

## AN INTERCULTURAL APPROACH TO THE HIDDEN PARADIGMS OF CULTURE. THE ELABORATION OF A MODEL OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ANALYSIS APPLIED TO THE CONTEXT OF THE VALLE D'AOSTA REGION

**Maria Giovanna Onorati**

*University of Valle d'Aosta, Faculty of Education, Str. dei Cappuccini 1, Aosta (Italy); m.onorati@univda.it*

**Francesco Domenico d'Ovidio**

*University of Bari, Faculty of Economics, via C. Rosalba 53, 70124 Bari (Italy); fasefd@dss.uniba.it*

### *Summary*

*This article presents an analysis conducted from an intercultural perspective of the processes of cultural change, taking place within a specific regional context. The analysis is based on the elaboration of a structural model (LISREL) which starts, through an explorative factorial analysis, from the existing orientation of values expressed in terms of agreement, preferences and aspirations, under the guidelines of Hofstede's intercultural model. The structural model, creating dimensional indexes of culture with a good likelihood level, allows to reach hidden paradigms of the culture that lie behind the declared values and influence those of the future.*

**Keywords:** *Intercultural accommodation; Hidden paradigms; Emerging values; Hofstede model; Structural equations model*

### **1. BACKGROUND**

The data presented here are the result of a research conducted in Valle d'Aosta, an alpine region of the North of Italy (Onorati and Bracciale 2007), with the aim of defining the emergence of new values produced by a process of interaction/integration which in many cases is spontaneous and comes from below, among different cultural backgrounds owing to the ever more heterogeneous and multiethnic composition of the society examined.

Through the creation of a model of analysis largely inspired by that developed by the Dutch sociologist Geert Hofstede (Hofstede, 1998, 2001, 2003), based on the elaboration of dimensional indexes of culture, we have attempted to illuminate not so much the specific characteristics of the migrants' community of origin as those of the host society. The latter is, in fact, anything but neutral, and acts as a distorting mirror for the migrant, who finds in it an image of himself that (largely due to the anticipatory role of the experience played by the media) is often stigmatized and deformed into stereotypes and prejudices, which, in turn, play a crucial role in the process of redefining the identity not only of the new arrivals, but also of the hosts.

Adopting an intercultural perspective implies a process of cultural decentralization (Cohen-Emerique, 1990). This involves consciously viewing oneself and one's socio-cultural background through "other" eyes, identifying at the basis of relations with others underlying paradigms of action and forms of socially determined pre-understanding, for a cultural revision that integrates old and new.

Therefore, with the prospect of bringing about inclusive and non-discriminating models of integration (Cesareo, 2004: 118) and, in more general terms, the "reflexive modernization" which Beck, Giddens and Lash would like to see (Beck - Giddens - Lash 1994), it becomes particularly important to elaborate a *reflexive* model, capable of measuring as objectively as possible the way in which different cultures come into contact with and modify each other. It is consequently of importance to shed light not only on the explicative factors (opinions, judgments, preferences expressed, behaviour, etc.), but also on those which are implicit, the so-called "hidden paradigms" of the culture (Hall, 1968), factors of culturally determined pre-understanding, which underlie more informal and visible behaviour towards others (native and non-native) on the part of the host culture, which is inevitably the majority and is therefore destined to provide the dominant codes.

From an inclusive perspective that aims to favour the emergence of negotiated codes, it is therefore essential to understand what are the shared values, convictions and myths that lie behind the codes adopted by the majority of those belonging to the society in which the immigrants find themselves, but above all what potential there is for flexibility and integration within the value frameworks of the majority when they come into contact with those which are brought by minority groups. There is a consequent need to subject the values to studies and research on an institutional level in order to define and monitor the changes in the collective consciousness that are determined within the host society as a result of its ever more marked multiethnic composition.

The data published by the main Italian demoscopic organizations indicate a growing presence of foreigners in Valle d'Aosta (the region studied here). This presence is characterized by a tendency to territorial settlement and entry into the labour market. According to ISTAT and *Caritas* (cf. Annual Report ISTAT 2006 and Caritas 2006), more than 5000 were legally registered in 2006, representing 4% of the entire Valle d'Aosta population, and of these 993 were minors (19.9% of the foreigners present and 5.8% of the minors in the whole region); 76.8% of the adults were aged between 19 and 60.

The immigrants in Valle d'Aosta also include a significant number of females. Women represent 50.2% of the immigrants, a slightly higher figure than the national one of 49.9% (cf. ISTAT 2006 and Caritas 2006). Therefore, in order to evaluate the effects of this transformed demographic condition on the systems of values in a small region like Valle d'Aosta, it was decided to perfect the abovementioned instrument of analysis, beginning with the administration via CATI of a questionnaire to a sample of 604 persons from the Valle d'Aosta population aged between 18 and 65. The questionnaire was composed of 33 questions aiming to explore the principle aspects of the culture affected by the transformed ethnic composition and with this to outline the emerging system of values from an intercultural perspective (cf. Onorati – Bacciale, *op. cit.*).

## **2. METHODOLOGY OF INVESTIGATION**

The analysis described in this article began from a subset of questions more limited with respect to that used on the Valle d'Aosta population sample. In fact, the model excluded all the socio-demographic variables as well as those relating to the educational background, occupational situation and eventual migratory experience of the interviewee. We limited ourselves to including in the model of factorial reduction only 22 variables concerning subjective opinions on different aspects of the common cultural substrate and relating to the four dimensions explored by Hofstede on which we based the construction of the items: *Power distance*, *Individualism*, *Masculinity*, *Uncertainty avoidance* (for the indicators see Hofstede 2001 and 2003).

The replies are based on a verbal scale of 4 modalities, with formulations that run from “no agreement” to “little agreement”, “some agreement” and “complete agreement”. A neutral reply is not foreseen, nor is the reply “don't know” (which frequently represents a convenient way of avoiding giving opinions), but there is the possibility of not replying; this possibility, while it has the same significance as the intermediate position, does not in reality appear as such to the interviewee, and can

presumably induce a greater number of subjects to provide a reply, whether it be positive or negative.

For this reason, in the analysis we decided to safeguard the ordinal character of the evaluation by including the missing replies in the intermediate position and shifting the last two formulations so that the scale of evaluation is expressed in 5 points, with the neutral position corresponding with the third modality.

On the basis of the replies provided by the interviewees, transformed with the Torgenson scaling method (1958), an explorative factorial analysis was carried out to isolate the latent variables best able to explain the attitudes observed in the sample and, by extension, in the Valle d'Aosta population as a whole. In the course of this analysis, some aspects with a share of less than 50% were seen to be scarcely correlated with the common factorial space and were therefore excluded from the subsequent analysis. Seven factors were initially identified that can explain more than 60% of the overall variability.

The results of this explorative analysis were considered as an indication toward the definition of a LISREL confirmatory model, according to which the multiple relations that are installed between the observed and latent variables are traced to a small number of direct effects, or rather, every *item* is considered as the expression in the real world of one latent variable alone (Cf. Jöreskog 1977, Jöreskog & Sörbom 1984, Corbetta 2005)<sup>1</sup>. As is often the case, this operation led to a loss of representativeness in many of the relations provisionally identified and, consequently, to the exclusion of further *items* and the reformulation of the structure of latent variables.

Although the confirmatory factorial model is of great interest and merits further academic study, it is no longer possible in social sciences to limit studies to simple analyses of correlation, but it is necessary to ask oneself whether some aspects can be considered to derive from others, as a result of mechanisms that cannot be observed directly. Therefore, this article will concentrate principally on the subsequent step: a causal model (which is in any case very similar to the factorial one from which it derives) that involves the latent factors of the intercultural identified here.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Operationally, the analysis was conducted by means of the programme SPSS-AMOS r. 7.0, verifying the results with LISREL r. 8.5. With the only constraint being the unitary variance of the latents, the method applied for the calculation of the coefficients was that of generalized minimum squares; this is more robust than the maximum plausibility method when applied to non-normally distributed observed variables. In the final verification, for greater robustness with respect to the applicative conditions of LISREL, the model was also recalculated utilizing Browne's ADF method (Asymptotically Distribution Free) (1982), obtaining almost identical results to those described and an equal level of approximation.*

The best model resulting from the operations briefly described is formed by 15 observed variables, the concrete expression of four latent variables which, as shown in the structural path analysis of Figure 1, are very close to the four dimensions of Hofstede. The most plausible causal relationship is that, in addition to acting directly on some of the behaviour observed, two of the latent factors identified may in turn influence *comunitarism*, a typical and traditional characteristic of Valle d’Aosta culture (for the evolution of comunitarism in Valle d’Aosta, cf. Cuaz in Onorati – Bracciale 2007: 22-30).

According to most of the fit indexes proposed in the scientific literature (i.e., Bollen 1989, Corbetta 2005), the model identified is a very good one: above all, the discrepancy function related to the his own degrees of freedom is  $\hat{C} / g = 1.2$ , a value that is even lower than the restrictive value proposed by Byrne (1989: 55); other commonly used indexes, including the *Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index* (AGFI=0.97), the *Incremental Fit Index* (IFI=0.94) and the *Tucker Lewis Index* (TLI=0.91), appear no less favourable, 1 being the best value. Also the *Root Mean Square Error of Approximation* is very good (RMSEA=0.02, when an optimal model has RMSEA<0.05).

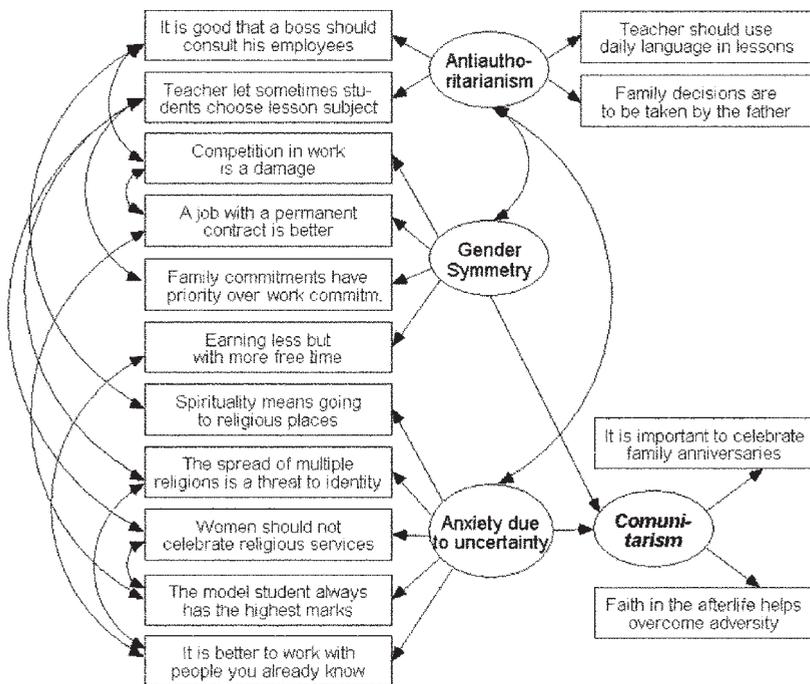


Fig. 1: Structural Model of the interculture in Valle d’Aosta.

### 3. INTERCULTURAL TENDENCE IN VALLE D'AOSTA AND UNDERLYING CAUSAL RELATIONS

In the population interviewed the behaviour noted which most significantly depend on the factorial structure is prevalently to be traced to the influence of three latent factors, specifically *anxiety due to uncertainty*, *non-gender discrimination* and a factor which, while it has connotations similar to the Hofstedian dimension of *individualism*, in the context of the Valle d'Aosta is represented above all in terms of the relationship with religious faith and with the family (with tradition therefore) and as such it is better described by the (opposite) concept of *comunitarism*.

These factors are built into hidden paradigmatic structures that form the "hard core" of the culture of Valle d'Aosta. Anti-authoritarianism, a factor which in Hofstede's model was presented in terms of power distance, in this context is revealed as a more marginal element, linked to the other latent factors, but without influencing them in a significant way and, above all, not directly connected to the factor of comunitarism.

**Tab. 1: Factorial weights of the identified model (measurement model).**

<i>Latent variables</i>	<i>Observable variables (opinions expressed)</i>	<i>w</i>
f1- <b>Antiauthoritarianism</b>	→ D4- In the families of origin all decisions are to be taken by father	-0.12
	→ D11- Sometimes teachers should let students choose the lesson subjects	0.81
	→ D13- The teacher should use everyday language in lessons	0.23
	→ D16- A boss must consult the employees	-0.22
f2- <b>Gender symmetry</b>	→ D7- Family commitments have priority over work commitments	0.43
	→ D18- It is better to earn less but to have more free time	0.39
	→ D19- Competition in work is damaging	0.24
	→ D20- To work well, it is better to have a permanent contract	0.15
f3- <b>Anxiety due to uncertainty</b>	→ D10- The model student always has the highest marks	0.20
	→ D17- It is better to work with people who already know each other	0.21
	→ D21- The spread of multiple religions is a threat to identity	0.39
	→ D22- Spirituality means going to religious places	0.71
f4- <b>Comunitarism (faith and tradition)</b>	→ D24- Women should not celebrate religious services	0.28
	→ D6- It is important to celebrate special family occasions	0.27
	→ D23- Faith in the afterlife helps overcome adversity	0.74

Table 1 shows the standardized factorial weights of the observed variables<sup>2</sup>, indicating how much each variable observed “depends” on (is directly influenced by) the latent factor identified. In particular, “**anxiety due to uncertainty**” is shown to be a complex factor, linked to a large number of behaviour forms distributed over various spheres of social action, with a prevalence in the religious sphere. Indeed, among the variables most heavily influenced by this factor the one with the greatest factorial weight (0.71), D22, aims to investigate the relationship between spirituality and observance of the commandments, just as the factor which certainly has the lowest (but equally significant) factorial weight, (0.39), D21, is also focalized on the perception of a threat to identity due to the spread of different religions.

It is therefore clear that uncertainty avoidance is one of the crucial paradigms needing to understand the cultural setting of present-day Valle d’Aosta. This is primarily linked to the way in which, while it is not weakened, the deep-rooted religious sense of the population is changing, and secondarily, but in a way that is no less significant, it is also shown to be linked to the sense of uncertainty perceived in the contexts of work and education.

In the context explored the possession of spirituality is shown to be a condition of the individual that is ever more separate from the observation of the commandments, that is to say from a faith filtered by organized religion and public behaviours exhibited for the community. The average value associated with the replies given to question 22 is lower than 2, and in fact more than 70% of the replies are concentrated on the negative formulations (no agreement” and “little agreement”), expressing a very high level of disagreement with the idea that the possession of spirituality coincides with the observation of the rules of a religion.

A similar tendency is also shown by variable 21 concerning the sense of the threat to identity attributed to the spread of religions other than Catholicism: also in this case the replies given show average values of less than 2, with 63.4% of the replies concentrated on judgements that express disagreement.

While Question 24 is also related to the religious sphere, it also refers to another dimension of culture, that of the division of roles on the basis of gender, and indicates the low masculinity which is a dominant cultural orientation in the context explored. This question relates uncertainty avoidance with the exclusion of women from exercising ecclesiastical functions (and therefore from an ecclesiastical career).

---

<sup>2</sup> In LISREL terminology, this table defines the measurement models of the latent variables, in that it allows the latter to be expressed on the basis of the values observed in some visible aspects.

The intention of this question is to evaluate how far this gender discrimination, consolidated in Catholicism as in other monotheistic religions, is perceived as unjust. The replies given reveal a marked concentration of negative replies, indicating a high level of disagreement with that discrimination. This *item* is a “problematic” one, in which the levels of evasiveness of the replies (the central position in which we grouped the non-replies and the “don’t knows”) are very high (more than 11% of the sample).

Anxiety due to uncertainty also manifests its complexity and trend in progress in the field of school education: more than 68% of the interviewees declare they do not agree with an educational model directed towards “excellence”. Also in this case, the average values associated with the replies given are low, confirming a low uncertainty avoidance in relation to the system of evaluation and scholastic recognition: a system of evaluation that is not directed towards excellence must necessarily be based on more flexible and multidimensional parameters.

The latent factor *anxiety due to uncertainty* also influences certain behaviour forms in the area of work: the model allows a glimpse of the trend towards a lessening of this anxiety, expressed by growing individualism which, as outlined by Parsons (1970), is displayed as a preponderant “universalistic” and “self-oriented” orientation in working relations, with scarce consideration for the specific system of preexisting relations between the parties involved and the interests shared by the community to which they may belong.

In this regard, the preference expressed by variable 17 for working with people who already know each other, that is the level of personalism, in a context as small and self-sufficient as that of the Valle d’Aosta, is revealed in reality as a figure that is evolving towards negative values. With 56% of the replies concentrated in the side of disagreement and average reply values of 2.30, and with only 1.2% non-replies, it indicates the trend towards a turnaround in an individualistic and universalistic direction, and it is not by chance that this is taking place in the setting of work which is strongly affected by the presence of legal immigrants and which represents an area with a new negotiability of roles and organizational strategies (Bracciale- Onorati, 2007: 95).

Anxiety due to uncertainty is, therefore, a complex factor that is linked to various contexts of sociality and is evidently in the course of being redefined. Not by chance, this transformation is expressed in those very contexts of socialization (education, work, religiosity) that are most directly affected by the multiethnic composition of context in question; Valle d’Aosta, where, as we have seen, immigration is well established.

Another determining factor for the principle behaviour forms observed is that

which we have called “*gender symmetry*”, understood, following Hofstede, as **non-masculinity**, taking this term to mean a low tendency in the society investigated to discriminate according to gender, or to make a net and rigid separation of socially defined roles according to gender. Behind this dimension there lies the concept of “gender identity” in the sense widely developed by *gender studies*, which no longer identify genetic makeup as the source of the discriminator of the roles associated with male and female identity, but rather a number of psychological, and behavioural factors, together with the personal and social aspirations which make male and female into socio-cultural categories and not biological objectivities (Bonino – Reffeiuina, 1999: 171; Braidotti – Cavarero, 1993: 83).

By “masculinity” Hofstede means not merely a projection of identity, but that rigid and artificial discrimination between female and male roles which, as a precise result of that rigidity (asserted in the name of a presumed “universalism”), refers to an asymmetrical (unequal) relationship (and therefore a relationship of power) between the sexes, in which there is a dominant figure, the male, characterized by strength, aggressiveness, determination and competitiveness, all qualities which make for a figure “naturally” destined to dominate the public sphere, and a subordinate figure, the female, characterized by vulnerability, tenderness and absence of ambition, relegated to perform caring roles within the private and domestic spheres (Hofstede, 1998 and Hofstede 2001: 280). Although these separations may be defined differently and with different degrees of discrimination, they are to be found to some extent in all societies.

The spheres of action immediately affected by this underlying component are obviously those of work and the family, the spheres in which this distinction of gender roles is mainly exercised. What clearly emerges in Valle d’Aosta is the priority of the family over work. We can agree with Inglehart that there is a marked trend towards post-materialistic values, favouring the quality of life and sociality rather than materialistic values linked to ambition, earning and personal success (Inglehart, 1998: 149-188).

Hofstede renames the polarization of the materialistic ethics of challenge and success on one hand and those of the quality of life and personal care of others on the other, in terms of masculinity versus femininity (cf. Hofstede, 2001: 281 and Onorati-Bracciale 2007: 63-64).

In Valle d’Aosta, the marked importance attributed to these values, reveals a remarkable new combination between old familistic matriarchal values typical of alpine culture (Zucca 2000 and 2004), and specifically post-modern tendencies which, as indicated by Inglehart, are linked to long term needs leaning towards the quality of life.

The two variables most closely correlated with the factor “gender symmetry” are those which explore the priority given to family commitments over those of work and the agreement with the idea that it is better to earn a little more so as to have a job that allows more free time. In both cases there is a clearly positive tendency to the replies, indicating a high level of agreement and of priority attributed to family commitments (D7) and free time compared to earnings (D18); in fact the reply values associated with these two variables are almost the same, with average values of 3.28 and 3.26 for the respective replies given, and with 89.9% of the replies concentrated on the formulations “some agreement” and “complete agreement” (with only 2.8% non-replies) in the case of D7, and 87.2% of replies concentrated on the formulations “some agreement” and “complete agreement” (with only 3% of non-replies) in the case of D18.

An equally marked trend, though with a lower factorial weight than the two previous variables observed, is indicated by the variable D19, which is also directly associated with the factor of non-discrimination between the sexes. The question explores the level of agreement of the people of Valle d’Aosta interviewed with the ethics of challenge and competition at work, which Hofstede associates with “masculinity”.

From the replies given it is clear that as many as 66.3% of the interviewees agree with the idea that competition at work does more harm than good. This reply trend is indicative of a productive model which is not very dynamic, probably owing to the typical welfare-orientated background of an autonomistic context characterized by a regionalism that goes to the limit of the self-referentiality of the productive system, suggests a possible openness to values not linked to egoistic needs for immediate fulfillment typical of materialistic societies

As we have already seen, this marked non-discriminatory tendency between the two sexes in the working context of Valle d’Aosta, definable in Hofstede’s terms as “non-masculinity”, is confirmed by its uncompetitive character and rejection of the ethics of success, also by the replies to variable D20, indicative of a marked preference for a temporary contract as a condition for working better. On this point more than half of the sample interviewed were in “complete agreement”, indicating an approach to work favouring stability and above all the need to be in harmony with the other spheres of life.

The factor defined as “*antiauthoritarianism*” (*low power distance*) is prevalently referred to the sphere of education, since two of the variables directly linked to it (one of which, D11, is very close to representing a structural variable) are related to the more or less authoritarian role which a teacher must assume with respect to the wishes of the students and to the choice of the type of languages

utilized in didactic activity.

These two variables express a change of direction which is taking place away from an authoritarian teacher who is remote from young peoples' everyday experiences of informal learning, and especially those which involve the communicative sphere.

The variable most strongly influenced by this latent factor is D11, which has a factorial weight (0.81) close to the maximum allowed by this model (1). The intention of this variable is to explore the degree of agreement with a teacher sometimes leaving to the students the possibility of choosing the subject of the lesson. This possibility is indicative of a tendency that is individualistic, in that it leaves room for initiative on the part of students, and in doing so encourages curiosity and experience of life; but which is also antiauthoritarian in that it tends to "dethrone" the teacher by obliging him to come down from his pedestal. It refocuses the learning process no longer on the source (the teacher) but on the recipient (the student) and on the processes of reception and reprocessing that the latter is able to apply. In reply to question 11, half of the sample (50% of the interviewees) are concentrated on the formulations "some agreement", to which can be added 23% who declared themselves in "complete agreement" with the need for the teachers to favour the initiative of students, leaving them the possibility to choose the subject of the lesson and, in this way, permitting the anchorage between actual formal and informal contexts of learning.

This significant antiauthoritarian change of direction is confirmed, though with a lesser factorial weight, by question 13 relating to the need to utilize in the classroom languages closer to the communicative experience of young people in their informal contexts of socialization. Yet again the people of Valle d' Aosta reveal a tendency to agreement on this point, overall 53.5% of the sample gave replies centred on the replies indicating agreement

The educational context is thus revealed as being a driving force with respect to cultural change in the direction of antiauthoritarianism, despite the authoritarian resistance found in family models and in hierarchical relationships in the workplace. As table 1 shows, the variables D5 and D16 are negatively correlated, though by a small amount, with the factor "antiauthoritarianism", indicating low power distance. In fact, some 80% of the replies declare that in most cases, the decisions in the family are to be taken by the father (though this finding should be viewed with caution as there are a high number of non-replies), and 71% of the interviewees reply to question D16 declaring some agreement or no agreement at all with the model of the consultative and democratic boss, who consults his employees before taking a decision, which is then based on of the majority view.

The fourth factor is “*Comunitarism*”, a cultural category which, as its name suggests, draws on those elements of singularity, self-sufficiency, homogeneity and personalism, which refer to the widely known distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* formulated by Tönnies (1963) and critically revived by Bauman in his attempt to understand the phenomena of a return to communitarian values in complex present day societies (Bauman, 2001: 13).

In the present research context, this factor is defined through the relationship with two spheres that are typical of comunitarism and that are also considered as the fundamental elements of the culture of the Valle d'Aosta: religious faith and family. In fact, the variable linked to the relationship with religious faith is that which, above all, describes this underlying factor.

This is a variable conceived to explore how far religious faith relieves anxiety due to uncertainty deriving, in this case, from fear of the unknown after death. The question gathers more than 65% of replies distributed almost equally between the positive formulations “some agreement” and “complete agreement” with this reassuring function played by religious faith, with a 4% incidence of non-replies. A lower factorial weight, but more marked reply trend is found in the variable D6 on the importance of celebrating special occasions in the family: almost the whole sample, 90% with no non-replies, agree with the idea that it is important to celebrate special occasions in the family, with an average of positive value replies that is almost of maximum levels (3.21).

However, this “comunitarism” – which represents in terms particular to this context (Valle d'Aosta) that dimension which Hofstede named “collectivism” in opposition to the fourth dimensional index of culture which he himself defined as “individualism” in the sense in which it was understood by Triandis (1995) – appears as a “critical” cultural factor, in which converge the variations of the other two factors most affected by social change and the change of direction towards emerging values.

Therefore, “critical comunitarism” should be defined as a factor that is especially sensitive to the variations found in “anxiety due to uncertainty”, on which it depends with a very significant coefficient (0.48, cf. Tab. 2.). In doing so it maintains a connecting link between new cultural directions and the comunitaristic tradition, played out entirely between two main contexts: faith and the relationship with the family.

**Tab. 2: Regression coefficients between the latent variables (structural model) and correlation coefficients between the specific factors (measurement errors).**

f3-Anxiety due to uncertainty	→ f4-Comunitarism (Faith and family)	0.48
f2-Non-discrimination of gender	→ f4-Comunitarism (Faith and family)	0.27
		<i>r</i>
f1-Antiauthoritarianism	↔ f2-Non-discrimination of gender	0.40
f1-Antiauthoritarianism	↔ f3-Anxiety due to uncertainty	-0.16
D17-It is better to work with people who already know each other	↔ D21-The spread of multiple religions is a threat to identity	0.14
D10-The model student always has the highest marks	↔ D20-To work well, it is better to have a permanent contract.	0.13
D19-Competition in work is damaging	↔ D20-To work well, it is better to have a permanent contract.	0.13
D17-It is better to work with people who already know each other	↔ D18-It is better to earn less but to have more free time	0.11
D10-The model student has the highest marks	↔ D24-Women should not celebrate religious services	-0.12
D16-A boss must consult his employees	↔ D22-Spirituality means going to religious places	-0.13
D11-Sometimes teachers should let students choose lesson subjects	↔ D21-The spread of multiple religions is a threat to identity	-0.14
D16-A boss must consult his employees	↔ D19-Competition in work is damaging	-0.17
D11-Sometimes teachers should let students choose lesson subjects	↔ D24-Women should not celebrate religious services	-0.20
D7- Family commitments have priority over work commitments	↔ D11-Sometimes teachers should let students choose lesson subjects	-0.29

**Tab. 3: Descriptive statistics of the identified model.**

	<i>Average</i>	<i>Std.dev</i>
D4. How often decisions are/were to be taken by your father in your family of origin?	3.95	1.02
D6. How important is it for you to celebrate special occasions (birthdays, anniversaries, events, festivities) in the family (also the family of origin)?	4.04	1.15
D7. How important is it to give priority to a family commitment compared to a work commitment?	4.26	0.92
D10. How far do you agree with the following affirmation: the model student is the one with the highest marks and stands out from the others in the class	2.31	1.29
D11. How important is it for you that the teacher sometimes allows the students to choose the subject of the lesson, e.g. one of current affairs?	3.68	1.18

D13. How important is it for you that in lessons a teacher uses the type of language that students use in their everyday life (e.g.. music, films, television, etc)?	3.05	1.36
D16. Do you agree that before taking a decision a boss should consult his employees and decide on the basis of the majority view?	2.34	1.32
D17. How important is it for you to work with people who already know each other or who come from the same place (same city, country)?	2.77	1.45
D18. How far do you agree with the following statement: it is better to earn a little less, but have a job that leaves room for free time	4.22	0.98
D19. How far do you agree with the following statement: competition at work can do more harm than good	3.65	1.35
D20. In your opinion is it important to have a permanent contract in order to work well?	4.11	1.21
D21. How far do you agree with the following statement: the increase of different religions represents a threat to national identity and to the identity of the Valle d'Aosta in particular	2.38	1.48
D22. Do you agree with the following statement: to have spirituality means to go to church (or to another religious place) and obey the commandments	2.17	1.37
D23. How important is it for you to believe in the existence of something after death in order to face unexpected events and adversities in life?	3.52	1.46
D24. Do you agree with the fact that in most religions women cannot celebrate the liturgical functions e.g. mass or other rites?	1.90	1.234.

#### 4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

How, then, after this research can we summarize the values setting, which this research reveals?

We see a Valle d'Aosta which, while maintaining the typical characteristics of a small, peripheral and self-sufficient context, also reveals a "comunitarism on the ropes", made up of attachment to the values of family and religious faith, but with a non-familistic and non-dogmatic or bigoted point of view. From this survey, the logic of the *enclave* appears to have accepted the challenge of living together in a multiethnic society. From below a series of revisions have begun that are characterized by processes of arrangement and organization of proximity relations within the real contexts of socialization. This has produced new value horizons that remain contradictory and disorganized, in that they are not yet supported by adequate institutionalization and, more in general, by policies able to take advantage of the innovative (and not backward looking or conservative) drive of these processes.

Comunitarism is on the ropes, therefore, and it corrects but does not prevent

a rejection of evidently weakened uncertainty, which proves to have already given way to a flexibility and renegotiability of roles in the crucial spheres of socialization directly affected by the constant presence of immigrants.

Personalism is narrowly exceeded (56%) by a universalistic and self-oriented tendency in the work environment. There is an educational ideal that is not obsessed by having to reward excellence, that is aware of the socio-economic gaps and of the drift towards inequality that the growth of this kind of system can perpetuate. Above all it is an educational ideal that is evidently directed at a religiousness unconnected to any form of social control, distant as it is from any institutional prescription of observance and from any form of stigma on the part of the community. Instead, religiousness is conceived in terms of individual spirituality, experienced in the light of pluralism and even of equal opportunity between the sexes, but which conserves intact its undisputed capacity to placate anxiety of the unknown.

In the value horizon, which emerges from the old “matriarchal” legacy typical of alpine contexts (cf. Zucca, 2000 and 2004), comes a low level of masculinity which from the Hofstedian perspective, is formed by priorities linked to family and quality of life. It is a particular mix of non-sexist legacy, familism and productive economic self-sufficiency which has given life to a new and dynamic value horizon, which appears to leave ample margins for an Inglehardt style post-materialism, where priority is linked to family commitment and free time, where there is a preference for stable working relationships as a condition for working well, and, finally, where competition at work is viewed negatively. These are all elements which reveal a value context which is little inclined to materialistic ethics where the objective is economic success and the satisfaction of immediate needs, but rather is orientated towards an ideal of long term personal fulfillment, in which work time is harmonized and conciliated with other aspects of life.

The wide and rooted non-masculinity in the Valle d’Aosta context is significantly interwoven with a growing antiauthoritarianism, which not by chance finds its driving force in education, directly influenced by the force for change that young people represent. Anyway this non-masculine antiauthoritarian trend continues to meet stubborn resistance in the family model and in the persistence of hierarchical relations at work, thus offering the right wing to a paternalistic policy unwilling to see in this cohabitation of sometimes contrasting orientations, the sign of something new.

What are the risks which this situation – undisputed sign of a context that is not exempt from change and which, above all, is not insensitive to it. – can present, if it is not suitably intercepted and constructively directed by political decision-makers?

If instead of being read in terms of a non-materialistic intercultural orientation the scarce competitiveness is intercepted by conservative and regressive tendencies that seek to enhance the persistence of authoritarian elements in productive and family relations, rather than the emerging symmetry between sexes, and to enhance low uncertainty avoidance and the unprecedented sentiment of religious faith experienced in an individualistic and spiritual way, it may create the risk of paternalism and create a comunitaristic revival supported by a regressive rhetoric of identity that does not favour the process of modernization to which the area appears to aspire.

### REFERENCES

- BAUMAN Z. (2001). *Community. Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*. Cambridge: Polity, 2001. It. trans.: *Voglia di comunità*. Laterza, Roma-Bari.
- BECK U., GIDDENS A., LASH S. (1999). *Reflexive modernization: politics, tradition and aesthetics in the modern social order*. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press (1994). It. trans.: *Modernizzazione riflessiva: politica, tradizione ed estetica nell'ordine sociale della modernità*. Trieste: Asterios.
- BONINO S., REFFEIUNA A. (1999). *Psicologia dello sviluppo e scuola elementare*. Firenze, Giunti Editore.
- BOLLEN K.A. (1989). *Structural Equations with Latent Variables*. John Wiley, New York.
- BRAIDOTTI R., CAVARERO A. (1993). *Il tramonto del soggetto e l'alba della soggettività femminile*. DWF, n 20, Roma, Ed. coop. UTOPIA.
- BROWNE M.W. (1982). Covariance structures. In: D.M. Hawkins (ed.), *Topics in applied multivariate analysis*. Cambridge University Press, 72-141.
- BYRNE B.M. (1989). *A Primer of LISREL*. Springer Verlag, New York.
- CARITAS/MIGRANTES (2006). *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2006*. IDOS, Roma.
- CESAREO V. (2004). *Società multi-etniche e multiculturalismi*. Milano, Vita e pensiero.
- COHEN-EMERIQUE M. (1990). La négociation interculturelle, phase essentielle de l'intégration des migrants. *Revue Hommes et Migrations*, juillet-août, nr. 1208.
- CORBETTA P.G. (2005). *Metodi di analisi multivariata per le scienze sociali. I modelli di equazioni strutturali*. Il Mulino, Bologna.
- HALL E. (1968). *The hidden dimension*. New York, Anchor books, 1966. It. trans.: *La dimensione nascosta*. Bompiani, Milano.
- HOFSTEDE G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences*. Sage Publication, London.
- HOFSTEDE G. (2003). *Cultures and Organization. Software of the mind*. Profile Books, London.
- HOFSTEDE G. and ASSOCIATES (1998). *Masculinity and Femininity, The Taboo dimensions of national cultures*. Sage Publications, London.
- INGLEHART R. 1998. *Modernization and Postmodernization. Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press (1997). It. trans.: *La società postmoderna: mutamento, valori e ideologie in 43 paesi*, Roma, Editori Riuniti.

- ISTAT- Rapporto annuale 2006: consultazione per capitoli. In [www.istat.it](http://www.istat.it), particularly cap. 6 su *Immigrati e nuovi cittadini*.
- JÖRESKOG K. G. (1977). Structural equation models in the social sciences. in: P.R. Krishnaiah (ed.), *Application of Statistics*. Amsterdam (North Holland): 265-287.
- JÖRESKOG K. G., SÖRBOM D. (1984). *LISREL VI Analysis of Linear Structural Relation by Maximum Likelihood, Instrumental Variables, and Least Square Methods, User's guide*. Department of Statistics, University of Uppsala, Sweden.
- ONORATI M.G., BRACCIALE R. (2007). *I valori emergenti in una prospettiva interculturale. Una ricerca in Valle d'Aosta*. Aosta, Le Château.
- PARSONS T. *The structure of social action: a study in social theory with special reference to a group of recent european writers*. New York: Free Press; London: Collier MacMillan (1949). It. trans.: *La struttura dell'azione sociale*. Bologna, il Mulino, (1974).
- TÖNNIES F. (1963). *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. Berlin: Karl Curtius (1912). It. trans.: *Comunità e società*. Milano, Edizioni di Comunità.
- TORGENSON W.S. (1958). *Theory and Methods of Scaling*, Wiley, New York.
- TRIANDIS H.C. (1995). *Individualism & Collectivism*, Boulder (Co) and Oxford (UK), Westview Press.
- ZUCCA M. (edited by) (2000). *Matriarchy and the mountains 3: Convention proceedings*. December 1999, Sardinia: Centro di ecologia alpina.
- ZUCCA M. Donne delle foreste e delle montagne (2004). l'eresia delle femmine ribelli. In Mornese C. and Buratti G. (ed.), *Eretici dimenticati. Dal medioevo alla modernità*. DeriveApprodi, Roma.

**UN APPROCCIO INTERCULTURALE AI PARADIGMI  
NASCOSTI DELLA CULTURA.  
L'ELABORAZIONE DI UN MODELLO DI ANALISI  
SOCIO-CULTURALE APPLICATO AL CONTESTO  
DELLA REGIONE VALLE D'AOSTA**

***Abstract***

*Questo articolo presenta un modello di analisi statistico-sociale che consente un'indagine di tipo quantitativo in chiave esplicativa dei processi di variabilità culturale in specifici contesti in una prospettiva interculturale e trans-culturale.*

*Basato su un sistema di indici in grado di individuare alcuni fattori latenti della cultura esplorata e spiegare la loro influenza su determinati processi di mutamento culturale, tale modello di analisi propone un approccio quantitativo di tipo esplicativo-interpretativo ai fenomeni culturali, riuscendo a far luce sui suoi paradigmi nascosti e su quelle dinamiche riconducibili, in gran parte, alla composizione sempre più eterogenea dei contesti, contribuendo allo sviluppo di quella sociologia riflessiva, che Beck definisce "cosmopolitismo riflessivo" (Beck 2007).*

*In particolare, quest'articolo prende le mosse da una ricerca realizzata in Valle d'Aosta (Onorati - Bracciale 2007, Onorati - d'Ovidio 2008) che, nel solco dell'analisi di*

*Triandis sul paradigma strutturale individualismo/collettivismo alla base dell'identità sociale, nonché dell'approccio alle differenze (Triandis, 1995) e degli studi di Hofstede sulla variabilità culturale (Hofstede 2001 e 2003), ha lavorato alla costruzione di un modello statistico di tipo fattoriale basato su equazioni strutturali applicate a un sistema di indici, che si propone così di spiegare, in una prospettiva interculturale e transculturale (che vuol dire anche comparativa), i fattori soggiacenti ai mutamenti culturali in atto nel contesto socio-culturale esplorato (la regione Valle d'Aosta).*

*Il modello proposto prende le mosse dagli indici di variabilità culturale di Hofstede – distanza dal potere, individualismo, mascolinità, rifiuto dell'incertezza – e, una volta rilevato il loro andamento su un campione rappresentativo di popolazione tra i 18 e i 65 anni residente in Valle d'Aosta, esplora i livelli di accordo/disaccordo, preferenze e percezioni su alcune questioni sensibili legate alle differenze culturali che insorgono nei principali contesti della socializzazione (famiglia, scuola, lavoro, religiosità) a causa dell'accresciuta mobilità fisica e simbolica degli individui e a conseguenti fenomeni di diaspora culturale. Quindi, partendo da un modello fattoriale esplorativo e poi un modello confermativo di tipo causale, tramite un sistema di equazioni strutturali quest'analisi si propone di interpretare e comprendere i processi di mutamento culturale, ipotizzando fattori latenti e verificandone l'influenza sui comportamenti osservati, facendo così luce sui cosiddetti "paradigmi nascosti" (Hall, 1968) che soggiacciono alle culture esplorate, il loro peso nell'influenzare l'orientamento di valori emergenti verso le differenze ed eventuali processi di accomodamento interculturale in atto. Trattando questi paradigmi nascosti come fattori invarianti alla base di qualunque cultura, quest'analisi si presta ad uno studio comparativo tra differenti culture, promuovendo un approccio riflessivo (consapevole) e trans-culturale alla complessità (Beck 2006, Beck-Giddens-Lash 1994).*