

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 been 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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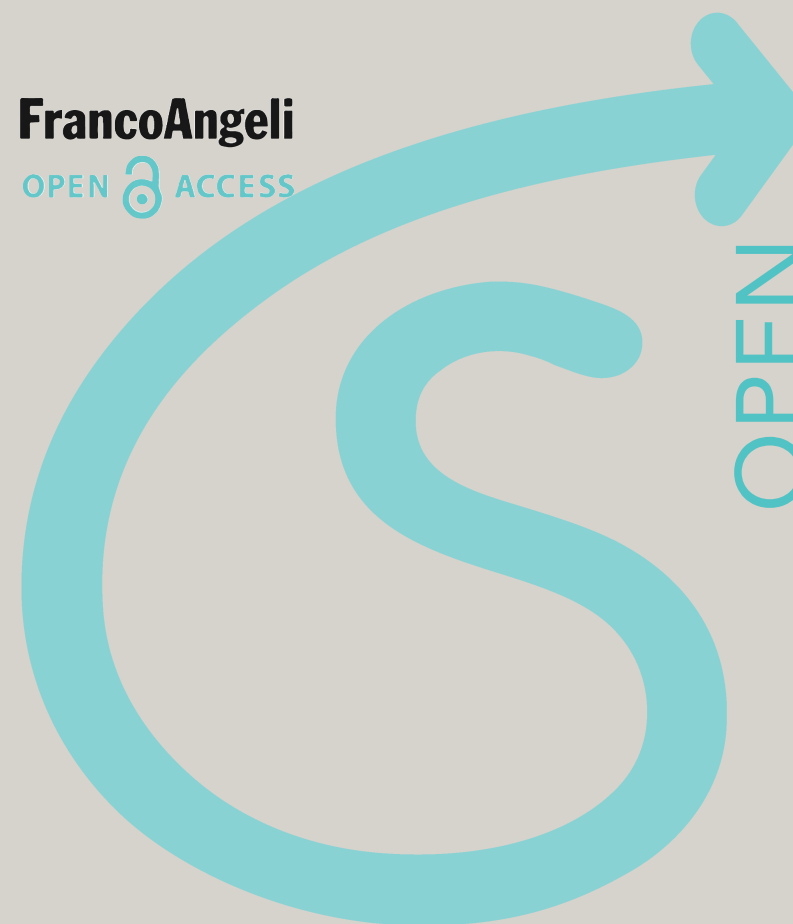
THE PROVIDE TRAINING COURSE

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Contents, Methodology, Evaluation

Edited by Ignazia Bartholini

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Edited by Ignazia Bartholini



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3. *An overview of the profiles of the participants: “reception personnel” and “charge-takers”*

by Ignazia Bartholini and Lia Lombardi¹

3.1 The process conceived and correspondence with the trainees’ profiles

The training course for “experts in proximity violence” was created with a view to defining and providing a set of contents aimed at promoting and strengthening specific skills capable of addressing the phenomenon. Although the creators of the course aimed at intercepting a group of professionals, as broad as possible in terms of age, profession and gender, the choice made previously by prospective participants to work in the social field, and in the specific sector of the reception of migrants, foregrounded some of the connotative features of the potential stakeholders already during the initial conception and design phase of the individual training modules thus bestowing direction on the overall design of the course conceived by the researchers.

As far as we are concerned, focusing on the skills to be reinforced, on those in need of mandatory further study, as well as designing the training modules, required an upstream implementation of a productive type of imagination. A kind of imagination which, incidentally, only those long engaged in contexts capable of providing the best, most useful and effective training courses are capable of exercising. The imagination in this case was no peregrine activity, detached from reality; on the contrary, it was an activity presupposing experience as an “*in-re* activity of knowledge acquisition”. Imagination was, therefore, introduced as a specific pre-comprehension activity, justified, besides, by the experience already acquired in the field of immigration, and, therefore, integral to a living world seen as a *sphere of intersubjective relationships* where different individuals act as interlocutors both real and ideal. On the basis of the store of experience available to the

¹ Paragraph 3.1 is by Ignazia Bartholini; paragraph 3.2 is by Ignazia Bartholini and Lia Lombardi; paragraph 3.3 is by Lia Lombardi.

researchers who prepared the scaffolding, the course was designed on the basis of what had been identified as behavioural styles and the constellations of values typical of those who work in the area of migrant reception.

The course for “Operators experts in proximity violence” proved to be, as early as during the stage when the call was issued, a magnet capable of attracting the energies of aspiring participants seeking objective and concrete orientation regarding the phenomenon of proximity violence and its direct implications for the psycho-physical health of asylum seekers. The need for knowledge was, therefore, combined with a request for professional training and the identification of appropriate skills. The first datum made available, about five months following the close of the last edition of the training courses, revealed that the number of requests to enrol was far greater than the courses could cater for, despite the fact that when they were repeated the numbers per course were extended from the initial eleven to the actual sixteen in order to meet the demand for training registered, above all, in Lombardy and Andalusia. The courses were held during first half of 2019 also in Tuscany, Sicily and in the French capital.

The choice of increasing the number of editions was prompted by the number of requests received, indicating the enormous widespread need for training felt among reception and charge-taking professionals, thus boosting the organisers’ intention of directing the recruitment of trainees towards contingents of workers employed in the reception circuit for migrants. The calls for the selection of participants were addressed to doctors, social workers, psychologists, lawyers, linguistic mediators, law enforcement agencies etc., with a view to improving their skills/competence and the ability to implement them in given situations.

3.2 Differences of professional and gender roles

To the 16 editions of the course held in Italy, 7 in Lombardy, 5 in Sicily, 2 in Tuscany, we need to add the 2 held in the Paris region and the 2 in Andalusia, which involved an aggregate of 818 professionals in all.

As far as gender was concerned, as one might expect, in all the courses most of the trainees were females; the males accounted for an average of around 12%. The educational level of the participants was significantly high and included 70% holders of three-year bachelor’s degrees (or equivalent qualifications in the cases of Spain and France) of which about 50% graduates in social work. In Italy, there was also a significant percentage of participants with a master’s degree (about 50%). In Sicily, moreover, most of the

trainees had a five-year degree (51.9%). As regards the time spent in the migrant reception circuit, one third of the students held intermediary status (1-5 years), while the remaining two thirds regarded, in almost equal terms, the youngest trainees who had worked for one year or less and the older cohort which had been employed in the field for over five years. The ages of the participants ranged from 28 to 42. The participants were classed as follows:

Table 3 – The professions of the trainees

PROFESSION	NUMBER OF CASES
Non classifiable	46
Educators	301
Work-orientation consultants	3
Mediators	65
Social workers	194
Psychologists	80
Animators	29
Medical doctors	9
Legal operators	39
Law-enforcement representatives	9
Nurses	6
Area managers for the reception of migrants (Cas or Sprar)	26
Managers of facilities available for the reception of migrants (Cas or Sprar)	11

Source: own elaboration

As table 3 shows, the prevalent profession among the trainees was that of the educator (37%) followed immediately by the social worker (24%), the latter, however, reaching 50% both in Lombardy and in the Paris region. The presence of psychologists (10%) and cultural mediators (8%) was also significant. Among the participants, those indicated as “non classifiable” were Sicilian and Spanish students attending the final year of their Degree Course in Social Service or students working on theses focusing on the topic of proximity violence and who, as simple auditors, attended the entire seminar cycle of the courses, without, however, receiving the final certificate awarded to the regular trainees.

The trainees were mainly (over 50%) operators working in CAS (Extraordinary Reception Center) and SPRAR (Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees) facilities, the other half professionals working within the

territorial social services, the police, hospitals, municipalities, provincial offices. A significant number were subjects who worked with voluntary associations. The types of professionals who enrolled were mainly educators, social workers, cultural mediators, psychologists, legal operators. Furthermore, the majority of the students had a five-year degree (51.9%), a smaller number a three-year degree or a senior-secondary-school diploma (49.1%). The overview of the situation helped us discover, thanks to our investigations (see table 2), based largely to analyses carried out by the colleagues who drafted chapter 4 of this volume, more than half of those who responded to the survey had a range of relative work-experience with migrant women.

Table 4 – Experience with migrant women (in %)

Yes, a lot	16,8
Sufficient	55,8
Little	23,3
None	4,2

Source: own elaboration

Attendance at the courses was no chance option. For these students it was triggered by a need they came across in the field, derived from the situations they often found themselves having to tackle. The experience gained was not the only distinguishing feature of those attending the courses. Another was the quality of their relationships, as they themselves pointed out during the workshops and seminars associated with the lectures contained in each module.

The “mixed-method” training course envisaged the creation of synergistic relationships between the teachers and the participants, between the legal and social-work trainers and the reception centres, between the doctors and those operating within the social and health services, between the psychologists who dealt with stress management and front-office operators. In general, it was observed that the participants invested massively in group work, which sometimes became an area of horizontal supervision and inter-professional discussion. This kind of investment was more intense in the less numerous classes (about 20). Furthermore, the trainees were attentive and interested, thanks to the continuum between the theoretical lectures and the practical workshops and the use of the case-study methodology. A high degree of satisfaction was observed as far as the teachers and the contents provided were concerned. Particular appreciation was expressed regarding those theoretical contents capable of deconstructing stereotyped representations of the phenomenon of violence and migration. The feedback from the territory during the promotion of the course and recruitment of the participants, also proved

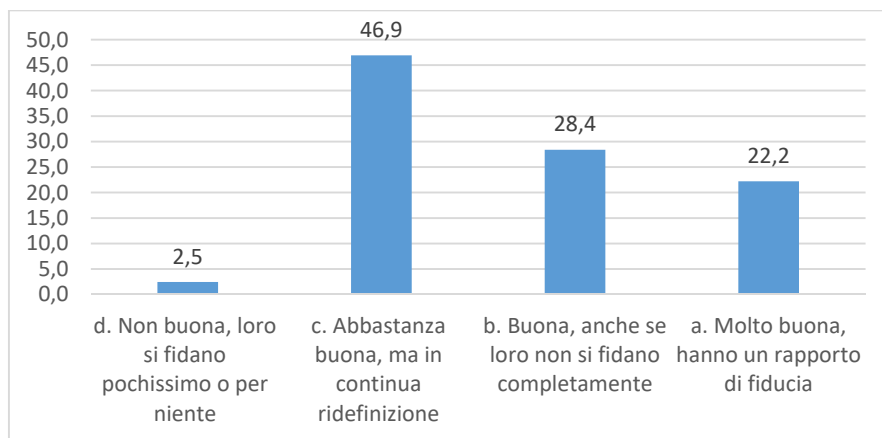
consistent, thus creating a positive degree of integration between action aimed at fostering “top-down” awareness and spontaneous applications.

The quality of the relationship with the migrant women hosted in the reception facilities, according to most of the participants, was fairly good. This relationship of trust represented a resource, because it permitted the migrant women to tell the story of the episodes of violence they had experienced. This bond of trust fostered communication, at least after some time, according to about 70% of the participants (Tab. 2). It was precisely about the importance of preliminary relationships to the “charge taking” of migrant victims, that it was mandatory to highlight three elements of the reception circuit.

1. The first concerns the structure of the third sector itself. Society, as a hierarchically ordered system, consisting of strongly interpenetrating and complementary subsystems, is actually replaced by the horizontal structure of the third sector, by its network, whose pieces no longer depend on roles, but on bonds and social “worlds of life”, the configuration of which can predict the behaviour of social actors (Di Nicola, 1998). It is no longer a matter of compliance with a role as a means by which to appraise degrees of cohesion and social integration; the concept of a “network strategy” emerges as a marker of the adaptability of the social actor.
2. The second, closely linked to the first, concerns the importance of the human capital incorporated in the very make-up of the third sector, particularly in the fiduciary effects that reverberate within relationships. Social capital, from this angle, rests on a double theoretical-empirical matrix (Andreotti, Barbieri 2003; Bagnasco et al., 2001; Donati, 2004; Tronca, 2003). If, in one sense, as Putnam (1993; 2002) intended, social capital is a collective resource (produced by a sense of belonging, rules, trust and civic commitment), of which the community and its institutions take advantage, on the other, according to J. Coleman (1990), social capital is a function of the very structure of relatively stable social relationships which permit individuals to attain goals they could never reach on their own behalf.
3. The third concerns the prevalence of female over male operators (Walby, 2005; Tiessen, 2007). If it is true that care has traditionally been entrusted to women as a “less important form of commitment” (Rao, Kelleher, 2003), and if working with migrants who have been subjected to proximal violence and affected by forms of motivational deficit is their task, one may observe that “women are able to help other women”

(Bartholini, 2015). Compared to the critical issues, most of the operators during the workshops reported that working with women was more difficult than working with migrants in general (Fig. 1). It also emerged that communications between the female operators and female beneficiaries of the reception facilities is the only possible solution. In this case, relationships based on a commonality of gender defies the objective criteria of scientific management and is typical of many “mature” care-providing professions, that is, those involved in mature construction of professional relationships that do not disregard the need for empathetic rapports between beneficiary and operators. It is a matter of mechanical rationality and affective neutrality that yields to the trusting and empathic modality based on relationality and empathy that is, on an “emotional kind of work” required to address the complexity of migrants’ needs and requiring a suitable amount of time and proper ways of building it up.

Figure 1 – How would you rate your relationship with the migrant women you work with? (in %)



Source: own elaboration

Gender fatigue (Kelan, 2009) which still seems to “persecute” women in many professions – and which coincides with real forms of gender segregation – becomes a veritable advantage within the context of the migratory circuit and of trust relationships thanks to the use of *skills* more closely related to emotional and gender intelligence. *Gender-sensitive* connotations are, therefore, accompanied by professional, relationship-promoting skills. As

Martha Nussbaum sustains, this leads to a “fruitful functioning” of gender skills capable of “facilitating others” (2011: 138).

3.3 Regional profiles of training course: amid diversity and similarities

We conclude this chapter by providing a general profile of the training courses carried out within the project’s various target areas and by pinpointing their common features and most salient differences.

As regards communications and dissemination of the information concerning the training and recruitment programmes for participants and trainers, all the partners used their own IT and digital resources, publishing both information and teaching materials on their websites and web pages, making them available to the trainees².

The training method used was appreciated by the trainees belonging to all the project’s target areas and who – in most cases – participated in an intense manner showing that they were very much involved and capable of producing, from time to time, an excellent balance between the theoretical insights and concrete situations according to their own professional experiences. The role of the cultural mediators who played a profoundly important part in the training workshops held in Lombardy, Sicily and Tuscany, may be deemed of the utmost importance as their contribution to the workshops, provided a different view of the case studies leading to a deeper understanding of specific situations.

In the case of the courses held in the Paris region (Paris, Noisy-le-Sec, Ivry), the organisers decided to make some changes to the provision of training in order to cater for some of their operators’ and stakeholders’ needs, which emerged during the preliminary research phase. This meant changing the order of presentation of Module 2 (*human and migrants’ rights within the framework of international and EU law*) and Module 1 (*gender inequality, gender violence versus proximity violence*) to clarify notions regarding migrants/refugees/irregular immigrants/asylum seekers before actually tackling the problem of violence.

For the second edition they chose to change the contents of module 3 from “health care” to “sexual and reproductive health”, to avoid resembling module 4 on “mental health” too closely. For the conduction of this module, they

² The ISMU Foundation and the University of Palermo have also created three lessons on video (modules 1, 2, 4) considered highly significant and which will be made available to the public at the end of the project.

involved experts from the “Gynécologie sans frontières” association. In France, the mental-health modules were conducted by psychiatrists, unlike other target areas, where mainly psychologists (Lombardy, Tuscany, Jaen) and ethnopsychiatrists (Sicily) were recruited. The University of Jaen carried out, in addition to training designed for operators, an official “specialisation course in proximity violence”, certified by the University of Jaén. This initiative obtained very high appreciation scores from the trainees. The male and female students who attended the course received an official university certificate following full attendance (25 hours) and after producing a final report. All the tutors, trainers and training managers found that the choice of trainers/experts needed to be carefully vetted, to avoid the risk of giving rise to “blurring” and confusion between the contents of the mental-health, health-care and stress-management content. All the partners engaged in the project publicised the courses on their vast network of public contacts (municipalities, local police forces, health-care agencies and hospitals) and third-sector agencies (migrant reception centres, social associations and cooperatives, anti-violence centres), obtaining excellent feedback, demonstrating the strength of their reference grids.

Table 5 – Bodies involved in the training course

Area	Dissemination and collaboration
<i>Sicily</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S.i.m.m. Italian Society of the Medicine of Migration; • CLEDU Legal Clinic for Human Rights, University of Palermo; • Società Italiana per lo Studio dello Stress Traumatico (Italian society for the study of Traumatic Stress); • Servizio di Etnopsicologia - Associazione Centro Penco (The Penco Centre Ethno-psychological Service); • Nucleo operativo di psichiatria transculturale ASP Catania (The transcultural psychiatric operative unit, ASP, Catania) rete SPRAR Sicilia) The Sicilian SPRAR network).
<i>Lombardy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comune di Milano (Milan municipality); • Provincia di Bergamo (Provincial authorities, Bergamo); • Comune di Brescia (Brescia municipality); • Provincia di Cremona (Provincial authorities, Cremona); • Prefettura di Lecco (Police headquarters, Lecco); • Comunità montana area di Lecco (Mountain community, Lecco); • CAS e SPRAR delle province e comuni coinvolti (Facilities of the provinces and municipalities involved); • Servizi sociali dei comuni coinvolti (Social services of the municipalities involved); • Ufficio Protezione Minori, Lecco (Office for the protection of minors) • Ospedale di Lecco (Lecco hospital); • Forze di polizia (Police forces);

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordine degli assistenti sociali (Order of social workers); • Ordine dei medici di medicina generale della provincia di Milano (General medical practitioners' order of the Province of Milan); • SVS-D Policlinico di Milano (Milan's General Hospital); • Centro di Etnopsichiatria dell'ospedale Niguarda di Milano (Milan's Niguarda Hospital's Ethnopsychiatric centre); • Centro donne maltrattate, Milano (Abused women's centre, Milan); • Coop. La Strada, Milano (The "La Strada" cooperative, Milan); • Coop. Lotta contro l'emarginazione, Milano (The anti-emargination cooperative, Milan); • Croce Rossa Italiana, Bresso (Bresso red Cross); • Casa sul Pozzo, Lecco; • Rete antiviolenza, Milano (Anti-violence network, Milan); • Rete antiviolenza, Ticino-Olona (The Ticino-Olona anti-violence network); • - Fondazione Somaschi (The Somaschi Foundation).
<i>Tuscany</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rete SPRAR e CAS regionali- (Regional Facilities); • Prefettura di Arezzo (Police headquarters, Arezzo); • Prefettura di Firenze (Police headquarters, Florence); • Agenzia anti-tratta, Toscana (Tuscan anti-trafficking agency); • Centri antiviolenza province della Toscana (Tuscan Provinces' anti-violence centres).
<i>Paris region</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CADA Centri di accoglienza per richiedenti asilo (Reception centres for asylum seekers); • HUDA-Accoglienza d'urgenza per richiedenti asilo- (Urgent reception service for asylum seekers); • Associazioni del Terzo settore (third-sector associations); • Municipal Services.
<i>Jaen Region – Andalusia</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ONG dell'Andalusia; • Centri dei servizi sociali di comunità (Community Social Services Centres); • Local Police; • National Police; • Civil Guard; • Ordine degli assistenti sociali di Jaen (Jaen's Official Association of Social Work); • Ordine degli Psicologi di Jaen (Jaen's Official Association of Psychologists of Jaén); • Ordine degli infermieri di Jaen (Jaen's Official Association of Nursing).

Source: own elaboration

Thanks to the territorial networks, it was possible to identify locations in which to conduct the courses and thanks to the organisations (both public and private) which collaborated actively in:

1. organising the dissemination of the courses within their territories;

2. selecting local operators to enrol and attend the courses;
3. carrying out a rigorous and careful selection of the trainers and mediators involved in the courses.

The above table n° 4 is a summary of the bodies involved in the dissemination and organisation of the different editions of the courses.

Despite all this, some critical points deserve mention in order to avoid them in future. The waiting-list for enrolment in the courses proved a critical issue both for Milan and the University of Jaèn: the extremely high numbers of applications were all accepted in the long run. This was achieved, at times, at the expense of the space available (especially in the case of the workshop activities). Some enrolments in the courses in Lombardy proved unsuccessful because, given the enormous interest shown, it was sometimes impossible for some potential trainees to reconcile attendance with their working schedules. In both Lombardy and the Paris region, some difficulties arose when it came to involving representatives of the police. Furthermore, recent Italian socio-political and regulatory changes and the consequent reorganisation of numerous CASs and SPRARs did not favour the objectives of the training courses which were aimed at increasing operators' ability to deal with highly vulnerable subjects. These difficulties were encountered especially in Tuscany where the decrease in the quality of the reception system throughout the entire region led to greater risks for victims of proximity and gender-based violence. In France, the difficulty of curbing and preventing gender bias and inequality emerged: most of the participants (as shown in the previous paragraph) were women and most of the facilities were staffed by women. This figure deserves attention in order to prevent the issue of violence from becoming "a business for women". The French operators, who attended the Provide courses, claimed feeling – especially during the course of the module on "stress management" – a sense of frustration because of their failure to implement solutions and changes at organisational level, since they are not part of the decision-making management: they are obliged, therefore, to address structural problems to which they are powerless to provide solutions.

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