The Olive Tree Effect:

Future Time Perspective When Future Is Uncertain

Kurt Lewin defined the time perspective as "the totality of the individual's views of his psychological future and psychological past existing at a given time" (Lewin, 1951, p. 75). The concept of time perspective refers to the influence that considerations of past, present, and future events can have on present-day behavioural decisions. In particular, research into the future time perspective (FTP) has shown it is an important predictor of attitude and behaviour change in different ages and in different domains. For instance, environmental psychology has shown FTP as being related to the capability of evaluating future scenarios, and consequently it is a good predictor of changes in everyday behaviours towards reducing climate change (Swim et al, 2009). Future time perspective is indeed linked to endorsing environmental preservation (Milfont & Gouveia, 2006; Strathman & Joireman, 2005) and it has an indirect impact on support for environmental policies (Dietz, Dan & Shwom, 2007). In health psychology, research has shown that FTP plays an important role in reducing addictive behaviours (e.g. Kirby & Petry, 2004; Reynolds, Richards, Horn, & Karraker, 2004), in increasing the use of condoms (e.g. Agnew & Loving, 1998), and accepting the influenza vaccine or adherence with cholesterol medication (Chapman et al., 2001). Analysis of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing data has revealed that time perspective plays a partial mediating role in health behaviours among older English adults (Adams, 2009). Adams also showed that time perspective is

socio-economically patterned, and high income occupations with permanent contracts and pension provision provide a degree of future security, in contrast to the relative insecurity of low incomes, temporary employment and a reliance on State benefits.

Adams' findings are particularly interesting if framed within the current historical context, in which employment and economic security are at stake as consequence of the world economic crisis. What happens to the future time orientation when the future seems more and more menacing? In this article we focus our attention on one of the main applications of future time orientation theory: education and academic achievement. We discuss how, under the current historical conditions, this application could be counterproductive. Thus, we suggest a reinterpretation of the concept of future time perspective, distinguishing between personal and social FTP. This distinction illustrates the path towards new applicative approaches, in particular for projects of community-building and the reduction of intergroup conflict.

When the Future Is Threatening

According to Benasayag and Schmit (2003) the future is not just what will happen tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. The future is essentially a concept which defines what detaches us from the present and put us into a projection, i.e. what we will be tomorrow. According to the authors the Western culture, from the Renaissance first and then Enlightenment later, has developed the idea that the future is the untold to be discovered and for this reason the future is filled with promise and a solution to the problems of the present. Future and progress are considered interchangeable, to the extent that the macro aspects regulating society, such as the economy, have been based on the concept of continuous growth and development. This idea is based on a conceptualization of time as a linear, unidirectional and irreversible phenomenon.

Yamada and Kato (2006) have highlighted that alternative definitions of time could complement linear time. In particular, the authors focus their attention on circular definitions, which instead of focusing on progress stress the process. However, in Western cultures there is a normative push towards the linear definition of time, in which the present is seen as the effect of the past and the future as dependent on the present. Time is conceived as an expression of causality and irreversibility, in which the present cannot modify the past and the future (the latest effect) cannot influence the present causes (for a critical discussion see Deacon, 2011; Rosen, 1985). In such epistemological frame, growth is considered a linear development and the idea of life trajectory implies a linear definition of time, which is defined through social discourses, fictions and narratives. Although this definition has been debated (e.g., Rudolph, 2006; Yamada & Kato, 2006; Zittoun, 2012), in developmental science human development is framed as a series of predictable stages in which the implicit direction is forward (Hood, 2006; Overton, 1994). The result is a conception of time in which future is structured into goals and progress is defined as the distance that separates us from those goals. But what happens when progress and growth decline?

Risk and uncertainty are common aspects of contemporary societies (Beck, 1992). On the one side, those institutions which have traditionally provided social stability, such as the family, the job market and the welfare state, have become weaker in post-industrial societies (Ranci, 2010). On the other, globalization has accentuated uncertainty by enhancing complexity, ambiguity, the absence of a superordinate knowledge structure, and the unpredictability of the future (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). The future has therefore shifted from promise to uncertainty and threat. Collective experiences such as the environmental emergency, new kinds of illnesses,

the persistent condition of social inequality, and the economic crises have transformed the Western concept of future into a culture of fear of the future.

Such a change of direction has a direct impact on the present. Indeed, if the future is no longer something to take care of, to feel responsible for, then the present is the only 'playground' (Stefano:' playground' perchè?) that matters. In a no-future society the very concept of responsibility falls. We are brought to account now for our past actions, while for our present actions we will be brought to account in the future. Thus, if there is no future, there are no consequences concerning our actual choices and behaviours (Auhagen, 2001).

Without the sense of social responsibility, the principle of authority also declines and a present-oriented society can guarantee the system's proper functioning (e.g. compliance with laws and institutions) only via the introduction of rigid rules constraining individual freedom of choice and behaviour. Paradoxically, rather than developing into greater individual freedom the lack of future accountability turns into more rigid and unequal social ties. Benasayag and Schmit (2003) argue that this dynamic is particularly evident in the relationship between adult and younger generations, such as in educational settings.

In education, the relationship between teachers and learners is held together on the principle of authority. It can be either an authoritarian relationship, in which the teacher imposes his/her authority by means of coercion, or a democratic relationship, based on a non-coercive authority, in which individual recognize the authority's legitimacy (e.g. his/her higher competence) and decides to obey it (Fromm, 1941). According to the political philosopher Thomas Christiano (2004), democracy is indeed based on the fact that authority is recognized as being legitimate by citizens and for this reason citizens are obedient towards it. In other words, obedience in a

democratic system is not a matter of being forced to obey but it is based on individual choice (Morselli & Passini, 2011). The concept of choice inevitably brings into play the concept of responsibility, i.e. I make choices as a function of the future consequences of these choices. But in a context collapsed on the present, people do not feel accountable for the consequences of their actions. In this scenario, democracy cannot stand on its own legs, because the authority lacks authoritativeness. Thus, the authority needs to use either coercive or persuasive means to guarantee the correct functioning of the system (Lincoln, 1994). The authority relationship turns into a relationship of dominance, in which one social actor is dominated by the other, while in the democratic relationship both social actors are considered equally valuable and the status difference is conventional rather than imposed (Popitz, 1986).

According to Benasayg and Schmit's clinical experience, in contemporary Western countries the educational process lacks the social conditions to be democratic, thus personal freedom is constrained, misdemeanours are punished, and school performance has a substantial weight in predicting children's life trajectories. "Failing at school means you will fail in life", "If you don't study and get yourself a degree you won't get a good job in the future" are examples of strategies to encourage children to learn. But, as the two psychologists argue, stressing the threatening characteristics of the future does not resolve the problem, rather exacerbates it if the lack of future perspective lies at its origins.

Future Time Perspective and Education: Friends or Foes?

In contrast with Benasayg and Schmit's remarks, research on the intersections between FTP and academic performance (e.g. Gjesme, 1975; Horstmanshof & Zimitat, 2007; Husman & Lens, 1999; Lens, Simons & Dewitte, 2001; McInerney, 2004; Peetsma, 2000) has focused on the assumption that stress on future is

instrumental towards increasing students' motivation to study. Lens & Tsuzuki (2005) and Simons, Lens, Dewitte and Vansteenkikste (2004) have suggested for instance that understanding the future benefits of present learning tasks creates an instrumental motivation for students. That is, students who consider their present time as an instrument for achieving future outcomes are committed to their present tasks. Similarly, Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) argued that FTP is more likely to account for educational achievement and school drop-out than cognitive and intellectual abilities, because FTP is directly linked to motivational psychological aspects. Some research has shown that future orientation is an important mediating factor of high school students' engagement (Horstmanshof & Zimitat, 2007). Peetsma and Van der Veen (2011) found that FTP is related to the effort students make on learning, and that indirectly affects academic achievement. Thus, holding future goals would be important to students, because these future goals would help to make school tasks meaningful and relevant (McInerney, Roche, McInerney & Marsh, 1997; Miller & Brickman, 2004).

The ultimate conclusion of these studies isthat educational systems should point to the enhancement of students' future time perspective. For instance, McInerney (2004) suggests that "counsellors and teachers need to help students think through their ideas, relate them to present and future goals, and discover the instrumental route to this future" (p. 148). However, it is legitimate to ask whether this conclusion still holds in the presence of a menacing future. What happens when students have to deal with unequal or blocked opportunities? For instance, research into African American students in the USA found that African American students were more likely to share abstract beliefs about the interconnections between future opportunities and education, but they were less likely to prompt beliefs about everyday educational

practice and concrete future opportunities (Mickelson, 1990). Although future orientation in terms of aspirations for future goals is a good predictor of successful school achievement, it fails to predict achievement among disadvantaged minorities (Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Phalet & Claeys, 1993). According to Phalet, Andriessen and Lens (2004) the future may fail to motivate minority students because of the inconsistency between doing well in school and future opportunity in the context of continuous discrimination. In addition, these authors also argue that future time orientation may have a different impact on academic achievement if it is internally driven or externally imposed. If minority students perceive future goals as being externally controlled or clashing with their own culture then they are more likely to disengage with learning. This presents another problematic aspect of FTP in educational system, which is the assumption that future orientation is equally relevant in different cultures, especially in school contexts which are increasingly multicultural.

The relevance of time and beliefs concerning the importance of the past, present and future is indeed culturally embedded. Kluckhohn (1956) proposed a categorization of cultures on the emphasis given to five value orientations, one of which was time. Western culture is usually considered more competitive and seeking individual success and for this reason more future-oriented (Fuchs, 1976; McInerney et al., 1997; Zimbardo & Boyd, 2009) than non-Western cultures, which are more past and present-oriented and seek commitment to the family and the community (Athawale, 2004; Silvestri & Richardson, 2002; Triandis, 1995). Thus, different connotations attached to time and the future reinforce or are reinforced by societal values, as suggested by Yamada and Kato (2006). According to them, the linear progressive view of time enhances individualism, while alternative conceptions may

facilitate the contextualization of the personal life within a broader social context.

Thus, students coming from non-Western cultures may be torn between the culture of

origin and the Western-based educational provision (Jackson & Smith, 2001;

Lundberg, 2007)

The ambiguity of the empirical findings complicate the picture: whereas some

research has reported cross-cultural differences on FTP (Meade, 1972; Metha,

Sundberg, Rohila & Tyler, 1972; Seginer, 2008; Zaleski, 1994), other research into

educational settings showed differences in the present and past time perspectives, but

not for the future among American, Chinese, Taiwanese and African students

(Sodowsky, Maguire, Johnson, Ngumba & Kohles, 1994), American, Japanese and

Malawian students (Block, Buggie & Matsui, 1996), and Arab and American students

(Al-Harthi, 2010). Such ambivalent results and the theoretical explanations that are

provided may depend on the lack of focus on three different aspect of future time

orientation: the factors that influence it (*why*), the explanation of the psychological

process (*how*), and the content of FTP (*what*).

The Why, How and What of Future Time Perspective

Time orientation is a learned attitude which influences individual behaviour. We

have discussed possible cultural differences concerning FTP; however, the first

argument to explain the incoherence of the findings is that although important, culture

may not be the only factor. The development of a future time orientation is likely to be

a multifactorial-process, influenced by a number of contextual factors (Chen &

Vazsonyi, 2011). While normative social expectations play an important role in

casting relevance upon particular interests or trajectories (Nurmi, 1991), everyday

interactions with peers and parents mediate the cultural differences concerning the

future time perspective (Kandel & Lesser, 1969; Phalet, Andriessen & Lens, 2004).

Adolescents, for instance hold more optimistic perceptions of the future when they receive more support from parents, notwithstanding their cultural backgrounds (Kenny, Blustein, Chaves, Grossman & Gallagher, 2003). Outside the household, a number of contextual factors can influence FTP such as the complexity of the society in which individuals live, perceived opportunities that the society offers, spirituality, socio-economic stratification and socio-historical factors. Time is managed and perceived in different ways across countries, but also inside the same country (Levine, 1997). Thus, inconsistency in the results on the cross-cultural differences may be explained by the use of an inappropriate scale of analysis (i.e. the country), given that the definition of time can change also within the same macro-culture and/or between subcultures. Multiple and coexisting views of time within the same context come into play in attaching meanings to individual actions and responses (Yamada & Kato, 2006; Rudolph, 2006). Thus, the country level comparison is inaccurate because it assumes that individuals within a specific country behave always in similar ways, independently of the specific relational conditions of the different situations in which the persons are engaged in everyday life. However, if the country is not the optimal unit of analysis, the appropriate scale at which contexts should be studied in relation to FTP is an open and unexplored question.

In addition to the contextual factors that influence the future time perspective, it is also important to account for the psychological processes underpinning the relationship between FTP and school achievement, namely *how* FTP works. The commonly used explanation is that future-oriented individuals supposedly have a higher ability to delay their immediate gratification (Mischel, Shoda & Rodriguez, 1989) as a function of a greater future result and benefit, than present-oriented or past-oriented individuals (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2009). However, this explanation of

how FTP works poses a number of doubts both at the empirical and the theoretical levels. According to the delay of gratification explanation, people learn from their social and cultural environment to defer the immediate gratification (e.g. having fun) in order to achieve greater future personal benefits (e.g. getting a better job and a higher future socio-economic status). Rewards for present tasks would become secondary when contrasted with the cumulative reward that can be achieved in the future.

Although the connection between delayed gratification and future time perspective can be conceptually pertinent, little research has been conducted in this direction, and most of it did not measure FTP directly. For instance, in a study on African American students, Ward and colleagues (1989) showed that students' career objectives were positively related with the delay of gratification, but they did not have direct FTP measures. Similarly, Witt (1990), Bembenutty (1999), and Bembenutty and Karabenick (1998) showed a positive association between delayed gratification and the perceived task utility for achieving specific future goals. Using a direct scale of FTP, Bembenutty and Zimmerman (2003) report that students' beliefs that performing well in exams would help them to attain a better future career was linked to their ability to delay gratification. Based on this evidence, Bembenutty and Karbenick (2004, p. 52) suggest that "teachers could teach children to develop an awareness of their future goals […]. Further, teachers could focus their instruction on highlighting the importance of intrinsic motivation in conjunction with the instrumentality of the task for future outcomes." This recommendation assumes a causal path from delay of gratification to FTP, which is, however, scarcely supported by empirical evidence. Most of the studies are indeed correlational and it is not clear whether it is the ability

to delay gratification that allows kids to project themselves towards the future or kids who have a wider perspective on the future are keener to delay gratification.

In addition, akin to time orientation the delay in gratification is also embedded into the specific cultural setting (Gjesme, 1975). The "scientific" link between delay of gratification and FTP is indeed the product of the Western conception of time as linear, non-reversible and unidirectional. As we already discussed, according to this paradigm the present causes determine the future effects. However, alternative models of explanation have been advanced even in the fields of biology and artificial intelligence (see Butz, Sigaud, & Gérard, 2003; Rosen, 1985). According to those models the future (and therefore the ability to anticipate it) is a powerful predictor of present behaviour and learning systems. Nevertheless, a series of exogenous factors intervene to mediate and moderate this relationship. Bembenutty and Karbenick (2004) themselves admit that the delayed gratification depends on the perceived value of the delayed alternative and the student's self-perception of the ability to obtain it. That is, the content of future goals needs to be congruent with personal values, which in turn are built upon cultural and social factors.

In addition, the focus on delay of gratification evidently clashes with Benasayg and Schmit's (2003) theory, according to which the instrumental use of the future exacerbates the focus on the threats to one's personal future, i.e. the future is uncertain and threatening so I should be concerned about my personal future. In contrast with Bembenutty and Karbenick, the two psychologists see the instrumental use of education (i.e. "If you do not study and get yourself a degree you will not get a good job in the future") as the symptom of the decadence of social responsibility, exasperated by the perception of future as threat, rather than a plausible educational strategy. Following this line of thought, the instrumental motivation explanation not

only clashes with the multicultural educational settings of Western societies, trying to impose a cultural model, but also misses the real cause of lack of academic engagement in students, that is young generations do not see the future as something to aspire to, but rather as something to escape from.

This approach is particularly interesting because it gives a new viewpoint to the whole argument on the intersections between future time perspective, culture and education. Despite their clinical background, Benasayg and Schmit frame their hypothesis within a societal level of interpretation. The menace posed by the future is not just a problem for the single individual; it is a societal phenomenon that influences individual psychological processes. People are exposed to this societal climate and may be influenced or resist its influence. Thus, in a society connoted by uncertainty and lack of future prospects, individuals that prompt a future time perspective oppose the fatalistic societal influence. By following this line of thinking, the future time perspective could be considered as the ability not to be influenced by a circumstantial threatening future. Such an ability is at the same time individually and culturally constructed, in the sense that may reflect a different conceptualization of what the future is and the meanings attached to it. A focus on the future implies thinking beyond here and now and projects the imagination on alternative possibilities (Deacon, 2011; Josephs, Valsiner & Surgan, 1999; Zittoun, 2012). This orientation (or ability to imagine the future) is therefore co-constructed between individuals; it is defined by and at the same time defines the conceptualization of what time and the future actually are. Such a reinterpretation of the meaning of FTP allows us to emerge from the impasse as to whether FTP may be good or not for education and move the argument also into another direction, which is the content of the future toward which individuals are oriented.

In educational science FTP has been manly considered as the concern for personal future (personal career; personal life trajectory). However, different meaning may be attached to the future. Research by Peetsma (2000) showed for instance that academic achievement is highly correlated to an orientation towards future career, but the link between concerns for future career and the concern for social relations in the future is weaker, or even negative in certain cases. Concern for one's personal future and concern for social future are therefore two dimensions of FTP which may not be coherent, as Peetsma's results show. Phalet, Andriessen and Lens (2004) argue indeed that migrant minority students are motivated both by personal and social concerns about the future: they study not only to achieve personal success, but also to improve their family's standard of living. They also show that migrant minority students are more oriented to distant future goals than native students are. In other words, akin the definition of time, its relevance and its meanings, are not homogeneous but complex and multilinear (Müller & Giesbrecht, 2006; Rudolph, 2006), a monotonic definition of future time perspective should be rejected. We therefore propose defining at least two dimensions to expand the definition of a future time perspective: the personal-social dimension and the short-long term dimension. The former defines whether projections on the future concern the self (personal success, career, trajectory) or the community (quality of social relationship, continuity of the community in the future). The latter defines the extension of the projection in the future. Short and long-term projections represent two different ways of reasoning, which are also used as regulatory strategies for impulse control and delay of gratification (Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999).

The intersections between the personal-social dimension and the short-long term dimension is shown in Figure 1. According to this conceptual matrix, goal

achievement is set on the personal axis, and on this dimension short and long term views of the future are opposed. Views focused on long-term future correspond to a greater willingness to delay personal gratification for achieving future and a better personal career. In contrast, short-term personal concerns are oriented towards the achievement of instant benefits in a more hedonistic way. A similar difference can also be applied to the social perspective on future, which overcomes the narrow focus on individualism. The long-term side of the social FTP is thus linked to a sense of concern for how society will be even beyond the duration of one's own lifetime. However, this wide perspective is narrowed when only short-term consequences and immediate benefits are considered. The short-term social FTP is more likely, even if not limited to, be linked to a sort of social hedonism, in which immediate benefits and privileges are preferred over greater long-term ones.

The next paragraphs focus more on the long-term social FTP, linking FTP to developmental and social psychology. While there are good arguments to take one's distances from any attempt to universalise personal FTP, we argue that a different logic is applicable to long-term FTP and that it can represent an under-explored psycho-social resource.

Generativity: A Social Long-Term Path to Future

The distinction of between the extension (short *versus* long) and content (personal *versus* social) dimensions reminds us of Erik Erikson's (1980) arguments on the concept of *generativity*. Erikson describes generativity as the concern for the continuity of life. Generativity is tightly linked to FTP: no concern for continuity can materialise without a concern for the future and vice versa. In addition, Erikson argues that generativity ranges from a narrow short-term perspective, the concerns for my own children, to a wider long-term view, the focus on generations that have yet to

come and children yet to be born (Erikson, 1980). That is, generativity is commonly and biologically expressed by parenting, but can also turn into a more general sense of responsibility for the community and the future generations, leading people to find satisfaction in social activities such as teaching, mentoring, leadership and other actions that may leave a positive legacy for the future.

A man who plants a seed to grow an olive tree will not be able to pick the olives from that plant in his life. Olive trees grow slowly and they are planted for the benefit of future generations. In the same way generative-oriented people are concerned for the generations that are yet to come, not for their own immediate personal interest. Akin to the argument on FTP, when generativity extends beyond the boundaries of the personal sphere it is invested with a sense of responsibility for the long-term community. Research on the MIDUS (Midlife Development in the United States survey) data has shown that generativity is indeed a strong predictor of many dimensions of social responsibility, such as volunteerism and contributing with time and money to community concerns (Rossi, 2001). Similarly, Cole and Stewart (1996) found that generativity was linked to feelings of attachment to the community and civic agency, and research by Bradley (1997) and Bradley and Marcia (1998) has shown that generativity also differs from fostering others for instrumental purposes – i.e. caring only for people considered to be similar (like ingroup members) or mainly for achieving personal goals. According to Marcia (2010), generativity describes an inclusive attitude towards society, rather than exclusive or ascribed to one's own family and beloved children.

However, being developed within developmental psychology paradigm, the concept of generativity is suffers of a linear definition of time. Generativity is first of all defined as the need for procreation and future generation, and it assumes that this

need is or should be developed during the adult stages of life. According to classical Eriksonian theory, each stage of life has specific developmental tasks (Clark, 2010). Generativity is one of the tasks of adult life, and would be at odd to study it during childhood or adolescence. However, although it may not make much sense for children to think about physically "generating" life, it might be perfectly reasonable to consider how children are concerned about future and even future generations. Hence, the concept of future time perspective as we have defined it in terms of content (personal and social) and extension (short and long) is more flexible and can find a wider application in other disciplines and social interventions.

In summary, we have seen that, on the one hand, future time perspective can be understood as an individual strategy to resist to the contextual influence and lack of hope in the future. On the other, when focused on long-term future, the future time perspective is linked to the individual sense of social responsibility and represents a resource for existence of the community. In the next paragraph we are going to discuss what applications this community-oriented future time perspective can have.

Social Future Time Perspective as Resource for Building Communities

If, theoretically, the future time perspective could represent a resource for the community, surprisingly little research has investigated this path. However, a handful of remarkable studies suggest that there is something correct in this hypothesis. For instance, Insko and colleagues (Cohen & Insko, 2008; Insko et al., 2001; Wolf, et al., 2009) have stressed that future orientation is pivotal for reducing intergroup conflict. Their experimental results showed that the manipulation of the way individuals think of the future may be a sufficient condition to generate some cooperative behaviour towards outgroups. According to Axelrod (1984), the cooperation between two people improves when they are aware of the fact that they might meet again in the future.

Following this recommendation, Cohen and Insko (2008) showed that the anticipation of future interaction makes the long-term advantages of cooperation (or the disadvantages of non-cooperation) salient. Outside the laboratory, similar results were found in a set of in-depth interviews by Greenwood (2011) with members of Tulsa community in Oklahoma. In 1921 the Tulsa city administration was responsible for inciting a white mob that burned down the houses of America's most affluent Black community and murdered approximately 300 Black residents (Madigan, 2001). In 1997 the Oklahoma legislature commissioned an investigation into the facts of the 1921 Riot, and the Commission recommended the reparation to the Black community in terms of direct payments to survivors and survivors' descendants. These recommendations raised a debate within the Tulsa's White citizens on the legitimacy of being charged with facts for which the majority was not responsible. Greenwood explored individual attitudes and opinions of Tulsa's White citizens, and highlighted that people who focused on the long-term existence of their community were more willing to accept norms of distributive justice and intergroup equality. Indeed, the consideration of future consequences is negatively related to attitudes of prejudice and support for ideologies which justify group hierarchy on a superiority-inferiority dimension (Morselli, 2011; Thornhill & Fincher, 2007). According to Spini, Elcheroth and Fasel (2008), when the survival of the community is at stake, people try to reinforce the norms which enhance the protection of individual and social rights, independently from the intergroup division within the community itself. The focus on the future of the community may speed up this process.

Thus, FTP may have practical implications for conflict resolution and community building, improving the reduction of intergroup conflict and enhancing cooperation. For instance, Fisher and Ury (1991) suggested that a necessary condition to resolve

small-scale conflicts is to shift the attention from the past to the future. Social FTP allows parties to take a socially responsible approach and choose the appropriate strategy to solve everyday problems and getting over the residual grievances from the past. Examples of successful conflict resolution shows that the interaction between the constructive treatment of past events with the focus on solving problems for the future allowed to reach a solution agreed on by all the parties (Zakay & Fleisig, 2011). The settlement reached between Mandela and De Klerk at the end of *apartheid* is an example of the potential of the long-term social FTP. With the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, South Africa moved from the acknowledgment of past traumas to the focus on the future of a new inclusive nation, and such a shift allowed for the construction of a stable new social order (Gibson & Gouws, 1999).

The effectiveness of methods to improve the future time perspective is still largely underexplored. Some methods, like the Art Future Image intervention (AFI, Walsh, 1993), have been developed to improve the personal FTP. The AIF showed promising albeit not always clear results in reducing suicidal tendencies among adolescents (Walsh & Brosz, 1994; Walsh & Minor-Schork, 1997). To our knowledge, similar methods that address social FTP are even less explored and developed. However, it may be easier to promote a socially oriented future time perspective than to change other situational and external conditions to enhance cooperation and intergroup tolerance. Social FTP is not likely to eliminate intergroup conflict entirely, but the psycho-social literature reviewed above suggests that it may be sufficient to buffer prejudice and tensions to a certain extent. Thinking about the future of the community and about the consequences of our actions for the future has an effect on our concerns for the society and for the future generations. If the personal future time perspective is culturally dependent and not applicable to non-Western societies, the social future

time perspective may overcome cultural borders because it is embedded in the concept of community itself. An interest for the future generations, as in the metaphor provided by planting an olive tree, is linked to the survival of the community after the limited period of the personal life. Thus, if we want to reduce destructive intergroup conflict, social FTP may help to focus on long-term and inclusive concept of community, which is at the same time respectful of different cultural specificities. Social FTP has, then, a high applicative potential in reducing group conflict in a variety of different settings in which the concept of community and its survival are salient.

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		Extension	
		Short-term	Long-term
Content	Personal	Hedonism	Achievement (Personal Responsibility)
	Social	Social Hedonism	Social Responsibility

Figure 1. Conceptual Matrix of Future Time Perspective.

THE OLIVE TREE EFFECT