by the team of researchers engaged in the PROVIDE project and implemented by groups of teachers and trainers selected by each of the project's partners (UNIPA, ISMU, OXFAM, Telefono Donna, Badia Grande, ASEIS Lagarto), and appraised by the trainees themselves as regards the effective usefulness and usability of the knowledge they acquired. This was a characteristic of the methodology underpinning the project, and which the first of the two PROVIDE volumes defined in relation to the topic, the legal systems referred to, and, above all, the good practices found in the various European areas engaged in the project.

The main exigency underlying the drafting of this second volume was that of filling an "information gap". The exploratory research carried out prior to and during the implementation of the PROVIDE project, brought to light many of the difficulties encountered by those engaged in the services and facilities made available to refugees and asylum seekers (Pattaro et al., 2018; Bartholini, 2019). One of these problems actually concerned operators' lack of the specific skills required to address gender and proximity violence. This meant not only of a lack of *ad hoc* services geared to take charge of victims or potential victims but, also and above all, an almost total absence of trained, specialist personnel. According to the operators, it is extremely difficult to understand the needs of those coming from countries where they have been "exposed" to male violence within segregating cultural systems, whereby they fall victim to rape and psychological abuse considered "normal" in those milieus and frequently normalised by the victims themselves.

The implementation of these professional training courses assumed a far more engaging significance than what is commonly assumed by those who believe it their exclusive prerogative to interpret the transfer of the skills required to carry out given activities. It also drew attention to the need to modulate the interpretative key to the social role associated with the activities to be carried out, in this case, the need to consider it a preliminary alliance, uniting the social scientist and the professional operator.

The goal inherent in the effectiveness of the training provided by these courses, involved a complexity far beyond the simple preparation of programmes aimed at enabling people to take full advantage of the training opportunities offered.

Despite territorial differences, the PROVIDE project succeeded in designing a model centred on three fundamental criteria: *identification, prevention, care*. The cognitive core of the course aimed at dealing with people rather than things, and was combined, therefore, with the charge-taking of victims of violence and the ethics of the professions carried out or to be carried out.

It was, therefore, a matter of drawing up a pilot model based on a systematic approach capable of implementing the *know-how* needed by the professionals working in the various reception centres who enrolled in the various editions – of the course, sixteen in all. The trainees presented their work experiences with a view to foregrounding the complexity of the effects on the conduct and behaviour of victims of proximity violence resulting from what they were subjected to as migrants.

To describe the training model proposed in its entirety, it is useful to refer to its three main features:

1. the identification of training goals capable of providing specific tools, methods and skills;

2. the creation of a training-course prototype capable of integrating the proposed objectives and the relevant contents in terms of professional spendability;

3. the pursuit of goals/objectives that the prototype of the "Provide training course" aimed at achieving in a tenaciously constructive and flexibly self-critical way, to make future trainees aware of the problems, like stress, underlying proximity violence which have an impact upon the professionals themselves and learning to cope with them.

The training programme outlined in the set of contents designed to promote and strengthen the acquisition and development of specific skills regarding the phenomenon, besides a knowledge of the phenomenon, required an upstream employment of a productive kind of productive imagination.

As to the second point, it required that the framework within which the concepts referring to the broader plan, be informed by a reflection on the issues relating to the professional skills to be enhanced. Then, an approach was shaped on the basis of active methodologies designed to cater for the professional training of adults and, within the focus groups, applied by employing *role play* to enhance responsibility and boost understanding engagement with the users/beneficiaries of the reception centres. A training plan based on sociological and psychological, above all, on anthropological, disciplines was also defined. This aimed at permitting the trainees to acquire empathic skills permitting them to see "through the eyes of others", in the places and situations proper to reception of migrants, a characteristic which has now become a permanent mark of most asylum seekers/refugees who reach Europe.

One important datum registered, about five months after the closure of the last edition of the courses, was that the numbers of applications for participation in the courses were far higher than the numbers of places available, despite the fact that, after the first edition, the subsequent ones the intake was increased from the initial eleven to the actual sixteen with the precise intention of responding to the demand for training registered, especially in Lombardy and in Andalusia and in the editions held during the first half of 2019 in Tuscany, Sicily and the French capital.

An equally comforting result was the popularity index registered at the end of the courses and obtained as feedback from rigorously-tested investigation tools used to appraise and above all assess the impact of the course upon the trainees' real-life professional practice.

1.2 The PROVIDE questionnaires

The second part of the volume – chapters 4 and 5 – presents the results of the *ex-ante* and *ex-post* assessments provided by the trainees themselves.

The *ex-ante* questionnaire was administered to the trainees and used to outline their profiles, especially to detect some of the aspects regarding professional activity best related to the topics addressed by the PROVIDE course and those most likely to require improvement after participation in the course.

The *ex-post* questionnaire mirrored the questions dealt with in the *ex-ante* survey and was designed to find out which aspects of the trainees' professional activities had been modified following participation in the course. The administration of the second questionnaire, following the end of the last module of

each course, aimed at evaluating degrees of participant satisfaction with various aspects of the courses, divided into the following categories:

> •the interest and participation of the respondent and the other participants, during the course;
> • the didactic material provided; organisation and services (location, equipment, teaching staff);
> • an analytical evaluation of individual modules and workshops; assessment of the course on the whole.

The hope as well as the aim of the project was to find indicators attesting to improvements in the trainees' professional activities as far as the topics addressed during the course were concerned.

The team of researchers who conducted the survey "*set itself the objective of gathering information regarding the presence of migrant women, victims of gender-based and proximity violence, passing through the Italian reception system and* ***how those who work closely with them handle the complex situations they encounter****. They also aimed at understanding whether the training course had provided tools useful for the daily practice of the operators".*

The reflections on the training needs emerging from the interviews administered to the operators (social workers, psychologists, professional educators, psychiatrists, lawyers and legal assistants) concerned, as Lia Lombardi points out in the third paragraph of this book, bore witness to the urgency of going more deeply into skills that regarded:

• a knowledge of the criteria and symptoms through which to recognise signs of gender or proximity violence in persons hosted by the reception facilities (health-case and life histories; direct and indirect observation of verbal and non-verbal behaviour; reported symptoms; circular communication between beneficiaries and operators, etc.);

• the possibility/need that operators be able to create and set up a therapeutic pathway for migrants, victims of violence (women, men, teenagers);

• the possibility/need to be able to distinguish between the types of violence undergone, but also, and above all, the ability to understand what violence may mean to each of the persons encountered as well as what escape from a context of violence may mean to them. "Because what the Bengali woman requires is different from the model of escape from violence we propose" (PFG n. 2, social worker, SVS-D, woman);

• the possibility/need to guarantee that the psycho-social treatment provided be adequate and effective for the migrants;

• the opportunity to avoid the construction or reproduction of stereotypes and prejudices, since violence is not culturally speaking a universally connoted phenomenon;

• the need to create networks and synergies between all the social actors involved, including the local and national institutions, public and private organisations;

• the importance of cultural mediation and multidisciplinary work, two phenomena indispensable to training courses and operational staff;

• the possibility/need for training courses and modules relating to legal-administrative issues, including family reunification;

• the possibility/need to implement strategies for the management and prevention of crises and emergencies, the ability to network and collaborate with other services active in the area and the importance of a multidisciplinary approach;

• the possibility/need to address and correct the bureaucratic-institutional jargon used since it is often far removed from the language used by the operators working with migrants (for example the police, social services, health-care services, local institutions, etc.).

Training was considered, therefore, necessary for those in high institutional places, as well as for policy-makers, administrators, legal bodies and the police, since their actions have repercussions on the "inclusion policies" implemented at local and administrative level. It also emerged that an inclusive, egalitarian culture required diffusion (Polanyi, 1979).

The reader will have the opportunity of obtaining from the chapters contained in this volume, a detailed account of the rankings scores obtained by the courses. However, what we wish to highlight most of all – at the end of this lengthy research pathway described in depth in the first volume of the PROVIDE project – is that the research inspired by the project and the implementation of the training model replicable in other contexts, required a co-responsible effort on the part of all the researchers and professionals involved in implementing the strategies aimed at recognition of victims of proximity violence and their subsequent accompaniment along pathways of emancipation. Co-responsibility on the basis of "loose" nodes which – as Granovetter (1983) put it – fosters a kind of mutual enrichment at action-research level due to a merger between stochastic attitudes and different skills that become a store of shared experience. At the end of the experience, it was inevitable to ask which strategies, rules, protocols need to be implemented in future scenarios where arrivals of increasing numbers of victims of proximity violence will take place.

The second issue was that of official professional recognition of experts trained in proximity violence. This means – in our opinion – the hypothesis of a specialist social entrepreneurship set up to employ educators, social workers, psychologists and mediators with particular professional qualifications. The need for greater social recognition of professional figures as well as that of policy makers operating within the reception circuit, is particularly worthy of attention (Schön, 2006). The PROVIDE training courses sought to define a process of construction and validation of the skills capable of facilitating recognition of victims of proximity violence, with reference to protecting them but also of activating their own intimate resources.

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