

DAILY PRACTICE AS A CREATOR OF COMMON SHARED VALUES

Emanuele STOCHINO*

*University of Brescia, Brescia, Italy

Abstract: *This abstract sets out to highlight how Social Psychology, over the last seventy years, has demonstrated various functional ways in which groups different in terms of ethnicity, religion, sexual preference, economic and cultural level can interact without conflict (Mazzara, 2017). Although pioneering, the studies of W. Allport in the 1950's succeeded in intercepting concepts, among which the 1954 Theory of Contact, a theory which identified four fundamental elements through which diverse groups might relate to one another both positively and efficiently: positive and pleasant interaction, similar status, possibility of prior consciousness and institutional support. Successive studies of non-conflictual inter-group behavior, such as Pettigrew and Tropp (2000), Tajfel and Turner (1979) and Turner (1979), also have Allport's four elements at their base. Considering Allport's vision, one may deduce that multi-culturalism (interaction between differing social groups and their mutual recognition) is to be regarded as an enriching exchange for all groups in as much as each one helps the other. Should this contact occur within this favourable framework, it is highly likely that this interaction can reduce prejudice effectively (Sherif, 1966). Thus, when speaking of multi-culturalism, one is not speaking of an abstract idea but of one which is concrete and based upon reciprocal exchange/help. This leads to the recognition to exist with parity both as a group and as a culture; this represents the creation of daily practice which, with time, will become common values (Sartori, 2000).*

Keywords: *Gordon W. Allport; Multiculturalism; Prejudice, Theory of Contact*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the years the studies of the social psychology showed that can give a valid scientific contribution for the study of social policies that analyzing the relationship among people groups of different nature by ethnicity, sex and gender (Brown, 2001). In the last forty years, issues relating to civil rights and multiculturalism have been one of the main themes of both the psychological and political sciences (Clichres, 2009). The Contact Theory of Gordon W. Allport (1954) gave a scientific frame of reference for the development of social policies relating to inclusion between groups. Over the years the theoretical conception of multiculturalism has undergone several interpretations. In the 1970's and 1980's prevailed ethnocentric theories, while today the prevailing theories try to find the values which can be shared of the different groups that live in the same society.

2. EVOLUTION OF THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY BETWEEN THE EARLY 1900s AND 1950s

1908 is the date generally traced to the birth of social psychology. This is due to the publication of

the first two manuals of the discipline: *Handbook of Social Psychology* by Edward A. Ross and *Social Psychology* by William MacDougall (Amerio, 1995). In 1931 G. Murphy wrote the book "Experimental Social Psychology" where for the first time have been analysed the results of empirical research, made in all previous years, inherent the relationship between heredity and environment. This review focused on identifying if there was differences between individuals due to the race and gender. The authors conclude that what discriminated against one group over another was not ethnicity and gender but schooling and urbanization.

in the other words, neither a simple racial nor a simple national explanation of the result will be suffice. On the contrary, the data show that there are within each race "good" samples and "bad" samples; that there are within each nation good samples and bad samples (Murphy, 1937:67)

The book *Experimental Social Psychology* also delineates the scientific results achieved as well as between differences between race and gender and also the difference within the white ethnic group. The eugenics considered Hierarchically the Anglo-

Saxon and northern European peoples more smarter than the all other peoples of European (Horsman, 1997).

If on the one hand social psychology had managed to demonstrate scientifically that there were no differences between: races (based on biological aspects), between peoples within the same ethnic group and gender attitudinal differences on the other hand the prejudice was, in daily life, the most widespread tool for intergroup relations within society.

In the modern era Gordon W. Allport can be considered the scholar who define the concept of prejudice. Allport introduced a methodology that, dynamically, combined on the one hand aspects of context: historical-economic, socio-cultural and "situational" and on the other hand the way in which individuals organize and substantiate knowledge by processing the stimuli of the context.

Given the dynamic nature of the various aspects mentioned above, Allport considered prejudice as a normal and not pathological thought process (as Adorno did later). For Allport, prejudices allow the individual to master the extreme complexity of environmental stimuli (context) and to act effectively in relation to them.

Allport in his bias theory has analysed:

the generalization process the constant tendency of the human mind to extend the observations made on the few available events to large series of events.

the process of categorization, that is, a grouping of stimuli and events in sets as homogeneous as possible.

stereotype is formed from the combination of the generalization process and the categorization process. For Allport, the stereotype has a descriptive value of the category in that it represents the assessments and expectations that were formed during the generalization process.

Allport in his analysis concerning inter-group relations underlined how the concepts of: in-group, (relations between members of the same group), out-group (relations between members of different groups) and favoritism for in-group (subjects of the same group who perceive themselves more favorably than the subjects of the other groups). The concepts mentioned above is the elements that triggering the process of categorization and consequently of prejudice and discrimination. In 1954 Allport defined the *Theory of Contact*, a theory which identified four fundamental elements through which diverse groups might relate to one another both positively and efficiently: positive

and pleasant interaction, similar status, possibility of prior consciousness and institutional support.

In 2006 the empirical validity of the *Contact Theory* was unequivocally highlighted by the meta-analysis of Pettigrew and Tropp who examined 515 studies for a total of 250,494 participants from 38 different nations.

In the United States between the 1960' and 1970', the *Contact Theory* had an application effect to try to control and reduce the forms of racism that hindered the recognition of civil rights

In 1954 the United States Supreme Court, in the *Brown v. Topeka's Board of Education* accepted the requests from the Browns. The ruling in favor of Brown ended racial segregation in American schools. Allport was also very impressed by the fact that in the ruling *Brown v. Topeka's Board* there was a clear reference was made to the results of the social sciences (for an analysis of the relationship between Allport's theory and his civil commitment see de Carvalho, 1993).

In those years social psychology had defined three different model for define coexistence within the same society of communities that are different from each other for history and traditions. The three approaches were:

(1) Assimilation is required of minority communities to adapt to the rules of the dominant group of society. The assimilationist approach emphasizes the cultural aspect in terms of values:

- patterns of behaviour
- Conception of the state
- Conception of social order

(2) Merger The creation of a homogeneous people (meeting pot). In other words, the different ethnic present in the society dissolve into each other. The "melting pot" will create rise to a different society with autonomous characters both from a biological and a cultural point of view.

(3) Cultural pluralism each group belonging to society has the right to maintain and enhance its roots. In other words, democracy is achieved through tolerance and mutual enrichment in a perspective of cultural pluralism. (Kallen, 1924).

3. GENESIS AND EVOLUTION OF THE MULTICULTURALISM

Thanks to the favourable decree of the Constitutional Court (*Brown v. Board of Education*) the struggle for civil rights was invigorated. One of the main-players in this struggle was Martin Luther King who, as leader of the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (NAACP) undertook a battle based

upon non-violence which led to the approval of the *Civil Rights Bill* of 1964 and the *Voting Rights Bill* of 1965 (Kennedy, 1989; Kennedy, 1989).

King's idea of the integration of rights was based upon the concept of "*American creed*" which in turn was centred on the concept of *Democracy* as first put forward by Tocqueville and later by Myrdal in the 1940's.

The element which lay at the base of democratization was the "heterogeneity" of the American people who had been rejected by their homelands, and this "heterogeneity" allowed for the proliferation of a common sense of freedom and opposition to central power. (Ciaralli, 2016:44).

This concept of democracy manifested itself

through the exercising of the political rights and civil responsibilities [colonists] were invested with by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution (Sartori, 2000)

Despite this, in *The Democracy in America* Tocqueville noticed how deeply-rooted racial segregation was in American national character.

The most civil and most avid population of the world had driven the Redskins to extinction and the presence of a black population "was the greatest of all evils which threatened the future of the United States. (Tocqueville, 1835:329)

Bearing this in mind, non-violent methods won; they did not break down the constituted system, they made that system aware of the fact that it was acting incorrectly and not heeding the ideals of the Constitution.

This led to multiculturalism's being a much-debated topic in those years; at the end of the 1960's American society began to question all the values upon which its society was based, that is, *white Anglo-Saxon Protestantism* 7.

From the mid 1960's, groups other than the NAACP in the fight for civil rights began to appear. These new groups looked upon *affirmative action* as something formal but insubstantial (Mammarella, 1984). For this reason, such groups recognized that *New Left* ideas combined with a more radical and violent approach constituted the most effective way to acquire rights.

One of the most widely-known radical groups of the period were the *Black Panther Party* (BPP) 10 which, in 1967, published its *Ten-point Program*, the first point of which included the following statement: "We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black

Community." Underlining their constitutional right to freedom, the BPP would have to accept all other aspects of the constitution. Since the BPP considered the *Black Community* as being distinct from other communities in American society, this implied non-recognition of the Constitution and hence, an antagonistic approach towards the *State*.

After the declamation of their *Ten-point Program*, the BPP began armed patrols in the San Francisco Bay Area. These patrols were introduced to defend themselves from the Police who the BPP regarded as being "representative of a government from which one had to protect oneself, even using arms" (Benvenuti, 2016).

The strategy of struggle used by the King and the BPP may correspond to the two extreme conceptions today present in the struggle for civil rights in terms of ethnicity, religion, sexual preference, economic and cultural level.

While King used the tools already present in the democratic order to achieve his goal in order to achieve integration, (albeit slow, but lasting) he applied the vision of Cultural Pluralism. On the other hand, radical groups used a fundamentalist strategy that often resulted in violence. That is, the root groups implemented undemocratic forms of dialectics as they were not tolerant of others and saw no prospect of enrichment in taking into consideration the themes and cultures of the other groups that were present in society.

The choice of an approach that reflects assimilation or merger or pluralism corresponds to the political vision of a society. Democratic societies today have a pluralistic approach (cultural pluralism). This does not mean that there are no major problems for implementation in daily practices. The pluralistic vision is based on the concept of full equality of individuals from which it follows the elimination of the barriers determined by belonging to both the majority and minority groups.

The concept of equality between men is an integral part of human rights which are a pillar of all the constitutions of democratic nations. Nonetheless, in the current cultural debate there is the possibility of maintaining barriers and differences as it is supported with different motivations both by those who believe in the value of mixing cultural pluralism and those who are afraid of it. The positive social values of tolerance and integration can be recalled at the basis of a hybridization strategy as well as one of reaffirming the differences.

The set of these contradictions, reported in the terms of the current debate, can be read as the

consolidation of "differentialist racism". This form of racism rejects the category of race on a biological basis (classical racism), but emphasizes the cultural (ethnic) differences with which the idea of coexistence is associated more or less as possible between them.

Differentialist racism is not only operated by the majority group but can also be done by minority groups as the BPPs did towards their society. So if up to the mid-1900's racism was only possible by white men (as it is based on biology) today we are witnessing forms of racism on the contrary, that is, by the minority groups that impose, without wanting to find any form agree, their views to the majority.

The deliberative policies of democratic nations implemented over the past sixty years have tried to mitigate as much as possible the discrimination suffered by some minority groups in society by the majority group.

Giovanni Sartori defines deliberative laws as:

Corrective and compensatory policy designed to create, or seek, equal opportunities, that is, equal starting positions for all. Therefore the objective of the affirmative actions is to cancel the differences that disadvantage and then restore the difference blindness of the law equal for all. So the goal still remains the "undifferentiated citizen (Sartori, 2000:73).

From the 1960's to the mid-1980's, in the United States was made programs for the integration of the various ethnic groups of the American society. These programs were based on the concept of color blindness which is:

The term color blindness express the idea of a non racial society wherein skin colour is no have consequence for individual life chances or governmental policy. Central tenets of colour blindness included non discrimination, due process, equally of opportunity, and equal protection of rights under the law. (Schaefer, 2008:320).

For example, in public schools were dictated that in the primary and secondary school classes no was permitted predominance of an ethnic group but that all the ethnic groups residing in that region should also be present (on a percentage basis).

In New York, public school students were subject to long journeys between one district and another in the city so that classes were made up of the various ethnic groups in the city.

In those years in the Bronx there was a very high crime rate compared to the other districts of the city. This differentiation was reflected in the

interaction between students from the Bronx and those from other districts. This differentiation was due to a prejudice. The bronxites were considered violent and dangerous. The colour blindness policies actually conflict fully with Allport's contact theory as the students did not have a status (similar socioeconomic) and did not have prior direct knowledge. In everyday practice this led to heated quarrels among students from the Bronx with those from other districts. These school policies have brought about a negative effect or the birth of *re-segregation*:

The tendency of individuals to seek mainly the company of their own kind and to oppose more or less explicitly to the various cooperative integration programs (Mazzara, 1996:178).

Today, fifty years later, there are many studies on the negative effect that this type of policy has had (Donnor, 2013).

4. EUROPE AND POSSIBLE EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION POLICIES

The example of the Unites Stated social policies allows us today to be able to identify which are the winning and losing strategies for good social integration. At the same time, social psychology has shown which scientific elements produce positive contact between groups. Nevertheless today we have problem for the establishment of valid social integration policies. The problem previously mentioned can be traced back to two factors: little attention to the errors committed by certain social policies and the lack of consideration of the social sciences for the benefit of an ideological interpretation of scientific data and the foundations of human rights. In 1969 Sartori wrote:

In the other terms, we are required to conceive ideology as a dimension or an aspect of politics which may, or may not, be found to apply to real world. For this purpose ideological politics will be opposed her to pragmatic politics, i.e. , pragmatism will be used as a designation for non-ideology (Sartori, 1969:399).

The possible social policies reflect the conception that the various states have of the concept of multiculturalism. Sartori argued that two visions of multiculturalism can be given. A first view of multiculturalism is understood as a fact that simply records the multiplicity of various cultures. In this sense, multiculturalism does not

pose problems for a pluralist conception of the world. Multiculturalism is understood as one of the possible historical representations of pluralism. But if multiculturalism is given a (priority) value,

then the discussion changes and the problem there is. The problem arise because in this case pluralism and multiculturalism immediately enter a collision course (Sartori, 2000, p. 56).

More multiculturalism does not automatically mean more pluralism. If a given society is culturally heterogeneous, the term pluralism incorporates it as such. But if a society is not, pluralism does not feel obliged to multi-culturalize it. Pluralism values diversity and considers it enriching. But it does not imply that diversity is to be increased, and it certainly does not imply that the best possible way is a diversified world in ever increasing diversification. Pluralism arises from the concept of tolerance. The latter concept does not exalt the high and the otherness: it accepts them. This means that pluralism defends but also slows down diversity (Zanfarino, 1985).

Pluralism urges that much assimilation that is needed to create integration. Furthermore, being tolerant, pluralism is not aggressive and is not warlike. But if in a peaceful way it fights disintegration.

A second vision of multiculturalism is a neo-Marxist theoretical vision of English and French origin that has established itself in colleges, universities, with the introduction of Cultural Studies.

The result of this vision has had two distinct results over time:

1. In the 1970's and 1980' there was a negating conception of pluralism developed through ethnocentric theories (Diop, 1974).

2. At the end of the 1980s was developed social theories that sustained that the different ethnicities could have a democratic dialectic in the society and at the same maintain of the culture of origin.

The most recent theories such as that of Benhabib are very accurate from a theoretical formal point of view but difficult to implement in practice. (Hughes, 1993).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Nowadays, in order to create social policies that support integration, we have the opportunity to take advantage of both tested scientific instruments of social psychology, and examples of previous social policies, whether successful or unsuccessful, made in various countries of the world.

We could be inferred that the difficulty that exists in establishing social policies that are effective is not due to science, but to the ideological approach by those who govern the legislative framework. The question we ask ourselves is that if science is subject to interpretation, how can it be possible to create inclusion policies that are really necessary and not just ideological.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Allport, G.W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
2. Amerio, P. (1995). *Fondamenti Teorici di Psicologia Sociale*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
3. Benvenuti, A. (1986) *Cinquant'anni fa il graffio all'America delle Pantere nere*. Rome: Il Manifesto.
4. Brown, R. (2011). *Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups*. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell.
5. Cliehres, I. (2009). *Multiculturalism in Historical Perspective*. Pisa: CLIORESS.
6. De Carvalho, R.J. (1993). Gordon W. Allport on the Nature of Prejudice. *Psychological Reports*. no. 72. 299-308.
7. Diop, C.H. (1974). *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*. Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books.
8. Donnor, K. (2013). *The Resegregation of Schools: Education and Race in the Twenty-First Century*. London, New York: Routledge.
9. Horsman, R. (1997). The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism. In R. Delgado, *Critical White Studies*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
10. Hughes, R. (1993). *The culture of Complaint*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
11. Kallen, H.M. (1924). *Cultura and Democracy in the United States*. New York: Boni & Livergh.
12. Kennedy, R. (1989). Martin Luther King's Constitution: A Legal History of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. *The Yale Law Journal*. Vol. 98, no. 6.
13. Kennedy, R.L. (1989). Racial Critiques of Legal Academia. *Harvard Law Review*. Vol. 102, no.8.
14. Mammarella, G. (1986). *L'America da Roosevelt a Reagan. Storia degli Stati Uniti dal 1939 a Oggi*. Bari: Laterza.

15. Mazzara, B.M. (1996). *Appartenenza e Pregiudizio*. Roma: La Nuova Italia Scientifica.
16. McDougal, W. (1908). *Social Psychology*. London: Metuen & Co.
17. Murphy, G.; Murphy, Barclay; Murphy L. & Newcomb, T.M. (1937). *Experimental Social Psychology*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers.
18. Myrdal, G. (1944). *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. London: Harper & Brother Publisher.
19. Pettigrew, F.T. & Tropp, L.R. (2006). A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Vol. 90, no. 5. 751–783.
20. Ross, E. (1908). *Social Psychology: An Outline and Sourcebook*. New York: Macmillan.
21. Sartori, G. (2000). *Pluralismo, Multiculturalismo e Estranei*. Milano: Rizzoli.
22. Sartori, G. (1969). Politics, Ideology, and Belief Systems. *The American Political Science Review*. Vol. 63, no. 2. 398-411.
23. Schaefer, R.T. (2008). *Race, Ethnicity and Society*. London: SAGE Publication.
24. Tocqueville, A. (1982). *La democrazia in America*. Milano: Rizzoli.
25. Zanzarino, A. (1985). *Pensiero Politico e Coscienza Storica*. Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane.