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THE DRAWING TECHNIQUE AS A TOOL FOR THE STUDY OF THE SOCIAL REPRESENTATION OF CULTURE

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Abstract

The aim of the present study is to investigate how children think culture, in the theoretical perspective of the Moscovici's (1961) Social Representations. The research was carried out in Naples (Italy) on 138 pupils of two lower secondary schools. According to the Community Profile of the City of Naples (Comune di Napoli, 2012), through a non random judgment sampling, the interviewees were divided into two different subsamples: mid-high economic status and mid-low economic status. The main purpose was to explore the influence of participants' status differences on their representation of the object. Research methodology is based on the Drawing Technique that is considered one of the best tool to interview developmental age subjects (Galli, Nigro & Poderico, 1989; Galli & Fasanelli, 1995;). Effectively, the drawing represents the most powerful and direct way of children expression. Participants were asked "to draw culture", then to comment on their drawings and in the end to define culture. Data collected through this strategy, were processed by a categorical-frequency content analysis. Our results showed both convergent and divergent representations among the two different economic status subsamples. On the one hand the iconographic identification of culture (as "school/teaching" actions) is similar for all the children involved in the study, on the other hand the definition of culture is different between the two subsamples. The mid-high economic status participants showed a culture representation focused on the classic role of the artist and the art, instead the mid-low economic status children showed a culture representation based on the folks costumes and traditions.

Keywords: Culture, Social Psychology, Social Representations, Development Age, Drawing Technique, Qualitative-quantitative research

1. INTRODUCTION

The Theory of social representations, enunciated by Serge Moscovici in 1961, deals with the way in which the knowledge is represented in a community, shared by its members and considered as a real "theory of common sense" (Moscovici and Hewstone 1983). The task of each representation is to make familiar the unfamiliar, in relation to the different aspects of life and society.

The act of representing is an act of thought which the subject knows the object, allowing so the individuals to be oriented in their social and material environment and to dominate it. Representing is "acting as", "being in place of", it is reproduction of something and construction, too. Social representations are not simply "opinions about something", "images of something", but "theories", "branches of knowledge" that individuals use to discover and organize reality (Moscovici, 1973).

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Historically, Durkheim (1895), with the Theory of socially shared representations or collective representations, introduced the notion in the field of social sciences. The last ones must be considered in their specificity in relation with individual thinking, as a result of a cooperation, an interaction between individuals, extending in space and time. However, representations as such appear as explicative entities, means to explain social behaviours. They are not further dividable, we know their existence but ignore the action, the internal structure and the dynamic (Galli 2006).

Moscovici's remarks start from the theoretical framework drawn by Durkeheim. Though, if the representations are means to comprehend collective behaviours for the sociologist, for Moscovici the representations themselves must be explained and analyzed. The focus is moved from the relation individual-society to the dynamics of construction of the representation. The hallmarks of this passage are merit of Lévy-Bruhl (1951) and his studies on primitive thinking. With Lévy-Bruhl the object of study is the relationship society/its proper representations: what counts is the structure of the thought of the entire society, not the way the individuals think. It is the structure the individual thinks in, that make possible a determined thought in a given society.

Other authors, like Piaget and Vygotskij, influenced Moscovici in the processing of his Theory of social representations. Piaget (1932) gives us an analysis that interprets the specificity of social representations in psychic terms. It questions about social representations of the world and about moral judgment of children, starting from the ways they acquire social knowledge.

The learning processes are also object of analysis for Vygotskij (1934): the acquisition of knowledge is first a social and then an individual process, because children grow up in an environment of collective representations that are internalized through interaction and dialogue, forming the basis of mental representations.

Moscovici was already questioning about the topic of social knowledge, but it is through the Theory of social representations that we understand how the "game of science" becomes the "game of common sense" (Galli 2006). The aim is to comprehend how a content shifts from reified (by science) universes to consensual universes (space of social representations). According to Moscovici (1986), this division characterizes our culture: the two universes are recognized in two distinct conceptions of society; they follow two different paths of knowledge and different forms of causality. In the reified universes, the society is meant as hierarchic system, where roles are fixed based on competences and rules appear as being accepted more than shared. The route leading to knowledge is determined by a sequence of events where the cause precede the effect. The path is symmetrical within the reified universes: the effects can be explained retrospectively, starting from the causes, from the owned idea of reality and of the context, this idea was formed in. Society is meant as a group of free and equal individuals, where exclusive competences do not exist and rules are understood and shared. Everyone can summarize and transform scientific knowledge to produce shared meanings that allow to comprehend reality.

The aim of all social representations is to make familiar something uncustomary or unknown (Moscovici 1984), through generative processes. In order for it to be possible, the activation of two mechanisms is needed: anchorage and objectification. The anchorage allows to bring unusual, unknown ideas and concepts back to known categories. Learning a new object is then made easier, orienting the social utility of the representation. Whereas, the objectification is a process of transformation of something abstract into something concrete. Objectifying means reproducing a concept in an image. Through this process it's possible to go from the knowledge about something to the knowledge of something. Objectification is articulated in three phases: the selective construction, which consists in selecting information suitable for a public that, recognizing them as known, can dominate them. In a second place, the structuring schematization, that determines the figurative core of representation: reproduction of a visible structure that is composed of element having a strong existential resonance (Nigro, Galli, Poderico 1989). Lastly, a phase of naturalization, where the elements of the scheme become evidently observable. The processes of anchorage and objectification allow the social representations to be forming part of the reality being represented (Rouquette and Garnier 1999).

2. THE RESEARCH

Within the presented theoretical framework, a study has been conducted, aimed to investigate the social representation of culture. In particular, the goal was to study how children "think" this particular and polymorphic social object, still not much explored in the researches conducted using this framework.

The study has been conducted in Naples, using a non probabilistic purposive sampling. The sample, formed by 139 subjects in D.A. between 8 and 10, was divided in two subsamples, chosen on the base of members' belonging school. These schools were selected in two different territorial contexts, poles apart in the socio-cultural and economic aspect, identified according to the "Community Profile" edited by the city

administration (Comune di Napoli, 2012). The first subsample was composed of 73 subjects, between the age of 8 and 10, coming from two schools of a upper-intermediate socio-economic context. The second subsample was composed of 66 subjects, between the age of 9 and 10, coming from just as many schools from a lower-intermediate socio-economic context.

The aim of this research is to identify the iconic aspects of the social representation (SR) of culture circulating among young Neapolitan students. The purpose is also to verify if these representations are different from each other, starting from the socio-economic context variable (from now on referred to as s.e.c.). The chosen investigation tool has been the Drawing Technique, useful to know the images linked to the social representation of the culture formulated and shared by the children involved in the study. This technique allows to integrate the informations collected using exclusively discursive productions, with a non-verbal figurative task. Such procedure has often been used in the studies about social representations led on samples of D.A. subjects (Nigro, Galli, Poderico, 1989; Galli, Nigro, 1992; Galli, 1995): in which drawing represents a customary and immediate means of expression.

The collection of data was articulated in two phases for both subsamples involved in the study. In the first step, they were asked to create a drawing that would represent Culture and to provide a written description of it. Successively, the interviewees were asked to write down their own definition of Culture.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first part of the analysis has been dedicated to drawings, grouped in semantic sets. In Table 1 are summarised the results of the first subsample taken under exam, composed of 73 subjects belonging to the upper-intermediate socio-economic context.

Table 1 - Drawing Technique - Subsample S.C.E. upper-intermediate

N= 73		
Category	Co-occurr.	%
Artist	8	11,0
Teaching/Learning	8	11,0
Nature	8	11,0
Sport	8	11,0
Tradition	7	9,6
Book	7	9,6
Picture/Painting	7	9,6
Scientific knowledge	5	6,8
Places of the culture	5	6,8
Sculpture	5	6,8
Food	4	5,5
Game	3	4,1
Other	2	2,7

For the semantic category Artist, the descriptions of the drawings are quite clear: a 9-year-old student writes (MSA36): "I drew a painting with a painter drawing with colors". Culture in this case is "personified" in the artist, in his inspiration, in his creative act. As an example of the content of the category Teaching/Learning 11% of the participants describes their drawing making explicit reference to school and the teaching in general. A 9-year-old student (MSA67) wrote: "I drew a kid who is learning the culture of Phoenixes". A 9-year-old girl (FSA103) writes: "I tried to draw my teacher in class while she's reading a book about culture to make us understand what culture is". The association with the natural world (categ. Nature),

collects a similar number of references that can be summarized by a 9-year-old boy (MSA22) who claims: "Trees, birds, flowers, sun... this is what culture brings to my mind". Another student (FSA71) writes: "I drew the sea". The association between culture and nature seems to be underlining that, for these kids, natural phenomena are an integral part of a knowledge process. Among the categories that collect the higher number of co-occurrence is the Sport. A 9-year-old student (MSA63) writes: "I drew a sport, namely swimming it's my favourite sport and I do it too", while a peer (MSA 47) writes: "I drew Napoli's championship badge". It is worth underlining, speaking of this, that all the subjects who drew and described their work with explicit reference to sports, are male. Relevant on a frequency level is the Tradition category: the graphic representations hark back to symbols of Italian traditional history, but also to elements representative of different cultures. This is how a kid describes his drawing (MSA113): "I drew an Ancient Rome gladiator"; another 9-year-old student (MSA49) on the other hand writes: "I drew Sagrada Familia". Among the most used symbols to graphically represent culture, we find the Book. A 9-year-old boy (MSA16) describes his drawing like this: "I drew the book that symbolizes culture", while a girl of the same age (FSA69) writes: "I drew a staircase made of reading and writing books". Just as relevant, on a frequency level, is the Picture/Painting category. A 9-year-old female student (FSA61) writes: "I drew a painting with a prince and a princess, an antique painting of culture"; another one (FSA111) writes to have drawn "A palette and a painting". Considered in relation to the previous category appointed to the artist, the one just described suggests that, for the participants to the study, the painting is perceived as a product of the culture the author is holder of. For the semantic category Scientific Knowledge, the interviewees offer descriptions that refer to the knowledge of natural phenomena, to technical-scientific knowledge. An interviewee (MSA6) writes: "I drew a train that represents the evolution of mankind driven by the creed of culture". The Places of culture category reaches a co-occurrence frequency of 6,8%. A 9-year-old student (MSA23) writes: "I drew a museum of arts because museums remind me of culture". The museum is one of the places that the interviewees believe important from the cultural point of view, so much as to being able to be symbolically representative of the concept of culture itself. The Sculpture too represents, for this subsample, a symbol coherent with the idea of culture. A 9-year-old girl (FSA38) writes: "I drew a statue", while a peer male student (MSA62) claims he drew: "A statue of the king because he has a jacket, the crown and a shield". For the interviewees the statue assumes a cultural, historical and artistic value. The Food category doesn't collect a significant number of references, however it shows among the elements representative of the concept of culture, in terms of knowledge of culinary tradition. An interviewee (MSA18) writes: "I drew Neapolitan pizza", while another boy writes: "I drew a Panettone". Last category on a frequency level is acclaimed to all the references to Game. Reported by the interviewees in the description of their drawings.

The Table 2 collects the results of the analysis of the content led on the graphic productions of the 66 students attending the schools belonging to the lower-intermediate socio-economic context.

Table 2 - Drawing Technique - Subsample S.C.E. lower-intermediate

N= 66		
Categories	Co-occurr.	%
Teaching/Learning	13	19,7
Places of Culture	12	18,2
Tradition	9	13,6
Artist	7	10,6
Finds	7	10,6
Sculpture	7	10,6
Work	6	9,1
Book	5	7,6
Picture/Painting	5	7,6
Game	3	4,5
Nature	3	4,5
Other	2	3,0

For these kids the Teaching/Learning category reaches a frequency of occurrence superior to all the others (19,7%) confirming its place, yet one more time, as a symbolic cornerstone of representations of culture. Between the different descriptions of the graphic tests a student (FSB79) writes: I drew our class where the teacher knows a lot of things and explains them". Another student aged 10 (MSB80) writes: "I drew a kid telling the teacher that he likes to learn, so the teacher says he has much culture". Second category in number of co-occurrence is Places of culture. A 9-year-old student (FSB127) describes her

drawing like this: "I drew the library which is the books", a peer (MSB95) writes instead: "I drew a museum with lots of paintings and a kid holding his father's hand". The semantic category of Tradition has a frequency percentage of 13,6% of the total. A 10-year-old girl (FSB72) writes she drew: "Naples' culture namely the culture of own countries", and another 9-year-old girl (FSB82) writes she drew: "Catacombs of Naples, where my mom and dad work". For these kids this category refers more to the traditions of their own country, of their city even. The category of the Artist too occupies a relevant place among the definitions of the drawings taken under exam for this subsample. A boy (MSB112) writes: "I drew a painter colouring a fruit basket". The references are to the figure of the artist and their creative act. The element of novelty, in comparison to the data concerning the previous subsample, is represented by the Finds category (10,6%). Within this semantic category, we find drawings of antique vases, archaeological finds, fossils, that reproduce graphically artefacts that the subjects recognize the historic magnitude and cultural value of. A 9-year-old student (FSB99) writes: "I drew Atlantis, some Canopic jar, an embalmed mummy". Even for these children we find the category of Sculpture. Another student (MSB121) writes: "I drew Zeus's statue", while a 9yo girl (FSB114): "I drew the statue of the thinker". A further novelty is represented by the category of Work, that collects 9,1% of co-occurrences. A girl (FSB109) writes: "I drew a female painter, a cleaning man, a water. Culture for me is a profession". One more peer (FSB120) describes her drawing writing: "I drew a lady working as a housewife". The children of this subsample underline the importance of a job, also from a cultural point of view. Seems interesting to highlight that children belonging to the subsample of the residents in the upper-intermediate s.e.c. didn't make any reference to work, but they often made references to nature and sports. For these interviewees too the Book is linked, yet again, to the concept of culture, becoming one of its symbols. A 9-year-old student (MSB64) writes he drew: "A history book", while his 10yo peer (MSB85): describes his drawing like this: "Me taking a book, reading". With the same number of co-occurrences the Picture/Painter category shows, content of which is the summery of the words of a little girl (FSB122): "I drew a painting by Caravaggio there's a fruit basket". The semantic category Game collects a low number of references, similar, on a frequency level, to the Nature category. Concerning the element of the game, a girl (FSB76) writes: "Here are me and my brother playing in the garden collecting flowers for our mother". The reference is to the recreational activity, the fun. The association to the natural world, on the other hand, remains linked to the landscape, like a 10 years old boy (MSB100) writes: "I drew a house between trees and I want this house in the trees".

As previously mentioned, the second section of the study envisaged that the students involved defined in writing the concept of culture. Table 3 illustrates the results of the category-frequency analysis made on the verbal production of the children coming from the more well-off socio-cultural context of the city of Naples.

Table 3 - Definition of Culture - Upper-intermediate S.C.E.

N= 73		
Categories	Co-occurr.	%
Artist	15	20,6
Tradition	8	11,0
Knowledge	7	9,6
Nature	4	5,5
Places of culture	3	4,1
Game	3	4,1
Remains	2	2,7
Food	2	2,7
Work	2	2,7
Teaching/Learning	2	2,7
Other	10	13,7

As it is possible to observe, the category with the absolute highest frequency is the Artist. Like a 9-years-old boy (MSA25) underlines, "the culture for me is the colors put on a painting that transfer the painter's emotion. The second category with the highest frequency is represented by Tradition. Within this category are references to traditions of peoples linked to a determined geographical area or, more generically, to cultural values and identities present in specific territorial areas. A 9yo student (MSA56) writes: "Culture for me is knowing of an ancient civilization". For the semantic category Knowledge, the drawings descriptions are clear: a student (MSA3) writes "Culture for me means the one who knows a lot of things deeply", while another girl (FSA5) affirms that "Culture in my opinion (for what I've heard) would be the knowledge, or better say the knowledge of the events that changed the history". In the definitions of culture taken under exam, knowledge is not only referred to the scientific one as it happened for the drawings, but it embraces the knowing in its various aspects. For the Nature category, 5,5% of participants make references to landscape, to environment. Indeed, writes a 9-years-old student (MSA41): "For me culture is an environment or a place where you can farm, breed animals and house farms". The association to Places of culture collects a restricted number of references, even though explicit: writes a boy (MSA49) "For me culture is a museum".

Among the categories that collect the highest number of co-occurrence is the Game. The expressions used to define culture referred to Remains. Even in this case, the kids recall archaeological finds and their historical value. A 9yo boy (MSA4) writes: "Culture are the remains of history for me it's important otherwise I wouldn't know everything I know" and a peer (MSA68) writes: "Culture for me are vases and other ancient things". With the same number of co-occurrences, we find the semantic category of Food. An interviewee (MSA34) writes: "For me culture are the food and traditions of various countries, Italian pizza, take away, pounds sterling, spaghetti with escargot". Also among the definitions of culture is possible to find the link with culinary tradition. The category Work presents a frequency percentage of 2,7. Among the definitions of culture, a student (FSA3) writes: "Culture for me is knowing the most important things so you can do the different jobs that can be done in life". The link culture/work is related to the useful knowledge to do a certain job. Lastly, in the Teaching/Learning category, we find references to school and teaching, like a 9-years-old reminds (MSA39) "Culture is teaching".

In Table 4 it's possible to identify the frequency weight, for the kids resident in poor neighbourhoods of the city of Naples, of the analytic categories so far described.

Table 4 - Definition of Culture - lower-intermediate S.C.E.

N= 66		
Category	Co-occurr.	%
Tradition	16	24,2
Sculpture	11	16,7
Artist	9	13,6
Places of Culture	8	12,1
Knowledge	8	12,1
Work	8	12,1
Teaching/Learning	6	9,1
Remains	3	4,6
Book	2	3,0
Other	12	18,2

For these interviewees the more frequent references are to Tradition, so to uses and costumes, identity values, as cleared by a 10-years-old student (FSB73): "For me culture is everything that a country owns". Sculpture occupies, in this sample, a relevant place among the definitions of culture. A 9-years-old male (MSB) writes: "Culture for me is something beautiful like a statue". Another student (FSB131), for her part, claims that: "For me culture are the statues, everything that dates back in the past. I really like statues and paintings". For the interviewed subjects statues become symbols of the culture of the past that keeps a value in the present time. The references to the Artist give life to the third category in terms of importance for this subsample. A 9-years-old student (MSB112) writes: "For me culture is fantastic because you can make big masterpieces", while one of his classmate (MSB121) writes: "For me culture is art like statues and paintings". In the definitions of culture examined, the figure of the artist becomes integral part of the creative act and its finished product. With the same number of co-occurrences (12,1%), the semantic category Knowledge. Among the definitions taken in exam, a participant says (FSB78): "Culture is when someone knows many things", while her peer (FSB114) writes: "For me culture is the knowing of people". The category of Work, as was easy to predict, between the poorer interviewees, obtains the higher number of co-occurrence in comparison to the other subsample. A 10-years-old girl (FSB84) writes: "Culture for me is work", while a 9-year-old classmate (FSB101) claims that for her "Culture is a seeding farmer". Coherently with what resulted from the analysis of the drawings, in this subsample the element of work, linked to culture, underlines the centrality of knowledge to be able to have access to a job that allows to a real social improvement. The category Places of Culture refers to material sites of culture. A 9-year-old interviewee (MSB84) writes: "Culture is reading in the library" and one of his peers (FSB100) claims that for her "Culture is knowing the things of ancient times that you can find in museums". The references to Teaching/Learning are, for this subsample, more that the one considered before. Indeed, this category registers a frequency percentage of 9,1 of the total. A 9-year-old student (MSB53) affirms: "For me Culture is school" while a 10-years-old kid (MSB80) writes: "Culture makes you learn many things". The definition of culture stays tied to learning, to school as a place to know. The semantic category Remains does not register a high number of co-occurrences. A 9yo girl writes (FSB99): "For me culture is knowing ancient things that you can find in the museums", and one of her peers too (FSB123) affirms: "For me culture is something that remained in the past like the finds". The idea of culture stays tied to the past finds for this subsample as well. With a frequency percentage of 3,0% we find the category of Book. A 9-years-old girl (FSA127) defines culture writing: "In my opinion culture is books", another student (FSB89) writes: "For me culture means: a book that can explain to me what culture is". You can find the book as a symbol of culture, but decreases the presence, in comparison the drawings, in the definitions of the children.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The presented results, pertaining the two sections the study was articulated in, highlighted the interesting differences between the ways children represent the culture to themselves, starting from the socio-economical variable. As for the first phase, consisting of drawing and describing culture, from a confrontation between co-occurrences relative to each category, for each subsample, it seems to be clear that the Teaching/Learning is the one that most of all highlights the culture interpretative differences between the two groups of students involved in the study. Farther elements presenting dissimilar symbolic weights, in the two subsamples, are traceable in the categories of Places of Culture, Nature, Finds and Sport. The other findable frequencies for Nature and Sport, recorded for subjects belonging to upper-intermediate s.c.e., are not observable within the lower-intermediate s.e.c. subsample. As for the Nature category, the explanation could be linked to the fact that the first ones see in the natural phenomena something that is outside of the daily metropolitan experience, so an element strictly tied to a process of knowledge and observation. For the Sport category is underlined an even more marked difference between the two subsamples: the subjects of lower-intermediate s.e.c. probably consider physical activity as amusement, a game, a recreational daily practice, not attributable to the concept of culture. Always among the students coming from a lower-intermediate s.e.c., Finds is the category that prevails - in terms of frequency – in comparison to the upper-intermediate s.e.c. Probably, in the light of some descriptions given by participants, this is owed to the fact that participants belonging the first subsample give more importance to the guided visits with a teaching aim, not having the opportunity of travel's direct experience. Further deeper analysis could corroborate this interpretation. The Work semantic category too seems to differentiate the representations of culture made by the two subgroups. In the lower-intermediate s.e.c. the frequencies observed prevail in comparison to the upper-intermediate s.e.c.. The explanation could be traceable in the fact that the subjects belonging to a lower-intermediate s.e.c. consider work as social improvement means, so they underline its importance, even under a cultural point of view. To verify the non-casual nature of the differences observed between the two frequency distributions related to the analytic categories, the Chi-squared test was carried out. The

Pearson's index (p) observed (x^2= 19.873; p= 0,01869969) confirms the existing difference between the conceptions of culture of children residing in well-off neighbourhoods of the city of Naples and the ones of the children residing in its mass neighbourhoods.

In relation to the second phase of the research, related to the definition of the object Culture, it would seem that the children of the lower-intermediate socio-economic context subsample are more inclined to define culture as something tied to identity values, such as uses, costumes and traditions. On the contrary, the subjects belonging to upper-intermediate s.e.c. subsample tend to bring back the culture to art, objectified in the artist and their productions. The Knowledge category, in both subsamples, covers a relevant role in the social representation of culture. The categories of Sculpture and Work differentiate the descriptions given by the lower-intermediate s.e.c. kids from the ones given by their peers residing in the upper-intermediate s.e.c.. This comparative analysis too has been verified through a Chi-squared test. The Pearson's index observed (x^2 = 21,758; p = 0,00967841) confirmed the existing difference between the culture representations of the children residing in the distinct areas of the city of Naples.

In conclusion, iconography and imagery seems to play an interesting role in the relationship between language and social representations. This issue has already been the subject of various reflections. Thus, de Rosa and Farr (2001), iconography should be both considered source, medium and producer of social representations. In another direction (Moliner, 1996), it has been proposed to consider the representations as frames of reference that allows to interpret images of the world in terms of "social images" of the world. In this research, as in the original Moscovici's approach (1961), the "social" coincide with the real context in which our interviewees live, study, play and interact, re-constructing meaningful social object, as the culture could be surely considered. The objective of the work we present here was to offer empirical evidence for this thesis.

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