UNIVERSITY OF BERGAMO

Department of Human and Social Sciences

Ph.D. Course in "Human Capital Formation and Labour Relations"

Curriculum: Clinical Psychology

XXXI Cycle

The operationalization of Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy constructs to promote personal well-being in adult-child relationship:
A first application in the context of teacher-student relationship and increase of Specific Learning Disorder diagnoses.

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Doctoral Thesis

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ACADEMIC YEAR 2017 / 2018

To my children, Roberto and Gabriele,
who are teaching me every day what is
not written in books

Contents

Abstract

The present dissertation advances proposals of operationalization for the concepts of *Black Pedagogy* (Miller, 1980; Perticari, 2016; Rutschky, 1977, 2015) and *Adultcentrism* (Goode, 1986; Petr, 1992; Furioso, 2000; Mackay, 1973, 2003; Biancardi, 2002; Foti, 2004). The former is meant as a set of educational and disciplinary practices assimilable into those that nowadays are included in the frame of physical and psychological maltreatment, the latter refers instead to a paradigm of thought, prevailing within our social system, which would lead to provide inadequate or distorted responses to children's needs (Furioso, 2000). The reflection on a possible legacy deriving from such educational *forma mentis* is discussed in the light of what is commonly deemed in society as included in the *ius corrigendi* justification in relation to the "Abuse of means of correction or discipline" (Art. 571, I.P.C.). A third measurement instrument has been developed ("Representations and Attitudes towards SLD diagnoses questionnaire" - RADSA) in order to implement a research representing the first application of Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy scales in the context of teacher-student relationship and of the phenomenon of SLD diagnoses increase.

Four studies are therefore included in the present work: three validation studies of the new instruments and one main study involving the participation of 294 Italian primary school teachers belonging to the Territorial Area of Bergamo.

Results are in line with the importance, highlighted in the literature, of making an effort in recognizing the partiality of the adultcentric perspective since our biased understanding of adult-child relationship appears to prevent the acknowledgement of the deeply reciprocal and bilateral qualities of the encounter between those that can be seen as two cultures: the one of adults and the one of children. Moreover, it has been found that Adultcentrism significantly explains 30.4% of the variance in Black Pedagogy scores, thus providing the well-founded impression that an adultcentric perspective risks to deviate towards detrimental educational and disciplinary practices. Implications for teachers' role in the context of the always increasing number of SLD diagnoses in our territory are also discussed.

One of the most important suggestions deriving from the presented results is that it seems more functional to work on the level of values, beliefs, and objectives connected to child-rearing, disciplinary and educational practices rather than intervening directly on practical methods in order to modify them.

The possible applications of Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy scales could range from research fields of pedagogy, education, parenting, child advocacy to social-juridical psychology.

Preface

The present work belongs to a wider research project designed during my Ph.D. course, therefore, in this section I am going to provide the general picture in which the following dissertation is contextualized. The original title of the project is "Cultural Premises, Relationships and Epidemic of Specific Learning Disorders" and it is aimed at addressing the phenomenon of the always greater number of Specific Learning Disorder (hereinafter: SLD) diagnoses in schools from the point of view of teachers' beliefs and attitudes; exploring prevailing cultural premises and general beliefs about educational practices; outlining the status of the paradigm through which children are seen and described by adults who take care of them and of their school education; comparing the relational quality perceived by the teacher in the relationship with a student with a Specific Learning Disorder diagnosis and in the relationship with a student without a diagnosis but with a poor school performance; individuating and proposing possible ways of strengthening the teacher-pupil relationship especially in the presence of pupils with a Specific Learning Disorder and of pupils with poor school performance, in a perspective of prevention and with the purpose of promoting the well-being of children and teachers within the educational relationship.

The underlying hypothesis motivating such objectives is that the exponential increase of SLD diagnoses could be related not only to the fact that recently professionals have become more competent in detecting them, but also to a more general cultural movement of change in educational practices and in adults' understanding of children needs. In a recent past, our culture allowed educational practices that result impossible to be applied today following the great and fast global advances regarding the protection of children's rights occurred in the last decades of nineteenth century. In this perspective, diagnostic classification could have become a way in which children needs are framed and addressed, including a series of problems perhaps not directly connected to a neurological disorder but which give similar outcomes (reading or writing difficulties, limited concentration, etc.) or that fall within a Special Educational Needs (hereinafter: SEN) category. The same discourse could be raised for other types of school age disorders that are spreading nowadays, e.g., hyperactivity or oppositional provocative disorder, but the focus has been centered only on SLD in order to avoid the generation of a dispersive research design. In reasoning about this phenomenon, two main priorities have been individuated: firstly, to implement a research design capable of accounting for the complexity of systems involved in influencing the teacher-child relationship both in contextual terms (social, cultural, scholastic and domestic) and with regard to the individuals involved in such systems (teachers, children, parents). Secondly, to focus specifically on teachers'

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attitudes and representations of this phenomenon, since they are constantly involved in working daily life with all the practical issues that can be connected to it. Therefore, the research project does not have the objective of investigating or discussing the diagnostic modalities of SLD or of raising the problem of false positives, but of exploring teachers' ideas in this regard and of understanding if such ideas are influenced or not by the legacy of a past culture related to education. This seems to be of primary importance, since it could influence the type of relationship that the teacher will contribute to build with his/her pupil.

The research design has been presented to the Regional Scholastic Office of the Territorial Area of Bergamo and a genuine interest was found, especially for the complex approach dedicated to the exploration of this phenomenon, together with an agreement on the concerns about the current level of well-being in teacher-student relationship in our schools. A fruitful collaboration was established and the project has been presented to an event organized by the Scholastic Office, to which all the Head Teachers of Bergamo and province state schools were invited. Reflections, hypotheses, and concerns were clearly exposed, specifying the delicacy of the topics that would have been treated, as well as the primary and secondary objectives of the project, i.e., that there would have been the need to deepen the definition of what does not benefit the educational relationship and to examine certain behaviors today defined as maltreatment, but often present as insidious and pervasive traits of a past educative approach that hinders the development of a totally positive adult-child relationship. Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy have been identified as representative of such educational approach belonging to the past common sense about child-rearing and education. An educative approach that certainly had its reason to be, but that results obsolete in the light of our fast changing culture. The speed at which such cultural and social changes occurred and are occurring, may have made difficult to recognize and to avoid such practices. It has also been specified that it would have been necessary to create specific instruments for this research work and then to proceed through complex phases requiring a significant commitment and collaboration of participants.

Despite the delicacy of the topics covered and the amount of collaboration required, I unexpectedly received numerous participation consensuses: Head Teachers of 16 "Comprehensive Schools" signed up to the project, for a total of 39 School Complexes. All the participations requests have been accepted and all the time necessary was dedicated to the phase of data collection, which was possible through a considerable organizing effort. In fact, in a time lapse of six months, data have been collected and coded for 92 teachers who participated to focus groups, 295 teachers who responded to the online set of questionnaires, 2'609 mothers and 1'965 fathers who responded on an online survey platform or who received their questionnaires in paper form in a sealed envelope distributed and then collected with the precious help of the teachers of each school, 2'131 children for whom parent's

consensus was received and who filled out the dedicated instruments in their own schools in small groups at the presence of the researcher. Such large participation leads to think that the research topic is of great interest for our territory: a restitution meeting will take place to share with participants the final results once the huge amount of data derived from this research will be adequately processed.

1. Introduction

In the present dissertation the work conducted during a preliminary phase of the aforementioned research is set forth: three pilot studies have been carried out for the preliminary validation of the measurement instruments elaborated in order to address the original research questions. Such new measures have been entitled "Black Pedagogy Scale", "Adultcentrism Scale", and "Representations and Attitudes towards SLD" (hereinafter "RADSA", acronym of the Italian title: "Rappresentazioni e Atteggiamenti rispetto ai Disturbi Specifici dell'Apprendimento").

The introduction will be dedicated to present the theoretical framework of Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy constructs, along with an overview of the literature regarding teacher-student relationship from which becomes visible the importance of a first application of these concepts to deepen our understanding of what might reduce the quality of the relationship. Such reflections will be then connected to the exploration of the main themes emerging in the literature addressing the topic of SLD diagnoses increase.

In section "New measures" the three pilot studies carried out for the preliminary validation of the instruments created *ad hoc* for this research are presented separately.

The fourth and main study composing the present dissertation thesis consists in the first application of the three new instruments to the sample of participant teachers. During this administration other measures already existing in the literature have been included in the set of questionnaires proposed to participants. Such measures and the reasons underlying the choice of their inclusion in the research design are introduced in "Other measures" section. The sample of teacher participating to this phase of the research is then described and data analyses performed is also summarized in a dedicated section. Section concerning the display of results is followed by the final discussion on findings and on their implications for adults who work in contact with children and future research directions.

1.1. Adultcentrism

The term *adultcentrism* refers to a paradigm of thought prevailing within our social system, which would lead to provide "inadequate or distorting responses to children's needs" even if adults have good intentions and are convinced to act in child's best interest (Furioso, 2000, p. 126, own translation). The term "paradigm" in this context is meant according to its definition of a set of assumptions that includes ontological and epistemological positions, as well as a conception of human nature and methodological implications that directly derive from them (Burrell & Morgan, 1979;

Schultz & Hatch, 1996). Such definition of "paradigm" was elaborated in order to sort and frame sociological and organizational theories according to a definite number of archetypal paradigms that reflects different combinations of assumption sets (Reis Louis, 1983). Nonetheless, it seems that referring to a paradigm rather than to an attitude or a belief is more useful for defining what is described in the literature as "adultcentrism". An attitude is indeed definable as "a person's favourable or unfavourable evaluation of an object", whereas a belief refers to the linkage between an object and an attribute (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 12). Adultcentrism seems instead a tacit and subtle *forma mentis* assuming, among other things, an image of the child with certain characteristics in adults' mind on the basis of which adults act towards children, understand their requests and respond to them in a determined way, take care of them, and interpret their rights and needs. Furthermore, adultcentric paradigm goes beyond the individual since it is at the same time the product and the producer of a sociocultural matrix, both on a material and on a symbolic level (Duarte Quapper, 2012). Several authors have focused on the importance of making an effort in recognizing the partiality of such adultcentric perspective and have pointed out the benefits that this could entail in educational practice, in welfare policy, in the prevention of distress and in research with children (Foti, 2004; Furioso, 2000; Goode, 1986; Mackay, 2003; Pedrocco Biancardi, 2002; Petr, 1992, 2003).

1.1.1. Origins and Definitions of the concept of Adultcentrism. Adultcentrism is a relatively recent concept that has been treated since the beginning of the twentieth century, but which has spread in its last two decades thanks to the attention of various authors belonging to different fields of study. Contributions about the topic have been found in the areas of psychology, psychotherapy, pedagogy, sociology, welfare policies and even biology (Bianchi, 2002; Foti, 2004; Furioso, 2000; Goode, 1986; Mackay, 2003; Minelli, 2003; Pedrocco Biancardi & Talevi, 2010; Petr, 2003). The first definition of the concept appeared in 1986, in the work of David A. Goode, who explicitly affirmed to have coined the term "adultcentric" (Goode, 1986, p. 84). There are though prior and contemporary contributions that pointed out the detrimental consequences of a solely adult perspective (Du Bois, 1903; Mackay, 1974, 2003) and the need to take "children seriously as sociological subjects" (Waksler, 1986, p. 71). According to these authors, as well as to more recent contributions, adultcentrism is describable as an implicit perspective intertwined with different aspects of society that imposes a specific image of the child and that influences socialization and education practices, sociological understanding of children, research practices and children care policies (Matusov & Hayes, 2000; Petr, 2003).

Before proceeding in presenting the specifics of how "the child" is seen from an adultcentric perspective, a disambiguation results necessary between adultcentrism and two concepts that are not specific objects of the present work: ageism and adultism. Ageism is the discrimination of one group towards other age groups, but is mainly meant as the prejudice against older individuals (Butler, 1969; Haydon, 2012; Macnicol, 2006; Nelson, 2004). Adultism refers instead to "all those behaviors and attitudes which flow from the assumption that adults are better than young people, and entitled to act upon young people in myriad ways without their agreement" (Bell, 1988, p. 35, 1995). As stated above, adultcentrism is placeable at a paradigmatic level, from which descends a certain "methodology". Such methodology seems to be assimilable with "adultism", since it is defined as a sum of behaviors, attitudes and beliefs. In other words, adultism appears to refer to the pragmatic level of adultcentrism, designating some specific attitudes, behaviors, practical repercussions and outcomes of the adultcentric paradigm, especially those that are more detrimental, unrespectful, oppressive and that amplify the configuration of a position of dominance for adults and of subservience for youth (Bell, 1995; Checkoway, 1996; Fletcher & Vavrus, 2006; Rodrìguez Tramolao, 2013). In fact, adultism has been basically defined as the power that adults have and exert over children (Flasher, 1978) and the "systematic subordination of younger people as a targeted group" (DeJong & Love, 2015, p. 490). "Adult supremacy" is currently emerging as an alternative term to adultism (Delgado & Staples, 2008) and it is defined similarly as a set of "beliefs, attitudes, policies, and practices" (DeJong & Love, 2015, p. 490), therefore it appears to be possible an assimilation of the two terms since both "adultism" and "adult supremacy" refer to negative practical effects of an adultcentric paradigm of thought.

In some contributions though the terms "adultcentrism" and "adultism" have been used as synonyms (Abood, 2009; Fletcher, 2013; LeFrançois, 2014). The first mention of the term "adultism" in the work of Patterson Du Bois (1903) was also concurrent to the description of an "adultocentric" attitude: the author stated that "the principal obstruction to our clear vision of the nature of the child is our own adulthood" (Du Bois, 1903, p. 16) and explained that adultism generates from three sources: a traditional idea of the child that are "thus-and-so", the tendency to seek power and authority, and the respect of duty (Du Bois, 1903, p. 17). Therefore, in addition to what presented above, it seems that since its first appearance "adultism" is connoted as the product of background assumptions that are involved with a specific image of the child and with other personal and society's tendencies. In view of the fact that at the present day a considerable amount of contributions on the topic exists, it has become important to discern between adultism and adultcentrism. The reason is that all the valuable practical suggestions provided by authors who treated adultism for more advisable not-adultist behaviors could be difficult to internalize for adult practitioners who work with

children, since the paradigm of thought in background could remain intact, thus probably leaving them with the feeling of being lacking of means to reach their educative, caring, raising or protective objectives concerning children. Therefore, in discussing the practical negative repercussions of adultcentric paradigm and the possible alternatives to them, the present work will combine the contributions of authors who focused their attention on the pragmatic aspects of this topic, regardless of whether they referred to them as adultism or adultcentrism.

In order to describe the functioning of adultcentric bias it seems appropriate to base the discourse on the resemblance observed between adultcentrism and ethnocentrism (Goode, 1986), since they both function subtly and their negative consequences are similar: miscommunication, inaccurate judgments, misuse of power, as well as undermining strengths and competences (Petr, 1992, 2003). Ethnocentrism is defined as a "view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it" (Sumner, 1906, p. 13) and, as emerged so far, adultcentrism also conforms to a paradigm of thought that puts adults at the center of everything, while children and young people are scaled and rated with reference to it. Furthermore, members of an ethnocentric group project their values in other groups' social systems with the belief that is "in the nature of things" to be organized on the basis of their own assumptions (Catton, 1960, p. 203). But children's culture exists as well, and it is very different from the one of adults, having its own priorities, transmission of skills, knowledge and characteristics (Corsaro, 2003; Goode, 1986; Mackay, 1974, 2003; Opie & Opie, 1991; Petr, 1992, 2003).

1.1.2. The image of the child. As a starting point, descriptions of the child that can be assimilated to an adultcentric perspective have been collected in order to identify the assumptions underlying adultcentric paradigm.

Edith Grotberg (1977) affirms that the concept of child development includes, among the others, a recurrent aspect of comparison between children and adulthood. According to this author, the characteristics of children that are generally highlighted are: small in size, emotionally unstable, irrational, illiterate, egocentric, dependent, and amoral. Adults instead are: large in size, emotionally stable, rational, literate, sociocentric, independent, and moral (adtapted from Grotberg, 1977, p. 392). These dichotomized differences are an example of a dualism that risks to separate and to put in opposition kids and adults by promoting a limited binary thinking (DeJong & Love, 2015). The sociologist Robert W. Mackay (1974, 2003) depicts the conception of children constructed by the dominant culture of adults: "Children are incomplete—immature, irrational, incompetent, asocial, acultural depending on whether you are a teacher, sociologist, anthropologist or psychologist. Adults, on the other hand, are complete—mature, rational, competent, social, and autonomous unless they

are 'acting-like-children'" (Mackay, 2003, p. 28). It has also been found that "children are described today as innocent, weak, needy, lacking (in skill or knowledge), immature, fearful, savage, vulnerable, undefined, or open-ended, as opposed to adults who are intelligent, strong, competent, mature, civilized, and in control" (Cannella, 1997, p. 34). The opinion that children lack in moral status, are incompetent, passive and dependent (Lansdown, 2005; Mayall, 2000) is a *leitmotiv* in the description of adultcentric perspective and the immediate implications of such adult/child dichotomized comparison are that adults are substantially better, complete and fully human, while children are not (Cannella, 1997; DeJong & Love, 2015; Goode, 1986; Mackay, 2003; Moss & Petrie, 2005; Waksler, 1986). In this perspective, children are seen as innocent and needy, as well as passive recipients of a developmental process where teachers and parents transmit them their wisdom and expertise (Lansdown, 2005; Nguyen, 2010). Such vision leads inevitably to an asymmetry of power in the adult-child relationship (Nguyen, 2010; Pedrocco Biancardi, 2002; Rodrìguez Tramolao, 2013) and to the conviction that adults "have the moral authority to control youth" (Delgado & Staples, 2008, p. 29). This is in line with the statements of David A. Goode (1986), according to whom from an adultcentric perspective children are seen as needing the action of adult society in order to acquire those basic competences that characterize a human being, as well as a *tabula rasa* with potentialities that will be expressed only in adulthood. The author affirms also that the adultcentric perspective thinks of children as growing through precise developmental stages until the final stage of adulthood. This aspect concerns the implied finalism in developmental stage theories, which risks to configure as adultcentric because it implies that adulthood is the final aim, the endpoint of development, thus constructing an image of the child that by definition is undeveloped, incomplete and incompetent in previous stages (Cannella, 1997; DeJong & Love, 2015; Petr, 1992, 2003; Uprichard, 2008). Moreover, such incompetence is measured on the basis of adult standards, against which children's deficits are highlighted at the expense of their agency and resources (Lansdown, 2005; Mackay, 1974; Matusov & Hayes, 2000; Nguyen, 2010). The critique to the finalism intrinsically embedded in adultcentric paradigm is not exclusive of human and social sciences. The Italian biologist Alessandro Minelli (2003) proposes a paradigm shift in evolutionary developmental biology from finalism to a truly developmental perspective (Paula, 2004), because adultcentric perspective is

> a generalized weakness of biology, […] according to which what really matters in the living world is the adult, the fitness of which can be calculated by determining how much its offspring contributes to the next generation: non-reproductive stages are relevant only in so far as they pave the way to the coming of the adult on the scene. (Minelli, 2014, p. 227).

Alessandro Minelli (2003) affirms that an "adultocentric" view of development describes the processes of ontogeny as provisional scaffolds for definitive attributes of adult form, while it is also possible to explain such scaffolds looking at their congruence with specific ontogenetic stages in which they appear, considering the complex of developmental dynamics of a particular stage instead of limiting our understanding by reducing them as mere bases at the service of later adult structures. Instead of considering every developmental stage as compatible with the following ones (i.e., adultcentric view), the alternative is simply to consider every stage as compatible with the previous one (Minelli, 2003).

On the basis of what emerged in the literature, it is possible to distinguish the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions that characterize the adultcentric paradigm of thought, referring respectively to "the nature of reality and being" and to "the study of knowledge" (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 27). At the ontological level, an adultcentric perspective considers the child as an "Other" opposite to the adult. Child has his/her own characteristics that are given, and adults do not think that the image of the child that they have in mind is constructed through their own consciousness and cognition, in fact they look for universal rules and standards of normality to explain childhood. This conception resembles the ontological position of realism and, as a result, young people would have a "predetermined reality that can be uncovered through Western positivist science" (DeJong & Love, 2015, p. 496). Epistemology regards instead the acquisition of knowledge and the relationship between the "knower" and the "would-be knower" (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 27), in this case respectively the adult and the child. Adultcentrism entails the idea that an "objective" knowledge can be transmitted to the child, who is conceived as an empty box that has to receive and accumulate wisdom, knowledge and expertise from adults to become one of them. Children must assimilate what adults transmit to them and if they are not able to do it, or if they do it in another way, they are either defective or wrong.

There are also assumptions about human nature regarding specifically the relationship between human beings and environment synthesizable with the control-controlled opposition (Burrell & Morgan, 1979): from an adultcentric perspective, children do not have an active part in controlling the environment, and therefore environment exerts a control on children through socialization, cultural demands, family context, and so forth. Raniero Regni (2007) underlines "one of the many *idola* lodged in adults' minds, and which for centuries impeded them from approaching the discovery of childhood. According to a traditional image, little child's mind has the characteristic of passing quickly from one thing to another, a kind of attention that is unstable, wandering, slippery, and skipping depending on the strength of environmental stimuli drawing it by, thus implying that child's attention actually belongs to the environment and not to him/her" (Regni, 2007, p. 78, own

translation). This becomes visible when the child is described as passive and incompetent, namely de-empowered and without agency in the world. Adults from the other hand, have the power and the duty to raise children, educate them and make them respectable members of society.

Finally, methodological level concerns the practical consequences of the aforementioned assumptions including also, as previously stated, negative adultist behaviors, beliefs and attitudes. Some examples of such practical outcomes are that children and young people in general are continuously controlled by adults, their opinions are not taken into much consideration, and they have to be punished, threated and hit, added to the fact that adults have the right to withdraw privileges and to ostracize them (Bell, 1995). But also over-permissive, over-controlling or indifferent attitudes are described as forms of discrimination against young people (Fletcher, 2013) because these attitudes descend by the same assumptions: children can do whatever they want because they are "just children" and nothing much is expected from them, or they are ignored because they are not perceived as adequate conversational partner, or they are under maximum control and protection because they are needy and not able at all to control or protect themselves. Some of these measures appear undeniably understandable, but the risk involved is that "protectionist perspective combines with an adult-supremacist ideology that positions older people as the ultimate authority figures and children as mere objects of their control" (Abood, 2009, p. 3). It becomes visible that practical repercussions of an adultcentric paradigm can have different shades and that it is not sufficient to simply do the opposite to what seems a negative adultist behavior (e.g., indifference as opposite to over-control), this is because the underlying idea that the child is "something else" compared to an adult remains intact, and the binary thinking with all the assumptions that distinguish an adult from a child is still working in the background. Obviously children need guidance, protection, care and the intention of the present reflections is not to contradict this self-evident fact, but it can be argued that the kind of guidance, protection and care that is widespread in our society constructs a powerless child and sometimes risks to ignore his/her competences and resources, aspects that would result harmful to the child, but that also have negative implications for parents, teachers, and services that are certainly well-meaning and have the interests of young people close to their hearts.

1.1.3. How adultcentric bias affects the adult-child relationship. Our understanding of adult-child relationship might be subjected to the adultcentric bias, which prevents to acknowledge the deeply reciprocal and bilateral qualities of the encounter between those that can be seen as two cultures: the one of adults and the one of children. Such bias gives to the relationship certain specific connotations: firstly, there is an evident asymmetry of power in favor of the dominant culture that is the one of adults (DeJong & Love, 2015; Duarte Quapper, 2015; Goode, 1986; Rodrìguez Tramolao,

2013). To perceive children as immature and incompetent leads automatically adults to feel the right of fully decide for them, and this has direct implications on the other two characteristics of the relationship. It has been indeed argued that children are treated more as objects or possessions by adults, an extension of their own ego (Benedict, 1934), than as relational partners with their own agency. Children are perceived so incompetent that they do not even know what they want or what they need, therefore privacy and liberty have to be limited by adults for children's own good (Lansdown, 2005; Mason & Steadman, 1997; Melton, 1987), they are depersonalized by the fact of being treated as objects of adult socialization and of massive interventions that work to modify childhood (Mayall, 2000). Finally, since children are immature and incompetent, the relationship results unilateral, one-sided in a top-down direction: the adult "teaches" to the child meanings, emotions, moral, values, and so forth. Children's views are rarely taken into account, they do not teach anything to adults and they do not enrich adults' views. Their voices and perspectives are disqualified, ignored or reinterpreted with adult lenses (Cannella, 1997; Foti, 2004; Lansdown, 2005; Pedrocco Biancardi, 2002). It has been argued by Keri DeJong and Barbara J. Love (2015) that adults may see the intrinsic powerlessness of children as a rite of passage that has to be survived in order to receive the benefits and the privileges of adulthood, and that a change in the adult-child relationship will "eliminate, destroy, or invalidate their own experience or diminish their status as an adult. For some, it would be as if they endured the powerlessness of childhood for nothing" (DeJong & Love, 2015, p. 504). The most evident aspect is that the two aspects of power and protection are deeply intertwined in denoting the relationship when adultcentric paradigm is working in the background. It is possible that this fact can make very difficult for adults to think of a bilateral, interactive and equitable relationship with children and, simultaneously, to find a way to protect and guide them.

1.1.4. Adultcentrism in society. Claudio Duarte Quapper (2012, 2015) has deepened the description of an adultcentric society, in which the relationship between the age classes is characterized by an imbalance of power, where the vision of adults dominates and perpetuates itself both on a material and on a symbolic level. Materially, through economic and political processes that institutionalize the delimitation of access to certain goods, benefits, services and rights. Symbolically, by constructing the adult as a reference point for children, powerful, valuable and capable of decisions and therefore in right of control youngers, constructing at the same time childhood as a condition of inferiority and subordination. According to the author, adultcentric society, is the product and the producer of itself since economic and political processes have materially consolidated this specific societal organization, and the symbolic level of the socio-cultural matrix enhances its recreation and reproduction, building an imaginary that directly affects the relationships and identity processes of

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social subjects. Keri DeJong and Barbara J. Love (2015) describe youth oppression in adultcentric society adjusting the "Five Faces of Oppression" (Young, 2009) to the topic and adopting them as individuation criteria: (1) Exploitation: when the results of young people's labor and efforts are transferred to adults' group, organizations and institutions (e.g., unpaid internships); (2) Marginalization: the impossibility to participate in economic life leads to young people's financial dependency on adults. (3) Powerlessness: children and young people lack in authority and status, therefore they are not allowed to make decisions on various matters that directly involve their lives (alimentation, sentimental relationships, school attendance, etc.); (4) Cultural imperialism: refers to the predominance of adults' perspectives, which are seen as normal and universally correct, while young people's point of view is disregarded or trivialized; (5) Violence: the extent to which every form of violence toward children is enabled by legal, social or common practices (DeJong & Love, 2015, pp. 493–494). The authors argue that the existence of government agencies that handle the matter of violence against children indicates that the phenomenon is widespread. A point highlighted also by Christopher G. Petr (1992, 2003), according to whom the fact that similar organizations exist "is, paradoxically, an indictment of our society's disregard of children: if we truly valued children, society would not need such an organization" (Petr, 1992, p. 409). Nevertheless, in the second half of twentieth century some social and cultural changes have occurred, among which the fact that the always growing attention to the rights of the child set standards of care and raising based on the respect for children's and adolescents' dignity, questioning the traditional idea of ownership and control of children by parents, thing that can explain why adults today feel a lack of ideas, models and roles (Rodrìguez Tramolao, 2013, p. 21). In fact, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) indicated the need for our society to abandon the adultcentric perspective and to adopt a rights-based framework (Abood, 2009; Lansdown, 2005). Concluding, since children have their own culture, socialization might also be conceived as a contact between cultures (Speier, 1973), this could help in thinking at socialization of children as something constructed by adults and children together and not as a top-down process from adults to children.

1.1.5. Adultcentrism in child advocacy and medical care. Adultcentric paradigm, as presented so far, has direct implications on the way in which adults, certainly driven by the best intentions, take action to protect children. The major effect consists in denying children "the opportunities to contribute towards their own welfare" (Lansdown, 2005, p. 39). Adults limit the conception of child's well-being giving priority to family economic status and individualism, failing to widen the framework to improve community wellness (Abood, 2009). Well-being should be conceived as highly dynamic and variable, mediated and influenced by multilevel processes, but there is a scarcity

in the literature of works that take into account children's views and "active contributions to their well-being, coping and very survival" (Boyden & Mann, 2005, p. 20). Thinking at the child in a finalistic way, as a "still-not-an-adult" object, implies children's incapability and incompetence in reasoning, deciding, evaluating what they need or want. Therefore, the risk is to confuse child's real needs with something else which is the result of the interpretation and values of adults. "Child advocates act on behalf of children, but they do not always represent children" (Melton, 1987, p. 359), since adultcentrism, if prevailing, represents an impediment for adult practitioner because it creates "barriers to effective practice with children" (Petr, 1992, p. 408). A connection between this discourse and the topic of children medical care can be easily drawn, since in the second half of twentieth century a change in pediatrics also occurred: from a pediatrics concerned only at the sphere of physical well-being to a new pediatrics that monitors the development of children in all its emotional and psychosocial aspects, thus giving pediatricians a new role of child counsellor and advocate (Di Mauro & Mariniello, 2005; Pawluch, 1983). This is certainly a great advancement in pediatrics, but keeping in mind the characteristics of the adultcentric paradigm a risk becomes visible: all the areas of children's life become prerogative of medicine, thus supporting a medicalization movement where parents result dependent by pediatricians, up to the extreme of delegation (De Luca, 2009).

1.1.6. Adultcentrism in research with children. Since a paradigm is a "set of interrelated assumptions about the social world which provides a philosophical and conceptual framework for the organized study of that world" (Filstead, 1979, p. 34), adultcentric paradigm should affect above all the context of research with children. Indeed, it has been pointed out that in research context the effect of such paradigm would easily lead to confuse one's own difficulties as an adult in understanding kids' activities with deficits attributable to children themselves (Matusov & Hayes, 2000; cf. also Donaldson, 1978). In other words, this approach to the matter problematizes the possibility that an adult researcher would not be able to completely understand how children carry out their activities or the real motivations underlying their actions. Consequently, the reference standards chosen by the researcher can make the child appear to be defective when the research situation itself is constructed in a way or in a context that the child does not understand or does not consider relevant.

Moreover, as already discussed above, conventional child development theories have certain assumptions that can be considered adultcentric: the conception of child development as universal process, adulthood as a normative status, universal developmental goals and stages, the idea that a deviation from the norm represents a risk for the child, and that children are dependent and passive recipients of adults' protection and guidance (Lansdown, 2005). Such assumptions inevitably affect

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research if not recognized and taken into consideration. An example often presented in this respect (Alderson, 2007; Donaldson, 1987; Matusov & Hayes, 2000; Regni, 2007) and that permits to highlight at what level adultcentric bias operates in research settings and in theory construction, regards the Piagetian notion of children's egocentric thought (Piaget & Inhelder, 1956). On the basis of the results obtained from children subjected to the three mountains task, Jean Piaget and collaborators observed that participants younger than approximately seven years of age, namely still in the preoperational stage, failed in describing a perspective different from their own when asked to indicate what another person would see from a different position. More specifically, the three mountain task consisted in presenting to the child a three-dimensional model of three mountains, which were differentiated from each other thanks to details like the color or the object on the top of the mountain. Afterwards, a doll was placed in a position that was different from the one of the child, who had to solve the problem of what the doll can see from its position. Several experiments designed in more child-friendly versions of the three mountains task (Donaldson, 1987; Hughes, 1975) gave extremely different results, in the sense of a tangible increase in much younger children's success rates, thus questioning the very concept of children's egocentrism. It appears plausible to think that "what Piaget called the children's 'egocentrism' was actually Piaget's adultocentrism of confusing the children's unfamiliarity and disengagement with the task as defined by the researcher and attributing to the children the cognitive deficit of egocentrism" (Matusov & Hayes, 2000, p. 232).

David A. Goode (1986) argues that traditional research topics concerning childhood (e.g., child development, socialization, sociolinguistics, sociology of education and of family, etc.) are uninformed about the existence and the characteristics of kids' culture. If the study of childhood would be conceived as a cross-cultural task, it could be possible at least the attempt to avoid the problem of ascribing adult meanings to children (Melton, 1987; Speier, 1973) cultural anthropology and ethnographic methodologies can be of inspiration in addressing this issue. An example of discussion about adultcentric paradigm guiding research is provided by Pascual I. Rodríguez (2010), who analyzed the state of research regarding the consequences of the use of new technologies (ICTs) in the lives of children, who are seen as incapable and immature in protecting themselves from the intrinsic risks of the use of internet. The author highlights that research on this topic is not neutral and that it is more similar to a cultural product revealing adults' representation of childhood: in contributions where ICTs results as having negative effects on children, these latter have had little role in research design and are observed more as objects than as subjects. On the other hand, research designs based on contextualized and participative methods did not result in findings where risk and danger appeared as dominant topics, but what was noticed is that children have an active role in the use of ICTs: they are creative and skilled, as well as able to find social support or reinforcing

relationships in real life through the use of ICTs. The suggestion of the author is not to ignore the risks, but to include in the analysis children as key informants using a naturalistic or contextual research approach.

1.2. Black Pedagogy

1.2.1. Origin of the concept. The concept of *Schwarze Pädagogik*, literally meaning "Black Pedagogy", slowly spread in discourses about child-rearing and laid the foundations for interdisciplinary reflections connecting pedagogy and social-juridical psychology fields of study. The first appearance of this concept can be traced back in the work of Katharina Rutschky (1977), who gathered various sources of eighteenth and nineteenth century with the precise purpose to show which where the considerations, values and practices promoted by pedagogists and physicians of those times and to problematize the "scientified" and socialized education through a historical, and critical, reflection on education as part of the civilization process (Rutschky, 2015). The author argues indeed that "education" is a bourgeois phenomenon belonging to modernity and, instead of focusing on progresses and innovations arising from the Enlightenment, she puts into the foreground the actual repercussions of educational principles and socio-cultural context of that time on the daily life of children, corroborated by the multitude of primary sources that the author collects in her *florilegium* of Black Pedagogy. The result is the description of a systematic use of power, violence and intimidation to "train" children in bourgeois virtues such as diligence and subordination (Brokate, 2005). Polarization of power in favor of adults is in fact the bedrock of Black Pedagogy, thing that is immediately reflected on the resulting educational practices consisting in physical and psychological violence, control, surveillance, oppression and punishment (Kühn, 2014; Rutschky, 2015). It was though Alice Miller (1980) the one who provided a more systematic definition of the concept combining it with a psychological explanation of its foundations in the mind of educators and its consequences on children, and vice versa: in fact, "if it was never possible for us to relive on a conscious level the rejection we experienced in our own childhood and to work it through, then we in turn will pass this rejection on to our children" (Miller, 1983, p. 4), thus creating a vicious circle both of subtle and explicit violence that is transmitted through generations. In the English version of her work, the author refers to Black Pedagogy as to "poisonous pedagogy" (Miller, 1983), nonetheless in the present work it has been decided to use the label "Black Pedagogy" in order to maintain a direct semantic connection with the original term, which was also used as such by Alice Miller in her original publication (Miller, 1980), and it has been translated into Italian language maintaining the reference to the black color (Miller, 2007; Rutschky, 2015). It is necessary to strongly underline that

this term is nowise referring or connected to "Black Pedagogy" meant as the education provided to black students or the implementation of black studies in schools' curricula (Johnson, Pitre, & Johnson, 2014; Pitre, Ray, & Pitre, 2008): the semantic adherence to the originally coined term has been considered a priority, trusting that the clear disambiguation provided would have been sufficient to distinguish the different conceptual areas. Therefore, in the context of the present work, the label "Black Pedagogy" represents the systematic use of educational methods focused on the primary objective to break the child's will and to shape the child's character according to the ideal values of educators and society: some of its more recognizable characteristics are discipline, the safeguard of educator's authority, strict rules, as well as control and power of the educator on the child (Kühn, 2014). Some examples of Black Pedagogy's methods are: "laying traps, lying, duplicity, subterfuge, manipulation, 'scare' tactics, withdrawal of love, isolation, distrust, humiliating and disgracing the child, scorn, ridicule and coercion even to the point of torture" (Miller, 1983, p. 59).

1.2.2. Current functionality of the construct. Most of the educational practices presented in Katharina Rutschky's work (1977) can be easily labeled today as physical or psychological maltreatment, but the change in the image of childhood occurred relatively recently: an idea of the child as subject of rights and the cultural valorization of childhood emerges starting from the 1960s (Di Blasio, 2000) culminating in the 1989 *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (hereinafter referred to as "CRC"), ratified in Italy in 1991 with Law 176/91. For what concerns child maltreatment, the CRC states that:

> States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child. (UN General Assembly, 1989, article 19, paragraph 2)

Such a definition is broad and all-embracing, thing that could involve a certain difficulty for individuals (teachers, parents, etc.) in recognizing and defining a behavior as maltreating in some borderline cases, indeed, it is the very limit that could be often problematic to trace, since specific cultural assumptions of each country influence its characteristics. In fact, different countries vary in the reported normativeness of physical discipline (Lansford et al., 2005) and, for this reason, it is hard to imagine that the CRC could have had an immediate and pervasive effect on all the countries which ratified it. No less than 20 years after the appearance of CRC, the Committee on the Rights of the

Child issued a general comment on the aforementioned article 19 "since the extent and intensity of violence exerted on children is alarming" and reminded that "no violence against children is justifiable; all violence against children is preventable" (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2011b, p. 3). In order to clarify what is meant in article 19 with "all forms of violence" the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011) pointed out that "frequency, severity of harm and intent to harm are not prerequisites for the definitions of violence" (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2011b, p. 8) and provided a more detailed definition of the different forms of violence against children, emphasizing the awareness of an artificial subdivision as they can easily co-occur: neglect or negligent treatment, mental violence, physical violence, corporal punishment, sexual abuse and exploitation, torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, violence among children, self-harm, harmful practices, violence in the mass media, and violence through information and communication technologies (ICTs). For the purposes of the present work only the definitions of two forms of violence listed above will be reported, in order to show their similarity with Black Pedagogy as it has been conceptualized so far. The following definitions have been extracted and adapted from the General Comment No. 13 (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2011b):

- *Mental violence.* Often described as psychological maltreatment, mental abuse, verbal abuse and emotional abuse, can include: (a) all forms of persistent harmful interactions with the child, for example, conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved, unwanted, endangered or only in value of meeting another's needs; (b) Scaring, terrorizing and threatening; exploiting and corrupting, spurning and rejecting; isolating, ignoring and favouritism; (c) Denying emotional responsiveness; neglect mental health, medical and educational needs; (d) Insults, name-calling, humiliation, belittling, ridiculing and hurting a child's feelings; (e) Exposure to domestic violence; (f) Placement in solitary confinement, isolation or humiliating or degrading conditions of detention; (g) Psychological bullying and hazing by adults or other children, including "cyberbullying" via ICTs.

- *Corporal punishment.* Any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Most involves hitting ("smacking", "slapping", "spanking") children, with the hand or with an implement - a whip, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon, etc. But it can also involve, for example, kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, caning, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scalding, or forced ingestion. In the view of the Committee, corporal punishment is invariably degrading.

(UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2011, paragraphs 22 and 24)

The full implementation of CRC at all levels of our society may not result in a smooth process if singular citizens have not yet completely introjected the image of children as subject of rights, thing that would lead them to have a clear idea of which are the limits that have to be respected in child rearing, care and education. Therefore, while the most obvious and explicit abusive conducts are correctly identified, adults could be still hindered in recognizing as harmful forms of subtle violence, such as psychological abuse or some kinds of physical disciplinary methods. In fact, physical violence for disciplinary purposes (e.g., harsh treatment and cruel or humiliating punishment) results still common in the context of family both in industrialized and in developing countries (Durrant, 2005; Pinheiro, 2006) and it often coexists with psychological forms of violence detrimental to child's well-being both in family and in school contexts (Pinheiro, 2006).

According to Paolo Perticari (2016), who edited the Italian edition of Katharina Rutschky's *Schwarze Pädagogik*, this level of children abuse is a contemporary problem and it deserves urgent attention, since this pathogenic education built on a devious authoritarian mentality is infecting children's everyday life and disguising abuse as a form of love and care. The author specifies that such level of maltreatment is covert, difficult to recognize and also very complicated: most adults do not realize to behave in a harmful way and they are convinced to act in children's own good and that slapping, yelling at kids or humiliating them are necessary methods to promote a healthy and robust growth. Consequently, also those adults who are in the position of observing the application of such disciplinary practices, tend to justify or minimize them, often not recognizing them as something from which children have to be protected.

1.2.3. Italian legal framework. In the face of such considerations, it appears necessary a reference to the Italian legislation on the subject: before the reform of Family Law occurred in Italy in 1975, the abrogated article 319 of Italian Civil Code (hereinafter: "I.C.C.") explicitly acknowledged to the parent the power of restraining child's misconduct, and it was interpreted as a sort of exemption from responsibility for the harmful acts committed by the parent towards the child if they were aimed at repressing bad behaviors, a sphere of exemption connected to the *ius corrigendi* (i.e., the right to correct), a corollary of parental *potestas* (i.e., authority) (Paladini, 2012), with an underlying motivation not based on the objective of favoring a well-balanced development, but rather on the intention to obtain a docile and not bothering child (Occhiogrosso, 1993). To date, *ius corrigendi* has not yet been explicitly defined by law, but its existence is deduced from Art. 571 of Italian Penal Code (hereinafter: "I.P.C.") that defines the offense of "Abuse of means of correction or discipline". The fact of referring to an "abuse" automatically implies that there is a legitimate and permitted use of disciplinary measures, which can result in abuse if the measure is excessive, arbitrary or untimely

(Ferraro, 2008). In other words, the *ius corrigendi* justification regards the right of parents (or educators, or teachers) to use "licit" means of correction and discipline. The question that remains open is then to understand which is the boundary between licit and illicit means of discipline since it is very difficult to establish a distinctive criterion (Catullo, 2012). On the basis of CRC's guidelines, it results clear that the problem should not exist: *vis modica* (i.e., moderate violence) has to be considered as unacceptable corporal punishment. But the existence of Art. 571 I.P.C. leaves open the opportunity to punish more lightly conducts that in the absence of *animus corrigendi* (i.e., corrective purpose) would constitute crimes against the person, thing that is absolutely anachronistic if considering both CRC (1989) and Italian reform of Family Law (Law n. 151/1975), as a result of which family loses its previous connotation of authoritarian and hierarchical system and the child, from object of protection and sometimes of disposition, becomes a subject of rights (Tortorelli, 2014). This transition is evident in the change of attitude through which Italian jurisprudence interprets Art. 571 I.P.C.: for example, Italian Supreme Court (Criminal section) in 2016 stated that a teacher who adopted a rigid teaching method, including the resort to slaps, had to be framed within the most serious crime of maltreatment ordered by Art. 572 I.P.C. (Cassazione Penale, Decision No. 4170/16). However, it is reported in the literature that with specific reference to Italian family relationships, part of the doctrine considers *vis modica* a licit mean of correction and also that it would be difficult to imagine the prospect of completely banish it from family context (Catullo, 2012; Tortorelli, 2014).

This very brief examination of Italian legislative and juridical references certainly does not have the pretension to be exhaustive: the discussion of the topic in juridical literature is extensive and it was inevitable to limit the exploration according to the objectives of the present work. However, it emerges that there is a complex discussion concerning the definition of what falls within the *ius corrigendi* justification and what does not. Accordingly, in respect to Italian legal framework, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed a concern for "the absence of a nationwide common system and framework for the protection of children from all forms of physical and mental violence" (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2011a, p. 11). If this is the case, it results appropriate to ponder further on how the distinction between licit and illicit means of correction can be clear in the minds of individual citizens and how they can realize to be mistaken if they apply the educational practices (e.g., a slap or a verbal insult) that they have seen widely adopted by the previous generations (parents, grandparents, etc.) without any questioning of their legitimacy.

1.2.4. Necessity of an instrument. As a matter of fact, physical discipline or verbal intimidation for educational purposes is the most common form of violence against children and often this is not the consequence of an intentional disciplinary choice but is the result of anger, frustration, or lack of

knowledge of responses that do not entail violence (UNICEF, 2014). Therefore, the hypothesis of the present work is that the ongoing diffusion of the subtlest forms of disciplinary physical or mental violence coincides with a persistence in our society of the hierarchical and authoritarian model of the family mentioned above, which appears to be well described by Black Pedagogy values. In the light of this hypothesis a measuring instrument capable of grasping such authoritarian educational model was needed. At first, it has been considered to use the already existing "Poisonous Pedagogy Scale" within the O'Brien Multiphasic Narcissism Inventory (O'Brien, 1987), a subscale elaborated on the basis of Alice Miller's definition of Black Pedagogy and measuring the belief to have the possibility to control others taking advantage of one's own superordinate position (Montebarocci et al., 2003; Sines, Waller, Meyer, & Wigley, 2008). Nevertheless, it has eventually been chosen to develop a different proposal, in order to include more detailed aspects of Black Pedagogy concept, in line with the research interests connected to the present study. Surely "Poisonous Pedagogy Scale" will represent a valuable comparison to be included in a future research protocol in order to evaluate its relationship with the proposal of a Black Pedagogy scale set forth in this dissertation. Therefore, it has been elaborated an instrument which thoroughly gathers values and methods of Black Pedagogy, in order to explore the possible presence in our territory of this unexpressed legacy that could hamper the complete abandon of physically and psychologically harmful disciplinary practices and thus the construction of a totally positive adult-child relationship.

Finally, it is necessary to underline that the instrument elaborated for detecting the construct of Black Pedagogy has been conceived and administrated keeping constantly in mind that the concept of "Black Pedagogy" was coined in retrospective with respect to the disciplinary practices that it intends to describe, since such practices were the direct result of educational objectives shared by the European society of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, viz., the subordination to authority and development of bourgeois qualities such as tidiness, gratitude, honesty, obedience, diligence, humility and chastity (Kühn, 2014). Therefore, it seems that the retrospective and critical pedagogical reflection leading to the description of "Black Pedagogy" was possible because cultural and social changes allowed to conceive such disciplinary practices as harmful to the child. This latter aspect is of great importance: if the historical and cultural frame in which such practices took place is taken into account, it seems understandable that who implemented Black Pedagogy methods thought to act for children's own good.

1.3. Teacher-student relationship

The teacher-student relationship has acquired growing centrality in the psychological research

field, especially since the Nineties, following a contextual turn that has promoted a shift in the focus of attention towards social interaction and its influences on child development and education (Longobardi, 2008). Following the reconstruction of Sondra H. Birch and Gary W. Ladd (1997), it has been noticed that teacher-student relationship has been defined mainly on the basis of John Bowlby's Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980) through the work of several authors who make a complete reference to it or adopt only some aspects of it (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Howes & Hamilton, 1992, 1993; Howes & Matheson, 1992; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1992; Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995).

Many studies have shown that a good relationship between teacher and pupil has a fundamental importance from different points of view. Using the concept of "relatedness" Micheal Lynch and Dante Cicchetti (1992) observed that children who are maltreated in the family context tend to find in the relationship with their teacher an alternative or secondary attachment relationship. The sense of relatedness to teacher seems to influence heavily children's emotional engagement, meant as the perception of interest and fun in involving in academic activities, and the feeling of being happy and comfortable in classroom: children's reports of boredom, unhappiness, and anger during learning activities were higher when they described to feel unimportant for teachers or ignored by them (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). In preschool, a secure attachment with the teacher resulted related to children's prosocial behavior and their social competence rated by the teacher, moreover, it has been observed that it can compensate in part a insecure mother-child relationship (Copeland, Denham, & DeMulder, 1997).

Robert C. Pianta and colleagues (Pianta, 1994, 2001a; Pianta & Nimetz, 1991; Pianta & Steinberg, 1992; Pianta et al., 1995) developed the *Student-Teacher Relationship Scale* (STRS) widely used in researches that include teacher-pupil relationship and that permitted to highlight various beneficial aspects of a relationship characterized by high levels of closeness and low levels of conflicts. For example, the degree of closeness, meant as emotional warmth and open communication, significantly correlates with children's school performance and attitude, as well as with their engagement in school environment (Birch & Ladd, 1997). More specifically, closeness and conflict in the relationship between teacher and pupils seem to play a role in children's ability to acquire those skills that result necessary for school success (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). Already at the early age of preschool, a good quality relationship characterized by low dependence and low conflict is associated with less disruptive play modality with peers (Griggs, Gagnon, Huelsman, Kidder-Ashley, & Ballard, 2009) and, especially in Italy where children are in close contact with a limited number of teachers for the three preschool years, a positive relationship with the teacher may serve as protective factor against social maladjustment (Sette, Baumgartner, & Schneider, 2014). The establishment of a supportive

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relationship between teacher and pupil is an important factor of protection that is advantageous to the development of the child, and a very useful resource for counterbalancing any problem, which can take on the role of a risk factor, present in other relational contexts in which the child is involved (Pianta, 2001a). In this respect, it has been observed that a close relationship with the teacher worked as protective factor in the case of children with developmental vulnerabilities, who were more advantaged than peers with similar difficulties but without such relationship (Baker, 2006). Moreover, teacher's style influences also classroom climate in general: it has been observed that students with a controlling teacher display less intrinsic motivation, perceived competence, and self-esteem than students with autonomy-supportive teachers (Deci, Ryan, Vallerand, & Pelletier, 1991).

The always greater number of contributions in the literature highlighting the importance and centrality of a good, positive and supportive relationship between the child and the teacher, leads to reflect on what would happen if such relationship was not good, positive and supportive. It may be plausible to think that the teacher-pupil relationship can itself represent a risk factor or that can even conform as psychological and/or emotional maltreatment. Signs in this direction can be found in several research studies: for example, the presence of dependency in teacher-child relationship significantly correlates with difficulties in school adjustment, more negative school attitudes and a less positive involvement in school environment (Birch & Ladd, 1997). It has been also demonstrated that students complain more about educational, psychological and somatic distress if they perceive a more hostile attitude of teacher towards pupils (Sava, 2002) and also that the negative feedback, meant as a lack of nurturance, is a consistent negative predictor of children's academic performance and social behavior (Wentzel, 2002). An interesting result emerged from a study of Claudio Longobardi, Tiziana Pasta and Rocco Quaglia (2009) shows that the academic performance of primary school pupils influences the relationship with the teacher, in the sense that it appears characterized by more conflictual and dependent traits, especially regarding male students. Taking into account the points of view of both teachers and pupils, school performance is associated to the perception of compatibility or hostility within the relationship and therefore, the authors affirm that successful school performance has a positive impact on the teacher-student relationship, especially for what concerns male pupils (Longobardi et al., 2009). Furthermore, "children experiencing behavioral or learning problems showed poorer school outcomes and were less able to benefit from a close teacher relationship when compared to peers without such problems" (Baker, 2006, p. 211). In relation to this aspect, it has been highlighted that teachers nowadays are expected to manage a great variety of different educational needs and to favor an inclusive classroom atmosphere, thing that may cause an increase of teachers' stress levels, thus contributing to create the conditions for the generation of emotional abuse in the classroom, since teachers may unwittingly succumb to anger

and frustration (Nesbit & Philpott, 2002). In fact, verbal abuse acted out by the teacher seems to be preceded by inattention of disruptiveness of the child and it is more likely for boys to be subjected to it (Brendgen, Wanner, & Vitaro, 2006). Since such negative statements probably regard school performance or child's conduct, they may consolidate in children a sense of low competence in scholastic and behavioral matters, along with stirring them up to behave in accordance with teacher's negative belief, thus creating a vicious cycle that can actually lead to school failure and to the intensification of behavior problems (Brendgen, Wanner, Vitaro, Bukowski, & Tremblay, 2007).

Despite the presence in the literature of various results and reflections indicating the negative consequences of a distressing teacher-pupil relationship, research on such negative interaction seems to be considered a taboo (Poenaru & Sava, 1998). Research on the topic is perhaps complicated by the lack of agreement on the definition of such phenomenon (Mceachern, Aluede, & Kenny, 2008; Sava, 2002) and it is possible to affirm that few studies addressed the topic of intra-scholastic maltreatment carried out by the teacher (Caravita & Miragoli, 2007). However, an in-depth analysis would be necessary and important because it is not possible to gather the necessary elements to understand subtle emotional maltreating behavior possibly carried out by the teacher deriving the considerations only from studies focusing on effective teachers (Sava, 2002) and on positive relationships. Therefore, the literature calls attention to the need for dedicated studies, which should be able to provide useful information and specific prevention proposal, to protect the well-being of the child, but also of the teacher since, as explained above, often hostile behaviors implemented by teachers are the result of their fatigue and sense of frustration.

Constructs of Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy seem to be adequate for this purpose since they are aimed at detecting those educational premises that can lead, unwittingly or not, to conducts physically or psychologically harmful for children. As treated in the dedicated sections, the approach adopted in the present dissertation considers Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy as embedded in our social and cultural system, therefore it is hypothesized that their diffusion at a certain degree of intensity is extensive, especially as regards their value-related aspects. Consequently, the harmfulness of certain disciplinary measures, especially those pertaining to the emotional and mental sphere, can remain not recognized or not problematized. A similar "invisible maltreatment" is in fact often unwitting (Furioso, 2000, p. 125, own translation) and eventually arising from the pitfalls of a difficult adult-child relationship. In a study focused on gathering teachers' and teacher trainees' conceptions of abusing behaviors in scholastic context, it has been observed that emotional abuse verbally perpetrated is the least known form of child abuse from the perspective of teacher trainees (Shumba, 2002). It is necessary to always keep in mind in treating this topic that what is conceived within a certain context as accepted child-rearing and disciplinary practice has profound roots in cultural and

social norms (Lansford et al., 2005; Sava, 2002; UNICEF, 2014) and this complicates the possibility to delineate a comprehensive definition, especially for what concerns emotional abuse. In fact, "as the only stand-alone form of maltreatment and perhaps the most challenging to define a cut-off or threshold level, emotional maltreatment is likely most under-known" (Wekerle, 2011, p. 900). According to Filippo Furioso (2000), intra-scholastic maltreatment may be the result of good educational intentions and teachers can truly be convinced to act properly in order to carry out their educational role by implementing various types of abusive behavior towards the child: ignoring or rejecting, isolating, terrorizing, mortifying, depriving, punishing, blackmailing and manipulating. The author underlines that such conducts, based on genuine educational and disciplinary intents, would derive from an adultcentric cultural model. Invisible maltreatment is not, therefore, an explicit pedagogic choice but originates from a series of implicit and not elaborated aspects contained in the pedagogic option chosen by the practitioner.

Comparing the educational practices resulting from the adoption of an adultcentric perspective as presented by Filippo Furioso (2000), and those that characterize the methods of Black Pedagogy, it is possible to notice their substantial similarity, except for the component of corporal punishment that remains excluded. This is natural because the concept of Black Pedagogy includes all the abusive behavioral forms used with disciplinary purposes (psychological and physical), while Filippo Furioso (2000) focuses his attention on a level of maltreatment channeled mostly by verbal and relational channels.

On the basis of the literature presented so far, adultcentrism has been defined in the present work as a paradigm of thought, thing that would place it at a superordinated level in respect to Black Pedagogy. In this sense, the latter would seem to incorporate the most negative behaviors resulting from the adoption of an adultcentric paradigm, thus resulting at the same level of what in the literature has been identified as adultism.

1.4. Increase of Specific Learning Disorder (SLD) diagnoses

Recollecting the previously treated aspect regarding the fact that relational difficulties between teacher and pupil can be considered as related to students' low academic performance, learning problems, inattention or disruptiveness (Baker, 2006; Brendgen et al., 2006, 2007; Longobardi et al., 2009; Nesbit & Philpott, 2002) it results of great interest to explore teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding the recent considerable increase of SLD diagnoses in Italian schools. In fact, it has been measured an incidence of SLD diagnoses equal to .9% in school year 2010/2011 (i.e., 65'219 pupils on the entire Italian school population), and already in school year 2011/2012 it has been measured

an increase of 37%, since the incidence of SLD diagnoses reached the 1.2% (i.e., 90'030 pupils on the entire Italian school population), moreover, the highest incidence was found in northern and central Italy (MIUR, 2011). The percentage of incidence has further increased in the following years: in school year 2014/2015 it was assessed that it was equal to 2.1% (i.e., 186'803 pupils on the entire Italian school population) and that it mainly pertained in Italian northern regions for what concerns primary and secondary school (MIUR, 2015). The most recent survey of Italian Minister of Education, University and Research (2018) shows that the percentage of incidence of SLD diagnoses in school year 2016/2017 reached the 2.9% (i.e., 254'614 pupils on the entire Italian school population) and that the majority of cases is registered in northern Italy. Moreover, from this study emerges that Dyslexia is the most common SLD diagnosis and that the number of pupils with an SLD diagnosis in public schools is definitely greater than the number of pupils with an SLD diagnosis in private schools (MIUR, 2018). It has been hypothesized that such increase is due to a greater cognizance of SLD (MIUR, 2011, p. 3), but most of all it would be due to the approval of Law 170/10 "New rules on specific learning disorders in schools", which beyond a greater awareness of SLD promoted also assumption of responsibility by schools and teachers training, a set of premises that increased the ability and the possibility to individuate suspected cases of SLD to be referred for a diagnostic procedure (MIUR, 2018, p. 12). Nevertheless, there are also other opinions related to the considerable increase of SLD diagnosis occurred in the last few years. According to neuropsychiatrist Michele Zappella (2017) the recent epidemic of SLD pertaining in Italian schools may include false positives, meant as those cases that fall within SLD test parameters, but for which learning difficulties (e.g., reading difficulties) are not attributable to the actual neurobiological disorder (e.g., Dyslexia), but to other environmental factors (unfavorable socio-cultural context, too many hours of television, chaotic school environment or bullying, inadequate teaching, etc.). The problem arises especially when compensatory measures (audiobooks, use of computers, etc.) are provided for both categories, while for false positive cases exist also other kinds of successful intervention involving school-family collaboration (Zappella, 2017). Besides, problematic aspects of diagnosis process, in particular in respect of Dyslexia, have been highlighted by various authors in terms of the difficulty of individuating commonly accepted criteria that can help to distinguish the condition of Dyslexia from the condition of other poor readers (Elliott & Grigorenko, 2014; Pumfrey & Reason, 2013; Ramus, 2014). Taking into account these points of view, it appears that the risk involved in responding to similar difficulties with similar compensatory measures even when the origin of such difficulties is different, is to generate a standard response that does not truly account for individual's needs. In this respect, Christine Lloyd (2006), referring to Special Educational Needs (SEN), argues that a genuine inclusive attitude should require an understating of individual differences rather than treating SEN as

a homogenous group in needing of compensatory measures providing all an access to the same educational opportunity:

> While these measures may be seen to be laudable, in terms of developing *good* practice, they are, however, all concerned with compensatory and deficit approaches geared towards the normalization and indeed standardization, of groups and individuals rather than contributing to the *denormalization* of the institutions, systems and rules which comprise education and schooling. (Lloyd, 2006, p. 228)

It is however beyond the purpose of the present work to deepen this issue for which one should refer to the cited authors and to the literature on the topic, but a mention was necessary to reason on the fact that such differences of opinion can reasonably belong also to single teachers that everyday work in class with pupils. In the frame of the discussed phenomenon of the increase of SLD diagnoses, it is natural to doubt that single teachers can have a clear and shared opinion about the existence of SLD "false positives" and about which are the necessary or useful interventions to be implemented in such cases. Since the relationship between pupil and teacher is a relevant theme in this context, along with teacher's attitudes (Kerr, 2001; Lampugnani, 2017), the following question regards what kind of beliefs or values can influence teachers' educational attitude when dealing with a pupil having an SLD diagnosis or when dealing with a student with poor school performance but without a diagnosis and, above all, what kind of clarity on the topic can teachers have if such a debate is ongoing between specialists. Concerning this latter aspect, Hugo Kerr (2001) encountered confusion and uncertainty about dyslexia definition, causes and its very existence in results of a preliminary study involving ABE (Adult Basic Education) teachers as respondents. It would be of interest to assess if such confusion is present also with respect to Italian teachers, especially eight years later the approval of Law 170/10. There are also other issues concerning the increase of SLD diagnoses and SEN labelling that have been problematized in the literature, first of all, the very linguistic act of naming a situation with specialized terms such as SLD or SEN introduced in school a pathographical perspective that medicalizes the relation between learning and teaching (Annaloro, 2015). The risk that has been highlighted is the replacement of the pedagogical action with a diagnostic, clinical and therapeutic perspective and with a procedural conception of teaching to be applied in a standardized way, a medicalization tendency that would belong also the wider social and cultural context (Goussot, 2015). On the other hand, it has also been claimed that the harmfulness of diagnostic labelling seems more connected to the context and the purposes underlying the application of such label (Riddick, 1995).

Further issues that need to be taken into consideration in this context are possible problems of socialization with the peer group due to the presence of the diagnosis (Lampugnani, 2017), the attitude and role of parents towards the diagnosis (Griffiths, Norwich, & Burden, 2004; Mehta, 2011; Riddick, 1995) and the risk of teacher's "learned helplessness" (Gwernan-Jones & Burden, 2010; Kerr, 2001) that can be defined as:

> an unconsciously mediated mental state characterised, to a greater or lesser degree, by some or all of the following: reduced confidence and self-esteem, impoverished performance, diminished expectation, lowered motivation, dampened curiosity, lack of engagement, weak persistence, unwillingness to take risks and passivity. (Kerr, 2001, p. 83)

It seems that teachers are placed in the center of a great complexity of regulations, individual needs, expectations and difficulties. In fact, the need to approach the problem taking into consideration also the social and emotional aspects of this diagnosis with an interdisciplinary approach was highlighted by several authors (Gibbs & Elliott, 2008; Gibson & Kendall, 2010; Lampugnani, 2017; Pumfrey & Reason, 2013; Riddick, 1995), and in the present work it will be tried to account for the complexity of the phenomenon on our territory specifically from the point of view of teachers.

2. Aims of the study

The main reflection at the basis of the interest in the implementation of the present study is that, following the recognition, definition and greater protection actualized towards children in the last few decades, explicitly violent educational practices drastically decreased and result nowadays broadly socially condemned. However, if the paradigmatic premises underlying the implementation of detrimental educational and disciplinary practices have not fully changed, some specific objectives, values, and an adultcentric image of the child from which those practices originated, could be still present in adults' minds. If this would be the case, it is expected to find that subtler and elusive types of harmful disciplinary practices have not decreased at the same rate as "visible maltreatment", thus continuing to hamper positive relationships and well-being of both the child and the adult.

2.1. Primary Objectives

Therefore, one first objective of the present study is (a) to explore the presence on our territory of the visions and beliefs described above, measured through the operationalization of Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy constructs, since it is expected that these are present in a certain degree in "normal population" and that they still exert an implicit action as founding roots of educational practices undermining the good quality of the pupil-teacher relationship. (b) It will be also verified the hypothesis that there is more agreement with the values of Black Pedagogy than with its methods. This result could help in explaining what in the literature emerges as an unwitting detrimental behavior put into practice by the adult, since only certain disciplinary behaviors are fully recognized as harmful to the child (e.g., those involving the physical level). In fact, (c) it should be found a positive correlation between the presence of such constructs, especially Black Pedagogy, and a low recognition of situations and educational practices that are emotionally and psychologically maltreating. Consistently, (d) it is expected that emotionally and psychologically harmful disciplinary practices show a lower decrease rate if compared to physical ones. The reasoning behind this hypothesis is that a whole series of harmful disciplinary practices originated from Black Pedagogy values and objectives, therefore, if such values and objectives are still supported in some extent, it is likely that subtler and unrecognized maltreating disciplinary practices unwittingly persist in our child-rearing culture. Moreover, (e) the relationship between Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy is going to be explored and defined, evaluating the explanatory capability and usefulness of these constructs: on the basis of the theoretical literature Adultcentrism appears to be a paradigmatic frame for attitudes assimilable to Black Pedagogy methods.

Subsequently, (f) it is intended to use this framework to explore the pupil-teacher relationship, taking into account the phenomenon of the growing diffusion of SLD, e.g., if there is any difference in relational quality when a pupil with SLD is involved in the relationship compared to when it regards a pupil without a diagnosis but with poor school performance. It is also of interest what is teachers' stance on the phenomenon of increase of SLD diagnoses. In particular, it would be useful to gather more information about what they take into consideration when referring parents to a diagnostic procedure.

2.2. Secondary Objectives

In order to achieve primary objectives, it has been necessary to pass through several steps involving the accomplishment of subsidiary or connected goals: (a) the construction and preliminary validation of Adultcentrism Scale and Black Pedagogy Scale; (b) the construction and preliminary validation of an instrument capable of accounting, as much as possible, for the complexity of teachers' attitudes and representation of the increase of SLD diagnoses phenomenon; (c) to explore and to deepen the definition of intra-scholastic maltreatment in order to elaborate future proposals of intervention capable of promoting well-being in teacher-pupils relationship. This latter point has been treated in the dedicated section of the introduction. For what concerns the construction and preliminary validation of the instruments needed for the current study, three pilot studies will be presented in the following section entitled "New measures".

3. New measures

3.1. The Adultcentrism Scale: construction and preliminary validation

    3.1.1. Instrumentation. On the basis of the reference literature a questionnaire of 27 items has been developed. Response options have been designed as a 4-point Likert scale, because the instrument is structured as subject-centered, for which a 5-point response set is adequate (Chiorri, 2011; Cox III, 1980). Considering also that there is no clear indication of preference between 4-point and 6-point scales (Chang, 1994; Chiorri, 2011; Lee & Paek, 2014), it has been opted for the 4-point response set considering scale's and items' length (Chiorri, 2011). The possibility of a mid-point positioning has been excluded also because adultcentrism is definable as a paradigm of thought, therefore, investigating its aspects appears similar to an exploration of attitudes, in the presence of which an eventual prevalence of mid ratings could indicate "neutrality, uncertainty, indifference, or even ambivalence" (Haddock & Maio, 2004, p. 77). Furthermore, given the delicacy of the topic, it has been thought that the possibility of a neutral position could affect results through desirability bias (Garland, 1991), in other words participants have been knowingly forced to take a position for or against each statement derived from the literature on adultcentrism. In this first version of the scale seven reverse items were present, referring to a meaning that goes in the opposite direction of the measured construct.

    3.1.2. Participants and procedures. The questionnaire was administered to 326 subjects at Time1 and to 237 subjects at Time2 with a time lapse of two weeks. In both sessions, participants were informed about the objectives, procedures and their rights, including anonymity and the possibility of dropping out from the study at any moment. All participants were treated in accordance with the ethical guidelines for research provided by American Psychological Association (APA, 2017), by Italian Psychological Association (AIP, 2013), and by the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2008). After the first informative phase, participants were asked to express their informed consent, in order to proceed with the compilation of the instrument. Participants were Italian university students at their first year of attendance at the Department of Human and Social Sciences of the University of Bergamo. The choice of inviting for participation only students at the first year of attendance was due to the intention of avoiding the risk that university education could affect their responses. Administration of the instrument took place in students' university classrooms (related to developmental psychology courses), as well as the restitution of results, which has been designed as an interactive reflection session with participants on the collected data. At Time1 (N = 326),

participants' age range was from 18 to 42 years, with a mean age of 20 years ($SD = 2.6$). Most of participants were female (92% females, 8% males) with a secondary education diploma (98%), the remaining ones had a higher educational qualification. Approximately half of participants worked (46%) and the 56% of them worked with children. Virtually all participants (99%) were in contact with children in their personal life. At Time2 ($N = 237$), age range was from 18 to 35 years ($M = 20$ years; $SD = 2.6$), the sample was still predominantly composed by females (88% females, 12% males) and with the prevalence of a secondary education diploma as lowest educational qualification (96%). Working students were 44%, of which 60% was working with children. The 99% of the whole sample reported to be in contact with children in personal life.

3.1.3. Data Analysis. Analyses were conducted with IBM SPSS software (Version 22). Screening of data, exploration of the scale's proprieties and reliability analysis have been conducted. It was possible to perform a paired-samples t-test on 106 participants, and it was expected to find a not significant result for this specific analysis, since adultcentrism should be a construct that does not change over time unless some kind of training or intervention occurs. After the assessment of the suitability of data for factor analysis, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed with Maximum Likelihood approach and Oblimin rotation. Cross-loading items have been discarded (Costello & Osborne, 2005), along with items loading < .35 considering the minimum acceptable loading value of .32 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

3.1.4. Results of pilot study. Firstly, an initial exploration of the characteristics of the scale was performed: Table 1 shows a summary of exploration results concerning Adultcentrism Scale both at Time1 and at Time2. Since Little's MCAR Test resulted significant in both occasions, thus indicating that data were not missing completely at random, a pairwise exclusion has been set for the following analyses. As reported in Table 1, distribution of responses configured as heavy-tailed (Westfall, 2014) with a slight asymmetry (positive at Time1, and negative at Time2). The mean of the scale at Time1 and at Time2 (minimum score = 27, maximum score = 108) was similar, and 5% Trimmed Mean resulted very close to the mean in both occasions, so it has been decided to not exclude outliers from further analyses. Cronbach's alpha resulted .67 both at Time1 and at Time2, slightly lower than the suggested acceptable value of .70 (George & Mallery, 2003); nonetheless, values greater than .60 are questionable, while an alpha lower than .50 is considered unacceptable (George & Mallery, 2003, p. 231). Moreover, it has been stated that a Cronbach's alpha higher than .60 is still acceptable in social sciences (Ghazali, 2008; Mohamad, Sulaiman, Sern, & Salleh, 2015; Shankman & Allen, 2010, p. 429). Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk normality tests indicated a violation of normality

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assumption, with the exception of a not significant result of the Shapiro-Wilk test at Time2. Nevertheless, histogram and Normal Q-Q Plot showed that responses were reasonably normally distributed, moreover, values of skewness and kurtosis between -1 and +1 are considered acceptable (Muthén & Kaplan, 1985) for proceeding with analyses requesting assumption of normality.

Table 1

Adultcentrism scale: results of exploration at Time1 and at Time2

Analysis	Time 1	Time 2
N	326	237
M	63.52	63.28
SD	6.3	6.2
5% Trimmed *M*	63.49	63.31
Average response	2.4	2.3
Cronbach's alpha	.63	.65
Skewness	.12	-.088
Kurtosis	.91	.452
Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test	$p < .01$	$p < .05$
Shapiro-Wilk normality test	$p < .05$	$p > .05$
Little's MCAR Test	$p < .05$	$p < .05$

Paired samples t-test performed with 106 of the 326 original subjects indicated a not significant difference between the results of the two administrations: $t(105) = -1.87$, $p = .065$ (two-tailed), with a strong positive correlation ($r = .75$, $p < .001$) of the means at Time1 and at Time2. The not significant difference of the mean was a slight increase of .8 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -.653 to .49 and a Cohen's *d* of 0. Once assessed that the construct measured by the scale was stable over time, preliminary analyses for assessing the adequacy of data for factor analysis were performed. Data resulted adequate since Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .69 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity resulted significant ($p < .001$) (Bartlett, 1954). The sample to variable ratio was 8:1, that in literature is considered sufficient for factor analysis (Hogarty, Hines, Kromrey, Ferron, & Mumford, 2005). As can be seen from what has been presented so far, data did not completely meet the assumptions for factor analysis, but characteristics of the distribution resulted acceptable. It seems that this condition is common in the field of social sciences, and the maximum likelihood approach is still recommended if assumption of normality is not severely violated (Costello & Osborne, 2005; Fabrigar, MacCallum, Wegener, & Strahan, 1999). Therefore, Explorative Factor Analysis (EFA) with Maximum Likelihood (ML) approach was conducted. Oblique rotation was

preferred in this case following the argument of Costello and Osborne (2005), according to whom in social sciences a general correlation among factor is expected, therefore oblique rotation should provide a more accurate solution. In addition, the authors underline that if factors are not correlated oblique and orthogonal rotation provide nearly the same results. After first output of EFA the extraction of three factors has been forced on the basis of Kaiser's criterion of considering only eigenvalues greater than 1 (Kaiser, 1960) and on the analysis of the scree plot (Cattell, 1966). Afterwards cross-loading items and items with loading < .35 have been excluded and the extraction of three factors has been performed again. Table 2 presents final results of ML EFA with Direct Oblimin rotation (total variance explained 43.48%), while Table 3 shows factors correlation matrix.

Table 2

Adultcentrism Scale: final results of Maximum Likelihood Exploratory Factor Analysis (Oblimin rotation)

	Pattern Matrix			Structure matrix		
Item number	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
3	.633			.629		
12	.599			.595		
2	.592			.589		
4	.459			.505		
7	.365					
22		.720			.700	
16		.535			.537	
21		.500			.485	
10		.499			.479	
27		.430			.454	
13 (reversed)			.644			.627
24 (reversed)			.584			.610
18			.518			.523
19 (reversed)			.447			.452
9 (reversed)			.374			.398
20			.355		.367	

Notes. Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization Rotation converged in 11 iterations.
Cross-loading items and items loading < .35 have been discarded.

Table 3

Adultcentrism Scale: Factors correlation matrix

Factor	1	2	3
1	1	.264	-.191
2	.264	1	.175
3	-.191	.175	1

Notes. Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization

According to items loading on each factor, the three dimensions emerged from this analysis have been entitled "Child as an empty box" (Factor 1, explained variance: 17.93%), "Child without agency" (Factor 2, explained variance: 15.97%) and "Competent Child" (Factor 3, explained variance: 9.58%). The term *agency* is used in the conception of Albert Bandura (2001) as the capacity to exercise a certain control over nature and over the quality of one's life through several features including "the temporal extension of agency through intentionality and forethought, self-regulation by self-reactive influence, and self-reflectiveness about one's capabilities, quality of functioning, and the meaning and purpose of one's life pursuits" (Bandura, 2001, p. 1). Table 4 presents the results of exploration of the three factors separately.

Table 4

Adultcentrism's three factors: results of separated explorations

Factor	% of explained variance	Number of items	Cronbach's α	Mean of inter-item correlation	*sk*	*ku*	Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test	Mean response (min=1; max=4)
"Child as an empty box"	17.93%	5	.65	.273	-.24	-.08	*p* < .001	2.8
"Child without agency"	15.97%	5	.67	.283	.02	-.25	*p* < .01	2.2
"Competent Child"	9.58%	6	.62	.225	.29	.12	*p* < .001	1.8

As can be seen, Cronbach's alpha values are still included between a range of .60 and .70. It is common to find low alpha values in scales with fewer than ten items, and in this case is useful to report inter-item correlation mean (Pallant, 2016) considering that the recommended range is from .2 to .4 (Briggs & Cheek, 1986).

3.1.5. Conclusions. The final Adultcentrism Scale is composed by 18 items, two of which are excluded from factor analysis but maintained for theoretical reasons. High scores on "Child as an

empty box" factor reflect the agreement of respondents with the image of a child as an empty receptacle in need of being provided by adults with social and cultural values, the finalistic conception of child development is also represented by this first factor. The second factor has been entitled "Child without agency" because items loading on it clearly show an idea of the child as totally disempowered and without any responsibility: high scores on this factor indicate an agreement with this opinion. "Competent Child" factor is mainly composed by reversed items, high scores on this last factor represent agreement with the belief that children are equipped with their own competences and opinions which deserve to be acknowledged. As shown in Table 4, results of pilot study indicate a slight tendency towards higher values for what concerns "Child as an empty box" factor, while asymmetry of the responses distribution on the second factor is near to zero ($sk = .02$) equivalent to a mid-positioning of the agreement with this factor. Lastly, "Competent child" presents the lowest mean response, with a positive asymmetry of .29, indicating that responses tend moderately to lower values of the scale. No significant correlations have been found between scores on Adultcentrism Scale and demographics in the results of the present pilot study.

The three factors that have been extracted and the tendency of responses distributions appear consistent with the literature. Therefore, the proposed instrument could have a practical utility in detecting the construct of adultcentrism, particularly in large-scale studies. The final version of Adultcentrism Scale is provided in Appendix I, along with the factorial structure composed of re-numbered items for a more straightforward consultation of the instrument.

3.2. The Black Pedagogy Scale: construction and preliminary validation

3.2.1. Instrumentation. 41 fundamental statements describing Black Pedagogy's values, practices and main convictions have been individuated and elaborated according to the general rules of items construction (Chiorri, 2011). The instrument in its first version was composed by two main sections: the first one was dedicated to the detection of Black Pedagogy construct as it has been described in the literature, it was constituted by 41 items (10 of which were reversed) and a response set designed as an agreement 4-point Likert scale, this first section will be referred to as "Black Pedagogy Observation" hereinafter. The second part was instead focused on gathering participants' estimations of the current diffusion of Black Pedagogy practices on our territory, and of the diffusion of these practices in the past, namely in the period of time when what is today defined as Black Pedagogy was of common use in educating and raising children. Therefore, it has been necessary to insert a forty-second item prior to this section to assess the temporal period to which participants referred when

thinking of "the past". This second section has been entitled "Black Pedagogy estimations of diffusion" and it consisted in two identical 12-items lists of disciplinary practices typical of Black Pedagogy educational style, in respect to which participants have been asked to evaluate the diffusion of each method one first time in respect to the past, and a second time in respect to the present day. Items of the second section were also accompanied by a 4-point Likert scale response set, but based on frequency instead of agreement, with clear instructions to inform respondents of the change in response options meanings (1 = Not present at all; 2 = Present, but not common; 3 = Present; 4 = Widespread). The practices identified in the literature on the topic as characteristic of Black Pedagogy have been listed as follows:

a. Pedagogical beating (slaps, to hit with a stick, etc.);

b. Denial of a meal or its replacement with bread and water;

c. Frightening through stories focused on distressing characters in order to be obeyed (the boogeyman, ghosts, legends, etc.);

d. Providing false information to divert from topics mentioned by the child but considered inappropriate for his/her age;

e. Treating the child coldly as a consequence of his/her disobedience;

f. Toughening children up in respect to physical exertions, namely to improve their stamina towards fatigue, heat, cold, hunger and tiredness;

g. Monitoring and discouraging children's curiosity towards their own sexuality;

h. Lying exacerbating the consequences of a conduct considered wrong with the intention to scare the child and thus avoiding his/her attempts to put it into practice;

i. Humiliating: involving other people (family members, relatives, classmates, etc.) in showing disapproval to the child in response to his/her mistake or disobedience;

l. Physical violence (beatings, whipping, etc.);

m. Blackmailing the child to make him/her do something;

n. Always highlighting that unpleasant measures are executed solely for children's own good.

At the end of both 12-items lists of educational practices, a thirteenth item has been left open to individual contributions of participants: respondents had the possibility to insert a particular practice not present in the list and to rate its presence in the past and nowadays. The choice to opt for a 4-point Likert scale of response both in first and in second section of the instrument was due to the high number of items and also to the fact that items themselves were not always short and straight since they had to reflect Black Pedagogy's values and convictions or to represent in detail a specific

disciplinary method (Chiorri, 2011). This choice is supported by the fact that a 5-point Likert scale is considered an adequate response set for subject-centered instruments and that a preference between four- and 6-point scale has not been indicated (Chang, 1994; Chiorri, 2011; Cox III, 1980; Lee & Paek, 2014). Given the delicacy of the topic, it was essential to avoid the risk of a mid-ratings prevalence since it could easily occur as a consequence of desirability bias (Garland, 1991), furthermore it would not have been possible to interpret a mid-point positioning of respondents as, e.g., neutrality or uncertainty (Haddock & Maio, 2004) given the nature of the pilot study not involving other instruments that could have been of help in interpreting such eventuality. Therefore, participants were asked to take a clear stance for or against each statement, and a possible change in the response scale would have been evaluated after analyzing missing data patterns.

3.2.2. Participants and procedures. Participants were Italian university students of the Department of Human and Social Sciences of the University of Bergamo, most of them were attending the first year of their degree course in Sciences of Education (93.9% at Time1; 94.4% at Time2). Only students of first year of attendance have been included so that they could be still informative about their own beliefs concerning educational practices as they developed them through their own life experience. It was indeed thought that asking to students of upper years to participate could easily affect results since their university education could have had easily modified their ideas on educational practices. The Black Pedagogy Scale was administered in two different occasions to the same group of subjects in order to assess if there were changes in answers over time, thing that was not expect to happen since Black Pedagogy represents a whole of values and beliefs that should not change unless the occurrence of training or intervention. The administration sessions have been organized directly in students' university classrooms, as well as restitution of results. At Time1 the instrument was administered to 374 subjects; the sample was composed of 92.2% females and the mean age was 20 years ($SD = 2.6$), with a minimum age of 18 and a maximum age of 42. Most of participants had at least secondary education diploma (97.3%). The 45.5% of participants worked and the 25.7% of the whole sample worked in particular with children. In general, 98.1% of participants declared to be in contact with children in their personal lives. At Time2, after two weeks, it has been possible to administrate the instrument to 251 participants. The mean age was still 20 years ($SD = 2.6$) but the age range was from 18 to 35 years. Most of participants were females (88.4%) and had at least a secondary education diploma (96%). The working students represented the 43.4% of the sample and the 25.9% worked specifically with children. Most of respondent resulted to be in contact with children in their personal life (98.4%). The evident reduction in the number of participants was due to a general decrease of class attendance in the period of second administration.

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In both occasions participants were clearly informed about the objectives and phases of the research, about their rights as participants including the guarantee of anonymity and the possibility of dropping out from the study at any moment. All participants were treated in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2008), as well as with the ethical guidelines for research provided by American Psychological Association (APA, 2017) and by Italian Psychological Association (AIP, 2013). Participants had then the occasion to receive further information following their questions and, afterwards, they were asked to express their informed consent in order to proceed with the compilation of the instrument. The restitution of results took place in participants' university classrooms (related to developmental psychology courses) and it has been designed as an interactive reflection about the results of the pilot study.

3.2.3. Data Analysis. Analyses were performed with IBM SPSS statistical software (Version 22). After an initial screening of data, a first exploration of the proprieties of 41-items "Black Pedagogy Observation" section was conducted in order to investigate its reliability and the distribution of responses. It was possible to perform a paired samples t-test on 104 participants, expecting to find a not significant result. Subsequently, suitability of data for factor analysis has been assessed and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was then performed using Maximum Likelihood method with Varimax rotation. The process of selecting the best factorial structure was guided by Kaiser's criterion (Kaiser, 1960), analysis of the Scree Plot (Cattell, 1966) and cross-loading items and items loading < .35 have been removed. Item number 42 referred to temporal collocation, while the doubled 12-items list were set to gather participants' estimations of the differences in the diffusion of Black Pedagogy methods between the past and the present day. Therefore, data emerged from the second section of the instrument have been treated separately and in terms of mean comparisons or graph representations. Since the sample was homogeneous with regard to gender, educational qualifications and age, no specific analyses were conducted involving these variables except for a bivariate correlation between age and total score on the 41-items "Black Pedagogy Observation" section, along with the inspection of differences in such scoring between participants who work with children and those who do not.

3.2.4. Results of pilot study. Table 5 presents a summary of the exploration of Black Pedagogy Scale first section at Time1 and at Time2. The mean of "Black Pedagogy Observation" section (minimum score 41 - maximum score 164) was similar to the 5% Trimmed Mean, thus indicating that it was not necessary to exclude outliers. In terms of mean response, it resulted a value of 2.5 both at Time1 and at Time2 (minimum response 1 - maximum response 4). The Little's MCAR Test was not

significant ($p > .05$) thus suggesting that data were missing completely at random. Cronbach's alpha resulted in an adequate value of .83 at Time1 and .82 at Time2, suggesting reliability of the scale. The distribution is slightly heavy-tailed (Westfall, 2014) and characterized by a positive asymmetry towards lower values of the scale in both occasions.

Table 5

"Black Pedagogy Observation" section: results of exploration at Time1 and at Time2

Analysis	Time 1	Time 2
N	338	232
M	104.14	102.72
SD	11.07	10.53
5%Trimmed *M*	103.96	102.44
Average response	2.54	2.51
Cronbach's alpha	.83	.82
Skewness	.275	.348
Kurtosis	-.094	-.195
Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test	$p < .01$	$p < .05$
Shapiro-Wilk normality test	$p > .05$	$p < .05$
Little's MCAR Test	$p > .05$	$p > .05$

At second administration, both Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk normality test resulted significant ($p < .05$) thus suggesting violation of normality assumption. Nevertheless, values of skewness and kurtosis included between a range of -1 and +1 are considered acceptable (Muthén & Kaplan, 1985) and, moreover, histogram and Normal Q-Q Plot showed that responses were reasonably normally distributed. After second administration it has been possible to conduct a paired samples t-test on 104 subjects for the comparison of the scores obtained on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section at Time1 ($M = 103.13$, $SD = 11.07$) and at Time2 ($M = 102.7$, $SD = 11.04$) and it resulted not significant: $t(103) = .713$, $p = .477$ (two-tailed), with a strong positive correlation ($r = .85$, $p < .001$) between the results of the two administrations, thus suggesting that what the scale is measuring should not change spontaneously over time. The not significant decrease of the mean was .423 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -.753 to 1.6 and a Cohen's *d* of .09.

The condition of data, violating normality but reasonably normally distributed, is commonly encountered in social sciences, therefore Maximum Likelihood (ML) approach has been chosen since it is still recommended when a sever violation of normality is not present (Costello & Osborne, 2005;

Fabrigar et al., 1999). Data resulted adequate for factor analysis since Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .79 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity resulted significant ($p < .001$) (Bartlett, 1954). Subsequently, ML Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with Varimax rotation has been performed. After the first output of EFA it has been decided to force the extraction of three factors following Kaiser's criterion of eigenvalues > 1 (Kaiser, 1960) and on the basis of the inspection of the Scree Plot that clearly showed a change of direction after the fourth dot (Cattell, 1966). Subsequently, cross-loadings items and items loading < .35 have been excluded, thus reaching best factorial structure (shown in Table 6) that explained a total variance of 37.9%.

Table 6

"Black Pedagogy Observation" section: final results of Maximum Likelihood Exploratory Factor Analysis (with Varimax rotation)

Item number	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
25	.590		
27	.551		
17	.539		
23	.539		
14	.533		
6	.517		
12	.465		
28	.442		
33	.419		
13	.411		
22	.395		
30	.392		
34		.762	
1		.665	
9		.627	
8 (reversed)		.571	
16 (reversed)		.433	
21			.591
36			.506
26			.485
38			.465
31 (reversed)			.447
41			.369
32			.353

Notes. Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
Rotation converged in four iterations.
Cross-loading items and items loading < .35 have been discarded

According to the meaning of the 24 items detecting Black Pedagogy construct included in the factorial structure, the three factors extracted have been entitled as follows: "Values of Black Pedagogy" (explained variance: 18.74%), collecting items concerning the main educational values and objectives typical of Black Pedagogy's perspective; "Education of children over time" (explained variance: 10.62%), regarding those items related to the attitude towards the changes in children's education, in fact, a Black Pedagogy's perspective is obviously nostalgic about educative practices used in the past because considered more effective and useful; "Methods of Black Pedagogy" (explained variance: 8.57%), which collects the items on Black Pedagogy disciplinary and educational methods used as means to pursue its values and objectives.

Table 7 shows exploration analyses of the three different factors, it is interest to notice that the mean response on "Methods of Black Pedagogy" is clearly lower than the one on "Values of Black Pedagogy", as expected.

Table 7

Three factors of "Black Pedagogy Observation" section: results of separated explorations

Factor	% of explained variance	Number of items	Cronbach's α	*sk*	*ku*	Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test	Mean response (min=1; max=4)
"Values of Black Pedagogy"	18.74%	12	.79	.041	.119	*p* < .01	2.9
"Education of children over time"	10.62%	5	.76	.103	.005	*p* < .001	2.8
"Methods of Black Pedagogy"	8.57%	7	.67	.255	-.68	*p* < .001	1.9

An independent samples t-test was performed to compare scores on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section between those who work with children ($M = 102.66$, $SD = 11.8$) and those who do not ($M = 100.4$, $SD = 10.62$), and the difference resulted not statistically significant: $t(99) = 1$, $p = .32$. Spearman's rho coefficient between scores on first section of Black Pedagogy Scale and age showed a negative low correlation of -.142 ($p < .05$), thus suggesting a slight decrease in the agreement with Black Pedagogy construct with the increase of age. This result is certainly counter-intuitive if the reference literature is taken into account, but it has to be considered both the context of sample recruitment and the fact that age distribution in the sample was very highly skewed towards lower values.

Item 42 dedicated to temporal collocation of the expression "educational means used in the past" presented results that were difficult to interpret since 61.1% of participants clearly agreed with this

collocation, but 38.9% was not completely satisfied with the temporal definition proposed by item 42 (cf. Graph 1). This suggested a reformulation of the item in a different way to help identifying which period of time participants have in mind when referring to the pedagogical practices used "in the past".
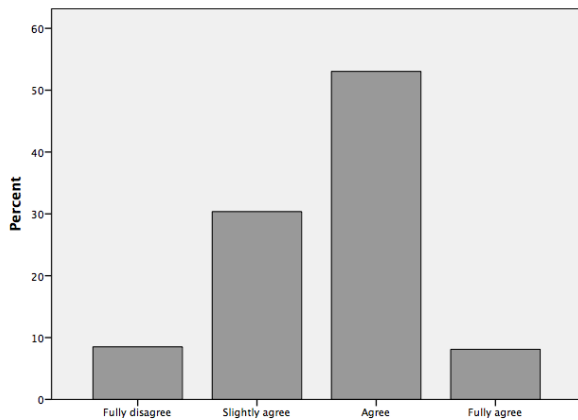
Graph 1

Responses to item 42: "By educational means 'used in the past' are meant the educational practices that took place in Italy from the post-World War II period (from second half of the twentieth century) until the 1980s"

The comparison of the diffusion of Black Pedagogy's practices in the past and nowadays revealed that participants report a general decrease in the diffusion of such educational measures except for what concerns the practices of blackmailing to control children actions (m) and of justifying unpleasant educational measures by telling the child that these are applied for his/her own good (n), as shown in Graph 2.

Graph 2

Comparison of mean responses about Black Pedagogy's practices diffusion formerly and nowadays (1 = Not present at all; 2 = Present, but not common; 3 = Present; 4 = Widespread)
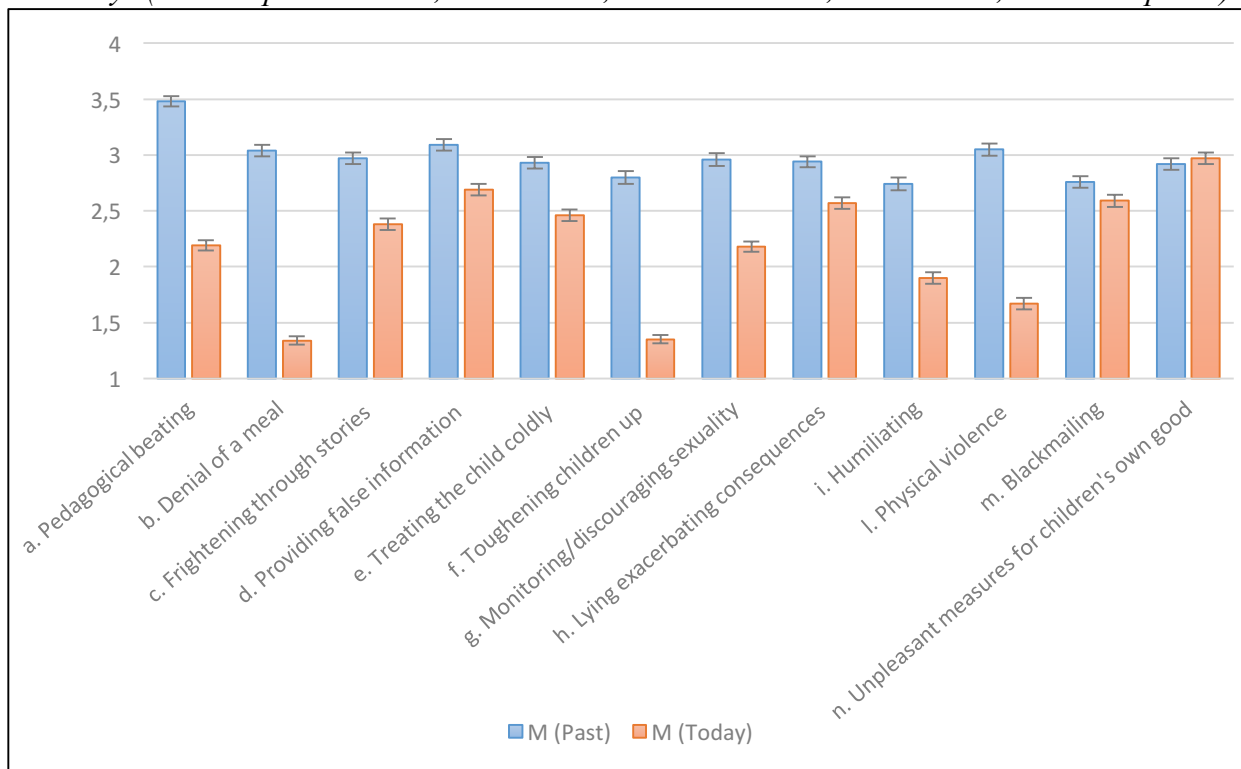
Table 8 summarizes the mean response for each Black Pedagogy method and the significance level of mean differences in the comparison between past and present diffusion.

Table 8

Mean responses about the diffusion of Black Pedagogy's practices in the past and nowadays (1 = Not present at all; 2 = Present, but not common; 3 = Present; 4 = Widespread)

Black Pedagogy method	Past	Today	Mean difference	Difference's significance level
a. Pedagogical beating	3.48	2.19	1.29	$p < .001$
b. Denial of a meal	3.04	1.34	1.7	$p < .001$
c. Frightening through stories	2.97	2.38	.59	$p < .001$
d. Providing false information	3.09	2.69	.4	$p < .001$
e. Treating the child coldly	2.93	2.46	.47	$p < .001$
f. Toughening children up	2.8	1.35	1.45	$p < .001$
g. Monitoring/discouraging sexuality	2.96	2.18	.78	$p < .001$
h. Lying exacerbating consequences	2.94	2.57	.37	$p < .001$
i. Humiliating	2.74	1.9	.84	$p < .001$
l. Physical violence	3.05	1.67	1.38	$p < .001$
m. Blackmailing	2.76	2.59	.17	$p < .01$
n. Unpleasant measures for children's own good	2.92	2.97	-.05	$p > .05$

Observing mean comparisons, it emerges that mean differences are less pronounced for those educational practices not involving a physical level of harm for the child: Graph 3 has been elaborated in order to visualize this aspect of results that culminates in the approximatively same level of current diffusion for what concerns method "m" and in a not significantly greater diffusion today than in the past of method "n".

Finally, bivariate correlations have been performed between the three factors and the results on the doubled 12-items list of educational practices used in the past and at the present day. The only significant correlation was found between the scores on "Values of Black Pedagogy" and the evaluation of the diffusion of Black Pedagogy practices in the past ($r = .18$, $p < .01$): a low positive correlation indicating that who observed a higher diffusion of Black Pedagogy practices in his/her past experience, tended also to score higher on the "Values of Black Pedagogy" factor.

Graph 3

Mean differences in participant's evaluation of diffusion of Black Pedagogy's practices in the past and nowadays.
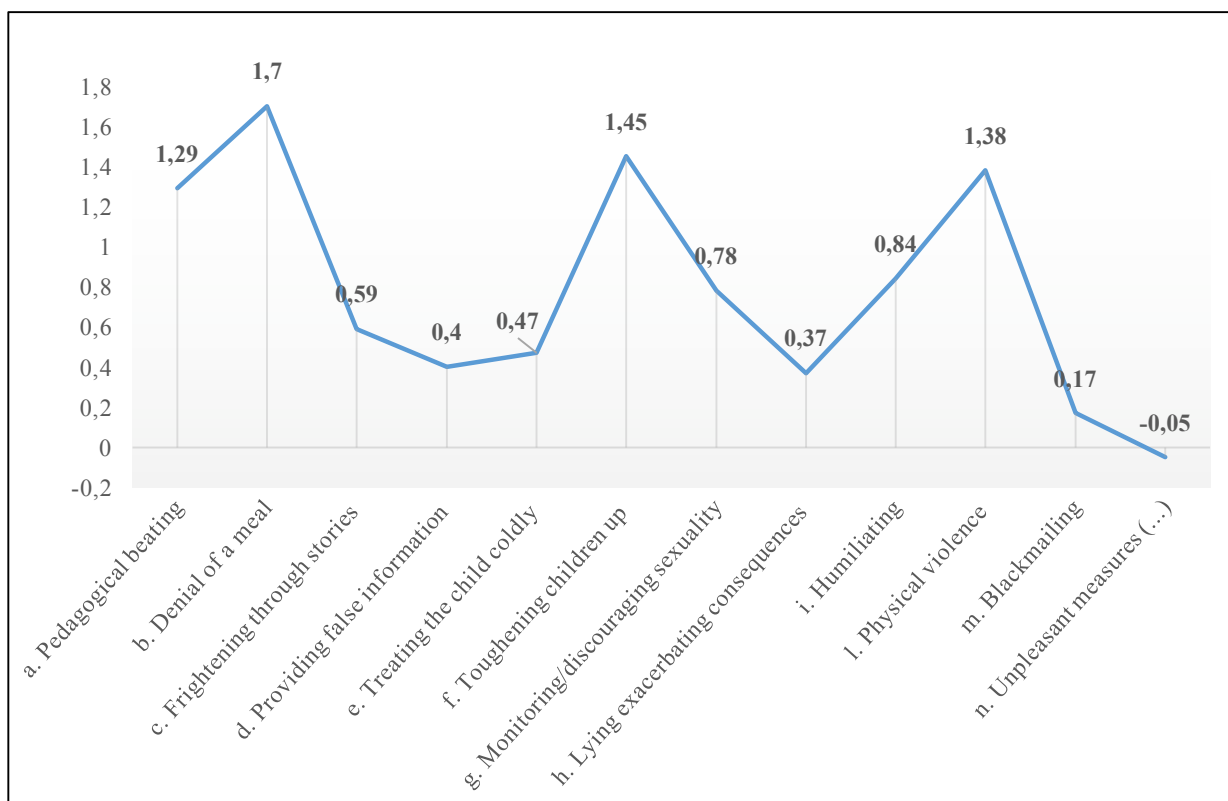
3.2.5. Conclusions. Final version of Black Pedagogy Scale is constituted by a first separated item of temporal collocation that has been modified and elaborated in a more informative way: "In your opinion, until which generation the educational practices known as those "used in the past" have been applied?" with four options of response (1 = Parents; 2 = Grandparents, 3 = Great-grandparents; 4 = My own generation). The following 24 items concern the detection of Black Pedagogy construct (viz., "Black Pedagogy Observation" section) and they load on the three factors "Values of Black Pedagogy", "Education of children over time" and "Methods of Black Pedagogy". The further section of the instrument, namely "Black Pedagogy estimations of diffusion", includes the doubled 12-items list of Black Pedagogy's practices, that resulted particularly informative although not included in factorial analysis. The scale of response remained unchanged for both sections.

Results of this first examination of Black Pedagogy Scale seem to be encouraging for a future application of the instrument in other contexts: the three factors emerged are consistent with the structure initially hypothesized on the basis of reference literature. The fact that the mean response on factor "Methods of Black Pedagogy" was the lowest, was an expected result since policies of children protection have certainly made progresses in Italy after the reform of Family Law and the

ratification of CRC. This result suggests that maltreating educational practices of Black Pedagogy are not accepted nowadays, but the same cannot be said for the educational values and objectives from which such practices consistently originated. The ongoing diffusion of the subtlest forms of disciplinary methods that are definable as psychologically harmful, could be therefore due to the persistence of an obsolete hierarchical and authoritarian conception of the right way to raise and educate children. Nowadays the threshold of "acceptable" violence in an educational relationship seems to be lower than in the past, but the impression is that not all forms of violence are subjected to the same rate of decrease in their diffusion. In fact, responses on the doubled 12-items list regarding estimations of diffusion made by participants give the impression that psychologically harmful educative and disciplinary practices (frightening, providing false information, blackmailing, etc.) have not decreased as much as physical ones.

Another interesting result is the significant and positive low correlation between the scores on "Values of Black Pedagogy" and the evaluation of the diffusion of Black Pedagogy practices in the past, therefore those who in their past experience witnessed a greater diffusion of the educational practices typical of Black Pedagogy, show more agreement with the values of Black Pedagogy. One possible interpretation could be that who has been in contact (even only as an observer) with such practices, tends to assimilate Black Pedagogy's values and objectives, thus supporting the idea of intergenerational transmission of physically and mentally violent disciplinary practices, a dangerous vicious circle that deserves urgent attention (Miller, 2007; Perticari, 2016). The final version of Black Pedagogy Scale and its factorial structure composed of re-numbered items are provided in Appendix II.

3.3. Representations and Attitudes towards SLD diagnoses questionnaire (RADSA): construction and preliminary validation

3.3.1. Instrumentation. In order to explore the attitudes, beliefs and representation of teachers towards this phenomenon of increase of SLD diagnoses focus groups have been proposed to teachers of participant schools. Afterwards, items of the questionnaire have been created on the basis of the opinions and statements emerged in focus groups. The creation of RADSA questionnaire was therefore structured in the two phases of focus groups and of pilot study. In the following sections details regarding both phases are presented.

The questionnaire proposed to the validation sample was composed by 120 items, with a 4-point Likert scale response set based on agreement, with clear instructions to inform respondents of options meanings (1 = Fully disagree; 2 = Slightly agree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Fully agree). It has been chosen to

maintain the same response set as Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy Scales in order to facilitate instruments comparison.

3.3.2. Participants and procedures. During first phase, 11 focus groups have been conducted with a total of 92 Italian primary school teachers, corresponding to a mean of eight participants for each group. Participating teachers were mostly females (96.7%), while male teachers represented only the 3.3%. "Curricular teachers" (i.e., regular teacher of a certain subject) represented the 81.5% of focus groups participants, while the 16.3% was the proportion of special needs teaching assistants and the remaining 2.2% referred to the presence of project representatives. Age range was from 25 to 62 years ($M = 47.15$, $SD = 8.8$), the mean of hours of teaching per week was 21.6 ($SD = 5.97$), while the mean of years of teaching resulted 22.1 ($SD = 11.1$).

Four textual stimuli have been proposed consecutively to participants, with a time of about 30 minutes for each topic and a total duration of each focus group of about two hours. The situations and information described in the stimuli have been constructed on the basis of what emerged from the reference literature regarding the main issues related to the increase of SLD diagnoses and outlined in the following list:

- Increase of SLD diagnoses (Gibbs & Elliott, 2008; Lampugnani, 2017; MIUR, 2011, 2015, 2018; Zappella, 2017);
- Problems with Peer group (Lampugnani, 2017);
- Parents' attitudes towards SLD diagnosis (Burden & Burdett, 2005; Griffiths et al., 2004; Riddick, 1995);
- The moment in which the teacher refers parents to an SLD specialist (Gwernan-Jones & Burden, 2010; Kerr, 2001).

After the analysis of focus groups material conducted with T-Lab software (Lancia, 2012, 2018), the 120-items RADSA questionnaire was developed on the basis of clusters emerged in T-LAB outputs, but also taking into account original transcripts in order to include any singular opinion remained excluded by clusters, the purpose of focus groups organization was indeed to gather, as much as possible, the complexity of teachers' representations and attitudes towards the phenomenon. Statements composing the questionnaire have been elaborated following item constructions rules (Chiorri, 2011).

Second phase consisted of a pilot study in which RADSA questionnaire was administered through an online survey platform to 111 Italian primary school teachers for initial validation. The age range

of validation sample was from 25 to 63 years ($M = 46.12$, $SD = 9.34$), the mean of years of teaching was 20.18 ($SD = 11.49$) and hours of teaching per week resulted in a mean of 21.33 ($SD = 3.38$). Validation sample resulted still composed mainly by females (94.6%), while male teachers represented the 5.4%. The totality of participating teacher was divided in "curricular teachers" (94.6%) and special needs teaching assistants (19.8%). Fifty-six percent of the sample held an upper secondary school qualification, 4.5% held a "University Diploma" (qualification established by Law 341/90, no longer in force), 6.3% a Bachelor's degree, 24.3% a Master's degree and, finally, 8.1% held a post-Master's specialization qualification. Lastly, 74.3% of respondents declared to have children, while 25.7% did not.

In both phases, participants have been informed about the objectives and procedures of the research, as well as their rights including the guarantee of anonymity and the possibility of dropping out from the study at any moment. All participants were treated in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2008), with the ethical guidelines for research provided by American Psychological Association (APA, 2017), and with those indicated by Italian Psychological Association (AIP, 2013). Participants were asked to express their informed consent in order to participate in focus groups or to proceed in filling out the online questionnaire.

3.3.3. Data analysis. Focus groups have been transcribed and analyzed with the T-LAB software for thematic analysis through an inductive approach allowing themes to emerge from the text (Lancia, 2012, 2018): a summary of T-LAB outputs is provided in Appendix III. The main impression from this first phase was that the overall complexity of the topic was respected enough through this approach of instrument development, inspired by the work of Simona Caravita and Sarah Miragoli (2007). The four macro-themes represented by textual stimuli have been maintained as general structure of RADSA questionnaire since, according to focus groups participants, such areas resulted adequate in treating the topic. No further macro-themes emerged from participants' discussions, indicating the possibility that the four subtopics addressed saturated the discourse on the SLD diagnoses increase phenomenon. It was observable a further subdivision of macro-themes into several thematic cores for each area (cf. Appendix III). Therefore, each macro area has been treated as a scale and, after assessing the adequacy of data, Maximum Likelihood Explorative Factor Analysis (Varimax rotation) has been performed in order to examine the structure of each section. Subsequently, each subscale emerged from factor analysis has been explored and investigated in its correlations with all the other dimensions and sample descriptives. Differences in groups scores have been also investigated performing one-way between-groups ANOVAs, after assessing assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance. The explored groups were formed according to

educational qualification, professional role (i.e., curricular teachers and special needs teaching assistant) and gender.

3.3.4. Results of pilot study. In Table 9 explorations of four sections forming RADSA questionnaire are presented in a summary of means, standard deviations, standard errors of the mean, along with results of the assessment of adequacy of data for factor analysis (Bartlett, 1954; Kaiser, 1970, 1974).

Table 9

Minimum and maximum possible scores and characteristics of distribution of RADSA's sections and adequacy of data for factor analysis

Scale	Minimum score	Max score	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*	*sk*	*ku*	KMO	Bartlett's test of sphericity
Diagnoses increase	39	156	104.8	12.62	1.36	.215	-.113	.708	*p* = .000
Peers	25	100	65.84	7.02	.744	.549	1.197	.664	*p* = .000
Parents	28	112	77.64	7.66	.808	.738	1.712	.673	*p* = .000
Teacher	28	112	72.98	6.93	.723	.196	.206	.659	*p* = .000

Notes.
   Diagnoses increase: "Increase of SLD diagnoses" section;
   Peers: "Peer group" section;
   Parents: "Parents' attitudes towards SLD diagnosis" section;
   Teacher: "The moment in which the teacher refers parents to an SLD specialist" section.

As can be seen, distributions are all positively skewed, indicating that responses tend, more or less slightly, to low score values. For what concerns kurtosis, sections related to peer group and to parents' attitudes toward SLD diagnosis resulted particularly heavy-tailed, meaning that there are more scores in the extremes than what it would be expected in a normal distribution with same mean and standard deviation (Westfall, 2014).

Data of all sections resulted adequate for factor analysis (cf. Table 9) in the light of the resulting Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value and of not significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954; Kaiser, 1970, 1974). Subsequently, Maximum Likelihood Exploratory Factor Analysis (with Varimax rotation) has been conducted for each RADSA section, since kurtosis and skewness did not exceed the thresholds of $sk > 2$ and $ku > 7$, that would clearly indicate a severe violation of normality (Costello & Osborne, 2005; Kim, 2013; West, Finch, & Curran, 1995). Following tables (Tables 10, 11, 12 and 13) present the final factorial structures of the four RADSA sections, resulting from the decision of forcing the extraction of three factors on the basis of Kaiser's criterion and inspection of

Scree Plots (Cattell, 1966; Kaiser, 1960). Items with not satisfying loading (< .35) have been removed as well as cross-loading items. In order to provide a more straightforward presentation of the best factorial structures found, by the side of each table further information is provided regarding the denominations of extracted factors, the percentage of variance explained and the meaning direction of scores.

Table 10

Summary table of ML EFA (Varimax rotation) best solution for RADSA section entitled "Increase of SLD diagnoses"

Item number	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
19	.848		
7	.793		
30	.720		
32	.632		
5	.451		
34	.424		
39 (reversed)	.411		
13		.664	
2		.609	
6		.576	
23		.528	
25		.443	
14		.436	
15		.408	
37			.649
35			.645
33			.565
27			.519

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
Rotation converged in five iterations.

Table 10 shows the factorial structure of first RADSA section. According to items' meanings and loadings, the three extracted factors have been entitled "Medicalization" (factor 1, 23.15% of variance explained),

"System-level causes" (factor 2, 16% of variance explained) and "Causes related to how children are raised nowadays" (factor 3, 9.36% of variance explained) for a total variance explained of 48.5%. High scores on first factor indicate the belief that the increase in the diffusion of SLD diagnoses is due to a medicalization tendency of professionals, specialists and society rather than to an actual increase in the number of SLD cases or in the increasing propensity or ability in recognizing SLD as such. High scores on factor 2, instead, indicate the agreement with the opinion that SLDs are actually more diffused nowadays compared to the past, and that this is ascribable to causes connected to the level of society system (e.g., parents' chaotic life, too complex work for teachers, etc.). Similarly, high scores on factor 3 refer to the agreement with the idea that the way in which children are raised in the current culture and society represents a cause of the increase of SLD diagnoses (e.g., massive use of technology, development acceleration, etc.).

Table 11

Summary table of ML EFA (Varimax rotation) best solution for RADSA section entitled "Peer group"

Item number	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
19	.803		
18	.670		
17	.655		
11	.654		
10	.623		
23 (reversed)	-.477		
16		.657	
13		.504	
6		.466	
20 (reversed)		.431	
5		.424	
14		.380	
22 (reversed)			.599
15			.587
9			.545
25			.430
12			.407

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
Rotation converged in four iterations.

Table 11 presents item loadings on the three factors emerged in "Peer group" section. First factor has been entitled "Complaints about facilitations" and it explains 19.8% of the variance. High scores on this factor reflect the opinion of respondents that usually classmates complain about the facilitations reserved to pupils with an SLD diagnosis. Second factor, "Attention to classroom emotions and to individual needs", explains the 14.4% of variance; responses tending to high scores indicate agreement with the idea that carefulness towards emotions and individual needs is necessary to promote an inclusive classroom climate, low values instead refer to the belief that such attention is not necessary, since inclusion climate occurs spontaneously in classroom daily life. Factor 3 has been named "Fairness of evaluation" (11.4% of explained variance), and high scores on this subscale indicate the belief that is fair to differentiate tests and homework between pupils who have an SLD diagnosis and those who do not have it, low scores regard instead the opinion that it is not fair to differentiate tests and homework. The three factors considered together explained an overall variance of 45.6%.

Table 12

Summary table of ML EFA (Varimax rotation) best solution for RADSA section "Parents' attitudes towards SLD diagnosis"

Item number	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
20	.819		
19	.599		
23	.492		
12	.379		
9	.376		
3		.756	
5		.738	
6		.427	
18		.357	
21			.756
4			.671
24			.527

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
Rotation converged in five iterations.

Table 12 displays item loadings on the three factors pertaining to the section dedicated to parents' attitudes towards an SLD diagnosis: "Roles and information" (factor 1, 22.5% of variance explained), "Diagnosis as alibi" (factor 2, 17.7% of variance explained) and "Parents' negative reactions to SLD diagnosis" (factor 3, 12.7% of variance explained). High scores on the first factor reflect the opinion that more clarity is needed for parents on the role of each professional figure (e.g., teachers, psychologists, etc.) and on the nature of SLD. In particular, the need is felt for an information not provided in a top-down manner, but a kind of informative process that allows the parent to truly understand the nature of SLD condition. Agreement with items loading on second factor reflects instead the opinion that parents tend to connect all problems to the SLD diagnosis, thus using it as an explanation for a series of difficulties or situations that may not be connected to it. As a consequence, parents may not accept teacher's attempts to further stimulate the child on an intellectual level. Third and last factor of this section regards the belief that parents tend to react negatively to the idea that their child could have an SLD. The total variance explained from the three factors was 52.9%.

Table 13

Summary table of ML EFA (Varimax rotation) best solution for RADSA section "The moment in which the teacher refers parents to an SLD specialist"

Item number	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
7	.693		
25	.556		
11 (reversed)	-.541		
8 (reversed)	-.533		
22	.488		
27 (reversed)	.440		
10 (reversed)	.415		
18		.647	
21		.590	
28		.573	
3		.510	
5 (reversed)		.400	
13 (reversed)		.371	
12		.353	
23			.820
19			.557
15			.419

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
Rotation converged in five iterations.

Last section of RADSA regards the moment in which the teacher decides to share with parents his/her opinion that the child needs an SLD assessment: Table 13 presents the three factors that have been extracted for this macro-theme. Unexpected multiple facets of opinions emerged also in regard to this section: first factor, "Strengths and weaknesses", explained the 19.2% of variance and renders an image of strength and resourcefulness (high values) or of weakness and overwhelm (low values) in front of a pupil with an SLD or suspected to be in this condition. Second factor has been entitled "Teacher positioning in respect to other professionals", it explains the 15.8% of the variance and reflects an image of teacher's role as penalized (high values) or as central (low values) in respect to the other professionals involved when dealing with an SLD case (e.g., neuropsychiatrists, psychologists, etc.). Third factor, "Diagnosis usefulness" (9.5% of explained variance) refers to the opinion that the diagnosis is not particularly useful for teachers in dealing with a pupil with an SLD (high values). The total variance explained by three factors as a whole was 44.5%

On account of the extraction of factors for each section, course of meaning appears easier to follow than through the observation of sections total scores because, as reflected by factorial structures, there is a substantial variety of subtopics for each section. Consequently, the total score of a section appears not informative as much as comparing responses on each factor. For this purpose, Table 14 summarizes the characteristics of response distributions for all subscales separately:

Table 14

RADSA: Minimum and maximum possible scores, and characteristics of the distribution of each subscale

	Min score	Max score	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*	*sk*	*ku*
Section 1: Diagnoses increase							
Medicalization	7	28	16.03	3.26	.333	-.069	-.909
System-level causes	7	28	21.22	3.07	.316	-.273	-.443
How children are raised nowadays	4	16	10.56	2.21	.226	.452	.128
Section 2: Peer group							
Complaints about facilitations	6	24	11.9	3.15	.326	.333	-.243
Attention to emotions and needs	6	24	18.03	2.04	.211	.367	-.204
Fairness of evaluation	5	20	13.22	1.92	.198	.193	1.25
Section 3: Parents							
Roles and information	5	20	16.48	1.83	.191	.129	-.597
Diagnosis as alibi	4	16	9.95	1.96	.204	.059	.495
Parents' negative reactions to SLD diagnosis	3	12	7.63	1.42	.148	.274	.385
Section 4: Teacher							
Strengths and weaknesses	7	28	23.57	2.65	.273	-.167	-.794
Teacher positioning	7	28	17.91	2.15	.223	-.014	.03
Diagnosis usefulness	3	12	7.01	1.74	.18	.219	.085

Notes.
  Diagnoses increase: "Increase of SLD diagnoses" section;
  Peers: "Peer group" section;
  Parents: "Parents' attitudes towards SLD diagnosis" section;
  Teacher: "The moment in which the teacher refers parents to an SLD specialist" section.

After performing one-way between groups ANOVAs for each subscale, no significant difference was found in scores when comparing groups based on educational qualification, professional role (i.e., curricular teachers and special needs teaching assistants) or gender. Table 15 summarizes correlations between subscales and continuous sample descriptive measures.

Table 15

Summary of Pearson Product-moment correlations between RADSA subscales and sample descriptives

Subscale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Medicalization	-											
2. System-level causes	.119	-										
3. Causes related to how children are raised nowadays	.260*	.305**	-									
4. Complaints about facilitations	.206*	-.043	.313**	-								
5. Attention to classroom emotions and to individual needs	.091	.315**	.210*	.115	-							
6. Fairness of evaluation	.189	.162	.061	.061	.123	-						
7. Roles and information	-.085	.419**	.379**	.024	.434**	.302**	-					
8. Diagnosis as alibi	.273**	.215*	.278**	.282**	.157	-.192	.024	-				
9. Parents' negative reactions to SLD diagnosis	.216*	.245*	.280**	.096	.069	.176	.290**	.127	-			
10. Strengths and weaknesses	-.075	.169	.142	-.144	.305**	.239*	.373**	-.175	.124	-		
11. Teacher positioning in respect to other professionals	.278**	.081	.177	.225*	.122	-.008	.156	.207*	.231*	-.098	-	
12. Diagnosis usefulness	.362**	.208*	.248*	.387**	.125	.172	.061	.250*	.074	-.025	.191	-
Age	0	.169	.170	-.088	.034	-.055	-.043	.229*	-.017	-.088	-.289**	-.035
Hours of teaching per week	0	-.055	.124	.013	-.021	.091	.172	-.113	.224*	-.097	.064	-.031
Years of teaching	.048	.144	.137	-.081	.035	.092	.072	.199	-.010	-.021	-.254*	.004
Number of children	-.155	.024	.054	-.091	-.002	-.002	.035	.142	-.093	.250*	-.310**	-.081

* p < .05 Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)

**p < .01 Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

3.3.5. Conclusions. Considering each subscale separately, strong deviations of distributions from the symmetry axis are not visible. The dimension with the most pronounced tendency is "How children are raised nowadays", in which answers tend towards lower values (sk = .452), thus meaning that respondents tend to disagree with the opinion according to which the way of raising children in the current culture and society represents a cause of SLD diagnoses increase. Kurtosis presents instead more perceptible fluctuations: beside subscales with kurtosis close to zero, representing more proximity to a normal distribution with same mean and standard deviation, other dimensions are observable with fairly lower or higher values. For example, "Medicalization" and "Strengths and Weaknesses" are characterized by negative kurtosis values close to one, indicating a light-tailed distribution in which there are less scores in the extremes than what it would be expected in a normal distribution with same mean and standard deviation (Westfall, 2014). On the contrary, "Fairness of evaluation" (ku = 1.25) presents a heavy-tailed distribution, thus being a sign of the presence of more extreme values.

As visible in Table 15, various significant correlations are present between RADSA subscales. "Roles and information" is the factor presenting the strongest correlations with other dimensions: results suggest that who scores higher on the idea that there is the need of more clarity for parents on the role of each professional figure and on the real nature of SLD condition, tends to agree with the opinion that increase of SLD diagnoses is due to some external factors ("System-level causes" and "Causes related to how children are raised nowadays"), as well as with the beliefs that carefulness towards emotions and individual needs is necessary to promote an inclusive classroom climate and that it is fair to differentiate evaluations according to pupils' idiosyncrasies. Another emerging aspect that seems interesting to underline is that the more diagnosis is considered useless, the more agreement is present with the opinions reflected by factors "Medicalization", "System-level causes" and "Causes related to how children are raised nowadays". Moreover, it appears that increase of age, teaching years and number of own children positively correlate with a central teacher positioning in respect to other professionals.

Final version of RADSA is composed by 64 items and remained divided into the four original thematic areas derived from the literature, which were confirmed as significant by focus groups participants. The 4-point Likert scale response set based on agreement has been maintained (1 = Fully disagree; 2 = Slightly agree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Fully agree). The impression that the topic of attitudes and representations towards the increase of SLD diagnosis is a complex issue seems to be confirmed by the final structure of this measure (cf. Table 14). A translated version of RADSA is provided in Appendix IV together with a table that summarizes re-numbered items, showing their loadings on each factor.

4. Other measures

Contextually to first application of the three new measures presented above, some selected instruments already validated in the literature were included in the battery of questionnaires in order to evaluate both how new instruments behave and to explore any significant correlation with other connected constructs. Most of such measures have been created and validated in Italian language and context, and they are individually presented in the following sections.

4.1. Organizational well-being

The present work is not focused on aspects of organizational well-being, however, being this a research of systemic type, it was decided to not completely overlook such dimension inasmuch it has been highlighted that high levels of stress may have the potential to generate emotional abuse (Nesbit & Philpott, 2002). Indicators of organizational malaise have been selected from those presented by Avallone e Bonaretti (2003) on the basis of which items were thought to be of interest with respect to the subject of the present work: namely, those reflecting any sign of stress, negative perception of teacher's work, together with a general perception of organizational discomfort. The items finally selected are 16 indicators of organizational malaise and nine items regarding stress and the characteristics of work task (Avallone & Bonaretti, 2003) with a 4-point Likert response set concerning the level of presence of the indicated aspects.

4.2. Educational Styles

The aspect of educational styles put into practice in the context of the classroom is certainly more directly connected to the subject of the research here presented. Both Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy constructs are indeed described as characterized by an imbalance of power between the adult and the child, as well as a harmful use of authority for what concerns Black Pedagogy. Two instruments have been identified as useful in this context of reflection: the *Problems in School Questionnaire* (PIS; Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, & Ryan, 1981) and the *Questionario di Autovalutazione dello Stile Educativo* (QUASE; Giorgetti, Iafrate, Cerioli, & Antonietti, 1995), that is translatable as "Self-assessment questionnaire of Educational Style".

The first measure, *Problems in School Questionnaire* (PIS; Deci et al., 1981), evaluates whether the teacher tends to adopt a controlling teaching style or a style that supports the student's autonomy. This instrument has been validated in Italy (Alivernini, Lucidi, & Manganelli, 2012) and it has been

reviewed in an updated version provided for the present research by the corresponding author of the second Italian validation study (Alivernini, Lucidi, & Manganelli, n.d.). The questionnaire is constituted by two situations depicting two possible problematic events occurring in classroom daily life, each of which is followed by 10 items representing several different possible reactions to the proposed situation. Respondents are asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert response scale how much likely is that they would react as in the manner indicated by the item (1 = Not at all likely, 2 = A little likely, 3 = Quite likely, 4 = Very likely, 5 = Extremely likely). A part of the reactions listed as items reflect a more controlling style in responding to the presented situation, while the remaining ones denote teacher's reactions that are supportive of the autonomy. The sum of scores on items related to one of the two styles provides the total score of the "Controlling teaching style" and "Autonomy supportive teaching style" subscales.

The second measure identified to explore teaching styles has been originally elaborated and validated in Italian language: the *Questionario di Autovalutazione dello Stile Educativo* (QUASE; Giorgetti et al., 1995). The questionnaire aims at providing stimuli capable of activating in respondents the internal representations of their own experiences and of the relational modality characterizing their behavior in an educational context. QUASE is divided into three sections (connotation of childhood, relational modalities and professional image), constituted by different types of questions. In first section, namely "Connotation of childhood", four points are present and they indicate to express agreement or disagreement about common statements in the educational field (more or less stereotyped judgments about children, about relationships and about the role of school), each point is followed by three items in respect to which participants are asked to express their degree of agreement. In second section (i.e., "Relational modalities") four professional situations are presented, each of which is followed by three different reactions of a hypothetical teacher: respondents are asked to express their degree of agreement about each of the latter. Lastly, in section concerning "Professional image", participants are asked to express how much they feel similar to a series of 13 professional profiles, three of which are more detailed while the remaining 10 profiles are concise. The response scale to all these elements is a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Absolute disagreement; 2 = Simple disagreement; 3 = Simple agreement; 4 = Absolute agreement). All questions and items refer to four specific bipolar psychological dimensions: narrow-minded/open-minded, impulsive/reflective, static/dynamic and prescriptive/not-prescriptive. The scores for each item range from a minimum of -3 (maximum narrow-mindedness, rigidity and prescriptiveness) to a maximum of +3 (maximum open-mindedness and flexibility), and total possible scores of the instrument as a whole, range from -84 to +84. The authors of QUASE individuated four cut-offs within this possible range of total scores, thus identifying four different educational styles:

- Style "A1" (scores from -84 to -42): highly prescriptive, narrow-minded and regulating. Characterized by impulsivity and scarce epistemic curiosity;
- Style "A2" (scores from -41 to 0): this style denotes the tendency to be prescriptive, with ambivalent behaviors;
- Style "A3" (scores from +1 to +42): style oriented to not-prescriptiveness;
- Style "A4" (scores from +43 to +84): open-minded, flexible and curious style. It can deviate towards permissiveness.

In general, higher total scores on QUASE refer to a more open-minded and flexible educational style, while lower scores reflect a narrow-minded and prescriptive style.

4.3. The ability to correctly recognize subtle maltreating situations

In the context of the present research, the individuation of a measure capable of observing how respondents actually evaluate subtle emotional maltreatment situations was of central importance since, as treated above, the issue addressed is that most of the times the very limit of what is licit and what is not in disciplinary practices is vague, thus leaving space for potentially increasing subtle maltreating practices in child-rearing and education. To this purpose, *Percepire il Maltrattamento in Aula* (Caravita & Miragoli, 2007) has been identified as a an instrument of particular interest to be put in association with Black Pedagogy and Adultcentrism scales. The title is translatable as "Perceiving Maltreatment in Classroom", hereinafter referred to as "PERC". Elaborated and validated in Italian language, the instrument aims at detecting teacher's personal sensitivity to subtle maltreating situation that can occur in the context of the classroom, namely teacher's ability to recognize the inadequacy of educational modalities which configure themselves as psychologically harmful practices against pupils. PERC is constituted by four professional situations describing a hypothetical teacher reacting in an emotionally maltreating manner toward a pupil, each situation is followed by six or seven items that refer to possible opinions about the proposed situation and the teacher's behavior. Items refer to six possible response trends, listed as follows:

- Blaming the child: respondents show agreement with statements that justify teacher's reaction on the basis of child's responsibility for the presented situation.
- Justification of teacher behavior based on the relationship: the behavior of the teacher is considered correct in the light of the relationship established with that specific pupil or of child's particular characteristics.

- Justification of teacher behavior: general rationales regarding childhood support teacher's reaction.

- Evaluation of teacher's behavior as maltreating: teacher's personal reaction is correctly recognized as psychologically and emotionally harmful for the child.

- Evaluation of the relationship as maltreating: characteristics of the relationship occurring between teacher and pupil described in the textual stimulus is correctly recognized as psychologically and emotionally harmful for the child.

- Evaluation of the child as mistreated: recognition of maltreatment both in respect to the specific child involved in the situation and his/her needs.

Beyond the comparison of scores on the single dimensions listed, a total score on PERC can be calculated: high total scores refer to the ability to correctly perceive and recognize subtly maltreating situations, whereas low scores indicate a difficulty in recognizing such situations as psychologically and emotionally harmful for the child.

4.4. The teacher-student relationship

In order to investigate the quality of teacher-pupil relationship, an instrument widely used in research for this purpose has been included in the battery of questionnaires, that is the *Student-Teacher Relationship Scale* (STRS; Pianta, 1994, 2001; Pianta & Nimetz, 1991; Pianta & Steinberg, 1992; Pianta et al., 1995). A short Italian version of 22 items has been chosen (Fraire, Longobardi, Prino, Sclavo, & Settanni, 2013), this version preserves the original structure constituted by three dimensions: Closeness (eight items), Conflict (10 items) and Dependency (four items). The initial instructions of STRS ask participants to keep in mind a particular pupil while answering the questions that follow. Subsequently, items configured as descriptions of relationship's characteristics are presented and participants can express their responses on how much each statement is applicable to the relationship with the pupil they have in mind. Response set is a 5-point Likert scale of applicability (1 = Definitely does not apply; 2 = Does not really apply; 3 = Neutral, not sure; 4 = Applies somewhat; 5 = Definitely applies). "Closeness" subscale informs about the degree of warmth, affection and open communication experienced by the teacher with a particular student; "Conflict" subscale provides an evaluation of negativity and of the conflictual character of the relationship taken into consideration; lastly, "Dependency" subscale measures how much the teacher perceives the student as overly dependent (Pianta, 2001b). Higher total score of the STRS indicate an overall positive relationship, which tends to be characterized by lower levels of conflict and dependency, and by higher levels of

closeness (Pianta, 2001b, p. 12). It has been also underlined that "Dependency" factor seems to acquire a positive or negative connotation depending on teacher's culture (Gregoriadis & Tsigilis, 2008).

Interconnections between STRS and the scales of Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy are expected, in particular, it is hypothesized a lower level of closeness in the relationship with the teacher who tends to score higher on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section. Moreover, consistently with the purposes of this study concerning also exploring attitudes of teacher towards the increase of SLD diagnoses, participants have been asked to fill out the STRS twice: one first time, thinking to a student with an SLD diagnosis, and the second time thinking to a student with poor school performance but without any diagnosis.

5. Data analysis

In following sections, the main study of the present dissertation is set forth. Data analyses conducted on results obtained from the final sample consisted in the first place of descriptive analyses on sample's characteristics. Subsequently, distribution of responses to each instrument has been explored, devoting particular attention to results concerning Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy scales. The absence of important violations of normality was assessed considering that values of skewness and kurtosis between -1 and +1 are considered acceptable (Muthén & Kaplan, 1985), and also that thresholds of $sk > 2$ and $ku > 7$ have not been exceeded, thing that would indicate a severe violation of normality (Costello & Osborne, 2005; Kim, 2013; West et al., 1995).

Differences in scores between multiple subgroups of participants (more than two subgroups) have been investigated through one-way ANOVAs and MANOVAs, in respect to which assumptions of normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity have been preliminary tested. When mean comparison between only two groups was of interest, independent-samples t-tests have been conducted. In the case in which participants completed the same measure twice with different filling out instructions (e.g., in the case of *Student-Teacher Relationship Scale* and of doubled 12-items list of "Black Pedagogy estimations of diffusion" section) paired-samples t-tests have been performed.

For what concerns Pearson product-moment correlations, Cohen's guidelines (1988) for interpreting the intensity of the correlation have been used: a correlation is therefore considered "large" when r is included in a range from .50 to 1, "medium" if r results in a range from .30 to .49, and "small" if r is included in the range from .10 to .29. When significant correlations were found,

linear, multiple or hierarchical regression have been performed according to results and theoretical framework. Assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity have been controlled contextually to each regression analysis.

6. Participants and procedures

In this main study all measures presented were administered in Italian language to a sample of Italian teachers working in classes from second to fifth grade of primary schools belonging to the City and Province of Bergamo. As anticipated in the preface of this dissertation, sample recruitment was preceded by the collection of Head Teachers' consent to join the present research, a connection between territory and the University of Bergamo made possible thanks to the precious collaboration of the Regional Scholastic Office (Territorial Area of Bergamo). Participants have been provided with the link to an online survey platform and received clear information about the objectives and phases of the research, about their rights as participants including the guarantee of anonymity and the possibility of dropping out from the study at any moment. All participants were treated in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2008), as well as with the ethical guidelines for research provided by American Psychological Association (APA, 2017) and by Italian Psychological Association (AIP, 2013). Participants were provided also with researcher's contacts in order to receive further information if needed, and they were asked to express their informed consent in order to proceed in filling out the battery of questionnaires.

The age range of the sample (N = 294) was from 25 to 65 years ($M = 47$, $SD = 8.96$). Continuous scale of age has been collapsed into four age groups: under 35 years (9.5%), from 35 to 45 years (26.5%), from 45 to 55 years (41.2%), and from 55 to 65 years (22.8%). The mean of teaching years was 21.29 ($SD = 11.5$), while hours of teaching per week resulted in a mean of 20.85 ($SD = 3.8$). Teachers employed in a curricular role represented the 83.6% of the sample and the 16.4% was constituted by special needs teaching assistants. The sample resulted mainly composed by female teachers (96.6% females and 3.4% males). Sixty-two point six percent of the sample held an upper secondary school qualification, 5.4% held a "University Diploma" (qualification established by Law 341/90, no longer in force), 4.8% a Bachelor's degree, 21.8% a Master's degree and, lastly, 5.4% held a post-Master's specialization qualification. Most of the participants (78.9%) were involved in a sentimental relationship (i.e., stable relationship, cohabitation, married, or remarried), while the 21.1% at the moment of research was not involved in a sentimental relationship (i.e., single, separated, divorced or widow). Twenty-five point seven percent declared that they do not have any

child, while 74.3% of respondents resulted to be a parent: of the latter, 65.3% were living with one or more of their children, and 6.2% had children who live by themselves.

Battery of questionnaires was provided to participants in three versions. Each version differed from the others only for the order in which instruments were presented, thus permitting to verify if there was an effect of the presentation order of measures on responses. Version 1 was filled out by 25.2% of respondents, version 2 by 37.8% and version 3 by 37.1%.

7. Results

7.1. Black Pedagogy Scale

First item of Black Pedagogy Scale permits to assess which generation respondents had in mind when answering to the "Black Pedagogy estimations of diffusion" later section. As shown in Graph 4, participants mostly identified the generation of their grandparents as the last one in which educational practices "of the past" were applied (42.9%). Another large proportion thought that such methods were still used in their parents' generation (31.8%) and an unexpected 21.5% declared that their own generation has witnessed the application of educative methods commonly referred to in our territory as those "of the past".

Graph 4

Generation until which educational practices "of the past" were applied.
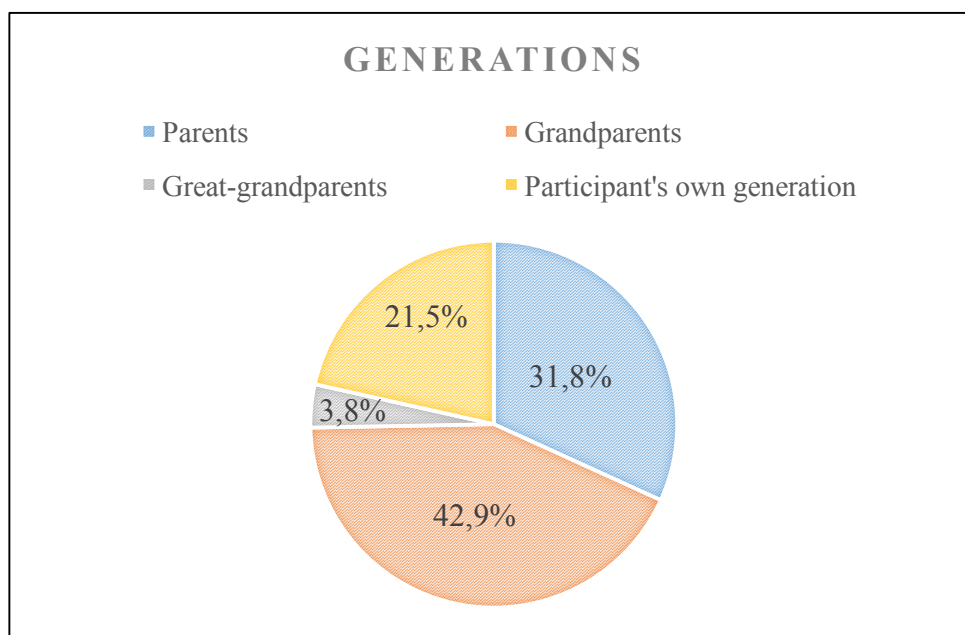
It is beyond the purpose of the present work to deeply analyze which were the past educational practices in general, but thanks to this piece of information, it will be possible to understand until which generations Black Pedagogy methods were diffused in the extent of participants' estimations provided by the dedicated 12-items list. Following the same reasoning, it is plausible to think that participants who responded "my own generation" have lived or witnessed the kind of diffusion of

Black Pedagogy methods that they estimate in the 12-items list concerning past diffusion of such practices. Table 16 shows mean responses on "Past diffusion" list and mean age for each group.

Table 16

Summary of age descriptives, and scores on "Past diffusion" list, of groups divided on the basis of the generation indicated by participants as the one until which Black Pedagogy methods were widely used

| Generation | Age (in years) | | | | Mean response on "Past diffusion" list (min = 1, max = 4) |
	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*	
Parents	26	62	45.6	8.66	2.83
Grandparents	26	63	47.9	8.45	2.83
Great-grandparents	40	60	52.8	7.45	2.81
Participant's own generation	31	63	48.9	8.43	2.84

After performing ANOVAs, no significant differences have been found in mean response or mean age of the four different groups. This may suggest that participants estimate similar levels of Black Pedagogy methods diffusion in the past regardless of which generation they indicate as the last one to which such diffusion is referred. Moreover, since groups' mean ages are similar, results give the impression that Black Pedagogy methods, starting to decrease from grandparents' generation, are less and less diffused as time approaches the current generation of respondents, although still present to some extent (21.5%). It is recalled that mean age of the whole sample was 47 (*SD* = 8.96), age range from 25 to 65 years), that is close to the mean age of each subgroup: therefore, if one generation length is considered to be 27.5 years (Keyfitz & Caswell, 2005; Preston & Guillot, 2009) and sample mean age is considered, it can be observed that according to participants Black Pedagogy methods started to decrease approximately from years 1944-1945, but also that they are still present to some extent in current generation. These results are consistent with the opinion that such ideology was at its peak at the turn of the twentieth century, representing the pedagogical basis of child-rearing practices that parents and grandparents of late-mid twentieth century generation experienced, and with the fact that it cannot be expected to spontaneously disappear in one generation (Miller, 1983).

The total score on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section (24 items) detecting Black Pedagogy construct has been calculated and, subsequently, minimum possible total score has been subtracted from maximum possible total score: the remaining range has been equally divided in three categories of score level (low, medium, and high). Graph 5 shows the percentage of presence of each level.

Graph 5

Percentage of low, medium and high levels of Black Pedagogy
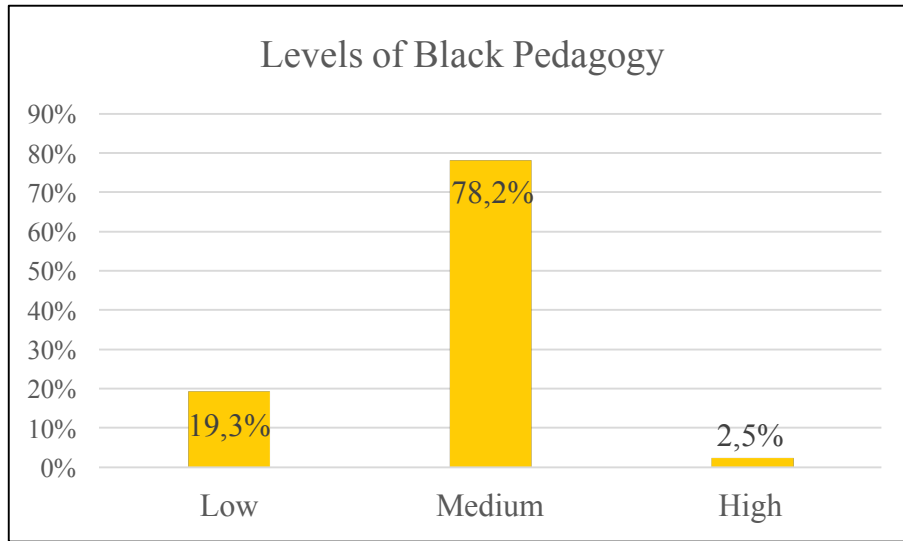
As can be seen, most of the sample is positioned at a medium level of agreement with Black Pedagogy construct. It remains though to be assessed if there is a difference between the scores on the three different factors, since dissimilarities could be informative about the meaning of this result.

It is recalled that one of the hypotheses driving the implementation of the present research was that there could be more agreement with the values of Black Pedagogy than with its methods (hypothesis b). Table 17 summarizes mean scores calculated on participants' responses to "Black Pedagogy Observation" section and to its subscales separately, providing also possible minimum and maximum scores and exploration of the characteristics of each distribution of responses. Same information is included for what concerns "Black Pedagogy estimations of diffusion" section.

Table 17

Minimum and maximum possible scores on Black Pedagogy Scale sections and subscales, compared with mean total scores, distribution of responses and mean responses (min = 1; max =4)

Section or subscale	Min score	Max score	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*	*sk*	*ku*	Mean response
Black Pedagogy Observation	24	96	55.8	8	.51	.044	-.197	2.33
Values of Black Pedagogy	11	44	29.7	5	.32	-.033	.009	2.7
Education of children over time	5	20	13.8	2.3	.14	.209	-.005	2.76
Methods of Black Pedagogy	7	28	10	2.3	.14	.787	.532	1.43
Black Pedagogy estimations of diffusion								
Diffusion in the past	12	48	34.3	6.5	.42	-.229	-.234	2.86
Diffusion nowadays	12	48	21.9	4.8	.31	.129	-.071	1.83

As shown in Table 17, results indicate that the only factor negatively skewed was "Values of Black Pedagogy" (sk = -.033, SE = .154), thus indicating that scores slightly tend to higher values of the subscale, whereas "Methods of Black Pedagogy" factor appears clearly skewed towards lower values (sk = .787, SE = .152), suggesting a lower agreement of participants with the Black Pedagogy methods listed in this subscale. Furthermore, according to participants' estimations, diffusion of Black Pedagogy methods was higher in the past: a paired samples t-test has been conducted to compare participants' estimations of the diffusion of Black Pedagogy methods in the past (M = 34.4, SD = 6.5) and nowadays (M = 21.9, SD = 4.8), and a significant difference has been found $t(244)$ = 28.18, p = .000, suggesting that Black Pedagogy methods as a whole are significantly less common at the present time from the point of view of participants. As anticipated when presenting hypothesis (d) it was expected that if a greater agreement was found in respect to Black Pedagogy values than methods, subtler and unrecognized maltreating disciplinary practices could unwittingly persist in current child-rearing practices. On this respect, participants' estimations of diffusion related to each Black Pedagogy method listed in the dedicated section result informative (cf. Graph 6).

Graph 6

Comparison of the estimation of diffusion in the past and nowadays (min = 1, max = 4) of each Black Pedagogy method
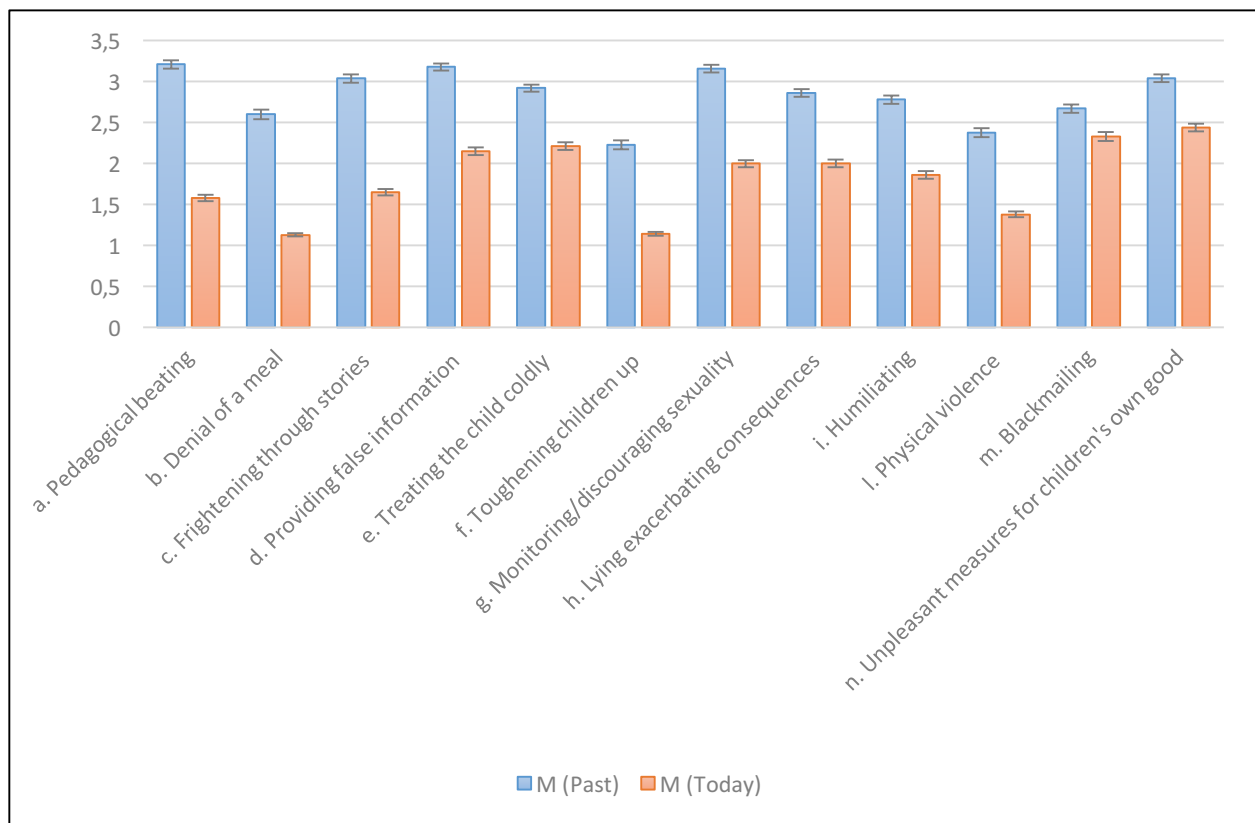
Paired sample t-tests have been conducted on responses concerning past and present diffusion of each Black Pedagogy method. All the differences between mean responses resulted significant ($p <$ .001), indicating a statistically significant decrease in the diffusion of such practices according to participants' estimations, consistently with the clear low agreement on "Methods of Black Pedagogy" subscale belonging to prior section. Table 18 summarizes the results of paired samples t-test for each comparison.

Table 18

Summary of paired samples t-test results for each comparison between past and current diffusion of Black Pedagogy methods

Method	M	SD	SEM	95% Confidence interval of the difference		t	df	p
				Lower	Upper			
Pedagogical beating	1.6	.933	.058	1.52	1.75	28.16	257	.000
Denial of a meal	1.5	.886	.055	1.36	1.58	26.43	254	.000
Frightening through stories	1.4	.908	.057	1.28	1.5	24.52	256	.000
Providing false information	1	.832	.052	.93	1.14	19.9	255	.000
Treating the child coldly	.7	.907	.057	.6	.82	12.58	256	.000
Toughening children up	1.1	.895	.056	.97	1.19	19.37	256	.000
Monitoring/discouraging sexuality	1.2	.917	.057	1.05	1.28	20.35	256	.000
Lying exacerbating consequences	.9	.976	.061	.74	.98	14.16	257	.000
Humiliating	.9	.929	.058	.8	1.03	15.74	255	.000
Physical violence	1	.925	.058	.89	1.11	17.36	257	.000
Blackmailing	.3	.891	.056	.24	.46	6.19	254	.000
Unpleasant measures for children's own good	.6	.910	.057	.484	.707	10.49	256	.000

But if the specific amounts of such decreases are emphasized, it appears that they are not always similar for all methods: some clearly decreased more than others according to participants (cf. Graph 7). In fact, comparing the decrease in diffusion estimations of each Black Pedagogy method, it can be observed that "Pedagogical beating" is the practice that decreased the most, while "Blackmailing" decreased the less. In general, it is visible that methods involving physical level have decreased more than those concerning the psychological area (e.g., treating coldly, humiliating, lying, blackmailing, etc.).

Graph 7

Mean differences in the estimations of diffusion of Black Pedagogy methods in the past and nowadays
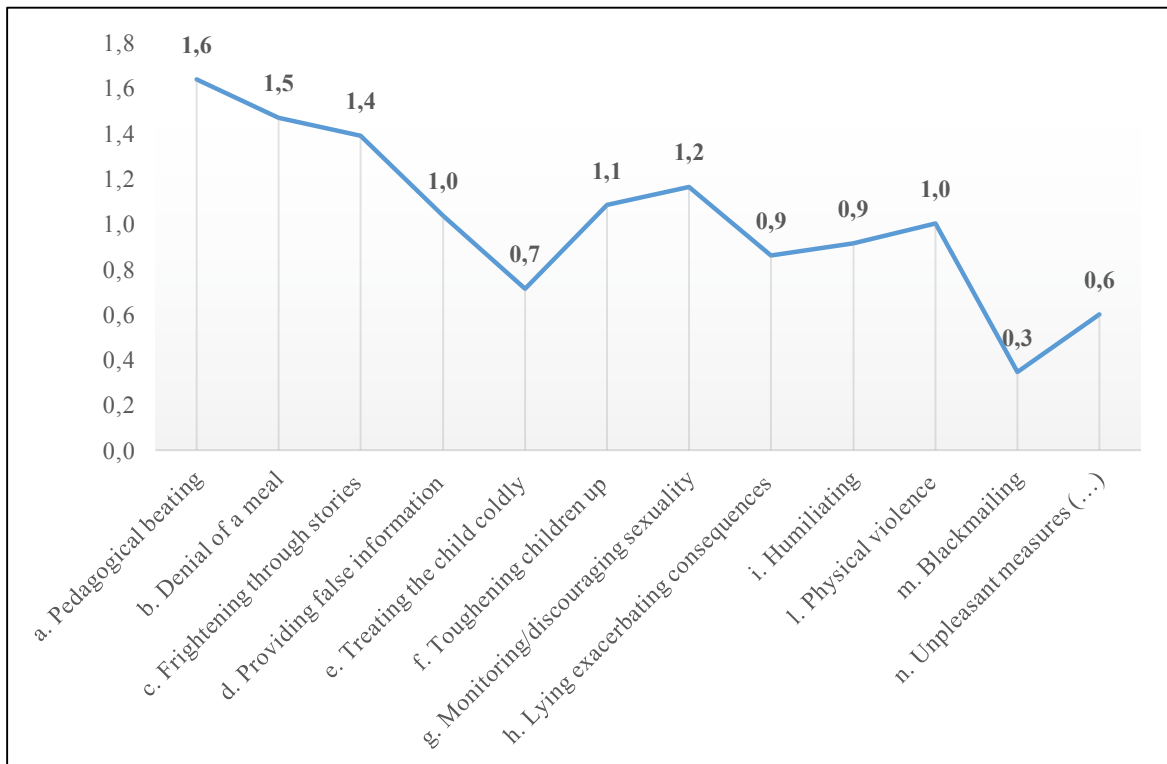
Unexpectedly, according to respondents, physical violence decreased less than pedagogical beating, and "Frightening through stories" is one of the methods that decreased more, contrary to what was found in the pilot study where respondents were students with a mean age of 20 years. More specifically, "Pedagogical Beating" is the method which decreased the most and that theoretically should be the most representative application of Black Pedagogy construct. On this basis, it is to be presumed that if "Pedagogical Beating" was taken as a reference point, more harmful methods on the physical level (e.g., denial of food, toughening up, and physical violence) should be estimated as less diffused nowadays, while psychologically detrimental methods should appear more diffused. As can be seen in Table 19, this supposition results confirmed with the exception of method "Frightening through stories" which, referring to the present time, results diffused as much as "Pedagogical Beating". All the other methods' estimations of diffusion are statistically different from the one of "Pedagogical Beating": results indicate that nowadays, according to respondents, physically harmful methods are less diffused (positive mean difference), while psychologically detrimental disciplinary practices are more diffused (negative mean difference) than "Pedagogical Beating". It is interesting to notice that "Monitoring/discouraging sexuality" is the only Black Pedagogy method whose decrease amount is more similar to the ones of physical disciplinary practices but that also results

currently diffused in an extent that is more similar to psychological methods (e.g., it is more diffused than pedagogical beating).

Table 19

Summary of paired samples t-test results for the comparisons between "Pedagogical beating" diffusion nowadays (maximum decrease) and other methods

Methods compared with "Pedagogical Beating"	Paired differences							
	M	SD	SEM	95% Confidence interval of the difference		t	df	p
				Lower	Upper			
Denial of a meal	.45	.647	.04	.37	.53	11.23	258	.000
Frightening through stories	-.07	.753	.047	-.17	.02	-1.57	257	.117
Providing false information	-.57	.781	.049	-.67	-.48	-11.77	258	.000
Treating the child coldly	-.63	.859	.053	-.74	-.53	-11.87	258	.000
Toughening children up	.43	.698	.043	.35	.52	9.9	257	.000
Monitoring/discouraging sexuality	-.43	.821	.051	-.53	-.33	-8.34	257	.000
Lying exacerbating consequences	-.43	.852	.053	-.53	-.32	-8.34	257	.000
Humiliating	-.28	.822	.051	-.38	-.18	-5.52	258	.000
Physical violence	.21	.710	.044	.12	.29	4.64	258	.000
Blackmailing	-.74	.877	.055	-.85	-.63	-.13.56	257	.000
Unpleasant measures for children's own good	-.87	.92	.057	-.98	-.75	-15.06	258	.000

As presented above, the literature describes Black Pedagogy as a pervasive construct, hence particular differences in subgroups or important correlations with descriptive variables of the sample should not emerge. Concerning this latter aspect, Table 20 presents Pearson product-moment correlations between all Black Pedagogy Scale components and continuous variables that describe some particular characteristic of the sample. As can be seen, only weak correlations have been found, though of intuitive significance: scores on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section are lower with the increase of work experience measured in years of teaching, but the presence of Black Pedagogy construct seems to grow if hours of teaching per week increase. "Values of Black Pedagogy" subscale appears to give the greater contribution to such relationships, indicating that there is a slight reduction in the agreement with such values in the presence of more working years and a modest growth of the agreement with Black Pedagogy values with the increase of teaching hours per week. Finally,

participants' estimation of Black Pedagogy's methods diffusion nowadays is lower with the increase of teachers' age.

Table 20

Summary of Pearson Product-moment correlations between Black Pedagogy (sections and subscales) and age, years of teaching and hours of teaching per week

Scale	BPO	BP-F1	BP-F2	BP-F3	BP-P	BP-N
Age	-.09	-.09	-.11	-.03	0	-.15*
Years of teaching	-.15*	-.14*	-.12	-.11	.02	-.04
Hours of teaching per week	.16*	.13*	.12	.09	-.06	-.03

* p < .05 Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)
Notes. BPO: total score on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section;
BP-F1: score on factor 1 "Values of Black Pedagogy";
BP-F2: score on factor 2 "Education of children over time";
BP-F3: score on factor 3 "Methods of Black Pedagogy";
BP-P: participants' estimation of diffusion of Black Pedagogy methods in the past;
BP-N: participants' estimation of diffusion Black Pedagogy's methods nowadays.

Table 21 summarizes the results of a series of ANOVAs that have been performed to assess differences in scores on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section with respect to sample subgroups. Since same analyses have been conducted in respect to Adultcentrism Scale, Bonferroni adjustment has been used to reduce the risk of inflated Type 1 error (i.e., finding a significant result when it actually is not). Therefore, a more stringent alpha value was set by dividing the typical value of alpha (.05) by the number of dependent variables ("Black Pedagogy Observation" and "Adultcentrism"), thus resulting a new alpha cut-off value of .025.

As can be noticed, Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was not significant in all cases ($p > .05$), indicating that assumption of homogeneity was not violated. It has not been found an effect of instruments' order of presentation on responses: $F(2, 240) = .56$, $p = .57$, $\eta^2 = .005$, suggesting that there is a meaningless proportion of variance ($\eta^2 < .01$) in "Black Pedagogy Observation" total scores that is associated with the three versions of the measurement set (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013, p. 54). Same conclusions can be derived for all other subgroups taken into consideration and shown in Table 21, since *p* value does not reach significance ($p < .025$) in any occasion.

Table 21

One-way between groups ANOVAs exploring impact of categorical variables on "Black Pedagogy Observation" total score

Subgroups	Between groups		Within groups		Levene Satistic		F	p	η^2
	df	MS	df	MS	Value	p			
Versions	2	35.95	240	63.69	1.32	.27	.56	.57	.005
Age group	3	71.18	239	63.37	1.16	.33	1.12	.34	.01
Having children	1	363.1	231	60.94	.52	.47	5.96	.020	.03
Educational qualification	4	8.77	238	64.38	.38	.82	.14	.97	.002
Sentimental relationship	1	41.59	241	63.56	.16	.69	.65	.42	.003
Territorial areas	5	113.76	237	62.40	1.24	.29	1.82	.11	.04
Working role	1	181.26	240	63.23	.29	.59	2.87	.09	.01

Notes.
Versions: three different measures' order of presentation in the battery of questionnaires;
Age group: four age groups (< 35 years, 35 - 45 years, 45 - 55 years, 55 - 65 years);
Having children: two groups (having children, not having children);
Educational qualification: five groups (Upper secondary school qualification, "University Diploma", Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, post-Master's specialization qualification);
Sentimental relationship: two groups (in a sentimental relationship, not in a sentimental relationship);
Territorial areas: six groups (Bergamo City and surroundings, South, East, West, Valley 1, and Valley 2);
Working role: two groups (curricular teacher, special needs teaching assistants).

7.2. Adultcentrism Scale and its relation with Black Pedagogy Scale

In this section, results concerning participants' scores on Adultcentrism Scale are presented and investigated mainly in the light of their relationship with Black Pedagogy construct. Firstly, the total score obtained by the sum of responses on the 18 items detecting Adultcentrism construct has been calculated. Minimum possible score has been then subtracted from maximum possible score and the remaining range of score (54) has been divided in three equal categories of score level (low, medium, and high). Graph 8 shows the percentage of presence of each level.

Graph 8

Percentage of low, medium and high levels of Adultcentrism
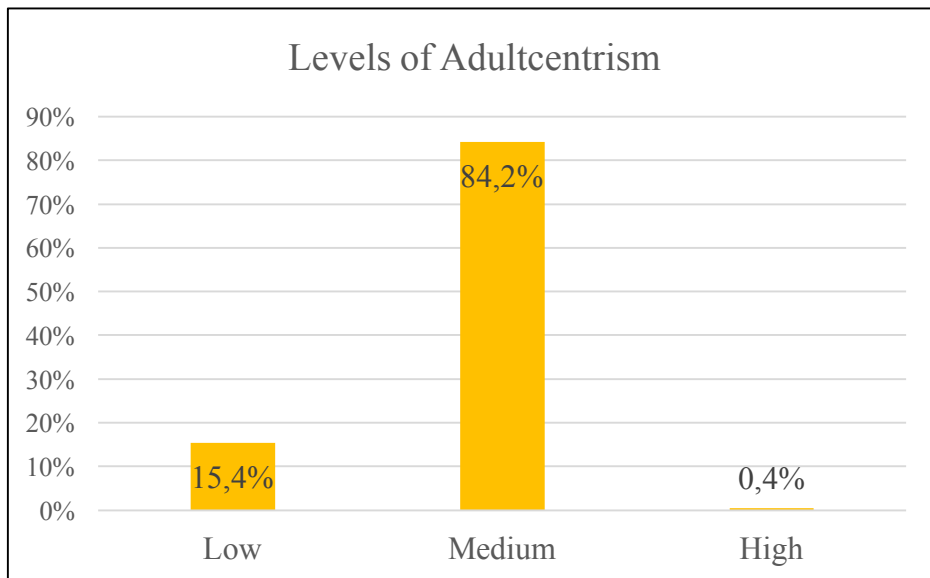
As observed in results related to Black Pedagogy construct, a medium level of agreement is mostly present with the construct of Adultcentrism as well. An understandable result if it is considered that adultcentrism has been defined in the present work as a basic paradigm of thought whose most detrimental behavioral consequences can be assimilated to Black Pedagogy lines of conduct. Exploration analyses have been performed for each factor separately in order to assess differences in distributions of responses. As can be seen (cf. Table 22), the only factor negatively skewed is "Child as an empty box" ($sk = -.083$, $SE = .151$), thus indicating that scores slightly tended to higher values of the subscale. To a small degree, the overall Adultcentrism scale was also tending to higher values ($sk = -.017$, $SE = .153$).

Table 22

Minimum and maximum scores of Adultcentrism Scale and subscales, compared with mean scores, distribution of responses and mean responses (min = 1; max = 4)

Subscale	Min score	Max score	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*	*sk*	*ku*	Mean response
Adultcentrism (Total)	18	72	40.38	4.22	.27	-.017	.153	2.24
"Child as an empty box" (Factor 1)	5	20	14.47	2.09	.13	-.083	.221	2.89
"Child without agency" (Factor 2)	5	20	10.67	2.19	.14	.501	.810	2.13
"Competent Child" (Factor 3)	6	24	11.31	1.99	.12	.139	.474	1.89

On the other hand, responses on "Child without agency" factor tended to lower values and distribution configured as heavy-tailed, meaning that there are more extreme scores than those expected in a normal distribution with same mean and standard deviation (Westfall, 2014).

It is recalled that first and last item of Adultcentrism Scale have been excluded from factor analysis because their loadings were not acceptable, but they have been maintained in the overall measure of the construct since these were the only items which put Adultcentrism paradigm in clear connection with the concept of a not truly kids-friendly society, aspect of basic importance according to the literature on the topic (Abood, 2009; Moss & Petrie, 2005; Petr, 1992, 2003), moreover, the two items in question are constructed as opposite in meaning, thus giving the opportunity of controlling for each other. In fact, responses tending to high agreement with Item 1, suggest that adultcentric bias is in action and, consistently, it should be found less agreement with Item 18. Vice versa, if less agreement with Item 1 is present, it means that society is perceived as not kids-friendly, a point that has been particularly stressed in the indicated literature, and agreement with item 18 should be evident in this case. Table 23 displays in summary the characteristics of response distributions for the two items discussed.

Table 23

Comparison of mean response (min = 1, max = 4) to Item 1 and to Item 18

Item	Min score	Max score	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*	*sk*	*ku*
(1) "In our society, children are the category of population to which institutions give the most importance"	1	4	2.12	.62	.038	.194	.228
(18) "Despite the attention that is claimed to be addressed to children, society and infrastructures are often not child-friendly"	1	4	3.15	.63	.039	-.403	.637

Respondents are clearly more in agreement with the statement of Item 18, since the pronounced negative skewness ($sk = -.403$, $SE = .15$) indicates a tendency to higher values. As expected, responses to Item 1 tend to the opposite direction although not at the same degree ($sk = .194$, $SE = .15$). Consistently, responses to the two opposite statements present a negative and significant correlation ($r = -.241$, $p < .001$), as well as a significant difference of their means: $t(262) = -16.91$, $p = .000$ (two tailed). In conclusion, participants are significantly more in agreement with the idea that "Despite the attention that is claimed to be addressed to children, society and infrastructures are often not child-friendly" (Item 18), thus showing an opinion similar to what expressed on this regard in the reference literature.

Adultcentrism is also described as spread widely throughout all levels of society, therefore it is not expected to find any particularly strong correlation with sample characteristics or subgroups (cf. Tables 24 and 25).

Table 24

Summary of Pearson Product-moment correlations between Adultcentrism and age, years of teaching and hours of teaching per week

Scale	Adultcentrism (Total)	Child as an empty box (Factor 1)	Child without agency (Factor 2)	Competent Child (Factor 3)
Age	.16**	.15*	.21**	.03
Years of teaching	.06	.09	.08	.01
Hours of teaching per week	.11	.13*	-.06	.07

* p < .05 Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)
**p < .01 Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

A weak positive correlation was found between age and total score on Adultcentrism, a very intuitive result suggesting that agreement with Adultcentrism increases with age. The same kind of correlation was found between the hours of teaching per week and "Child as an empty box" factor. Therefore, after checking for the assumptions of multicollinearity, normality, linearity and homoschedasticity, a multiple linear regression was performed to predict Adultcentrism on the basis of age and hour of teaching. A significant regression equation was found: $F(2, 244) = 4.787$, $p < .01$, with an R^2 of .038 (adjusted $R^2 = .030$). In particular, age accounted for the 2.5% of the variance ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$, part $=.159$), while hours of teaching accounted for the 1.5% of variance ($\beta = .12$, $p < .05$, part $= .124$). Participants' predicted score on Adultcentrism resulted equal to 33.45 + .78 (age) + .153 (hours of teaching per week), where age is measured in years and hours of teaching per week is

measured in hours. Therefore, Adultcentrism increased of .078 points of agreement for each year of age and .153 points of agreement for each hour of teaching per week.

Table 25 summarizes a series of ANOVAs conducted with the purpose to assess if there were statistical significant differences between subgroups in the agreement with Adultcentrism construct. Since same analyses have been performed for Black Pedagogy scale, a stricter alpha level has been set (alpha = .025), in order to avoid the risk of inflated Type 1 error (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Table 25

One-way between groups ANOVAs exploring impact of categorical variables on "Adultcentrism" total score

Subgroups	Between groups		Within groups		Levene Satistic				
	df	MS	df	MS	Value	p	F	p	η²
Versions	2	16.9	250	17.77	2.64	.07	.95	.39	.007
Age group	3	57.63	249	17.29	3.15	.03*	3.33	.020	.04
Having children	1	.96	240	18.23	4.74	.03**	.05	.89	< .001
Educational qualification	4	21.51	248	17.71	3.1	.02**	1.22	.31	.02
Sentimental relationship	1	4.33	251	17.82	1.79	.18	.24	.62	.001
Territorial areas	5	20.06	247	17.72	2.27	.048**	1.13	.34	.02
Working role	1	.96	250	17.91	6.05	.02**	.05	.89	< .001

* Welch test p = .029
**Welch test confirms the not significance resulted in F statistic (p > .025)
Notes.
Versions: three different measures' order of presentation in the battery of questionnaires;
Age group: four age groups (< 35 years, 35 - 45 years, 45 - 55 years, 55 - 65 years);
Having children: two groups (having children, not having children);
Educational qualification: five groups (Upper secondary school qualification, "University Diploma",
                          Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, post-Master's specialization qualification);
Sentimental relationship: two groups (in a sentimental relationship, not in a sentimental relationship);
Territorial areas: six groups (Bergamo City and surroundings, South, East, West, Valley 1, and Valley 2);
Working role: two groups (curricular teacher, special needs teaching assistants).

Since Levene's test for homogeneity of variance indicated a violation of homogeneity assumption (p < .05), robust tests of equality of mean were performed and Welch test was taken into consideration instead of F statistic for significance assessing. As shown in Table 25, no significant differences have been found between the investigated subgroups.

It has been argued in the present work that adultcentrism can be theorized as a paradigm of thought whose most harmful adultist conducts resemble what in the literature is described as "Black

Pedagogy". If this theorization presents some degree of explanatory usefulness in respect to the actual phenomenon addressed by the present study, Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy should result two constructs related to each other (cf. Table 26).

Table 26

Summary of Pearson Product-moment correlations between Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy scales and subscales

Scale or subscale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. AD-Tot	-									
2. AD-F1	.63**	-								
3. AD-F2	.71**	.34**	-							
4. AD-F3	.53**	-.03	.03	-						
5. BPO	.55**	.43**	.41**	.25**	-					
6. BP-F1	.54**	.46**	.46**	.15*	.91**	-				
7. BP-F2	.26**	.26**	.13*	.16*	.7**	.5**	-			
8. BP-F3	.33**	.08	.2**	.34**	.56**	.35**	.2**	-		
9. BP-P	-.11	.16*	-.13*	-.09	.04	.03	.12	-.09	-	
10. BP-N	-.2**	-.09	-.2**	-.13*	-.16*	-.16*	-.08	-.05	.3**	-

* p < .05 Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)
**p < .01 Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)
Notes. AD-Tot: total score on "Adultcentrism" scale;
    AD-F1: score on first factor of Adultcentrism Scale, "Child as an empty box";
    AD-F2: score on second factor of Adultcentrism Scale, "Child without agency";
    AD-F3: score on third factor of Adultcentrism Scale, "Competent child";
    BPO: total score on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section;
    BP-F1: score on first factor of Black Pedagogy Scale, "Values of Black Pedagogy";
    BP-F2: score on second factor of Black Pedagogy Scale, "Education of children over time";
    BP-F3: score on third factor of Black Pedagogy Scale, "Methods of Black Pedagogy";
    BP-P: participants' estimation of diffusion of Black Pedagogy methods in the past;
    BP-N: participants' estimation of diffusion Black Pedagogy's methods nowadays.

As expected, several significant correlations between the two constructs and between their subscales emerged, in particular, a significant large positive correlation resulted between the total score on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section and the total score of Adultcentrism ($r = .55$, $p < .01$). Accordingly, a simple linear regression was performed in order to explore the predictive power of Adultcentrism on Black Pedagogy construct and Adultcentrism has been set as independent variable according to the theoretical framing of the concept discussed above in the dedicated section. Assumptions for linear regression have been assessed through the generation of normal probability plot of the regression standardized residuals, which shows that concerning deviations from normality

were not visible (cf. Graph 9). Scatterplot of the standardized residuals (cf. Graph 10) displays that assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity have also been met and that there were no critical outliers exceeding the threshold of ± 3.3 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013, p. 128). Maximum Mahalanobis distance ($\chi^2 = 7.59$) did not exceed the critical value of $\chi^2 = 10.82$ ($\alpha = .001$) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Graph 9
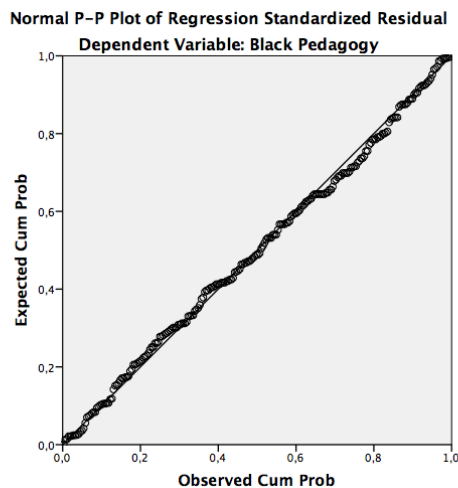
Graph 10
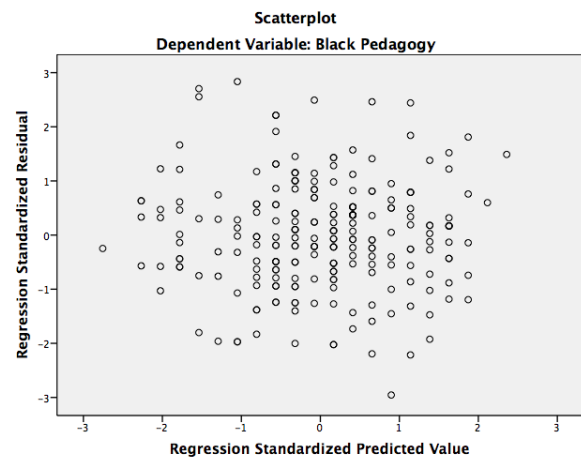
Simple linear regression calculated to predict Black Pedagogy based on Adultcentrism resulted in a significant regression equation, $F(1, 232) = 101.164$, $p < .001$), with $r^2 = .304$. Coefficient of determination indicated that Adultcentrism explained 30.4% of the variance in Black Pedagogy scores. Participants' predicted score on Black Pedagogy was equal to $12.669 + 1.068$ (adultcentrism), where adultcentrism is measured in grade of agreement with adultcentric statements. Thus meaning that agreement with Black Pedagogy construct increased of 1.068 ($SE = .106$) for each additional grade of agreement on Adultcentrism Scale. In order to evaluate which factor of Adultcentrism was more predictive of agreement with Black Pedagogy construct, a multiple linear regression was performed. Assumptions of multicollinearity, normality, linearity and homoscedasticity resulted not violated. Maximum Mahalanobis distance ($\chi^2 = 14.2$) did not exceed the critical value, that in this case results to be $\chi^2 = 16.27$ ($\alpha = .001$) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The significant regression equation found was $F(3, 258) = 37.451$, $p < .001$, with an R^2 of .303 (adjusted $R^2 = .295$), thus indicating that the three subscales of Adultcentrism altogether predicted the 30.3% of the variance in scores on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section. Standardized beta coefficients showed that first factor of Adultcentrism Scale, namely "Child as an empty box", is the one that gave the major unique contribution to the model (cf. Table 27).

Table 27

Standardized Beta coefficients and percentage of unique contribution of Adultcentrism subscales to the explanation of the variance in scores on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section

| Subscale | Standardized beta coefficients | | Semipartial correlation coefficients (*sr*) | Percentage of unique contribution |
	β	*p*		
"Child as an empty box" (Factor 1)	.322	< .001	.303	9.2%
"Child without agency" (Factor 2)	.283	< .001	.267	7.1%
"Competent child" (Factor 3)	.244	< .001	.244	5.9%

Since two of the independent variables (Factor 1 and Factor 2) were correlated ($r = .336$, $p < .001$), squared semipartial correlations ($sr^2_{ad-f1} = .092$; $sr^2_{ad-f2} = .071$; $sr^2_{ad-f3} = .059$) do not sum to the total amount of R^2 (.303) indicating a remaining shared variance of 8.1%.

7.3. Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy in relation to other constructs

The present section is dedicated to the display of results concerning the exploration of relationships between the two main constructs presented in this dissertation (Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy) and the other measures selected and included in the battery of questionnaires. Information about distributions of responses on such measures concerning organizational well-being, educational styles, the ability to correctly recognize subtle maltreating situations occurring in classroom, and the quality of teacher-student relationship are provided in Table 28.

Table 28

Minimum and maximum possible scores on other measures, compared with mean scores and distribution of responses

Measure	Min score	Max score	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*	*sk*	*ku*
PERC	26	104	80.94	7.44	.479	-.242	-.028
Blaming the child	6	24	17.68	2.84	.179	-.078	-.311
Justification (behavior)	4	16	13.41	2.03	.129	-.676	.551
Justification (relationship)	4	16	9.03	1.74	.11	-.148	-.011
Maltreated children recognized	4	16	13.83	1.7	.107	-.493	-.337
Maltreating teacher recognized	4	16	13.04	2.26	.142	-.781	.527
Maltreating relationship recognized	4	16	13.93	1.94	.123	-.949	.724
PIS (supportive of autonomy style)	10	50	38.45	6.6	.407	-.308	.088
PIS (controlling style)	10	50	21.36	6.14	.379	.280	-.391
QUASE	-84	+84	15.42	15.72	.992	-.692	1.139
STRS-Closeness (SLD)	8	40	30.27	5.22	.323	-.659	.726
STRS-Conflict (SLD)	10	50	17.37	6.98	.433	.920	-.001
STRS-Dependency (SLD)	4	20	7.85	2.98	.183	.666	-.137
STRS-Closeness (not SLD)	8	40	27.41	6.23	.388	-.595	.386
STRS-Conflict (not SLD)	10	50	17.23	7.28	.452	1.2	.961
STRS-Dependency (not SLD)	4	20	7	2.89	.179	.984	.244
Organizational Malaise	16	64	28.62	6.98	.41	.391	-.271

Notes.
PERC: "Perceiving Maltreatment in Classroom" total score and its subscales (blaming the child, justification of teacher's behavior, justification of teacher behavior based on the relationship, maltreated children recognized, maltreating teacher recognized, and maltreating relationship recognized);
PIS: *Problems in School Questionnaire*, divided in its subscales (controlling teaching style, and style that supports student's autonomy);
QUASE: total score on "Self-assessment questionnaire of Educational Style"
STRS: *Student-Teacher Relationship Scale*, divided in its subscales (Closeness, Conflict, and Dependency). Where "SLD" is specified, it indicates that the score refers to the instrument filled out having in mind a pupil with an SLD diagnosis, while where "not SLD" is specified, indicated it that the score refers to the instrument filled out having in mind a pupil with a poor school performance but without an SLD diagnosis.

For what concerns PERC scale and subscales, it can be observed that distributions of responses are all negatively skewed, thus suggesting a tendency to high values (i.e., to the ability to correctly recognize subtle maltreating situations in classroom). Regarding instead educational styles, results on PIS subscales revealed that the teaching style supportive of pupils' autonomy was more common if compared with a controlling teaching style. Accordingly, QUASE mean of sample total scores resulted included in the range of scores referred to as Style "A3" (from +1 to +42), namely a style oriented to not-prescriptiveness, but which does not risk to deviate towards permissiveness. Responses to Organizational malaise's indicators tend instead to lower values since the distribution resulted positively skewed.

Mean comparison of scores on STRS subscale have been conducted through paired sample t-tests in order to address hypothesis (f), according to which some differences were expected in relational quality when a pupil with SLD is involved in the relationship compared to when it regards a pupil without a diagnosis but with poor school performance. Table 29 summarizes the results of mean comparisons regarding scores on STRS subscales when a pupil with SLD diagnosis is involved or not in the relationship.

Table 29

Summary of paired samples t-test results for each comparison between scores on STRS subscale when a pupil with and without an SLD diagnosis is considered

	Paired differences							
				95% Confidence interval of the difference				
STRS Subscale	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*	Lower	Upper	*t*	*df*	*p*
Closeness (SLD vs. not SLD)	3.035	6.59	.413	2.22	3.85	7.34	253	.000
Conflict (SLD vs. not SLD)	.075	8.58	.541	-.99	1.14	.139	251	.889
Dependency (SLD vs. not SLD)	.876	3.16	.196	1.26	4.46	4.46	258	.000

Notes.
Where "SLD" is specified, it indicates that the score refers to the instrument filled out having in mind a pupil with an SLD diagnosis, while where "not SLD" is specified, indicated it that the score refers to the instrument filled out having in mind a pupil with a poor school performance but without an SLD diagnosis.

Mean comparisons showed that a significant difference ($p < .001$) is visible in the dimensions of "Closeness" and "Dependency", which resulted higher when a pupil with SLD diagnosis was taken

into consideration, rather than when having in mind a pupil with poor school performance but without an SLD diagnosis.

Table 30 presents a summary of results of bivariate correlations among all variables. As can be seen, correlations' directions resulted in line with what could have been presumed on the basis of the reference literature for most instruments. Total scores on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section presented a significant negative correlation of medium intensity ($r = -.33$, $p < .01$) with total scores on PERC (i.e., "Perceiving Maltreatment in Classroom" questionnaire), thus indicating that the higher was the agreement with Black Pedagogy construct, the lower resulted the capacity to correctly recognize subtle maltreating situations in classroom. If Black Pedagogy subscales are considered separately, it can be noticed that all the correlations between these and PERC are significant, especially for what concerns "Methods of Black Pedagogy", which presented the strongest negative correlation with PERC: consistently, the greater is the agreement with Black Pedagogy methods, the less will be the ability to correctly recognize maltreating situations. On the other hand, inspecting PERC dimensions revealed that Black Pedagogy construct was associated with the three dimensions that are connected to justification tendencies hindering the correct recognition of a maltreating situation, viz., blaming the child, justifying teacher's behavior, and justifying teacher's behavior on the basis of the relationship. In particular, "Blaming the child" tendency showed the strongest correlation with total scores on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section, indicating that higher values of Black Pedagogy are related with a lower ability to recognize maltreatment in the specific sense that the child is blamed for how the situation evolved.

Total score on Adultcentrism Scale showed also a significant correlation with PERC in the same direction as Black Pedagogy construct, though weaker ($r = -.18$, $p < .05$) and it did not present particularly stronger correlations if compared with PERC subscales concerning tendencies to justify the mistreating reactions presented in PERC situations. One aspect that is worth to be noticed is that PERC dimension regarding the tendency to justify teacher's maltreating behavior (i.e., in general) was negatively correlated with a general vision of the child as competent ($r = -.15$, $p < .05$), thus meaning that the less children in general are believed to be competent, the more subtle maltreating behaviors of the hypothetical teacher presented in the PERC instrument are justified. On the other hand, the tendency to justify teacher's behavior on the basis of the relationship (i.e., with a specific pupil or in a specific situation), thus not recognizing the maltreating situation (low scores), did not correlate at all with children seen as competent, but with higher scores on "Child as an empty box" and "Child without agency" Adultcentrism subscales. Similarly to Black Pedagogy construct, Adultcentrism did not correlate at all with the three PERC dimensions evaluating the tendency to correctly recognize the child as maltreated and the teacher, or the relationship, as maltreating.

Table 30

Summary of Pearson Product-moment correlations between Black Pedagogy, Adultcentrism and other measures

Scale	BPO	BP-F1	BP-F2	BP-F3	BP-P	BP-N	AD-Tot	AD-F1	AD-F2	AD-F3
PERC	-.33**	-.23**	-.21**	-.39**	.1	.12	-.18*	0	-.07	-.3**
Blaming the child	-.41**	-.33**	-.32**	-.28**	-.08	.12	-.21**	-.13*	-.14*	-.2**
Justification (behavior)	-.29**	-.22**	-.21**	-.27**	.07	.08	-.21**	-.08	-.11	-.15*
Justification (relationship)	-.22**	-.21**	-.13*	-.11	-.07	.01	-.19**	-.17**	-.21**	0
Maltreated children recognized	.08	.13*	.07	-.17**	.2**	.03	.09	.31**	.07	-.21**
Maltreating teacher recognized	-.11	-.03	-.05	-.23	.15*	.11	-.05	.07	.08	-.26**
Maltreating relationship recognized	-.13	-.07	-.04	-.22**	.12	.05	-.02	.1	.01	-.18**
PIS (supportive of autonomy style)	.08	.16*	.09	-.15*	.09	.04	.05	.18**	.09	-.13*
PIS (controlling style)	.38**	.38**	.22**	.23**	-.01	-.17**	.28**	.17**	.14*	.25**
QUASE	-.41**	-.29**	-.39**	-.3**	.05	.06	-.27**	-.07	-.12	-.32**
STRS-Closeness (SLD)	-.15**	-.01	-.11	-.27**	.08	.08	-.04	.01	0	-.13**
STRS-Conflict (SLD)	.02	-.02	.02	.06	-.11	.03	.02	.07	-.01	0
STRS-Dependency (SLD)	.05	.04	.03	.03	-.09	-.05	.12	.09	.13**	-.01
STRS-Closeness (not SLD)	-.1	-.04	-.1	-.1	-.15*	-.01	-.06	-.05	-.07	.02
STRS-Conflict (not SLD)	.05	.03	.02	.07	.12	.09	.06	.04	.09	0
STRS-Dependency (not SLD)	.1	.1	.06	.01	-.04	-.05	.06	.04	.06	-.05
Organizational Malaise	-.2**	-.2**	-.13*	-.09	.18**	.29**	-.19**	-.14*	-.17**	-.05

* p < .05 Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)

**p < .01 Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

Problems in School Questionnaire (hereinafter: "PIS") subscale concerning a supportive of autonomy teaching style, did not present a significant correlation with total scores of "Black Pedagogy Observation" section and Adultcentrism. Whereas controlling teaching style measured by PIS dedicated subscale showed a significant positive correlation with both Black Pedagogy ($r = .38$, $p < .01$) and Adultcentrism ($r = .28$, $p < .01$), thus indicating that higher scores on Black Pedagogy and Adultcentrism are related to higher score on controlling teaching style subscale of PIS.

Correlations with "Self-assessment questionnaire of Educational Style" (QUASE) provided a similar indication since it resulted negatively related both with Black Pedagogy ($r = -.41$, $p < .01$) and with Adultcentrism ($r = -.27$, $p < .01$), thus suggesting that low scores on QUASE, referring to a more rigid and prescriptive teaching style, are correlated with higher scores on Black Pedagogy and Adultcentrism. It is worth to be highlighted that the strongest correlations were found with the "Education of children over time" Black Pedagogy subscale and with the "Competent child" Adultcentrism subscale, thus indicating respectively that teaching style appears more rigid when there is higher agreement with the opinion that educational methods used in the past led to better results, and when the child is perceived as competent.

For what concerns *Student-Teacher Relationship Scale* (STRS), results indicated a significant and weak negative relationship between Black Pedagogy construct and "Closeness" subscale ($r = -.15$, $p < .01$), more specifically, only "Methods of Black Pedagogy" subscale was inversely correlated with "Closeness" dimension, suggesting that the more agreement is present with methods of Black Pedagogy (and, presumably, their application), the lower are scores on the "Closeness" dimension of the relationship. It has to be underlined though that this result concerns only the relationship with a student having an SLD diagnosis: when taking into consideration results on STRS "Closeness" in respect to a student without a diagnosis, but with a poor school performance, no significant correlations emerged, with the exception of a small negative correlation with the estimation of diffusion of Black Pedagogy methods in the past, indicating that the higher is such estimate and the lower are scores on "Closeness" quality of the relationship. Adultcentrism third factor "Competent child" also resulted slightly associated with "Closeness" in the relationship when a pupil with SLD diagnosis is involved ($r = -.13$, $p < .01$). Conversely, "Conflict" dimension of the relationship is correlated neither with Black Pedagogy nor Adultcentrism, as it would have been expected.

It is interesting to observe that both Black Pedagogy and Adultcentrism negatively correlated with organizational malaise, thus showing that higher scores of agreement with these two constructs were related with lower scores on the sum of the 16 indicators of organizational malaise selected for this study. Unexpectedly, also estimations of Black Pedagogy methods diffusion in the past and nowadays seem to be related with the level of organizational malaise perceived by respondents. In particular,

when today's diffusion of Black Pedagogy methods is tending to higher values, scores of organizational malaise increase ($r = .29$, $p < .01$).

Although all correlations presented are certainly able to arouse interesting reflections on the topics addressed by the present work, they are not informative in terms of causality. Therefore, a series of linear and multilinear regressions were performed depending on the correlations which were considered of most interest for the purposes of the present research.

Firstly, a multilinear regression was conducted to predict scores on PERC on the basis of Black Pedagogy and Adultcentrism constructs. A significant regression equation was found $F(2, 220) = 13.286$, $p < .001$, with an R^2 of .108 (adjusted $R^2 = .100$), thus meaning that 10.8% of the variance in PERC scores was explained by the model. Participants' predicted ability to correctly recognize maltreating situations in classroom was equal to 97.805 - .309 (Black Pedagogy) + .009 (Adultcentrism) were both independent variables are measured in grades of agreement. Accordingly, scores on PERC decreased of .309 for each additional grade of agreement on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section and increased of .009 for each additional grade of agreement on Adultcentrism scale. It is noticeable that Adultcentrism gave a minor contribution to the model, in fact Black Pedagogy (β = -.331, $p < .001$, sr = -.276), significantly predicted scores on PERC, with a unique contribution of 7.6%, while Adultcentrism (β = .005, $p > .05$, sr = .004) did not significantly predict scores on PERC, providing a unique contribution of only .002% to the total R^2.

Since Black Pedagogy construct resulted to be the only significant predictor of PERC, another multiple regression was performed in order to assess the role of each Black Pedagogy subscale in predicting PERC scores. Estimations of past and nowadays diffusion of Black Pedagogy methods have also been included in the model. The significant equation found was $F(5, 224) = 9.552$, $p < .001$, with $R^2 = .176$ (adjusted $R^2 = .157$). Subscales entitled "Values of Black Pedagogy" (β = -.049 , $p > .05$, sr = -.04) and "Education of children over time" (β = -.112, $p > .05$, sr = -.096) did not result to be significant predictors by themselves, as well as participants' estimation of diffusion of Black Pedagogy methods in the past (β = .064, $p > .05$, sr = .06) and nowadays (β = .048, $p > .05$, sr = .045). "Methods of Black Pedagogy" (β = -.335, $p < .001$, sr = -.331) was the only significant predictor of the model, explaining alone the 10.9% of scores variance on PERC. Taking into account only this last significant predictor, ability to correctly recognize maltreating situations decreases of 1.114 for each grade of agreement on "Methods of Black Pedagogy" subscale.

For what concerns QUASE, the same procedure has been applied and Black Pedagogy resulted the only significant predictor: the significant equation found was $F(2, 228) = 22.621$, $p < .001$, with $R^2 = .166$ (adjusted $R^2 = .158$). Adultcentrism did not provide a unique significant contribution to the

model ($\beta = -.040$, $p > .05$, $sr = -.034$), while Black Pedagogy construct ($\beta = -.383$, $p < .001$, $sr = -.320$) accounted for a unique contribution of 10.24% to the explanation of variance in QUASE scores. More specifically, participants' scores on QUASE decreased of .755 (meaning that they tend to a more rigid teaching style) for each additional grade of agreement on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section. Since Black Pedagogy resulted the solely significant predictor, multiple regression was performed setting all Black Pedagogy subscales as independent variables, including scores on the estimations of past and nowadays diffusion of Black Pedagogy methods. The resulting significant equation was, $F(5, 232) = 11.761$, $p < .001$, with $R^2 = .202$ (adjusted $R^2 = .185$). Not all independent variables turned out to be significant predictors of QUASE scores, in fact "Values of Black Pedagogy" ($\beta = -.063$, $p > .05$, $sr = -.052$), as well as participants' estimation of diffusion of Black Pedagogy methods in the past ($\beta = .068$, $p > .05$, $sr = .064$) and nowadays ($\beta = .002$, $p > .05$, $sr = .002$) did not explain a significant amount of variance in R^2. Only "Education of children over time" ($\beta = -.323$, $p < .001$, $sr = -.276$) and "Methods of Black Pedagogy" ($\beta = -.191$, p < .01, $sr = -.177$), resulted significant predictors accounting for, respectively, the 7.6% and the 3.1% of variance. If only significant predictors are taken into account, participants' predicted score on QUASE resulted equal to 59.351 - 2.192 ("Education of children over time") - 1.341 ("Methods of Black Pedagogy"), where both independent variables are measured in grades of agreement. Therefore, score on QUASE decreased (i.e., meaning that it tends to indicate a more rigid teaching style) of 2.192 for each additional grade of agreement on "Education of children over time" subscale and of 1.341 for each additional grade of agreement on "Methods of Black Pedagogy" subscale.

As expected in the light of Pearson product-moment correlations found, Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy did not result significant predictors of a teaching style supportive of autonomy: $F(2, 230) = .831$, $p > .05$, $R^2 = .007$ (adjusted $R^2 = -.001$), where Adultcentrism semipartial correlation coefficient was equal to .007 ($\beta = .008$, $p > .05$) and Black Pedagogy construct accounted only for the .4% of variance ($\beta = .080$, $p > .05$, $sr = .067$). On the contrary, a significant equation was found for the prediction of a controlling teaching style: $F(2, 226) = 18.959$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .144$ (adjusted $R^2 = .136$). Participants' predicted score on PIS "Control" subscale was equal to 1.339 + .245 (Black Pedagogy) + .157 (Adultcentrism), where the two independent variables were measured in grades of agreement. But beta coefficients showed that only Black Pedagogy is an actual significant predictor ($\beta = .324$, $p < .001$, $sr = .270$), while Adultcentrism provides a minimal and not significant unique contribution to R^2 ($\beta = .087$, $p > .05$, $sr = .073$). To address the question of which of Black Pedagogy subscales is the best predictor of a controlling teaching style, multiple regression was performed including three Black Pedagogy factors along with the estimations of diffusion of Black Pedagogy methods in the past and nowadays. The general equation of the model resulted $F(5, 231) = 9.112$, p

$< .001$, $R^2 = .165$ (adjusted $R^2 = .147$). "Values of Black Pedagogy" was the only independent variable with a significant predictive power ($\beta = .309$, $p < .001$, $sr = .254$), providing a unique contribution of 6.4% in explaining the variance in scores on PIS "Control" subscale. Therefore, scores regarding a controlling teaching style would be equal to 8.728 + .376 ("Values of Black Pedagogy", measured in grades of agreement), thus meaning that scores on PIS "Control" subscale increased of .376 for each additional grade of agreement on "Values of Black Pedagogy" subscale.

Since the only significant correlation found with STRS and total scores of Black Pedagogy and Adultcentrism total scores was between STRS "Closeness" subscale (when a student with SLD is considered) and "Black Pedagogy Observation" section, multiple regression was performed between this dimension of STRS and Black Pedagogy subscales (three factors and two estimations). The resulting model was overall significant $F(5, 234) = 5.053$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .097$ (adjusted $R^2 = .078$), but only "Values of Black Pedagogy" ($\beta = .157$, $p < .05$, $sr = .129$) and "Methods of Black Pedagogy" ($\beta = -.288$, $p < .001$, $sr = -.268$) turned out to be significant predictors, explaining respectively the 1.6% and the 7.2% of the variance in scores on STRS "Closeness" subscale (SLD). Taking into account only these two independent variables, participants predicted score on STRS "Closeness" subscale (SLD) was equal to 33.695 + .163 ("Values of Black Pedagogy") - .674 ("Methods of Black Pedagogy"). Meaning that the reported level of Closeness in the relationship (when a student with SLD is considered) increased of .163 for each additional grade of agreement on "Values of Black Pedagogy" scale and decreased of .674 for each grade of agreement on "Methods of Black Pedagogy".

Lastly, correlations between Organizational Malaise, "Black Pedagogy Observation" section and Adultcentrism have been considered. Since there was no theoretical basis for considering Black Pedagogy and Adultcentrism possible predictors of Organizational Malaise, following regressions have been performed considering Organizational Malaise as independent variable, according to the idea that high levels of stress may have the potential to generate emotional abuse (Nesbit & Philpott, 2002). Organizational Malaise actually significantly predicted Black Pedagogy: $F(1, 239) = 9.786$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .039$ (adjusted $R^2 = .035$). Participant's predicted score on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section was equal to 62.253 - .226 (Organizational Malaise), where independent variable was measured in grades of presence of 16 malaise indicators. Therefore, agreement with Black Pedagogy construct decreased .226 for each additional grade of presence of malaise indicators. Similarly, Organizational Malaise predicted also Adultcentrism: $F(1, 247) = 8.766$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .034$ (adjusted $R^2 = .030$). Participant's predicted score on Adultcentrism was equal to 43.576 - .112 (Organizational Malaise, measured in grades of presence of 16 indicators of malaise). Hence, Adultcentrism total score decreased .112 for each additional grade of presence of malaise indicators.

Since Organizational Malaise resulted a significant predictor of Black Pedagogy, hierarchical multiple regression was performed to assess the ability of Adultcentrism to predict Black Pedagogy after controlling for Organizational Malaise. Consequently, Organizational Malaise total score was entered at Step 1, with the result that the 3.9% of the variance in scores on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section was explained (3.5% according to adjusted R^2 value). At Step 2, Adultcentrism was entered and the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 31.4%: $F(2, 232) = 53.077$, $p < .001$, with an R^2 of .314 (adjusted $R^2 = .308$). After controlling for Organizational Malaise, R^2 change was equal to .275 and F-change $(1, 232)$ was equal to 92.853, $p < .001$. Therefore, Adultcentrism significantly explained an additional 27.5% of the variance. Considering the model as a whole, only Adultcentrism resulted a significant predictor of scores on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section ($\beta = .533$, $p < .001$, $sr = .524$).

7.4. Representations and Attitudes towards SLD diagnoses questionnaire (RADSA): relationships with Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy.

In the present section, results of RADSA questionnaire administered to the sample of teacher belonging to the main study (N = 186) are displayed. No great differences in terms of means and standard deviations can be observed with responses previously obtained in the pilot study. Table 31 provides an overview of results for each RADSA subscale separately.

Table 31

Summary of Pearson Product-moment correlations between RADSA subscales and age, years of teaching, hours of teaching per week. Absolute Minimum and Maximum scores, Means and Standard Deviations

Subscale	Age	Teaching years	Hours per week	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*	*sk*	*ku*
Section 1: Diagnoses increase									
Medicalization	-.12	-.21**	.12	7	28	16.2	2.9	.208	.106
System-level causes	.04	-.08	.1	7	28	21	3	-.334	.036
How children are raised nowadays	.05	-.04	.1	4	16	9.7	2.2	-.031	-.085
Section 2: Peer group									
Complaints about facilitations	-.16	-.2*	-.05	6	24	11	3.1	.644	.510
Attention to emotions and needs	.1	0	.07	6	24	18.4	1.9	.231	-.040
Fairness of evaluation	.06	.13	.03	6	24	13.7	2	-.205	.144
Section 3: Parents									
Roles and information	.07	-.05	.04	5	20	16.6	1.9	.125	-.433
Diagnosis as alibi	-.07	-.13	.09	4	16	10	2.2	.576	.332
Parents' negative reactions to SLD diagnosis	-.21**	-.26**	.08	3	12	8.2	1.6	.419	.148
Section 4: Teacher									
Strengths and weaknesses	-.21**	-.15	.06	6	24	23.5	2.3	-.278	.114
Teacher positioning	-.05	-.16*	.12	7	28	18.3	2.1	.286	.200
Diagnosis usefulness	-.08	-.09	.15	3	12	7	1.6	.218	.131

* p < .05 Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)
**p < .01 Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)
Notes.
   Diagnoses increase: "Increase of SLD diagnoses" section;
   Peers: "Peer group" section;
   Parents: "Parents' attitudes towards SLD diagnosis" section;
Teacher: "The moment in which the teacher refers parents to an SLD specialist" section

"Parents' negative reactions to SLD diagnosis" and "Strengths and weaknesses" subscales resulted negatively correlated with age. Therefore, a one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed to compare effect of age on the agreement with "Parents' negative reactions to SLD diagnosis" and "Strengths and weaknesses" factors. Assumption of

homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices was not violated (Box's test $p >.001$) and equal variances have been assumed since both Levene's Tests of equality of error variances were not significant ($p > .05$), thus suggesting that the assumption of equality was not violated. Initially, a statistically significant difference among age groups was found, $F(6, 322) = 2.57$, $p = .019$, Wilks' λ = .911. Partial η^2 was equal to .046, thus indicating a small effect size according to Cohen's guidelines (1988). In order to further investigate between-subjects effects, a stricter alpha level has been set using Bonferroni adjustment (alpha = .025). Taking into account new alpha level, both "Parents' negative reactions to SLD diagnosis", ($F(3, 162) = 2.5$, $p =.062$), and "Strengths and weaknesses" ($F(3, 162) = 2.77$, $p =.043$) did not reach statistical significance in their differences among groups.

Also RADSA factors correlating with years of teaching have been explored with MANOVA. Independent variable has been collapsed in seven groups with a different range of teaching years (less than six, from six to 11, from 12 to 17, from 18 to 23, from 24 to 29, from 30 to 35, above 36). Box's test ($p > .001$) indicated that assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices was not violated. Levene's Test of equality of error variances was not significant ($p > .05$) for what concerns "Medicalization", "Complaints about facilitations", and "Parents' negative reactions to SLD diagnosis" subscales thus indicating that assumption of equality was not violated. Regarding instead "Teacher positioning" subscale, Levene's test indicated a violation of equality assumption ($p < .05$), therefore a more stringent alpha level has been set (alpha = .025) for significance determination of this specific variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). A statistically significant difference among groups based on teaching years on the combined dependent variable was found, $F(24, 524.5) = 1.78$, $p = .013$, Wilks' $\lambda = .761$. Partial η^2 was equal to .066, thus indicating a medium effect size (Cohen, 1988). In order to proceed in considering independent variables separately, Bonferroni's adjustment has been used to reduce alpha value according to the number of dependent variables, thus resulting a new alpha level of .0125. In the light of new alpha level, none of the dependent variables previously combined in MANOVA reached statistical significance.

Table 32 provides a summary of Pearson product-moment correlation between RADSA, Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy scales and subscales. Correlations with Organizational Malaise have also been included. Both Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy positively correlate with all subscales of first RADSA section, namely the one concerning the increase of SLD diagnoses, suggesting that the higher is the agreement with these constructs, the higher is the tendency to believe that the phenomenon of growing diffusion of SLD diagnoses is due to processes that create "false positives" (medicalization, system-level causes, and how children are raised nowadays).

Table 32

Summary of Pearson Product-moment correlations, Between RADSA subscales and Black Pedagogy and Adultcentrism Scale and Subscales

Scale	AD-Tot	AD-F1	AD-F2	AD-F3	BPO	BP-F1	BP-F2	BP-F3	Org. Mal.
Section 1: Diagnoses increase									
Medicalization	.2*	.18*	.12	.05	.23**	.2*	.16*	.25**	-.07
System-level causes	.18*	.23**	.14	.04	.31**	.28**	.26**	.11	-.09
How children are raised nowadays	.23**	.29**	.13	-.02	.24**	.22**	.15	.16*	0
Section 2: Peer group									
Complaints about facilitations	.09	.09	.09	.05	.28**	.23**	.21**	.17*	.04
Attention to emotions and needs	.01	.21**	-.08	-.12	.04	.05	.05	-.05	-.13
Fairness of evaluation	-.07	-.02	-.01	-.09	-.21*	-.11	-.28**	-.22**	.22**
Section 3: Parents									
Roles and information	.12	.29**	.1	-.15	.23**	.25**	.23**	-.07	-.08
Diagnosis as alibi	.2*	.19*	.17*	-.5	.29**	.29**	.19*	.14	-.1
Parents' negative reactions to SLD diagnosis	.16	.14	.19*	-.04	.37**	.33**	.39**	.1	-.06
Section 4: Teacher									
Strengths and weaknesses	-.11	.06	-.15	-.16*	-.08	-.03	-.01	-.18*	-.07
Teacher positioning	.2*	.1	0	.25**	.35**	.29**	.29**	.2*	.07
Diagnosis usefulness	.1	.09	.20**	-.09	.06	.11	0	-.03	.02

* p < .05 Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)
**p < .01 Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)
Notes. AD-Tot: total score on "Adultcentrism" scale;
　　　AD-F1: score on first factor of Adultcentrism Scale, "Child as an empty box";
　　　AD-F2: score on second factor of Adultcentrism Scale, "Child without agency";
　　　AD-F3: score on third factor of Adultcentrism Scale, "Competent child";
　　　BPO: total score on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section;
　　　BP-F1: score on first factor of Black Pedagogy Scale, "Values of Black Pedagogy";
　　　BP-F2: score on second factor of Black Pedagogy Scale, "Education of children over time";
　　　BP-F3: score on third factor of Black Pedagogy Scale, "Methods of Black Pedagogy";
　　　Org. Mal.: Organizational Malaise

For what concerns the other three sections of RADSA, it seems that Black Pedagogy construct established correlation relationships stronger than those with Adultcentrism. Nonetheless, both constructs revealed various significant correlations that were worth to be further explored with a series of regression analyses, summarized in Table 33. Linear, multiple or hierarchical regression have been performed according to results of Pearson product-moment correlations. Assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity have been controlled contextually to each regression analysis.

Table 33

RADSA subscales: summary of regression analyses

Dependent variable	Predictors		Model						Coefficients					
		$df1$	$df2$	F	p	R^2	adjusted R^2	Constant B	β	p	Predictor B	95% CI Lower bound	95% CI Upper bound	sr^2
Medicalization	BPO	2	145	4.576	.012	.059	.046	9.929	.176	.074	.062	-.006	.129	.021
	AD-Tot								.096	.329	.070	-.072	.212	.006
System-level causes	BPO	2	147	7.959	.001	.098	.085	14.744	.310	.001	.109	.043	.176	.065
	AD-Tot								.004	.965	.003	-.136	.143	< .001
How children are raised nowadays	BPO	2	144	5.639	.004	.073	.060	4.240	.164	.095	.043	-.007	.093	.018
	AD-Tot								.140	.154	.076	-.029	.182	.013
Complaints about facilitations	PN	1	149	12.232	.001	.076	.070	5.315	.275	.001	.101	.044	.159	-
Attention to emotions and needs	AD-F1	1	159	7.599	.007	.046	.040	15.646	.214	.007	.187	.053	.322	-
Fairness of evaluation	Mal. Org.	2	149	5.946	.003	.074	.061	14.335	.184	.025	.049	.006	.092	.032
	BPO								-.160	.051	-.038	-.075	.000	.024
Roles and information	BPO	2	147	4.156	.018	.054	.041	13.909	.244	.014	.056	.012	.100	.040
	AD-Tot								-.023	.811	-.011	-.104	.082	< .001
Diagnosis as alibi	BPO	2	147	6.687	.002	.083	.071	5.359	.257	.008	.066	.017	.115	.045
	AD-Tot								.051	.599	.027	-.075	.130	.002
Parents' negative reactions to SLD diagnosis	BPO	2	149	6.928	.001	.085	.073	5.716	.260	.003	.067	.023	.110	.056
	AD-F2								.064	.457	.066	-.109	.242	.003
Strengths and weaknesses	BP-F3	2	158	3.614	.029	.044	.032	26.241	-.144	.077	-.155	-.326	.017	.019
	AD-F3								-.118	.147	-.140	-.329	.050	.013
Teacher positioning	BPO	2	147	10.332	.000	.123	.111	13.332	.350	.000	.089	.042	.136	.083
	AD-Tot								.001	.991	.001	-.098	.099	< .001
Diagnosis usefulness	AD-F2	1	161	6.865	.010	.041	.035	5.192	.202	.010	.170	.042	.298	-

All the regression equations found were statistically significant. As can be noticed, the model concerning "Medicalization" significantly explains the 5.9% of the variance in this subscale. It is interesting to notice that both Black Pedagogy and Adultcentrism did not give a statistically significant unique contribution to the model, thus suggesting that their predictive power lays in the overlapping effects of the two constructs. On the contrary, Black Pedagogy construct stands out in the model predicting scores on "System-level causes" subscale, since it contributed uniquely to the explanation of 6.5% of the variance in R^2. "Causes related to how children are raised nowadays" is also predicted by the shared variance of Black Pedagogy and Adultcentrism first factor "Child as an empty box", since both β coefficients are not accompanied by significance ($p > .05$). "Complaints about facilitations" and "Attention to classroom emotions and to individual needs" were set as dependent variables for two separated simple linear regression analyses, since results of bivariate correlations did not show a relationship with these subscales and both constructs of Black Pedagogy and Adultcentrism. In both cases, the predictor entered in the model resulted significant. Hierarchical multiple regression was instead conducted to evaluate the ability of Black Pedagogy construct to predict scores on "Fairness of evaluation", after controlling for Organizational Malaise, since the latter also resulted correlated to this subscale. As shown in Table 33, in this case Organizational Malaise turned out to be the only predictor able to provide a unique significant contribution to the explanation of an amount of variance (3.2%) in R^2. All the three subscales of third RADSA section, namely "Roles and information", "Diagnosis as alibi", and "Parents' negative reactions to SLD diagnoses" were best predicted by Black Pedagogy construct, since this is the only independent variable providing a significant unique contribution to the model. The model regarding prediction of "Strengths and weaknesses" significantly explained the 4.4% of the variance in this subscale. Nonetheless, neither "Methods of Black Pedagogy" nor "Competent Child" subscales did provide statistically significant unique contribution to the model, thus indicating that their shared variance was accountable for the resulting R^2. Black Pedagogy construct distinctly predicted "Teacher positioning in respect to other professionals" accounting alone for the 8.3% of the total 12.3% variance explained in this subscale. Lastly, "Diagnosis usefulness" subscale resulted predicted for the 4.1% of its variance by Adultcentrism second factor, namely, "Education of children over time".

8. Discussion

First and foremost, an important premise is required for the interpretation of the previously presented results. This study was designed to give a contribution to an area of the literature concerning the widespread presence of Black Pedagogy and Adultcentrism constructs in our society and their related detrimental effects. The first and greatest expectation was therefore to find a certain degree of agreement with these dimensions in a sample randomly recruited from a population of primary school teachers. Consequently, a delicate approach was certainly needed in conducting such kind of research, though most of the literature concerning the theoretical aspects of these topics obviously assumes a tone of denunciation in order to highlight the urgency of paying attention to such issues. The basic assumption of the present work was that we all have in common a certain degree of agreement with these constructs due to the belonging to our culture and to our shared history, so it is here clearly stated that the intent underlying this research was neither to judge participants' beliefs, which are in no way conceived as intentionally malicious, nor to detect detrimental relational modalities as an end in itself. Rather the intention was to understand if these aspects that we might have in common deserve to be recognized, better understood and utilized to promote the well-being of both adults and children in the relationship. The work focused indeed on the unwitting and unrecognized aspects of educational practices that, despite the good intentions, could be harmful or counterproductive for the child: Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy are used as a key to interpretation, needed as definite constructs to implement the research. As can be noticed through the perusal of presented results, what appears to be most informative is not the degree of agreement with Adultcentrism or Black Pedagogy in itself, but the proportions of agreement with the various subscales and, above all, the relationships found between Black Pedagogy, Adultcentrism and other significant constructs related to the relationship and to educational styles. The latter constitute indeed the bases from which is possible to draw conclusions capable of suggesting useful solutions for practice with children and potentially for parenting.

It has been previously argued that subtler and elusive types of harmful disciplinary practices may not have decreased at the same rate as "visible maltreatment" if the paradigmatic premises underlying the implementation of detrimental educational and disciplinary practices have not fully changed. In spite of the fact that the recognition, definition and greater protection actualized towards children in the last few decades promoted a drastic decrease of explicitly violent educational practices, which nowadays are broadly socially condemned, specific objectives and values of Black Pedagogy, as well as an adultcentric image of the child from which such practices originated, could be still present to some extent in adults' minds. Therefore, there might still be in "normal population" a certain degree

of diffusion of those disciplinary methods and rearing practices that have the power to hamper the positive relationships and well-being of both the child and the adult. On this account, Black Pedagogy and Adultcentrism operationalized constructs have been used in the present study to assess the presence of such mentality in our territory, thus addressing hypothesis (a). A "medium" level of presence was observed both for what concerns Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy, and no significant differences have been found exploring scores between subgroups. This result suggests that, for what concerns the categories formed on the basis of information about participants gathered through the demographic form prepared for the present study, constructs of Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy were present at the same level among the population studied. Adultcentrism's first factor "Child as an empty box", is the one toward which there was the highest agreement if compared with other subscales of both Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy, in line with what in the literature is described as a widespread image of children seen as passive recipients of a developmental process in which adults transmit their knowledge, moral values, culture and wisdom to them. Coherently, the idea that a child comes into the world with his/her own competences had the lowest concordance rate of all Adultcentrism subscales. Moreover, as advanced in hypothesis (b), the agreement with Black Pedagogy construct was more focused on the sphere of values and beliefs, since scores on factors "Values of Black Pedagogy" and "Education of children over time" were higher than those on "Methods of Black Pedagogy". As a further matter, participants' estimations informed on the fact that there was a greater diffusion of Black Pedagogy methods in the past compared to the present time, though they are not yet disappeared in respondents' generation.

Through the assessment of the explanatory power of Adultcentrism on the proportion of variance in Black Pedagogy construct (measured in grades of agreement), and the combination between the latter and PERC, it has been made an attempt to address hypothesis (c), concerning the difficulty to recognize subtle maltreating situations if there is the persistence of a hierarchical and authoritarian model of the family that justifies the ongoing diffusion of the most understated forms of disciplinary physical or mental violence. As a matter of fact, it resulted that Adultcentrism significantly explains 30.4% of the variance in scores on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section (hypothesis "e"). The latter, resulted negatively correlated with scores on PERC, indicating that the greater is the agreement with Black Pedagogy construct (especially with Black Pedagogy methods), the less is the ability to correctly recognize subtle maltreating situations, while Adultcentrism by itself did not result a significant predictor of the variance in PERC scores. This results could suggest that when Adultcentric perspective is at a certain level such that it generates detrimental adultist conducts, assimilable to Black Pedagogy methods and mentality, the ability to recognize harmful disciplinary practices is compromised. As a consequence, less obvious detrimental disciplinary practices should

be decreased less because not fully recognized as harmful. In actual fact, participants' estimations of diffusion pointed in this direction: though Black Pedagogy methods had an overall decrease nowadays, psychologically detrimental disciplinary methods clearly decreased less than physical ones (hypothesis "d"), with the exception of "Frightening through stories" method. One possible explanation of this latter particular aspect is that actually "Frightening through stories" could be seen as the most explicit of emotionally harmful methods since it pertains to an imaginary level, that is difficult to justify with the same clarity of other psychological methods embedded with reality (e.g., "Humiliating" or "Blackmailing") and, therefore, more easily recognized and abandoned, just like more physical methods. On the other hand, it is interesting to notice that "Monitoring/discouraging sexuality" is the only Black Pedagogy method whose decrease amount resembles the ones of physical disciplinary practices but that also results currently diffused in an extent that is more similar to psychological methods (e.g., more than "Pedagogical Beating"). It might be possible that the way in which sexuality sphere is controlled nowadays changed, passing from a "practical control" to a more "mental" one. Otherwise, this result could be due to the fact that this method is the "less physical" of physical methods, since it concerns parents' monitoring action on sexuality, a sort of mediated physicality, as in the case of "Denial of a meal". The latter is one of the most disused methods for obvious reasons of change in the historical context, along with "Toughening children up". Accustoming children to life hardships was indeed considered an important component of education in the past since it promoted the acquisition of survival skills (Kühn, 2014).

If adults are pursuing educational ideals without being aware that these are consistent with abusive disciplinary methods, they could either apply a level of disciplinary violence deemed acceptable in their cultural and social context (e.g., a slap, a verbal insult, etc.) or, in the best case, they could feel deprived of the means to carry out their educational duty towards children. Both of these possible scenarios suggest that if a change at the level of educational methods is desired, one should work at the level of values and objectives in order to change them and to allow the emergence of the different methods deriving from them. Such consideration, could have important implications in interventions to promote the well-being in the relationship between adult and children both in scholastic and in family environment because, although today's society is surely the less adultcentric ever (Petr, 1992), we still have to abandon our binary thinking. Some authors claim that even child-centered pedagogy and psychology, that could seem the solution, are founded on an assumption of universal child who progresses through predetermined stages of development (Burman, 2017; Cannella, 1997) and, most important of all, is limited anyway in the same manner as an adultcentric view, because it still defines childhood as "something else" while "child development is not the whole of developmental psychology. Moreover, parents are interesting in their own right. Their experiences, satisfactions, and

development are topics to be explored without any necessity to justify the exploration on the grounds of effects upon children" (Goodnow & Collins, 1990, p. 10). The solution is not to minimize adults' importance or to overturn the asymmetry of power described so far. As stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child:

> States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention.
>
> (UN General Assembly, 1989, Art. 5)

A rights-based approach would permit to take into account both the adult and the children as persons, human beings with individual specificities, recognizing parents' vital role of guidance and direction that needs continuous adjustments of equilibrium between itself and children's evolving abilities, in order to permit them a partial or full assumption of responsibility and exercise of their rights (Lansdown, 2005). This recommendation seems capable of resolving the issues emerged concerning how is it possible to protect children without disempowering them. In this respect, it seems that there is the need to reflect on another way to protect, care, raise and look after children, and this concerns both family and school environment. But it cannot be possible without the collaboration of the whole society and of institutions, because a single adult could not put in to practice a new paradigm if society is pressingly demanding him/her another result. It appears necessary a paradigm shift which, as known, is preceded and accompanied by a phase of crisis and disorientation (Bokulich & Devlin, 2015; Kuhn, 1962). The first step might be to recognize the existence of the adultcentric bias, and this recognition should though take distance from a blaming attitude: with the exception of detrimental adultist behaviors and maltreatment that are obvious and recognizable, adultcentric vision itself should not to be condemned since it is just a perspective, often naturally assumed by adults with the very best intentions towards children. Yet the problem arises when clues to recognize it are available, and one does not want to see them. Following the indication of John Bell (1995), some questions to become aware of adultcentric bias in our choice of action can be suggested: "Would I treat an adult this way?", "Would I talk to an adult in this tone of voice?", "Would I grab this out of an adult's hand?" (Bell, 1995, p. 5). A suitable example of the application of such questions is reported below; while reading it, should be kept in mind that in Italy an occasional slapping of the child is not fully condemned by the common sense. The following conversation unfolded with a university student during the discussion of results with respondents who participated

in the pilot study of Adultcentrism Scale preliminary validation. After talking about adultcentric paradigm, students have been asked if they thought that to slap a child is an "adultist" act, namely a Black Pedagogy method:

Answer: "No."
Question: "Why?"
Answer: "Because sometimes it is necessary to make them understand."
Question: "Would you do it to an adult for the same reason?"
Answer: "No!"
Question: "And, do adults always understand?"
Answer: "No…"
Question: "So, why don't you slap an adult when he/her doesn't understand?"
Answer: "Because I can't."

The relationship between the adult and the child could therefore benefit from the recognition of the presence of an adultcentric paradigm and its possible repercussions in terms of adultist behaviors, viz., Black Pedagogy methods application. In fact, it has been found that the enactment of a more controlling, rigid and prescriptive teaching style was predicted in its variance of scores by the shared action of Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy, with a specific significant unique contribution of different aspects of Black Pedagogy construct. On this basis, a first application of these constructs to the concrete situation of the increase of SLD diagnoses has been attempted according to objective (f). First of all, it has been assessed if there was any difference in relational quality when a pupil with SLD is involved in the relationship compared to when it regards a pupil without a diagnosis but with poor school performance. Actually, "Closeness" and "Dependency" in the relationship have been found to be significantly higher in the presence of an SLD diagnosis. But it was also found that lower scores on "Closeness" were related with higher scores on "Black Pedagogy Observation" section, indicating that the presence of a diagnosis lowered the quality of the relationship in terms of Closeness if there was a greater agreement with Black Pedagogy construct, in particular with Black Pedagogy methods. Further reflection hints on this aspect are provided by results concerning the exploration of relationships existing between RADSA subscales and the two constructs of Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy. In fact, though all participants showed a considerable level of agreement with the idea that children's scholastic difficulties are often medicalized, the resulting pattern of correlations when agreement with Black Pedagogy construct (and with Adultcentrism to a lower extent) was present, shows the possible profile of a teacher in difficulty when confronted with the complex scenario

exemplified by RADSA structure. It seems that the higher was the agreement with these constructs, the higher was the tendency to believe that the phenomenon of growing diffusion of SLD diagnoses is due to processes that create "false positives" (medicalization, system-level causes, or how children are raised nowadays). In addition, the more was the agreement with Black Pedagogy, the more parents were seen as needing more training about SLD, as using the diagnosis as an alibi and as having excessively negative reactions to SLD diagnosis. Lastly, the more teachers perceived their role as penalized in respect to the other professionals involved when an SLD case is dealt with, the more agreement with Black Pedagogy construct was detected and the child conceived as more competent (i.e., higher scores were present on Adultcentrism third factor).

On the basis of the significant models presented in the results section, it seems that a Black Pedagogy legacy is detrimental most of all to the conception of teacher's role itself: the more agreement was detected especially with this construct, the more teachers' responses indicated a critical attitude towards society, specialists, parents and the idea of children as capable of accepting a classmate having an SLD diagnosis. This might not necessarily mean that the presence of such construct is the source of all the issues identified by our focus groups participants, rather it seems more appropriate to read this result as a demonstration of the unsuitability of Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy with our currently evolving culture and society. And, making a step forward, it could suggest that teachers have been overwhelmed by great changes and complexity that have not been accompanied by adequate solutions at the level of everyday practice with children. The increase of SLD diagnoses throws into crisis especially the Adultcentric vision and the educational modalities of Black Pedagogy, just because this phenomenon is not something according to which "old methods" could be simply reformulated, and in front of this kaleidoscopic range of pupils' individual needs, adultcentric standardized and authoritarian perspective shows all its obsolescence. As highlighted by Robert C. Pianta (2001a), a biological interpretation of children's scholastic problems reflects the tendency to attribute the cause of such difficulties to forces that cannot be controlled or influenced by the school, thus shifting the responsibility of scholastic progress to children own characteristic (in terms of their genes and brain functioning), thus overshadowing the role of context and relationship in school success. This aspect seems to be the focal point of the matter, because the imbalance of power in the relationship is exactly what characterizes Adultcentrism and its possible adultist repercussions, therefore, if the relationship is disempowered by medicalization, Black Pedagogy methods and an Adultcentric understanding of the educational relationship are encompassed by paradoxical requests. The latter can be roughly summarized in requests of the following kind: "You have to do things in another way, but achieve same or even better results than before"; "Pay more attention to individual needs (SLD, SEN, etc.), but use same guidelines and examination criteria for

each pupil", "Learnings *differentiations* are needed in order to permit everyone the opportunity to achieve the *same* goals and results". These paradoxical and demanding situations appear to have emerged spontaneously from the evolution of the social context as it was described in the dedicated introductory section and, although showing a general impacting on all participant teachers, they seem to create particular difficulties to teachers who show more agreement with Adultcentric paradigm of thought and Black Pedagogy construct. As a result, according to the findings of the present study, it seems that teachers do not need more specific top-down training about SLDs. Rather, it becomes apparent that there is a need for time and occasions to adapt to fast-changing working circumstances, to reinvent their role according to more modern values and objectives in education, to be accounted for their efforts especially when these are directed to their own professional improvement and to have an equal dialogue with parents, specialists, and institutions. Teachers have their specific "needs", and since they are intertwined in multiple relationships with pupils, it is of priority importance to take into account the necessities of relationship's members with a combined perspective so that what benefits one part of the relationship, can be positively reflected on the other part and vice versa. The risk of bracketing off teachers' need to reinvent themselves and to be confident in their methods and objectives, is to divert the problem on children, generating an overall sense of inadequacy both in pupils and in teachers.

9. Conclusions

It seems possible to think that today time is ripe to allow the attempt to visualize children as competent in a new and different way, to think them as active members of society with their own agency, to be curious and open about their culture, to empower them in their living context and to find a third way capable of going beyond the two alternatives highlighted by the literature, according to which children would be forced either to adapt or to be in opposition to adults' world. The fact of taking seriously for a moment such child description immediately entails the unfolding of multiple issues regarding, for example, what kind of decisions can children make for themselves, how can they be more autonomous as possible if they are surrounded by hazards, or what exactly can they teach to adults. It is crucial to maintain awareness that each of these questions, like many others that could originate from a change of perspective, deserve careful consideration and that they may result somehow concerning from the point of view of adults who work with children and of parents. But the proposal driven by the results of the present study is to make an attempt to start thinking carefully about the presence of Adultcentric paradigm in our social context before focusing too much about possible practical obstacles deriving from its recognition. This is the reason why it has been thought that an operationalization was needed: the implementation of a research concerning these topics was necessary to engage schools, institutions and the territory in reflecting upon Adultcentrism and its most detrimental consequences that, as discussed above, are assimilable to what in the literature is labeled as Black Pedagogy. Results indicated a certain degree of widespread presence of such constructs and revealed that they behave accordingly to their theoretical conceptions when compared with other connected constructs already operationalized in the literature. Such results permit to legitimize the combined reasoning on the issue, starting to reflect on Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy with a constructive attitude of recognition and improvement. This could generate tremendous application models for all practitioners who work with children as well as for parents: as argued in the exploration of the reference literature, teachers, educators and child advocacy services could improve their action through the recognition of an Adultcentric paradigm, mainly because it would help in avoiding the reference to a restricted image of the child and the unwitting use of detrimental disciplinary or educational practices. In respect to the latter, one of the most important suggestions deriving from results is that it seems more functional to work on the level of values, beliefs, and objectives connected to child-rearing and educational practices. Working on practical methods appears to be a subsequent step, otherwise, the risk is that subtle forms of harmful disciplinary and educational practices belonging to an obsolete child-rearing culture are unwittingly

used when lack of methods, difficulty or frustration are perceived. On this basis, it may be possible to elaborate a rights-based model (Lansdown, 2005) for child-rearing and education that could bring several positive implications in many areas involving the relationship between adults and children. Fortunately, there is no need to start from scratch, as underlined by Paolo Perticari (2016), various prominent authors in the field of pedagogy have already emphasized the importance of assuming a perspective that is truly respectful of children, for example, Janusz Korczak and Maria Montessori. Future lines of research in which these constructs could be applied are numerous. It would be very informative, for example, to combine Adultcentrism and Black Pedagogy constructs in research protocols including instruments that take into account children perspectives, attachment styles (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980) or "Mind-mindedness" construct (Meins, 1998), as well as their administration to teachers of secondary education system. The possible applications could range from research fields of pedagogy, education, parenting, child advocacy to social-juridical psychology.

If it is true that "one, in the beginning, has to do only with theoretical, rhetorical, abstract children, and then, when children in flesh and blood are encountered, one sacrifices either the principles to the child or the child to the principles" (Regni, 2007, p. 106, own translation), it is hoped that the present work demonstrated why the former represents the most desirable and advantageous course of action for the promotion of well-being in adult-child relationship.

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Appendix I: Adultcentrism Scale

(E. Florio, L. Caso & I. Castelli, *in preparation*)

This translation is provided for presentation purposes only: it should not be used for administration because the instrument has not been validated in English.

Instrument

Children and Adults

Here follow some statements regarding the image of the child and the adult, taken from the psychological and pedagogical literature on the topic. Read each sentence and, in evaluating your response, **keep in mind that we are referring to adults and children in typical developmental conditions, i.e., without any particular difficulty or deficit**. Afterwards, please mark with a cross the number indicating your level of agreement with each statement, according to the following response scale:

1 = Fully disagree (You fully disagree with the statement)
2 = Slightly agree (You mainly disagree with the statement, but you find yourself in agreement with a part of it)
3 = Agree (The statement is close to your thought)
4 = Fully agree (The statement reflects exactly what you think)

1	In our society, children are the category of population to which institutions give the most importance	1	2	3	4
2	The most important purpose of a child's development path is to become an adult fully developed in all his/her abilities.	1	2	3	4
3	During a child's process of socialization, the priority is that he/she embraces the social values of the society in which he/she lives	1	2	3	4
4	Adults of reference (parents, teachers, etc.) must teach children to achieve emotional stability	1	2	3	4
5	If an individual does not become proficient in all the abilities of a functional adult, it means that he/her fell behind in development	1	2	3	4
6	It is necessary to take into account above all children's opinions for a problem that concerns them or their context	1	2	3	4
7	Adults of reference (parents, teachers, etc.) must teach children everything	1	2	3	4
8	During a child's process of culturalization, the priority is that he/she embraces the values and contents of the culture in which he/she lives.	1	2	3	4
9	Since birth, children have competences that adults tend to ignore	1	2	3	4
10	Parents have full responsibility for everything their children do	1	2	3	4

11	Children come into the world without competences	1	2	3	4
12	Adult society should adapt to children's specific developmental periods	1	2	3	4
13	Without adults' educating action, children are amoral by nature	1	2	3	4
14	Children are a property of parents	1	2	3	4
15	Teachers have full responsibility for everything their pupils do in classroom	1	2	3	4
16	A child's maturation process should respect the personal time needs of that particular child	1	2	3	4
17	The child's achievements are all thanks to parents or teachers	1	2	3	4
18	Despite the attention that is claimed to be addressed to children, society and infrastructures are often not child-friendly	1	2	3	4

Table of factors

Adultcentrism Scale: final factorial structure with re-numbered items
(ML EFA -Varimax rotation)

Item	Child as an empty box (Factor 1)	Child without agency (Factor 2)	Competent Child (Factor 3)
3	.633		
8	.599		
2	.592		
4	.459		
5	.365		
15		.720	
10		.535	
14		.500	
7		.499	
17		.430	
9 (reversed)			.644
16 (reversed)			.584
11			.518
12 (reversed)			.447
6 (reversed			.374
13			.355

Notes. It is recalled that items 1 and 18(reversed) are excluded from factor analysis

Appendix II: Black Pedagogy Scale

(E. Florio, L. Caso & I. Castelli, *in preparation*)

This translation is provided for presentation purposes only: it should not be used for administration because the instrument has not been validated in English.

Instrument

Child-rearing in the past and nowadays

In your opinion, until which generation the educational practices known as those "used in the past" have been applied?

Parents
Grandparents
Great-grandparents
My own generation

Here follow some statements about practices concerning the education of the child drawn from the psychological and pedagogical literature on the topic. Read each sentence and then please mark with a cross the number indicating your level of agreement with each statement, according to the following response scale:

1 = Fully disagree (You fully disagree with the statement)
2 = Slightly agree (You mainly disagree with the statement, but you find yourself in agreement with a part of it)
3 = Agree (The statement is close to your thought)
4 = Fully agree (The statement reflects exactly what you think)

1	Today's children are more ill-mannered than those of my generation	1	2	3	4
2	It is necessary that children learn to unconditionally obey adults who take care of them (parents, teachers, etc.)	1	2	3	4
3	Nowadays, the way in which children are educated has changed for the better	1	2	3	4
4	Today's children show less sense of gratitude towards adults who take care of them (parents, teachers, etc.)	1	2	3	4
5	Children's character should be shaped according to the rules and values of society	1	2	3	4
6	Discipline is a fundamental value to be passed down to children	1	2	3	4
7	Bad habits and character flaws must be eliminated through education	1	2	3	4
8	Today's children respect the "No" of parents and teachers	1	2	3	4
9	Children must respect authoritarian power-holders of a certain context (school, family, etc.)	1	2	3	4

10	Sometimes pedagogical beating results necessary (slapping, hitting with a stick, etc.)	1	2	3	4
11	Children should be kept constantly under control	1	2	3	4
12	The value of honesty should be taught to children as early as possible	1	2	3	4
13	Children must learn to be humble	1	2	3	4
14	Punishment and confiscation are effective disciplinary means	1	2	3	4
15	Children must learn to show gratitude and thankfulness for what is being done for them	1	2	3	4
16	It is essential to teach children tidiness and cleanliness from a very young age	1	2	3	4
17	Children must learn to be diligent and willing to face the tasks they have been entrusted with	1	2	3	4
18	Words are always more effective than pedagogical beating	1	2	3	4
19	Children's interest towards the sphere of sexuality should be discouraged	1	2	3	4
20	Each error or disobedience must be followed by a corrective measure, otherwise, the child will not be coherently brought up	1	2	3	4
21	Nowadays, the way in which children are educated has changed for the worse	1	2	3	4
22	It is necessary to show children one's own inflexibility to be obeyed, since otherwise they don't cooperate	1	2	3	4
23	The most effective punishments are those that embarrass children in front of others (classmates, relatives, family members, etc.)	1	2	3	4
24	Children must be submissive to parents	1	2	3	4

Please refer now to the following response scale:

1 = Not present at all
2 = Present, but not common
3 = Present
4 = Widespread

25	**In your opinion, how much were the following measures widespread among educational means "of the past"?**				
	a. Pedagogical beating (slaps, to hit with a stick, etc.)	1	2	3	4
	b. Denial of a meal or its replacement with bread and water	1	2	3	4
	c. Frightening through stories focused on distressing characters in order to be obeyed (the boogeyman, ghosts, legends, etc.)	1	2	3	4
	d. Providing false information to divert from topics mentioned by the child but considered inappropriate for his/her age	1	2	3	4
	e. Treating the child coldly as a consequence of his/her disobedience	1	2	3	4

f. Toughening children up in respect to physical exertions, namely to improve their stamina towards fatigue, heat, cold, hunger and tiredness	1	2	3	4
g. Monitoring and discouraging children's curiosity towards their own sexuality;	1	2	3	4
h. Lying exacerbating the consequences of a conduct considered wrong with the intention to scare the child and thus avoiding his/her attempts to put it into practice;	1	2	3	4
i. Humiliating: involving other people (family members, relatives, classmates, etc.) in showing disapproval to the child in response to his/her mistake or disobedience;	1	2	3	4
l. Physical violence (beatings, whipping, etc.);	1	2	3	4
m. Blackmailing the child to make him/her do something;	1	2	3	4
n. Always highlighting that unpleasant measures are executed solely for children's own good.	1	2	3	4
o. Other: _____ (If you want, you can add here an additional educational method "of the past")	1	2	3	4

26	**According to your experience, to what extent educational means "of the past" are still present nowadays?**				
	a. Pedagogical beating (slaps, to hit with a stick, etc.)	1	2	3	4
	b. Denial of a meal or its replacement with bread and water	1	2	3	4
	c. Frightening through stories focused on distressing characters in order to be obeyed (the boogeyman, ghosts, legends, etc.)	1	2	3	4
	d. Providing false information to divert from topics mentioned by the child but considered inappropriate for his/her age	1	2	3	4
	e. Treating the child coldly as a consequence of his/her disobedience	1	2	3	4
	f. Toughening children up in respect to physical exertions, namely to improve their stamina towards fatigue, heat, cold, hunger and tiredness	1	2	3	4
	g. Monitoring and discouraging children's curiosity towards their own sexuality;	1	2	3	4
	h. Lying exacerbating the consequences of a conduct considered wrong with the intention to scare the child and thus avoiding his/her attempts to put it into practice;	1	2	3	4
	i. Humiliating: involving other people (family members, relatives, classmates, etc.) in showing disapproval to the child in response to his/her mistake or disobedience;	1	2	3	4
	l. Physical violence (beatings, whipping, etc.);	1	2	3	4
	m. Blackmailing the child to make him/her do something;	1	2	3	4
	n. Always highlighting that unpleasant measures are executed solely for children's own good.	1	2	3	4

	1	2	3	4
o. Other: _____ (Write here again the educational method "of the past" that you added in the previous question and now indicate how much is still used nowadays)				

Table of factors

"Black Pedagogy Observation" section: final factorial structure with re-numbered items (ML EFA -Varimax rotation)

Item re-numbered	Values of Black Pedagogy (Factor 1)	Education of children over time (Factor 2)	Methods of Black Pedagogy (Factor 3)
13	.590		
15	.551		
9	.539		
12	.539		
7	.533		
2	.517		
5	.465		
16	.442		
20	.419		
6	.411		
11	.395		
17	.392		
21		.762	
1		.665	
4		.627	
3 (reversed)		.571	
8 (reversed)		.433	
10			.591
22			.506
14			.485
23			.465
18 (reversed)			.447
24			.369
19			.353

Appendix III: Summary Table of T-LAB outputs

Summary of Clusters emerged from thematic analysis performed with T-LAB software

Section	Cluster	%	Characteristic words	χ^2	Characteristic statements (Elementary Contexts)
Increase of SLD diagnoses	1	24%	Parent	142.409	*For example, the work. In the early years when I was teaching, almost no mother worked. So, the mother was at home, or someone of the family was: at home there was often also a grandmother or a grandfather, these children were more followed from the emotional point of view.*
	2	43.9%	To understand	22.23	*I think society and parents have changed* [...] *education has also changed; how much has education changed!* [...] *The school is no longer among the first positions of the scale of values.*
	3	32.1%	Child	14.141	*We prepare a PLP* (personalized learning plan) *because* (the child) *has a serious learning difficulty. And who has a serious learning difficulty can be an SLD, or a child with difficulties deriving from family problems but which result in real learning difficulties; that is to say, the child is not just lazy.*
			Difficulties	61.75	
Peer group	1	17.9%	To succeed	234.321	*This difficulty can be overcome. And this can be seen not only with SLD diagnoses, but often also with serious, very serious, disabilities. Children with a diagnosis or with serious disabilities placed in a familiar and social context that is beautiful, full of stimuli and rich…they can still do something.*
	2	13.7%	Instruments	106.524	*This child did not accept the compensatory measures at all, he/she was almost ashamed to use them, the classmates had been told anyway that this child could use them, also because they were all well aware of the effort that this child had to do, in first and second grade they even encouraged him/her* (to use facilitations).
			Classmates	72.071	
	3	25.8%	Teacher	30.443	(In respect to a class where there are complaints about facilitations) *Teachers have changed, so there is someone who has a method and someone who has another method. Continuity was missing and… Yes, they have been… a bit like that. So these things* (not complaining) *can be noticed when in the classes there is always the same team, compared to classes in which every year teachers have changed.*
			School	27.268	
	4	10.8%	Test	79.167	*I brought them* (tests) *home and I was correcting the right ones that became wrong and then… I was exhausted. So I thought to put a dot under the wrong word. There isn't a grade.*

			Different	56.049	*The first thing they look at is the grade "But, have you forgotten the grade?"* (children say to the teacher) *"Yes, I'm a bit forgetful"* (the teacher answers to children). *I don't use the grade. I don't grade it.*
	5	16.2%	Need	53.229	*For example, one has to use the multiplication table, like the Pythagorean table, and the children understand why one should use it. And how is the reason explained? The truth is told. The only word I would not have used if I was this teacher* (of the textual stimulus) *was "doctor".*
			To explain	41.904	
	6	15.7%	Different	32.783	*So, it's clear that in front of a tenfold increased homework, the fact that one* (child) *with SLD has it reduced at the minimum, triggers a bit of anger in those who have to study 10 pages of history, do you understand? It's this competitiveness that does not allow the acceptation of the child with SLD, because he/she has* (to study) *one history page with concepts.*
			Situation	17.202	
Parents (Parents' attitudes towards SLD diagnosis)	1	16%	One's own	41.716	*I think that full-time school is lacking of the moment in which one has to deal with a homework by him/herself. It's true that in full-time school the teacher assigns activities that children do by themselves, but they do them by themselves in classroom, it's not the same as doing it by oneself at home. They are quite different things.*
			To find	27.786	
			Path	23.429	
	2	20.1%	Mom	31.399	*The problem is that children think they are inadequate, but you learn in this way, so there's nothing that doesn't work with you, you learn this way.*
			Read	84.892	
			Tutoring	60.098	
	3	15%	Diagnosis	68.287	*To get a diagnosis in the years of secondary school only to have the well-known facilitations is useless. Having instead a diagnosis at the beginning* (is useful) *in order to be able to understand this child, why he/she makes such exertions, therefore more a profile than a diagnosis. Yes, a profile, including resources and not only difficulties.*
			Instrument	48.818	
	4	7.6%	To think	67.383	*The parent arrives at school with what the child had forgotten. Have you forgot your notebook? And here it comes at school! So, in the moment you make a request to the child, he/she is not able to sustain it. And then the parent replaces the child. School makes too many and high requests to children.*
			Before	18.42	
	5	9.7%	Family	59.341	*I think that if a child is followed by a therapist, there should be communication between the therapist and the private or classroom teacher more than communication between private*
			Diagnosis	29.465	

			To follow	49.563	*teacher and classroom teacher. Because is the therapist the one who can help me in activating* (specific helps).
	6	17.3%	To buckle down	56.04	*It has to be considered what the parent has in mind, in terms of his/her own knowledge, life experiences... So many times one should buckle down to it... I know it's difficult, one should manage to say it...to talk heart to heart* […] *however it's easy to deny the help for one's own child and to hinder him/her further.*
			To find	13.767	
	7	14.24%	Problems	42.874	*The most truly distressing thing is to hear teachers' lexicon, these neologisms linked to SLD and to SEN* (Special Educational Needs)*, a "SLD and SEN lottery": I have thirteen, I have sixteen this year.*
			To talk	13.938	
Learned helplessness *(The moment in which the teacher refers parents to an SLD specialist)*	1	12.17%	To succeed	13.558	*A system element* (is missing)*: what school resources do I have available to intervene? Ok? Is there a psycho-pedagogist? No. Is there any chance to have hours of co-presence? To activate some... even some simple observational interventions?* (No)
	2	22.52%	SLD	28.549	*If there is a diagnosis one takes advantage of it, but then, then it says* (citing an extract of textual stimuli)*: "moreover, she can rely on guidelines provided by specialists", but the guidelines provided by the specialists are never like the daily work done in the classroom by a teacher, a work done with a lot of effort.*
			Reality	32.893	
	3	35.5%	Teacher	24.752	*Because in the moment in which a precise diagnosis arrives, the teacher continues to strive, with the only difference that efforts become more significant. That is to say, teacher's intervention finally becomes meaningful, and therefore focused. But the fact that there is an assessment* (diagnosis) *does not relieve the teacher from striving.*
	4	29.82%	To see	38.329	*I'll give you the television, I'll give you the mobile phone. This discourse is also interesting, because maybe one can understand why a parent is so interested in results, because if he/she sees only them* (results) *[...] let's say, a football match... maybe he/she* (parent) *doesn't watch the game, but he hears the result, which is a defeat...*
			Result	31.681	

Appendix IV: "Representations and Attitudes towards SLD diagnoses questionnaire"
(RADSA)

(E. Florio, L. Caso & I. Castelli, *in preparation*)

This translation is provided for presentation purposes only: it should not be used for administration because the instrument has not been validated in English.

Instrument

"Representations and Attitudes towards SLD diagnoses questionnaire"
(RADSA - *Rappresentazioni e Atteggiamenti rispetto ai DSA*)

Please read carefully each section topic and then express your level of agreement with each statement, according to the following response scale:

1 = Fully disagree (You fully disagree with the statement)
2 = Slightly agree (You mainly disagree with the statement, but you find yourself in agreement with a part of it)
3 = Agree (The statement is close to your thought)
4 = Fully agree (The statement reflects exactly what you think)

Section 1:

Following statements regard <u>possible causes of the high increase of SLD diagnoses</u>, please mark your level of agreement with each of them:

1	SLD diagnoses increased because nowadays such disorders are considered important, whereas before they were mistaken for attitudes of laziness.	1	2	3	4
2	Parents' life today is more hectic.	1	2	3	4
3	In my experience, I have rarely seen a real SLD	1	2	3	4
4	The acceleration of children's development implies that they cannot achieve stages of development on their own.	1	2	3	4
5	SLD diagnoses increased because our society is characterized by an increasingly marked medicalization movement.	1	2	3	4
6	Children today play in a less aimed and structured way than in the past.	1	2	3	4
7	Teachers are asked to personalize learning and to manage "level classes" (i.e., with a personalized teaching method), but this makes the work too complex for the available school resources.	1	2	3	4
8	Today's parents have less time to dedicate to their children.	1	2	3	4
9	SLD diagnoses are very easily made because there is business of private services behind and serious money at stake.	1	2	3	4

10	SLD diagnoses increased due to the massive use of technology (smartphones, tablets, etc.), which provides more numerous and frenetic stimuli to today's children.	1 2 3 4
11	There is a system-level problem: SLD regulations have been made, but not enough resources have been made available to put recommendations into practice.	1 2 3 4
12	Diagnoses increase is not linked to the real neurological disorder: SLD certificate is being misused.	1 2 3 4
13	A positive aspect of an SLD diagnosis is that it helps to identify the problem and to understand what the pupil needs.	1 2 3 4
14	Sometimes SLD diagnoses are fitted for the situation in order to get some kind of help for children.	1 2 3 4
15	Today's children do not have the opportunity to experience their mistakes, to autonomously face the consequences or to search for a solution.	1 2 3 4
16	An accurate SLD diagnosis should exclude other causes of learning difficulties (social, environmental, family, etc.)	1 2 3 4
17	Separations are more common today	1 2 3 4
18	In my experience, I see more "borderline cases" in which it is not clear whether the child really has an SLD or not.	1 2 3 4

Section 2:

Following statements regard the topic of <u>social relationships with the peer group</u>, please mark your level of agreement with each of them:

1	The other pupils complain in order to get the same facilitations as a classmate having an SLD.	1 2 3 4
2	In Primary School teachers are much more attentive to the emotional sphere if compared with later school grades.	1 2 3 4
3	Homework should not be the same for all, because it is right to assign each student the homework he/she needs.	1 2 3 4
4	Parents complain about the different treatment towards a pupil if he/she does not have an official SLD diagnosis (e.g., in the case of pupils with SEN).	1 2 3 4
5	The team continuity of teachers is essential to ensure the possibility to promote a respectful and inclusive classroom climate.	1 2 3 4
6	Pupils complain about the facilitations available for a classmate with SLD because there is a strong competition for grades.	1 2 3 4
7	Teachers' attention to the emotional sphere gradually decreases in school grades after Primary school, until it disappears.	1 2 3 4

8	Often there is no need to explain the problem to the class because the diagnostic process is so long that the children already got used to the difficulties of a classmate before the SLD diagnosis arrival.	1 2 3 4
9	Parental complaints about homework arise from the fact that there are actually teachers who give a lot of homework without leaving time for resting, amusement and other extra-scholastic activities.	1 2 3 4
10	Sometimes the teacher has to impose his/her authority in order to hush classmates' complaints regarding the different treatment towards a pupil with an SLD.	1 2 3 4
11	Numerical grades should be eliminated.	1 2 3 4
12	To promote an inclusive classroom climate means to explain to children that everyone has different needs.	1 2 3 4
13	Many complaints arise among parents when it comes to be known that homework is differentiated.	1 2 3 4
14	Since learnings have to be diversified according to everyone's specific difficulties, different tests (both school tests and national examinations) should be created, diversified according to everyone's specific resources.	1 2 3 4
15	Pupils help a classmate in difficulty, rather than envy him/her for the facilitations.	1 2 3 4
16	Sometimes one wonders whether if the grade achieved in a facilitated test has the same value of an identical grade achieved in the complete version of the test.	1 2 3 4
17	If there is an SLD diagnosis, help is easily accepted by everyone (classmates and parents).	1 2 3 4

Section 3:

Following statements regard <u>parents in relation to SLD diagnoses</u>, please mark your level of agreement with each of them:

1	If family denies the problem when it is present, the child remains very confused and unaware of his/her potential.	1 2 3 4
2	Those parents who continue to look for information, trying to stimulate and strengthen the child as much as possible despite the SLD diagnosis, are rare.	1 2 3 4
3	Often parents oppose teacher's suggestion to begin an SLD certification process.	1 2 3 4
4	There should be a lot of training for kindergarten teachers in order to start as soon as possible to strengthen the child if warning signs are present.	1 2 3 4
5	Parents experience SLD diagnosis as something painful.	1 2 3 4
6	Parents tend to "rest on" the SLD diagnosis, desisting from stimulating the child and delegating everything to the school.	1 2 3 4
7	Thirty years ago, the teacher had much more authority in the eyes of parents.	1 2 3 4

| 8 | The figure of a school psychologist or psychopedagogist would help a lot: from the early stages when the presence of an SLD is hypothesized and communicated, to later support of parents in understanding and dealing with the situation. | 1 2 3 4 |

| 9 | A change of mentality should occur in society so that parents would not be informed through a "top-down" process, but in a manner that really helps them to understand SLDs | 1 2 3 4 |

| 10 | Parents utilize the SLD diagnosis as an "alibi": they do not accept that teachers try further to stimulate or strengthen the child. | 1 2 3 4 |

| 11 | Getting the family to accept the idea of a psychological help is very difficult, so one tries through the speech therapy, in order to start getting help at least from that direction. | 1 2 3 4 |

| 12 | Parents think that a learning disorder is a severe disability. | 1 2 3 4 |

Section 4:

Following statements regard <u>the moment in which the teacher refers parents to an SLD specialist</u>, please mark your level of agreement with each of them:

| 1 | Children with an SLD cannot do much more, so one should not insist on them. | 1 2 3 4 |

| 2 | A more assiduous collaboration with the specialist on any single case is needed because the worlds of teachers and specialists are currently separated. | 1 2 3 4 |

| 3 | The fact that there is an SLD diagnosis related to a pupil simplifies the teacher's work. | 1 2 3 4 |

| 4 | Often there is no gratification because parents do not recognize the teacher's great dedication. | 1 2 3 4 |

| 5 | The absence of collaboration between colleagues has immediate negative repercussions on the class because there is no agreement on a common strategy. | 1 2 3 4 |

| 6 | Specialists' recommendations included in SLD diagnoses concerning dispensatory and compensatory measures are often identical for everyone, so they are not useful to the teacher. | 1 2 3 4 |

| 7 | Parents criticize teachers' work. | 1 2 3 4 |

| 8 | Referring parents to an SLD specialist is the last resort: one must try everything before (teaching remedial, personalized activities, etc.). | 1 2 3 4 |

| 9 | Those who have an SLD diagnosis have to be also stimulated and strengthened because they can still improve. | 1 2 3 4 |

| 10 | SLD diagnosis makes teacher's work more complex. | 1 2 3 4 |

| 11 | Specialists should include in the SLD diagnosis also child's strengths and resources, not just the weaknesses. | 1 2 3 4 |

12	It can happen that the teacher uses the "trick" of suggesting an SLD diagnosis process because the rest of the class has become more difficult to manage.	1 2 3 4
13	After the SLD diagnosis, a great effort is always needed on the part of the teacher to carry out a pupil-focused work.	1 2 3 4
14	Sometimes SLD assessment is suggested because one feels powerless in the face of pupil's difficulties for various reasons (many different needs of children, being alone in managing the class, dealing with parents, impossibility to work harder, etc.)	1 2 3 4
15	Specialists should get to know the child by seeing him/her various times, and in the classroom context, rather than through a one-time evaluation.	1 2 3 4
16	SLD diagnosis does not add particular suggestions to what the teacher was already doing to help the pupil.	1 2 3 4
17	Many "SLD" would not exist if teachers could simplify school programs as they used to be in the past, giving value to time, repetitiveness and experiences.	1 2 3 4

Table of Factors

RADSA: factorial structures of each section with re-numbered items.
(ML EFA -Varimax rotation)

	Section 1: *Increase of SLD diagnoses*		
Item re-numbered	Medicalization (Factor 1)	System-level causes (Factor 2)	Causes related to how children are raised nowadays (Factor 3)
12	.848		
9	.793		
14	.720		
5	.632		
3	.451		
18	.424		
16 (reversed)	.411		
8		.664	
7		.609	
2		.576	
17		.528	
1		.443	
11		.436	
13		.408	
10			.649
4			.645
6			.565
15			.519

	Section 2: *Peer group*		
Item re-numbered	Complaints about facilitations (Factor 1)	Attention to classroom emotions and to individual needs (Factor 2)	Fairness of evaluations (Factor 3)
1	.803		
10	.670		
4	.655		
13	.654		
6	.623		
15	-.477		
7		.657	
2		.504	
5		.466	
8 (reversed)		.431	
12		.424	
14		.380	
16 (reversed)			.599
9			.587
17			.545
3			.430
11			.407

	Section 3: *Parents' attitudes towards SLD diagnosis*		
Item re-numbered	Roles and information (Factor 1)	Diagnosis as alibi (Factor 2)	Parents' negative reactions to SLD diagnosis (Factor 3)
9	.819		
1	.599		
4	.492		
7	.379		
8	.376		
6		.756	
10		.738	
2		.427	
11		.357	
5			.756
3			.671
12			.527

Item re-numbered	Section 4: *The moment in which the teacher refers parents to an SLD specialist*		
	Strengths and weaknesses (Factor 1)	Teacher positioning in respect to other professionals (Factor 2)	Diagnosis usefulness (Factor 3)
9	.693		
11	.556		
14 (reversed)	-.541		
12 (reversed)	-.533		
5	.488		
1 (reversed)	.440		
3 (reversed)	.415		
4		.647	
15		.590	
7		.573	
10		.510	
8 (reversed)		.400	
13 (reversed)		.371	
2		.353	
17			.820
6			.557
16			.419