

# WORLD DYNAMICS: HOW TO UNDERSTAND POWER TO PROMOTE SOCIAL BALANCE

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*Source / Izvornik:* **Zbornik radova Međunarodnog simpozija mladih anglista, kroatista i talijanista, 2020, 4 - 18**

**Conference paper / Rad u zborniku**

*Publication status / Verzija rada:* **Published version / Objavljena verzija rada (izdavačev PDF)**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:172:548711>

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*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2024-12-28**

*Repository / Repozitorij:*

[Repository of Faculty of humanities and social sciences](#)



UNIVERSITY OF SPLIT



ISBN 978-953-352-056-8

**FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET SVEUČILIŠTA U SPLITU**

**ZBORNIK RADOVA MEĐUNARODNOGA SIMPOZIJA  
MLADIH ANGLISTA, KROATISTA I TALIJANISTA**

**JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM OF STUDENTS  
OF ENGLISH, CROATIAN AND ITALIAN STUDIES**



**Zb. rad. međ. sim. ml. angl., kroat. i tal.**

**2020**

**Str. 127**

**Split, 2020.**

**ZBORNİK RADOVA MEĐUNARODNOGA SIMPOZIJA MLADIH ANGLISTA,  
KROATISTA I TALIJANISTA**

**Izdavač / Publisher**

Sveučilište u Splitu, Filozofski fakultet /  
University of Split, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,  
Poljička cesta 35, 21000 Split

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Zbornik se objavljuje prema odluci donesenoj na sjednici Fakultetskoga vijeća  
Filozofskoga fakulteta u Splitu dana 11. studenog 2020. godine.

## ČLANCI / PAPERS

*Izvorni znanstveni rad*  
Primljeno 1. ožujka 2020.

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### **WORLD DYNAMICS: HOW TO UNDERSTAND POWER TO PROMOTE SOCIAL BALANCE**

#### Summary

*The media, being potentially biased though wide lens of analysis, can be a conduit and represent the implicit struggles that underlie imbalances or misuses of power in a myriad of spheres of context. Power can often be present at the core of traditional structures that promote immediate and unfair imbalances - such as the structures beneath the gender gap which affect women, globally, on social, political, intellectual, cultural and economic levels. Bearing these lines of thought, this article will focus on suggesting ways of thinking 'Power' as a factor which carries boundless potential to act on human nature and, eventually, corrupt it, taking as the main reference point, bibliography-wise, Philip Zimbardo's *The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Turn Evil* (2008). Some mediatic cases will be used to further illustrate the arguments presented. The article aims to promote a route for consciousness and education about power in order to prevent abuses, encourage proactive behaviours to counteract existing power mishandlings and endorse one's responsibility whilst carrying and manifesting power in any form.*

**Keywords:** Education, Global Citizenship, Media, Power, Society

### **POWER AS AN ELEMENT OF CORRUPTION: INSIGHTS**

Culturally, it could be argued that it is not uncommon to project the concept of evilness or any kind of wrongdoings as a direct contrast of a profile of good, immaculate behavioural structures, incapable of committing acts that would violate morality as it is generally perceived.

In *The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Turn Evil*, Philip Zimbardo (2008) explores human nature as a structure which is vulnerable to moral corruption, establishing the assumption that both 'good' and 'evil' are intrinsic and transversal to the human condition itself. His argumentative lines will establish the main matrix of the article.

Zimbardo ascertains his perspective on 'evil' as being:

(...) a simple, psychologically based one: Evil consists in intentionally behaving in ways that harm, abuse, demean, dehumanize, or destroy innocent others—or using one's authority and systemic power to encourage or permit others to do so on your behalf. In short, it is "knowing better but doing worse (2008: 5).

Such position would, by contrast, also imply the definition of 'good' to be the absence of immoral dynamics in the spectrum of social interactions as per explicated by the author. He also highlights that "most people, most of the time, are moral creatures. But (...) morality is like a gearshift that at times gets pushed into neutral" (idem: 17), which, in a way, could be perceived as a statement that self-determines the importance of understanding and tackling the factors that might be decisive for the crossing between states of "moral predispositions".

In the course of exploring "processes of transformation at work when good or ordinary people do bad or evil things" (idem: 5), Zimbardo succeeds to identify 'power' as the element that triggers processes of moral corruption: an element which can, for instance, be present in situational conditions that "are created and shaped by higher-order factors—systems of power" (idem: 9–10). The primary concern would be that someone, who is a holder of power, might mismanage it and affect one physically and/or psychologically, which should, subsequently, trigger the previously referred process of moral corruption.

The way Zimbardo frames his idea is very much compatible with the notion of "banality of evil" as per projected in the scope of the analysis of the trial of German Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann by Hannah Arendt (1964) who perceived Eichmann as a very mundane and average person, despite the atrocities he was being judged for. In a sentence that illustrates the dichotomy existent in the extreme of a dynamics of power where there is one who subjugates and another who one is subjugated, but where the agent who detains the power is a person corrupted by the acritical adoption of a role, Hannah Arendt highlights: "what for Eichmann was a job, with its daily routine, its ups and downs, was for the Jews quite literally the end of the world" (1964: 73).

This core set of notions, which constitutes the first and main block of the argument, will, further in the article, link with an illustrative section which should deepen the understanding of possible implications of power mishandling and, finally, conclude the argumentative line by offering a broad approach to think education as the key to counter-act or prevent profiles corrupted by power and their effect on individuals or society in general.

## **THINKING EVIL IN SOCIETY: HOW IT EMERGES IN MULTIPLE DEGREES OF GRAVITY AND SCENARIOS**

Philip Zimbardo's (2008) reflections on power came on the sequence of the well-known Stanford Prison Experiment, which is regarded as "one of the most famous studies in psychology" (Griggs, 2014: 195). Such experiment, which led Philip Zimbardo to mount a prison-like structure in the premises of his university campus, "began as a simple demonstration of the effects that a composite of situational variables has on the behavior of individuals role-playing prisoners and guards in a simulated prison environment" (2008: 195). Zimbardo emphasises that the goal was "not testing specific hypotheses but rather assessing the extent to which the external features of an institutional setting could override the internal dispositions of the actors in that environment. Good dispositions were pitted against a bad situation" (ibidem).

For his experiment, Zimbardo chose "a sample of individuals who did not deviate from the normal range of the general educated population on any of the dimensions we had premeasured. Those randomly assigned to the role of 'prisoner' were interchangeable with those in the 'guard' role" (idem: 196). He also mentioned there was no criminal record associated to the students who would randomly fill both the designated roles of "guards" and "prisoners", as there was not, as well, any history of intellectual or social disadvantage, nor emotional and/or physical disabilities (ibidem).

Prior to his studies on the corruptive effect of power, Zimbardo (2008), during the Stanford Prison Experiment, suffered himself the same kind of corruption he portrays when depicting the crossing from 'good' to 'evil', which led him to allow the experiment to continue, even though it progressively gained considerable unethical traits, as the 'guards' would make 'prisoners': clean out the toilets with bare hands, withstand involuntary nudity, stay in forced confinement in an isolation booth known as the "Hole", amongst other sorts of symbolic or explicit dehumanising attitudes which triggered considering levels of suffering.

Admitting the wrongdoings of such levels of violence, Zimbardo claims:

[T]he Stanford Prison Experiment must certainly be judged unethical because human beings did suffer considerable anguish. People suffered much more than they could have reasonably anticipated when they volunteered for an academic study of "prison life" that was being conducted at a prestigious university. Moreover, that suffering escalated over time and resulted in such extreme stress and emotional turmoil that five of the sample of initially healthy young prisoners had to be released early (idem: 233-234).

The 'guards', who before the experiment were in the same group of normal, ordinary students, felt entitled to submit their peers, now in the role of 'prisoners', to diminishing treatment. Elements that contributed to that gap of rights and differentiated treatment were elements such as "deindividuating silver reflecting

sunglasses for the guards and staff along with standard military style uniforms” (idem: 301). Also, it is relevant to point out that, as one of the central conclusions, it was noted that:

[A]nything, or any situation, that makes people feel anonymous, as though no one knows who they are or cares to know, reduces their sense of personal accountability, thereby creating the potential for evil action. This becomes especially true when a second factor is added: if the situation or some agency gives them permission to engage in antisocial or violent action against others (ibidem) (...)

The Stanford Prison Experiment and Zimbardo’s subsequent studies of it provides us with a valuable ground to transversally think human nature and the potential dangers of power as an element that may propel normal, common people into roles of evildoers.

### **Media and power: power dynamics and ill-manifestations of power coming to light**

By reflecting on Zimbardo’s (2008) perceptions of power and its corruptive element, capable of leading behavioural profiles considered to be ‘good’ and ‘normal’ towards an opposite conceptual field, where many kinds of abuses and diminishing dynamics may take place (as evidenced in the Stanford Prison Experiment), we paved the way to allow the possibility of analysing other illustrative cases of power dynamics and ill-manifestations of power coming to light, highlighting the role of the media in such process.

Generically stating, one could find fit to portray the media as a vast mirror of the many realities that surround us. Following the same metaphor, it would also be prudent and pertinent to state that those mirrors do not all reflect the same way: the wideness and depth of each reflection might suffer conscious or unconscious adjustments or shifts. As Wolton states, there “is a broad consensus that news outlets are (...) biased” (2019: 548). Nonetheless, even though we might be expecting, to a certain extent, some degree of bias from the media, it is unequivocal that its presence in society is determinant of bringing virtually any sort of episode to light. Irwin recognises the importance of the media to convey to “the public (...) all manners of events” (2011: 109). Eventually, such fundamental role should be able to catapult or incentivise the debate, in society, regarding what is being covered, as “media coverage might bring to public discussion prominent realities of the world scenario” (Irwin, 2011: 109).

Following the premise that the media might not be exempt from biases but is still a basilar source to pass information to the masses and might, too, have a tacit potential to drive debate around a certain topic, some examples will be mentioned with the aim

of illustrating well-known cases of power abuse which, in the light of Zimbardo's study (2008), would be perceived as contexts where power might have corrupted ordinary people and allowed them to cross from a 'good' set of moral attitudes and stands to an 'evil' one.

A meaningful way of illustrating a large, promising debate generated by a mediatic approach to an issue underlying power as the main cause of immorality and abuse is the well-known #MeToo movement. The debate, as Mendes et al. state, has had crucial social repercussions as "hashtags like #BeenRapedNeverReported and #MeToo are making survivors feel heard (...), then they are doing meaningful and worthwhile work in building networks of solidarity" (2018: 238).

They go further contextualising it:

On 24 October 2017, the #MeToo hashtag began trending on Twitter. Although the phrase was initiated by African American women's rights activists Tarana Burke in 2006, it gained widespread attention when actress Alyssa Milano used it as a Twitter hashtag in response to allegations of sexual assault by Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein. Through the #MeToo hashtag, Milano encouraged members of the public to join in to showcase the magnitude of the problem of sexual violence (Mendes et al., 2018: 236).

As the Al Jazeera reports, "Harvey Weinstein was an all-powerful Hollywood mogul wielding unchecked power to make or break the careers of women working in the industry" (2020), which evidences that even though sexual violence against women was one of the central concerns that fuelled the referred movement, Weinstein's predatory behaviour was linked to power within the workplace. This particular episode, related to the imbalances of power based on the gender gap, which affects the way how men and women access opportunities in a myriad of contexts, links directly to how Zimbardo infers the corrosive effect of power, which, in the scope of the gender gap, is stimulated by a global reality that is still to improve. As the World Economic Forum states, "[n]one of us will see gender parity in our lifetimes, and nor likely will many of our children. That's the sobering finding of the Global Gender Gap Report 2020, which reveals that gender parity will not be attained for 99.5 years" (2020).



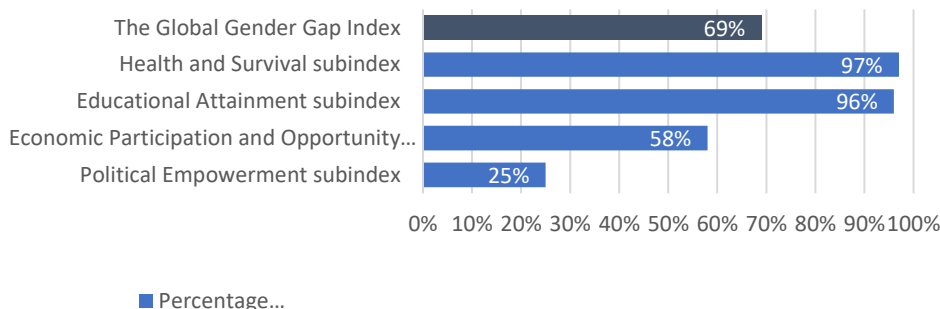


Figure 1: Percentage of the gender gap closed to date, 2020 (World Economic Forum, 2020: 10). Note: population-weighted averages, including the 153 economies featured in the Global Gender Gap Index 2020.

As demonstrated in the figure above (Figure 1), which corresponds to the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index 2020, the disparity affects women on social, political, intellectual, cultural, economic and health-related levels. Such a social reality of hard-rooted gender differences might be an indicator that the pre-established dynamics of power that, in this case, would implicitly benefit men, could be easily assumed uncritically by men who would see their moral compass corrupted and would misuse their power to exert some degree of violence on another person – women, in this specific scope – even if that degree of violence was more subtle and taking a symbolic, sexist-fuelled (and often normalised) approach. Within work-related contexts, for instance, one would be able to identify examples such as many men feeling routinely entitled to salaries that would be above their female counterparts. In the European social context, for example, as the European Commission states, “[w]omen earn over 16% less than men per hour in the EU” (2019: 1). The European Commission goes further by linking gender stereotypes and social norms to the way women get affected with extra unpaid work, fewer promotions and fewer opportunities to develop career-wise, giving men an unfair advantage and making women more vulnerable economically and socially (2019: 4-5).

As Mills claims, “[t]he integration of women into the public sphere has not been achieved without conflict and resistance from men. It is clear that women are not treated equally even now” (2018: 20). The need to tackle gender disparities together, with men recognising the power that the predominant social contexts grant them with and use it for the promotion of an equitable society, is progressively endorsed and evidenced in movements such as the UN Women’s movement ‘HeForShe’:

The world is at a turning point. People everywhere understand and support the idea of gender equality. They know it’s not just a women’s issue, it’s a human rights issue. HeForShe is an invitation for men and people of all genders to stand in solidarity with women to create a bold, visible and united force for gender equality. The men of

HeForShe aren't on the sidelines. They're working with women and with each other to build businesses, raise families, and give back to their communities (2019).

Power-based systems can be assumed to bring toxic and dehumanising abuses in other contexts, too, where the perpetrators might prey on minorities due to the power imbalances that can be directly subjacent to their interaction; the vulnerabilities might be exploited namely via homophobic, xenophobic, racist or religious abuses. In essence, anyone that might be 'trapped' in a logic where the holder of power establishes himself/herself as the "dominator" might be in a route of abuses and dehumanisation.

Another powerful episode that pictures a vile dehumanisation of people, also acknowledged by Zimbardo (2008) as a process of moral corruption through power, is the Abu Ghraib episode, which was notoriously explored by the media and exposed to the world. As The Independent UK stated:

The images of torture at Abu Ghraib shocked the world when they emerged nearly 15 years ago. Bound and naked men piled on top of each other in a pyramid. Hooded prisoners connected to electrical cables. A barking dog held inches away from a face fixed in terror. Just as memorable as the horror of the victims were the smiling American soldiers present in many of the images. Their grinning faces symbolised a kind of unthinking cruelty that came to define the war for a generation of Iraqis (2019).

In this example, to which there is photographic proof, there was an evident abuse of power that was perceived as assigned and legitimised by the roles of whom was involved, and potentially some degree of xenophobia intensified by the notion of otherness that might have been attributed to the Iraqis who were imprisoned, tortured and humiliated. Regarding that sense of otherness, Zimbardo (2008: 11) sustains that it "requires a 'hostile imagination', a psychological construction embedded deeply in their minds by propaganda that transforms those others into 'The Enemy'", which, once more, solidifies the notion that the person who is being the victim of the abuses is perceived as not worthy of the same humane status as the perpetrators or their group would be. Zimbardo (2008: 11) claims that the process is started by the creation of stereotyped and dehumanised notions of the other, which would reduce their worthiness, as well as create the mental image of the other as a powerful, demonic, abstract monster that can endanger what one would perceive as 'our' prized beliefs and values.

Within the many abhorrent abuses that the detainees of this episode suffered whilst imprisoned, the CNN (2019) recalls some of them:

- Punching, slapping, and kicking detainees; jumping on their naked feet.
- Videotaping and photographing naked male and female detainees.
- Forcibly arranging detainees in various sexually explicit positions for photographing.
- Forcing detainees to remove their clothing and keeping them naked for several days at a time.

- Forcing naked male detainees to wear women's underwear.
- Forcing groups of male detainees to masturbate themselves while being photographed and videotaped.
- Arranging naked male detainees in a pile and then jumping on them.
- Positioning a naked detainee on a box, with a sandbag on his head, and attaching wires to his fingers, toes, and penis to simulate electric torture.
- Writing "I am a Rapist" on the leg of a detainee accused of rape, and then photographing him naked.
- Placing a dog chain or strap around a naked detainee's neck and having a female soldier pose for a picture.
- A male MP guard having sex with a female detainee.
- Using military working dogs (without muzzles) to intimidate and frighten detainees, and in at least one case biting and severely injuring a detainee.
- Taking photographs of dead Iraqi detainees.

One could state that there are somewhat similar lines to the overall process of the Stanford Prison Experiment as, identically, it "emerged as a powerful illustration of the potentially toxic impact of bad systems and bad situations in making good people behave in pathological ways that are alien to their nature" (Zimbardo, 2008: 195).

Finally, in order to illustrate how, for instance, the members of the LGBT community may be victims of extremely diminishing treatment and violence in today's world, the Chechnya case (which came to light in 2017) will be explored, suggesting the impermeable power and authority of a morally intoxicated sphere of political and social reality, and how that same sphere assumed the role of evildoers for the last few years.

As the BBC UK (2018) reported, referring to the LGBT community, "[d]ozens have fled and some have been granted asylum abroad, amid reports of kidnap and torture by Chechen security forces targeting gay or allegedly gay people" going further (2019) and calling it a "gay purge", stating Chechnya's highly homophobic and conservative stance. According to the International Business Times (2017), LGBT people had been detained in the "first concentration camps since the Holocaust".

In a petition directed to president Putin, the Amnesty International (n.d.) confirmed the abuses mentioning that LGBT people in Chechnya were being "abducted, locked up in secret detention sites, tortured and sometimes killed – purely because of their sexual orientation" as well as trapped in Chechnya as their "passports are being confiscated and destroyed by the authorities".

In a shocking statement that invokes the same notions of arbitrary and vile usage of power in the process of moral degradation in the same line of the one Zimbardo (2008) refers, The Guardian, mentioning one of the victims of Chechnya's "gay purge" reported:

Adam's captors attached metal clamps to his fingers and toes. (...) As they tortured him, the men shouted verbal abuse at him for being gay, and demanded to know the names of other gay men he knew in Chechnya. "Sometimes they were trying to get information from me; other times they were just amusing themselves," he said, speaking about the ordeal he underwent just a month ago with some difficulty (2017).

The particular seriousness of the situation is even more preeminent when taking into consideration Chechen authorities who, according to the Amnesty International (n.d.), "incite homophobic violence by telling people to murder their own family members because of their sexual orientation". Such claim suggests how the otherness notion can be incentivised to diminish a specific person or group thus making it easier to perform any wrongdoings as people would be endorsed by authorities (making it easier to obey). As Zimbardo (2018: 21) stated, "any of us can be vulnerable (...) [to] subtle and pervasive powers (...) easily influenced by authorities, group dynamics, persuasive appeals, and compliance strategies".

All the examples previously explored, brought up to public debate by the media, signal the existence of multiple contexts and degrees of intensity of arbitrary, toxic and inconsiderate manifestations of power towards people or groups that are caught in a power system in a position in which they are preyed upon.

## **EDUCATION AS A MEANS TO PROMOTE A CONSCIOUS ROUTE TO POWER**

By now, the argumentative line sequenced how power can, in more or less subtle manners, evidence itself as a toxic element for people and the way they interact with others, having illustrated it by referencing varied relevant episodes and contexts.

As one understands that power, according to Zimbardo's (2018) perception of it, is the element that might turn ordinary people into evildoers by corrupting their patterns of moral behaviours, it becomes evident that it is imperative to promote a route of consciousness of power in order to prevent abuses. Naturally, as we analysed before, there are power systems that are present and deep-rooted in society and it would be naive to assume they could just be entirely and suddenly restructured or obliterated.

As power structures and dynamics are likely to endure amongst us, it would be wise to understand that possibly the most obvious way to avoid misuses of power is to make people conscious of power and its effects in one's actions and moral compass. That said, it would be necessary to create/forged/discover an approach that would reach virtually everyone, as everyone might be in a position of power in a certain moment of his or her life – in a power system that might be determined by work-related contexts, gender, ethnicity, amongst others – or in a position of victim that might need to be able to fully identify and speak against the wrongdoings. One could argue that tackling an issue via the education of the youth would be the most

promising way, as all the next generations of fully active, adult citizens would benefit from such intervention. The relevance of the young generations is such that Hwang and Kim state that “it is pivotal that youth are informed and engaged with the global vision for the future” (2017: 8).

Fomenting knowledge and respect through the pillars inherent to global citizenship and human rights could be the key to encourage consciousness and proactiveness to counteract power mishandlings and endorse one’s responsibility in case he or she holds any power and might be in a corruptible position. As reflected by Oxfam (2015: 5), “[i]t is transformative, developing the knowledge and understanding, skills, values and attitudes that learners need (...) to participate fully in a globalised society (...) and to secure a more just, secure and sustainable world”. Pointing out to the benefits of introducing education that entangles human rights in primary or secondary education, the UNESCO (2006: 48) states that with it “the school becomes a model of human rights learning and practice”.

The aim of enshrining the education of youth with notions of collective good, prosocial actions and the deep understanding of rights that are inherent to everyone matches Zimbardo’s belief when he states that “[t]he evil that persists in our midst must be countered, and eventually overcome, by the greater good in the collective hearts and personal heroic resolve” (2008: 488).

Due to the nature of this section, which is a piece of reflection regarding the relevance of creating routes for consciously understanding and handling power and potential misuses of power, it would be unviable to explore all the possible insertions of human rights and global citizenship into educational curricula in the many countries, educational systems, and realities of the world. Nonetheless, for illustrative purposes, one could note this manageable way of embedding and exploring education for global citizenship (and, implicitly, human rights) through integrated curricula:

Within class groups, teachers would allow their students to choose a weekly or monthly theme. In older classes students were given the opportunity to choose the themes themselves, whereas, in younger classes, students voted on a set list of themes provided by the teacher. Students then brainstormed on ways to explore their theme and were given the opportunity to guide their own learning and choose methodologies used to explore themes. Through interviews, focus groups and observation it became evident that activities spanned multiple national curriculum subjects, including geography, history, English, art and design, design and technology, mathematics, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and music (Golden, 2016: 94).

The example above is from a larger qualitative case study of an English primary school that developed an integrated school curriculum focusing on the education for global citizenship, which in the scope of this article was inserted to exemplify how viable such a pathway is, namely for the vital purpose that would ultimately be educating for power. It would be, too, a scenario which would allow one to integrate relevant

current discussions of various natures in the line of debates to be undertaken, including prominent topics brought to light by the media.

The importance of exploring the educational context to promote social balance and expand people's notions of their place in an interconnected world, where their rights and actions must harmoniously co-exist, symbiotically, with others' rights and actions – locally and globally – is fundamental. Ghosh states:

Inequalities in power around the world mean violation of the human rights of citizens globally. (...) Educational content (...) is embedded in the sociocultural matrix of every society. Educational practice inculcates the prevalent ideologies, and educational curricula are designed to reflect the values and biases of the ruling elites who propagate the norm of the dominant group (2008: 91).

Bearing in mind that educational content might reflect, influence or structure people's understanding of the world and its realities, it becomes imperative to ensure such element is consciously used in favour of all the people in the world by facilitating moments of debate and deconstruction in the classroom, allowing all sorts of perceptions or social canons to be looked under a prosocial and intellectually honest lens of analysis. It would be, in essence, endorsing a model of proactive minds and behaviours in the youth, ascertaining that "citizenship is not just a mechanism to claim rights that are based on membership in a particular polity, but that human rights are based on membership beyond any state or national boundaries, inherent to all individuals and groups in all places and times" (Abdi and Shultz, 2008: 3–4).

In the same line of the previously presented sample of an English primary school where teachers could, through integrated curricula, facilitate the discussion and exploration of many themes with the purpose of educating for global citizenship, there is another pertinent example which shows the potential of education to, ultimately, educate for power: tackling underrepresentation (or biased representations) of students of minority groups in the many school subjects and, for instance, in the materials which are used or the contents which are covered. As we recall that power dynamics can be present in multiple layers of our lives and experiences, it becomes a priority making sure that all types of traits and people are properly and equitably represented to ascertain all differences as normal and all individuality worthy *per se*. A striking and, regrettably, quite common example that one might find easy to recognise is how women might be considerably underrepresented in positions of active power and would be limited to representations strictly linked to gender biases and benevolent sexism – a statement which matches, for example, the findings of Islam and Asadullah (2018) as they compared the representation of women in Malaysian, Indonesian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi school textbooks. Other minorities should be referenced as well for the need of being adequately represented too, such as the LGBT community – as represented through the following example of the laborious

adoption of LGBT-inclusive History textbooks in the American state of California, as reported by the Time Magazine (2017):

It remains the only state to have such a law on the books. Now, after many delays and much wrangling over the details (...) state officials reached a milestone this November (...) In California, kids will get bits of both at different ages when it comes to LGBT figures. In second grade, when kids learn about family and community history, for example, they might see depictions of families with single parents and foster parents, as well as those with two moms or dads. When eighth graders learn about 19th-century U.S. history, including the ravaging of Native American sovereignty and culture, they might delve into notions of gender that were also minimized by assimilation. Individuals described as two-spirit, who did not fit neatly into the categories of male or female, have historically been venerated in some tribes. (...) Changing textbooks is a slow process, just like changing attitudes.

This need of granting an adequate representation for all in the educational sphere should make sure every student has access to contents that mirror an inclusive reality where everyone fully belongs, regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender, or any other defining aspect of one's existence. It is important to realise that the presence of a particular trait does not invalidate the possibility of an overlap with others, and that also deserves proper attention. For example: being crucial as it is adequately representing women (in general) in the school context, it should be considered, for instance, the singularity of being a black and/or a queer women, which also deserves to be adequately and individually addressed, subsequently avoiding the risk of oversimplifying and homogenising a naturally vast and diverse group (women).

It becomes relevant, once more, to reinforce the understanding that the purpose of this section is limited to promoting the grounds to raise a debate on the relevance of thinking education as a stage to consciously determine how young people can be guided into having a healthy relation with power, assuming they might either be in the position of someone who holds the power or someone who might be subject to some sort of power abuse and would then have the tools to identify the nature of the behaviour and act accordingly. This educational goal of educating for global citizenship, human rights, and, ultimately, for power, could potentially be explored in many ways, such as in the promotion of structural knowledge, skills and values.

Transposing some of the general lines from this section to realities outside educational contexts, adults and civil society in general could also aim to lead children and youth by the empathetic path of exploring global realities, the promotion of a sense of common respect and accountability, as well as, whenever necessary, challenging themselves too, as adults, by consciously and meaningfully undertaking identical steps to become aware of their potential as global citizens and by proactively engaging against wrongdoings, as Zimbardo supports, by acknowledging "heroism an egalitarian attribute of human nature rather than a rare feature of the elect few" (2018: 488).

## CONCLUSION

Throughout this article, using Philip Zimbardo's (2008) study on the Stanford Prison Experiment and his notions of the processes that incentivise ordinary people to be malefactors, the element of power and the importance of consciously understanding power to promote balance were discussed. Zimbardo claimed (2008: 195) that "[t]he line between Good and Evil, once thought to be impermeable, proved instead to be quite permeable" as his experiment – the Stanford Prison Experiment – revealed "the extent to which ordinary, normal, healthy young men succumbed to, or were seduced by, the social forces inherent in that behavioral context" as well as himself and "many of the other adults and professionals who came within its encompassing boundaries".

Using mediatic examples to illustrate a myriad of possibilities in which the mishandling of power might be present, reflections about immoral, diminishing episodes which came to light were developed, using as a guiding line the same logic of power as a potential element of moral corruption, as per thought by Zimbardo (2008).

Finally, in order to promote the ponderation on routes for consciousness and education for power, with the aim to prevent abuses and endorse proactiveness in society, the article analysed the possibility of focusing on education as the main way to virtually reach every profile of person in society and, eventually, allow the notions of global citizenship and human rights to positively reverberate within the global context.

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