

**Exploring the complexity of the refugee experience.**

**Towards an embodied narration.**

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### **Summary:**

The refugee predicament can be regarded as a complex phenomenon where aspects from the individual level and the socio-political context are closely connected. Despite the various outcomes that may derive from this experience, most specialized literature seems to focus only on the negative side. Also the dimension of the body, in connection with refugee issues, seems to be mostly regarded negatively, being mostly presented in the form of somatic symptoms and epidemiological ratings.

Having found these trends in the refugee literature, this thesis investigated (a) the issue of complexity in refugees' verbal narratives, and (b) the impact of the body, as a story-telling resource for increasing narrative articulation.

With a sample of 20 refugees, 2 semi-structured interviews were administered to each participant, 7-10 days apart. 14 individuals were located to the main group (MG), and 6 to the comparison group (CG). The first interview was identical for both groups and focused on verbal complexity. The second interview (MG) included a specific focus on the body, in the form of “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” (i.e., movements, hand gestures, positions in space and facial expressions). The second interview for the CG was uniquely verbal.

The collected data was analysed using a hybrid thematic analysis, that combined an inductive approach with a deductive one.

The results seem to suggest that when refugees can 'speak with their own voice' (Temple and Morain 2011), they can narrate complex stories of their experience of forced migration. Resilient and positive elements can be acknowledged, alongside negative ones. Moreover, the body can be truly regarded as a resource for narration, especially when concrete/tangible events are reconstructed.

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*Frida Kahlo — 'I hope the exit is joyful and i hope never to return.'*

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**Introduction:**

*There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity under the heavens:*

*a time to be born and a time to die,  
a time to plant and a time to uproot,*

*a time to kill and a time to heal,  
a time to tear down and a time to build,  
a time to weep and a time to laugh,  
a time to mourn and a time to dance,*

*a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,  
a time to search and a time to give up,  
a time to keep and a time to throw away,*

*a time to tear and a time to mend,  
a time to be silent and a time to speak,  
a time to love and a time to hate,  
a time for war and a time for peace.*

(Ecclesiastes)

This thesis investigated (a) the issue of complexity within the refugees' verbal narratives, and evaluated (b) the impact of the body, as a story-telling resource.

The working definition used in this work purports *complexity* is informed by the Trauma Grid and the four phases of the refugee experience (Papadopoulos 2001a, 2007), a heuristic tool devised to systematize refugees' responses to the adversities they faced. In the light of this, complexity can be defined as a peculiar way to look at a phenomenon, acknowledging:

- multiple and contradicting qualities (positive, neutral and negative);
- diachronic changes in time (a before and an after);
- the contribution of various factors (the individual is considered located within and constantly interacting with a wider context).

For example, when addressing refugees' issues, this approach to regarding the phenomena helps recognise that, alongside negative effects following adversities, resilience and growth may also appear. Moreover, the refugee experience is regarded as being composed of various phases, within which transformations may occur. Finally, when considering the individual refugee, various contextual factors are believed to constantly interact with him/her (i.e., the individual is never considered a "secluded" entity).

In the analysis and presentation of the findings, the concept of complexity was operationalized further into that of coherence, a term borrowed from the attachment paradigm (Bowlby 1988; Grossmann et al. 2005; Main et al. 1985). In the context of this study, coherence was considered a functional equivalent to complexity since the well-known construct helps classify narratives in internal consistency and articulation. For example, a secure attachment appears to correlate with an articulate narration (i.e., coherent); events are reconstructed realistically and negative memories can be recalled. Similarly, one of the key aims of this work was indeed to explore the internal articulation of the study participants' narrative. An empirical correspondence was created between our construct of complexity (Papadopoulos 2001a, 2007) and the attachment construct of coherence (Bowlby 1988; Grossmann et al. 2005; Main et al. 1985) by establishing a correspondence between each parameter of the Trauma Grid and refugee phases to each category of coherence (i.e., conversational maxims by Grice; 1975, 1989).

In this study, a narrative was classified as complex and therefore coherent if characterized by consistency of memories, and all phases being recalled with sufficient details, the story had no blind spots or excessive details in other phases. Moreover, the participant remained focused on the topic at stake and was clear when talking about it.

Then, going back to point b (i.e., impact of the body, as a resource for

narration), the term “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” refers to body movements, hand gestures, positions in space and facial expressions, that participants spontaneously used to deepen their narration. They were invited to verbally deepen their story further and, in this way, the impact of the body on the verbalizations that followed could be explored.

**Background:**

The refugee phenomenon is recognized as a serious, worldwide public concern (UNHCR 2010, 2011). Refugees, in contrast to economic migrants, do not choose to leave their country and resettle into a new one. They are forced to leave their countries and, in order to save their lives, seek refuge in a new one (Nassari 2000; van der Veer 1998). This means being a refugee involves a subjective individual level of experience within a wider socio-political context which impacts on individual, family and community. It is precisely the individual and contextual connection that makes the refugee phenomenon inherently complex.

However, some noted scholars (e.g., Papadopoulos 2000, 2001a, 2001b,

2002a, 2002b, 2007; Summerfield 1999, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2005;) have argued that most contributions in refugee literature seem to focus on “refugee trauma”, that is, their emphasis seems exclusively to lie on the negative side of the refugee experience. In this way, resilient elements (Kroo and Nagy 2011; Luthar et al. 2000; Powell et al. 2003), and, even less, positive and growth-related ones (Papadopoulos 2007; Tedeschi and Calhoun 1996, 2004), tend to be overlooked. The implication of this particular approach to the refugee experience is the risk of being conceived as stereotyped figures (i.e., hopeless victims) and, in doing so, they actually risk further victimization.

Therefore, the primary reason for undertaking this academic journey was connected to the issue of complexity of the refugee predicament. The attempt was to counter-balance what was found in the mainstream literature, by going beyond an exclusive focus on the negative side of the refugee experience. This is why a systemic framework (Bateson 1972, 2002; Papadopoulos 2007) was chosen to construct of the interview protocol. Indeed, one of the key theoretical assumptions of the systemic approach is that each phenomenon is composed of multiple elements which are connected into a meaningful whole. In this study this means that, in order to understand the refugee experience, it is important to consider the multiple variables involved, not only a restricted selection, as the studies focusing only on the negative seem to do.

Beside the issue of complexity, another reason for undertaking the project focused on the specific role of the “body” within most refugee literature. Indeed, it appears that the body is either overlooked, or when its presence acknowledged, is often reduced to lists of somatic symptoms. For example, refugees have often been reported to display higher rates of somatic complaints compared to non refugee populations, even clinical ones (e.g., Grodin 2008; Kirmayer and Young 1998; Kruse et al. 2009; Morina et al. 2010; Prorokovic et al. 2005). Exception include research studies which report experiences of body therapeutic approaches with refugees (e.g., Amone-P’Olak 2006; Callaghan 1998; Fabri 2011; Harris 2007; Lynn-Gray 2011). However, to my present knowledge, in no case has the “body” been explored as a narrative resource for refugees to reconnect with their life story.

It is in the light of this literature search, which showed a prevalence of studies focusing on the negative aspects of the refugee predicament, and reporting very high rates of somatic symptoms affecting refugees, that I decided to explore (a) the issue of complexity within the refugees' verbal narratives and (b) the role of the body as a narrative resource, which may help to further increase the complexity of the verbal narrative.

**Research questions:**

The thesis is constituted by four research questions (RQ). The first and second RQ focus on the verbal side of the refugee's narrative, while the third and fourth RQ specifically tackle the issue of the “body” within the interview procedure.

**1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> Research Questions:**

1. How do refugees narrate their experience, if the interview format is inspired by systemic ideas (Bateson 1972, 2002; Papadopoulos 2007)? And how can these narratives be classified in terms of coherence (Grossmann et al. 2005; Main et al. 1985)?
2. Are refugees attached to a victim identity?

**3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Research Questions:**

1. Does the “body” impact on the verbal accounts that follow? And if yes, how does it impact upon the quality of responses?
2. What are the main features of the movements actually displayed by the study participants?



**Research design:**

A semi-structured interview approach was taken (e.g., Burns and Grove 2005; DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006; Fontana and Frey 2005; Polit and Beck 2006), the main questions were intended to cover a set range of areas with supplementary questions being asked in order to elicit more specific details.

The study sample included 20 refugees, selected according to a 'criterion' sampling. The inclusion criteria were: age above 18; spoke either Italian or English; with an absence of mental health diagnosis. Since the sample was non clinical, no participant could be under psychiatric treatment. The participants were all engaged in the secondary welcoming project named *Sportello per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati* (whose acronym is SPRAR), which, in conjunction with the Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs, is devoted to the secondary welcoming of refugees that occurs after preliminary and emergency procedures offered elsewhere, usually in refugee camps and other similar centres, have taken place. Progetto SPRAR ([www.serviziocentrale.it](http://www.serviziocentrale.it)), is located at the Migration Office, via Cadello 9, Cagliari, Italy. They were all new to the secondary welcoming service. The sample of 20 people was divided into two sub-groups, 14 people constituted

the main group (hereafter MG), and 6 people constituted the comparison group (hereafter CG). Two semi-structured interviews were administered to each participant and 7-10 days passed between the first and the second interview.

The first interview was identical for both groups (i.e., MG and CG), and was verbally-based and audio-recorded. The set range of areas to be covered during the interview focused on the diachronic changes in time, which, in the context of this interview, were the phases of the refugee experience as identified by Papadopoulos (2001a). Therefore, each participant was asked about the following phases: (a) what happened before the threats, (b) what happened when anticipating the threats, (c) what were the threats and actual danger (if any) about, (d) how the person managed to escape, (e) how was the resettlement in a new environment, and (f) how life was now. From these stages of the refugee experience, the person was invited to deepen various aspects of their story.

Whilst the first interview was identical for both groups, the second interview was diversified into two formats. The most striking difference between the two was that there was only an explicit and specific focus on the embodied dimension in the second format for the MG. Moreover only the second format (MG) was video-recorded.

During the second interview with the MG, three pre-selected events were presented to the participants. These events had been chosen from the first interview by the researcher as particularly poignant for the participant's life story. Participants were invited to expand on these selected events through the use of "non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours" (i.e., movements, hand gestures, positions in space and facial expressions). After the bodily enhanced exploration of the selected events, the participant further deepened his/her story verbally.

The third format (i.e., second interview for the CG) was very similar to the protocol with the MG. Again, three pre-selected events from the first interview were presented and negotiated with the study participant. However, no direct questions targeting the non-verbal dimension were asked, so the three pre-selected events were further deepened only in verbal terms. Another difference consisted in the recording mode, which was only audio.

It could be pointed out that the reference to the "non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours" is based on an artificial distinction, since the somatic dimension is an integral part of any narrative. The explicit focus on "non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours" consisted, at the stage of the data collection, in the triggering stimuli from the interviewer, that directly invited the interviewee to deepen some events of his/her story through the body. This explicit focus, at the stage of the data collection

process, occurred only in the second format of the interview protocol (i.e., second interview with the MG participants).

Moreover, an explicit focus on “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” occurred also at the stage of the data analysis. Here the study participants' movements, hand gestures, positions in space and facial expressions were extracted from the overall narration and subdivided in non-verbal units, which were then classified in their isolation and in their interactional qualities.

Different recording modes were used between MG and CG. For the MG, the recording modes were: (1) an audio-recorder for the first interview (only verbal); and (2) a video-recorder for the second interview (whose focus was both verbal and non-verbal). For the CG, both interviews were collected using an audio-recorder.

While the inclusion in the whole sample followed a criterion modality of selection (age, language and absence of mental health diagnosis), the more specific inclusion for the main or the comparison group followed the “rule” that one person in every three was to be included in the CG.

Although this research was not quantitative, and therefore did not require a comparison group, an alternative protocol to the main one was regarded as

an important source of richness, since differences between the two groups, in both quality and quantity of narrations, could be compared and discussed.

In this work, the term “refugees” will be used to refer to refugees, asylum seekers, and also for those in the appeals process. The rationale behind this choice is that all these people, despite the differences in legal status, are likely to share the experience of forced migration and resettlement in a new country. Since the focus of this work is on the refugee experience and not on the legal process, this semantic choice was made to make the reading easier.

### **Constituting parts:**

The thesis is divided into three parts. **Part one** deals with “locating the phenomenon” of the refugee experience within its wider theoretical context. It comprises three chapters. In the first, named 'the phenomenon of the refugee experience and the meaning in context', the following issues are covered: the role of the context within the refugee experience, the relation between context and mental well-being, and the systemic approach proposed by Gregory Bateson. Systemic ideas are used for the construction of the interview

protocol and to give meaning to the data obtained (Bateson 1972, 2002; Papadopoulos 2007), and thus this chapter is crucial for the ensuing understanding of the interview protocol.

In the second chapter, 'theoretical perspectives on the refugee experience', the main theoretical foundation of the thesis, that is, Papadopoulos' (2001a, 2002a, 2007) main ideas on refugees is developed (i.e., positive understanding of the term trauma, home and refugees, the Trauma Grid and the four phases of the refugee experience). The original elaboration of some of his constructs as they were actually used in this work is discussed (i.e., coherence as functionally equivalent to complexity).

Moreover the embodied perspective (e.g.. Damasio 1994, 2003; Gallagher 2005; Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999; Rohrer 2008) which was used for the specific issue of non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours is introduced in the third chapter, named 'Refugees, home and the body'. In this chapter some definitions of embodiment is provided, and the state of the art of the specialist literature dealing with the issue of the body in relation to refugees is introduced. Finally, in the sub-chapter "the body as a story-teller" the issue of non-verbal communication will be discussed, as crucial to understanding the focus of this thesis on the somatic dimension of a narrative. The thesis embraces a phenomenological view when dealing with

the issue of embodiment. While losing their home and leaving their country behind, refugees still have their bodies accompanying them in this forced journey. Here it is argued that the embodied dimension has a crucial role in the refugee experience, since the body is each refugee's (inevitable) migrating companion.

**Part two**, “Methods”, begins with laying out the main issues faced in order to “researching the phenomenon”. It consists of two chapters which describe the empirical work, by presenting its methodology (e.g., Loewenthal and Winter 2006; Patton 2002), research design and interview protocol. The fourth chapter, named 'research methodology' covers the following issues: the rationale behind the choice of a qualitative paradigm and of an interview as a form of narration, the research questions, the main features of a hybrid approach of thematic analysis and finally how the ethical requirements of the project were met.

Chapter 5, 'research design and interview protocol', deals precisely with the research design, the setting, the characteristics of the sample and the setting. Moreover, the three interview formats are described. The first format was identical for both groups, the second format was used for the MG and the

third for the CG.

Finally, **Part three** deals with the presentation of the “findings and discussion”. This section comprises two chapters. In chapter six, 'presentation of the findings', all the findings are presented, and follows the order of the research questions posed. Case vignettes and pictures help illustrate the work using the participants' own words and showing their own non-verbal behaviours.

Chapter seven, 'discussion of the findings', locates the findings within the wider theoretical context, that is, in the light of the theoretical ideas depicted in the first part of the work. This chapter also includes the research implications, limitations and suggestions for further study.

Finally, the thesis contains a summarizing conclusion, a glossary of key-terms and, in appendix, further visual illustrations of the non-verbal behaviours of the MG study participants.



**Uniqueness of this research study:**

To the best of my knowledge, this study is the first one which: (a) uses the concept of *coherence* (Grossmann et al. 2005; Hesse 2008; Main et al. 1985), as functionally equivalent to that of complexity, to evaluate the articulation of contents of the refugees' narratives; and (b) studied “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” as a narrative resource available to refugees.

Having explored the complexity within the refugees' narratives and the role of the body as a resource to further increase narrative complexity, this study is first and foremost exploratory and pilots a new perspective for approaching the issues of refugee adversity, rather than confirming and testing pre-existing theories that focus exclusively on the negative effects of the refugee situation.

**PART I**  
**BACKGROUND**

## CHAPTER 1

# The phenomenon of the refugee experience and its meaning in context

*Refugees expelled from one country to the next  
represent the avant-garde of their people*

Arendt, H. (1943)

### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter will illustrate the contextual nature of the refugee phenomenon, even though the researcher's main focus is psychological and thus traditionally intrapsychic. By “contextual” it is meant that no refugee is considered a secluded being. He or she is always thought to be connected to multiple elements and people of “external reality”, whether back in their home Country or in the new place of residence.

In relation to the traditional intrapsychic view, some epistemological pitfalls regarding the refugees' mental well-being and overall experience will be discussed. The very terms *refugee* and *refuge* will be analysed, together with the political and legal nature inherent to their etymology. Some key-debates within this field will be presented, in order to locate the refugee phenomenon

and its interconnection with other academic disciplines.

The role of the context will be more deeply explored through an abstract analysis and the theoretical support of Bateson's argument of 'logical types' (1972: 180-193). A link between (abstract) epistemology and (concrete) action will be presented, by putting forward the idea that the way we think deeply affects the way we act.

The Batesonian theory on context will be further connected to Papadopoulos' theory (2002a, 2007), since both share a fundamental systemic approach. That is, they both suggest holding a sense of totality in mind when dealing with complex realities, as opposed to narrow focused theories and techniques. I

## ***1.2 Locating the refugee phenomenon in context: Key-issues***

“Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.”

(Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 14)

The term *refuge* derives from the Latin word *refugium*, meaning *re*: back and *fugere*: to flee. Implicit in this definition is that of a place where one can flee to somewhere to seek protection, the term is also definable as; a shelter, a sanctuary or a safe place (Oxford Dictionaries, [www doc](http://www.doc)). A *refugee* is thus a person who seeks refuge (same source), i.e., a place where one can be protected from persecution. It is when the states that should be responsible for the protection of the fundamental human rights of their citizens are unable or unwilling to do so, that individuals may suffer such serious violations of their basic human rights that they seek sanctuary in another state (UNHCR 2011).

The two cornerstones of international law in the field of refugee issues are, respectively, the Convention (1951) and its revision named the Refugee Protocol (1967). The Refugee Convention (1951) was written in the aftermath of World War II to protect European refugees:

Grounded in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of human rights 1948, which recognizes the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries, the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, adopted in 1951, is the centrepiece of international refugee protection today (UNHCR 2011).

The Protocol (1967) represents the “universalization” of the Convention, i.e., an expansion of its scope, so as to encompass the problem of displacement spread around the world and does not only involve European refugees.

According to the Convention, a refugee is a person who has a 'well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion' (UNHCR 2011). As the legal expert Judith Farbey points out, it is 'the legal framework which determines who is and who is not to be recognized as a refugee' (Farbey 2002: 57), even if the very same definition includes subjective elements within it (i.e. fear).

As various authors have pointed out (e.g., Papadopoulos 1997; Van der Veer 1998), refugees are impacted on by so many factors that transcend the single individual, it comes as no surprise that the refugee predicament, depicted as having primarily a legal and political nature, requires the attention of various fields of knowledge, of which psychology is only one among many. Food, shelter, physical and mental health, legal aid and linguistic support are just some of the multiple needs refugees may display in relation to their predicament. It could be said that the whole pyramid of needs depicted by Maslow (1943) is relevant in the context of their predicament, from very tangible and basic needs, to higher less tangible ones. But, it also has to be observed that this complexity of needs should not automatically transform refugees into passive recipients of services. Adversities do not automatically

erase their individual qualities and strengths.

In relation to the various needs that refugees may display, the scientific contributions to this field seem equally extremely varied, each discipline emphasizing one (if not more) aspects of the phenomenon at stake. Indeed, broadly speaking, the refugee literature, taken in its totality, appears highly interdisciplinary, e.g., sociology (Hilhorst and Jansen 2012), philosophy (Friese 2012, Heuser 2008), law (Storey 2012), and human rights (Lamey 2011) are only some key-contributions among various others.

Zooming in on the specific field of psychology when applied to the refugee phenomenon, what appears of paramount difficulty is how to define and establish the remit of psychology itself. Indeed, how can psychology contribute to the understanding of this phenomenon, since it is primarily legal and socio-political? Moreover, another issue at stake is how psychology might dialogue with other academic disciplines in order to respect the complexity of the refugee phenomenon. Indeed, in this specific field, namely, when psychology encounters the refugee phenomenon, the traditional “discourse on soul” cannot avoid facing human right issues, broader considerations drawn from anthropology or political sciences, material conditions of disadvantages, linguistic barriers, and difficult access to health care facilities.

All the aforementioned factors are not only epiphenomena, namely,

secondary variables existing alongside a principal phenomenon. The refugees' mental well-being is inherently located within the context of a retrospective, and a prospective (and prognostic) viewpoint.

Retrospectively, refugees have been forced to flee, and the very essence of this predicament is thus political and legal. Yet, also in teleological terms, the refugees' mental well-being does not depend on the provision of a good psychotherapeutic approach but rather on a plethora of variables that go well beyond the intrapsychic dimension. Quoting Maslow (1943) again, providing psychological or psychotherapeutic support without basic living conditions having been met would not only be ineffective, but also disrespectful to the service users.

Maybe it is the very same idea of a “secluded” psychology that here, in the context of refugees, is untenable.



### ***1.3 Refugees' mental well-being and the challenges of the context***

As stated in the previous sub-chapter, refugees' mental well-being should be considered as constantly interacting with the various aspects in context. Going well beyond the mere intrapsychic level, the well-being of each refugee includes the fit, or lack of fit, between the individual and the meaningful context around him/her. Here, examples of some key-debates within the refugee field are presented, with a summarized Table presented at the end .

The term mental well-being is meant differently from the term mental health. While the latter emphasises the absence of mental disorders, the term mental well-being focuses on the presence of a full and creative life, where the cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions appear harmonically integrate. Being a refugee, as seen already, is located primarily within a legal framework, not a psychological one. This means that even when refugees show psychological or psychiatric signs of distress, these are not primarily related to the legal and political dimensions involved.

Based on this premise, it is thus possible to present some key issues offered by a set of psychological studies on refugees. They constitute a synthesis of the literature search carried out in this study, and by no means considered fully comprehensive of the debates at stake. The literature search output, about to be presented, can be summarized around four dilemmas: **(1)** *Are all refugees vulnerable people?* **(2)** *Should the psychosocial levels be included*

*even when considering individual states of suffering? (3) What is the weight of cultural issues when considering the mental well-being of refugees? (4) Is it legitimate to assume a linear causal model for the aetiology of the possible forms of psychological distress following the experience of forced migration?*

**(1)** Historically, the scientific literature on refugees tends to put an exclusive emphasis on the vulnerabilities, traumas, psychiatric diagnoses and injuries suffered by refugees as a result of their specific predicament. Within this historical trend, some authors have tried to show the direct relationship between the severity of events faced by refugees and the severity of their psychiatric symptoms (Krupinski et al 1973). Studies sharing this view have found that the refugee population is at very high risk of developing psychiatric symptoms, with a particularly high prevalence of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (e.g. Burnett and Peel 2001; Cheng 2001; McColl and Johnson 2006; Palmer and Ward 2007; Turner et al. 2003).

However, more recent studies, alongside the traditional scientific contributions focusing on refugees' vulnerabilities, have highlighted resilience, positive functioning, new gains and protective (i.e. preventive) factors may impact equally upon the refugee population (e.g., Kroo and Nagy 2011; Papadopoulos 2007; Powell et al. 2003).

Within these newer “positive” trends in refugee psychology, it seems worth mentioning a heuristically useful distinction between resilience and growth factors. Indeed, sometimes they are used as equivalent terms (i.e., highlighting positive qualities). When a subtler discrimination is applied, resilience appears more connected to a neutral quality whilst growth-factors to a positive one.

Resilience has been defined by Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000), as 'a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity'. As such the emphasis is on the ability, in analogy with the physical world, of a body to keep its original shape and functions. Moreover, Papadopoulos (in press), in attempting to systematize the various understandings of resilience, has identified five basic emphases: (a) retention of already existing positive functions; (b) quickly returning to one's previous equilibrium; (c) tolerating the instability which is connected to changes; (d) adapting to new contexts; and finally (e) being flexible.

On the other hand, recent studies describe the processes of growth following exposure to extreme adverse conditions. These recent studies differ from those on resilience and underline the emergence of something previously non-existent, rather than a bouncing back to a previous functioning state, as it appears when discussing the concept of resilience.

Two key constructs within this last line of studies are those of Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG; Tedeschi and Calhoun 1996, 2004) and Adversity Activated Development (AAD; Papadopoulos 2007). Using Papadopoulos' own words (2007: 307), the two constructs (i.e. PTG and AAD) mainly differ in the central point of departure (respectively trauma and adversity), temporal location (after the traumatic experience in the first case and at no pre-defined moment in time in the second), and in their exact terminology (respectively growth and development). Yet, despite the differences just mentioned, both constructs share an emphasis on the positive qualities that may emerge in relation to potentially devastating events, rather than emphasising the deficits. The pain and suffering connected to potentially devastating events are acknowledged. However, at the same time, human beings are regarded as resourceful creatures able not only to survive tragic events, but also thrive precisely because of the extremely adverse conditions.

**(2)** Following Kuhn, this theoretical shift has presented itself as 'paradigmatic' since it has introduced a great degree of complexity to previous linear discourses. While previous studies tended to focus exclusively on the intrapsychic level, (e.g. studies on the various psychiatric symptoms estimated in different populations of refugees), the psychosocial approach to

psychology tends to include the interpersonal and socio-political dimensions, even when considering individual experiences. In this way, the object of study is not the single individual per se, but the individual and his/her connections to the meaningful context around.

As such, the refugees' mental well-being and overall experience shifts from being the subject matter of a discipline focused on the secluded territory of the individual person, to a wider scenario where even the states of individual functioning or dysfunctioning are the result of the interaction of the single person within the wider context. The refugees' well being can then be regarded as the result, albeit unstable and continually shifting, of a relational negotiation among parts, not as something happening "inside" a single person.

For example, with reference to the construct of vulnerability; vulnerability should not be considered as something inside a single individual but rather an emerging property of the interaction among various psychosocial actors. For example if basic safety needs, housing or food are not met by the environment, these unattended needs may increase the likelihood of vulnerability the person experiences. However, this person should not be considered vulnerable per se, but may become vulnerable because of a lack of fit between him/herself and the surrounding context. Thus a person can be considered vulnerable or resilient depending on the unique encounter

between his/herself and the context. As such, the outcome is inherently relational and not an internal characteristic of the single person.

It should also be noted that by putting emphasis on the relational nature of the psychological and psychiatric distress refugees may display, a close tie between psychological and political issues is established. As Afuape observes throughout her book (2011), when mental health issues incorporate the social dimension, the crucial variables related to inequality, discrimination and social justice finally come to the fore, becoming then accessible to a serious examination and translation into more egalitarian theories and practices.

**(3)** Moreover, another widely debated issue is that regarding the role of somatic symptoms among non-western populations and refugees. Within this debate, cultural variables are questioned as if playing a decisive role in the prevalence of somatic symptoms. For example, it has been found that the higher prevalence of somatic symptoms registered among refugees (e.g., Aragona et al. 2010; Blackwell 1997; Saxena et al. 1988) may be attributed to the likelihood of physical symptoms being more widely accepted by the patients themselves and the community they belong to rather than signs of mental suffering (Tribe 2002). This observation is of great interest given the high prevalence of PTSD diagnoses, whose consistent degree of somatic

symptoms, may be read under a different light incorporating not only non-physiological, but also cultural elements within it.

Moreover, in a fertile inter-pollination with anthropology, some studies have highlighted the importance of creating a dialogue between *emic* (literally “from the inside”, internal) and *etic* (literally “from the outside”, external) approaches to mental disturbances potentially affecting refugees (Woodcock 2000; Zur 1996). Great differences may exist if the same disorder is considered using a “Western” lense, whereas the same pathology utilising an application of understanding which springs from the “non Western” culture where it originated can be viewed differently.

For example, Zur (1996) proposes to use Geertz's (1986) “experience-near” anthropological concept. It is one thing to look closely at a certain distress and try to incorporate what people of that specific culture believe. It is a completely different thing to adopt “experience-far” approaches, which assume a universal nature of (mental) pathology and not refer to any situated understanding of states of distress. Approaches that refer to the “experience-near” concept tend to challenge the universal validity of western psychiatric labels when used with non western populations, such as PTSD. At the same time, they also challenge our “western” therapeutic approaches, and confer equal dignity to western and non-westerns forms of treatment. As such, a symptom can then be defined as a 'text without context' (Nathan 1996).

In these theoretical options sensitive to emic aspects of issues of mental well-being, a close resemblance to Franz Fanon's (1963) studies on the process of decolonization of the oppressed can be glimpsed. Indeed, when considering western forms of treatment as an uncritical imposition of labels and related forms of treatment to non-western populations, one may ask if those forms of treatment are not ways to de-legitimate local cures and healers, and indirectly de-legitimate other cultures. As poignantly observed by Summerfield, there is a concrete risk to inadvertently perpetuate forms of neocolonialism:

There may be risks that the host society offers refugees a sick role instead of what is really sought: viable opportunities for social integration and meaningful citizenship as part of the rebuilding of a world. Indeed, Western psychological models have never really acknowledged that social action directed at the conditions of one's life might be a strategy for improving mental health. Psychotherapy promotes an ethic of acceptance: it is the individual who has to change, not society (2000: 423).



**(4)** Finally, the line depicted so far (i.e., positive psychology, the inclusion of the psychosocial dimension and the role of culture) is completed by a fourth academic line of study, which may be called anti-deterministic. Instead of considering external events as equivalent to the subjective experience of these events, anti-deterministic approaches attribute crucial importance to the subjective experience for the understanding of the refugees' experience (e.g. Bhugra, 2004). The possibility of discerning and not confusing an event and its subsequent experience may indeed help avoid considering (and even treating) refugees as victims. In doing so, the refugees' distress is prevented from being "objectively" medicalized (e.g., Papadopoulos 1998). Indeed, if we confuse event and experience we may be tempted to "objectively" attribute a degree of severity to each type of event. In doing so, we may believe in quick and ready-made answers to provide for each type of event (e.g., rape, torture, etc.). This way of proceeding seems the standard protocol a doctor applies when prescribing drugs for certain diseases. Equating the type of event to a specific type of disease, then we may take the right "pills" or "treatments" for both. In this way the uniqueness of each situation is lost and the specific kind of suffering is reduced to a disease, or series of symptoms, that may be objectively treated.

Differently from a deterministic and "objective" approach to human suffering, an anti-deterministic theory or technique puts the greatest focus on the

specificity and uniqueness of each given situation. Depending on this uniqueness, specific answers and/or treatments are provided. It is assumed that the same cause may lead to various outcomes (multi-finality) or different causes lead to the same result (equifinality). As such, living beings and especially humans are understood through probabilistic and not linear causal models.

The Table below synthesises the four key dilemmas, presented so far, within the refugee literature. They by no means pretend to cover the whole spectrum of existing theoretical debates. However, each seems poignant to understand the changes that have occurred within selected themes and the multiplicity of views applicable to understanding the refugee predicament.

| <b>DILEMMAS</b>                | <b>OLDER APPROACHES</b>   | <b>NEWER ONES</b>   |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Refugees' vulnerability</b> | Vulnerabilities.  | Positive sides (i.e. resilience and growth factors) as coexisting with elements of vulnerability.           |
| <b>Dimensions included</b>     | intrapsychic level.   | Inclusion of socio-political dimensions.  |
| <b>Role of culture</b>         | No reference to culture.<br>Assumption of universalism of western diagnostic categories and treatments. | Cultural issues examined and questioning of universal principles of western approaches.                     |
| <b>Causal model</b>            | Linearity event and its psychological consequences, (i.e., blurring event-experience).                  | Equifinality and multifinality (i.e. same result from various causes or different results from same cause). |

**Table 1.1:**

The Table summarizes the four dilemmas emerging from the literature review I carried out. Older and newer approaches on the same issues are compared.

In relation to this literature synthesis, the thesis is located within the theoretical solutions found in the newer approaches. That is, the thesis embraces a positive, psychosocial, culturally-sensitive and anti-deterministic view. This rather “philosophical” and abstract positioning will become clearer when discussing methodology, and the empirical findings will be presented in the second part of this work.

#### ***1.4 Bateson's systemic theory as a suitable approach to refugees***

“There is no single variable in the redwood forest of which we can say that the whole system is oriented to maximizing that variable and all other variables are subsidiary to it; and, indeed,

the redwood forest works **towards optima, not maxima**”

(Bateson 1972: 305, bold mine).

In order to provide further consistence to the notion of context, the formal work carried out by the British anthropologist and biologist, Gregory Bateson, is introduced.

The word context is a “wild creature” as Dervin (2003) observes in her systematic analysis of this construct within the social sciences, ‘... certainly a

question leading to a quest that demands extraordinary tolerance of chaos' (2003: 112). Therefore, we will start with Bateson's own words. The context is 'the pattern that connects ... without context there is no meaning' (1972).

Gregory Bateson (1904-1980) first trained formally as a biologist and anthropologist. It cannot be said that he embraced a single disciplinary approach, since he preferred taking an interdisciplinary look at a great variety of phenomena. His interests span the following areas: 'biological evolution, adaptation, ecology, art, arms races, social organization, communication, cultural transmission, learning, play, fantasy, films, character and personality. More generally, the nature and pathologies of thinking and epistemology, of culture, and a great class of integrative processes he eventually called "mind"' (Levy and Rappaport 1982: 379).

What mostly fascinated this scholar was connected to the discovery of a very small number of an abstract set of laws, which he called *fundamentals* (Bateson 1972: xxvi-xxvii), underlying seemingly disparate and even antithetic living phenomena. In a criticism of contemporary trends in science, of a reductionistic and inductive nature, he opposed the search for a limited set of principles that could be deductively applied to all living beings and phenomena, from the functioning of a single cell to the understanding of sociological facts. The concept of information constituted the basis of his formation of mental processes (Goodbun 2011: 41), applicable to all living

entities, not only humans.

Literally defined as the 'difference that makes difference' (1972: 315), information was located at the basis of every kind of mental processes, and thus resulted applicable to all living phenomena. The implications of this view is that mental processes are regarded not as abstract, rather they are defined as being immanent in every scale of the natural world (Charlton 2008: 31-69).

A further implication of Bateson's theory of mind as immanent to every event in the natural world is that only the world of physical objects can be studied through reductionistic and narrow-focused approaches. On the contrary, all that lives requires a different approach, where molecular units of study are substituted by molar ones. In this author's mind, objects per se lost their relevance, what became crucial was the relation between parts, what happened in between and not 'inside' the objects of study. The 'world (is) not as a collection of things or persons, but a network of relationships, that network bound together by communication' (Nachmanovitch 1984: 114). As such, Bateson's theory is purely relational, that is, a theoretical view which assumes meaning may only emerge from the totality. It is in the wholeness of the elements which constitute a certain phenomenon that there can be true understanding of what that phenomenon is about. Moreover, what can be defined as totality is more than the sum of its constitutive elements.

In his theory of the mind, Bateson gave a crucial role to what he defined context, i.e., that which is around a certain object of analysis. As Bateson put it, the problem of *context* was crucial since it directly connected to that of *meaning* (Ramage 2009: 737). The word context comes from the Latin word *contextus* and the verb *contexere* which means “joining by weaving or putting together”. Synonyms of the term context include milieu, background, surroundings, and environment. In the Oxford Dictionary (online version) we find: “the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood”.

Another appropriate definition of context, which may be well applied in this thesis, is that conceptualized by the pragmatist philosopher Dewey, who wrote:

A spatial and temporal background which affects all thinking and a selective interest or bias which conditions the subject matter of thinking' (1960: 90, in Derwin 2003).

Dewey's notion of context highlights the important aspect that what is considered meaningful and relevant deeply affects thought. Far from being an objective entity, what we consider context is already a choice made in the understanding of a certain phenomenon. It follows that typically contextualised positions reject the idea of a true reality to be discovered, and mostly put forward the idea that knowledge is situated and connected to the

experiencing person (also definable as postmodernist view).

Returning to Bateson and the unique way in which he tackled the problem of the context, it may be said that he looked for the support of formal logic, through Russell's theory of 'Logical Types' (Whitehead and Russell 1910-1913). In analogical terms, this author suggested imagining the frame of a picture (as a container) and the picture itself (as the content). This basic differentiation closely echoes Bion's thoughts on the early relationship between mother and her baby. The containing function of the mother's *reverie* has the function of holding the baby's contents, further allowing the development of the child's process of thinking (see also Bion 1962). The implicit message of this two-fold entity would be:

attend to what is within and do not attend to what is outside ... Perception of the ground must be positively inhibited and perception of the figure (in this case the picture) must be positively enhanced (1972: 160).

According to this statement, the role of the frame is of meta-communicating, or else, of communicating to the observer how to interpret the communication arising from the picture:

... The picture frame tells the viewer that he is not to use the same sort of thinking in interpreting the picture that he might use in interpreting the wallpaper outside the frame. ... **the frame itself thus becomes a part of**



**the premise system** (1972: 160, bold mine).

In this way, there is a strong relationship between context and its content, and this relationship becomes particularly relevant when considering, as already stated, the problem of meaning. Thinking, for instance, about the existing relationship between a phoneme and a word, a word and a sentence, and so on, as this author himself exemplified, helps in the realization of how any given entity acquires significance only when put in relation with broader and smaller elements of context. Again, thinking about Dewey's words the choice of what is context (or, the location of the frame, in Bateson's words) is by no means a neutral action. It deeply affects the entire process of thinking.

This distinction seems very close to that of Jaspers (1965) between concepts of explaining (*Erklären*) on one side and understanding (*Verstehen*), on the other. In order to explain something, it may be enough to analyse molecular bits of reality, disengaged from their meaningful relations with other molecular bits of reality. However, when the need is that of understanding or trying to achieve an understanding of a certain phenomenon, then molecular bits of reality are insufficient and molar entities reveal their crucial importance. In fact explaining is associated with causal and reductionistic method which characterized the positivist science that looked for very detailed bits of knowledge. Understanding is instead concerned with meaning unfolding from the inner side, a necessary appreciation of wider units of significance. Bateson is clear about this:

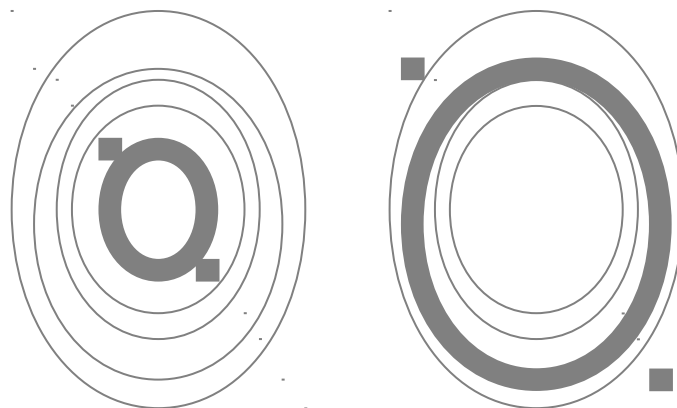
It may (perhaps) be true in physics that the explanation of the macroscopic is to be sought in the microscopic. The opposite is usually true in cybernetics: without context, there is no communication (Bateson 1972: 379).

It must be noted that the author's words do not uniquely refer to the positive function of the frame (i.e. enhance what is inside) but also to its negative indication (i.e. ignoring what is outside). The implications of this double indication (i.e., enhancing the inside and inhibiting the outside) may be also applied to the refugee discourse. Indeed, even if Bateson did not personally engage to the topic of refugees, nor the broader one of migration, his considerations, being applicable to all living phenomena, may be fruitfully used.

Depending on the width and location of the frame, that is, depending on the nature of discourses on refugees, we are likely to understand or cut the phenomenon at stake into pieces. In the second case, at best, we are only able to explain it, following the distinction proposed by Jaspers.

The first drawing in Figure 1 shows in analogical terms the width of reality portions ignored when the frame is located too narrowly around its centre. For example, if read in psychological terms, in this case the frame would be located at the intrapsychic level. An example of studies on refugees' mental

well-being whose frame stops at this level is constituted by the contributions on the prevalence of somatic symptoms in the refugee population and/or universal nature of PTSD (e.g., Cheng 2001; Turner 2003). On the contrary, the second drawing shows a wider frame, able to encompass a greater number of psychosocial levels and thus, in Bateson's terms, is more able to grasp the meaning which arises from the various levels of interconnectedness (or 'dance of interacting parts'; Bateson 1972 quoted in Dervin 2003: 122). A good example of this second frame could be Papadopoulos' psychosocial dimension, when he suggests locating the individual's predicament within a wider context (2002a, 2007). That is, since being a refugee is primarily connected to legal and socio-political factors, it follows that even when considering the single refugee it is important to be aware of the context around, in order not to psychologize or worst pathologize his/her predicament. Even when working with refugees as psychologists or psychiatrists, the refugee predicament must be understood as closely connected to the circumstances that affected the intrapsychic level.



**Figure 1.1:**

The drawing on the left represents, in analogical terms, the interconnectedness between

levels, which Bateson put forward as the origin of an emic understanding of living phenomena. Conversely, the drawing on the right would represent a secluded, and narrow focus.

In our case, the refugee phenomenon is a very complex entity with the primary contextual facets being: social, political and legal. Remembering Bateson's indication, a member of a class cannot be regarded as the class itself (1972: 186), since the class is located at a meta (wider) level. In our case, this implies that a primarily socio-political phenomenon should not be approached exclusively at the intrapsychic level. Numerous realms are interrelated and such complexity should be preserved theoretically as well as with actual interventions and techniques. Not only does it help recognising the multiplicity of needs that refugees display (well beyond the category of psychological needs), but, and this constitutes the subtler aspect, as Papadopoulos suggests, when psychological needs exist, they should be regarded as closely entangled with the wider contexts. The socio-political dimension should not be overlooked, since the 'psychological considerations are only part of the totality of the situation' (Papadopoulos 1997: 207).

However, it could be argued that, given a potential "regressum ad infinitum" of the frame's location, the equation width = epistemological goodness is, at best, questionable. This expression attempts to admit the opposite view of the one that characterizes this study. It was previously argued that context plays a central role in the understanding of a phenomenon. However, if this view is

taken too far, it could lead to the erroneous equation that only by including wide portions of context can we produce a good theory. The reference to “width” means those portions of context we decide to include in a study in order to understand the phenomenon. For example, if we are studying the phenomenon A, we may include B, C, and D, which are contextual layers around A. However, if the frame were more inclusive encompassing more context (and thus more data, more levels, more portions of reality) each time, it would lose the sense of its limitations and, as such, lose efficacy in the understanding of a certain phenomenon X. Therefore by focusing too narrowly on A, or including too many layers of context (e.g., from E to Z), the A phenomenon we aim to study may get lost.

In this way, formal logic seems to invite us not to consider things in isolation, but rather to appreciate the interconnection existing amongst parts. At the same time, it is also suggested embracing the indication of the Ockam razor, i.e., to preserve complexity yet not multiply the objects more than is necessary. Indeed, the dilemma is one of being as simple as possible, yet, given the complexity of the phenomenon at stake, not simpler.

Understanding is thus an appreciation of a sort of a dance among interacting parts. According to a relational view, understanding is inherently to do with an opus of beauty. Indeed, as the quote below suggests, beauty is the thing occurring in between, hidden in all living complexities.

"What is beauty?" I asked him that night.  
He said, "Seeing the pattern which connects."  
(Nachmanovitch 1984).

### **1.5 Summary**

In this chapter several topics have been covered. Of these, some have been directly related to refugees: e.g., key-issues at stake, older and newer trends in the psychological literature, and etymological analyses of crucial terms.

Bateson's notion of context and the usefulness of the insights contained in the 'logical types' theory have been used to glimpse the relation between context and meaning. In this way, the usefulness of a contextualised and thus systemic understanding of the refugee predicament is argued. Literally, context has been defined as a set of circumstances or background that does not objectively exist per se, but that is the result of a choice. That is, we select X portions of outer context that we believe may help to understand the phenomenon Y we are willing to study. It is only in this interconnectedness that the phenomenon Y can make sense, not in its isolation. It is precisely the choice of the context (i.e., its width) that, like a frame around a picture, helps understanding of what is inside and inhibits the perception of what is outside.

Explained in the topic of this thesis, it has been argued that Bateson's theory of context and meaning, choice of the frame's location and the implication for the process of thinking, can be related to Papadopoulos' (1997: 207) notion of a psychosocial dimension. Only when considering the refugee experience both as an individual and as a social, political and legal predicament, can it be understood in its totality, and, recursively, only when understood in its totality, is its inherent complexity preserved.

As Bateson put it, if a phenomenon in the hard sciences may be cut into pieces in order to be studied through causal and reductionistic methods, the same is not true within social sciences. In order to understand the uniqueness of the refugee predicament molar units of analysis (individual + meaningful context) must be considered.

As such, the term "context" was described synonymously as a psychosocial dimension (i.e., what is around a single individual; Papadopoulos 2001, 2007) and according to Bateson's work on the logical types (1972), as the 'pattern which connects' and confers meaning to the phenomenon studied. In light of what has been discussed in this chapter, the refugee predicament is understood in close connection with the socio-political factors impacting on it, even when these factors moderate intrapsychic states of suffering. In this way an ongoing dialectic between individual and societal factors is recognized.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Theoretical perspectives on the refugee experience**

#### ***2.1 Introduction***

This chapter will develop the main theoretical foundation of the thesis, that is, Papadopoulos' main ideas on refugees and the original elaboration of some of his constructs as they were used in this work.

The underlying assumption for understanding refugees was that complex phenomena require complex theories and heuristic tools so as not to reduce their richness in an attempt to understand them. This is why Papadopoulos' (2001a, 2002a, 2007) perspective was chosen, for his ideas on refugees and the loss of home, as well as, the heuristic tools proposed, like the Trauma Grid and the four phases of the refugee experience. More precisely, the construct of complexity is defined as a peculiar way to see the refugee phenomenon in light of the parameters emerging from the Trauma Grid and the four phases of the refugee experience (Papadopoulos 2001a, 2007). As such, it is argued that the refugee phenomenon has multiple, even contradicting qualities (i.e., alongside negative responses to adversities, also neutral and positive ones may exist); characterized by diachronic changes



(i.e., there are various phases in the refugee experience and important transformations may occur in between them); that contains a psychosocial dimension (i.e., the single individual is considered located and constantly interacting with a wider context, being the refugee phenomenon is primarily socio-political).

Moreover, with reference to the last point (i.e., psychosocial dimension), while non reifying the concept of culture into a monolithic entity, the author recognizes specific cultural elements as possible moderating factors within the refugee experience itself.

In this chapter, firstly, the term 'trauma' will be discussed, by specifying its potentially positive implications (Papadopoulos 2002a). Then this author's theory on refugees and loss of home will be deepened. The specific yearning that this loss causes will be explained in relation to identity issues impacting upon the refugee population.

The Trauma Grid will then be introduced (Papadopoulos 2007) as a practical way to systematize the variety of the refugees' responses to the difficulties they endured. In relation to this key heuristic tool, the four phases of the refugee experience (Papadopoulos 2011a) will be also presented. Both tools (Trauma Grid and four phases) are crucial for the empirical section of this work, since both were used for creating the topic areas to be explored during the interviews and also constituted the categories used for classifying the

study participants' narratives, in a top-down manner.

Finally, utilising the theoretical support of the drama triangle (Karpman 1968), the potential violence that can be inflicted on refugees by further victimizing them will also be discussed. This potential violence will be understood especially in terms of polarized narratives (e.g., of victim-hood) about them, that may further victimize this population. In opposition to polarized narratives, the construct of complexity will be further operationalized into that of narrative coherence, and used in the empirical part of this work, to allow refugees to narrate their story of forced migration from their unique point of view.

## ***2.2 Misused pairing: Refugees and trauma***

The United Nations' definition states that a refugee is a person who has a 'well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion' (UNHCR 2011). Thus, a refugee is a person who has been impacted by violent political or social upheavals. This implies that, in the understanding of the phenomenon, the potential forms of individual distress refugees may experience are secondary (chronologically and aetiologically) in respect to a primary basic layer which is contextual (i.e., not subjective). As a consequence of this, the needs refugees may display can fall within many

various dimensions of contexts, so that those needs may range from being tangible (e.g., food, shelter, money) to intangible (e.g., cultural values, language barriers, religious access to services). In their heterogeneity they should be equally acknowledged.

As already stated, this thesis embraces a psychosocial perspective, which is non-pathological and non-medically-oriented. However, it cannot be ignored that most refugee literature tends to focus only on the negative side of the refugee predicament (e.g., Burnett and Peel 2001; Cheng 2001; Krupinski et al. 1973; McColl and Johnson 2006; Palmer and Ward 2007; Sack et al. 1996; Turner et al. 2003).

More specifically, refugees seem often to be associated with the term 'trauma'. This term literally means 'psychic wound' and is characterized by a specific class of symptoms (Gabbard 2005; Krystal 1988; Kalshed 1996; Woodcock 2000; Zur 1996). This semantic equation seems to suggest an underlying reference to a linear cause-effect model, and also that complexities of human responses to difficulties are rare. Probabilistic concepts such as those of equifinality (i.e., different causes leading to a same effect) and multifinality (i.e., same cause leading to various effects) seem not to be incorporated by those theories.

It should be noted that, hidden in a linear cause-effect model, the distinction

between objective/external events and subjective/internal experience (Papadopoulos 2007: 3) become blurred, the modalities 'culture-near' (Geertz 1986) to express and give meaning to states of existential suffering are likely to be ignored. Lastly, concrete conditions of oppression, discrimination and societal inequalities that often affect the refugee population tend to be overlooked (Afuape 2011).

In order to tackle the issue of terminological ambiguity around the term 'trauma', Papadopoulos (2001a, 2001b, 2010a) has introduced a differentiation between the two terms: 'refugee trauma' and 'psychological trauma'. According to Papadopoulos 'refugee trauma' is a general term which comprises 'the whole spectrum of phenomena connected with the specific refugee reality and range of experiences; the latter refers to the psychological effect of being traumatized regardless of the external causes' (2010a: 21). However, as this author has pointed out, the definition of 'refugee trauma' implies more than this descriptive statement. It also implies that all refugees are psychologically traumatized. As said before, this blurs at least two fundamental aspects: (1) the necessary distinction between event (objective) and experience (subjective); and, (2) it does not consider the highly individual way that each person has to attribute meanings to events (this process of meaning-making has both individual, as well as culturally-specific and thus collective, aspects).

Papadopoulos (2000, 2001a, 2002a) found that, deriving from ancient Greek, the word trauma comes from the verb *titrosko*. This word originally means “to pierce”, thus evoking the idea of an injury, or a wound, which results from the action of piercing the skin. The author observes that the first meaning aligns with the traditional understanding and application of the term, which considers trauma as synonymous with psychic wound (Papadopoulos 2002a: 28-29). However, Papadopoulos has shown that *titrosko* does not uniquely mean 'rub in', but also 'rub off, rub away'.

Therefore, trauma is the mark left on persons as a result of something being rubbed onto them. Then, in so far as the rubbing is of two kinds, we could have two different outcomes: from 'rubbing in', the result would be an injury or a wound; and from 'rubbing off' or 'rubbing away', the result would be the cleansing of a surface where there were previous marks, like when we use an eraser, a rubber to erase writing on paper (2010a: 21).

Beyond the negative meaning, the positive one suggests a sense of renewal, a deep transformation that helps the person who experiences it transcend the suffering experienced and find more authentic ways of living. Papadopoulos extended this etymological search to the refugee population. As a result of their exposure to adversities, refugees may not only be injured (i.e., in metaphorical terms, pierced and wounded), as most literature contributors seem to suggest. For example, *The Harvard Trauma Questionnaire* (Shoeb et al. 2007); *The PTSD Checklist* (Weathers 1993); and, (3) *the Hopkins*

*Symptom Check List* (Parloff et al. 1954), they all focus on the negative understanding of the term “trauma”. They are very useful tools to quickly reveal the possible presence of psychiatric symptoms in refugee populations. However, they are less likely to help those who work with refugees to discern the resources and even point of growth that the very same people may have.

According to Papadopoulos, in addition to or as an alternative to going through distress, pain and suffering, refugees may experience a sense of transcendence, a sense of renewal, where new priorities may emerge and old ones given up (Papadopoulos 2006, 2007). This means that, in a paradoxical way, despite the devastating nature of certain events, or even precisely because of these same events, refugees may start living more fully and authentically. This positive understanding of the word trauma does not aim to overlook the concrete difficulties and even atrocities that many refugees face in their life story. On the contrary, their pain and difficulties are recognized, but these people are not stereotyped into the role of hopeless victims. They are regarded as people who suffered, but who are also resourceful and may even find new and more authentic ways of living.

Trying to link Papadopoulos' etymological findings with the current state of the art of most refugee literature, it may be observed that the first meaning of trauma, that is, the meaning deriving from 'rubbing in', causing an injury or a wound, could be considered the dominant one. As already seen, the

predominant assumption of most refugee literature seems to be that certain events can be objectively considered as traumatizing (e.g., war, torture) and people experiencing them necessarily traumatised (i.e., X inevitably leading to Y).

The seeming intelligibility of this deterministic model does not acknowledge that linearity is rarely applicable to living beings in general (Bateson 1972), and even less to humans. In legal terms, crimes must be prosecuted and perpetrators judged. However, the subjective implications of these crimes for the people who suffered from those actions are far from being of a unique type. Each person, depending on a multiplicity of factors (e.g., age, presence of social support, or gender) processes the same event in highly unique and specific ways. Being a refugee depends on a set of contextual variables (i.e., generally, but not exclusively, political factors), that cannot be measured objectively in its severity nor can the linearity of its effects be fully hypothesised. If it is true that the contextual set of circumstances impacting on refugees may have psychological, and even psychiatric implications, yet, those implications, albeit psychological, must be understood in the light of contextual circumstances given.

### **2.3 Home and identity**

Refugees do not constitute a homogeneous class of people, and even less a homogeneous diagnostic category (Papadopoulos 2002a: 9). They come from different countries, speak different languages and pray to different gods (Dubosc 2011; Nathan 1996). They come from different cultural backgrounds, are used to different foods, landscapes, and climates. They may have endured extreme adversities or may not (Papadopoulos 2001a: 413). A UNHCR poster called *Spot the Refugee* invites the spectator to identify the refugee amongst dozens of Lego “men” and “women”, all of whom have different physical and clothing characteristics. Of course, as in real life, there is no way to identify who the refugee is.

Refugees have two things in common: the first, as an oxymoron, is precisely constituted by the diversity between one refugee and another, and the fact that they have all been forced to leave their homes behind (Papadopoulos 2002a: 9), unlike economic migrants, this flight was involuntary in nature.

Papadopoulos' theorizes (2002a: 9-39) home as an area of focus for the specific loss shared by all refugees, and on the specific yearning it entails. According to this author, home is a multi-layered construct, where oppositions can co-exist and one's sense of being part of humanity emerge (2002a: 17). Papadopoulos analyses home through three different aspects: as a theme, its



nature and its structure.

When home is considered as a *theme*, it embraces two main polarities, which are departure, on the one hand, and arrival on the other (Papadopoulos 1987: 16). Thus, home is depicted as containing the double polarity of a point of origin and final end (Papadopoulos 2002a: 11). Furthermore, when its *nature* is explored, home is both a concrete entity (like for instance a shelter or a sanctuary), and a symbolic one (Papadopoulos 1987: 17). It is precisely by bringing seemingly opposite elements together that home acts as a unifying container.

This powerful combination of the tangible and intangible, concrete and ethereal, physical and imaginary, inflexible/immovable and flexible/mobile, substantial and indefinable make the image of home a most potent and resilient cluster of psychological dynamics (2002a: 13).

Finally, with regard to its structure, home binds together three *psychosocial levels*, namely: a) individual; b) inter-personal (between the members of a family); c) socio-political (Papadopoulos 2002a: 19). 'One of the first characteristics of home is that it is not restricted to a personal home of one person or one family but it also has a collective connotation' (Papadopoulos 2002a: 10).

Given these three main aspects (i.e., theme, nature and structure), Papadopoulos considers home a fundamental layer of the 'substratum of identity' (2002a: 17) for each human being. It is precisely in the co-existence of opposites, that home, as a containing membrane, 'contributes to the development of a deep sense of reliability about life' (2002a: 19). According to this author, identity is organized as a mosaic, where smaller elements are organized within a coherent whole, of which home constitutes a primary layer, a substratum for all the following concrete and tangible experiences that are to come (2002a: 17). This is probably why 'to understand this lack as a loss in the ordinary psychological sense is to miss the rich meaning and complexity that the loss of home entails' (2002a: 15).

Papadopoulos refers to the yearning for restoring this specific loss with the term *nostalgic disorientation*. Indeed, since the only thing that all refugees have in common is their loss of home, he coined a term that tries to be respectful of this basic fact. Moreover, since home is an ontological entity that provides both a primordial sense of containment and a solid basis for each person's sense of identity, its loss is likely to be defined as ontological in nature.

Drawing a parallelism with the world of literature, the experience of estrangement that may affect refugees' identities can be compared to that of Alice when trapped in her "Wonderland". Notably, the original title of the book

was not *Alice's Adventures in the Wonderland*, but *Alice's Adventures Underground*, showing a darker side of this story.

Even if Alice is *not* forced to leave her familiar world, nonetheless the world that opens up in front of her is not without a high degree of shadows and anguish. Indeed, the underlying level of this story is that of a girl who leaves her home and finds herself trapped in a world ruled by chaos, confusion, and non-senses. The existential problems that Alice faces can be read with regard to the issue of home, its loss and the subsequent confusion of meanings. 'Everything is so out-of-the-way down here', Alice often tells herself throughout the tale. Moreover, it is not only her nostalgia for the home she has lost that is remarkably present in many passages of this story, but also her very sense of identity severely challenged. The disruption of the meaningful connections between Alice and her world have been so severely impaired, that she starts doubting she is still the same person.

Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is: Who in the world am I? Ah, That's the great puzzle! (Carroll 1865).

Lewis Carroll, through linguistic and logical non-senses, is able to convey the precarious state of reality that Alice experiences, which, in turn, affects her

identity. She cannot make sense of herself, nor the surrounding environment and the queer creatures that inhabit it. Indeed, the loss of containment that the lack of home entails renders the encounters with these creatures extremely discomfoting (in Bion's words, we could say that they stand for elements without a container; 1962). Moreover, her body, as her primary identity source, is also affected.

“It was much pleasanter at home”, thought poor Alice, “when one wasn't always growing larger and smaller ... I almost wish I hadn't gone down that rabbit-hole ...” (Carroll 1865).

The sense of bewilderment Alice experiences seems to bear witness to her precarious state of being, a 'bewilderment which, in the context of refugees, is what 'nostalgic disorientation' is about' (Papadopoulos 2002a: 18). Alice is not a refugee, in the strict sense of this term, however, she is a 'stranger in a strange land' (Heinlein 1961).

## **2.4 The Trauma Grid and the four phases of the refugee experience**

The Trauma Grid was conceptualized by Papadopoulos (2007) as a tangible and systematic way to classify the richness of refugees' responses to adversities. Conversely, the grid also helps identify the needs that refugees display at a precise moment in time. As such, it seems particularly useful to those working in the concrete field with refugees, for tackling the variety of needs that this population may have.

In the empirical section of this work, it will be used to classify the verbal content of participants' responses in order to: (1) respect the uniqueness and complexity of each participant's story, and (2) properly systematize their responses in a coherent and detailed framework (see Table below).

| <i>Levels</i> | Positive Effects                          | Neutral Effects   | Negative Effects                      |   |                            |
|---------------|---|-------------------|---------------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
|               | Adversity Activated<br>Development<br>AAD | Resilience<br>RES | Ordinary<br>Human<br>Suffering<br>OHS | Distressful<br>psychological<br>Reaction<br>DPR | Psychiatric Disorder<br>PD |

|                     |  |  |  |  |  |
|---------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Individual          |  |  |  |  |  |
| Familiar            |  |  |  |  |  |
| Community           |  |  |  |  |  |
| Society/<br>Culture |  |  |  |  |  |

**Table 2.1:**

The Trauma Grid (Papadopoulos 2007) allows for a discernment of the quality and psychosocial level involved in each refugees' narration. The consequent classification enables a systematic understanding, that avoids polarizations and over-simplifications of these narrations.

The Trauma Grid foresees potential co-existence of various qualities (i.e., a person may show simultaneously positive and negative responses), and psychosocial levels (i.e., an event may be classified as both individual and familial). Finally, the Trauma Grid may refer both to actual or potential consequences (i.e., something which is happening in the here and now, or something likely to happen in the near future).

Despite most specialist refugee literature seeming to focus on trauma, as synonymous with wound and pain, and therefore on negative outcomes arising from adversities, some authors (Bonanno and Mancini 2012; Luthar, et al. 2000; Papadopoulos 2007; Tedeschi and Calhoun 1996, 2004) have noted that resilience and positive consequences deriving from these adversities may exist.

According to Papadopoulos (2007: 305-8), along a hypothetical continuum of negative and positive poles, three main types of consequences may take place: positive, neutral and negative. As in a probabilistic model, instead of a causal linear one, many consequences may follow the same cause (i.e., multi-finality). Moreover, it is also argued that there are many mediating factors that may massively alter the likelihood of certain effects over others, such as age, gender, profession, social support, or faith.

Moreover, as Papadopoulos further observes (2007: 305), a person may have co-existing negative effects, alongside new gains, either in different temporal moments, or simultaneously, in specific contexts or across various ones.

The most studied pole of this continuum is the negative one. Being connected to the concept of negative traumatization, this pole refers to the 'rubbing in' meaning linked to the verb *titrosko*. Papadopoulos (2007: 305-6) identifies three degrees of severity in his Trauma Grid:

*1) Ordinary human suffering (OHS):* this is the most usual response to suffering from adversities and tragedies. Indeed, suffering is not in itself a pathological condition, nor does it inevitably lead to a medical/pathological condition. It is rather a physiological and normal reaction to suffering from adversities.

2) *Distressful psychological reaction (DPR)*: even with more severe conditions, coping mechanisms inside the individual can tackle this level of suffering. Usually, non-specialist care (i.e., ordinary support systems) can effectively deal with this class of problems, since various types of symptoms do not necessarily reach the threshold of any psychiatric category.

3) *Psychiatric disorder (PD)*: the severest form of suffering, requiring professional intervention. The most common being PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; APA 2000), and includes depressive reactions or even psychotic crises.

In reference to the neutral outcome, Papadopoulos (2007: 308) termed it *resilience (res)*. According to that author, the original meaning was drawn from physics, since it means the ability of a body to keep its original shape after being exposed to stressful conditions. Still following Papadopoulos, the key difference between his construct of a positive quality (AAD) and the construct of resilience does not lie in the inherent quality of the construct. One quality is not necessarily better than the other. What makes the difference between the two (i.e., positive and neutral) is time dependent. Positive qualities existing prior to the exposition to adversities are termed resilient, whilst new qualities not existing prior to exposure to the adversities are termed AAD.



Finally, the last category conceptualized by Papadopoulos (2007: 306-8) is that of the positive outcomes. This author calls this specific kind of response *Adversity-Activated Development (AAD)* and specifically refers to the kind of development that did not exist prior to the exposure to adversities.

AAD refers to a new learning, a new gaining, to a transformative renewal (Papadopoulos 2007: 308), that could be summarized, using Jungian terminology, as the ability to *transcend* suffering. But, this transformation, as Hussain and Bhushan also note, 'does not necessarily yield less emotional stress' (2011: 721). The ability to transcend suffering and reach a renewed sense of life depends, in turn, to the second (often hidden) meaning of the verb *titrosko*, that is, 'rubbing off, rubbing away'. In other words, these are qualities triggered precisely by the very adversities refugees encounter in their experience of forced migration (Papadopoulos 2007: 304-5). Papadopoulos further clarifies that: (1) *AAD* emerges only when the person is exposed to his/her very limits. The feeling is somehow that of dying. Only when these limits are reached, a sense of transcendence and renewal may appear. 'This reaching of limits, which is experienced as an end, can open up new horizons beyond those previously planned or imagined' (2006: 4).

Positive growth following exposure to adversities has been studied in other ways, using different terminologies and emphasising slightly different aspects (e.g., Krow and Nagy 2011; Powell et al., 2003).

The grid helps us to be mindful of this totality in order to avoid compartmentalisation and polarisation. Moreover, the grid is useful in reminding us that the box of individual pathology is only a tiny space in relation to the wider spectrum of other consequences that may also co-exist with the pathology (Papadopoulos 2006: 6).

Moreover, the possible profile of vulnerability emerging from the grid should be understood in relational terms, that is, focus on the interaction between service providers and service users. In this way, vulnerabilities are not reified, nor regarded as inherent characteristics of single individuals. Rather, they are conceptualized as emerging qualities from an interactional matrix, that is, emerging qualities negotiated among the different actors involved. As seen in the first chapter, relational refers to the idea that vulnerability is not an inherent characteristic of a person. A person is not vulnerable per se. He/she may become vulnerable as a result of a lack of fit between him/her and the surrounding context.

Papadopoulos (2010a) argues that vulnerability should not be understood as a single entity or characteristic belonging to one dimension of human functioning but as a composite phenomenon with external and internal dimensions. As such, vulnerability is considered essentially a contextual concept (i.e. dependent on its contexts of time, place and conditions),

relational (i.e. dependent on the interaction with others, persons, groups and services) and dynamic (i.e. not static but subject to change in time, responding to surrounding changing circumstances) (2010a: 26). Moreover, when considering the issue of vulnerability in refugees, the relationship between service users and service providers is crucial. As mentioned before, it is not rare that both actors collude and fall into rigid roles, leading to rigid human encounters. Most commonly, refugees tend to fall into the role of victims and service providers into that of rescuers (Karpman 1968).

The attitude of assuming that all refugees are vulnerable may make it difficult for service providers to recognize potential the resources in service users. This does not mean that, at the same time, service providers should be encouraged to neglect the potential distress and suffering of people they are working with. It is the complexity of possible responses that should require acknowledgement, rather than a single (either positive or negative) extreme. With respect to this, the Trauma Grid (Papadopoulos 2007) acts precisely as a systematic reminder, that people's responses to adversities may vary considerably and this richness should be preserved.

Moreover, by containing four psycho-social levels (i.e., individual, familiar, community and societal/cultural), the grid helps 'to remind workers that asylum seekers are not isolated and self-contained units but live as part of families, communities and within cultures' (Papadopoulos 2010b: 50). The

term psychosocial was first introduced, within the realm of the social sciences, by Erik Erikson (1950, 1959, 1968). It accounts for all those phenomena for which the application of a single-level explanatory theory (e.g., only political or, on the other extreme, only intrapsychic) is not considered enough. Indeed, since the refugees' predicament is massively connected with political (and thus inherently contextual) events, when considering the psychological (or individual) dimension of this population it makes sense to refer to non-psychological elements.

Moreover, by including psycho-social levels to understand the multifaceted nature of the refugee predicament, the role of culture is acknowledged as crucial in shaping, maintaining and providing for allowed (or forbidden) boundaries for the expression of mental distress. As noted by various scholars (e.g., Kleinman 1987, 1988a, 1988b; Marsella 2010; Summerfield 1999, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2005; Nathan 1996), each culture may have specific systems of spiritual beliefs, which comprise peculiar ways to understand and treat physical, as well as mental suffering. For example, for Nathan a symptom is precisely a "text without context" (1996). This means that, if brought back to its original place, a symptom would resolve and disclose its inherent meaning. More specifically, Summerfield notices that:

Every culture has its own reserves of psychological knowledge, range of attributions to assign to adverse experience, and forms of accommodation, struggle and help-seeking. In many non-Western cultures distress is

commonly understood and expressed in terms of disruptions to the social and moral order and no particular attention is paid to internal emotions as items in their own right (2000: 422).

On a practical level, a psychosocial approach may help service providers make sense of this complexity (i.e., interrelated realms) and help clients reconnect with their wider networks of belonging, whether they be tangible institutions such as mosques or churches, or intangible as rites and specific celebrations. A particular emphasis on the value of culture was proposed by Eisenbruch (1988, 1990, 1991) in his concept of “cultural bereavement”, to account for the specific pain experienced by migrants and refugees in relation to their culture of origin. Indeed, he suggested treating this specific type of sorrow by re-connecting of the person with meaningful cultural rites.

Finally, while the Trauma Grid systematizes the quality of responses (i.e., positive, negative and neutral) and the psychosocial levels involved (i.e., individual, familiar, community and societal) in each refugee’s story, the dimension of time is incorporated in the four phases of the refugee experience (Papadopoulos 2001a). Through these phases, Papadopoulos identifies the refugee experience as internally composed by various stages. At the same time, possible diachronic changes within the same refugee’s story may be acknowledged.

Papadopoulos (2001a: 412-16) identified four main phases, which he defined as: anticipation, devastating event, survival and adjustment. The phase of anticipation refers to the pre-traumatic period of fear for the adversities that are likely to happen. The phase of devastating events is the most widely studied in the literature on trauma. It is often connected with extreme events, such as rape, torture, and deaths. However, it should be remembered not all refugees actually experience such atrocities. Then, the phase of survival where refugees no longer risk their life. Although there is no risk to life, this phase may lead to intense suffering, since 'refugees are disoriented, disempowered and helpless. ... This can be a most distressing and indeed 'traumatic' phase, which is usually ignored, especially when the emphasis is on the exciting and tangible phase of the devastating events' (Papadopoulos 2001a: 414). Finally, the phase of adjustment refers to the refugee's arrival in a new Country, where they frequently face of a difficult/strange environment.

Those four phases, when combined with the Trauma Grid, allow simultaneously for a classification of the responses in their qualities, psychosocial levels involved and specific passages of time. As it will be seen in the empirical section of the work, it is precisely in the interconnection of these parameters that the participants' narratives were evaluated.

## **2.5 Polarized discourses or complex narratives?**

*No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself ... I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you ... in such a way that ... I am still author, authority. I am still the colonizer, the speak subject, and you are now at the centre of my talk .*

(Hooks 1990:151-52)

The drama triangle is a theoretical and clinical tool constructed by the transactional analyst Karpman (1968). It helps discriminate between those situations where roles amongst people become stereotypical and rigid. It can be defined as a specific “transactional game” we may engage in when with others and only one among the many “games” that may be played (Stewart and Joines 2005: 119-130).

According to transactional analysis (TA; same authors: 295-309), humans play games in order to avoid intimacy and the vulnerability connected with being authentically close with others.

The drama triangle foresees three roles, which are rigid and stereotyped (i.e., they leave no room for complex feelings, cognitions or behaviours): saviour, perpetrator and victim. On entering the game, each person locates him/herself in one of these roles, assumes all the attributes characteristic of

the role and neglects all characteristics which do not fit with the chosen role. For example, those in the role of victims tend to reinforce their weakness, vulnerability and dependence on others. Conversely, they will tend to neglect feelings of pride, or behaviours connected to strength.

Typically, refugees tend to cover the role of victims, helpers (by definition) that of saviours, and finally, those who committed crimes against refugees that of persecutors. These roles, as already said, are over-simplified and do not leave room for complex understanding. For instance, the possible violence inherent the role of saviour is not explored.

To respond to the question of when this “game” gets activated and in which conditions, it may be said that it usually becomes established in highly emotional situations, where there is pressure for immediate action and little room for complex thinking. According to Papadopoulos (1998: 456), in the context of refugee issues, one factor likely to contribute to the constitution of these rigid roles is the confusion between the condemnation against crimes committed and the linearity of the discourses around those facts. Instead of complex thinking, the following discourses tend to be polarized or, in Bateson's words, only bipolarly differentiated. That is, you are good or evil; you are ok or are a victim; you need to be saved or you do not need any kind of help. Using Bateson's own words, bipolar differentiation (i.e., dark vs light; good vs evil) is a common way of reasoning, yet it does not help grasp the



interconnection of variables present in a social fact.

When we invoke bipolarity as a means of handling differentiation within society ... we considered only the possibilities of simple bipolar differentiation. Certainly this pattern is very common in Western cultures; take, for instance, Republican-Democrat, political Right-Left, sex differentiation, God and the Devil, and so on. These discourses even try to impose a binary pattern upon phenomena which are not dual in nature (1972: 15, I changed the word people with that of discourses).

If polarized into extremes, complex refugee narratives rarely have space to emerge, despite the complexity inherent in this phenomenon. Instead, sharp and linear narratives are more likely to be told. It could be argued that, normally, we live in contexts that, beyond containing dichotomies, also have their nuances, and we move among these. However, with excess stress (i.e., when highly emotionally charged situations occur), polarization tends to take precedence over complexities and nuances.

Going back to our example of refugees and helpers, polarized narratives seem to be typical among helpers, especially within the mental health field (Papadopoulos 1998: 460). Papadopoulos asserts mental health professionals are likely to treat refugees using their own specific lenses, which tend to be polarized along a continuum which has health and pathology as its extremes. This general psychiatric/psychological trend, he continues, risks (1) to psychologize and pathologize refugees; (2) may further victimize

the people already in need of redress.

As Summerfield (2001a: 96) also observes, the tendency to psychologize the refugees' predicament may become a self-fulfilling prophecy, where victim identities imposed on refugees actually foster the vulnerabilities of the people these labels are attached to. This author further observes:

Suffering arises from, and is resolved in, a social context, shaped by the meanings and understandings applied to events. The distinctiveness of the experience of war or torture lies in these meanings and not in a biopsychomedical paradigm. This is not just a conceptual issue, but also an ethical one, given the danger of misunderstanding and indeed dehumanising survivors via reductionist labelling (Summerfield 1999: 1454).

The risk is that, as Papadopoulos (1998) points out, the only way to condemn those that have committed crimes is by pathologising the survivors, rather than questioning and possibly challenging the contextual factors involved (Afuape 2011: 27). However, pathologising survivors is likely to destroy the delicate balance between witnessing and sympathising with the adverse experiences of survivors and may foster their sense of helplessness (Papadopoulos 1998: 456, 2001b: 6).

So far, refugees have been depicted in the role of victims, helpers as saviours, and those who committed political crimes as persecutors. However,

real drama (Karpman 1968) only begins with a sudden change of roles and inevitably leads to a negative outcome for all actors involved. The result is reciprocal blame, where nobody is able to transcend the game and observe the trap they are located in.

As suggested by Karpman himself, the victim triangle or drama triangle is a closed system. The only way to escape the drama, once established, is to stop playing the rigid game. And the only way to stop playing is by adding complexities (and even ambiguities) to the previous narrations (Afuape 2011; Mason and Sawyerr 2002). Adding complexity to a closed system does not only open the whole system, it also liberates each person previously trapped within it.

If we translate the rather abstract discourse on open and closed systems to the refugee field, a good example of a closed system could be a polarized narrative, that is, a narrative containing sharp dichotomies. On the contrary, a good example of an open system could be a complex narrative, that does not only focus on one side of the refugee experience. This implies a shift on the side of the interviewer, not to only ask about some aspects of the whole experience of forced migration. On the contrary, the effort should be to ask about all that happened of relevance to the interviewee in his/her refugee experience.

In the context of this work, the construct of complexity, informed by the categories of the Trauma Grid and the four phases of the refugee experience (Papadopoulos 2001a, 2007), guided the questions asked to the respondents and was also used to analyse the narratives produced within the interview setting. In operative terms, the construct of complexity was defined as a peculiar way to look at a phenomenon, acknowledging:

- multiple and even contradicting qualities (positive, neutral and negative ones);
- diachronic changes in time (a before and an after);
- the contribution of various factors (the single individual is considered located and constantly interacting with a wider context).

The construct of complexity was then further specified into narrative coherence, as functionally equivalent to the construct of complexity. In this way, the narrative complexity of the study participants' life stories was evaluated in terms of coherence. The construct of narrative coherence was borrowed from one of the most well-known instruments for evaluating the adult quality of attachment, that is, from the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI: Grossmann et al. 2005; Main et al. 1985). The original internal subdivision of the construct of coherence into two conversational maxims by Grice (1975) was maintained.

In the original field of study where the construct of narrative coherence was first used, one of the key hypotheses of attachment theorists is that

complementarity exists between the care-giving behaviours of parents and the attachment behaviours of the children. The main function of attachment is to guarantee safety to the child through proximity with the caregivers.

The Adult Attachment Interview (AAI: Grossmann et al. 2005; Main et al. 1985) is a semi-structured interview that lasts about one hour. It evaluates the present mental state of an adult about his/her early relational experiences, starting with the earliest memories. The AAI shares key characteristics both with clinical interviews (e.g., the interviewer is free to deepen the topics that the interviewee raises), as well as, with structured ones (e.g., composed of 18 questions asked in a standard order).

The interview opens with a broad question about the relation, in general terms, of the interviewee with his/her caregivers. Then, 5 adjectives describing the relationship with each parent are asked for. For each adjective, the person must provide a specific memory that supports the choice made. Then other questions follow exploring, for example, which parent the subject felt more connected to, parents' usual reactions to emotional or physical needs, the first separation from home, and possible experiences of rejection and threats regarding discipline. Finally, a series of questions are asked aiming to explore how early relationships have influenced adult life, if there was any experience of loss, and the main characteristics of the present relationship of the subject with his/her parents.

The subject's story is fully transcribed and codified. A crucial aspect of this procedure is that it is not based on objective experiences, but instead on how memories emerge in the subject's narration. Indeed, the key assumption of this instrument is that the quality of the discourse reflects the way early attachment experiences have been organized in the subject's mind, in so defined internal working models (IWM; Calvo and Fava Vizziello, 1997).

Therefore, the coding procedure is subdivided into a two-step analysis, the first reflecting the explicit/semantic aspect of the IWM and the other the implicit/procedural aspect.

The global coherence of the speech is evaluated, and operationalised according to Grice's conversational maxims (1975). Moreover, the global coherence of the mind is evaluated, depending on the organization, clarity and complexity of the memories.

From the coding process, four main categories are foreseen, related to specific modalities to remembering early experiences of attachment (Calvo & Fava Vizziello, 1997; Simonelli & Calvo, 2002):

- secure/autonomous attachment is connected to a coherent narration, which means the answers are clear, relevant and concise. These

subjects are free to explore their feelings and are aware of the effects their early relationships had on them. What is crucial is that not only are the subjects with supportive parental figures considered secure, but also subjects who had a difficult past can be classified as secure, if they metabolised their past and are able to present it in a coherent way.

- Dismissing attachment. This is a specific organization of thoughts that allows the attachment experiences to be kept at least partially detached and disconnected from present life. This characteristic is expressed during the interview through the attempt to devalue the emotional side of their attachment experiences. Usually experiences are described in highly idealized way, with no specific memories to support this idealization. Or subjects express a strong devaluation of the importance of attachment relationships, minimizing the influence of negative experiences or omitting specific episodes of the past (especially negative ones).
- Entangled or preoccupied attachment. Here the attachment appears confused, passive or angry. There is an over involvement within the family members, that still continues to operate in the subject's mind. There is a continued intrusion of past memories during the interview and speech becomes over-emotional. The subject is not able to

articulate his/her thoughts in a logical and coherent way. Irrelevant details also abound. There are many violations of Grice's maxims and the discourse is difficult to follow.

- Attachment with non-resolved losses or traumas. This is the last category where subjects appear very confused and disorganized in their description of early attachment relations.

In the context of this work, the construct of complexity was translated into that of coherence by creating a direct correspondence between each parameter of the Trauma Grid, phases of the refugee experience (i.e., quality, psychosocial level and phase; Papadopoulos 2001a, 2007) and notes from the interviewer on the way the interviewee narrated his/her experience within the interview setting to each category of coherence (i.e., two conversational maxims; Grice 1975).

The first maxim by Grice was that of consistency ("say the truth"), while the second was that of collaboration. The last maxim was further sub-divided into three, being: (a) quantity ("make your contribution as informative as is required"), (b) relation ("be relevant") and (c) manner ("avoid obscurity of expression"). More specifically, the maxim of consistency was put in correspondence with the "what" that was said in the interview, while the



maxim of collaboration with the “how” the interviewee located him- or herself within the interview setting.

The conversational maxim of consistency was connected to the parameters of phase, quality and psychosocial level. Each parameter could be classified as having a high, mild or low level of consistency. For example, a high level of consistency was associated with a “balanced” description of that parameter. A high level of consistency within the parameter of phase meant that the narration had no temporal blind spots. On the contrary, mild or low levels of consistency were mainly connected to “polarized” (i.e., split narrations) or “over-concentrated” (i.e., one-sided) narrations. The attribution of mild or low levels of consistency depended on the degree and pervasiveness of the polarization or over-concentration. A mild level of consistency meant the participant was maybe not able to recall all phases, but most phases could be recalled. A low level of consistency of the parameter of phase meant the participant could not mention most of those phases.

The conversational maxim of collaboration was divided, as in its original format, into three parameters of quantity (i.e., sufficiently complete), relation (i.e., relevance), and manner (i.e., easy to follow). According to the quantity parameter, a narration could be classified as: too long, sufficient, too short; according to the relation parameter into relevant or irrelevant; and the manner parameter, it could be easy or difficult to follow.

In a similar way to the classification of a secure attachment in the AAI, a coherent narration was characterized by consistency of memories, that is, all phases were recalled with sufficient details, and all qualities and psychosocial levels were explored, the story had no blind spots, contained a sufficient number of details, and the topics discussed were relevant and easy to follow.

An important characteristic shared from the original use of the construct of coherence and how it was used in this thesis is that a narrative was considered complex and coherent not only because it focused on positive memories and aspects. On the contrary, a narrative could be classified as complex/coherent if all (or most) parameters were mentioned, with an appropriate degree of explanation. Even a sad experience could be found in a coherent narrative, if the person had come to terms with the atrocities contained in the past memory and was able to recall the event in the here and now without being overwhelmed.

Without trying to minimize actual suffering and pain experienced by refugees, the primacy is attributed to the process of meaning-making each refugee operates with regards to his or her own story. An event cannot be cancelled, however, it can be metabolised and new meanings may emerge in relation to it. Refugees not only endured extreme events, sometimes they managed to thrive in the face of these events, or precisely because of them.

## **2.6 Summary**

No refugee leaves alone, detached from others and from multiple social contexts. These contextual elements may range from very tangible, such as a concrete institution like a mosque or a church, or intangible ones, as in a spoken language, or a special festivity. Within each refugee story, the individual level of subjective experience is constantly connected to the wider context around.

In the opening of this chapter, Papadopoulos' etymological analysis of the term trauma (2002a) has been introduced. The positive and negative nature of the original term 'trauma' have been discussed in light of the frequent pairing of the terms "refugees and trauma".

Then, the uniqueness of the refugee predicament was explained in relation to the loss of home and the specific yearning this loss entails. Moreover, the Trauma Grid (Papadopoulos 2007) and the four phases of the refugee experience (same author 2001a) have been explored. The Grid classifies the various possible outcomes from adversities, and the psychosocial factors involved. While the four phases allow for a classification of these responses according to the temporal variable. The specific definition of vulnerability emerging from the Trauma Grid connects individual features of refugees with

wider contextual elements, that move from a familiar level to incorporating societal/cultural ones. The assumption is that no refugee is an isolated being, whether the connection is mediated through tangible or intangible elements.

Finally, the drama triangle (Karpman 1968; Stewart and Joines 2005: 301-303) has been outlined as an example, within the mental health field, of exclusively adopting a negative and deficit-oriented view of refugees. Polarized narratives as an example of loss of complexity and rigid human encounters with refugees was contrasted to rich and complex narratives. This lead to a discussion on the construct of complexity being operationalised into one of narrative coherence.

## CHAPTER 3

### Refugees, home and the body

#### 3.1 Introduction

The relationship between mind and body has long fascinated philosophers and artists, as well as scientists and theologians. Despite common daily accounts on how the body exerts its influence on the mind, or, vice versa, how the mind influences the body, when we try to undertake a more serious inquiry into the mind-body topic, many contradictions arise. The role of the body becomes suspended between the realms of *being* and *having*. We become uncertain if the body should be considered as a subject (the 'I' that constitutes the biological roots of my identity), or better as an object (the 'material thing' that I own and which constitutes an epiphenomenon with reference to more central features of my identity).

In the opening of this chapter, a debate on the embodied mind thesis will be discussed (e.g., Maturana and Varela 1998), as one of the key perspectives addressing the body/mind issue. According to this perspective, the condition of embodiment is inherent our humanhood, and by no means an

epiphenomenon of it.

After this section, a discussion on the current state of the art of the refugee literature dealing with bodily issues will be discussed. Within the same sub-chapter, the declension of embodiment in relation to the outer environment (i.e., concept of territoriality) will be also deepened, because of its relevance for refugees. Within the context of refugee studies, it is highlighted how the body is generally neglected, and if present, is discussed mainly in the reductionist form of somatic symptoms. Only a small number of studies address the “refugees' body” for its therapeutic qualities. In no case, to the best of my knowledge, has the body itself been addressed as a potential resource able to enrich verbal narratives, in an interview context.

Finally, as a core theoretical aspect of this thesis, in light of the following presentation of the findings, a section devoted to non-verbal communication will follow, as a concrete way to systematically analyse the “body” in relation to the verbal counterpart. When discussing issues of non-verbal communication, the body will be described in its expressive potential and thus, literally, as a story-teller.

The whole thesis embraces a phenomenological view when dealing with the issue of embodiment. While losing their home and leaving their country

behind, refugees still have their bodies accompanying them in this forced journey. Here it is argued that the embodied dimension has a crucial role in the refugee experience, since the body is each refugee's (inevitable) migrating companion.

### **3.2 Some definitions of embodiment**

Human beings have bodies, and those bodies shape and constrain how we think. ...

the body is not some other thing

to which the mind returns when thinking is interrupted

- thinking itself is shot through and through with the body

(Rohrer 2008: 382-383)

There are various definitions of embodiment. Theses on embodiment are found in psychology, philosophy, robotics, artificial intelligence, music, law, and the neurosciences, just to mention some of the key fields involved. Usually, the most prominent definitions are the result of highly interdisciplinary efforts, rather than the outcome of a single discipline. This should not surprise the reader, since the body/mind issue is characterized by such a high degree of complexity, it would be simply impossible for a single theory or disciplinary field to comprise and explain the whole richness.

The rationale behind this section of the work is to present one (or more, in the case of the “philosophical and neuroscientific sections”) author per disciplinary field. At the end of this chapter, a brief summary, in the form of a table, will be presented, in order to systematize each contribution with their unique emphasis.

Zooming in on the field of psychology and philosophy, it can be said that the most prominent theses on body/mind issues are those on embodied cognition (Berlucchi and Aglioti 2009; Bosnak 2003, 2007; Castiello et al. 2010; Damasio 1994, 2003; Gallagher and Marcel 1999; Gallagher 2005; Gallese 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999; Le Breton 2007; Panksepp 2005; Rohrer 2008; Schore 1994, 2005; Tsakiris et al. 2007; Tsakiris and Fotopoulou 2008). The embodied cognition thesis (also named, 'situated cognition') is the result of interdisciplinary work deeply connected with phenomenology (Husserl 1964, 1970; Merleau-Ponty 1962).

As observed by Rohrer (2008), the embodied cognitive thesis explores specific ways in which the body shapes and constrains thought from various points of view (e.g., philosophical or neuro-physiological). According to this thesis, it is assumed that cognition is resultant of inter-actions of the subject within his/her environment (Ferri et al. 2011; Castiello et al. 2010; Gallagher



and Marcel 1999; Gallagher 2005), and, thus, the emerging knowledge is always rooted in action and situated in a context.

Merleau-Ponty has probably provided the most complete definition of *embodiment* since, in his opinion, 'our encounter with the physical is already situated and embodied. Matter is described experientially' (64). In other words, according to this author, mind and matter are inextricably connected. As no material entity can exist without a subject knower that can give an account of its existence, a subject knower must necessarily locate his knowledge within a real, corporeal, world. The body described by phenomenologists is a living body, something very different from the corpse or the body found in anatomical tables. Paraphrasing the Italian phenomenological philosopher Galiberti (1983), the living body in a world is a primitive opening to the world, a primitive intentionality, and our primary means of establishing an explorative relation to the world (1983: 81). It is through the embodied experience that people make sense of their reality.

Phenomenology is rooted in early 20th-century European philosophy. It involves the use of thick description and close analysis of lived experience to understand how meaning is created through **embodied perception**. (Starks and Trinidad 2007: 1373; bold mine).

Phenomenology is concerned with the appearance of things (through a

detailed study of how the mechanism of perception works) and as such assumes objective reality is not knowable *per se*, and we can only know things as they appear to us. The viewpoint is that of the subject experiencing his or her life-world (lived world), and the search is not for truth, but rather for meaning (Kvale 1983, 1996). It is not only what comes to us that should be observed, but also the ways in which things come, in their encounter with the perceiving subject (Husserl 1964, 1970; Merleau-Ponty 1962).

When one rejects the idea of an objective knowledge of reality, in favour of a personal, idiosyncratic, knowledge that occurs through perception, the world becomes a perceptual reality that takes place only through a process of embodiment, and not something existing *per se* that needs to be discovered.

The truth of an event, as an abstract entity, is subjective and knowable only through embodied perception; we create meaning through the experience of moving through space and across time.

(Starks and Trinidad 2007: 1374).

Within the same phenomenological approach, Varela and colleagues (1993), later suggested that, just like Merleau-Ponty, they also see embodiment as having a double meaning, since it is both a lived/experiential structure and also the context/milieu for cognitive mechanisms to take place (1993: xvi).

That is to say, the world is not separable from the subject knower. While for Descartes, one of the most eminent representatives of the opponent dualistic position, reality actually existed in the external world (i.e., the so-called “realist position”), phenomenologists believe that 'naïve realism', as they call the realist position, has to be rejected since things are never the way they appear. In other words, the world always contains the marks of our own structure as knowers, in a similar fashion to the *a-priori* categories of experience proposed by Kant. Varela et al.'s (1993: 172-3) definition of embodiment is as follows:

By using the term embodied we mean to highlight two points: first, that cognition depends upon the kinds of experience that come from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities, and second, that these individual sensorimotor capacities are themselves embedded in a more encompassing biological, psychological, and cultural context.

Thus, not only is the process of thinking embedded in the 'bodily environment' (and within its constraints), but this 'bodily environment' is further contained in a wider context which is both social and cultural in nature. This allows us to conceptualize something more; the reference to neuroscience (e.g., when talking about sensorimotor processes involved in the mind/body relationship) does not reduce the functioning of the body uniquely to its elementary

processes, since the body is also a symbolic entity, deeply embedded in the cultural milieu of belonging. Herein lies the main difference between animals and humans. That is, everything animals sense and are aware of depends on their specific sensory machinery, which is complete at birth. On the contrary, humans are also deeply influenced by cultural and educational factors (Le Breton 2007: 17; Papadopoulos 2008: 95), and the range of human possibilities increase dramatically with age and learning. Moreover, as Le Breton points out, from an anthropological perspective, an individual can never be reduced to a sum of sensory organs and related activities, as animals can. Humans, unlike animals, use the external world as a *pre-text* (2007: 5) and their immersion in a sensory world is used as a starting point to create a world of sense (i.e. meanings). Even perceptions are not the result of neutral (i.e. physically objective) activities, since they are instead interpretations of the “external world”, deeply embedded in cultural and personal frames of reference (2007: XII).

Furthermore, Maturana and Varela (1998: 11) hold that cognition is not a representation of the world “out there”, but rather an 'ongoing bringing forth of a world through the process of living itself'. According to this view, all cognitive experience involves the knower personally, where the process of knowing is not a representation of something that exists objectively. On the contrary, it is a “bringing forth” of something internal, a constitutive property of all living

beings in their encounter with external data. This means, as suggested by Merleau-Ponty (1962) in the following quotation, that at least three elements are always present within the process of knowledge, that is, a subject knower (always living), external data (whether living or not) and the process of knowing (as the experiential meeting between the two).

My body ... can never be absent from my experience – if I am perceiving, then my body is experienced; it is a permanent feature of my perceptual field. ... Other physical things are open to exploration. I can move round them in space or turn them over in my hands. But I can only experience my own body from one perspective (from Merleau-Ponty 1962: in 171).

Moreover, this process of knowing, rather than being postulated as a static moment in time, is conceptualized as being based on action. Indeed, the circularity of the relationship between the world and the knowing subject could be further summed up in the aphorism that 'all doing is knowing, and all knowing is doing' (Maturana and Varela 1998: 26). These authors indeed hold the idea of a universal nature of doing and of a direct relation of the mind with the body via the concept of action. 'Knowing is effective action, that is, operating effectively in the domain of existence of living beings' (1998: 29).

Damasio (1994) and Gallese (2010), as two of the major representatives of

neuroscientific studies, have also provided crucial contributions for the field of embodiment. According to the first author, the human organism interacts with the environment as a whole, not simply at the level of elementary interactions. This interaction is carried out through external responses we call “behaviours”, but especially through the display of internal responses, which are themselves displayed as images (1994: 88-9). Damasio postulates these images as being at the basis of the mind, with the body providing an ongoing reference ground.

The body, as represented in the brain, may constitute the indispensable frame of reference for the neural processes that we experience as the mind; that our very organism rather than some absolute external reality is used as the ground reference for the constructions we make of the world around us and for the construction of the ever-present sense of subjectivity that is part and parcel of our experiences; **that our most refined thoughts and best actions, our greatest joys and deepest sorrows, use the body as a yardstick** (xxvi; bold mine).

According to this view, the mind is fully embodied, namely, it is not enough to say the mind is located in the brain, since, if the brain was disconnected from the body, the resulting mind would probably be far different from the one we have now. Mind is hence neither body nor brain but results from complex interplay of brain-body with environment. Indeed, it is the same author that

suggests caution, in not considering the neuroscientific stance as being fully explicative of the nature of the mind.

In a strikingly similar fashion, Gallese also warns (2010) that the *methodological reductionism* characterizing neuroscientific and/or laboratory explorations should not be translated into an *ontological reductionism*, where the inevitably reductivist results are taken as complete explanations of the studied phenomena. The neuro-physiological side is only one aspect of embodiment; 'the embodied mind cannot be reduced only to the brain any more that it can be reduced to culture' (Rohrer 2008: 384). Going back to Damasio, he poignantly observes that the same dualism Descartes proposed, celebrating the separation of the thinking thing (the mind or *res cogitans*) from the mechanical entity (the body or *res extensa*) that constitutes its yardstick, and can be found in the very same neuroscientific positions that state it is possible to provide a full account of mental functioning based only on cerebral happenings (either structural or functional).

... the comprehensive understanding of the human mind requires an organismic perspective; that not only must the mind move from a nonphysical cogitum to the realm of biological tissue, but it must also be related to a whole organism possessed of integrated body proper and brain and fully interactive with a physical and social environment (Damasio 1994: 252).

Moving on to another discipline's contribution, that of system theory and cybernetics, Bateson, that we met in the first chapter, in his *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972), proposes an even more radical theory of the embodied mind. While affirming the mind's immanent nature, since it has at least the negative support of the Ockam's razor, he conceives the mind as something that goes well beyond traditional views that saw it as something within a single individual. Indeed, according to Bateson, not only is the mind embodied, but it also includes wider portions of outer reality. If it is true that also for phenomenologists the mind does not exist in isolation from the outer context, for Bateson this idea should be even more radicalised. Not only is there a dialectic play between inner and outer dimensions, which therefore presupposes the existence of something internal and something external, but, even more sharply, the mind cannot be considered a secluded entity, confined within the individual's skin. What is to be considered "mind" is the total self-corrective unity, which may or may not end within the individual's personal kinesphere. In Bateson's own words:

I suggest that the delimitation of an individual mind must always depend upon what phenomena we wish to understand or explain. ... in principle, if you want to explain or understand anything in human behaviour, you are always dealing with total circuits, completed circuits. This is the



elementary cybernetic thought (1972: 433).

From the perspective of developmental psychology, Stern gives his personal contribution to a phenomenological view of the body in *The Present Moment* (2004). The emphasis here is on the category of time, conceptualized in a phenomenological fashion, closely connected to the unfolding of the living process and the functioning of consciousness. The category of time is used to explain the process of knowing, both in its explicit (verbal and symbolic) and in its implicit (non-verbal and procedural) facets. According to this author, implicit *knowing* is a pre-symbolic, pre-verbal, procedural and unconscious dimension, which embraces motor processes, physical sensations, affects, motivations occurring in the phenomenological present/now. Rather than arguing for the primacy of the implicit dimension over the explicit, Stern claims for a necessary and fruitful co-existence with dialogue between the two. Although they are different, these two dimensions cannot be separated; a change in the explicit dimension inevitably affects the implicit one and a change in the implicit reverberates in the explicit. These changes between the explicit and implicit dimensions occur within a time structure, of which the “now” becomes the only moment of authentic subjective reality. For Stern, while the natural sciences refer to the Greek perspective of *cronos*, as objective and measurable time, another Greek term seems more adapt for the

subjective/experiential reality. The word *Kairos*, referring to the propitious moment for something to happen (2004: XIV), does not emphasise the linear flowing of time inherent with the concept of *cronos*, but rather a subjective bracketing within the flowing of time, and as such is the point of reference for subjective experiences in time.

The rationale behind illustration of the works covered so far is to emphasise the highly interdisciplinary nature of the studies on embodiment. The topic is indeed so complex it seems of paramount importance to present the same issue from different points of view, each highlighting some specific feature. However, what all these contributions have in common is that they all make a concerted effort to overcome the Cartesian body-mind split (Damasio 1994). The selection of authors presented has followed a criterion of relevance within each specific disciplinary field, by no means signifies a complete account.

To further summarize what has been said so far, see Table 3.1., where all the selected contributors are presented in shortened form with the explicated criterion relevant to this thesis.

As already seen with Bateson's contribution (1972), the mind is not only embedded in a living body but also includes wider portions of 'outer' reality, and, as such, embodied cognition theorists can be broadly considered truly

systemic thinkers. As humans, we are embodied and incorporated in wider contextual networks. We are not only animals, but, as Aristotle put it, we are 'social animals'.

| <b>Author</b>               | <b>Main argument</b>  | <b>Key-emphasis</b>               | <b>Disciplinary field</b>           |
|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Merleau-Ponty<br>(1962)     | Encounter with reality can occur only through perception, embedded in a living body.  | <i>PERCEPTION</i>                 | <i>Philosophy</i>                   |
| Varelà et al.<br>(1993)     | Cognition depends on the biological apparatus of the mind, further embedded in a socio-cultural milieu.   | <i>SOCIO-CULTURAL<br/>CONTEXT</i> | <i>Philosophy</i>                   |
| Maturana &<br>Varelà (1998) | All knowing is doing, and all doing is knowing.   | <i>ACTION/ENACTMENT</i>           | <i>Philosophy</i>                   |
| Damasio (1994)              | The body constitutes the necessary yardstick for neural processes that we call mind.  | <i>BODY-MIND-BRAIN</i>            | <i>Neuroscience</i>                 |
| Gallese (2010)              | The neuro-physiological side is only one aspect of embodiment.<br>Be aware of ontological reductionism  | <i>BODY-MIND-BRAIN</i>            | <i>Neuroscience</i>                 |
| Bateson (1972)              | The mind has an immanent nature, embodied, and includes meaningful portions of outer reality.   | <i>CYBERNETIC SYSTEM</i>          | <i>Systemic thinking</i>            |
| Stern (2005)                | The implicit (non-verbal) dimension is connected to a non-linear conceptualization of time ( <i>Kairos</i> ) and values the present time (now). | <i>KAIROS/NOW</i>                 | <i>Developmental<br/>psychology</i> |

**Table 3.1:**

This table briefly outlines key contributions presented in this sub-chapter, on the basis of the analysis carried out so far. The criteria followed were mainly two: (1) to present the topic of

embodiment from various disciplinary perspectives, and their complementarity; and, (2) to select one (or more) noted thinkers within each approach.

### **3.3 Body and refugees**

As we have seen, embodied cognition perspectives confer a central position to the concept of context (Bateson 1972; Castiello et al. 2010; Damasio 1994, 2003; Ferri 2011; Gallagher and Marcel 1999; Gallagher 2005; Gallese et al. 1996; Gallese and Sinigaglia 2009a; Papadopoulos 2008). According to these perspectives, identity can only develop within a constant inter-change between the individual and the external environment (which is both social and physical). This inter-change is so sophisticated in structural levels and continuity in time that some authors (e.g., Bateson 1972) have cast doubt as to whether it is possible to clearly separate an individual from his/her environment, or whether it be more epistemologically appropriate to consider the individual and his/her fundamental interconnections as a unique system. If these views are fused, identity is neither an *immaterial entity* (Damasio 1994: 252; he uses the term *nonphysical cogitum*) separated from neural activity, nor is it detached from the outer realm. In this ongoing process of reciprocal exchanges, between what is “inside” the individual and what is “outside”, the body plays a mediating role. It acts as a surface of contact allowing passages to take place, almost like the semi-permeable membrane of a cell.

When we discussed the role of the loss of home in the refugee predicament, we saw how the issue of territoriality is crucial for refugees. Concepts such as exile, odyssey, nostalgia, homecoming, return, and home, all have special significance for refugees (Nassari 2000; Papadopoulos 1997, 2002a; Van der Veer 1998). However, despite the relevance that the issue of territoriality has for refugees, and the role of the body in mediating the relationship with the outer environment, the body seems to be mostly neglected in the specialised literature.

Stretching Papadopoulos' theory on home and refugees (2002a), the body may be seen as each refugee's first home and shares with his construct of home many basic features. As Nina Papadopoulos observes (2014):

Home is characterized by the three dimensions of time, space and relationships which means that it provides continuity over time within the context of a certain space that enables relationships that create a sense of familiarity, intimacy, continuity and homeness. All these are facilitated and experienced primarily through the body: we experience the space around us through the body as well as experiencing the spatial dimensions of the body itself; relationships are experienced through the body and we also develop an ongoing relationship with our own body; the embodied experience of continuity of our very existence is primary to our sense of identity (2014: 4).

The comparison between home and the body was approached by highlighting eight characteristics of the body that have a status of “homeness” (2014: 1-4). In her original writing, every characteristic is deepened in relation to the key body-related exercises to promote an awareness of that particular characteristic.

1. Constancy, stability, continuity: even if a person is in states of distress, normal body functions (such as breathing, digestion or other basic functions) continue to work.
2. Adaptational change: homoeostatic property of many body functions which help the body to keep its balance in the face of threatening stimuli.
3. Transformational change: ability of the body to introduce quick changes within the psycho-somatic dimension.
4. 'Body language': body expressing psychological states and vice versa: existence of a cybernetic (or feedback) circuit between the psyche and soma.
5. Differentiation awareness: further specification of the previous characteristic. Not only do psyche and soma influence each other, but from somatic awareness it is possible to differentiate various psychological states.

6. Activating differentiation: through the use of props in body exercises, many emotions may be expressed. In this way they have the chance to get to the conscious surface, rather than staying in an unconscious state. If they become conscious, there is a chance to potentially elaborate and transform them (if dysfunctional).
7. The body as a positive source of strength to counteract negative experiences: even if a person is overwhelmed by terrible experiences, he/she may still have the chance to have positive experiences related to the body.
8. Quality of playfulness through physical experiences: they may have enriching effects for the person who experiences them.

If it is true that the body can be seen as our first home, then refugees may be helped in reconnecting therapeutically with their own body. At the same time, even if not for therapeutic purposes, the body is a resource that all refugees may engage with for recalling experiences of the past home, back in their home Country.

However, despite the role that the body has (or may have, in therapeutic terms) for refugees, there is only a small number of studies that directly address the body in its various aspects (e.g., somatic disturbances, or role of the body in the context of seeking refuge). Moreover, when present, the body

is found mostly in the reduced form of bodily symptoms (Aragona et al. 2010; Blackwell 1997; Eisenbruch 1990; Grodin 2008; Kirmayer and Young 1998; Kruse et al. 2009; Morina et al. 2010; Prorokovic et al. 2005; Tribe 1999, 2002; Van der Veer 1998). Terms such as 'somatic symptoms', 'somatic complaints', 'somatoform disorders', 'bodily complaints', 'somatic distress', 'physical complaints', 'somatisation', 'physiological dis-balance' are most prolifically found in the refugees' mental health literature. This is particularly true when refugees' mental health also includes references to the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD; APA 2000), where the link between the psychological correlates of the disorder and somatisation is frequently reported (e.g., Rothschild 2000, 2003; Van Der Kolk 1994; van der Kolk et al. 1996). Somatisation is literally defined as the presentation of physical symptoms that do not have an organic aetiology, and are thus regarded as bodily expression of psychological distress (Aragona et al. 2010). They may include symptoms such as headaches, back pain, musculoskeletal pain, fatigue, dizziness, gastrointestinal disturbances, and other physical complaints.

There are various ways in which the high rates of refugee's somatic complaints can be understood. They may vary from one extreme pole, which could be defined 'universalistic' (e.g., Cheng 2001; McColl and Johnson 2006; Palmer and Ward 2007; Turner et al. 2003) to another that could be



termed 'cultural relativism' (Eisenbruch 1988, 1990, 1991; Geertz 1986; Zur 1996). The first pole ('universalistic') assumes the culture free nature of somatic symptoms, because of an underlying assumption that what is biological must necessarily be universal, as critically pointed out by some ethnocultural thinkers (Gaines 1992, in Zur 1996: 306). On the contrary, the second hypothesis ('culturally relativistic') assumes each diagnosis, including that of PTSD, represents an over-generalization of a context-dependent disorder. Indeed, this diagnosis was first used for Vietnam war veterans and only appeared for the first time in the DSM III in 1980 (APA 1980 in Zur 1996: 305-7). According to this position, each diagnosis is believed to be culture-bound (Kleinman 1987, 1988a, 1988b). For example, in the discussion of refugees' mental health, the role played by somatic symptoms (Tribe 1999) may serve a cultural purpose, since 'physical pain may be much more acceptable than psychological pain' (Tribe 2002).

An in-between position (e.g., Woodcock 2000) recognises that, given the universal nature of the human nervous system, some universal elements in the somatic distress displayed by refugees does exist, but a crucial role of a culturally situated understanding and treatments of these disorders is recognised. Along with this recognition, a fruitful integration of Western and non-Western healing practices is equally aimed. Symptoms are believed to be fully understandable only within the context in which they are displayed, even

if, as humans, there are certain features of our shared biological apparatus.

Few studies have described body oriented (psycho)-therapies (BOP/BOT) with refugees (e.g., Amone-P'Olak 2006; Callaghan 1998; Fabri 2011; Harris 2007; Lynn-Gray 2011). The major advancement of these contributions is that the body is not regarded as a container of somatic complaints, as seen in the reports on somatisation, but in its 'therapeutic totality'. This means that, unlike these reports, the body is not considered as a sum of symptoms, but rather, in its organismic wholeness.

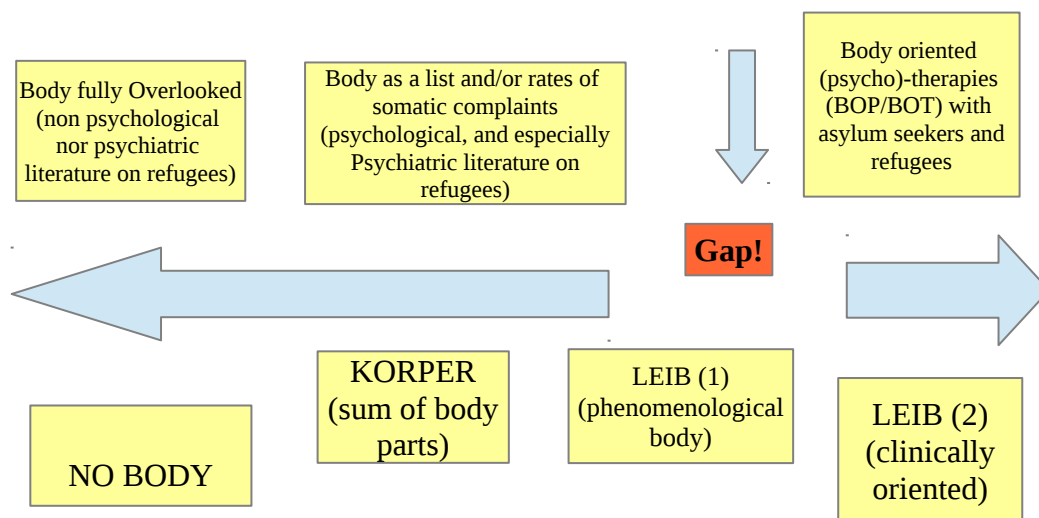
For example, Callaghan (1998) argues that refugees may more easily access movement-based therapies, rather than verbal ones, since the latter are, on the contrary, perceived as more frightening and distant from their familiar settings. He observes (1998: 29):

Psychotherapy is uncommon in many countries and where available is frequently associated with the mentally ill. Movement psychotherapy, using a medium more often associated with activities of celebration, art and sport, is more acceptable to some refugees. Similarly, the whole concept of sharing feelings and problems with strangers is often so unfamiliar that sitting and talking about them is too uncomfortable. In such instances, by using movement it is possible to facilitate communication through action.

Another example is that of Harris (2007). Similar to Callaghan, this author also considers BOP/BOT to be more appropriate than “western” traditional approaches, yet he recognises the importance of maintaining a parallel “Western” understanding of the predicament of the people he is working with (2007: 136). This author's work should be considered as an in-between (integrative) position, since he proposes the use of body oriented (psycho)-therapies (BOP/BOT) to 'promote cultural relevance and community ownership' (2007: 134).

In the light of these two works, taken as representative experiences of BOP/BOT within refugee settings, what seems really interesting, especially with regard to Papadopoulos' criticism of the main societal discourses on trauma (as seen in chapter three; Papadopoulos 2002a, 2007), is that such clinical contributions are mostly trauma-focused. In other words, it is assumed, in line with most studies on refugees' mental well-being, that refugee populations are in a vulnerable state due to the trauma(s) suffered. In this way, BOP/BOT contributions may be considered an advancement towards an organismic, and thus totality-oriented view of the body. However, what seems to be lacking in these body-oriented therapeutic approaches is the idea that the body may be studied for its own sake, without assuming its necessary therapeutic role, and without assuming all refugees are traumatized people.

This thesis is not a clinical one and therefore the specific reference to the embodied dimension is by no means intended to focus on a clinical inquiry on the outcome of formal psychotherapy. However, it is argued that the body may be accessed as a resource for narrative purposes, and in this way, be regarded in its holistic totality. In the context of this work, the body is seen as a resource for narration, for even when meanings are conveyed by words, it needs a body to do so.



**Figure 3.1:**

This figure illustrates the aim of this research project, namely, that of exploring a missing gap within the refugee literature. The aim is of understanding the role of the body, as a narrative resource, within an interview setting with refugees. In the context of this study, the body is regarded as an organismic unit that may be a source of knowledge itself.

### **3.4 *The body as a story-teller***

The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said.

Drucker P.

There are many ways to define communication, and one of them highlights the interactional aspect. Under this light, a possible complete definition of communication could be 'whenever the behaviour of one individual (the sender) influences the behaviour of another (the receiver) . . . behaviour can be defined as communicative to the extent that it reduces uncertainty in the behaviour of another" (Wilson 1979 in Buck, 1984: 4)'. According to this definition, communication does not depend on the prevalent code used, whether verbal or non-verbal, but rather on the pragmatic effects that it has on the receiver. In this definition of communication, not restricted to the verbal code, the emphasis is on the relation among interactants.

Defining communication mainly as an interactive process, and using communication and behaviour as synonyms, Watslawick (1967) argues that it is impossible not to communicate. While we can choose not to speak, by literally keeping our mouth shut, the same cannot be said for non-verbal cues.

It is impossible to stop behaving, 'activity or inactivity, words or silence' (Watslawick et al. 1967: 48-49) are ways of communicating.

Focusing on the pragmatic effects of interpersonal exchanges, this author observes that every communication comprises an aspect of content and one of relation. This last level meta-communicates (i.e., communicates over a process of communication) on the content, helping the receiver clarify the message it carries. While most content is conveyed through words, which are finite and discrete, relation is mostly conveyed in analogical terms. Desires, affects and feelings are conveyed through non-verbal cues (also defined as implicit aspects of the process) and it is thus the relational aspects of a communication that qualifies the "true" nature of a message.

Indeed, wherever relation is the central issue of communication, we find that digital language is almost meaningless. This is not only the case between animals and between man and animal, but in many other contingencies in human life, e.g., courtship, love, succour, combat, and of course, in all dealings with very young children or severely disturbed mental patients" (Watslawick 1967: 48-71).

By connecting the axiom of the impossibility of not communicating, with the prevalent relational nature of non-verbal communication, which helps de-codify verbal contents, Watslawick further observes:

We have feelings about others and the behaviour of others, and these feelings engender spontaneous displays that in turn constitute relational messages. Such phenomena as interpersonal synchrony, equilibrium, and reciprocity (often involving extremely subtle micromovements, postures, gestures, and eye behaviours) are emergent phenomena often based upon the interplay between spontaneous displays and preattunements during the course of interaction that express important emotional aspects of a relationship. **In this way, we cannot not communicate and we cannot avoid defining our relationship** (Watzlawick et al., 1967, in Buck and VanLear 2002: 535-36; bold mine).

In most cases, it seems that non-verbal communication provides more meaning than its verbal counterpart. For example, according to Mehrabian (1972, 1981), over 50% of the meaning of a message is conveyed by body language, and only 7% by the words themselves.

As with regards to the clarification of the meaning of a verbal message, non-verbal elements may emphasize words, contradict them, or substitute them. Words are emphasised when the non-verbal cues accentuate the meaning of what is said verbally. A verbal message is contradicted by non-verbal elements when we convey a double-message (Bateson 1972). In this case, the words convey one thing whilst the non-verbal elements its opposite. If it is possible to convey a deceitful message with spoken language, it is far more

difficult to do it in analogical terms. This last level, as already stated, is meta and more trustworthy than its verbal counterpart.

I can tell you "I love you" when in fact I do not. But discourse about relationship is commonly accompanied by a mass of semivoluntary kinesic and autonomic signals which provide a more trustworthy comment on the verbal message (Bateson 1972: 137).

Finally non-verbal elements can be used in place of spoken words. This is particularly true for conveying emotions and feelings, and as we have already seen, more easily accessed and expressed with non-verbal cues than words alone. As observed by Manusov and Trees (2002: 640), 'non verbal cues may be an important part of moving through account sequences, both on their own and when combined with verbal utterances'.

A further specification of this could be the reveal, through non linguistic means, of physical symptoms which are invisible. For example, Heath (2002) found in his observations of what happens inside the consultation rooms that patients use non-verbal cues to express their physical suffering, and in this way reveal their inner world to the bodily surface. The aim is to make their suffering intelligible to the doctor, in order to convey the uniqueness of what they are experiencing against the generalizations of the diagnostic categories. This author points out:



Through gesture and bodily conduct, patients transpose inner suffering, their personal subjective experience of their complaint, to the body's surface and particular parts and areas of their physic. The inner and the subjective are overlaid on the outer surface of the body and rendered visible and objective ... The doctor momentarily becomes a spectator, witness to the symptoms that the patient has experienced (or is experiencing) (Heath 2002: 603).

However, according to some scholars (Buck and VanLear 2002: 522) the issue of truthfulness of non-verbal elements is more complicated than what has been said so far. Non-verbal communication may be further subdivided into two kinds: spontaneous non-verbal communication and pseudo-spontaneous one. The latter is located in an interface between verbal and spontaneous non-verbal codes.

According to this classification, verbal communication is defined as symbolic, intentional, socially shared, discrete and learned; language is probably the best example of symbolic communication. Spontaneous non-verbal communication is, on the contrary, non intentional, biologically rooted, comprising of signs, not symbols. The emphasis is on the unintentional nature of this form of communication. What these authors define as pseudo-spontaneous communication shares same non-verbal cues with the spontaneous non-verbal communication, but differently in that it is intentional and involves a strategic manipulation. As such, it could be defined as a

symbolic non-verbal communication. Neurological evidence supports this subdivision since Buck and VanLear (2002) found that language is usually associated with the brain's left hemisphere, while spontaneous non-verbal communication is mostly associated with the brain's right hemisphere. Similarly to the symbolic verbal communication, pseudo-spontaneous non-verbal communication is mostly associated with the brain's left hemisphere.

Moreover, there are many difficulties regarding the interpretation of non-verbal cues, since, by definition, non-verbal elements are ambiguous. They are continuous, as opposed to the discrete nature of spoken words, and are often involuntary (even if not always, as we have just seen with the pseudo-spontaneous non-verbal communication; Buck and VanLear 2002). Moreover, the ambiguity of non-verbal codes is connected to the fact that a non-verbal element can trigger various meanings (e.g., as for instance the same gestures in different cultures) and various non-verbal elements may be used to communicate the same meaning. It can indeed be said that non-verbal codes are always context-related; i.e., the way people move their hands, touch others or make eye contact may change consistently depending on the cultural background.

non-verbal communication is also influenced by gender. In a similar way, cultural and gendered elements are learned. Judith Hall suggested that male

and female roles each own a set of prescribed behaviours (56). This means society expects men and women to behave differently, and these expectations are translated in learning practices since birth, which codify the preferred (and banned) gendered behaviours.

Differently from verbal communication, which is by far the most studied, non-verbal communication has a more recent scholarly history. Probably, Darwin's (1872) *The expression of the emotions in man and animals* is the first writing to directly address the issue of non-verbal communication. As observed by Vulcan (2013: 7), the 'somatic/verbal divide' (Vulcan 2013: 7) renders the transition between the soma and verbal language not easily crossed, and this divide is difficult to translate into academic knowledge.

Needless to say, this difficulty is deeply rooted in the conventionally Western mind–body divide and inherent to the trajectory of human development, as traditionally conceived, from a somatic “bundle of needs” to a semiotic, signifying individual.

Differently from verbal communication, non-verbal communication seems to be located in a phylogenetic continuity with the animal world. Indeed, it has been observed that innate competences to rapidly codify and decodify non-verbal messages are shared among human and non human mammals. This is particularly true for facial signals with an emotional value (Segerstråle and

Molnar, 1997).

*Why do our facial expressions of emotions take the particular forms they do? Why do we wrinkle our nose when we are disgusted, bare our teeth and narrow our eyes when enraged, and stare wide-eyed when we are transfixed by fear? ...* According to Darwin's intellectual heirs, the behavioural ethologists ... , humans do these things because over the course of their evolutionary history such behaviours have acquired communicative value: they provide others with external evidence of an individual's internal state (Krauss et al. 1996: 2; italics mine).

The non-verbal cues may indeed be connected to primary emotions (i.e., joy, rage, sadness, fear, disgust and surprise), as Ekman and Friesen (1972) found in their pioneering research on the “universal” nature of facial expressions. These authors (1977) initiated a study on body movements and facial expressions to 'challenge the view current at that time in psychology that non-verbal behaviour was meagre source of information, rarely providing accurate information' (1977: 37). These results cannot be considered definitive, as various authors pointed out. For example Russell (1994) cast doubt on the rigour of their methods when used cross-culturally, and provided alternative explanations to the data obtained. Or Margaret Mead who criticized Ekman and Friesen's work as a “discipline-centric approach”, highlighting on the contrary the cultural and non universal nature of facial

expressions (Jones and Lebaron 2002: 500). However, while results cannot be considered definitive, Ekman and Friesen had the merit to show that not only could non-verbal behaviours provide information, but that this information could be considered accurate.

Since the very first days of life, a baby relates with his mother mainly through implicit and thus procedural non-verbal codes. For example, they “talk” to each other through facial expressions, specific vocalizations and gaze. The early bodily experiences between a baby and his/her caregiver deeply influence the developing neurological structure and physiology of the brain (Schore 1994, 2005). Altogether these interpersonal exchanges account for the early experiences of inter-subjectivity (Stern 2004), which are genetically pre-programmed and by no means learned. For example, it was found that we have an innate predisposition to understand others' intentions through an automatic process of simulation, thanks to the so defined mirror neurons (Gallese, 2009b). Since the very beginning, these neurons help each human to “understand” and co-regulate the quality of interpersonal relationships. The fact that these embodied mechanisms of simulation are genetically predetermined suggest that they have an evolutionary meaning (e.g., by promoting attachment behaviours; Bowlby 1988) and aim to maximise the individual's possibilities of survival.

Moreover, there is evidence that the use of non-verbal codes enhances further development of verbal language. Both in normal and in impaired populations (e.g., deaf children), gesture serves as a transition to spoken language. A neurological overlap has indeed been observed between the brain's regions controlling speech and controlling performance of gestures (Iverson & Thelen, 1999a, 1999b). Moreover, it was found that 'like language, gesture provides an index of a child's cognitive status' (Capone and McGregor 2004: 174).

Literally, non-verbal communication has to do with the process of creating meanings through non linguistic means, that is, without spoken words. It comprises various elements: kinesic cues (e.g., gestures, facial expressions, postures), spacial elements (i.e., distance), time (i.e., time cues), clothing (i.e., the way a person appear), and paralinguistic elements (e.g., volume, pitch, rate).

As Argyle (1988: 1) points out, each aspect can be further subdivided into other variables, 'for example different aspects of gaze - looking while listening, looking while talking, mutual gaze, length of glances, amount of eye-opening, pupil expansion'. At the same time, not all sub-variables have equal pragmatic relevance.

According to this author (1988: 5), non-verbal communication has five primary functions:

- Expression of emotion; preferably transmitted through non-verbal cues, as already seen when describing the two aspects (i.e., content and relation) inherent to any message;
- Communication of interpersonal attitudes; in phylogenetic continuity with the animal world, we maintain relationships mainly through non-verbal cues;
- Accompany and support speech; interactants engage in a complex exchange of verbal and non-verbal cues. For example, Hadar and colleagues found neurological evidence that verbal messages and coverbal (i.e., speech-related) gestures are connected. By studying clinical (i.e., brain damaged patients) and non clinical groups of people, these authors showed that this kind of conversational gestures are related to speech 'both in their timing and their ideational content' (1998: 108).
- Self-presentation; this is mainly achieved by the way a person appears (i.e., movements, postures and clothing);
- Rituals; most rituals are performed through non-verbal cues.

In the context of this thesis, only the category of kinesics (i.e., facial

expressions, gestures, eye movements and postures) will be discussed in the presentation of the findings, and mainly analysed according to Troisi's classification (1999).

Kinesics studies the human body's motion, that is, it focuses on bodily movements, postures, gestures and facial expressions. The word kinesics derives from the Greek word *kinesis*, which means "movement". Its founder, Birdwhistell, 'envisioned a discipline that would parallel linguistics but deal with the analysis of visible bodily motion' (Farnell 2003: 49-50). Gestures will now be taken as key-examples of kinetic non-verbal elements, particularly interesting for both the presence of a rich academic literature on this topic and the connection of this literature with actual findings obtained (Hostetter 2011: 298). However, as already mentioned, in the context of the presentation of findings, all kinetic elements will be discussed in relation to the actual displays of the study participants.

From an embodied cognition standpoint, 'gestures emerge from perceptual and motor simulations that underlie embodied language and mental imagery' (Hostetter and Alibali 2008: 502). That is, gestures are indeed a good example of the embodiment of language, and are characterized by underlying verbal and spatial processes.



The embodied approach to cognition suggests that ... language comes to have meaning because we can index words to the real world; language is grounded in our sensorimotor experience (Glenberg & Robertson, 2000; Zwaan & Madden, 2005) (in Hostetter and Alibali 2008: 497).

Gesturing is a universal phenomenon, 'even found in individuals blind from birth' (Goldin-Meadow 1999: 419). Gestures are used to accompany speech but are also used as a tool for supporting the process of thinking.

Gesture also provides listeners with a second representational format, one that allows access to the unspoken thoughts of the speaker and thus enriches communication (Goldin-Meadow 1999: 428).

A preliminary observation is that all gestures are hand movements, but not all hand movements may be classified as gestures, that is, have a communicative value. For example, according to Kendon (1983), hand movements can be classified on a continuum of "lexicalization", from a minimum degree of communicative value to a maximum degree where the non-verbal message is a close substitute of a spoken word.

According to this author's classification we find adapters, on one extreme of the continuum, symbolic gestures on the other, and conversational gestures in an in-between position. Following this classification, adapters should not be

considered gestures tout court, since they are not communicative, nor are they related to the speech they accompany. 'They consist of manipulations either of the person or of some object (e.g., clothing, pencils, eyeglasses)—the kinds of scratching, fidgeting, rubbing, tapping, and touching that speakers often do with their hands' (Krauss et al. 1996: 4). At the same time, inferences may be drawn from their observation. For example if the speaker is nervous, stressed, excited, or bored.

At the opposite of the continuum we find symbolic gestures (Ricci Bitti and Poggi, 1991). They usually have a conventional meaning, are used intentionally, may substitute unsaid words, and are thus culture (or even sub-culture) specific. In the most extreme case, gestures are themselves "speech", as it is in sign language for deaf people (i.e., American Sign Language, ASL). 'Like spoken languages, sign languages are structured at syntactic, morphological, and phonological levels and exhibit left hemisphere dominance' (Goldin-Meadow 1999: 420).

Finally, in mid position of the continuum, we find conversational gestures. They accompany speech and are thus related, both in timing and semantic aspects, to the words they accompany.

Hostetter (2011: 308) identified a way to further describe conversational

gestures. She subdivided them into three categories: (1) representational gestures, depicting an abstract content, also called metaphoric gestures (McNeill, 1992); (2) deictic gestures, pointing to a concrete referent (like a spatial position or a concrete object) in the environment; and (3) iconic gestures, creating through the use of hands and arms an image standing for a spatial or motor content. However, as observed by this author (2011), the informative contribution provided by gestures to spoken words differs on the kind of gesture displayed. Gestures depicting spatial information or motor actions (i.e., deictic and iconic gestures) proved more communicative than gestures referring to abstract contents (i.e., metaphoric gestures). This finding will be extremely relevant when discussing the findings of this PhD work, since our results seem to align with Hostetter's results of her meta-analysis.

Under such a view, in order for a gesture “to be worth a thousand words,” the gesture would most likely depict spatial or motor information. Gesturing while describing an abstract topic, under such a view, would do little to enhance communication because abstract ideas are less clearly conveyed in gesture. The results of this meta-analysis support this view; **gestures that accompany abstract topics do not significantly benefit communication** (as evidenced by an average effect size that is not significantly greater than zero). **Gestures that accompany spatial and motor topics, however, do have significant benefits for communication** (Hostetter 2011: 298; bold mine).

Similarly, but with a therapeutic purpose, the Jungian analyst Bosnak (2007: 40) reached a similar conclusion. By connecting imagination and affects, via the body, this author defines embodiment (2007: 106) as follows:

Embodiment is the way in which image becomes flesh. We affectively live our bodies. It is the primary affective knowledge we have of our bodies, more direct than any knowledge we have of our body as an object. By following the way in which affects live as embodiments, we uncover the lived body as a physical expression of emotional states. A state of embodiment consists of affect, image and physical sensation (2007: 120).

He observes the close connection between body gestures and spatial and motor contents, which he defines as the recreation of visually concrete landscapes.

Going back to Hostetter, she also observed that the contribution of gestures to speech is greater when gestures do not overlap with words, thus when they are non redundant (e.g., Church and Goldin- Meadow, 1986; Emmorey and Casey, 2001). Finally, gestures may help to maintain the listener's attention, but, according to Hostetter's meta-analysis, only when the information conveyed by gestures deals with spatial or motor content, not when it deals with abstractions.

It may be rightly observed that the subdivision in verbal and non-verbal codes is somehow artificial, since in most interpersonal exchanges these two codes are like simultaneous streams creating altogether the complex process we define communication. Recent lines of research tend indeed to aim for a holistic approach regarding the issue of communication. According to these studies, verbal and non-verbal messages are considered inseparable and occur together, to reach a “mutual performance” (Jones, and LeBaron 2002: 499). Moreover, further studies seem to shift from a focus on “behaviour” to that of “embodied action”. The observational focus changed, shifting from an external position (a behaviour that can be observed) to a perspective of agent-centred (Farnell 1999, 2003).

Borrowing Gallese's (2009c) subdivision, methodological reductionism should be seen as different from an ontological one. In the context of this thesis, verbal and non-verbal communication are both considered as necessary aspects of the overall process of communication, embodied by a meaning-making individual. Simultaneously, for the methodological requirements of the empirical part of this work, a specific focus on non-verbal behaviours was required. Following Gallese's sub-division, the choice was a methodological reductionism, yet with an anti-reductionist ontological view of what is considered communication.

The body itself is considered a story-teller, and its unique “wordless language” worthy of being listened to.

### **3.5 Summary**

In this chapter, various contributions within embodiment theory have been presented. Special emphasis has been placed on the importance of the phenomenological approach, as outlined by its founders Husserl (1964, 1970) and Merleau-Ponty (1962), for understanding the embodied cognition theses. Indeed, the primacy of lived, embodied and contextual dimensions are crucial features shared by phenomenologists and embodied cognition thinkers. The phenomenological philosopher Gallagher further states that 'even if all of the unessential features of self are stripped away, we still have an intuition that there is a basic, immediate, or primitive 'something' that we are willing to call a self' (2000: 15). Accordingly, the most primitive level of self is an ecologically embedded body, and even if we are not aware of it, still counts as a self-experience.

This following section dealt with the discussion of current state of the art in the refugee literature addressing bodily issues. Papadopoulos' theory on

home and refugees (2002a) has been stretched to encompass embodied notions. The refugee's body is not only their first home, which has been negatively impacted on by the experience of sudden uprooting from their meaningful environment, but can also be a resource (Rothschild 2000, 2003) available to refugees for restoring a primary sense of containment. Despite the possible understanding of the body as each human's first home, and thus as each refugee's inevitable migration companion, the body seems to be mostly overlooked in the refugee literature. The unique focus and contribution of this thesis will be highlighted, that is, engaging the body may help refugees to more fully narrate their life stories. To the best of my knowledge, the body has not been explored as a narrative resource in an interview setting with refugees.

Finally, the chapter ended with a discussion on non-verbal communication, as the theoretical foundation for the empirical part of this study. While the subdivision in verbal and non-verbal communication is artificial from an ontological point of view, most processes of communication comprise of both. Yet, a methodological distinction is operated, both at the level of the research questions and in the methodological devices chosen.

The actual work of this thesis constitutes an attempt to explore an overlooked issue within an already overlooked field. Even if the thesis is not clinical and

does not aim to evaluate the outcome of a psychotherapeutic process with refugees, the body is considered a story-telling resource, a crucial means to help refugees narrate their life story.

Sometimes I long back for certainty.

I understand Descartes

(Bosnak 2007: 113)



**PART II**  
**METHODS**

## CHAPTER 4

### Research methodology

#### **4.1 Introductory thoughts**

*How do refugees talk about their experience of forced migration? Do they see themselves as victims, or as resourceful people? Can they use “non-verbal bodily expressive/communicative behaviours” to deepen their story? What kind of movements will they use and how will these movements affect the verbal accounts that follow? Will these narratives become enriched or will it just be a repetition of same contents?*

#### **4.2 A qualitative methodology**

Too often there is a naïve acceptance of the “data” as something like a found object on the beach, a piece of driftwood, or an apple that falls, or points of light viewed through a telescope.

Data has to be understood as data

(Schostak 2006: 68)

The word methodology refers to the overall approach to research and is thus linked to a specific research tradition or scientific philosophy (e.g., positivist, naturalistic, phenomenological). There is a close link between the questions the researcher asks and the research paradigm chosen. Indeed, as Papadopoulos (2006: 7:53) highlights, the methodology is, etymologically speaking, the logos of *methodos* (from the Greek terms *meta* and *odos*, meaning, respectively, 'after' and the 'road'). Thus methodology can be defined as the route to be taken in order to address the questions the researcher has in mind.

Within existing methodological approaches, the greatest subdivision is that between quantitative and qualitative studies. The choice for this research project was to tailor to a qualitative inquiry, for a number of reasons, which can be summarized as follows. Indeed, it is the *purpose* of the work which is the force controlling the research process, because it is precisely from purpose that criteria, methods, and kinds of research originate (Patton 2002: 213).

1) *the generation of detailed data*. The aim of this project is an in-depth analysis of what a sample of refugees narrate about their experience of forced migration and resettlement in a new environment;

2) *the participants can 'speak with their own voice'* (Temple and Moran 2011: 6-9) . This kind of inquiry allows the study participants to narrate their experience, with the minimum degree of constraint inherent in a semi-structured interview;

3) *the exploration of new or poorly understood issues*. In this case, that of exploring overlooked issues, namely, that of looking beyond the vulnerable side of the refugee predicament and evaluating the role of the body as a resource for narration;

4) *direct connection with the issue of complexity*. The very same adjective *qualitative* refers to a research approach that aims to grasp the complexity and uniqueness of its findings (e.g., Glaser and Strauss 1967), rather than identify trends within the data and generalize them, as most quantitative approaches do.

From a philosophical point of view, qualitative research is likely to be linked to a *post-modernist* tradition, where the ideas of 'natural laws' or the 'objective external world' are rejected. In the qualitative/postmodernist approach, truth is not an objective entity waiting to be disclosed, but rather, a co-created (narrative) construction involving different social actors (Al Rubaie 1999, 2006). The notion of truth is itself inconsistent with postmodern thought.

Moreover, the qualitative research approach has always tended to put major emphasis on the concept of 'giving voice' to and empowering interviewees (e.g., see the concept, for instance, of 'power redistribution'; Karnieli-Miller 2009). As Temple and Moran (2011: 44) point out:

Researchers should acknowledge that they are part of the social world that they study and part of its production through research accounts. Moreover, it is possible for researchers to seek to implement more democratic, reciprocal, non-hierarchical and cooperative processes while still acknowledging responsibility. Thus, in this view, in order to be as rigorous as possible, researchers need to reflect on the ways in which they, as individuals with social identities and particular perspectives, impact upon the interpersonal relations of fieldwork.

Researchers must be accountable for their responsibility towards the research participants within the interview setting. This means that researchers should consider their personal involvement as crucial in affecting the inter-subjective field they are in, and thus their presence as having an inevitable impact upon the emerging results.

As Patton (2002: 227) points out, in comparison to quantitative means, 'qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed data about a much smaller number of people and cases'. Qualitative inquiries thus have an idiographic orientation. Samples are usually selected purposefully, and this choice based on specific criteria seems to provide quality and consistency to

the obtained data (Patton 2002: 238). As Bernard pointed out (2000: 176) with reference to the core aim of qualitative sampling, 'studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalization' (Bernard 2000: 176).

Furthermore, the position of "detached/transcendent observer" is usually abandoned, where the qualitative researcher engages in an active involvement with the world in which he/she is immersed in (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 3). This active involvement of the researcher with his/her object of study calls to the fore a further epistemological consideration, namely, the interaction between the *knower* and the *known*. Indeed, one of the primary goals of qualitative researchers, as already stated, is to make sense of phenomena, not only from an external position, but especially in terms of the idiosyncratic meanings people attach to them.

Since it is closely entangled with the researcher's subjectivity (i.e., the already mentioned interaction between *knower* and *known*), the qualitative approach not only has pros, but also inherent risks, because, for example, data and its interpretation may be heavily burdened with the researcher's biases (e.g., by his or her theoretical pre-assumptions). Even if it be noted that the *subjective* must not be confused with *personal*, risks exist. Among the possible devices that can reduce these risks, it is possible to mention the method of 'triangulation' (e.g., Patton 2002: 247) or the application of an 'intercoder

reliability test' (e.g., Kurasaki 2000). For this thesis, for example, the latter was used, that is, an external examiner, blind to the research questions, codified part of the data. In this way, the results obtained by researcher and external examiner could be compared and discussed.

#### ***4.3 Interviewing as a form of narration***

We tell stories about  
our lives  
to ourselves and to others.  
As such we create a narrative identity  
(Murray 2003: 116).

This research project further includes the idea that interviewing refugees may have an empowering effect on them, by helping them narrating the totality of their experience of forced migration. By addressing the totality of their experience, and not only a restricted selection of it, the study participants may go beyond an exclusive focus on the negative aspects of their story. In this way, the concept of 'giving voice' (Temple and Moran 2011) to the participants, and the issue of direct contact with complexity become clearer. A narration is indeed an organic unity composed of multiple parts, whose

meanings may emerge only from the totality.

During the 1980s, narrative scholars, within the qualitative research paradigm, took further the idea that interviewing should have a clear social purpose. These authors hold that the process of story-telling is massively capable of promoting social justice (Bochner 2001; Tierney 2000). In pursuing this social goal, narrative scholars developed a very specific way to define interview itself.

Interviewing is one of the most common methods of data collection within the social sciences (e.g., DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006), and, according to these authors, it can be equated to a form of narration itself (Kvale 1996: 199). The underlying idea is that each human being is like a story-telling animal. As argued by Holloway:

As part of the 'narrative turn' scholars have begun to treat seriously the view that people structure experience through stories, and that a person is essentially a storytelling animal. This has led to a more sophisticated appreciation of people as active social beings and focused attention on the way personal and cultural realities are constructed through narrative and storytelling (2005: 191).

The idea of regarding interviews as a form of narration, probably dates back to Aristotle's definition of what a narrative is, namely, a story that has a



beginning, a middle, and an end (Chatman 1978). As Hinchman and Hinchman (1997) further suggest, narrative stories 'should be defined provisionally as discourses with a clear sequential order that connects events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it' (xvi). As poignantly summarized by Elliott (2005), there are at least five common themes shared by all researchers interested in interviewing as a form of narrative, these are:

1. An interest in people's lived experiences.
2. A desire to empower research participants and allow them to contribute to determining what the most salient themes are in an area of research.
3. An interest in process and change over time.
4. An interest in the self and representations of the self.
5. An awareness that the researcher him- or herself is also a narrator (Elliott 2005: 6).

With reference to point one (i.e., an interest in people's lived experiences), the primacy attributed to the subjects' lived experiences over static data closely resembles one of the key-assumptions of phenomenology (e.g., Kvale 1996; Hycner 1985). In fact, within the latter approach, what really matters when considering any given phenomenon is the process of people's unique experiences as they unfold. This uniqueness must be preserved by letting people recall their experiences without interrupting this disclosure process (Kvale 1996). Indeed, findings are not meant to be generalizable (Giorgi 1985), rather, preservation of uniqueness and totality of the studied

phenomena is the most important feature.

Moving forward to point two (i.e., the desire to empower the research participants), narrative scholars have suggested that 'allowing respondents to provide narrative accounts of their lives and experiences can help to redress some of the power differentials inherent in the research enterprise' (Elliott 2005: 17). Rather than regarding the research setting as a "neutral" space, narrative researchers are willing to acknowledge issues of power and social asymmetry. Therefore, their emphasis in letting people respond with "their own voice" aims to balance the power differentials between interviewers and respondents. According to these authors, when power is shifted, a true democratization of the research process can be reached (Graham 1984; Kleinman 1987, 1988a, 1988b; Mishler 1984, 1986).

As regards point three (i.e., an interest in process and change over time), it can be said that narrative researchers pay attention to the dimensions of time and change, or, in other words, to the unfolding of events within the boundaries of a temporal frame. As such, Papadopoulos' (2001a) temporal suggestion of distinguishing four phases within the refugee experience can be considered in line with this point. Indeed, according to this author, the refugee experience is both temporally and qualitatively articulated. It therefore follows that there is no possibility to foresee, in a deterministic and *a-priori* fashion, which phase will have the major impact on each refugee, be it positive or

negative. Simultaneously, as time passes, initial vulnerabilities may transform into new and positive qualities. The clearest example is the concept of *Adversity Activated Development* (AAD, 2007), with which Papadopoulos denotes new emerging qualities that did not exist prior to the exposition to extreme adversities. The element of time is fundamental in the process of transformation, providing boundaries and “space” for change to take place.

Furthermore, in relation to point four (i.e., narration contributes to the constitution of the self), various authors over the last twenty-five years (e.g., Foucault 1978, 1995; Derrida 1989; Ricoeur 1991) have pointed out that the notion of identity as fixed and self-contained within the individual skin is inconsistent with post-modernist thought. According to the post-modernist tradition, the notion of identity is fluid and not liable to reification.

Identity is not to be found inside a person (like a kernel within a nut shell) but rather it is relational and inheres in the interactions a person has with others. (...) ... For Foucault and Derrida, the notion of a unified self is mistaken; the self is better understood as multiple and continually under construction rather than being a fixed set of characteristics or traits' (Elliott 2005: 124).

The narrative view holds that humans are essentially story-tellers, in need of meaningful narratives to create and re-create their lives (Afuape 2011: 78-84).

This idea is particularly interesting in the context of refugee issues. Indeed, the post-modernist view is so pervasive that the emerging relational, interactional and fluid vision can be applied even in the presence of terrifying and seemingly inexplicable events. Scholars embracing this view recognize and do not deny or try to minimize the tragic reality of violence and brutality. However, by considering human beings as constitutively story-tellers, the meaning attributed to such events is regarded as having the major impact on the affected people, rather than the events per se. 'Forasmuch as individuals construct stories, stories also construct individual identities' (Papadopoulos 1999: 330), and this is true not only at an individual level, but also at community and thus collective level.

Lastly, it follows from point five (i.e., the interviewer him- or herself is also a narrator) that interviewing is primarily a form of social interaction. Even if interviewers minimize, or attempt to minimize their presence to that of listeners, they cannot avoid partaking in this interaction. This is also true in those cases when the interviewers' participation is restricted to 'non-verbal cues, short responses or back channel utterances' (Elliott 2005: 11). Thus, an interview is not considered as merely a site of data collection, but also a place of data production, where the relationship between interviewer and interviewee forms a central feature of the process (Holstein and Gubriun 1995). Brinkmann and Kvale (2005) hold that potential harmful aspects should be recognized, alongside possible benefits to the research

participants. However, when issues of threat and potential harm within an interview setting with refugee people are addressed, the validity of the findings may increase (Hall and Callery 2001: 258) and potential benefits to the research participants may be provided.

#### **4.4 Research questions**

The thesis is constituted by four research questions (RQ). The first and second RQ focus on the verbal side of the refugee's narrative, while the third and fourth RQ specifically tackle the issue of “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” within the interview procedure. Since the research is first and foremost qualitative, no hypotheses are foreseen. The RQ are meant to be exploratory and open.

##### **1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Research Questions:**

- How do refugees narrate their experience, if the interview format is inspired by systemic ideas (Bateson 1972, 2002; Papadopoulos 2007)? And how can these narratives be classified in terms of

coherence (Grossmann et al. 2005; Main et al. 1985)?

- Are refugees attached to a victim identity?

### **3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Research Questions:**

- Does the “body” impact upon the following verbal accounts? And if so, how does it impact on the quality of responses?
- What are the main features of the movements actually displayed by the study participants?

The first two research questions focused on the verbal level of refugees' narratives. The data source for these two RQ were the first and second interview. The first interview was identical for both groups, while the second interview was diversified in two formats: one for the participants in the main group and one for those in the comparison group. The subdivision of the interviews in three formats will be further explained in the next chapter.

The last two research questions were focused on the second interview, in its two formats (main and comparison group). In this way, the findings obtained

in the two different groups were compared and discussed and thus the specific contribution of “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” on following verbal accounts to be explored.

While the thesis did not aim to generalize its findings and did not require a control group, the subdivision of the whole sample into two subgroups aimed to enrich the understanding of the role of the body as a narrative resource. Some narrations were in fact explicitly deepened with bodily expressions and others not. The more specific rationale behind the choice of a comparison group will be discussed in the following chapter (see 5.2: Research design).

#### ***4.5 Data analysis***

The qualitative data obtained in the interviews were classified through a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006: 79) 'for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data'. Literally, a theme can be defined as an identification and description of both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, 'that at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon' (Boyatzis 1998: 4). A theme can be identified directly, at a manifest level, or indirectly, at a latent level (thus beneath the surface of the phenomenon at stake).

The specific approach of the thematic analysis chosen could be termed hybrid (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006; Guest et al. 2012), since it combined an inductive approach (i.e., from the data itself upwards) with a deductive one (i.e., from specific theories downwards) (See Table at the end of this sub-chapter). In the former, patterns are recognized, while in the latter, they are interpreted.

The theory-driven (top-down) categories were used four times. In the first and second time they referred to the first research question, i.e., complexity in the verbal content of the refugees' narratives (micro and macro-levels). Micro-level analysis means that the first step consisted of analysing each meaningful sentence of the first interview for both groups' participants. The parameters used the first time (i.e., micro-level) were from the Trauma Grid (i.e., quality and psychosocial level; Papadopoulos 2007) and the four phases of the refugee experience (same author 2001a), that, taken altogether, are:

- quality (positive, negative and neutral);
- psychosocial level (individual, family, community and society/culture);
- phase (before, anticipation, devastating events, survival, adjustment and after).

The second time top-down categories were used was at the macro-level of the whole narrative of each participant. In this second case, the construct



chosen was *coherence*, adopted from the attachment paradigm (Grice 1975, 1989; Grossmann et al. 2005; Hesse 2008). A correspondence was created between the parameters constituting the construct of coherence (i.e., the conversational maxims by the philosopher Grice 1975) and the parameters of the Trauma Grid, plus the four phases (Papadopoulos 2001a, 2007).

In evaluating the participants' answers for the first RQ (at micro and macro-levels), the focus was exclusively on the first interview, which was identical for both groups (main and comparison). No reference was made to the different group allocation of the participant, nor to the content of the second interview.

The third time a theory-driven category was used it was for classifying the overall refugee experience and thus for the second research question. The overall refugee experience of the study participants was classified according to the quality of the Trauma Grid (Papadopoulos 2007), that is, in: negative, neutral (resilient) and positive (AAD) answers.

The fourth and last kind of theory-driven (top-down) category was used for the fourth research question, in order to classify the specific characteristics of the bodily expressions used by the study participants. This theory-driven categorization drew inspiration from Troisi's work (1999) who carried out an ethological inquiry on the non-verbal behaviours of psychiatric patients. In the context of this study, Troisi's classification proved particularly useful due to the

unambiguous nature of its categories.

All other categories were derived from the data itself, through a purely bottom-up codification. For example, the categories connected with the second research question (i.e., help to a person in need), could be summarized in: practical help, psychological help, spiritual help, social help, and a mixture of these.

Or, for the third research question (i.e., quality of the impact of non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours on the following verbal accounts), the categories were: amplification, reduction, repetition and meaning-making.

Finally, for the fourth research question (i.e., characteristics of the non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours), the interactional qualities of the movements were categorized as: null movement, direct interviewer's movement, constant interaction with the interviewer (mirroring or turn-taking), slight prompt, or autonomous movement.

|                              | <b>Top-down<br/>(source)</b>  | <b>Bottom-up</b> |
|------------------------------|---|------------------|
| <b>1RQ<br/>(micro-level)</b> | Trauma Grid (Papadopoulos 2007)<br>Four phases (Papadopoulos 2001a) |                  |
| <b>1RQ</b>                   | Coherence (Grice 1975, 1989; Grossman et al. 2005; Hesse            |                  |

|               |  |                         |
|---------------|--|-------------------------|
| (macro-level) | 2008)  |                         |
| 2RQ           | Quality from the Trauma Grid (Papadopoulos 2007) | Type of help            |
| 3RQ           |  | Type of impact          |
| 4RQ           | Ethological framework (Troisi 1999)              | Interactional qualities |

**Table 4.1:**

This Table summarizes the hybrid nature of the thematic analysis used in this thesis.

However, there appears a clash between the overall phenomenological approach, chosen as the best philosophical foundation for the current research, which explores in empirical terms the issue of embodiment, and the use of four pre-defined categories, pre-existent to the data collection itself. Indeed, the purist phenomenological inquiries (e.g., Kvale 1996) do not foresee pre-existing categories. However, bracketing, used for the 'setting aside of judgements, in order to remain as much as possible open to the disclosing of the experience' (Hollway and Jefferson 2000) is considered a key-technical device to be adopted (Romdenh-Romluc 2011).

Following Fereday and Muir-Cochrane' (2006), the hybrid approach chosen for this research includes both an inductive (i.e., data-driven) and deductive (i.e., theory-driven) thematic analysis to interpret raw data. This is in line with Guest's (2012) indication, that good qualitative research should combine elements from different perspectives. More specifically, to overcome the potential clash between the use of pre-existing categories and the overall

phenomenological approach of the thesis, the theory-driven pre-existent categories should have 'exploratory questions provided with expectations', rather than fixed statements for statistical validation or rejection.

Indeed, following Guest et al. (2012: 3-4), the data should primarily guide the analytical process, even when pre-determined categories exist:

The theoretical or philosophical foundation provides a framework for inquiry, but it is the data collection and analysis processes and the outcome of those processes that are paramount.

What can be defined as a theme is not measurable in objective and rigid terms, but rather is something able to “capture” significance in relation to the overall research question(s). It is in the linkage of pre-existing categories with actual data obtained that Schutz (1962: 59) glimpses a close resemblance between phenomenology and thematic analysis:

In this way, applied thematic analysis is similar to phenomenology, which seeks to understand the meanings that people give to their lived experiences and social reality.

Overall, what can be highlighted regarding the hybrid approach to qualitative research is that it applies different theoretical frameworks and techniques to data collection and data analysis. This hybrid approach serves to present the

study participants' stories as accurately and comprehensively as possible.

| <b>Exploratory (content-driven)</b>                 | <b>Confirmatory (hypothesis-driven)</b>          |
|---|--|
| What do X people think about Y?                     | H: X people think Z about Y                      |
| No specific codes/analytic categories predetermined | Specific codes/analytic categories predetermined |
| Codes derived from the data                         | Codes generated from the hypotheses              |
| Data usually generated                              | Typical use of already existing data             |
| Purposive sampling (most often)                     | Random sampling (most often)                     |

**Table 4.2:**

This Table consists of a summary of the main differences between exploratory and confirmatory approaches, as in Guest et al.' article (2012).

#### ***4.6 Ethical requirements of this project***

If all research projects raise ethical questions (Holloway 2000; Renzetti and Lee 1993: 14), these questions become particularly poignant in the social sciences, due to the close involvement with people that may find themselves in a vulnerable state.

In order to tackle the ethical issues related to this research project four key-ethical principles were followed (Beauchamp and Childress 1994): (1) respect for autonomy, (2) non-maleficence, (3) beneficence, and, (4) justice. Respect for autonomy is about the participants' right to free choice and thus with the importance of exercising informed consent. The principle of non-maleficence

relates to not causing harm to the research participants. The principle of beneficence aims to provide benefits to the participants and, finally, the principle of justice refers to an equal distribution of benefits, risks and costs to all participants.

Following these four ethical principles (1994), connected to the likelihood of the emergence of sensitive issues (Berry 2008), the protection of the participants' anonymity was crucial, especially given the provisional legal status of most participants. 'Refugees, with good reason, may be worried about exposing their details to public authorities, whether of their home country or the country of asylum' (Temple and Moran 2011: 26). The protection of anonymity was assured with the use of a written information sheet and a written consent form. Within both was an agreement with those involved of what might be done with their data (Karnieli-Miller et al. 2009; Sieber 1992). Both information sheet and informed consent form were available in two languages: English and Italian. They provided the participants with crucial information about the project, such as: why they were being asked to take part in the research project, what the research entailed, what possible risks or benefits existed, and what the data collection procedures and data treatment consisted of.

Essentially, the potential risks inherent to this research was explained as being connected to the topics covered in the course of two interviews, that

this could potentially cause distress and emotional arousal (elsewhere termed “sensitive issues”; Berry 2008). However, the choice of a non-clinical sample of refugees, plus the availability and access to clinical psychologist (other than the interviewer) based at the centre where the interviews took place, served to minimize the risk of emotional damage to the study participants.

In order to further provide boundaries for containing pain and prevent distress within the interview setting, all questions asked during the interviews were informed by Rothschild's ten principles of “safe trauma therapy” (2000: 98-9). Indeed, even if the interview protocols could not be considered a way of doing therapy, clinical guidelines were used, in relation to the disclosing of very personal memories.

More specifically, Rothschild's guidelines particularly relevant for the current research project can be summarized as: (1) establishing safety for the client (in this case, research participant), (2) developing good contact between therapist and client (in this case interviewer and interviewee), (3) adapting the therapy to the client (in this case, it is the interview that is adapted), and, (4) never expecting that the same intervention will have the same results with two clients (in this case the same interview question would not be expected to elicit the same responses with different people).

Moreover, as a further safeguarding framework, Papadopoulos' 'therapeutic stance' (2002a) was used. This stance consisted in the interviewer's ability to

'be aware of the totality of the complexities involved'. The adoption of the 'therapeutic stance' advocated by Papadopoulos mirrors the image of a 'secure base' (Bowlby 1988), where people are legitimated to make contact with and express the uniqueness of their experience within a securely held setting. By attending to and creating a containing frame, people could be simultaneously protected and structured whenever distressing elements emerged as a result of any particular disclosure (Palmer 2008).

At the same time, allowing interviewees to narrate the complexity of their experience and use the body to deepen this narration did not only carry potential threats. Each participant also had the opportunity to reach a greater understanding of his/her own life experience, in a 'private' sphere. As observed by Elliott, a noted researcher within the narrative field:

Of course it is not necessarily harmful for research subjects to experience distress in the course of an interview, and it may in fact be therapeutic or reassuring for a respondent to be given a safe space in which to talk about an upsetting event or experience ... People can also benefit from being given the opportunity to reflect on and talk about their lives with a good listener (2005: 137).

In particular, benefits could actually occur for the interviewees because they had the chance to explore the totality of their refugee experience, rather than only those parts related to their suffering and vulnerability. If the "trauma



story”, as an exclusive focus on the deficit side of the refugee experience, is regarded as functional to the survival of the refugee him- or herself (e.g., since it is frequently the most requested story to negotiate asylum and access help in a foreign country), this story is likely to jeopardize the refugee's longer term well-being. For example, a trauma story can further victimize a person when they completely identified with it and even prevent the further development. More specifically, the potentially inherent beneficial and facilitative nature of this research can be appreciated when one recalls the value of narratives, not simply as descriptive statements, but constitutive of the self, in relation to identity issues (Elliott 2005; Ricoeur 1991). In this way, detachment from a victim identity, through a complex narration, may be foreseen.

On, moving to the 'public' dimension, the interviewees could have their experience heard in the outside world. The potential “public” benefit sits well with the chosen qualitative paradigm, and would be achieved by writing-up the thesis and its hitherto unknown influence on other researchers' work:

Engagement with the methodological issue of giving 'voice' to refugees within the research process has benefits at various levels. It produces better research and it develops the skills and confidence of the refugees themselves (Temple and Moran 2011: viii).

#### **4.7 Summary**

Every act of looking turns into observation, every act of observation into reflection, every act of reflection into the making of associations; thus it is evident that we theorize every time we look carefully at the world  
(Goethe 1995)

This chapter dealt with the main methodological issues of this thesis. Firstly, the main characteristics of the qualitative paradigm were discussed. Together with these features, the reasons for choosing a qualitative paradigm were explored. Then, the process of interviewing was depicted as a way of narrating, in the pursuit of the goal of social justice. In relation to this, values and functions of the narrative in qualitative research were covered. According to the narrative view, humans are essentially story-tellers, in need of meaningful stories to continuously create and re-create their lives. As such, this view seems to be particularly useful for refugees, to detach from a victim identity.

The research questions and data analysis methods were then described. The hybrid thematic analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006; Guest et al. 2012) chosen was discussed in relation to the seeming clash between the use of pre-existing categories and the phenomenological foundation of the

work.

Finally issues concerning research ethics within the social sciences were covered, and how they were used for this research project. In the context of this section, the ethical principles proposed by Beauchamp and Childress (1994) had a key role, and helped explain the purpose of the informed consent form and project information sheet. Moreover, Temple and Moran's (2011) work was relevant for specifying general ethical principles in the specialist refugee research field.

As a closing thought, methodology is crucial for carrying out good research, and obtaining interesting and valid results. However, as the researcher, I would like to remind myself, this project could only be due to the generosity and openness of the study participants. Therefore, the primary aim of its methodology is not to be praised in itself, but to give value to the participants' precious openness. In fact, the very *raison d'être* of this work lies in the real stories of real people.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Research design and interview protocol**

#### ***5.1 Introduction***

The topics that will be covered in this chapter may be summarized in the following: research design, setting, characteristics of the sample, and the interview protocol which was diversified into three formats.

The research design deals with the main characteristics of the semi-structured interviews used with the participants. Then, the subdivision of the sample is explained: how the choice was made and why. The main rationale for subdividing the whole group into two halves was to compare and discuss the narratives produced by the MG and CG participants. Indeed, an explicit focus on “non-verbal bodily expressive/communicative behaviours” was connected only to the main group (MG).

The section devoted to the research design will address the way the participants were initially selected, the role of the information sheet and consent form in the selection process. Finally it will also deal with the

timetable for the interviews and the recording modes used.

The section regarding the setting will describe the characteristics of the SPRAR centre where the interviews took place. The SPRAR's s secondary welcoming reception centre's legal and organizational characteristics will be specified both from a national and local level.

The socio-demographic characteristics of the sample is described and comprises of: sex and age of the study participants, their nationality, religion, marital status, and time already spent in Italy and in Sardinia.

The interview protocol, as already stated, used three formats. The first one was related to the first interview and was identical for both groups (main and comparison). The second format was related to the second interview with the main group's participants and had a specific focus on "non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours". Lastly, the third format was connected to the second interview with the comparison group's participants. Differing from the second, the third format did not have any explicit focus on "non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours".

## **5.2 Research design**

All interviews were semi-structured (e.g., Burns and Grove 2005; Fontana and Frey 2005; Polit and Beck 2006), which means that the main questions covered a set range of areas and additional questions were asked to elicit further details. The fact it was a semi-structured interview also meant that the data emerged from an inter-subjective space, in which questions were asked to elicit detailed narratives (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006). Generally speaking, some of the main key-features of semi-structured interviews are: that they are scheduled in advance; their location is usually outside routine events; they are organized around a pre-determined set of questions (or topics to be covered); new questions (or comments) may emerge from dialogue; and, finally, they can normally last from 30 minutes up to several hours (Whiting 2008).

In the context of this study, the main rules used for interviewing the study participants may be summarized as: let the respondent, and not the interviewer, do most of the talking (Laforest 2009). In her turn, the interviewer's specific role was to facilitate the interviewee's talk through the 'probing techniques' (drawn from Whiting's advice, 2008). These could be: (1) *silence*, where the participant was allowed to think aloud and the interviewer stayed silent; (2) *echo*, where the interviewer repeated the participant's own words. It could be a single word, part of a sentence or a whole sentence, but nothing extra was added; (3) *verbal and non-verbal agreement*, where the

interviewer had the chance to express interest in what the interviewee said, by using words like 'right' or 'ok' or non-verbal utterances such as 'uh-huh', or 'mmm'; (4) '*Tell me more*', where the interviewer asked the participant to say more about a specific topic; (5) *long questions*, where the interviewer asked a long question, suggesting an equally long (and detailed) response.

The study sample included 20 refugees. They were all taking part in the secondary welcoming project named *Sportello per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati* (whose acronym is SPRAR; located in Cagliari, Italy), which, in conjunction with the Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs, is devoted to the secondary welcoming of refugees after the preliminary and emergency procedures offered elsewhere, usually in refugee camps and other similar centres has already taken place.

Participants were invited to take part in the research project in preliminary meetings that took place at the SPRAR centre. On these occasions the project information sheet, available in two languages (English and Italian) was presented. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured. The information sheet provided participants at those meetings with crucial information about the project, such as: why they were asked to take part in the research project, what the research entailed, what possible risks or benefits existed, and what the data collection procedures and data treatment consisted of.

People could freely refuse to take part in the research project (and this did indeed happen a couple of times) or they were excluded by the centre staff because they were under psychiatric treatment and/or had a mental health diagnosis. Those who decided to take part in the project freely and independently signed the informed consent form. Participants were reminded several times that they were free to withdraw at any time, without necessarily having to give any explanation. Ethical approval was officially obtained in November 2012, by the Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies (CPS), at the University of Essex.

In line with the qualitative research tradition, the number of study participants involved in the research was relatively small (i.e., 20 people) and selected according to a 'criterion' sampling. Criteria for inclusion or exclusion (if the standards were not met), were: mental health condition, age and language. For the mental health criterion, the sample had to be non-clinical, that is, no participant could be under psychiatric treatment. This means the psychological profile was an exclusion criterion, i.e., refugees with a mental health diagnosis were excluded. Age was another criterion for inclusion; only people of or above age 18 were interviewed. Finally, the last criterion was linguistic; since interviews were conducted in either Italian or English, people who could not understand and speak either of the two languages were excluded, unless an interpreter was available at the centre when these interviews took place (this occurred in 3 cases out of 20).



The criterion sampling was used for the inclusion of the subjects in the whole sample, regardless of the subsequent sub-division into MG and CG. The more specific inclusion into the main or comparison group followed the informal “rule”, this was that every third person was assigned to the CG. In some cases, due to pragmatic constraints (e.g., the participant did not want to be video-recorded), he/she was assigned to the CG.

The sample of twenty people was split into two halves. Fourteen people constituted the main group (MG), and six people constituted the comparison group (CG).

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant with 7-10 days between the first and the second interviews. The first interview was identical for both groups, while the second interview varied depending on whether the participant's were allocated to the MG or CG.

Although this research is not quantitative, and therefore did not require a control group to apply standard statistical procedures, an alternative format to the main one was regarded as an important source of richness. Indeed, in this way, differences between the two groups could be compared and discussed.

The idea behind the decision to split the whole group into two sub-groups was that the verbal narratives produced in the second interview with the MG

participants could be affected by the engagement of these study participants with “non-verbal bodily expressive/communicative behaviours” and thus become enriched as a result of this engagement. Conversely, CG participants' narratives could be affected precisely by the absence of this direct engagement with “non-verbal bodily expressive/communicative behaviours”.

However given the uneven number of participants in the two groups (14 vs 6) and the absence (as we will see later) of the same recording mode during the second interview (i.e., video for the MG and audio for the CG), differences in results have many limitations. Those limitations will be covered, one by one, in the discussion chapter.

The whole data collection lasted fourteen months, from September 2012 to November 2013. It included a preliminary phase of first contact with the SPRAR centre, including several meetings with the senior staff. Finally, other meetings were held in order to define a provisional timetable for the interviews. The actual interviews started in January 2013 and ended in November of the same year.

The general timetable was created with the help of the SPRAR project staff, paying attention not to overlap with their weekly duties and minimise interference with the refugees' activities.

A constant problem for the creation of a timetable was the extremely fast rate of changes in the composition of the service users' group at the SPRAR centre, thus making it impossible to define a fixed timetable for the long-term. Therefore, most of the time, the timetable was provisional and opened to changes.

Different recording modes represented a key difference between the MG and the CG. For the MG, the recording modes were, respectively: (1) an audio-recorder for the first interview (only verbal); and (2) a video-recorder for the second interview (whose focus was both verbal and non-verbal). For the CG, both interviews were collected using an audio-recorder, since they both were verbally-based. The decision to use an audio and a video recorder, instead of simply taking written notes, had the precise purpose of ensuring no data was lost. This argument is particularly pertinent for semi-structured interviews, which are regarded as sites of data production and not only data collection (Holstein and Gubriun 1995). Therefore, capturing as many details as possible was regarded as a crucial research choice (Elliott 2005: 33). These details included pauses, silences, and other paralinguistic cues, but could also be more directly "embodied", ones, such as shifts in position, facial expressions, tics, tapping of fingers and other physical movements. As poignantly put by Ribbens (1989), there is a whole hidden world to listen to 'beyond the oral'.

|                                  | <b>Modality<br/>Interview 1</b> | <b>Modality<br/>Interview 2</b>  | <b>Mode of<br/>Recording<br/>Interview 1</b> | <b>Mode of<br/>Recording<br/>Interview 2</b> | <b>Time in between</b> |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|--|------------------------|
| <b>Main Group<br/>(MG)</b>       | Verbally-<br>based              | Verbally-based +<br>"non-verbal<br>expressive/<br>communicative<br>behaviours" | Audio-recorder                               | Video-recorder                               | 7-10 days              |
| <b>Comparison<br/>Group (CG)</b> | Verbally-<br>based              | Verbally-based   | Audio-recorder                               | Audio-recorder                               | 7-10 days              |

**Table 5.1:**

This Table represents the basic interview features on the vertical plane, while a reference to the specific modality of interviewing (whether main or comparison) is given on the horizontal plane.

### **5.3 Setting**

Italy finds itself located in a very peculiar geographical position, right at the centre of the Mediterranean sea, as a privileged harbour for forced migrants, arriving both from the East and South. Despite this fact, there is no unambiguous Italian legal text on refugee issues. The existing laws are included in texts that primarily tackle the wider issue of immigration, whether legal or illegal. Recently, a slow but consistent evolution in refugee legislation has been observed, showing a greater sensitivity towards this specific topic. In close association with the legislative dimension there are various reception centres within the Italian territory. They have different internal organizational structures and usually give hospitality to refugees (SPRAR 2012: 56-57).

The data collection took place at a SPRAR centre (see the official logo in Figure 6.1), one such reception centre, first established in 2002, in connection to Law 189 (also called Bossi-Fini). The Organisation for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (*Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati*; SPRAR) was designed to provide secondary reception and support for integration and adjustment to forced migrants who have generally already obtained entitlement to settle on the Italian territory.

Interventions for integrated welcoming include, besides board and lodging, also other forms of support and orientation to the service users to support

their process of adjusting to a new context of life. Among the services offered, it is possible to enumerate: welcoming, provision of legal information and aid, support in administrative issues (e.g., preparation or acquisition of documents), assistance to access the health system, participation in Italian language courses, job-seeking support, housing, orientation regarding available services in the territory, psychological support, and, linguistic and cultural assistance. All adjustment trajectories tend to be highly personalized. As a secondary reception centre, the main goal of the SPRAR system is to facilitate the adjustment of refugees within the local territories and increase the likelihood of achieving a positive outcome for their migratory project (SPRAR 2010).



**Figure 5.1:**

The SPRAR is organized and monitored by the *Servizio Centrale* (i.e., Central Service) which is devoted to guaranteeing a uniform approach of interventions throughout the whole territory and connect approaches and

interventions in a coherent network. Moreover, the Central Service monitors, updates and spreads information on already completed interventions, offers technical support, information and orientation to all the local bodies involved (Muneghina and Papadopoulos 2010: 18).

Possible recipients of the SPRAR service are asylum seekers, those entitled to refugee status, holders of subsidiary or humanitarian protection, and those involved in appeal processes.

To meet the variety of needs that refugees may require, staff members come from various disciplines, and the working methodology is often group-based and holistically oriented.

Yet, critical aspects exist; there are long waiting lists for the people who are eligible for partaking in these projects, and the availability of places insufficient to accommodate everyone. Furthermore, a great number of eligible people do not even get access to information about the SPRAR system itself (SPRAR 2012: 57). Finally, the fact that Italy faces a serious economic crisis cannot be ignored. This crisis affects both Italians as well as foreigners trying to find a new life in Italy.

The SPRAR centre where the interviews took place is called “Emilio Lussu”, and is located in Cagliari, in the south of Sardinia (see Figure 6.2).

Just like all the SPRAR centres, Cagliari's is connected centrally to the Italian Ministry of the Interior, through the coordinating structure of the *Servizio Centrale*. Locally it is connected to the social cooperative “La Collina” and to the Cagliari Province. The project belongs to the organizations that were instituted by Article 32 of Law 189/2002, but this specific project located in Cagliari came into existence later, in 2007.



**Figure 5.2:**

More than the 25% of project's past beneficiaries decided to stay in the Sardinian territory, finding a new home, a job and a network of relationships. In the 2011/2012 two-year period, and compared to provision offered by the Italian SPRAR system as a whole, Sardinia welcomed 0,9% of the refugees (SPRAR 2012: 84), representing a minority of the total amount of national



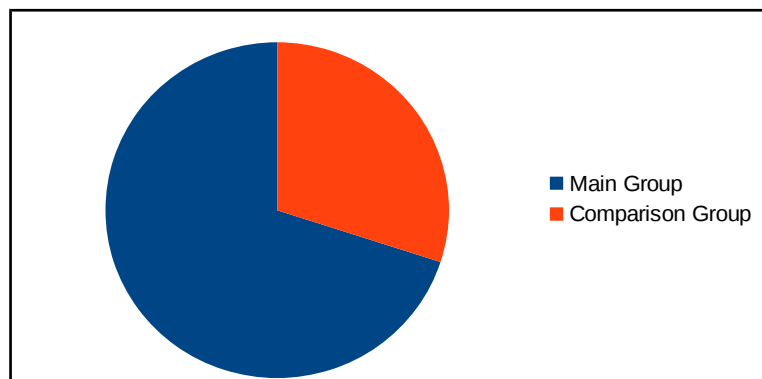
SPRAR recipients.

In line with national guidelines, the staff members of the Sardinian project have various professional expertise, comprising of: a sociologist, a psychologist, a philosopher, a legal expert, two pedagogues and various interpreters and cultural experts. Core staff members include: Stella Deiana (graduate degree in Pedagogy) who is the Responsible Director of the local SPRAR project; Diego Serra (graduate degree in Sociology) in charge of the refugees' integration measures; Gianna Antonacci (graduate degree in Developmental Psychology and specialization in Cognitive Psychotherapy) in charge of the reception phase; Enrico Vacca (graduate degrees in both Philosophy and Theology) in charge of the provision of first assistance; Stefania di Curzio (graduate degree in Programming and Management of Educational Courses) in charge of the reception phase; and, Roberta Piludu (graduate degree in Law) in charge of legal assistance. In addition, other professionals, such as interpreters, translators and cultural mediators, support the work of the core staff members for the following languages and cultures: Eritrean, Arabic, Persian, Pakistani, Russian, English and French.

#### **5.4 Characteristics of the sample**

Most of the study participants were new to the SPRAR service, whose service user group composition changes rapidly. The project for each person could last between 6 to 12 months, therefore, people who had been in their own SPRAR project for more than 6 months were excluded, to maximise the possibility of not losing data.

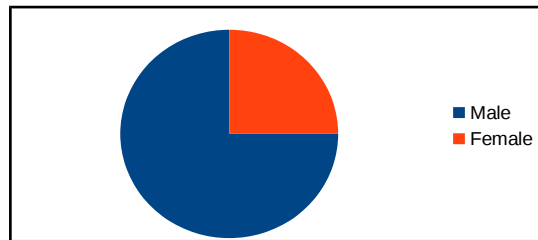
The study sample consisted of 20 people, and the whole group was split into two uneven halves, the one with 14 people made up the main group (MG) and 6 people constituted the comparison group (CG). The distribution of the study participants to either of the two groups is exemplified in the Figure below.



**Figure 5.3:**

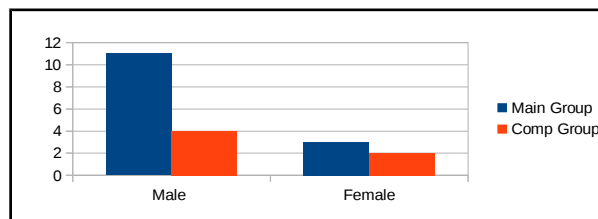
Furthermore, as regards sex distribution within the sample, out of 20 subjects, 15 were male and 5 female. Of the 15 male subjects, 11 were allocated to the

main group (MG) and 4 to the comparison group (CG). While, 3 of the 5 females were allocated to the MG and 2 to the CG.



**Figure 5.4:**

As can be observed, the vast majority (15 people, so the 75%) of the sample subjects were men. This datum is in line with general global trends in refugee studies that also show the majority of refugees are male.

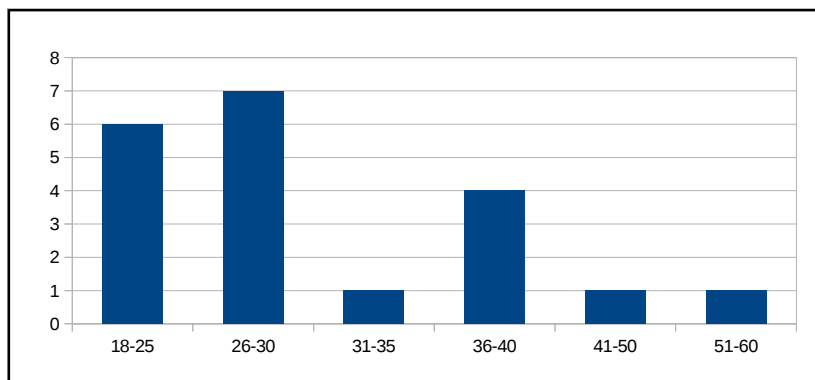


**Figure 5.5:**

This Figure shows how men and women were distributed within the two sub-groups.

The age of the study participants comprised between 20 and 56 (20 « X » 56), with an average of 30.6 years (and a standard deviation of 9.69). The

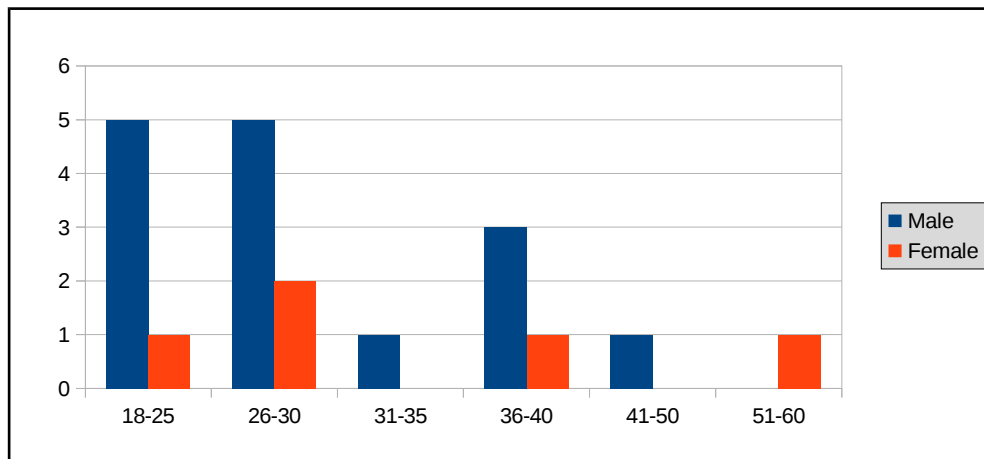
age distribution within the study sample is illustrated in the Figure below. Most of the study participants were young, between 18 and 30 years of age. This datum is in line with most refugee reports that show most refugees are located in this age group.



**Figure 5.6:**

This Table shows the age distribution within the study sample: 6 subjects were between 18-25; 7 people between 25-30; 1 person between 31-35; 4 people between 26-40; 1 person between 41-50; and another between 51-60.

The following Figure (6.7) illustrates a further specification, that is, how age is distributed within the study sample according to the sex of the participants.



**Figure 5.7:**

As can be observed in this Figure, the majority of women were between 26 and 30, and no woman is reported as being between 31 and 35 or between 41 and 50. Interestingly enough, the exact opposite occurs between 51 and 60 with no male appearing in this age group and only one woman.

Now we will move on to the analysis of the study participants' main nationalities per Country, in decreasing order, first in the form of a Table, followed by a graphical representation:

| Country           | No. of subjects | %  |
|-------------------|-----------------|----|
| Afghanistan       | 4               | 20 |
| Pakistan          | 4               | 20 |
| Eritrea           | 2               | 10 |
| Ethiopia          | 2               | 10 |
| Kashmir           | 2               | 10 |
| Turkish Kurdistan | 2               | 10 |
| Iraq              | 1               | 5  |

|            |   |   |
|------------|---|---|
| Iran       | 1 | 5 |
| Kyrgyzstan | 1 | 5 |
| Senegal    | 1 | 5 |

**Table 5.2:**

As regards the period of residence in either Italy or Sardinia, this stretched from 2006 (no specified month) to mid October 2013 (i.e., 2006 « X » October 2013). Most study participants reached Sardinia shortly after they had arrived in Italy, as can be seen in the Table below. Most of the study participants had spent less than two years in Sardinia (and Italy), but there are also some who had spent a much longer period on Italian territory.

| <b>No. subject</b> | <b>Time Italy</b> | <b>Time Sardinia</b> |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1                  | 2011              | May 2012             |
| 2                  | March 2012        | November 2012        |
| 3                  | March 2012        | March 2012           |
| 4                  | June 2012         | November 2012        |
| 5                  | 2010              | 2010                 |
| 6                  | 2011              | 2012                 |
| 7                  | 2011              | 2012                 |
| 8                  | 2011              | 2012                 |
| 9                  | December 2012     | January 2013         |
| 10                 | October 2012      | March 2013           |
| 11                 | 2008              | 2008                 |
| 12                 | 2012              | February 2013        |
| 13                 | 2012              | April 2013           |
| 14                 | 2007              | 2007                 |
| 15                 | 2006              | 2006                 |
| 16                 | 2006              | 2006                 |
| 17                 | January 2013      | January 2013         |

|    |               |              |
|----|---------------|--------------|
| 18 | January 2013  | July 2013    |
| 19 | 2009          | 2010         |
| 20 | February 2013 | October 2013 |

**Table 5.3:**

The Table shows that most of the study participants had spent some time in Italy, after which they immediately came to Sardinia in 2012 (regardless the month). However, there are also some who have been here for much longer (since 2006) or that, on the contrary, arrived even later than 2012, in 2013.

As regards marital status and the possible presence of children (whether in Sardinia or back in their home country), the emerging profile is as follows, first in the form of a Table and then in that of a Graph:

| Marital status | Children | Number of subjects |
|----------------|----------|--------------------|
| Unmarried      | No       | 13                 |
| Married        | Yes      | 5                  |
| Divorced       | Yes      | 1                  |
| Widow          | No       | 1                  |

**Table 5.4:**

Most of the study participants were unmarried and this seems quite understandable given the young age of the majority (13/20). Five were married, one divorced and another widowed. The ones with children were either married (5) or divorced (1).

A correlation existed between (1) age, (2) marital status and, (3) presence of children. As can be seen in the next Table, the average age consistently differed depending on the marital status. The sole exception was represented by the widow, who was still young, even though her marital status might suggest that she was older.

| <b>Marital status</b> | <b>Children</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Average age</b> |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Unmarried             | No              | 13            | 25,92              |
| Married               | Yes             | 5             | 38,4               |
| Divorced              | Yes             | 1             | 56                 |
| Widowed               | No              | 1             | 27                 |

**Table 5.5:**

For religion declared by the study participants, the following results were reported: 14 people who described themselves as Muslim, 4 as Orthodox, 1 as Yazidi (i.e., the ancient religion of Persia) and 1 as atheist. Out of the 14 Muslim, 13 said they were Sunni, while one (from Iran) said he was Shiite.



| No. of subject | Religion | Nations  |
|----------------|----------|--|
| 14             | Islam    | Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kashmir, Kurdistan,<br>Iran (Shiite), Kyrgyzstan, Senegal |
| 4              | Orthodox | Eritrea, Ethiopia  |
| 1              | Yazidi   | Iraq   |
| 1              | No       | Afghanistan  |

**Table 5.6:**

### ***5.5 Standard Protocol Interview 1 (first format)***

The first interview was identical for both groups (i.e., MG and CG). It was uniquely verbally-based and only audio-recorded. It comprised four different parts, as illustrated schematically in the Table below. The third section (i.e., actual body of questions) was the longest. Here, questions were asked to cover a certain set range of areas and additional questions were asked to deepen the interviewee's answers.

| Section                            | Content  | Relation with RQ  |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>1) Opening</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thanks</li> <li>• Reminder of Research Ethics Principles (anonymity and protection of data)</li> <li>• Reminder of Research Ethics Principles (5 guidelines for answers)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul> |
| <b>2) Socio-demographical</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• age</li> <li>• nationality</li> <li>• time in Italy and Sardinia</li> <li>• marital status</li> <li>• presence of children</li> <li>• religion (if any)</li> </ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul> |
| <b>3) Actual body of questions</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (fixed): <i>How come you are now in Sardinia?</i></li> <li>• (flexible): exploration of the refugee's experience (i.e., qualities, actors involved, diachronic changes)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1RQ</li> </ul> |

|                   |   |     |
|-------------------|---|-----|
|                   |   |     |
| <b>4) Closing</b> | <i>(fixed): If now you had in front of you a refugee who is feeling down, what would you say or do to help?</i> | 2RQ |

**Table 5.7:**

The opening and closing sections were characterized by a standard set of questions, while the middle part (also named “body of questions”) was more flexible, with only the first question being standardized. For most of the interview, the pace and the sequence of narration was chosen by the interviewee him-/her-self.

1) The opening section started with a standard form of thanks to the interviewee for his or her participation. After this, some key research ethics principles were re-stated in order to build, or reinforce, trust. These principles closely recalled those contained in both the information sheet and the consent form, and, as such, they were likely to sound familiar to the interviewee. Great emphasis was put on the guarantee of data protection and anonymity.

Finally, within this opening section, some general principles of safety within the interview setting were also presented. (1) the first principle stated that there were no good or bad answers; (2) then, that the person was free to say “I do not understand the question” and ask for repetition; (3) that the person was free to say “No, I do not want to answer the question” (even if the

question was understood); (4) that the person had the freedom to “choose the level of depth” for the disclosure of his/her experience; and, finally, (5) that no good or bad level of depth for this disclosure existed.

2) The socio-demographical section explored age, nationality, time in Italy and Sardinia, marital status, presence of children, and finally religion (if any) of the interviewee.

3) In view of the participant’s potential discomfort, when diving into a very private recall of their experience, the exact wording of the first question was chosen primarily to help the participant feel at ease, as suggested by DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006). Therefore, the first question of this section, although focused on the general topic of the refugee experience, was very loose, and aimed at eliciting an open-ended answer (i.e., *how come you are now in Sardinia?*).

Depending on the interviewee's answer to this first standard question, the interview followed a highly idiosyncratic pattern, where the interviewer mostly followed the flux of disclosure of the interviewee's narration. Indeed, the exact wording of the questions that followed could vary, and the order could change. However, the areas to be covered were the same for each interview and focused on the diachronic changes in time within the refugee experience. The areas were the phases identified by Papadopoulos (2001a) and

comprised: (1) a before: what happened before the threats; (2) an anticipation: what happened when anticipating the threats; (3) devastating events: what were the threats and actual danger (if any) about; (4) the survival: how the person managed to escape; (5) the adjustment: how the resettlement went in a new environment; and (6) an after: how life was now.

Each phase (or area) that was covered was deepened in its qualities (i.e., positive, negative or neutral) and psychosocial levels (i.e., who and what was involved in each moment).

If the focus was on the phase of survival, for example, typical questions could be: *How did you escape from there? Can you describe a specific moment during the flee? What helped you the most? What was more difficult? Did you find something new in that experience? How did you feel at that time?*

A brief summary, in the form of paraphrases, was proposed at the end of each long answer. The interviewee had the freedom to agree or not with these paraphrases, and correct the interviewer's understanding if it did not fully and emphatically mirror his/her inner experience.

4) Finally, the first interview closed with a standard question, aimed to stimulate the interviewee regarding issues of agency or victim-hood: *if now you had in front of you a refugee who is feeling down, what would you say or*

*do to help?*

After answering this last question, the participant was asked if he/she was ready to finish. When he/she said they were ready, the interviewee was thanked and the first interview was concluded. However, since semi-structured interviews are often hard to finish, the interviewee was asked if he or she had anything to add (as suggested by Laforest 2009).

Interviews usually lasted between 30 minutes to 1 hour and a half.

### ***5.6 Standard Protocol Interview 2 (MG; second format)***

While the first interview was identical for both the MG and the CG, the second interview was diversified into two formats, according to which of the two groups the participants were allocated.

The greatest difference between the second and the third format was that there was an explicit focus on “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” only in the second format (i.e., MG). Moreover, only the second format was video-recorded.

This second format comprised of three sub-parts, as depicted in Table 6.8.

| <b>Section</b>                | <b>Content</b>  | <b>Relation with RQ</b> |
|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| <b>1) Opening</b>             | Thanks<br>Check of well-being<br><i>(fixed): What impact did our first meeting have on you?</i>   | N/A                     |
| <b>2) Pre-selected events</b> | Verbal type: e.g., <i>Can you tell me something more? Is there anything else you would like to add?</i><br>Non-verbal type: e.g., <i>How do you represent this event X with the body? If you go back to that moment, what is your body doing?</i> | 3RQ<br>4RQ              |
| <b>3) Conclusion</b>          | <i>(fixed): If you were to write a book or direct a film on your experience as a refugee, which title would it have?</i>  | 2RQ                     |

**Table 5.8:**

1) After a brief welcome, the interviewee was thanked for coming back and his or her well-being checked. The wording of the opening question was fixed (i.e., the same words were used for each participant): *What impact did our first meeting have on you<sup>1</sup>?*

This was a broad question that, similarly to the opening question of the first interview, could lead to various responses, varying from very concrete answers, to others accessing the subject's inner world and ranging from a reference to feelings, or thoughts, or images, or to a combination of them. This question served various purposes. For instance, it helped to re-establish a connection between the interviewee and the interviewer, to locate the new research encounter in a temporal framework which had, no matter how small, a 'history,' and to check if any relevant (emotional) issue emerged and, in this case, have the chance to talk about it.

Then, picked out from the previous interview narration, three pre-selected events were presented to the participants. These events had been chosen by the researcher as particularly relevant in the interviewee's life story, according to the study participant's own definition. This means that these events were those most deep as defined by the interviewee during the first interview. Before exploring them, at the beginning of the second interview, their

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<sup>1</sup>The term 'meeting' has been chosen instead of 'interview', even if 'interview' would have been more appropriate in a research setting. However, given the specific sample, i.e., refugees who are very familiar with tribunal trials and formal interviews, the term 'interview' was considered, as generally not appropriate, as compared to 'meeting'.



presentation was followed by a negotiation of these events with the study participant. He/she had the freedom to: (1) agree with the choice of the pre-selected events; (2) disagree with this choice, with regard to a single event or two out of the three, or even to all of them; and finally, in the latter case of partial or total disagreement (3) introduce a new event (instead of another).

Participants were invited to further explore these selected events through the use of the “body” (i.e., movements, hand gestures, positions in space and facial expressions). After asking the participant if he/she had anything to add verbally (e.g., *Can you tell me something more? Is there anything else about this event that you would like to add?*), he/she was instructed to use the body to deepen the description of these selected events. The precise wording for inviting the participants to narrate the event with the body could vary. Usually, questions were connected to some concrete aspects of the selected events. For example: *“If you go back to that moment, what are you doing?”*; *“So, you stood here and what about him?”*; *“How did you stand/talk/fight?”*; *“Can you describe the environment which is around you and show me what is in it?”*.

After the bodily exploration of the selected events, the participant further deepened his/her story again in verbal terms. Sometimes verbalizations could accompany the bodily expressions (i.e., verbal and non-verbal expressions were used simultaneously). In most cases, the performance of bodily movements was done in silence and the verbal comment followed.

Moreover, sometimes the questions inviting the participant to engage with his/her body resulted in verbal narratives being formulated in the past tense (as the examples above suggest). However, when the participant seemed to be at ease in reconstructing vividly the selected events, then the wording was done in the present tense, as if the person could physically access a past memory in the here and now.

The second interview for the MG ended with a standard question: *If you were to write a book or direct a film on your experience as a refugee, which title would it have?* This question was meant to help the interviewee summarize his/her experience of forced migration in a nutshell and connect this summary to a creative output. Broadly speaking, a book or a film were chosen as artistic tools that, when engaged for creative purposes, may help one to transcend possible sufferings, by providing an aesthetic containment for painful memories.

### ***5.7 Standard Protocol Interview 2 (CG; third format)***

The second interview for the CG was similar to the second interview administered to the MG participants. Indeed, also in this case three pre-selected events were presented to the participants, picked up from the first interview. However, no direct questions targeting “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” were asked. Each event was deepened only verbally. The questions that were asked to the participants were intended to elicit further specificity and details of these events.

It could be rightly argued that “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” could not be deleted from the setting. Yes, this is indeed true. The difference between the MG and the CG is that: (a) there was an explicit observational focus on this reality only in the main group; (b) direct questions targeting this reality were not asked to the comparison group's participants.

Another difference, as already stated at the beginning of this chapter, consisted in the recording mode. While for the second interview carried out with the MG, the recording mode was a video, for the CG this was only audio.

For a summary of the sections which composed the second interview with the CG (i.e., third format) see Table 6.9, below.

| Section                       | Content  | Relation with RQ  |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>1) Opening</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thanks</li> <li>• Check of well-being</li> <li>• (fixed): <i>What impact did our first meeting have on you?</i></li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul> |
| <b>2) Pre-selected events</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only verbal type: e.g.,<br/><i>Can you tell me something more? Is there anything else you would like to add?</i></li> </ul>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3RQ</li> </ul> |
| <b>3) Conclusion</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (fixed): <i>If you were to write a book or direct a film on your experience as a refugee, which title would it have?</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2RQ</li> </ul> |

Table 5.9:

### **5.8 Summary**

This chapter has covered the issue of the research design, and the key features of the semi-structured interviews administered to the study participants. Then, why and how the whole sample was split into two sub-groups has been discussed, and the way narratives produced by the MG and CG participants were compared.

The setting has then be discussed, both in its legal aspect (national and local level), that in the concrete characteristics of the centre where the interviews were administered. Finally, the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample has been described together with the interview protocol, diversified in three formats.

**PART III**  
**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

## CHAPTER 6

### **Presentation of the findings**

#### ***6.1 Introduction***

In this chapter the key research findings will be presented in relation to each research question (RQ) previously formulated. Discussion and further comments will be deepened in the following chapter, where the findings will be located within a wider theoretical context.

Frequent use of graphical means will illustrate the data, in the forms of tables, graphs and pictures. This “aesthetic” choice was made to make the reading more fluent to the reader.

Limitations and suggestions for further research will be highlighted in the following chapter.

## **6.2 Results of the 1RQ at the micro-level (single sentences)**

The first RQ was connected to the complexity and coherence of the verbal narratives produced by the totality of the study participants, regardless of their allocation to the MG or the CG. The micro-level of the first RQ dealt with the construct of complexity, while the macro-level dealt with the further operationalization of the construct of complexity into that of coherence.

Here the construct of complexity was defined as a specific way of looking at a social phenomenon acknowledging multiple and even contradicting qualities (positive, neutral and negative ones); diachronic changes (a before and an after); and the contribution of psychosocial factors (individual, familiar, community and societal). In other words, using Papadopoulos' parameters (2001a, 2007) of the Trauma Grid and the four phases of the refugee phenomenon.

In order to classify the participants' answers at the micro-level, the following rules were followed. First, events were “bracketed”<sup>2</sup>, that is, events were extracted and delimited in a time frame. They were chosen because they were connected to the study participant's personal involvement (i.e., these events were not pure enumeration of facts). That is why the related sentences were defined “meaningful”, namely, connected to meaning. Some of these events will be further deepened during the second interview, either with or

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<sup>2</sup> The reference is to phenomenology (Husserl 1964, 1970; Merleau-Ponty 1962), and its concept of *epoché*.



without a specific focus on non-verbal elements (MG) or not (CG).

Next, each event was classified according to the parameters emerging from the Trauma Grid and phases of the refugee experience: quality, psychosocial factors, and phase.

To increase the rigour of the first analysis, an intercoder reliability test (Kurasaki 2000; MacQueen et al. 1998) was applied. In this way, the risk of affecting the analysis with the researcher's personal biases decreased. An external examiner, blind to the research questions, had been previously trained to codify the transcripts and codified 9 of them (out of 20). Then, the degree of agreement was verified and discussed. This procedure showed an intercoder agreement of 82% between the codification of the researcher herself and the one provided by the independent researcher.

Results from this first classification were then graphically put in a grid, whose prototype is represented in the following Table:

|          | BEFORE | BEFORE | BEFORE | ANTICIP | ANTICIP | ANTICIP | DEV EVE | DEV EVE | DEV EVE | SURV | SURV | SURV | ADJUST | ADJUST | ADJUST | AFTER | AFTER | AFTER |
|----------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------|------|------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
|          | NEG    | NEU    | POS    | NEG     | NEU     | POS     | NEG     | NEU     | POS     | NEG  | NEU  | POS  | NEG    | NEU    | POS    | NEG   | NEU   | POS   |
| INDIV    |        |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |      |      |      |        |        |        |       |       |       |
| FAM      |        |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |      |      |      |        |        |        |       |       |       |
| COMM     |        |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |      |      |      |        |        |        |       |       |       |
| SOC/CULT |        |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |      |      |      |        |        |        |       |       |       |

**Table 6.1:**

This Table represents the graphical mean used to classify each participant's story at the micro-level (single sentences), for the first research question. It mixes the following theory-driven parameters: temporal phase (see before, anticipation, devastating events, survival, adjustment and after), quality (see negative, neutral and positive) and psychosocial level (see individual, familiar, community and society/culture).

Various colours were used to fill each slot, indicating the different possible qualities (i.e., negative, neutral and positive). Red stood for negative; yellow for neutral (i.e., resilience) and green for positive (i.e., AAD).

This grid served interrelated purposes: it showed the individual profile, that is, how each refugee's story was distributed across temporal phases, psychosocial levels and qualities; it immediately gives a sense to the reader whether a narrative is rich or poor, if there are blind spots; finally, it constituted a first substrate for the following analysis of coherence (at the level of the whole narrative).

The following Table presents the actual results obtained, in terms of what the study participants from the whole sample (main and comparison) reported. For example, during the phase of devastating events, if a person is reported with a red slot at the level of the family means that he/she narrated something with a negative quality (red), which affected the family, during that specific phase.

A detailed presentation of two stories will be presented later. They were chosen because they represent the richest (CASE A) and poorest narration (CASE B).

|          | BEFORE |     |     | ANTICIP |     |     | DEV EVE |     |     | SURV |     |     | ADJUST |     |     | AFTER |     |     |
|----------|--------|-----|-----|---------|-----|-----|---------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|--------|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|
|          | NEG    | NEU | POS | NEG     | NEU | POS | NEG     | NEU | POS | NEG  | NEU | POS | NEG    | NEU | POS | NEG   | NEU | POS |
| INDIV    | 0      | 3   | 0   | 10      | 3   | 1   | 8       | 4   | 1   | 12   | 8   | 0   | 9      | 10  | 10  | 0     | 1   | 2   |
| FAM      | 2      | 3   | 0   | 6       | 3   | 0   | 11      | 5   | 1   | 3    | 10  | 0   | 9      | 5   | 3   | 1     | 2   | 2   |
| COMM     | 2      | 0   | 0   | 4       | 3   | 0   | 8       | 3   | 1   | 9    | 3   | 0   | 8      | 14  | 3   | 1     | 3   | 2   |
| SOC/CULT | 2      | 5   | 0   | 18      | 1   | 0   | 14      | 1   | 0   | 1    | 6   | 0   | 17     | 14  | 3   | 2     | 4   | 3   |

**Table 6.2:**

- Focusing on the *quality* (i.e., negative, neutral and positive), regardless of the other two parameters of phase and psychosocial level, most narratives could be classified as balanced between negative (e.g., “many people were killed”) and neutral (resilient; e.g., “I have always

had a brain working good”) elements, with a slight prevalence of the negative ones. On the contrary, positive (e.g., “they gave me a new life”) elements seemed far less mentioned by the participants.

- Focusing on the *psychosocial level* (i.e., individual, familiar, community and society/culture), regardless of the other two parameters of phase and quality, most narratives included all levels of psychosocial involvement. This means that the variables involved in each story could range from a very individual focus (e.g., “I was senseless”) to incorporating wider societal/cultural issues (e.g., “God helped us”). To be more specific, even with a slight prevalence, the two psychosocial levels mostly quoted were the individual one and the one pertaining to society/culture.
- Finally, when focusing on the *phase* (i.e., before, anticipation, devastating event(s), survival, adjustment and after), regardless of the other two parameters of quality and psychosocial level, an interesting datum seemed to emerge. The greatest majority of details and elements turned out to be connected with the phase of adjustment (e.g., “*but Sardinia is something else ... the weather, the people ... even if racism is present here also ... it is something else compared to Milan ... the culture is something different ... open, and very welcoming*”). They were almost double that of any other phase alone.

At the same time, the phases of anticipation (e.g., *“I was told, if you do not go, you will be killed”*), devastating event(s) (e.g., *““where is brother? Talk!” ... everybody cries ... “why cry? Is there a problem?” ... “why?” “He died” ... “brother died” “why?!?”*) and survival (e.g., *“by road ... by road and by foot ... most by foot, by foot too much”*) had an equal balance. The phases of before and after contained only a small minority of details.

- The intersection of the two parameters of quality and phase showed that negative elements prevailed in the phases of anticipation and devastating events. During the phase of survival, these negative elements decreased and were counter-balanced by neutral (i.e., resilient) elements. This element reversal was even more consistent when focusing on the qualities during the phase of adjustment. This was indeed the phase that presented the richest narrative scenario, with balanced negative and neutral elements and a consistent number of positive (AAD) ones.
- Summarizing the findings at this micro-level of the first RQ: (1) negative and neutral elements seemed balanced; (2) positive elements were, when compared to negative and neutral elements, rare, except in the adjustment phase; (3) the richest phase was that of adjustment, with almost twice the number of elements than any other phase alone.

The phases containing less elements and variety were those of “before” and after”; (4) all psychosocial levels were mentioned, but the most relevant seemed to be the individual and social ones.

### ***6.2.1 Two case examples for the results at the micro-level***

The following cases were chosen because they were classified as the richest (CASE A) and poorest (CASE B) narrations. In this way, it will be possible to obtain, from an actual story, what was concretely meant by the terms “rich” and “complex”.

It should be noted that the chronological presentation of each case (from the phase of before to that of after) does not reflect the way these two participants narrated their story during the interview. The chronological order of the phases reflects the researcher's choice to present those cases, with the aim of making the reading easier. This order was thus decided at the data analysis stage.

So, the presentation will follow the various chronological phases. When “N/A” is used in any of these phases it means that the participant did not say

anything fully classifiable about that specific phase. Then, each phase will be briefly described in the qualities reported and psychosocial levels mentioned. For example, if a person talked about the resilience of his family and community during the anticipation phase, the opening of the phase of anticipation will contain the summary “resilience/familiar and community levels”. This summary will be followed by a more extensive description, and also report using the study participant's own words.

**CASE A: richest narration (11th subject):**

**Before:**

N/A

**Anticipation:**

Negative/societal level: the interviewee attributed the state of distress he lived in within his home-country (Iraq) to causes of war, religion and belonging to a minority group (Kurdish). Moreover, instead of being Muslim as most of the Iraqi population he described himself as Yazidi, which he specified as being an ancient Persian religion. So he belonged to minority group (Yazidi) within an already minority group (Kurdish), and this intersection made his life even less safe. *“It's neither Islam, nor Christian. (pause). It's a religion born 4000 years before Christians and Muslims. It is an ancient religion. It is not very*

*well ... it is not common, so to speak. We are very few. It was born in Mesopotamia ... before 2003 also, there had always been war, but still we could live in peace, we could study, work, what we wanted ... actually not all ... then the war exploded, something among religions ... political parties raised in number ... it started to be very difficult to live there”.*

**Devastating events:**

Negative/community and societal levels: the interviewee saw the war which broke out in 2003 as the major cause for the suffering of his people and the main reason for his flight. However, no personal or family killings, or threats of death were reported during the interview. *“In 2003 the war started ... something between a religion and another ... political parties increased in number ... and it became really difficult to live”* or *“there was bomb-blasting all of a sudden ... maybe you were going to the market and a bomb was exploding”.*

Resilience/individual and societal levels: he was well aware that he had been lucky to have escaped with his life during that threatening period. He also showed pride for his own decision to leave his unsafe country. Moreover, the interviewee believed that it was God who had helped him save his life. *“Thanks to God nothing happened to me ... I am alive ... I managed to escape, to decide to flee somewhere else ... to do the best I can do”.*



**Survival:**

At the beginning, he opened the narration of this phase by giving some factual information. It took two months to get to Germany, his first hoped-for destination, and he managed to get there on foot, by car, plane and a train. Once he got to Germany on an Italian train, he was, however, sent back to Italy, the first European country in which he had set foot. *“I went to Germany by train. The police stopped us. We did not have passport ... and it was clear the train was coming from Italy ... “Do you come from Italy?” “Yes” “Where are you from?” “We are Iraqi”. There is a law that states: the first European country where you enter, you must stay there”.*

Negative/individual and community levels: after the first factual description, he started describing the hard experiences he had gone through during the flight from his country. The traffickers appeared particularly interesting and frightening in his description. *“Nobody could expect it was going to be so hard ... the journey ... I saw death ... if one puts a gun on your head or has a long knife with him ... I was so young, I was only eighteen ... we were young ... they stole everything from me”,* or *“we were taken by car in the middle of a wood and we could say nothing. They had guns with them and ordered us to shut up”.* The journey seemed to contain powerful elements of fear and hopelessness: *“we would have never believed it was going to be like that”.*

Resilience/individual and familiar levels: however, despite the fear and the

distressful elements he had endured, the interviewee was prone to acknowledge the spiritual help he felt he received from his mother, the bureaucratic support from his father (i.e., when he ended up in jail in Greece because he had no documents, his father sent a lawyer to have him released), and the patience and will to fight for his own life, from within himself. *“Only patience and that I wanted to fight ... and I wanted to hear from my mum. The only thing I wanted to hear. Only my mother. I only wanted to tell her “hello”. ... I was not thinking about anything else, not even about death”.*

**Adjustment:**

Negative/individual, community and societal levels: he described an initial state of deep fragility in finding himself within a completely new context of life. This was where he used a metaphor of the newly arrived refugee as a child with everything to learn: *“when I had just arrived here I was like a kid ... I could see but not talk ... I could not do this or that ... if I was told to go there ... I did not know where to go”.* *“At the beginning it was really hard ... to find new friends, learn a new language”.*

Resilience/individual and community levels: however, he also recognized that his ability and will to study the Italian language had acted as a source of individual strength to overcome the initial difficulties of adjustment. In this process of adapting to the new life context, he acknowledged the precious

role of the SPRAR people in a mediating role, that is, in supporting him in finding new friends and a job. *“What helped me the most is that, for first, I bought an Italian book ... and at home I was always studying ... but also Stella and Diego (two key-figures of the SPRAR centre) ... they helped us a lot, helped us to feel good, to learn a new language, to find a job”.*

AAD/family and community levels: he seemed truly grateful to the SPRAR people who had become his new family in a foreign territory. *“Diego, Stella, Gianna ... they helped us a lot really ... but really a lot ... I will never forget this for the rest of my life ... they are like my family”.*

**After:**

Resilience/community and societal levels: he seemed to have very positive feelings towards his life in Sardinia and its inhabitants. *“Sardinia is different ... the weather, the people ... they are open-minded, very welcoming”.* He recognized that he was safe in Sardinia: *“you hear no bombing ... no ongoing news that somebody died”.*

AAD/societal level: he did however do more than “simply” adapt and appreciate a new context of life. According to the interviewee's words, he was able to restore a sense of home in Sardinia, despite his initial disappointment at being sent here. *“I was looking for a place where to stay comfortable, tranquil ... I travelled a lot ... but when I was told at first to come here I*

*replied I was not willing to go to Africa ... but when I arrived it was different ... when I arrived I thought: 'it is here!'".*

Resilience/familiar and societal levels: his family represented an important source of strength, whenever he contacted them and saw that they were well: *"for now we are fine ... they are fine ... thanks God we are fine ... now their situation has improved"*.

Negative/familiar and community levels: however his family also represented a source of homesickness for him. And, in addition to this, he also missed his friends. *"I miss them so badly, so badly ... I miss them a lot ... all of them: mother, father, friends"*.

| <b>Phase</b>       | <b>Code (quality &amp; psychosocial level)</b>  |
|--------------------|---|
| Before             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>   |
| Anticipation       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative societal;</li> </ul>  |
| Devastating events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative community and societal;</li> <li>• Resilience individual and societal;</li> </ul>             |
| Survival           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative individual and community;</li> <li>• Resilience individual, familiar and societal;</li> </ul> |
| Adjustment         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative individual, community and societal;</li> <li>• Resilience individual and</li> </ul>           |

|       |  |
|-------|--|
|       | community;   |
| After | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AAD familiar and community;</li> <li>• Negative familiar and community;</li> <li>• Resilience familiar, community and societal;</li> <li>• AAD societal;</li> </ul> |

**Table 6.3:**

|          | BEFORE | BEFORE | BEFORE | ANTICIP | ANTICIP | ANTICIP | DEV EVE | DEV EVE | DEV EVE | SURV | SURV   | SURV | ADJUST | ADJUST | ADJUST | AFTER | AFTER  | AFTER |
|----------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
|          | NEG    | NEU    | POS    | NEG     | NEU     | POS     | NEG     | NEU     | POS     | NEG  | NEU    | POS  | NEG    | NEU    | POS    | NEG   | NEU    | POS   |
| INDIV    |        |        |        |         |         |         |         | Yellow  |         | Red  | Yellow |      | Red    | Yellow |        |       |        |       |
| FAM      |        |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |      | Yellow |      |        |        | Green  | Red   | Yellow |       |
| COMM     |        |        |        |         |         |         | Red     |         |         | Red  |        |      | Red    | Yellow | Green  | Red   | Yellow |       |
| SOC/CULT |        |        |        | Red     |         |         | Red     | Yellow  |         |      | Yellow |      | Red    |        |        |       | Yellow | Green |

**Table 6.4:**

**CASE B: poorest narration (9th subject):**

**Before:** N/A

**Anticipation:**

negative/individual, familiar and societal levels: the respondent talked in a very unclear manner about the nature of his problems. The only clear aspect

was that, according to him, his problems were located at both an individual and a societal level. *"It depends on various factors, not only one ... one is general, while one is special for me. General ... people from all the world know the news from my Country. This affects our life, at all levels. ... and the special depends on private problems"*. Then, he introduced the idea that his personal problems were connected to his marital status of not being married. He believed this to be the reason why, once he had lost his previous job, he had a very hard time finding a new one. From an objective point of view, his definition of losing of his job as a destructive factor in his life, and the reason for him leaving Iran seemed disproportionate. *"There are sanctions, less salary ... sometimes there are no salaries. The insurance is not under international marine laws ... after being removed from a board, I could not find a job as an officer for a long time. So it affected my life. ... if you lose your job, if you lose your income, you will go to destroy"*. And: *"I had an offer of a job in the office, but in final they did not accept me as a single, not married. Married people, they are in front of you"*.

It is clear, that, regardless of the objective view of what he had or had not, caused the interviewee a high degree of psychological distress: *"I was wasting my time ... no marriage, no child, no family ... I was going to destroy, no more power ..."*.

Resilience/individual level: however, when asked what had helped him to endure his predicament, he acknowledged his ability to retain hope and make

use of his own experiences from the past. *“Just hope to myself. I was trying for my experience”*.

**Devastating events:**

N/A

**Survival:**

N/A (He just stayed at a descriptive level, that is, he only enumerated the countries he crossed before arriving in Italy, without mentioning any subjective involvement in these descriptions).

**Adjustment:**

Resilience/community and societal levels: the interviewee made very positive comments on the Italian people in general and the services offered by the SPRAR system in Cagliari, even if the SPRAR staff were only mentioned indirectly. *“I am very pleased to meet Italian people ... in the refugee process they are really humanitarian ... and they make for me all the best ... accommodation, living costs ... any facility that each human needs”*. The researcher had some doubts as to the authenticity of comments or whether it was a way to please the researcher herself.

He also acknowledged the help and support he received from some friends: *“they cannot do anything ... they give me hope ... there is no reason to lose*

*it*".

Negative/familiar and societal levels: despite the possible compliance within the research setting, the interviewee was able to communicate the downside of being in Sardinia. Since he had family in Sweden and the Swedish government is much richer than the Italian one, he said he would have preferred to stay there, rather than in Italy. He actually had applied for asylum in Sweden but was sent back as he had an Italian tourist Visa. *"In Sweden I have some relatives ... in Italy I just have Italian Visa, as a tourist ... I decided for Sweden, I applied there. But I did not know about the new regulations"*.

**After:**

N/A



| <b>Phase</b>       | <b>Code (quality &amp; psychosocial level)</b>  |
|--------------------|---|
| Before             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A</li> </ul>   |
| Anticipation       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative individual, familiar and societal;</li> <li>Resilience individual level;</li> </ul> |
| Devastating events | N/A   |
| Survival           | N/A   |
| Adjustment         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative familiar and societal;</li> <li>Resilience community and societal;</li> </ul>       |
| After              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A</li> </ul>   |

**Table 6.5:**

|          | BEFORE | BEFORE | BEFORE | ANTICIP | ANTICIP | ANTICIP | DEV EVE | DEV EVE | DEV EVE | SURV | SURV | SURV | ADJUST | ADJUST | ADJUST | AFTER | AFTER | AFTER |
|----------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------|------|------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
|          | NEG    | NEU    | POS    | NEG     | NEU     | POS     | NEG     | NEU     | POS     | NEG  | NEU  | POS  | NEG    | NEU    | POS    | NEG   | NEU   | POS   |
| INDIV    |        |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |      |      |      |        |        |        |       |       |       |
| FAM      |        |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |      |      |      |        |        |        |       |       |       |
| COMM     |        |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |      |      |      |        |        |        |       |       |       |
| SOC/CULT |        |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |      |      |      |        |        |        |       |       |       |

**Table 6.6:**

### **6.3 Results of the first RQ at the macro-level (whole narrative)**

The second analysis for the first RQ focused on the whole narrative of each participant. It used the results obtained at the micro-level (of the single sentences) as the concrete substrate to evaluate the overall story.

Here, the construct of complexity, as operationalised for the first part of the first RQ according to Papadopoulos' parameters (2001, 2007), was put in direct correspondence with that of *coherence* (Grossmann et al. 2005; Main et al. 1985).

The construct of coherence was originally conceived, by the attachment theorists, as composed by two conversational maxims (Grice 1975). The first maxim was that of consistency ("say the truth") and the second maxim was that of collaboration. Furthermore, the maxim of collaboration was further divided into three sub-ones, namely: (a) quantity ("make your contribution as informative as is required"), (b) relation ("be relevant") and (c) manner ("avoid obscurity of expression").

In the context of this research, the source of data for the conversational maxim of consistency was constituted by the output grid of the micro-level, and its defining parameters of phase, quality and psychosocial level. Each of the three parameters could have a high, mild or low level of consistency. A

high level of consistency (any parameter) was associated with a “balanced” description of that parameter. For example, a high level of consistency in the parameter of phase meant that the narration had no temporal blind spots, and that all phases were recalled. Conversely, mild or low levels of consistency were mainly connected to “polarized” (i.e., split narrations) or “over-concentrated” (i.e., one-sided) narrations. The attribution of mild or low levels of consistency depended on the degree and pervasiveness of the polarization or the over-concentration.

For example, a mild level of consistency to the parameter of phase meant that the participant was not able to recall all phases, but that, at the same time, most phases could be mentioned. While, a low level of consistency to the parameter of phase meant that the participant could not mention most of the phases.

| <b>Parameter:</b>   | <b>Evaluation:</b>  |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Phases</i>       | high<br>mild<br>low |
| <i>Qualities</i>    | high<br>mild<br>low |
| <i>Psychosocial</i> | high<br>mild<br>low |

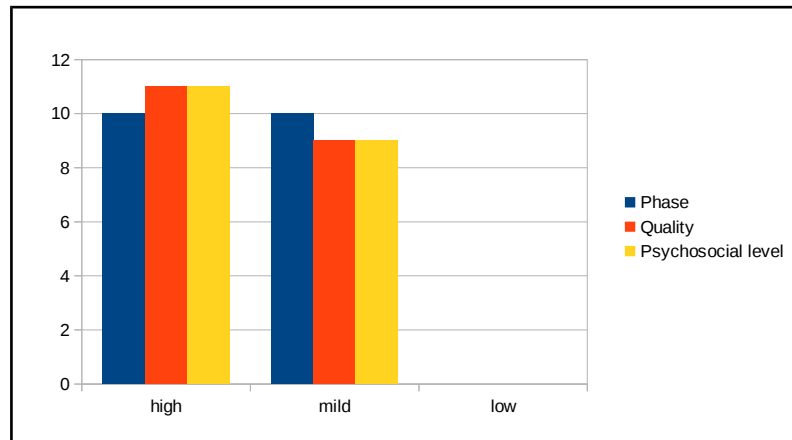
**Table 6.7:**

The source of data for the sub-parameters of collaboration was the researcher's notes of each transcript. The conversational maxim of collaboration was divided, as in its original format, into three parameters: quantity (i.e., sufficiently complete), relation (i.e., relevance), and manner (i.e., easy to follow). According to the quantity parameter, a narration could be classified as: too long, sufficient, or too short; according to the relation parameter into relevant or irrelevant; and finally, according to the manner parameter, it could be easy or difficult to follow. For example, according to the quantity parameter, the classification depended on the quantity of details that the study participant provided in his/her story. Then, according to the relation parameter, its classification depended on how the person could stay focused on the topic at stake. Finally, with regards to the manner parameter, this depended on the ease or difficulty the researcher found when listening to the person's story.

| <b>Sub-parameter</b> | <b>Evaluation</b> |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Quantity</i>      | too long          |
|                      | sufficient        |
|                      | too short         |
| <i>Relation</i>      | relevant          |
|                      | irrelevant        |
| <i>Manner</i>        | easy              |
|                      | difficult         |

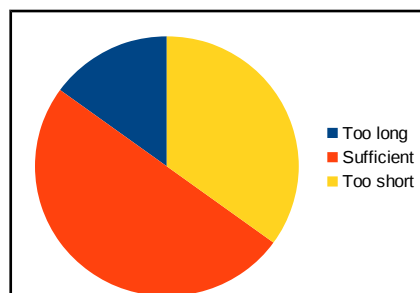
**Table 6.8:**

When considering the conversational maxim of consistency, in no cases were the narrations low for any of the three parameters. On the contrary, there was a substantial parity concerning high and mild results for the three of Papadopoulos' parameters of quality, psychosocial level, and phase. This means the participants' narrations were either highly or mildly consistent and in no case low/poorly consistent.

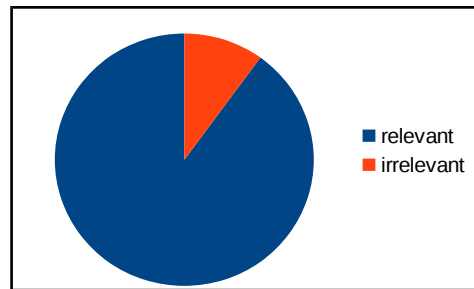


**Figure 6.1:**

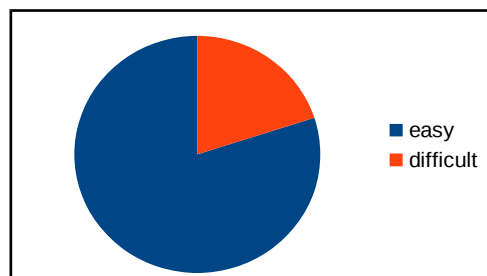
If we now consider the conversational maxim of collaboration, there was a substantial parity between sufficient and non-sufficient narrations, but, unlike this result, most narrations were classified as relevant and easy to follow.



**Figure 6.2:**



**Figure 6.3:**



**Figure 6.4:**

Taken altogether, the results obtained for the conversational maxim of consistency and for collaboration suggest that the overall narrative coherence of most study participants' narrations was high. In some cases it could be considered mild and in no case it was low.

It is interesting to note that most of the narrative complexity-coherence was connected to the interactional qualities of the exchange, which, in the context of this work, were summarized by the conversational maxim of collaboration.

#### **6.4 Second RQ**

The second RQ focused on the nature of the dynamic relationship between the study participants' self definition as refugees and a possible "victim identity". This RQ was composed by two different and interrelated facets. The first was related to the self-perception, i.e., the way the study participants defined themselves along a continuum of agency and victim-hood. The second aspect had to do with the study participants' evaluation of their overall refugee experience along the polarity of negative-neutral-positive terms.

The classification of the participants' answers was hybrid, using initially a bottom-up approach and secondly a top-down one. Each part of this second RQ showed an intercoder agreement of: (1) 90% for self-perception; and (2) 75% for evaluation of the overall refugee experience.

The second RQ completed the first by exploring, from another angle, the complexity of the refugee experience. Indeed, the refugees' definition of themselves as active agents, able to help others, and a definition of their overall refugee experience in positive terms would counter-balance the main trends in literature that seems to mostly focus only on one aspect of the refugee predicament (i.e., the negative one).

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#### **6.4.1 Perceived sense of agency**

In this first part the refugees' self-perception was explored. This specific type of perception was connected to the following question, asked during the first interview: *if now you had in front of you a person in need, what would you say or do to help?*

This was the concluding question of the first interview. The following answers were classified according to the kind of help the person would have provided (if any) to a person in need. It was assumed that behind the will to help a person in need, there was a self-perception of an active sense of agency. Conversely, behind the will not to help a person in need, a self-perception of victim.

The results are reported not only in the way the answers were classified, but also in the original words that participants used to express themselves (see Table below: 276).

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| <b>Number of subject:</b> | <b>Full text:</b>   | <b>Type of help:</b>                  | <b>Key-word:</b>       | <b>Sense of agency</b> |
|---------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1                         | Give hope   | Spiritual help                        | Hope                   | v                      |
| 2                         | Encourage to think about your family to engage internal strength  | Social help                           | Family                 | v                      |
| 3                         | Support in praying  | Spiritual help                        | God                    | v                      |
| 4                         | Reinforce sense of safety   | Psychological help                    | Safety                 | v                      |
| 5                         | Encouragement for study   | Practical help                        | Study                  | v                      |
| 6                         | Be friendly   | Social help                           | Friend                 | v                      |
| 7                         | With patience most things get sorted out. Keep yourself patient and hopeful   | Psychological help,<br>Spiritual help | Patience,<br>Hope      | v                      |
| 8                         | Be patient because not everything depends on us. Many things go as they have to. But if we keep ourselves patient, we'll get where we want to. Without patience, and not allowing time to pass, counting only on our own we are powerless | Psychological help                    | Patience,<br>Powerless | v                      |
| 9                         | Face anything that comes up. Learn the language. Look for good solutions, for making the best of your future  | Psychological help,<br>Practical help | Courage,<br>Study      | v                      |
| 10                        | Be happy no matter what happened, just for being alive  | Spiritual help                        | Gratefulness           | v                      |
| 11                        | From your suffering you'll be able to help others   | Social help                           | Reciprocity            | v                      |
| 12                        | Suggest to go to the police and ask for help (practical and legal advice)   | Practical help                        | Police                 | v                      |
| 13                        | Say "success is impossible without facing dangers"  | Psychological help                    | Courage                | v                      |
| 14                        | Be hopeful, you'll find something.  | Spiritual help,                       | Hope,                  | v                      |

|    |  |                                       |                    |   |
|----|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---|
|    | Learn the language and take maximum advantage of the opportunities provided while you take part in the (SPRAR) project   | Practical help                        | Study              |   |
| 15 | Take him/her to the hospital   | Practical help                        | Hospital           | v |
| 16 | First try to understand the specific needs of the other person.<br>Depending on this, help would be either psychological or economical                                   | Psychological help,<br>Practical help | Money              | v |
| 17 | For each person conditions are different. However, as a general suggestion, study hard, not waste time, learn the language and try to be part of the (receiving) society | Practical help                        | Study              | v |
| 18 | Psychological support for first.<br>Then, material help  | Psychological help,<br>Practical help | NA                 | v |
| 19 | Being close to, talk to him/her, do not leave alone  | Social help                           | Friend             | v |
| 20 | Help with money, or take to the hospital   | Practical help                        | Money,<br>Hospital | v |

**Table 6.9:**

Some redundancies, in the whole sample, can be observed from these results. Firstly, in no case did a study participant report that he/she would have been unable or unwilling to help a person in need. This result was understood as each participant's self-perception, without exclusions, as active agents. This would have been opposed to a self-perception as victims themselves.

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As regards to the specific help participants reported, this ranged from practical to psychological, social to spiritual, and an interrelation between them. More specifically, 5 people said that they would provide practical help (e.g., study, hospital, money, police); 4 people social help (e.g., friend, reciprocity, family); 3 people psychological help (e.g., patience, courage, safety); and 3 others spiritual help (e.g., hope, God, gratefulness). Moreover, 3 people said they would provide both psychological and practical help; 1 person talked about providing spiritual and practical help; and, finally, 1 person said he would provide spiritual and psychological help.

#### **6.4.2 The refugee experience as a work of art**

This second part of the second RQ focused on the way the study participants described their own experience as refugees, along a continuum of positive-neutral-negative extremes. The prompting question involved the reference to a generic work of art as a container to their refugee experience. The exact wording of this question was: *if your experience was a book or a film, which title would it have?* This was the concluding question of the second interview for all study participants (main and comparison).

With regards to the stage of data analysis, the reference to positive-neutral-

negative extremes was classified according to the qualities of the Trauma Grid (Papadopoulos 2007): i.e., positive (AAD), neutral (resilience), and negative.

The participants' answers are reported both in the way they were classified using the study participant's own words.

| <b>Subject:</b> | <b>Full text:</b>                                | <b>Quality inferred:</b> | <b>Key-word:</b> |
|-----------------|--|--------------------------|------------------|
| 1               | One lion in jungle is king                       | Resilience               | Fight            |
| 2               | Human beings are good                            | Resilience               | Humanity         |
| 3               | If you like peace, be prepared for war           | Resilience               | Fight            |
| 4               | A refugee is a human being                       | Resilience               | Humanity         |
| 5               | I am internationalist                            | Resilience               | Humanity         |
| 6               | God is what helped the most                      | Resilience               | God              |
| 7               | Stories gone through during migration            | Resilience               | Proceed          |
| 8               | From a story of darkness to a story of light     | AAD                      | Light            |
| 9               | Life is a ship: Go ahead                         | Resilience               | Proceed          |
| 10              | Lost love  | Negative                 | Nostalgia        |
| 11              | The journey with no return                       | Negative                 | Nostalgia        |
| 12              | How my life was ...                              | Negative                 | Nostalgia        |
| 13              | My life is so strange                            | Resilience               | Acceptance       |
| 14              | Being human in the body, but travel as an object | Negative                 | Powerlessness    |
| 15              | Becoming a voice for others                      | AAD                      | Voice            |
| 16              | A destiny towards freedom                        | AAD                      | Freedom          |
| 17              | Afghan young boy burns in his life               | Negative                 | Nostalgia        |
| 18              | After the dark, light!                           | AAD                      | Light            |
| 19              | Re-Birth of a Child                              | AAD                      | Light            |
| 20              | Me, my Country, both going on ...                | Resilience               | Proceed          |

**Table 6.10:**

From these results, 10 people were classified as reporting a neutral (resilient) title for their refugee experience as a work of art (e.g., humanity, fight, acceptance). 5 people were classified as reporting a positive (AAD) title (e.g., freedom, voice, light), and the other 5 a negative title for their refugee experience (e.g., powerlessness, nostalgia).

Overall, most study participants used positive (either resilient or AAD) terms to describe their overall refugee experience.

### **6.5 Third RQ**

The first two RQs, taken altogether, mostly focused on the verbal level of the study participants' narratives. On the contrary, the second part of this thesis dealt with “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours”, that is, it focused on the role of the body as a narrative resource and on the specific characteristics of the actual movements displayed by the study participants.

This third RQ focused on the way “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” impacted on the verbal account that followed and, in doing so, the main group's and comparison group's narratives were compared. Indeed, only the MG participants explicitly used their bodies as a story telling resource. The comparison group's participants deepened their story only in

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verbal terms.

The source of data for the third RQ was represented by one to three events, that the participants discussed in the first interview and deepened during the second. The way events were extracted was defined within this chapter when dealing with the results for the first RQ at the micro-level. The selection of the three events from the first interview was undertaken by the researcher herself, mostly on the basis of the study participant's length of the description during the first interview. At the beginning of the second interview, these pre-selected events were further negotiated with the participants who had the freedom to agree, disagree, delete some or all of these events and introduce new ones instead. Examples of these events are: (1) feelings of being alone and related state of distress (e.g., *“room alone ... I stayed like ... I was sitting alone like this ... Tension ... and mind was going going ... because I understand me no documents, no mother, no friends ... tension in the body, no power ... no power ... problem for me ...”*); (2) positive effect of a new and safe environment (e.g., *“after my friends came ... I went to the sea ... go and see people enjoy their life ... Ok, it's good, very good ... (pause). Now I have many friends ... now ... I can tell them my problems, and my friends say “Ok, no problem. You are not alone. There's me”. After friends come in my house ... we speak ... eat together, sometimes watch TV, listen to songs, music”*); (3) Help from the Mosque and from God (e.g., *“Help from the Mosque and from God (e.g., “Mosque mosque ... they are my friends. They gave me house,*

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sleep, food”).

The possible impact of “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” on the subsequent verbal accounts could be summarized with the term “quality”, i.e., what kind of transformation is it? When the study participants engaged with “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours”, what kind of transformation ensued and how did it impact on the subsequent verbal accounts?

In order to minimize the variables involved in answering this RQ, each classifiable movement displayed by the main group's study participants was reduced to an unknown X (i.e., variable). This means that the analysis for this RQ was carried out at a formal level, not analysing the characteristics of each movement. The specific features of the movements will be analysed later for the forth RQ.

In this way, the embodied elements were considered as unknown variables X within a verbal antecedent (A) and a verbal subsequent (B).

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$$A \rightarrow X \rightarrow B$$

legend:

A verbal antecedent;

X non-verbal element;

B verbal consequence

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Therefore, the transformation could occur (or not) between the X and the B. In order to classify these answers, bottom-up categories were constructed and those identified were: amplification, reduction, opposite, repetition. Moreover, different levels at which these transformations could occur were further identified to specify these categories. Each category could be identified when comparing the verbal account on a same event obtained in the first interview (i.e., identical for both groups) and in second one (i.e., diversified for the MG and the CG).

**(a) Amplification:** adding of new information, at the following levels: bodily elements/physical environment/psychological state/specific event.

The following example is taken from the 3<sup>rd</sup> subject's interviews (MG) (name of event: Journey to Europe). Amplification of specific event and bodily sensations:

- first interview: *it was a very painful journey you know for me ... on the way I met a lot of people ... those that are sick ... those that do not have money ... to give the agents, to come, and to cross the borders ... so, it was nice that I had some money ... and, actually, my relatives ... they support me ... they give some loan, some money for ... that I got from them and here ...*
- second interview (it included in between “non-verbal

expressive/communicative behaviours”): so I came here by the roof of Iran, Turkey, Greece, and then ... after many attempts, I reached Italia ... and asked for asylum. So, on my journey I had many troubles ... you know ... I met some thieves that stripped me off of everything that I had there ... you know ... they tied me with the rope and hanged ... hanged in the ceiling, you know ... and fortunately the border police they came ... they came there and there, they saved my life. So ...I felt the time ... especially on my journey ... I felt the time “maybe you'll die soon”... without soul ... you know, the body ... hanged ... in the ceiling you know ... they hanged me in the ceiling ... by the rope ... tied by the rope ... and then, you can say that, fortunately, the border police came and they saved my life ... maybe it was for 2 hours or 3 hours .... I was like this ... and the time I hanged, with the rope ... and they stripped me off everything which I had ... (pause) ... really, I can say that I am lucky that I am still alive ... the border police they came ... at that time I was senseless ... You know? ... you can say: half-dead. When someone beats you and they take everything from you ... but the police, the border police they came ... fortunately they came ... and they saved my life ... so you can say they gave me a new life, you know ... and now I am in front of you, I can tell you the story ... (pause) ...

**(b) Reduction:** subtraction of info, at the following levels: bodily

elements/physical environment/psychological state/specific event.

The following example is taken from the 8<sup>th</sup> subject's interviews (CG) (name of event: The Sahara desert). Reduction at psychological state:

- first interview: *“to get to Libya the desert was really hard, really hard ... a lot, a lot ... 29 days ... It cannot be described ... however ... what I suffered is much, much bigger of what can be told ... inside I believed I could make it because I had faith in God ... faith helped me ... but there were very heavy situations, while crossing the desert ... some were physically abused, others were asked all their money, some were abandoned in the desert ... some friends of mine were arrested as soon as they arrived in Libya ... 7-8-10 months in jail ... some of them disappeared ... problems are many ... difficult the narration .... it is heavy because I made it, while others did not ...”.*
- second interview second interview (it did not include in between “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours”): *“left the mark of the sorrow is what happened in the Sahara desert ... they beat us, even half-naked and this is for me something I cannot overcome ... unbearable ... humiliation ... sorrow and all this ...”.*

**(c) Repetition:** no new info is added or subtracted. The quantity of information conveyed between the two extracts stays the same. The level at

which the repetition occurs may again be specified: bodily elements/physical environment/psychological state/specific event.

The following example is taken from the 15<sup>th</sup> subject's interviews (MG) (name of event: The Turkish hymn). Repetition of specific event and psychological state:

- First interview: *“when I arrived to Turkey, after 1 or 2 years I forgot to be Kurdish ... I did not even know I was a Kurdish kid ... once a day kids of the elementary and middle schools have to say the Turkish hymn ... never mind the ethnic group of belonging, once they are in school: “I am Turkish, I am happy, I am strong”. I will never forget once when I was in the middle school after reading the essay in front of the class you had to say: “thanks God I am Turkish, I want to be Turkish”. Like this ... but I was Kurdish ... after reading my essay, I said: “I am proud to be Kurdish”. The teacher was shocked. She turned to me and gave 2 slaps on my face ... terrible!”.*
- second interview (it included “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours”): *“If you can say: “I am Turkish, I am happy, I am joyful” ... also a Kurdish person should be able to say: “I am Kurdish, I am happy, I am joyful”. ... yet the hymn has to be said ... all standing ... My doubts had already started, but actually on that day I would have said nothing ... but when a female classmate finished her reading saying “I*

*am Turkish” ... then I wanted to say it ... “I am happy to be Kurdish”. And I received two slaps, heavy ones ... not simple messages “do not do it again” ... really heavy ones!”.*

**(d) Meaning-making:** transformation of the rough information into a higher level understanding (i.e., see also transcendence and AAD).

The following example is taken from the 10<sup>th</sup> subject's interviews (CG) (name of event: Courage from family to flee):

- first interview: *“my father told me “what do you want? You cannot fight with the Talebans. If we lost one, we do not want you to be here. If you stay, they catch you ... When one is gone, he is gone. But you're not gone””* (the reference is of his brother killed).
- second interview (it did not include in between “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours”): *“Family, mother and father, helped me by telling: “don't come back home. Talebans are coming. One son already died. They are only waiting to catch you”. My brother is like a “lost love”... like air for me. He was the first person helping the family. He was “same my heart””.*

Complete results are reported in the Table below. In the first column the number of subject is reported alongside his/her allocation in the main or in the

comparison group. In the second column the kind of event(s) selected are summarized. They could range from one to three, depending on the richness of the study participant's narration. A richer narration was likely to have three and even more possible events to be selected.

The third column provides a summary of the participant's own words, related to that event and expressed during the first interview. In the fourth column, the participant's own words are summarized, again related to the same event, but on this occasion spoken during the second interview. Then, in the fifth column, the type of transformation that occurred is reported.

| <b>Subject's allocation:</b> | <b>Events (1-3):</b>   | <b>1st interview key-words:</b>   | <b>2nd interview key-words:</b>   | <b>Type of transformation that occurred:</b>  |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| <b>1 MG</b>                  | 1) Feeling of being alone and related state of distress.<br><br>2) Positive effect of a new and safe environment.<br><br>3) Help from the Mosque and from God. | Family distance, and problems related to loneliness.<br><br>New and positive aspects of being in Sardinia.<br><br>Material help received. | Description of space, description of body posture and of bodily tension. Problems related to this tension.<br><br>Description of space.<br><br>Description of praying and connection with metaphysical aspects. | Amplification of physical environment and bodily sensations.<br><br>Amplification of physical environment.<br><br>Amplification of a specific event.<br><br>Meaning-making. |
| <b>2 MG</b>                  | 1) Mother as a   | Mother as a   | Description of a specific   | Amplification of a specific   |

|             |   |   |  |   |
|-------------|---|---|--|---|
|             | helper.   | helper.   | event and contact with ambivalent feelings.  | event.  |
| <b>3 MG</b> | 1) Journey to Europe.<br><br>2) Importance of hope and its meaning.<br><br>3) Threats received from Talibans. | Factual description of the journey, and disclose of painful nature of this experience.<br><br>Explanation of the term "hope" and concrete examples.<br><br>Description of a specific event. | Description in great details of a specific event (i.e., thieves that stripped the interviewee off of everything). Disclose of the fear felt then and of the positive final.<br><br>Description of a specific event and connection of internal world to external elements.<br><br>Role playing for describing a specific event. Another description of a specific event and new role playing. | Amplification of a specific event and of bodily sensations.<br>Meaning-making.<br><br>Amplification of specific event.<br>Meaning-making.<br><br>Amplification of specific event. |
| <b>4 MG</b> | 1) Characteristics of the journey.<br><br>2) Arrest.  | Factual description of the journey and brief mentioning of its difficulty.<br><br>Factual description of two arrests.   | Description of a specific event and role playing.<br>Discussion of the psychological implications.<br><br>Description of a specific event and location of this event in a wider context.<br>Description of the physical implications and contact of sad feelings.  | Amplification of a specific event.<br>Meaning-making.<br><br>Amplification of a specific event and of bodily sensations.  |
| <b>5 MG</b> | 1) Description of a night during the  | Description of a specific event and   | Description of bodily postures, environment  | Amplification of a specific event, of a physical  |

|             |  |   |  |  |
|-------------|--|---|--|--|
|             | first revolution.                                | meanings emerging. Then, decision to leave.                                       | around and psychological implications.   | environment, of bodily sensations and of a psychological state.<br><br>Repetition of a specific event.             |
|             | 2) Threat received during the second revolution. | Description of specific event.  | Description of specific event, of bodily posture and of the environment, plus a final involving an action.           | Amplification of physical environment and of specific event.   |
|             | 3) Being trapped within snow walls.              | Description of a specific place and disclose feelings with respect to that place. | Subject in relation to environment plus take up of an active role, against contradictory feelings towards the place. |  |
| <b>6 MG</b> | 1) Religious problems in Sudan.                  | Religious problems.   | Religious problems.  | Repetition of a specific event.<br><br>Amplification of environment, of specific event and of psychological state. |
|             | 2) Desert.                                       | Factual description.  | Description of specific event and environment.<br>Deepening of the fear felt then.                                   | Amplification of specific event and of psychological state.  |
|             | 3) Ship to reach Lampedusa (Italy) from Libya.   | Factual description.  | Description of specific event and of the fear felt.  |  |
| <b>7 CG</b> | 1) Religious freedom found in the new territory. | Religious freedom and meaning-making.   | Religious freedom.   | Reduction: psychological state;<br><br>Repetition of a specific event;   |



|              |   |  |   |  |
|--------------|---|--|---|--|
|              | 2) The Sahara desert.   | Description of a specific event (rape) and psychological implications.   | Description of a specific event (rape) and psychological implications.  |  |
| <b>8 CG</b>  | 1) Migration as a school of life.<br><br>2) The sea.<br><br>3) The Sahara desert. | Meaning-making.<br><br>Description of a specific event.<br><br>Description of specific event, psychological implications and meaning-making. | Meaning-making.<br><br>Description of a specific event and psychological implications and meaning-making.<br><br>Description of specific event, psychological implications. | Meaning-making;<br><br>Amplification of psychological state.<br>Meaning-making.<br><br>Reduction of psychological state. |
| <b>9 MG</b>  | 1) Keep hope when feeling overwhelmed.  | Help from within.  | Help from within and meaning-making.  | Meaning-making.  |
| <b>10 CG</b> | 1) Courage from family to flee.<br><br>2) Life in Sardinia.                       | Description of a specific event and meaning-making.<br><br>Description of psychological state and present environment.                       | Description of a specific event and meaning-making.<br><br>Description of psychological state and present environment.  | Repetition of a specific event.<br>Meaning-making.<br><br>Repetition of psychological state and physical environment.    |
| <b>11 MG</b> | 1) Being trapped  | Description of a   | Description of a specific   | Meaning-making.  |

|              |  |   |   |  |
|--------------|--|---|---|--|
|              | in a wood and role of the traffickers.<br><br>2) Claustrophobic experience of journey.   | specific event and of the fear felt then.<br><br>Description of the fear.   | event and meaning-making.<br><br>Description of a specific event and of the fear felt then.   | Amplification of specific event.   |
| <b>12 MG</b> | 1) Talibans coming to the shop.  | Description of a specific event.  | Description of a specific event and bodily posture.<br>Fear felt at that moment.  | Amplification of bodily sensations and psychological state.  |
| <b>13 CG</b> | 1) Crossing the borders from Iran to Turkey.<br><br>2) Dilemma between safe here and far from the family.<br><br>3) Danger of going to pray to the Mosque. | Description of a specific event and fear felt.<br><br>Description of a psychological state of dilemma.<br><br>Description of a specific event and meaning-making. | Description of a specific event and fear felt.<br><br>Description of a psychological state of dilemma.<br><br>Description of a specific event and meaning-making.   | Repetition of specific event and of psychological state.<br><br>Repetition of a psychological state.<br><br>Repetition of specific event.<br>Meaning-making. |
| <b>14 MG</b> | 1) Lucky side of having a car accident.<br><br>2) Travelling like an inanimate object.   | Description of a specific event and psychological implications.<br><br>Psychological state of distress.   | Description of a specific event, bodily posture, specific environment, and psychological implications.<br><br>Description of a specific event, environment and bodily posture.<br>Psychological implications of it. | Amplification of environment and bodily sensations.<br><br>Amplification of specific event, physical environment and bodily sensations.                      |

|              |   |   |   |   |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|
| <b>15 MG</b> | 1) Dialogue with the “enemies”.<br><br>2) The Turkish hymn.                       | Description of a specific event and meaning-making.<br><br>Description of a specific event and psychological implications.              | Description of a specific event and meaning-making.<br><br>Description of a specific event and psychological implications.  | Repetition of specific event.<br>Meaning-making.<br><br>Repetition of specific event and psychological state.   |
| <b>16 MG</b> | 1) Forms of tortures within the female prison.<br><br>2) The Turkish hymn (2).    | Description of specific events and psychological implications.<br><br>Factual description.  | Description of specific events, environment , bodily gestures.<br><br>Description of a specific event, and bodily gesture.<br>Meaning-making.                       | Amplification of specific event, environment and bodily sensations.<br>Reduction of psychological state.<br><br>Amplification of specific event and bodily sensations.<br>Meaning-making. |
| <b>17 MG</b> | 1) Hearing the mistake from the local news.<br><br>2) First adjustment in Russia. | Description of a specific event and psychological implications.<br><br>Description of specific event(s) and psychological implications. | Description of a specific event and psychological implications.<br><br>Description of a specific event, bodily gesture and environment. Psychological implications. | Repetition of specific event and psychological state.<br><br>Amplification of bodily sensations and of physical environment.  |
| <b>18 CG</b> | 1) Solitary decision to flee.   | Psychological description and   | Psychological description and meaning-making.   | Amplification of specific event.  |

|              |   |  |   |   |
|--------------|---|--|---|---|
|              | 2) Ambivalence of being far from home.  | meaning-making.<br><br>Psychological state of distress.  | Description of a specific event.<br><br>Psychological state of distress.  | Repetition of psychological state.  |
| <b>19 MG</b> | 1) Father's meeting with the rebels.<br><br>2) Relationship with God and mother.<br><br>3) Dreaming about future. | Description of a specific event.<br><br>Description of specific events and psychological implications.<br><br>Meaning-making and psychological implications. | Description of a specific event and environment.<br>Meaning-making.<br><br>Description of specific events and psychological implications. Meaning-making.<br><br>Description of bodily sensations and meaning-making. | Amplification of bodily sensations and physical environment.<br>Meaning-making.<br><br>Meaning-making.<br><br>Amplification of bodily sensations. |
| <b>20 CG</b> | 1) Regret of past life in Pakistan.<br><br>2) Decision to flee.   | Psychological state of distress.<br><br>Psychological implications of fleeing.   | Psychological state of distress and description of specific events.<br><br>Fear felt and psychological implications.  | Amplification of specific event.<br><br>Repetition of psychological state.  |

**Table 6.11:**

The Table below reports the results obtained. Frequencies of these transformations, regardless of the distribution in the two groups, are shown in the second column; the third column reports the values obtained by the main group's participants, and finally, in the last column, the results of the comparison group's participants are reported.

| <b>Category:</b>                             | <b>Whole group:</b> | <b>MG:</b> | <b>CG :</b> |
|--|---------------------|------------|-------------|
| <i>Amplification of physical environment</i> | 10                  | 10         | 0           |
| <i>Amplification of specific event</i>       | 17                  | 15         | 2           |
| <i>Amplification of bodily sensations</i>    | 12                  | 12         | 0           |
| <i>Amplification of psychological state</i>  | 5                   | 4          | 1           |
|  |                     |            |             |
| <i>Repetition of physical environment</i>    | 1                   | 0          | 1           |
| <i>Repetition of specific event</i>          | 9                   | 5          | 4           |
| <i>Repetition of bodily sensations</i>       | 0                   | 0          | 0           |
| <i>Repetition of psychological state</i>     | 7                   | 2          | 5           |
|  |                     |            |             |
| <i>Reduction of physical environment</i>     | 0                   | 0          | 0           |
| <i>Reduction of specific event</i>           | 0                   | 0          | 0           |
| <i>Reduction of bodily sensations</i>        | 0                   | 0          | 0           |
| <i>Reduction of psychological state</i>      | 3                   | 1          | 2           |
|  |                     |            |             |
| <i>Meaning-making</i>                        | 14                  | 10         | 4           |

**Table 6.12:**

When analysing the category of amplification, this kind of transformation mostly occurred in the main group and at the following levels: physical environment, specific event and bodily sensations. The greatest difference between the two groups was mostly found at the level of the specific event, but even more at the levels of physical environment and bodily sensations. The only exception, with only just a small difference between the two groups, was represented by the category of amplification at the psychological level.

If we move forward to the category of repetition, in all cases but the level of bodily sensations, where there is a null level for both groups, the comparison group reported higher scores. The difference was mostly found for the physical environment and the psychological state levels, and less at the level of the specific event.

Then, if we then go on to the reduction category, an identical situation for both groups was observed, that is, a null result at the following levels: physical environment, specific event and bodily sensations. The only exception, with a difference between the two groups, was represented by the reduction at a psychological level, for which the control group reported a higher score.

Finally, as regards the meaning-making category, the results obtained seem to be very similar, as if this category was modality independent (i.e., the way

the information was conveyed was not crucial). Some limitations, further deepened in the discussion section, could be connected to the specific type of interview design which was restricted to the interviewee's exemplification of the experience.

The conclusions that can be drawn from the results obtained is that the amplification category, at most of its levels, was deepened by the study participants from the main group. This means that this transformation mostly occurred when the participants could use “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” to deepen their narrations. On the contrary, when using exclusively a verbal communication in both interviews, the category of repetition, at most of its levels, and the category of reduction, at one of its levels, prevailed.

Finally, with reference to the category of meaning-making, this did not seem to be affected by the prevalent modality used by the interviewees, since the results obtained on in both main and comparison groups seem very similar. See Table below, for a summary of the results obtained.

| Category      | Result   |
|---------------|--|
| amplification | the category of amplification was mostly reported by the main group;   |
| repetition    | the category of repetition was mostly associated, conversely, with the comparison group;                     |
| reduction     | the category of reduction was little found in both groups, with a slight prevalence of the comparison group; |

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| meaning-making | finally, the category of meaning-making had similar results in both groups, with a slight prevalence in the main group. |
|----------------|---|

**Table 6.13:**

### **6.6 Forth RQ**

The source of data for this forth RQ is exclusively constituted by the video-recordings of the second interview with the MG. Indeed, this RQ only focuses on the “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” explicitly stimulated in the interview participants by the interviewer's questions.

A hybrid data analysis was used to understand the data obtained. The variety and richness of movements were evaluated through a coding Tab which included both theoretically derived categories, already existing in literature, and as well bottom-up ones, created starting from the data themselves. The theory-driven categorization drew inspiration from an ethological work within a psychiatric setting, which focused on the non-verbal behaviours of people with mental disorders (Troisi 1999). See the Table used to classify data (below), for an explanation of each category identified.

Examples for the variety of movements and interactional qualities will be provided by screen-shots, extracted from the actual interviews with the MG



participants, and related verbal accounts. Additional visual and verbal examples can be found in the Appendix, at the end of this thesis.

| <b>Code:</b>   | <b>Explanation:</b>   |
|----------------|---|
| Look at *      | Looking at the interviewer  |
| Head to side * | The head is tilted to one side  |
| Bob *          | Sharp upwards movement of the head  |
| Raise *        | The eyebrows are raised and kept up for some time                                     |
| Smile *        | The lip corners are drawn back and up   |
| Look away *    | Looking away from the interviewer   |
| Look down *    | Looking down at feet, lap or floor  |
| Shut *         | The eyes are closed   |
| Chin *         | The chin is drawn in towards the chest  |
| Still *        | A sudden cessation of movements, freezing   |
| Hand-face*     | Hand(s) in contact with the face  |
| Hand-mouth*    | Hand(s) in contact with the mouth   |
| Relax*         | An obvious loosening of muscle tension so that the whole<br>body relaxes in the chair |
| Tension        | Muscle tension in excess (body armour)  |
| Functional     | Appropriate use of muscle tension, coherent with the<br>performed movement            |
| Standing       | Standing on two feet  |
| Sitting        | Sitting in a chair  |
| Bent           | Standing bent on one's knees  |
| Lying          | Lying on the floor  |
| Whole body     | Whole body is involved  |
| Upper Body     | Only torso and/or arms are involved   |
| Lower Body     | Only legs and/or feet are involved  |
| Only face      | Only facial expressions are involved  |
| Pointing       | Indicating something through arms or fingers  |
| Embracing      | Use of arms and fingers for embracing   |
| Reaching       | Stretching of arms and fingers to reach points in space                               |
| Other gesture  | To be specified   |
| Descriptive    | The movement describes something real and tangible                                    |
| Symbolic       | The movement describes something unreal and intangible                                |

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Emotional    | The movement is highly charged with emotions  |
| Neutral      | No visible emotion(s) are shown   |
| Symmetrical  | Gestures or body positions are equally distributed between both sides of the body   |
| Asymmetrical | Gestures or body positions are unequally distributed between both sides of the body |

**Table 6.14:**

In addition to the classification of the variety and richness of movements, the “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” taking place within the dyadic research setting were classified in their interactional quality. This means that not only were movements analysed per se, but also in their being part of a larger “pas de deux”. The categories used to classify these interactional qualities were entirely bottom-up.

| <b>Code:</b>  | <b>Explanation:</b>   |
|---|---|
| 0. null movement                                      | The movement(s) performed are so minimal in intentionality and interaction that it is not possible to classify them |
| 1. direct interviewer's movements (e.g., sculpturing) | The interviewee does not directly perform any movement, but directs the interviewer's movements                     |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| 2. constant interaction with the interviewer<br>(specify if: a mirroring or b turn-taking) | The interviewee requires constant involvement of the interviewer, either for mirroring his movements or engaging in a turn-taking/role-playing |
| 3. slight prompt   | With minimal, verbal or non-verbal, encouragement, the interviewee engages in movement enactments  |
| 4. autonomous  | Movements are performed without any form of support  |

**Table 6.15:**

Every coded image was specified according to the following parameters: event described; specific shot; interviewee's own words which either followed or was accompanied by the movements and time during the video-recording.

### **6.6.1 Results for the variety of movements**

The distribution of movements for all subjects in the main group (MG) was as indicated in the Table below. The number in brackets represents how many movements were analysed for each person, and the number to the left of each bracket represents the study participant's allocation. Some numbers are missing since not all participants were in the main group. The missing numbers are related to the people in the comparison group.

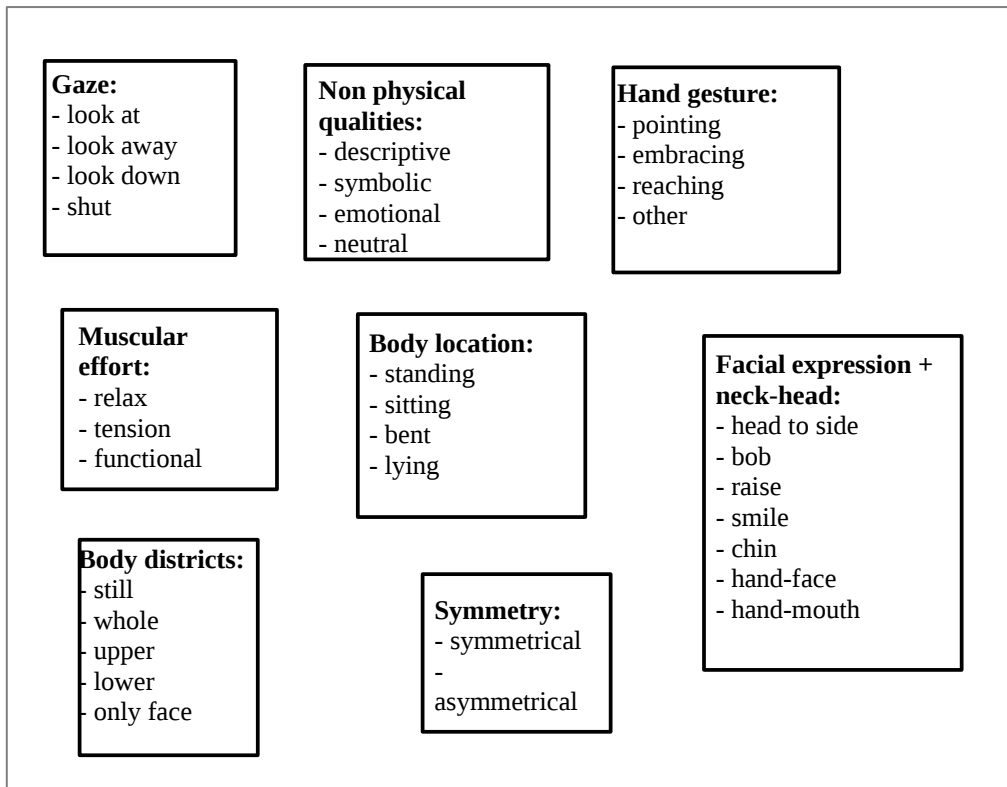
For example 1 (3) means that three movements were analysed for the first subject. The complete list is as follows: 1 (3); 2 (1); 3 (3); 4 (2); 5 (3); 6 (3); 9 (1); 11 (2); 12 (1); 14 (2); 15 (2); 16 (2); 17 (2); 19 (3).

Out of a total of 33 possible movements (i.e., the 33 categories of the Table, including both bottom-up and top-down categories), the data reported in the Table show the most displayed “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours”.

| <b>Code:</b>   | <b>?</b> | <b>Code:</b> | <b>?</b> | <b>Code:</b>  | <b>?</b> |
|----------------|----------|--------------|----------|---------------|----------|
| Look at *      | 16       | Hand-mouth*  | 0        | Only face     | 0        |
| Head to side * | 7        | Relax*       | 3        | Pointing      | 5        |
| Bob *          | 3        | Tension      | 6        | Embracing     | 1        |
| Raise *        | 2        | Functional   | 20       | Reaching      | 2        |
| Smile *        | 5        | Standing     | 11       | Other gesture | 15       |
| Look away *    | 7        | Sitting      | 17       | Descriptive   | 23       |
| Look down *    | 6        | Bent         | 1        | Symbolic      | 5        |
| Shut *         | 4        | Lying        | 1        | Emotional     | 5        |
| Chin *         | 7        | Whole body   | 4        | Neutral       | 3        |
| Still *        | 9        | Upper Body   | 24       | Symmetrical   | 15       |
| Hand-face*     | 5        | Lower Body   | 0        | Asymmetrical  | 13       |

**Table 6.16:**

The 33 categories were then gathered in bottom-up macro-categories, as shown in the Figure below.



**Figure 6.5:**

Analysing the results in comprehensive (bottom-up) macro-categories, the following observations were drawn.

- As regards to the gaze, the related categories are: *look at* (16), *look away* (7), *look down* (6) and *shut* (4). Most participants tended to keep their gaze on the interviewer, as if this direct focus established a non-verbal contact with her while performing their movements. The other

two categories are usually associated with an inward focus of the participants (i.e., a sign of deep involvement), rather than representing a sign of psychological distress experienced during the interview. For example, this happened when the participants seemed so involved in recreating a certain event that they lost eye contact with the interviewer. Finally, the *shut* category, in most cases, seems to represent the deepest involvement of the interviewee-performer with his/her own “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours.

Example of *look away*:



Related verbal production: *room alone ... I was sitting alone like this ... tension, and my mind was going ... because, I understand no documents, no mother, no friends ...*

- In observing the specific facial expressions, and movements of the head in relation to the position of the neck, the results may be summarized in the following list: *head to side* (7), *bob* (3), *raise* (2), *smile* (5), *chin* (7), *hand-face* (5) and *hand-mouth* (0). In most cases, movements involved either tilting the head to one side or drawing one's chin in towards the chest, smiling and/or the hand-face (usually in the form of pointing). Bobbing and raising the head were traced in the movements performed in a small number of cases, while in no case was the hand-mouth movement registered.

Example of *hand-face*:



Related verbal production: (*traversing the Sahara*); *in a big container, we were 35 .... too much sun ... oh, this was a big problem ... during the day I slept, at night went forward with the car.*



As regards the use of specific hand gestures, the related categories were *pointing* (5), *embracing* (1), *reaching* (1) and *others* (15). In most cases gestures were so idiosyncratic, that is to say, they had such a unique meaning to the interviewee that no specific category could emerge from the data. In a consistent number of cases (5), gestures took the form of pointing at something in space or on the surface of the body itself. Finally, there was 1 case of a gesture that indicated embracing, where the emphasis is on the symbolic meaning of containment, and another of reaching, with the prolongation of the body in space.

Example of *reaching*:



Related verbal production: *you use all equipments for running a ship. Life is a ship. Use it with regulations, so it's going ahead and to the final destination. But it cannot return back, in time. If you start a voyage, do it until finish.*

- As regards the non-physical qualities of the “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours”, the related categories were: *descriptive* (23), *symbolic* (5), *emotional* (5), and *neutral* (3). It should be noted that most movements were reality-oriented rather than meaning-oriented, that is they were more connected to concrete aspects rather than to abstract concepts. It may thus be inferred that the engagement of the bodily movements helped the interviewees to deepen the specificity of the events they had gone through, rather than in the production of new meanings. This would be in line with the results from the previous analysis (i.e., 3RQ), that suggested that the “body” amplified specific details of the concrete world, while the process of meaning-making was mostly modality-independent.

Furthermore, only few cases (5), did movements show a high display of emotions. In a similar way, lack of emotions while moving was registered in even fewer cases (3). On the contrary, in most cases, movements seemed to

be characterised by a mild emotional level, congruent to the contents expressed and the relation established with the interviewer.

Example of *descriptive*:



Related verbal production: ... *when there was a tree I could sit. We could speak. We could even do small walks, but for their security checks we had to stay close to each other. Here and there. We managed to see each other ...*

- When considering the body districts involved in a given movement, the possible categories are: *still* (9), *whole body* (4), *upper* (24), *lower* (0) and *only face* (0). From the obtained results, most respondents performed their “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” only with the upper part of their body (e.g., arms, hands). It was less frequent that the body was involved in its wholeness (e.g., arms and legs together). The special category of still recalls those movements that ended in a freezing position. Instead of being a position connected to a possible state of distress or to pathological freezing (i.e., post-traumatic), the still category reported here classified those movements intentionally put on hold. This intentionality could underlie, for instance, expressive reasons, such as a need to take time while performing various movements, or to give emphasis and strength to a certain gesture (e.g., such as holding a flag in patriotic enthusiasm).

Example of *upper body*:



Related verbal production: *and they said: "it's not army that stop us. You do not have to do what was said by the army". They slapped my face ... they slapped.*

- From the observation of how the body was located in space, the following categories were identified: *standing* (11), *sitting* (17), *bent* (1) and *lying down* (1). Most respondents performed their movements while sitting, or standing. Only one participant lie down completely on the floor to perform his movement.

It should be observed that there was no direct correlation between the body location and the districts involved. For example, even when standing, movements could be connected with the upper body alone, and vice versa, even when sitting, a movement could involve the whole body.

Example of *lying down*:



Related verbal production: *on my side. I could not sit because was too low. As if I was sleeping, my feet closed. A box under a van. And I could hardly breathe ... but then luckily police found me.*

- In considering the overall muscular effort observed in the study participants' "non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours", the related categories were: *relax* (3), *tension* (6) and *functional* (20). From the results, most movements were classified as functional, that is, the effort seemed congruent with the performed task (neither too much, nor too little). In a small number of cases, people performed "tensed" movements, either intentionally (e.g., in amplifying a certain gesture, such as holding a flag with patriotic enthusiasm), or without being aware of doing so. In an even smaller number of cases, movements were classified as relaxed. However, instead of meaning relaxed in the common sense, this category classified movements that seemed to be performed without any muscle support, and which thus tended to be still and lifeless.

Example of *tension*:



Related verbal production: (*carrying a flag*); "I am Turkish!". If you can say "I am Turkish, I am happy, I am joyful!" ... also a Kurdish person should be able to say "I am Kurdish, I am happy, I am joyful!".

- Finally, no substantial differences between the symmetrical or asymmetrical movements were observed. Movements classified as *symmetrical* (15) and *asymmetrical* (13) had almost an equal distribution.



Example of symmetrical:



Related verbal production: *I am really small .... and felt even smaller within a snow wall.*

### **6.6.2 Results for the interactional qualities: being embodied with**

Finally, movements were analysed from what could be defined an interactional point of view. Indeed, movements did not exist in a relational vacuum, since they always came about in a space always containing two people: the interviewee him/herself and the interviewer. This was true also when the interviewer had the role of a spectator or that of a witness of the participants' movements.

As such, this time the focus was not on the interviewee alone and the “non-

verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” he/she was performing, but instead the unit of analysis comprised two people. An example for each of these bottom-up interactional categories is provided.

| <b>Code</b>  | <b>?</b> |
|--|----------|
| 0. null movement   | 2        |
| 1. direct interviewer's movements (e.g., sculpturing)                                      | 1        |
| 2. constant interaction with the interviewer<br>(specify if: a mirroring or b turn-taking) | 6a / 3b  |
| 3. slight prompt   | 2        |
| 4. autonomous  | 16       |

**Table 6.17:**

It is apparent from this table that very few people displayed null movements, nor did they direct the interviewer's movements (as in a game of sculpturing), or required a slight prompt. Most people were instead autonomous in engaging their body as a narrative resource, which therefore would support the idea that when people are allowed to use the body as an expressive resource, they do in fact use it for this purpose.

At the same time, many movements involved a constant interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer, either in the form of being mirrored (passive option), or explicitly assigning the interviewer a role, in a turn-taking

exchange (active option)<sup>3</sup>.

### **6.6.3 Results for the interactional qualities: being embodied with (examples)**

0. null movement



Related verbal production: *the time when I told my mum ... not too happy.*

---

<sup>3</sup> Active and passive should not be considered as judgemental terms, but rather as specific stages in the human ontogenesis of movements. Before babies engage in activities which need a constant support from the caregiver(s), in the form of mirroring. Later in the developmental stage, babies become more active and become able to turn-take with the caregiver(s).

### 1. direct interviewer's movements (e.g., sculpturing)



Related verbal production: *standing up in a line ... all in a line and they got in from here.*

*Destroyed bed, pillows ... opened things ... destroyed writings. All morning we had to stay like this.*

### 2. constant interaction with the interviewer (a: mirroring)



Related verbal production: *sometimes I felt very tired ... and I said my God no more ...*

*because I am going to die ...*

## 2. constant interaction with the interviewer (b: turn-taking)



Related verbal production: *I stayed like this .... there! The stone fell there! And then I ran away in the opposite direction.*

## 3. slight prompt



Related verbal production: *I felt that time, on my journey, I felt the time that maybe you'll die soon ... without soul ... you know, the body hanged ... in the ceiling you know ... they hanged me in the ceiling, by the rope ... tied by the rope ... and then you can say that fortunately the border police came and saved my life.*

#### 4. autonomous



Related verbal production: *it means you want to pray God for giving the possibility to reach your dreams, do you understand? And at the end, after sharing my experience, in the end I will become what my mother wanted me to become.*

#### **6.7 Further observations**

Even if this work was not therapeutic (e.g., outcome study of a psychotherapeutic intervention), yet, possible benefits connected to the systemic and qualitative research procedure were foreseen. Indeed, the specific interview procedure administered was believed to be beneficial and facilitative, insofar as refugees were able to express what they wanted to convey in an articulate way.

For seeing this, the opening question of the second interview focused

precisely on the impact that the first interview had on the research participants. Moreover, depending on the interviewees' answers, the impact was further classified in bottom-up categories. The results presented in this sub-chapter, along with case vignettes, are not associated to any RQ. They could become a starting point for further research (see “suggestions for further study” in the following chapter).

The study participants were responding to the question: *“what impact did our first meeting have on you?”*.

| <b>Subject:</b> | <b>Text:</b>  | <b>Key-impact</b>   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| <b>1</b>        | Good ... not so good ...  | <b>Contact</b><br><b>contradictory</b><br><b>feelings</b> |
| <b>2</b>        | I liked it (the interview) ... because ... you are asking us problems ... that's why!   | <b>Contact</b> <b>positive</b><br><b>feelings</b>         |
| <b>3</b>        | It was good impression ... and I felt myself, you can say that, pleasure that you invited me here, for the interview ... and ... may God bless you ... that you invited me here ... really it's a pleasure. ... if I was not satisfied, I would have not come here again.           | <b>Contact</b> <b>positive</b><br><b>feeling</b>          |
| <b>4</b>        | I liked it because people in this Country (Italy) are interested in our stories ... so I am happy that there is someone interested in us ...  | <b>Contact</b> <b>positive</b><br><b>feelings</b>         |
| <b>5</b>        | Normal, OK. ... I was not worried ...   | <b>No answer</b>  |
| <b>6</b>        | Yes, ok ...   | <b>No answer</b>  |
| <b>7</b>        | It happened that I thought “why is she doing these interviews?” ... I mean ... “where do they (the interviews) will end up?” ...  | <b>Suspect</b>  |
| <b>8</b>        | It was not very painful ... and on the one hand it was good, because they are the events I went through. And I must remember them to carry on. And it was also positive to remember positive memories I could not any longer remember ... so also positive ... a positive outburst. | <b>Contact</b><br><b>contradictory</b><br><b>feelings</b> |
| <b>9</b>        | It made a focus of my ... of what I am going through ... it had positive  | <b>Contact</b> <b>positive</b>                            |



|           |   |                          |                 |
|-----------|---|--------------------------|-----------------|
|           | effects in my mind ... No, I cannot say it had negative effects.  | <b>feelings</b>          |                 |
| <b>10</b> | It made me think about my family and this makes me sad.   | <b>Contact feelings</b>  | <b>sad</b>      |
| <b>11</b> | Actually I liked it a lot ... to being able to talk about those issues ... it is important every once in a while to let things come out ... memories. Memories always stay ... to tell about my experience, how it went, how it was.  | <b>Contact feelings</b>  | <b>positive</b> |
| <b>12</b> | Nice ... my past ... I do not want to remember my past because I lost my father, also my house, my family ... 4 years ... 4 years without seeing my father ... I cannot see my mother, my brother and my sister ... 4 years ... 4 years I cannot see them ...   | <b>Contact feelings</b>  | <b>sad</b>      |
| <b>13</b> | It was ok ... it is tough if somebody misses his past, it's tough. But sometimes we have to be strong ... so ... I cannot say fine ... 50%-50% ... if I miss my past, then it's bad ... if I miss my past I will be, you know, a little bit sad ...   | <b>Contact feelings</b>  | <b>sad</b>      |
| <b>14</b> | Well, I actually like narrating ... and in any case it is not possible to neglect a part of each one's story ... it is even better to narrate the difficulties, than trying to keep them inside ... maybe, in the moment of telling you feel bad, but after, you relax and feel emptied. I like it, if not I would not have agreed to take part in the interviews.  | <b>Contact feelings</b>  | <b>positive</b> |
| <b>15</b> | To be honest, speaking always make me produce more thinking. Because on e does not live a life on his own, but also what he was told, and what was explained. ... who can must become the voice for the others ... today I have the possibility to narrate, explain, with the little Italian I can speak ... for those who could not speak because they died or were killed ... in a van while leaving their country or in a ship ... or under torture .... or shot on top of a mountain. | <b>Sharing/ listened</b> | <b>being</b>    |
| <b>16</b> | Since the day that we met, many ideas popped up to my mind. "I could have said this, I could have said that" ... the feeling is that there is a lot to say, really a lot ... but it's like, since for long time we were not free to express ... it is not easy for me to express myself, all in once. Even 24 hours would not be enough ...   | <b>Contact feelings</b>  | <b>positive</b> |
| <b>17</b> | I just told you my story, like that ... it was ok ...   | <b>Suspect</b>           |                 |
| <b>18</b> | Nothing ... maybe the journey ... the journey already done ... once here you start thinking how to find a job, on how to settle down ... and since here it is too difficult to find a job, you start thinking about other places as   | <b>Contact feelings</b>  | <b>sad</b>      |



|           |  |                         |                 |
|-----------|--|-------------------------|-----------------|
|           | well.  |                         |                 |
| <b>19</b> | Yes, I thought about it again, yes. ... it was good to express my feelings ... to express what I have inside my hearth, that I wanted to share with someone ... at first I did not want to talk, because I thought it was too painful. But now I am ok, and I want to move on. | <b>Contact feelings</b> | <b>positive</b> |
| <b>20</b> | I was just thinking that life in Pakistan for me is good. It is really easy for me ... I have a lot of friends, I have a family ... now here I am alone you know ... and friends are not so good like in Pakistan.   | <b>Contact feelings</b> | <b>sad</b>      |

**Table 6.18:**

|                                    |
|------------------------------------|
| Contact: positive feeling: 9       |
| Contact: sad feelings: 5           |
| Contact: contradictory feelings: 2 |
| Suspect: 2                         |
| No answer: 2                       |

**Table 6.19:**

The Table above shows the impact that the first interview had on the interviewees. Most of them (16/20) had the chance to “make contact” with their own feelings. For most of them this contact was positive (9/15), for some of them it was negative (5/15) and for few of them it gave rise to contradictory feelings (2/15). For 2 of them (2/20) no clear answer was obtained, and for 2 of them (2/20) the response was defensive (“suspect”).

Overall it can be observed that the interview procedure mostly fostered the

interviewees' contact with their own feelings. In the majority of cases, the contact was of positive feelings, in other cases, the feelings contacted were either negative or contradictory (i.e., co-existence of positive and negative ones). In very few cases, there was no answer or one suggesting suspicion on the side for the interviewee.

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### **6.8 Summary**

In this chapter, the results connected to the four RQ have been presented. These results were not deepened with further discussion or theoretical comments, since the discussion of the results will be the topic of the following chapter. Here the aim was to present simple data analysed, and, where possible, figures, case vignettes and pictures to concretely present examples of the study participants' own words and “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours”.

Among the findings obtained, the most promising ones may be summarized as follows:

- most of the study participants' narrations were classified as complex and highly coherent;

- most participants seemed to detach from a victim identity and describe their overall refugee experience with positive terms;
- “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” had an impact on the subsequent verbal accounts, by amplifying specific and concrete details (e.g., of a specific environment, episode or bodily sensations);
- most movements produced by the study participants were autonomously produced. However, most “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” performed by the study participants were restricted in the bodily possibilities. That is, they were mainly performed only with the upper body, even if the person was standing.

The next chapter will move on to discuss these results in greater detail, by locating them in the theoretical context depicted in the first chapters. Moreover, the possible implications of these results along with their limitation will be traced.

## CHAPTER 7

### Discussion of the findings

#### 7.1 Introduction

*"I do not see words as necessarily so separate ... one can move into another, images can contain words that need to be spoken, words can contain images that need to be enacted"*

*(Jones 2005: 116).*

This study set out with the two-fold aim to investigate: (1) the issue of complexity of the refugees' verbal narratives, and (2) the impact of the body, as a narrative resource. The first aim focused on the verbal level of the refugees' narratives, while the second one was mainly focused on the non-verbal level of the same narratives.

(1) As we have already seen, the working definition of complexity used in this thesis is that this term is informed by the Trauma Grid (Papadopoulos 2007) and the four phases of the refugee experience (Papadopoulos 2001a). Complexity was indeed defined as a specific way to look at a phenomenon, acknowledging multiple and contradicting qualities (i.e., positive, neutral and

negative), diachronic changes in time (i.e., a before and an after) and the contribution of various psycho-social factors (i.e., the single individual is considered located and constantly interacting with a wider context). When analysing the findings, the construct of complexity was further operationalized into that of coherence (Grossmann et al. 2005; Main et al. 1985).

The whole interview procedure was inspired by systemic ideas (Bateson 1972, 2002; Papadopoulos 2007), since these ideas allow for a fine discernment of the various components involved in each refugee narration, beyond an exclusive focus on the negative side. In other words, a systemic interview procedure allows the study participants to explore the same event from multiple points of view and not only focusing on restricted parts of their story.

(2) Moreover, as regards the impact of the body, this was evaluated as a resource for increasing the narrative articulation of the refugees' stories, from their own standpoint. In the context of this study, the term “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” refers to body movements, hand gestures, positions in space and facial expressions, participants used to deepen their narration.

The “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” were analysed on how they impacted on subsequent verbal accounts (i.e., what kind of

transformation did they produce?); in isolation, as objects of movement analysis per se (i.e., what were the main characteristics of these movements?); and in their interactional qualities, as parts of an implicit exchange between interviewee/interviewer (i.e., how did these movements connect the interviewee with the interviewer?).

In this chapter the results reported in the previous one will be discussed, located in the wider theoretical context.

## ***7.2 From the concept of complexity to that of coherence (1RQ)***

Some authors (e.g., Papadopoulos 2002a, 2007; Summerfield 1999, 2000, 2001a, 2001b) have argued that most contributions in refugee literature, and especially within the mental health field, tend to focus on the “refugee trauma”. These authors hold that the main emphasis of these contributions seems to be exclusively connected to the negative side of the refugee experience. In this way, potential neutral (resilient; Kroo & Nagy 2011; Luthar et al. 2000; Papadopoulos 2007; Powell et al. 2003) and positive (Papadopoulos 2007; Tedeschi and Calhoun 1996, 2004) outcomes from the adverse experiences faced by refugees remain unacknowledged.

The implication of this polarized approach to the refugee experience may have concrete consequences when working with real refugees. Indeed, they risk being perceived as stereotyped figures (e.g., hopeless victims) and, in doing so, actually risk further victimization. Indeed, a victim identity may well foster a self-perceived sense of victim-hood, which may in turn create a self-fulfilling prophesy and lead to behaving like a victim.

For example, most specialized literature on the refugees' mental well-being seems to focus on the concept of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (e.g., Cheng 2001; Turner 2003). Connected to this dominant focus in literature, most of inventories which are currently administered to refugees seem to be trauma-centred (e.g., The Harvard Trauma Questionnaire: Shoeb et al. 2007; The PTSD Checklist: Weathers 1993; the Hopkins Symptom Check List: Parloff et al. 1954). In this way, the complexity of the refugee experience is likely to remain unacknowledged.

Differently from these main trends in literature, the results of this study seem to show that when refugees are administered an interview protocol inspired by systemic ideas (Bateson 1972, 2002; Papadopoulos 2007), they can go beyond the negative aspects of their story. In this way, the multiple variables involved in their overall experience of forced migration may be discerned.

From Bateson's systemic, and thus deeply relational, approach, an appreciation of the centrality of the construct of context was drawn. Indeed, in Bateson's words, the context is 'the pattern that connects ... without context there is no meaning' (1972: 13). For Bateson, meaning may emerge only from the totality of the constituting elements, and this totality is more than the simple sum of these elements. It follows that the unit of analysis must be molar, not molecular. For example, when considering the refugee predicament, it is more than any single fragment of experience, whether owning positive or negative qualities. In order to get to the core of the refugee experience, multiple perspectives must be taken into account.

Going back to the actual results, far from being over-concentrated on only one side or aspect of the refugee experience, most study participants' narratives were classified as rich and articulate.

The results obtained at the micro-level (i.e., single sentences) indeed suggested that most sentences produced by the participants were complex. Using the adjective complex meant there was a presence of a co-existence of various qualities (positive, neutral and negative), psychosocial levels (individual, familiar, community and societal) and phases (before, anticipation devastating events, survival, adjustment, and after). This result, in turn, suggests the existence of underlying articulate processes of meaning-making (Davis et al. 1998; Teigen and Jenses 2011).



A further analysis of the narrative complexity in terms of coherence (Grossmann et al. 2005; Main et al. 1985) allows for a deepening of the findings themselves. This was related to the second part of the first RQ and focused on the whole narrative of each participant (i.e., macro-level). Each parameter used to classify single sentences was put in correspondence with Grice's (1975, 1989) conversational maxims, termed consistency and collaboration, which constituted the original construct of coherence. By doing so, when the results obtained in both conversational maxims were intersected, most of the study participants' stories showed a high level of narrative coherence, while a smaller number showed a mild level of narrative coherence.

These findings seem to be supported by the studies in refugee literature that consider the refugee phenomenon as a multi-layered object of inquiry that should be tackled through an interdisciplinary approach (Frieze 2012; Heuser 2008; Hilhorst and Jansen 2012; Lamey 2011; Storey 2012). Indeed, legal issues, philosophical debates, mental and general health concerns, and linguistic matters represent but a few of the intersecting disciplines within the refugee field of studies.

It is precisely in the light of these studies, that this thesis represents an empirical declension of interdisciplinary ideas and concerns. The interviewing

procedure in fact aimed to explore the many issues and variables involved in each refugee predicament. The systemic ideas underlying the interview protocol (i.e., Bateson 1972; Papadopoulos 2001a, 2007) were chosen to respect the inherent complexity of the phenomenon explored, where resilience and even elements of growth might coexist alongside points of vulnerability. In this way, the refugee experience can emerge as a rich and multi-faceted narration, where contradictions may co-exist and multiple perspectives be included.

As a final observation of the results of the first RQ, it could be added that whilst the results of this study showed most of the narratives were complex and highly coherent, positive elements were “rare” if compared to the negative and neutral (i.e., resilient) ones, which were mostly balanced. This unexpected result suggests a real process of transcending suffering and not necessarily an automatic achievement from adverse experiences.

Another interesting finding was that most of the narrative complexity was located at the adjustment phase level, thus connected to diachronic changes in time. It could be inferred that participants mostly acknowledged the coexistence of qualities and the multiplicity of actors involved, only at a relatively late stage of their experience. Connected to the previous observation, positive (AAD) qualities were generally able to emerge and be

acknowledged, by the people experiencing them, late in time. The results indicate that time permitted people to go beyond the wound affecting their life and allowed them to appreciate their new life acquisitions.

Finally, it seems very interesting that the major contribution of coherence was mostly connected to the conversational maxim of collaboration, and affiliated to the interactional aspects inherent to the interview relation (i.e., the non-verbal “how”). Conversely, the conversational maxim of consistency was more affiliated with what was actually being said (i.e., the verbal what). As such, this finding suggests the importance of what occurs in this kind of setting “beyond words”, and of the implicit dimension of any meaningful relation (Stern 2004).

This last finding would recursively return to the systemic ideas underlying the interview procedure. According to systemic theory, meaning is something that emerges in context and situated among actors. Simultaneously, what was found here is that most narrative complexity/coherence was connected to the conversational maxim of collaboration (i.e., the procedural “how” within the interview setting). This result suggests the interacting nature inherent to the systemic interview procedure greatly contributed to the richness and articulation of the participants' narratives.

### ***7.3 Detaching from a victim identity (2RQ)***

This second RQ completes the first one, insofar as they both focus on the verbal complexity of the refugee experience. However, while the first RQ directly tackled the issue of complexity in the verbal narratives, the second RQ focused on the refugee's self-perception of their identity and overall experience. Indeed, this study sought to explore whether the study participants identified with a victim identity or whether they could transcend this identity, and reach a more complete (and more complex) view of themselves. Also if their overall experience of forced migration and resettlement in a new environment was to be considered in terms of resilience, comprising both positive and negative terms.

As noted in the previous sub-chapter (7.2), most specialist literature dealing with refugee issues seems to focus on the negative side of the refugee predicament (e.g., Papadopoulos 2002a, 2007; Summerfield 1999, 2000, 2001a, 2001b). In this way, this extremely heterogeneous population seems to be mostly depicted as having similar attributes, sharing the unifying nuances of the "victim". Recalling Karpman's (1968) drama triangle, when one falls into the rigid role of victim, one's strength and resilience remain, while one's hopelessness is emphasised.

Conversely, media articles destined for the general public can often convey the opposite idea, that is, refugees might actually not really be people in need (Webber 1996). In these cases, most emphasis focussed on the economic effort governments must make in order to provide assistance to this population. Here, the unifying image may be of “bogus” claims. Once again translating Karpman's drama triangle to this particular, media-conveyed, view of refugees, classification of “perpetrators” may prevail amongst the countries providing asylum, with them being viewed as both saviours and victims.

Despite opposing seeming views, in both cases (i.e., victim and bogus), refugees are regarded reductionistically, as “objects”, not “subjects” actively involved in the understanding and defining of their unique predicament. Complex definitions do not find space to exist, and even fewer contradictions may occur. If a refugee possesses resilience she must be invulnerable, or, conversely, if she demonstrates vulnerability, resilience can not be recognized.

However, the results obtained in this study seem to contradict such polarized views. Indeed, not only did refugees refuse to recognize themselves solely as victims, but many attributed positive terms to their overall refugee experience.

All study participants said they would help a person in need, suggesting an

underlying idea that they saw themselves as resourceful. In no case did a study participant say they were unwilling or without sufficient resources to help another. Of course, this was only an imaginative task, and it is true that the same respondent could have replied in a different way if the task were more real. However, although imaginative, the respondents showed no doubt about helping another person, and all of them articulated the specific kind of help they would provide.

It could be argued that the idea of helping a person in need is an expression of refugee's ordinary human altruism. As such, the finding could be considered as not particularly interesting. However, if we consider that refugees are often labelled as victims, and thus as people without resources to help others, and who are in constant need of others' help themselves, then the findings may be read differently. Similarly, when refugees are labelled as bogus claimants they are not regarded as people able to help others, on the contrary, they require other people's help yet without a real need behind the claim. Again, the fact that all refugees in the study sample said they would have helped a person in need may be considered an interesting finding insofar as the common view of both the specialised literature and media-conveyed images of refugees tends to depict them as people unable, for opposing reasons, to help others. Acknowledging the task within the interview as imaginative, it nevertheless showed refugees possessing ordinary human altruism, and thus as resourceful people, despite all adversities faced.

This finding neither eliminates nor minimizes the difficulties and points of vulnerability negatively affecting the refugee's life. Yet, whilst acknowledging the existence of points of vulnerability, it is important to note at the same time that refugees presented themselves not as victims, but resourceful people (i.e., active agents: Gallagher 2000, 2005; Roessler and Eilan 2003) able to help others and to discern what kind of help would be appropriate.

From the different answers obtained on the specific help that respondents would have provided, the study participants emerged as “total humans” whose needs varied and were located at degrees ranging from practical to spiritual domains. Indeed the kind of help provided is another way of defining what needs refugees might have (i.e., I give the specific kind of help that I would have needed in that occasion). The categories that emerged from the participants' answers were: spiritual, psychological, social and practical, and the possible intersections between them. It is in the inter-relation of these categories that the participants' kind of help, and their needs to be fulfilled showed their systemic (i.e., circular and relational) nature. In this case, no one need took precedence over another, as in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) since, by definition, his hierarchy configures itself as a hierarchical pyramid of needs (i.e., physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualization). On the contrary, the needs expressed by the study participants seemed to be equally relevant and often participants proposed kinds of help belonging to different domains. Given the interrelation qualities among

various categories of “help provided/needs to be fulfilled”, these domains may be read under Max Neef’s (1992) systemic taxonomy of human needs. As a whole, the needs that Neef describes are indeed simultaneous, complementary, interrelated and interactive, and as such they seem to be in line with the findings obtained in this research.

When the interviewees were asked to give a conclusive title to their experience, if it was to be considered a work of art, either a film or a book, most refugees in this study used resilient expressions to title their experience. Even in a clearer way than (a), this sub-RQ (b) shows how the participants mostly detached from a victim identity, attributing resilient and growth-related terms to their overall refugee experience.

This finding seems to suggest that, beyond the difficulties faced, refugees were able to see the positive side inherent to their experience of forced migration, and make good use of it. This ability to make sense of their experience (Davis et al. 1998; Teigen and Jenses 2011), and transform it into words suggests an alternative view to the dominant trend of “refugee trauma” (e.g., Cheng 2001; Turner et al. 2003), that is, not all refugees are traumatized per se and reconnecting with their personal story does not necessarily elicit further traumatization of those involved. Thus, media-conveyed images of a refugee as either a bogus or helpless victim (Webber



1996) are one-sided and represent further stereotypical and phantasized images (as in the Klenian sense of this term, a product of unconscious paranoid activity), than the real living experience of refugees that have the chance to share their experience, from their unique viewpoint.

#### **7.4 Quality of transformation (3RQ)**

Refugees have often been reported as displaying higher rates of somatic complaints compared to non-refugee populations, even clinical ones (e.g., Grodin 2008; Kirmayer and Young 1998; Kruse et al. 2009; Morina et al. 2010; Prorokovic et al. 2005). Some of these studies have suggested an association between high rates of somatic symptoms and the specificity of non-western cultures, which would preferably allow the expression of distress via the soma (Tribe 1999, 2002). In addition to these studies, focussing on the epidemiological side of somatisation within the refugee experience, another line of clinical studies reported on body therapeutic approaches with refugees (e.g., Amone-P'Olak 2006; Callaghan 1998; Fabri 2011; Harris 2007; Lynn-Gray 2011). These studies mostly stress the trans-cultural value of body-oriented interventions, especially with regard to non-western populations. Not only, as stated above, because of a possible preferable expression of distress via the soma, but also because these interventions are believed to overcome

possible linguistic and other forms of cultural-related barriers.

However, although this thesis is be part of all the studies that address the “body” within the refugee experience at various degrees (e.g., somatic rates, cultural specificities or overcoming verbal-related barriers), the aim of this work was to address a gap found in the literature. To the best of my knowledge, “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours”, prior to this work, has never been considered a narrative resource within an interview setting with refugees. Here the body, as an authentic story-telling resource, was explored in its potential to help refugees narrate their personal stories in a more complete, down-to-earth way.

The findings obtained from the third RQ seemed to suggest a difference between the main group's narratives and the ones produced by the comparison group's participants<sup>4</sup>. At the same time, the difference between the two groups were more relevant for some aspects of the narrations, and less evident for others.

The bottom-up categories found were: amplification, reduction, repetition and meaning-making. In addition to this, there was a further specification concerned with the level at which this transformation occurred: bodily elements, physical environment, psychological state and specific event. The

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<sup>4</sup>As a reminder, only the participants in the main group explicitly used their body as an explicit narrative resource, while the comparison group's participants deepened their story only in verbal terms.

only exception was the meaning-making category which had no further specification, it being created as an abstract category.

The results of this study seems to indicate that the amplification category was affected by the presence of the “non-verbal bodily/expressive behaviours”, especially at the levels of physical environment, specific event and bodily sensations. On the contrary, there was only a small difference between the main and comparison group for this amplification category at the psychological level.

There may be at least two explanations for the differences found between the main and the comparison group. (1) The use of non-verbal units, that is, the direct engagement of the study participants with the dimension of embodiment is per se connected with the perceptual world. Going back to one of the key assumptions of phenomenology (Husserl 1964, 1970; Merleau-Ponty 1962), it precisely states that the encounter with the external reality needs a body to do so. According to Merleau-Ponty himself: “our encounter with the physical is already situated and embodied” (1962: 64). This would explain why the participants in the main group could deepen and thus amplify the concrete details of a specific event, or the bodily sensations that characterized a certain experience, or reconstruct a physical environment preferably when they directly engaged their body. (See Appendix for further visual examples).

With specific reference to reconstruction of a physical environment, that is, the increase of narrative articulation and richness when describing a specific environment, it is possible to mention Bosnak's (1998, 2007) approach of embodied imagination to dreams. According to Bosnak, it is indeed the body that mostly fosters memories related to the physical and material world, and it is in this way that the impact of the body on the amplification category may be understood. This author observes that through the body we may be able to access and recreate events and environments, as if they were real. Events become quasi-real, indistinguishable from a real environment when inside of it 'presenting themselves as self-evidently real, accompanied by basic physiological processes' (2007: 40).

It should be highlighted that the division between the group which used "non-verbal bodily/expressive behaviours" and the group which did not use them is artificial. Both groups' participants used their bodies to express themselves, because the body is a constitutive feature of being human and thus of storytellers, and cannot be eliminated. However, what differed was a specific and explicit focus on "non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours" only with the main group. It is the attention to and explicit instruction to use the body to deepen a certain event that made a difference between the two groups' engagement with the non-verbal reality.

If it is true that the body has a preferable connection with the physical world, it becomes more intelligible why no great difference between main and comparison group was found for the amplification category at the psychological state level. This level was indeed, unlike the other three (i.e., physical environment, bodily sensations and specific event), not connected to the tangible world. Being less modality-dependent, the psychological level of the amplification category was reported by both groups' refugees almost equally. This is in line with Hostetter's meta-analysis (2011), as described in the third chapter. Hostetter indeed described three kinds of gestures: representational (or metaphoric) gestures which are used to depict an abstract content; deictic gestures which point to a concrete referent in the environment (as a spatial position or an object); and iconic gestures which create an image standing for a motor or spatial content. What this author pointed out, and what mirrors the results of findings obtained in this thesis is that the informative contribution provided by gestures to the related verbal accounts depends on the kind of gesture displayed.

Indeed, according to Hostetter (2011), deictic and iconic gestures are more communicative than gestures referring to abstract contents (i.e., metaphoric gestures). As already reported in the third chapter:

Gestures that accompany abstract topics do not significantly benefit communication ... Gestures that accompany spatial and motor topics, however, do have significant benefits for communication (Hostetter 2011: 298).

This observation on the role of deictic and iconic gestures seems to mirror the results obtained in this work, with specific reference to the amplification category, at the levels of the specific event, bodily sensations and physical environment.

Conversely, if the amplification category was affected by the use of “non-verbal bodily expressive/communicative behaviours”, the meaning-making category seemed to be unaffected by the prevalent modality used by the interviewees. This result would suggest, in line with Hostetter’s meta-analysis, that the meaning-making category is *not* modality-dependent, unlike that of amplification. Also in relation to the relevant literature, transcendence-like processes (Papadopoulos 2007; Tedeschi and Calhoun 1996) seem to have an abstract/intangible content and are connected with a spiritual search for meaning and truth (Davis et al. 1998; Teigen and Jenses 2011).

Overall, the results of this study indicate that when events are concretely reconstructed the body, in its declension in “non-verbal bodily expressive/communicative behaviours”, may be regarded as a resource for

narration. In this way, gestures may be considered as supporting verbal speech and, within the interactional setting, help the study participants 'reveal emotional and personal experience' (Heath 2002: 597). In his article, this author considered the role of gestures in the consultation room, how patients use non-verbal cues to reveal and specify their suffering to their doctors. His observations in the consultation rooms, may be extended to those done within the interview setting with the study participants:

The inner and the subjective are overlaid on the outer surface of the body and rendered visible and objective (603).

As such, the body could be regarded as a concrete resource for tangible narratives, to reconstruct real scenarios which include bodily elements, and specific details of events. Conversely, when the content is more ephemeral and less rooted in a concrete and tangible reality, then, the use of an exclusively verbal modality or non-verbal one seemed to be less crucial. In this way, the body seems to be a narrative resource for increasing the richness of the refugee's stories, yet, with some specifications regarding its width of impact.

### **7.5 Richness of movements and “being embodied with” (4RQ)**

The focus of the forth and last RQ was to explore the characteristics of the “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” (i.e., the previous unknown variable X of non-verbal units). These characteristics were analysed in a two-fold way.

First, the “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” were analysed through an ethological framework, in isolation, that is, each movement per se. Secondly, these non-verbal units were also analysed for their interactional qualities, that is, in relation to the research setting which comprised an interviewee and an interviewer. In this way, each movement performed by the study participants was considered part of a dyadic dance, or co-construction, between interviewee and interviewer.

The first analysis (i.e., richness of movements) used a hybrid, that is, both top-down and bottom-up, codifying procedure. The top-down categories were inspired by the work of Troisi (1999), who proposed an ethological framework to classify the non-verbal behaviours of psychiatric patients. The bottom-up categories, which emerged from the results themselves, were added to complement Troisi's classification. By comparison for the second analysis (i.e., interactional qualities), an exclusively bottom-up classification was used.



When considering the characteristics, in their isolation, of the “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours”, most participants established direct eye contact with the observer, with their head often tilted to one side, indicating a sign of affiliation, according to the ethological framework proposed by Troisi (1999: 908). This result can be explained by the overall positive attitude of the study participants towards the relational framework constituted by the interview setting itself and promoted by the systemic orientation of the interview procedure.

Hands were often used in conjunction to the face to highlight emotional nuances, or to emphasise, through the gesture of pointing, a peculiar facial expression and/or develop specific descriptions of events. This finding seems aligned to what was found in the previous RQ, that is, the body can be considered a crucial resource for recreation of concrete and vivid scenarios (Bosnak 2007: Hostetter 2011). However, most movements were performed using just the upper-body, whether the person was standing or sitting. In a consistent number of cases, movements involved holding a position, suggesting a certain restriction in width of movement. The greatest exploration and use of the body possibilities as a narrative tool included the use of the upper body for affiliative purposes, and/or for a descriptive aim. Most people were either sitting or standing, and in the greatest majority of cases effort perceived was congruent to the task. Therefore, most movements

were classified as functional, which means not too relaxed and not too tensed. Finally, no difference was found between symmetrical and asymmetrical movements and gestures.

Most movements were descriptive, which means that they were used to recreate visual landscapes within the interview setting. Again this was in line with what was found in the previous RQ, namely, that the body can be considered a concrete resource for recreating tangible and vivid outer environments. For example, through the gesture of pointing, an interviewee was showing the interviewer how big was the dark sea around when they were about to sink in the Mediterranean Sea. Or, another one was showing how narrow and suffocating was the small space within the car in which he was trafficked to get to the Italian border.

As the interviewer, I often felt transported to new and distant places, or small and suffocating ones, as described by the interviewee's words and her meaningful gestures. Those descriptive gestures allowed participants to recreate images, and from these images to connect with specific thoughts that helped them to deepen their narration with concrete details and images.

In line with what observed with the third RQ, where the meaning-making category seemed to be non-modality-dependent, very few gestures were

classified as symbolic, that is to say, purely abstract. This, in turn, would suggest that the participants' engagement with the "non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours" was mostly connected to the tangible and concrete world. As in a circular motion, the engagement with the body recreated concrete details in the outer environment, and this re-creation of outer details increased the number of details recalled within the verbal narration. Conversely, the verbal increase of concrete details helped the study participants deepen their bodily exploration of the outer environment.

From an interactional point of view, the related analysis revealed that most movements were autonomous, that is, they were performed without any prompt from the side of the interviewer. Another consistent number of movements showed they were strongly interactional, either in the form of mirroring or turn-taking (e.g., Behrends et al. 2012; Berrol 2006; Mc Garry and Russo 2011; Ramseyer and Tschacher 2011). Mirroring consisted in a continuous reflection of what the interviewee was doing from the interviewer, literally as if one was in front of a mirror. This means, for instance, that if the interviewee lifted his right hand, the interviewer lifted her left one. Turn-taking had to do with the interviewee's attribution of different roles to him/herself and to the interviewer. This was followed by an active involvement of each participant in the specific role he/she had. Both in mirroring and in turn-taking, the one leading the action was always the interviewee.

Given the consistent number of movements which involved constant interactions with the interviewer (i.e., mirroring and turn-taking), a shift from an individual-based idea of embodiment towards an enactive, and thus relational-based idea, can be forwarded. Enactive approaches indeed consider the issue of embodiment within a clear relational framework (Castiello et al. 2010; Ferri et al. 2011; Gallese 2009a, 2009b). That is to say, a primary role is accorded to the body, yet, not considered in its isolation, but rather in its being part of a larger setting which includes at least two people. According to this view, movements cannot be analysed in their isolation, as something confined within the individual's skin, rather they are seen as a multi-focus stage where at least two actors interact to create a third embodied unit, which includes the contributions of both. This idea of shifting the individual focus towards a dyadic setting seems related to Bateson's theory of mind. Indeed, according to this author (1972: 433) what can be defined as "mind" and thus as "informative" is not something confined within the individual, but rather within the space which comprises the single individual plus the meaningful connections that he/she has with the outer environment. As such, movements are regarded as not only being embodied, but including interactional and enactive units of meaning.

### **7.6 Embodiment and verbal complexity: two case examples**

Here two case examples from study participants allocated in the main group will be presented. They show the intersection between the first interview (only verbal) and the second one (whose focus was both verbal and non-verbal). These two participants were chosen as good case examples because they represented respectively the one who most and who least engaged with the “non-verbal bodily expressive/communicative behaviours”.

Some possible explanations for the results obtained are provided at the end of each case, and could be considered ideas for further study.

#### **CASE A: minimum engagement with the “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” (2nd subject):**

S. is a shy and polite man. He barely speaks if not asked to and struggles to keep eye contact with the interviewer. His verbal narration, obtained during the first interview, reports a medium degree of coherence, and thus complexity. In a rather idealized way, he describes how life had been going well in Kashmir, twenty years before. Due to the ongoing conflights between India and Pakistan over his country, he decided to flee, but he had not directly faced any devastating events, nor did he witness any devastating event involving family members. When describing the details of his journey to escape from Kashmir, it is clear that he perceived great risks for his safety

during that flight. Unlike many of the other interviewees, he focused only on himself during the journey, never mentioning traffickers or other journey companions.

Furthermore, he described his arrival in Italy and his transfer from one centre to another only in factual terms. He said that, once he had arrived in Sardinia, he was well looked after by the members of the SPRAR staff. He seemed to have mixed feelings towards the Sardinian territory and uses oxymorons to emphasise this ambivalence, with, for example, the contemporary use of *survive* and *well* (“*this is a good project for refugees ... we can survive well ... not well .... but OK*”). Despite this ambivalence, he was able to acknowledge resilient factors in his life, and has a life project for his future, even recognizing elements of transcendence in his refugee experience, mainly connected to his family.

However, when during the following interview he was asked to enact some key events from his experiences, he disconnected from the task. More specifically, there was a disconnection between what he said in verbal terms (i.e., he verbally accepted the task) and his actual bodily response. He barely moved in relation to one event, reporting a very low frequency of embodiments. His uniquely displayed movement was so small that it was classified as a “null” movement. Also the impact, in terms of quality of the

transformation subsequent the engagement with the “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” was very limited.

**Possible explanations of the result:**

In this participant's case, there was a general correspondence between the first and the second interview and his personal involvement in the general setting, which comprised both a specific interview format and a specific attitude towards the interviewer. However, in proportion, the verbal production was richer when compared to the non-verbal one. This means that the interviewee was more articulate when speaking verbally, than when accessing the non-verbal dimension of his narrative.

This result may be explained due to the interviewee's personal characteristics or psychological traits (e.g., introversion, or shyness), or to the kind of topics covered in the interview, which may be quite rightly considered deeply personal and highly sensitive.

An alternative explanation for the paucity of verbal and non-verbal results with this subject may have more to do with the characteristics of the setting (i.e., interviewing format and interviewer). For instance a female interviewer for a

male Muslim, who is probably not very used to seeing a woman in the position of a researcher, could have been frightening or, at least, disorienting. This could be classified as a cultural and gender issue within the setting.

A final explanation is connected to the presence of an audio-recorder within the interview setting during the first interview, and of a video-recorder during the second one. Despite the various points of strength for using this recording mode within a qualitative interview setting, it must be equally acknowledged that it can also prove inhibiting, even though the interviewee had previously signed the informed consent form that included this specific point.

**CASE B: maximum engagement with the “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” (3rd subject):**

A. is an extrovert and very expressive man. From the start of the first interview, he seemed very willing to narrate and share his refugee experience with the interviewer. His verbal story, obtained in the first interview, reported a high level of coherence, and thus of overall complexity. Similarly to the previous interviewee, he opened the second interview giving a rather



idealised description of his life in Pakistan before he received death-threats. He particularly stressed his good life with his family (wife and kids) and how he enjoyed his job (English teacher).

He attributed the rising to power of the Talibans with his worsening personal and societal situation. He explained in great detail the sense of unsafety perceived after their arrival and then specified the threats directly involving him and family members. Since he was an English teacher living in a newly orthodox Islamic environment, he said was forced to flee, to save both his own life and that of his family. He did not directly have to face any devastating events, nor did he witness any event directly involving his family members. However, the threats he received during the phase of anticipation were very harsh, since weapons were used in both the episodes he experienced.

However, according to his explanation, the hardest part of his refugee experience was connected to the phase of survival. During the first interview, he did not describe the harsh conditions he had endured in great details. He seemed very positive towards his adjustment in Sardinia and showed a desire to live here and requested a family reunion.

It is only through his active engagement with “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” (i.e., non-verbal units of movement)

that his subsequent verbal production results greatly deepened and amplified. This engagement occurred in an autonomous and highly descriptive way, and also through non-verbal modalities requiring active support from the interviewer, especially in the form of turn-taking. Through the engagement with these non-verbal units of embodiments, he seemed able to add much information to the events narrated during the first interview. He literally opened up new scenarios of his refugee experience. Through the pictorial description he used during the second interview, A. was able to convey the specific reasons why the journey had been so painful for him. The reconstruction of two specific events concerned the anticipation phase, where I, as the interviewer, was actively involved in turn-taking to embody a Taliban shouting at him and pointing a weapon, and he was alone defending himself and his family.

However, it is the second episode, connected to the phase of survival, which is even more revealing and emotionally charged. In this second episode, he actively embodied in a most autonomous way, describing how he was stripped of everything and left to die by thieves. Specific details are revealed, most of which have a strong connection with the body positions he assumed with his arms and facial expressions. Finally, while describing how he was saved by the police, and shown pictorial details of this rescue, he was able to connect transcendent-like elements of this experience, which, in Papadopoulos' words would be classified as AAD (2007).

**Possible explanations for the result:**

This interviewee showed a similar narrative profile throughout the two interviews, since he was articulate in both of them. During the first interview, his narration reported a high degree of coherence, and consequent overall complexity. During the second interview, he showed the maximum engagement with “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” out of all the study participants allocated to the main group (MG).

A likely explanation could be that the two interviews may be closely connected, and that this subject is fluent in both verbal and in non-verbal units of expressions. Indeed, from the very beginning, he showed a willingness to talk and displayed an extrovert and lively personality. However, the new elements introduced by engagement with the “body” had peculiar features, not necessarily attributed to his extrovert personality and willingness to talk and share his experience with the interviewer. Indeed, new scenarios were only revealed, in terms of specificity of events and their consequent deepening and amplification, when he accessed the non-verbal units of expression and used them to increase the narrative depth.

It should also be noted that the verbal and non-verbal elements displayed by

this study participant were synchronous; e.g., he lifted both arms and held a specific position, he started to explain what was happening at that moment from this position. Verbal words triggered new movements, and new movements gave access to more verbalized insights, and so on. Finally, as mentioned before, the ability to access transcendent-like elements in his terrifying experience of survival seemed to be mostly connected with the engagement of “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” as a resource for narration.

### ***7.7 Research implications***

The main findings obtained in this research have potentially interesting implications for developing a close connection between theoretical ideas on refugees and more sensitive practices when working with them. Indeed, more than with other fields of study which tend to be either theoretically “purist” or empirically “applicative”, the field of refugee studies seems to require close interconnection between theory and praxis. Theoretically-sensitive ideas should guide the actual work with refugees, and the results obtained in this concrete work should be recursively used to improve the theoretical ideas guiding the practice, and so on.

The bridge identified in this thesis, between theory and praxis, is represented

by the interview setting itself. Both formal and informal procedures for interviewing refugees are inevitably guided by theoretical ideas surrounding them. *Are we assuming they must be traumatized or are we assuming they are going to lie? Are we regarding them as resourceful people, albeit facing pain and distress, or are we considering them as mentally impaired?*

Depending on the theoretical lenses we wear, we are likely to see the same phenomenon in various and seemingly opposite ways. These theoretical lenses will guide the way we actually interview refugees, also depending on the aim of the interview itself. *Are we going to explore a phenomenon we do not know? Or are we testing existing theories? Depending on the interview outcome, will the person receive an asylum grant? Or will he/she receive concrete benefits (e.g., housing, food, etc.)?*

In this way, not only are interview procedures strongly influenced by the underlying theoretical ideas, but do they have concrete implications. For instance, in terms of whether or not refugee status is granted, or if they are offered other forms of support to facilitate adjustment to a new context of life.

It should be further observed that refugees are questioned, interviewed and judged about the truthfulness of their story, its coherence and legitimacy. Often a refugee is granted a status precisely depending on the truthfulness of

his/her claim to be a refugee which should pre-exist its actual legitimation. I do not become a refugee because I have been granted a refugee status, but rather, I am granted a refugee status because my experience is that of a refugee and I have the right to seek asylum in another state. As Papadopoulos points out, entitlement to refugee status is almost paradoxical:

using the legal definitions, the term refugee has no ontological status because when persons enter a country seeking asylum, they are called “asylum seekers” (not refugees) and as soon as asylum is granted, they are no longer refugees but enjoy all the rights of all citizens of the receiving country' (2001b: 3).

Therefore, there are at least two implications that can be drawn from this study. The first has to do with the complexity-oriented structure of the interviews themselves. And the second with the specific contribution of the “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” in increasing the richness and articulation of the verbal narratives.

Taking the first implication, as we have seen throughout the work, this thesis holds that most interviews administered to refugees tend to be trauma-centred and focused on the negative side of the refugee predicament (e.g., Papadopoulos 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b, 2007; Summerfield 1999, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2005). Examples of these questionnaires are *The*

*Harvard Trauma Questionnaire* (Shoeb et al. 2007); *The PTSD Checklist* (Weathers 1993); and, (3) *the Hopkins Symptom Check List* (Parloff et al. 1954), among others. It is argued that in this way a sort of split seems to occur out of the totality of the refugee experience. The pain and sufferings that many refugees experience are reified, that is, they become “as if” they were concrete objects, measurable, that lead to inevitable negative outcomes. As in a theatrical stage, it is as though only one part of the stage is lit, the rest remains in darkness and cannot be seen or appreciated.

In contrast, this thesis focused on the multilayered nature of the refugee experience and therefore the interview protocol was inspired by systemic ideas (Bateson 1972, 2002; Papadopoulos 2007). Instead of focusing solely on one side or aspect, or temporal frame, of the refugee experience, the study participants were asked about the totality of their refugee experience, from their own unique standpoint. The temporal element was the guiding force of the interviews, by zooming in on each phase of the refugee experience.

In administering an interview protocol inspired by systemic ideas, this thesis questioned whether the only way to obtain a refugee status was necessarily connected to a story of victimhood. If extremely adverse experiences are common to many refugees, an exclusive focus on the negative side of the

refugee predicament does not help to encompass the complex nature of the overall experience as refugees. *What might, indeed, happen if this story also contained elements of resilience and even of growth? Would these “positive” elements erase the potential pain and horrors experienced and thus decrease the likelihood of asylum being granted? Or would these elements increase the richness of each refugee's story, despite all the difficulties faced? In this way, would refugees be more likely to be regarded as potential resources in their new country of residence rather than an economic burden for the social state? Or would they be regarded as “bogus” claimants?*

If refugees are conceptualized as victims, we will treat them as hopeless recipients of service provisions and only give credit to narrations of victimhood and pain. On the contrary, if they are seen as essentially resourceful and resilient people, then, we will treat them as active agents who endured extreme adversities, but who actively chose to save their life and seek refuge in another country. Resilient and even transcendent-like elements will be acknowledged in their stories, without those elements being perceived in contrast with the difficulties endured. As a famous Italian poet (Fabrizio De André) wrote: *Dai diamanti non nasce niente. Dal letame nascono I fior*<sup>5</sup>.

Thus, the first implication of this study has to do with the importance of having a systemic format for interviewing refugees, that can help them reconstruct

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<sup>5</sup> Nothing grows out of precious diamonds. Out of dung, the flowers do grow.



the various aspects of their story and give voice to their own point of view. In this way, polarized narratives, uniquely focused on the negative side of the refugee predicament, are likely to be avoided. In parallel with this, by talking with their own voice, refugees become active participants (and not passive recipients) in the construction of their future.

It is further argued that the possibility of narrating their story from their unique point of view is likely to have an empowering effect on the study participants. That is to say, refugees shift 'from 'objects' of research, to potential participants in the research process' (Hanley 2005: x).

Then, the second and key-implication of this study is that the “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” seem to actually increase the narrative articulation, by amplifying the number of details of concrete events reconstructed. That is to say, when the refugees in this study had the chance to directly engage with their body to deepen their verbal narration, this was indeed deepened when the person directly used “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours”. This goes back to the issue of complexity of the participants' narratives. Not only may a systemic format help to reconnect with the totality of the refugee experience, beyond an exclusive focus on the negative side of it, but the use of the body directly fostered this going beyond an exclusive negative side, by increasing the

number of details actually recalled. Indeed, 'without the necessary qualifications, one ends up with reductionist 'total images' and those written about lose the quality of being human (Lammers 2007: 74).

The engagement with the “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” in the narrative process should not be regarded as competing with the main and dominant verbal one. On the contrary, the point I wish to make is that the “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” may foster the amplification of concrete details which then would enrich the verbal narratives. An increase in awareness of the somatic narrative resource would improve what is already considered crucial for both formal and informal interviews with refugees, that is, the truthfulness of their story, its coherence and legitimacy.

The embodiment of memories (Bosnak 2003) may help increase the vividness of the narrations. The precise reconstruction of places and events, in turn, may lead to a better understanding of the actions, emotions and thoughts connected to those specific situations. Possible reasons for the increase in narrative specificity and vividness of the concrete events was connected to the following arguments: (a) the body, as constantly reminded by theorists within the field of embodiment (e.g., Gallagher and Marcel 1999; Gallagher 2005; Gallese 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Rohrer 2008), is always

connected to a place and in a situated action. (b) Moreover, the body connects us with the phenomenological present (Stern 2004), the “here and now”, that may help increase the description of specific events and the possibility to live them fully. And (c) finally, the body is a constitutive element, an 'essential feature' (Gallagher 2000: 15) of being human, which is alive in the present, is located in a context and is relational. Indeed, a body only exists in relation to other bodies, to other subjectivities (Bellia 2006).

Another possible implication of the narrative body is that of being a therapeutic resource, helping refugees to reconnect with their primary home (i.e., the body itself), once all other possessions have been lost.

Indeed, according to Papadopoulos (2002: 9-39), the only thing all refugees have in common is the loss of home. Since the body is our very first home (Papadopoulos, NLR 2014), it may be considered the inevitable migrating companion of refugees and thus be potentially engaged to restore a sense of homeness within a new context of life.

Moreover, if traumas, in the sense of psychic wounds (from the first meaning of the verb *titrosko*, that is, from rubbing in; see chapter 2) exist, the body may be accessed to reach the second meaning of that verb, that is, the sense of transcendence connected with rubbing off, rubbing away (Papadopoulos

2010a: 21).

For example, according to the somatic psychotherapist Levine, a trauma is a somatic experience which has not reached its climax. As such, trauma is a *dis-ease* (1997: 99-100), rather than a pathology or an illness. To treat it, the author forwards the idea that body *and* mind should be accessed together. The original approach that Levine proposes is called *Somatic Experiencing* (or SE; 1997: 61-3) and the emphasis is on the felt sense (see also Gendlin 1981), that is, a bodily awareness, rather than abstract or intellectual process. Similarly to Papadopoulos' ideas of possible growth as a result of extreme events (see the concept, discussed in the second chapter, of Adversity Activated Development or AAD; 2007), Levine also postulates the possibility of wisdom (i.e., a growthful response) as a result of transcending traumatic experiences.

Fortunately, the same immense energies that create the symptoms of trauma, when properly engaged and mobilized, can transform the trauma and propel us into new heights of healing, mastery, and even wisdom (1997: 21).

In fact, despite the disorientation (also termed 'nostalgic disorientation'; Papadopoulos 2002a) that may follow the forced loss of the private home and

the home-country, all refugees have their own body with them. This very same body can be the starting point for restoring a sense of home in the new context of life, and re-engage in a creative and full life despite all difficulties having been faced.

### ***7.8 Limitations and suggestions for further study***

There are some limitations to this study that need to be acknowledged and hopefully improved in the future. Firstly, the study is qualitative and as such it aimed to explore in depth refugee stories of a restricted number of individuals. Therefore, caution must be applied as the findings are not intended to be transferable to the general refugee population.

It could be interesting, for future research, to re-define its methodology to create a quali-quantitative study. In this way, more objective measures could be introduced, statistical devices applied in the analysis of the data and thus increase the overall rigour of the work and its explicative potential.

Related to the difficulty of generalizing the findings obtained in this work to the

general refugee population, it should also be stated that the sample was non-clinical and with a clinical sample of refugees results might have been very different.

Connected to this, another fruitful line of possible research could consist of applying the same systemic interview protocol to a clinical sample of refugees. This would allow for evaluation of areas of similarity and difference between clinical and non clinical samples of refugees. However, the inclusion of a clinical sample of refugees would elicit further concerns in terms of sensitive topics covered which would necessitate new safeguarding guidelines to be developed accordingly.

Another limitation of this work consisted of the overlapping of roles of researcher and interviewer, by the same person. This inevitably carried some biases with it. The potential decrease of rigour in the understanding of the findings was partially reduced by the application of an intercoder reliability test (Kurasaki 2000; MacQueen et al. 1998). However, even though at the stage of the data analysis, the risk of personal biases affecting the results was decreased by the introduction of an intercoder reliability test, the interviewing stage itself may have been affected by personal biases.

Thus, to increase the rigour of a further study two different people should act in the role of the researcher and interviewer.

Another limitation of the work concerns with the nature of subdividing the whole sample into two subgroups. Even if the work were to remain qualitative, and thus without the constraints connected to a quantitative study, the subdivision of the two groups should be even (i.e., half the people allocated to the main group and the other half into the comparison one). Moreover, the same recording mode should be used for the second interview of both groups.

Indeed, what we can say about the present work is that we have observed an amplification of details in the main group's narratives. However, we have not recorded which kind of movements the study participants in the comparison group actually displayed, and why these movements did not contributed to an amplification of narrative details as happened in the main group. As a related indication for further study, the same recording mode should be used for both groups.

Finally, another point of interest could be related to the beneficial and facilitative nature of the interview protocol. Indeed, even if the study did not consist of a clinical inquiry on the outcome of a psychotherapeutic intervention, nevertheless, possible benefits for the interview participants were foreseen. Connected to the systemic nature of the interview format (Bateson 1972; Papadopoulos 2001, 2007) refugees had the concrete

opportunity to express themselves about their experience of forced migration, from their own point of view. This had an empowering effect on its participants, who shifted from being objects of study, to active co-creators of their refugee story (Temple and Moran 2011). A systematic inquiry on the beneficial and facilitative nature of the systemic interview protocol could be foreseen. This would allow specific analysis of the type of gain connected to a systemic and qualitative protocol, compared to more traditional protocols which mainly focus on the negative (and even traumatic) side of the refugee experience. More specifically, the contribution of the body should be assessed in increasing the overall complexity of the systemic interview procedure.

### **7.9 Summary**

In this chapter the findings were located within the wider theoretical context discussed in the first part of the thesis. Those findings were presented in order, according to the list of research questions, to make the reading more fluent. The issues covered were therefore as follows: (1RQ) from the concept of complexity to that of coherence, (2RQ) detachment from a victim identity, (3RQ) quality of transformations, and finally (4RQ) richness of movements and “being embodied with”. Two case examples of the interconnection between the verbal and the non-verbal findings followed. In this way, possible



explanations of the interconnection between verbal fluency and amplification of the narrative articulation, when engaging “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours”, were provided. These explanations form the provisional ideas to be tested further.

Then, the research implications, limitations and suggestions for further study followed. More than in other fields of inquiry, the refugee phenomenon is regarded as the place where theoretical considerations and actual praxis are closely connected. The interview setting is, for instance, one of the possible key-places where theory and concrete action meet. Thus it is argued that seeing refugees as “total humans” and not only victims may have important implications in the way we treat them and what we expect them to say about their own experiences. Recursively, the way we treat them and the subsequent feedback we receive from them will affect the way we conceptualize their predicament, either in informal speeches or in formal and specialized theories. This feedback circuit is true not only for the attributions that external people (i.e., social workers, doctors, psychologists, and so on) attach to refugees. The feedback circuit may also become established in terms of self-attributions. The way a refugee consider him- or herself will affect his/her behaviour, and this behaviour will have implications in terms of self-perception and identity.

Given the impact that the engagement with “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” had on the subsequent verbal productions, the idea that interviewers could profit from becoming accustomed to a non-verbal (and possibly shared) framework to evaluate the non verbal behaviours of refugees is put forward. The possibility of including non-verbal elements as integral parts of the refugees' narrations could increase their richness, especially by adding new information when it is connected to the tangible world.

### **Conclusions:**

Returning to the RQs posed, the overall results of this study seem promising. Indeed, it was shown that, if addressed with an interview protocol inspired by systemic ideas (i.e., not exclusively focused on the negative side of being a refugee; Bateson 1972, 2002; Papadopoulos 2007), the refugee experience seems to emerge as an articulated and multi-faceted narration. When complexity was specifically analysed in terms of coherence (Grossmann et al. 2005; Hesse 2008; Main et al. 1985), most of the participants' narratives were indeed classified as having a high level of narrative coherence. This results seems to suggest that complexity can be found in the refugees' narratives, if the interview protocol does not uniquely focus on the negative side of the refugee predicament. In this way, multiple and even contradicting elements constituting the experience of being refugees may emerge.

Most of the narrative complexity was found at the level of resettlement in a new environment, this is connected to the last phase of the refugee experience according to Papadopoulos' temporal subdivision (2001a) and so late in the overall refugee experience. This result suggests it probably took time for the study participants to go beyond the adversities faced, and become able to appreciate their new life acquisitions.

Moving to the second RQ, the study revealed that, while most literature on

refugees seems to be polarized to the negative side of the refugee predicament (Papadopoulos 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2007), when refugees are enabled to speak “with their own voice” (Temple and Moran 2011: 6-9), they seem to be able to detach from a victim identity. Indeed, most study participants, when asked to give a title to their experience, used positive rather than negative words (e.g., “*a refugee is a human being*”, “*God is what helped the most*”, “*becoming a voice for others*”). The most interesting result was that all study participants said they would help a person in need, suggesting the idea that they see themselves (also) as resourceful people, and not only as persons in need of an external help. According to the study participants, this help could be practical (e.g., “*suggest to go the police and ask there for help*”), psychological (e.g., “*reinforce sense of safety*”), social (e.g., “*be friendly*”), spiritual (e.g., “*support in praying*”) or a mixture of these.

The ability that study participants showed in making sense of their experience (Teigen and Jenses 2011), and convey this into complex narratives seems to suggest an alternative view to that of the “refugee trauma” (e.g., Cheng 2001; Turner et al. 2003). That is, beyond the adversities faced, the study participants showed themselves to possess many resources in their lives they were able to connect with.

Moving forward, the most promising finding to emerge from this study is

connected to the third RQ, which also informs the very title of this thesis “towards an *embodied* narration”. Indeed, when assessing the impact of the engagement of the study participants with the “non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours” (i.e., body movements, hand gestures, positions in space and facial expressions) the findings seem to suggest that most people in the main group actively engaged with their body for describing some aspects of their story. With regard to this engagement, the “body” may be truly considered a resource for narration, especially when concrete events are reconstructed. When the body is used as a story-telling resource, narratives can result in being enriched and deepened.

Finally, with regard to the fourth RQ, the findings suggest that most participants used signs that, according to the ethological framework proposed by Troisi (1999: 908), may be defined “affiliative” towards the interview setting itself and which also had a descriptive quality. The adjective “descriptive” means that those movements were engaged to recreate specific events within the interview setting. The body, as it seems also for the previous RQ, was much less used for describing abstract contents. Most movements were not performed with the whole body, but rather only with the upper-body, even when standing, suggesting a certain restriction in the use of the movement possibilities.

Finally, when movements were analysed for their interactional qualities (e.g., Mc Garry and Russo 2011; Ramseyer and Tschacher 2011), they were mainly categorised as autonomous (i.e., without any prompt from the interviewer) or strongly interactional. In this last case, they were either in the form of mirroring or of turn-taking. Movements could therefore be regarded in their being not only embodied but also interactional, and transcended the individual interviewee to also include the interviewer (from a single space to a dyad).

The greatest “weakness” of this work consisted in the purely exploratory and not confirmatory nature of the inquiry. However, I see this weakness, at the same time, as being its major strength. As happens in all new fields or objects of inquiry, the first research attempts tend to be creative but in need of methodological improvement. Here I have taken a first step towards the clarification of the concept of complexity, both in verbal and non-verbal terms, within the refugee experience, and started a first inquiry on the role of non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours when refugees are narrating their experience. However, in a further study the variables targeted should be reduced, the sample size increased, the two roles of interviewer and researcher distinguished, and quantitative devices applied. Width of exploration has to be sacrificed for the sake of methodological improvement. Yet with a reminder to myself and the reader, that after all, 'all this stuff is just description' (Bateson quoted in Tresch 1998) and that reality is much more fascinating and complex than any formula could capture.



**Glossary of key-terms:**

**non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours:** in the context of this study, all that was referred to the somatic elements explicitly triggered and then identified in the study participants' narratives. They mainly comprised of movements, hand gestures, positions in space and facial expressions. In order to classify the non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours, these elements were divided into non-verbal units. Afterwards these units were analysed in isolation, as if each movement was existing per se, like in a still picture focusing on the individual study participant. Moreover, they were also analysed in their interactional qualities, thus shifting the focus from the individual participant to include the interviewee/interviewee dyad.

It should be observed that reference to non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours is based on an artificial distinction, since the somatic dimension of a narrative is an integral part of the overall narrative, which inevitably includes both verbal than non-verbal elements. The explicit focus on non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours consisted, at the stage of the data collection, in the triggering stimuli from the interviewer, that directly invited the interviewee to deepen some events of his/her story through the body. Moreover, an explicit focus on non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours occurred also at the stage of the data analysis, as already



discussed. Here the study participants' movements, hand gestures, positions in space and facial expressions were extracted from the overall narration and subdivided in non-verbal units, which were then classified in their isolation and their interactional qualities.

**coherence:** in its original understanding, this construct was used to evaluate adult narratives in their prevalent style of attachment to early care-giving figures. According to this first understanding, a narrative could be classified as coherent if events were reconstructed realistically and possible negative memories could be recalled and integrated in the overall life story.

In the context of this study, coherence was chosen as functionally equivalent to complexity since both address a whole by analysing the constituent parts. In doing so, the construct of complexity was translated into that of coherence by establishing a correspondence between each parameter of the Trauma Grid and the four phases to each category of coherence. In this way, a narrative could be classified with a high degree of complexity/coherence if characterized by consistency of memories (i.e., all phases were recalled with sufficient details), the story had no blind spots or was not over-filled with irrelevant details. Moreover, the way a person stayed focused on the topic at stake and how he/she was clear when talking about it was also evaluated, and contributed to the overall degree of complexity/coherence of the given

narration.

**complexity:** is a way of looking at a phenomenon acknowledging the various constituting variables and not only focusing on single ones. The working definition used in this thesis is that complexity is informed by the Trauma Grid and four phases of the refugee experience (Papadopoulos 2001, 2007) and thus it becomes the specific way to look at a phenomenon, acknowledging:

- multiple and contradicting qualities (positive, neutral and negative);
- diachronic changes (a before and an after);
- the contribution of various factors (where the single individual is considered located and constantly interacting within a wider context).

In this way, the characteristic variables of the refugee phenomenon may be discerned and acknowledged from each specific contribution.

**context:** this is an abstract term which refers to that which is around a certain object of analysis and helps to understand the very same object. For example it can be represented by a whole organism when considering a symptom, a family to understand the behaviour of a child, or a forest when analysing its trees. In this thesis, the constant reference to the construct of context

supported the relational and systemic overarching idea, (see later 'relational'), that in order to understand a phenomenon it is necessary not to consider it in its isolation. According to this systemic and relational view, a phenomenon should always be considered in its dynamic interconnections with the wider environment.

**embodiment:** a set of interdisciplinary theories (e.g., neuroscience, philosophy, psychology) which share the assumption that the body is an essential feature of being human. An underlying assumption within these theories is that the uniqueness of being human is given by the interconnection of thoughts, feelings and somatic responses. This implies that, in order to understand what is properly human, the somatic dimension must always be analysed as a crucial and non avoidable object of inquiry. The foundation of theories on embodiment traces back to the work of the phenomenologists Husserl (1964, 1970) and Merleau-Ponty (1962). According to phenomenology, all knowledge is situated in a corporeal world and depends on a subject knower. It is thus through the body that people can make sense of the corporeal reality that surrounds them.

**ethics:** since every research in the social sciences is not a neutral activity, issues connected to power were taken into serious account for this thesis.

This attention for the ethical aspects of research was actualized mainly in two ways. First, all the three interview protocols, in which the study was divided, contained safeguarding guidelines for the participants. As the overarching ethical guidelines, the principles identified by Beauchamp and Childress (1994) were followed and they consisted in: (1) respect for autonomy, (2) non-maleficence, (3) beneficence, and, finally, (4) justice. These safeguarding principles were made explicit in the project information sheet and the informed consent form.

In addition to this, the specific interview protocols were inspired by the body therapist Rothschild (2000, 2003) and her work for fostering the safety of the client (in this case of the interviewee) within the clinical/research setting. In this way, some specific and original guidelines for this work were developed. They can be summarized in the following points: (1) there were no good or bad answers; (2) the person was free to say "I do not understand the question" and ask for repetition; (3) the person was free to say "No, I do not want to answer the question" (even if the question was understood); (4) the person had the freedom to "choose the level of depth" for the disclosure of his/her experience; and, finally, (5) that no good or bad level of depth for this disclosure existed.

**experience:** cognitive, emotional and behavioural processing of an external event that the subject operates to attribute meaning to and responds to accordingly. Various outcomes may derive depending on the way an external event is processed, rather than depending on the objective characteristics of the event itself. In the context of this work, the distinction between external/objective event and internal/subjective experience was fundamental. Indeed, from a theoretical point of view the work focused on the subjective side of the refugee predicament, and not on objective facts. Moreover, this distinction between event and experience was even more sharp on the empirical side, since the interview protocol administered to the study participants focused on the subjective understanding of their own predicament, rather than on the objective adversities that the person faced.

**home:** in the context of this study, this was a crucial construct, since Papadopoulos' view (2002a) which regards the loss of home as the only shared characteristic of all refugees was adopted. According to Papadopoulos (2002a) home is a construct which synthesizes multiple and opposing characteristics that facilitate the development of each person, as fully human. On the negative side, its loss may lead to a state of nostalgic disorientation (same author 2002). However, home also has a telos, that is, a finalistic and thus positive tension which prefigures its possible restoring within a new

context of life.

Moreover, home was also explored in relation to the body. Since the body can be considered each human's first home (Papadopoulos NLR 2014), it is then suggested that a body-therapeutic work could be used with refugees to help them restore a sense of primary containment, despite all the changes that have occurred.

**interactional qualities:** these represent a specific focus in movement analysis that transcends the single performer to see what happens when two or more people move together. The focus thus enlarges from the single individual engaging in a certain movement X to include at least a dyad. In the context of this research, movements were analysed in their isolation, and in this case the focus was on a single movement at a time, performed by the interviewee. A second analysis, i.e., an interactional one, focused on the way these movements were performed by the interviewee in relation to the interviewer. An example is that of turn-taking, where the interviewee asked the interviewer to play a certain role while he/she was playing another, in order to concretely recreate an event (as in a drama).

**narration:** literally, a story which has a beginning, a middle and an end (according to the original definition by Aristotle). In the context of this study, the way the study participants replied to the semi-structured format of the questions was precisely in the form of a story about their experience of forced migration. Rather than responding concisely to a closed question, the study participants had the opportunity to reply in a discursive manner to the interviewer's questions. As such, the idea that interviewing is a way of eliciting narratives was put forward. Through a series of questions on a set range of areas, the study participants had the opportunity to recreate an organic narrative unit of their life story. In our case, the set range of areas was represented by the succeeding of various temporal phases within the refugee experience.

**non-verbal level:** the specific focus on the implicit and procedural aspects of a narration. While some participants accessed this level only indirectly, when talking verbally (i.e., they took part in the comparison group, CG), other participants were specifically instructed to use movements, hand gestures, positions in space and facial expressions to deepen their verbal narration (i.e., they took part in the main group, MG). In this second case, the focus was explicitly on the non-verbal level, also termed level of the non-verbal

expressive/communicative behaviours.

**refugees:** persons who were forced to flee their country for reasons of 'race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion' (UNHCR 2011). Refugees, differently from economic migrants, did not choose to leave their country and resettle into a new one. They were forced to leave their country and, in order to save their life, seek refuge in a new one. This happens when the states that should protect the fundamental human rights of their citizens are unable or unwilling to do so. The legal and socio-political parameters are key determinants of who is considered a refugee.

In the context of this study, the term refugees included asylum claimants. The main difference between refugees and asylum claimants is that a refugee was already granted an asylum state, while an asylum claimant is a person who has already been granted asylum, while an asylum claimant is a person whose asylum claim is still to be determined.

**relational:** this adjective goes back to its original significance in grammar, namely, meaning may emerge only from the totality of the constituting



elements of a certain phenomenon (in grammar this could be a phrase). This totality is more than the sum of the single constituting elements. For example, a family is more than the sum of father + mother + children 1 + children 2, but rather an overarching entity. A relational approach does not reify the objects of study, instead focuses on the relations among parts. In the context of this work, the adjective relational was used as synonymous to systemic.

**semi-structured interview:** a specific way of structuring a set of questions for data collection purposes. For example, in this study, the main questions covered a set range of areas (i.e., refugee phases), and additional questions were asked to elicit an increase in the details provided. The fact that the data collection process was based on a semi-structured interview also meant that the data emerged from an inter-subjective space, in which questions were asked to elicit detailed narratives.

**SPRAR:** literally, Sportello Per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati. A refugee project which, in conjunction with the Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs, is devoted to the secondary welcoming of refugees following preliminary and emergency procedures offered in refugee camps and other similar centres. The interviews for this project took place at the SPRAR centre, located at the

Migration Office, via Cadello 9, Cagliari, Italy. All the study participants (sample size: 20 people) were taking part in this project.

**trauma:** a term frequently associated with refugees and considered as synonymous with wound. In this way a strong link between refugees and negative aspects of their story is established. Contrary to this dominant understanding of the word trauma, Papadopoulos (2002: 28-29) carried out an etymological analysis which revealed a new meaning of the word trauma, beside that of "wound". Indeed, according to the author, the original Greek word *titrosko* does not only mean 'rub in', but also 'rub off, rub away', which implies the emerging of new and positive qualities. In this way, the word trauma stands for positive and negative aspects, and indirectly suggests that the refugee predicament should be approached not only by focusing on the negative side.

**verbal level:** specific focus on the semantic, explicit and content level of the narrations (see also non-verbal level).

**Other examples of the variety of movements:**

Here there will be reported examples, in both visual and verbal form, of the results obtained for the first part of the forth RQ. These results would complete the list for classifying the variety of the study participants' "non-verbal expressive/communicative behaviours". They were not included in the body of the text.

Examples of *look at* and *shut* (6<sup>th</sup> subject, Desert):



Related verbal production: *"during they day I slept ... While at night I went forward by car we had prepared food, and bag to keep it ... not a lot to eat ... and when it was over we had no more ... a friend of mine, from Somalia, too many problems ... people ... died ... no water, no food, for a month ... there was a problem with the car, run out of petrol ... all dead dead ... all problems ... death death ..."*.

Example of *smile* (15<sup>th</sup> subject, Dialogue with the “enemies”):



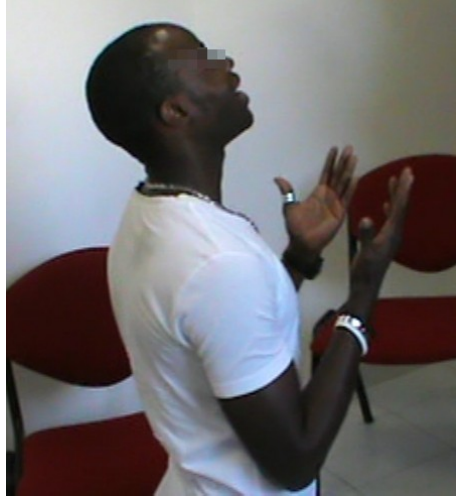
Related verbal production: *“Kurdish people are not free ... so everything represents a good reason to demonstrate ... even a marriage ... the songs are for love but also for our people and for freedom ... during a marriage 50 policemen came ... I could have gone ... but how could I? ... if I go I am a corrupted person ... they destroyed all musical instruments ... they told the musicians: “get on the car and married couple you too” and to me: “who are you?”. You won’t believe me. I said: “I am a human being”. I was so angry! For us it is special to say “human beings” because we are not looked as humans ...”.*

Example of *embracing* (16<sup>th</sup> subject, Forms of tortures in the female prison):



Related verbal production: *“I stayed three months in prison ... before prison I heard and saw things ... but did not really know them ... I could not believe my people were suffering so much. After I was imprisoned, there in prison, these beautiful women ... three months of intense sharing. All they did, I was also doing. We spoke about politics, women’s issues, about the economical growing of a nation ... I will never forget what I learnt from them. If I am what I am now is because of them ...”.*

Example of *emotional* (19<sup>th</sup> subject, Relationship with God and mother):



Related verbal production: *"I do not want to revenge ... I must accomplish what my mother wants me to become". (pause). ... an important person ... ah ah ... this is what I must do in my life ... (pause). And then she will see me from the sky, do you understand?! ... that her son is accomplishing her dream ... (pause) ... and then I thank God so much, for having saved me ... ah ah ... for all I went through in Africa until here ..."*

Example of *whole body* (14<sup>th</sup> subject, Travelling like an inanimate object):



Related verbal production: *"No, well, you know the vans that are used to transport goods ... there was room for 10-11 people ... we were sitting and some people were sitting on other people I managed to get closer to a window, but for being there I had to stand on a single foot, on a single one ... but I was lucky, close to a window I could breathe"*.

Example of *standing* (5<sup>th</sup> subject, Description of a night during the first revolution):



Related verbal production: *"I stood up like this, on top of a chair, because the window was very high up... I opened the little window"*.

Example of *functional* (19<sup>th</sup> subject, Relationship with God and mother):



Related verbal production: *"I am a prayer, do you understand? I believed in God. To what God put on my forehead ... my destiny ..."*.

Example of *asymmetrical* (15<sup>th</sup> subject, Dialogue with the “enemies”):



Related verbal production: *“Another time, it was 1999, we were at the office of our association ... we were doing a hunger strike against the hanging ... again they came and dragged us as if we were corpses ... they dragged us like this, in the street, until we got on the car”.*

Example of *still* (1<sup>st</sup> subject, Help from the Mosque and from God):



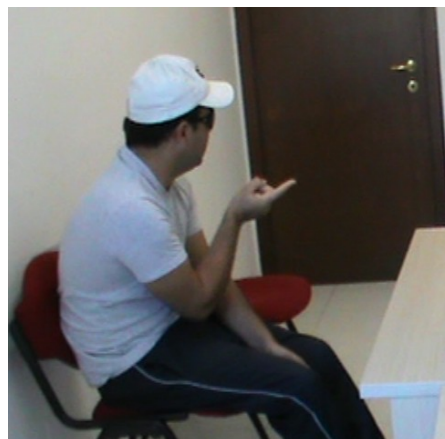
Related verbal production: *“Allah akbar ... like this to pray ... no look around ... Allah Allah Allah ... speak speak speak ...”.*

Example of *symbolic* (19<sup>th</sup> subject, Dreaming about future):



Related verbal production: *“My dream is the Rebirth of a Child of the Future ... because in this future I will have done many experiences before arriving to where I want to ... and also today I am walking ... I have many dreams I want to reach ... this is why I wake up every day to go farming ... it is tough, but when you have money you can reach what you wish for ... this is the reason why, really, I must work hard, do you understand? ... to reach my dream ...”*.

Example of *pointing* (17<sup>th</sup> subject, First adjustment in Russia):



Related verbal production: *“I was also always looking in the corridor ... I am just looking if there is nobody ... and only then I open my door. I then go in and close because they kill people like that also ... when you open the door and walk inside the apartment ... one guy would push you ... they will come after you and steal money ... after that they are killing ...”*.

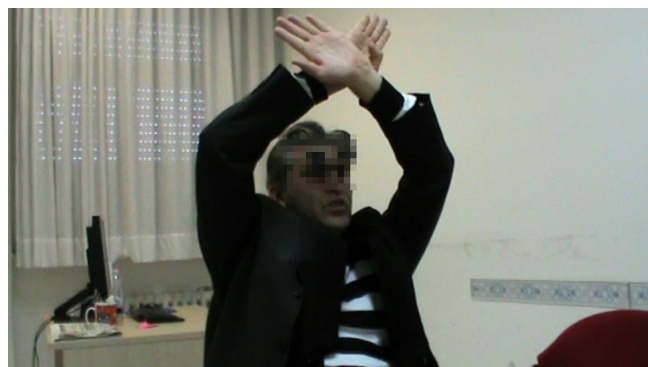


Example of *look down* (11<sup>th</sup> subject, Claustrophobic experience of journey):



Related verbal production: “a body cannot stand to be closed in a small space for long without proper breathing. Maybe we saved ourselves because of a hole ...”.

Example of *sitting* (3<sup>rd</sup> subject, Journey to Europe) (same verbal production in the body of thesis):



Related verbal production: “I felt that time, on my journey, I felt the time that maybe you’ll die soon”.

Example of *others* (i.e., gestures with the hand was highly idiosyncratic, as in this case where hands were becoming “waves”) (6<sup>th</sup> subject, Ship to reach Lampedusa (Italy) from Libya):



Related verbal production: *“at night the problem was waves ... we arrived in March. In March water is not calm”*.

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