

Virtual Session 6 English: SOCIO-POLITICAL ISSUE FOR COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY 2

Time: Saturday, 24/Sept/2022: 1:30pm - 3:00pm- Location: Space Room (virtual)

Opportunities and Challenges in Social Connectedness Between a Palestinian Bedouin and an Israeli Jew

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Social connectedness is essential in human development, and one of the ways to establish this is through friendship. In an era of globalisation, intercultural encounters are rising, and thus the possibility for intercultural social connectedness and friendship increases. Intercultural friendship provides excellent opportunities for bringing more understanding between people of different cultural communities and for personal growth, despite their habitually frustrating challenges.

This autoethnographic study focuses on the interface between interculturality and friendship. It does so in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, an environment that is not conducive to social connectedness between Arabs and Jews. The presenter, a Jewish Israeli man of Dutch origin, investigated his friendship with a Palestinian Bedouin man through the lens of stories of friendship he had collected for three years. After working through the stories' texts with his Bedouin friend, he analysed them from the theoretical perspective of Hofstede's (initial) four cultural dimensions, namely individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity/femininity.

The study showed that the respective cultures in which both men grew up are far apart on all four dimensions, and the cultural differences as they appear in the friendship were tremendous in each. The differences are in line with Hofstede's theory for three of the cultural dimensions, or value orientations, but in the field of "uncertainty avoidance," they conflict with the theory. To remain connected as friends, they needed to bridge these differences, which involved emotional, cognitive, and behavioural challenges. Nonetheless, the friendship flourished despite social pressures, while the study became an integral and increasingly significant part of the friendship.

The presentation will explain the friendship's challenges in each cultural dimension and illustrate these through stories, some of which are relaxed and others are thrilling. The stories exemplify themes such as work attitudes, taking risks, being a man, and honour and dignity. It also will discuss possible implications for personal growth.

Promoting social inclusion and connectedness: Ally efforts to combat microaggressions

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Many workplaces are looking for innovative approaches to enhancing equity and inclusion in their organizations, because it allows them to more fully utilize all available talent and because a diversity of perspectives has been shown to be helpful to the success of organizations. In addition to developing inclusive policies and procedures for documenting bias and harassment, many efforts toward equity goals focus on the provision of diversity-related trainings. However, research about the efficacy and long-term impact of policies and workshops has yielded inconsistent results. As a result, particularly around efforts toward workplace equity and inclusion, many have advocated for more systemic approaches that not only address specific transgressions and/or individual skill sets but also promote more inclusive organizational norms and cultures. Many researchers argue that buy-in and active involvement of peers can promote a more system-wide impact and embed organizational changes through active individual advocacy and broad support in the organization.

To explore this issue, we analyzed a university-based institutional transformation project that brought together a group of faculty members committed to serving as active allies toward building a more diverse, equitable and inclusive culture at their institution. The case study illustrates how intentional, systematic planning can help organizations harness the energy of willing allies who are motivated to support change. The focus of the study was the development of a peer-to-peer approach, Equity Leaders (ELs), that was part of a bigger, multi-level organization change effort at a U.S.-based university that included personal, interpersonal, and structural considerations. Through initiatives at these different levels of analysis, the overarching goal was to shift social norms and promote collective actions to reduce the expression of daily biases and, thereby, reduce barriers facing faculty from underrepresented groups in the academic workplace. The Equity Leaders functioned as internal change agents who not only conducted DEI trainings, but also served as role models and disseminate DEI-related information and knowledge.

Using interviews and observations, we examined how organizations can design a process that links overarching organizational change goals with efforts to enlist members to be full participants in achieving the targeted cultural change. The authors were participant conceptualizers, who also conducted 8 interviews with current and past ELs. In this presentation, we will summarize findings about what motivated the ELs to take on the work, what barriers and challenges they faced in their roles, and what they believed enabled them to be effective. We will also present findings from complementary studies that demonstrated the positive impact of the overall initiative. We use this case example to identify how ally involvement can sustainably combat bias and shift organizational values and attitudes around inclusion in organizations.

Working through digital platforms: between a glimpse of the future and a return to the past

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More and more people are working through digital platforms and this trend may have been accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. During the last two years, people changed their patterns of consumption, many newly unemployed registered as platform workers, and companies deepened their digital processes. As such, platformisation is expected to play a leading role in the ongoing capitalism's metamorphosis. More than a mere change in the way producers and consumers are connected, we're facing a change in work organisation, one based on algorithmic management, digital surveillance and worker atomisation. The truly disruptive element of platform capitalism may not be the app itself, but the way work is being reorganised through the blackbox behind it: workers are no longer employees but entrepreneurs of themselves, i.e., the self as a start-up; they must guarantee the means of production and take all the

risks; nonetheless, platforms are the ones who define prices, rates, commissions, procedures, orders, sanctions, and control all the information.

Knowing that no work organisation is psychologically innocuous, the question of better understanding platformed work characteristics and their psychosocial impact arises. Therefore, we conducted a qualitative and exploratory investigation in Portugal, inspired by a critical and community perspective. Twenty platformed couriers and drivers were interviewed, information to administrators of WhatsApp groups were requested and a press review on the subject was carried out.

From the information gathered it was possible to perceive that, under platformed organisation, and contrarily to what was argued in the dawn of the neoliberal era, work hasn't lost its centrality. Instead, it has become totalising. Precarity, lack of labour contracts and low income constrain the platformed labour force to work more and more hours. As a result, work monopolises workers' time and colonises the space of other activities. Even moments of leisure or rest are translated into anguish, anxiety and feelings of personal inadequacy.

The lack of work quality jeopardises the access to its psychological functions or latent benefits. Indeed, psychological functions traditionally associated with work – such as time structuring, social relationships broadening, activity impelling, collective purpose, status and identity or the construction of a genre of work – seem to be absent, or, at least, not fully available, when we analyse the experience of working through digital platforms.

Furthermore, algorithmic management hinders workers' autonomy and control over their own job and work. This jeopardises social and technical recognition, which, in turn, will impede an identity construction. To exercise some control, workers develop strategies, although many of them can be seen as self-defeating and self-exploiting.

As we stand at a crossroad between a glimpse of the future and a return to the past, we must acknowledge that the organisation developed from digital platforms poses serious risks to the worker and to work as a whole. Discussing these risks, measures to prevent them and ways to fight against further work deregulation is, not only a need but a demand. This investigation and the debate that follows is a stepping-stone on this path.

Fostering social inclusion in the Berica and Scaligera areas: a study on individuals carriers of fragilities.

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The Covid-19 pandemic has greatly affected the social fabric of Italy. One of the main factors increasing citizens' social exclusion is the inability to access the labor market. Especially for those who are framed as "fragile individuals" (i.e., minors, old people, people with disabilities, and citizens at risk of social exclusion or deviance) finding and keeping a job is now increasingly difficult. In the light of these considerations, research was conducted, in collaboration with Veneto Region, with the aim to investigate how the territory's network acts to prevent the social exclusion of fragile individuals, through projects aimed at job placement. The main purpose was to introduce the basis for starting a process of raising the awareness of organizations operating in social inclusion activities, in order to plan empowerment policies in support of fragile individuals. Forty public and private organizations operating in Verona and Vicenza were involved. The expected outputs were (A) to return a picture of the services to date active in employability, (B) to identify the strengths and weaknesses of these services, and (C) to identify potential areas and modes of intervention aimed at fostering an improvement in these services. Data were collected through the implementation of three purpose-built instruments (i.e., self-report questionnaire, semi-structured interview, and compilation scheme). The research activities included seven phases: 1) Territorial context analysis, 2) Development of the data collection instruments, 3) Communication to the participants of the survey launch, 4) Administration of the questionnaire and compilation scheme, 5) Administration of the semi-structured interview, 6) Data processing and analysis, and 7) Return and dissemination of the outputs. The results made it possible to identify the categories that were found to be at the greatest risk of labor and social exclusion in the areas investigated (i.e., women with dependent children and non-EU immigrants). In addition, the results confirmed the need to implement new methods and tools to strengthen the service network and enable fragile individuals, based on their personal characteristics and those of the labor market, to obtain and maintain employment. In particular, the need to adopt new evaluation tools in line with the new demands of citizens, and a shared database to monitor their path was revealed. In addition, the need was expressed for the establishment of a community of practice formed by the network committee representatives to enable the sharing of knowledge and expertise for improved service delivery. In other words, our findings highlight the need for action on social and employment inclusion, especially for those who are disadvantaged due to their physical, mental, or social characteristics. In response to post-pandemic challenges, it is, therefore, necessary to turn more attention to citizens and their specific needs, renewing active policies in the face of new changes in society.

Transforming colorism & racism in elementary school education in Puerto Rico

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The pioneering textbook *Arrancando Mitos de Raíz: Guía para una Enseñanza Antirracista de la herencia africana en Puerto Rico* (Pulling-up myths from the roots: A guide for an anti-racist teaching approach of African Heritage in Puerto Rico) was published in early 2013. It is intended to assist in educating teachers, university students, social workers, educational policy makers, psychologists, and generally anyone interested in combating racism in Puerto Rico. This book is the result of an applied anthropology, social psychology, and interdisciplinary social-science research project entitled, "Beyond the Self: Towards an Integral Approach to an Anti-racist Pedagogy in Elementary Education," conducted by a group of colleagues from the Institute of Interdisciplinary Research at the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey. Findings from the study revealed that racism was pervasive in schools. At the institutional level, we found that curricular materials and lessons taught students 5 recurrent and specific myths about Africa, the African heritage, and blackness in Puerto Rico. These five myths are: (1) Africa is a poor, primitive place of little importance in the world; (2) slaves were passive victims of slavery; (3) all black persons in Puerto Rico were slaves prior to the abolition of slavery; (4) the contributions of our African heritage are limited to music, folklore and hard labor; (5) in Puerto Rico, the majority of black persons disappeared as a result of race mixing or *mestizaje*. In conclusion, we propose to a) decolonize academia by denouncing anti-Black racism and other forms of oppression such as sexism and classism; b) foster pride about African heritage by promoting positive attachment to blackness and the African heritage among school age children; c) build a critical consciousness around the ways in which blackness has historically been associated with inferiority and whiteness with superiority, and to help diminish the effects of racism among students; and d) enforce structural changes through policies of inclusion.