



## **Social representations and valorial orientations: the immigrants case**

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### **Abstract**

The principal idea of this paper can be divided in two macro axes: the first is that the behavior toward the other or others, above all, depends on the representation that people build as to him/them, on the interpretations of actions (pasts, presents, and futures), and on the landmark of socio-cultural context. When responsibilities are attributed to an individual or to a group for critical and /or of sufferance conditions, the situation produced is that it is attributed a false fault to a subject or to a group that could be recognized as "enemy". The second is that images transmitted by the media do not produce only symbolism that contributes to the self construction of the identity, but provide identification models too on which it is possible to find interactions and social actions. In the specific case of the research we present modifications in the perceptions of young people who took part in the research, in regard to immigrants, they allow to look at a different direction that could assume a positive valence (making more familiar what was distant). But it is right to underline that in other situations images produce contrary effects and rather liberate from a stereotyped conditioning than push the subject to reinforce such position.

**Keywords:** social representations; enemy; values; images; immigrants.

### **1. Introduction: theoretical picture of reference**

Social sciences have underlined how the subject is constantly immersed into a system of relations that strongly contributes to define actions and features.

In the plot of social life, social representations form, consolidate and circulate themselves. They are theories of the common sense, constructed in every day interactions and shared by groups of subjects. So social representations do not arise from isolated individuals, but they are socially generated; they refer to objects or social phenomena and they are shared by every member of a group. As the literature has demonstrated (Jodelet, 1984; Moscovici, 1984; Duveen, 1988), in the study of social representations we need analyze the relationship among social actors (singles and groups). In the flowing of daily experience, social actors try to articulate the dialogue between individual and society in the real context of symbolic relationships among subjects, groups and institutions. It is evident here the reference to the role played by the sense of stereotype, prejudice and believes (Moscovici & Markova, 2006). The common trait among all these psychosocial phenomena consists in the fact they express a social representation that subjects and groups construct in order to act and communicate. Representations as symbolic constructions influenced by social positions of individuals which produce them (Jodelet, 1984), perform the essential task to make conventional objects, people, events, giving them an exact shape, assigning them to a precise category and defining them in a model, distinguished and shared by a group of people. Moreover, they are prescribing because impose themselves on us.

Representations are, in fact, cognitive elaborations of the reality shared by many people who orient individual sense making processes. Even though they are not produced by single actor, nevertheless they are rethought, re - mentioned and re -



presented at a micro genetic level. Representation systems that are present in a certain culture are transmitted to us and they are the product of a whole sequence of elaborations and changes which occur during the time (Laszlo, 2002).

From a structural point of view, social representations are formed by two dimensions: iconic (image) and symbolic (meaning) and they are interdependent on each other (Abric, 2001; Guimelli, 1994). Representation of an event, phenomenon or object puts in relation an image to an idea and *vice versa*. At the basis of such process there is the need to rebuild the common sense or the comprehension form of social happenings that creates the substratum of images and meanings without those no community could operate. In fact, the community doesn't work if those social representations are not formed themselves, that are based on a group more or less structured of theories, ideologies, visions of the world and that constitute the symbolic and cultural ground which makes possible the interaction among people. Representations make individuals able to share an implicit whole of images and ideas, which are assumed as given (Moliner, 1996).

In fact, one of the prerogatives of social representations is that they permit to transmute ideas in collective experiences and interactions in behaviors. Differently from the sciences that provide the set of instrument to acquire a scientific knowledge of the universe, the social representations have to do the "consensual" universe. They reestablish the collective awareness giving it a form, explaining objects and events so that making them accessible to everyone and making coincide with our immediate interests. It appears evident that as the aim of all representations is that to make something of unusual or the unknown itself as familiar (Moscovici, 1989, p. 45).

The non familiar attracts and makes curious the community, put on the alert the subjects and forces them to make explicit the implicit assumptions that are at the basis of assent. The fear to lose usual landmarks, to lose the contact with that furnishes a continuity sense of mutual comprehension it is intolerable. When the diversity imposes itself as something "not enough" as it should be, we instinctively refuse it because it threaten the given order.

The act to represent is a mean to transfer that disturbs us, that threatens our universe, from outside to inside, from a far place to a close space. The transfer is made separating concepts and perceptions usually connected and putting them in a context where the unusual becomes usual, where the unknown could be included in a recognized category (Moscovici, 1961/in press). When theories, information and events multiply themselves, they are to be reproduced at a closer and more accessible level and transferred to the consensual universe, and they are to be defined and re-presented. To give a familiar aspect it is necessary to activate two mind mechanisms: the first is the "anchorage" and it forces itself to anchorite unusual ideas and reduces them to ordinary categories and images and put them in a familiar context. Therefore "anchorage" is a process that brings something extraneous and disturbing which regards us in our particular system of categories and confronts it with the model of a category we consider right. To anchorite means classifying and giving a name to something, "anchorage" is the representation establishment in the social. Such mechanism performs three functions: 1) cognitive function of innovations integration; 2) function of innovations interpretation; 3) function of behaviors orientation and social relationships. This process making familiar the unknown reduces the fear and worry for that is not possible to explain. After all, the familiarity is a need intrinsic in daily living. To give a name to a person or a thing involves three effects: a) once a name has been assigned, person or thing can be described and acquire certain peculiarities, certain trends; b) person or thing differ from other persons and things on the basis of these peculiarities and trends; c) person or thing become the object of a convention among those adopt or share them (Haas, 2006).



Aim of the second mechanism ("objectification") is, on the contrary, to carry out these ideas, or rather to transform something abstract into something almost tangible. This mechanism, makes the unusual usual, disclosing it, making it accessible, concrete and consequently controllable. In this way we pass from idea abstraction to the image concreteness. When an idea enters into the knowledge of the daily life, it aims to materialize itself. For example, in every process of divulgation of scientific theories, it is carried out such transformation from the abstract to concrete by turning to a figurative nucleus. Given that a theory enter into the common sense, it happens a selective retention of some ideas which not contextualized in regards to original theoretical area, they are revised and reorganized on the basis of familiar knowledge. Actualizing through images, is a strategy justified by the need to simplify the overcharge of notions at which we are exposed every day. This process involves three passages: 1) selection and de - contextualization; 2) construction of a figurative nucleus; 3) naturalization. The objectification permeates of reality the idea of non familiarity, transforms it in the true essence of the reality (Farr & Moscovici, 1984).

The materialization of an abstraction is one of the most mysterious features in the thought and in the language. In short, actualizing it means to reproduce a concept into an image. Once the society has realized such process, it finds out easier to speak about everything is implied by paradigm. Then emerge formulas and clichés which synthesize and connect images before separate.

As Moscovici (1961, 2000) showed, image of the concept ceases to be an indication and becomes a repetition of the reality. Therefore, the notion or the entity from that is derived, it loses its immaterial nature and acquires an existence almost physical and independent. That is perceived replaces what is conceived and images became real factors, rather thought factors. So the distance between representation and represented is offset.

It is epistemologically and ontologically correct to affirm that social representations give form to social explanations; this is the reason for why people try to know what is real before asking them why anything happens in the way in which it happens. They must reduce ambiguity and make information unequivocal in order to make a concept and an image corresponds and *vice versa*. The behavior towards other people depends on: a) the idea that we have of them; b) the interpretation of their past and present actions; c) the expectation of their future actions; and d) from the socio-cultural contexts (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). As social actions are closely interconnected with the processes of social perception, it is easy to understand why scholars are interested in judgments that people give to one another. When individuals give a judgment (Heider, 1958; Hewstone, 1989), they try to explain or to interpret the behavior of the judged subject, making the social context of reference more predictable and understandable. In other words, social representations can be considered as a system of cognitive matrix with the task of coordinating words, ideas, images and perceptions that are shared in relation to a big number of people that identify among them (Jodelet, 1984; Moscovici, 1984; Crespi, 2004). At this point, we can state that the behaviours (positive or negative orientation) to anything or anybody are guided by the perception we have of them: the social reality is not built only by social meaning, but also by the products of the subjective world of individuals (Tateo, 2009). When an individual or a group blames another individual or group for his/her critical and/or suffering conditions, is created a situation in which we attribute a false blame to someone or a group defined as the "enemy" (Girard, 1987).

The attribution of responsibility suggests solutions to social problems, while the rules that determine the explanations can both contain and increase violence and/or control of social order.

The idea that goes with this study, is that orientations towards a subject or a group considered as "enemy", is a category which represents one of the most powerful



icons of the modernity (Giordano & Mizzella, 2006), and it is influenced by information and knowledge obtained from media and especially through images that the media broadcasts. We do not rebuild the history of the "enemy", but we want to analyze the different ways to give a judgment which allows us to create the real or virtual "enemy" as well. So, we ask ourselves questions about the different ways of symbolic meanings of perceptions of some categories and about the conditioning that they produce inside the social processes of building the figure of the enemy "as to who does not belong, that is foreign, that is on the wrong side, that does not share" (Giordano & Mizzella, 2006, p. 33). This last aspect is connected with the choice to use as "enemy" the category of the "immigrants" even if there are few studies on the representation of the "Other" (Colombo, 1999): the history of Europe is often characterised by the opinion of "foreign" (immigrant) as an "enemy" (Binotto, 2006). It is because the "foreign" is related to something "unfamiliar" (unknown) that, in the relationship, works such a border-figure as Simmel (1908) defined it: the foreign is "at same time close and distant".

The classical concept of "image of the enemy" is typical of humanity, as only this is able to produce significant symbolic meanings in absence of a face to face relationship (Attili, Farabollini & Messeri, 1996). It is a highly complex process which involves different dimensions of reality (social and psychological), and for this reason, it is easily influenced by the processes of knowledge acquisition.

Therefore, the object of this paper is to understand and, where possible, to explain the meaning and the role that the social representation assumes in the dynamics that lead to the modification of orientations (positive or/and negatives) connected to the construction of "enemy" and to explore how these could be different on the basis of perception and knowledge acquisition modalities.

## **2. Method: the research's objects and methodology**

The idea that social representations are on the basis of "cognitive prosthesis" which motivate people to social action, it pushes us to carry out this research that does not have the pretension to be exhaustive with respect to how build orientations that are on the base of individual and social group actions which refer on idea of "enemy". It wants only to propose a reflection on the processes of attribution in a society in which the acquisition of knowledge is strongly influenced by mass communication.

Empirical attention has been directed to young students of the University of Salerno in the South of Italy, Campania region (1), this choice is justified because young people represent the "vital strength" of society, with a course of life which still has to be built and therefore direct able "trainable" in one way rather than in other way. In fact, their developmental phase would still allow the definition, through the socialization processes (2), of social identity (Perret-Clermont, Pontecorvo, Resnick, Zittoun & Burge, 2004) positively oriented towards other (foreign/immigrant). The choice of this sample is justified also by the considerations that this target of population is the most frequent user of communication sources connected with new media in which the images are predominant.

By the light of these preliminary remarks, the aim of this research has been firstly looked into the vision of the world and the future perspectives that young people build. This is necessary because it is important to interpret which are the structures of the ways used to see the society through the eyes of young people. There is not doubt that human knowledge interacts with social life, the ideas on what is right and what is not right, are determined by the social context in which they develop. In this way a "reference scheme" of meanings can be created, standing what young people accept and do not accept with what is commonly accepted. It is fundamental to know not only which are the elements that constitute this "reference scheme", but most of all how it is built. The analysis of symbolic systems that orient processes attribution of meaning and the social behaviour of the individual, it gives an



adequate instrument of understanding dynamic interaction among society, people and knowledge.

Secondly, we have tried to look into how young people (according to the perception modalities of the concept) modify their orientations for subjects considered by us as "enemies". In fact, at this point it appears evident, the relevance of representation analysis in the study of behaviours and attitudes that people assume according others. When we talk of negative social actions in particular categories, we must try to develop a theory of representation more than to theorize on the dynamic of them, as often we are confronted with the shifting from one positive representation to a negative representation.

The phases of the research plan are the following: a *theoretical widening*, a *critical interpretation* of material acquired, the *building of a structured questionnaire* and finally, *data interpreting*. From the methodological point of view we are not worried about quantitative/qualitative controversies, as we think that both the methods can cohabit: in fact, the real problem is not linked to the type of method adopted, but rather to their reciprocal procedural relations (Cipolla, 1998), therefore we think it is advantageous to use an integrated methodology for the research study.

Among the different tools of research, the choice fell on to the questionnaire, because when we want to find out about a social phenomena, be it individual or collective, we have, fundamentally only two systems to gather the information: observation and interrogation (Corbetta, 2003). We chose to "interrogate", as we had the necessity to collect the information through a standard tools both through questions and answers, in a way to permit the study of eventual existent relations between variables.

The administered questionnaire was made up of four sections. The *first section* ("Socio-personal data") is represented by a personal file aimed at obtaining socio-personal data (sex, age, school attended, etc.). The *second section*, ("vision of the world and future perspectives") is made up of four questions in which one (max two choices of answers) is related to the media communication from which the youngsters obtain information; the second and the third questions tend to verify the presence and the perception of uncertain elements that can influence the young people every day life. The youngsters have expressed their own degree of trust regarding a series of people categories and about a series of future changes in which the youngsters have expressed their own degree of fear (we have used a Likert scale on four points). The use of the scale was necessary because, in our intents, there is the idea to verify the positive or negative intensity with which the young people load their disposition, against or in favour of a particular category of subjects or compared to a series of changes that can involve the youngsters in the future. The last question of this section, that presents the same series of changes of the former question, asks the youngsters about the possibility of improvement or deterioration (we have used a Likert scale on three points). The third and fourth section ("Representations of the enemy") is based on the *semantic differential* technique (Osgood, Suci & Tannenbaum, 1957). In its generality, this technique measures the connotative meaning (3) of a concept starting from affective and emotion reactions of the subject that answer to a certain stimulus (a word, a sound, a drawing, an image, etc.). The application of the semantic differential is easy, it is based on the expression of the subject's judgement in relation to "concept-stimulus" on a series of defined scales by a pair of opposite adjectives and from a *rating scale* presented in graphic form (from 1 to 7, or from +3 to -3 in less cases in which we want to indicate the positive or negative sign). Two are the types of judgement that are linked between them: one indicate the direction or the quality (at which point of the two sides of the scale does the association of opposite adjectives get nearer), the other the intensity or distance (how it approaches the extreme of the scale). The intermediate point of evaluation "4" (o in rare cases "0") corresponds to the equidistance or to the neutrality of two polar adjectives com-



pared to the "stimulus-concept". Each scale represents a meanings component (dimension of semantic space) that can be represented as a passer-by line the origin for of this space, the number of dimensions of this space is theoretically ended, but it is not known; from previous studies it appears that there are three reiterate dimensions: *evaluation*, *potency* and *activity*.

Before entering into details of the results it is necessary to explain the modality of the questionnaires administration: they are drawn up with help of an administrator, this modality was necessary because a part of the stimulus was visuals (stimulus-photo). To guarantee the minor distortion of answers the order of "stimulus-word" and "stimulus-photo" was diversified. The methodology that we adopted was, therefore to regroup a certain number of students in the classrooms, in the second semester of the academic year 2007/2008, giving them all the indication and information both on the objects of research and the modality of filling out the questionnaires. The sample, 0,62% of total students of the University of Salerno (40.534 units for the 2007/2008 academic year), was composed by 267 cases selected in at random and independently from type of course or faculties attended, for its constitution we only used stratification by sex.

### **3. Results and discussion: valorial orientations, the immigrants case**

Having constituted the methodological frame and having described the used tool, we only have to enter in the interpretations of the results obtained up to now (4). So as we have carried out the description of questionnaire, we analyze the results according to each single section of the tool.

#### **3.1. Socio-demographic profile of the sample**

The data relative to the first section were able to define a socio-personal profile of the respondent subject. The sample, on the base of methodological procedures that were used in the creation of the research plan is divided in a proportional way to the total students of the University of Salerno, and exactly is follows: 41,6% is made up from males and 58,4% from females. For age, the sample, was distributed, as 60,7% 18-22 year-old, 33% 23-27 year-old and 6,4% over 27 year-old. Only 2,2% is married (96,3% is unmarried).

Relatively at the high school attended the highest percentage is for Liceo pedagogico (23,6%), following Liceo scientifico (21,7%), Istituto Tecnico Industriale e Commerciale (respectively 18,7% and 15,7%).

Because the sample are students, there is a possibility that a large number of them do not live in Campania, therefore some questions referred to their province or area of residence, and type of "family". From these questions a profile of a young student that resides for 53,4% in the province of Salerno, the 17,4% in the province of Naples, 17,7% in the province of Avellino, instead the provinces of Caserta and Benevento are less represented (respectively 5,2% and 3%).

But it should mention that a 6% of students came from other regions. Relatively to the area of residence, 55,4% live in the periphery, 32,6% in the centre of the city and 11,6% live in "rural" areas. Among the typology of "family" emerges the "nucleus family" with 87,6% and a 9% that live with other students.

Only 18% of students interviewed state that they work 28,3% of them have a seasonal contract and 23% a full time contract.

This analytic presentation of the biographic profile of the sample provide to the reader/researcher all the informations useful to carry out eventually a comparison whit other similar study. It is worth to underline that in the following pages no other reference to the biographic profile are discussed because, from the scattered data, didn't emerge any difference statistical significant for gender, age, ad degree of education.



### 3.2. Vision of the world and future prospective

The data of second section of the questionnaire "Vision of the world and future prospective", revealed a quite negative students' outlook towards the future.

These data agree with the latest research on cultural consumption of young people (Ammaturo, 2008). At a general level of analysis young people seem to prefer the TV (41,4%) and internet (35,9%) when acquiring information. Only 11,7% of the students, instead, prefer other media as book and printed materials (5). This result is in line with current researches (Bruschi, Iannaccone & Quaglia, 2010; Ligorio, Andriessen, Baker, Knoller & Tateo, 2009) that underline the process of training and, at least, of identity construction is strongly influenced by mass media communications that always take up more space in the lives of young people.

In particular, it is all those forms of communication which are linked to the diffusion of images (Mangone, 2008) that influence a biography of single subjects.

So, what vision of the world do young people have? Let's try to give an answer using the data to help us, without leaving a short reflection on the sense of general uncertainty that permeates the entire society and that often immobilizes action (Bauman, 1999). More often than ever young people find themselves having to carry out their life project within a reality that is constantly changing. Those changes need to be interpreted in order to learn how to face the transitions in limited controlled situations and to make a choice in conditions in which to predict the future is more difficult (Buzzi, 2007). In this general climate of uncertainty that characterizes the Italian context, young people of our sample don't seem to have an optimistic vision of society and of their future yet.

To the question "*Here are a set of categories, could you please indicate your degree of trust of them?*" (Table 1), the young people preferred the modality of central answers (fairly and little) as if take a position regarding of these categories which is not of complete "open-mindedness", but is neither of complete "narrow-mindedness".

Table 1: Distribution of degree of trust in young people's on categories (%)

Category	A lot	Fairly	A little	Not at all
The cloth	5.2	42.7	35.6	16.5
No-profit organizations	4.9	43.4	45.3	5.6
Universities	9.7	63.3	21.3	4.5
Police	11.6	59.9	22.1	6.0
Young squatters	9.0	42.7	36.3	10.9
Politicians	0.4	2.6	30.7	66.3
Immigrants	0.4	12.4	56.2	30.7

The answers to the category "politicians" are a particular case, the "politicians" is a category towards which the young people are more diffident (66,3% of whom answered that they had chosen the option "Not at all"). Young people do not trust "politicians" and even less "immigrants" which seem to represent an emergency of the Third Millennium (56,2% of the answers to these questions scored "A little"). The little trust in politicians, that clearly has emerged from the latest research that studied this specific area (Buzzi, Cavalli & de Lillo, 2007), means that young people are conscious that it is not possible to change the world because political interests are stronger, therefore the young people prefer the "private" instead of the "public".

From the sample emerges a young person that who is afraid of a series of situations for which his/her power of control is minimum and the degree of uncertainty is high.



Table 2: Distribution of young people's fears (%)

Item	A lot	Fairly	A lot + Fairly
Cost of living, employment, unemployment	73.4	24.0	97.4
Pollution, environmental change and disasters	66.3	33.3	96.6
Terrorism, fundamentalism, war	56.9	30.7	87.6
Future in general	32.6	44.6	77.2
Political change, crisis of democracy, problem of delegation	20.6	49.4	70.0
Death, health, ageing	36.0	28.8	64.8
Demographic change, immigration, multiethnic society	17.6	38.6	56.2

If we try to write a list of young people's fear, adding the answers to modality "A lot" and "Fairly" (Table 2), we see that in first position there is "Cost of living, employment, unemployment" (97,4%), second "Pollution, environmental change and disasters" (96,6%), third "Terrorism, fundamentalism, war" (87,6%), fourth the "Future in general" (77,2%). Following in this list, we find "Political change, crisis of democracy, problem of delegation" (70,0%), "Death, health, ageing" (64,8%) and finally "Demographic change, immigration, multiethnic society" (56,2%).

The problems that politicians have do not seem to worry young people and *vice versa*. What is an "emergency" for politicians does not seem a "threat" for "young people".

Young people's pessimistic vision is evident from the answers of given to the question "For the same series of future changes, starting from his/her personal experience, can you indicate if they will improve or deteriorate?" (Table 3).

Table 3: Distribution of young people's future opinion on set of situations (%)

Item	Will improve	Remain unchanged	Will deteriorate
Cost of living, employment, unemployment	4.1	15.0	80.5
Pollution, environmental change and disasters	6.7	16.9	76.0
Terrorism, fundamentalism, war	8.6	43.8	46.1
Future in general	21.3	30.3	48.3
Political change, crisis of democracy, problem of delegation	7.9	55.1	36.0
Death, health, ageing	31.8	43.1	25.1
Demographic change, immigration, multiethnic society	19.9	34.1	43.8

At first and second place for the dimension of "deterioration" there are "Cost of living, employment, unemployment" (80,5%) and "Pollution, environmental change and disasters" (76,0%), and at the second one there is "Future in general" (48,3%). The aspect that seems to worry young people less is the course of life, in other words the aspects of person's evolution like death, health or ageing. For young people, in fact, these aspects "will improve" (31,8%) or "remain unchanged" (43,1%). These aspects "will deteriorate" only for 25,1% of the sample.

The behavior of young people is not only a reaction to a society that always asks them to *be equal to a situation*, in which the competitiveness is necessary and it is encouraged, and it appears as the only way to develop one's personality, however it is the result of their "fears" and their pessimistic vision of the future. If changes will occur, they will not be an improvement, but a deterioration of the situations.

### 3.3. Social representations of enemy

As explained above, a technique that we have used for studying valorial orientation of interviewed young people is the semantic differential that allowed us to analyse the meaning that the young people attribute to some categories such as "enemies" (in the case of present research, categories has been chosen by us and they are:





"terrorists", "immigrants" and "university professors") in relation to three principal dimensions (evaluation, power and activity) of semantic space. For each dimension we individualized three pairs of adjectives that they obtained scores non deforming scores (6).

For the study of the dynamics we used three indicated categories because we wanted to verify the differences in respect to categories close to the sample of students ("university professors") or not too close ("terrorists") (7). We used two form of stimulus: one a word that corresponds to the category and the other a visual stimulus (photo), because the starting hypothesis was that the orientation (positive or negative) would be different on the basis of perception modality. The analysis that we present is relative only to the category of "immigrants" because the most interesting data was gathered here. The results refer to three dimensions of semantic space and to the direction of judgement (at which two sides of scale the association of adjectives is closer) and to the distance (how the judgment is closer to the extreme of the scale). In Table 4 are indicated the percentage of answers to the semantic differential scale of the total sample for both stimulus (word and photo).

Table 4: Distribution of Semantic differential (%)

Comparison between stimulus word and photo "immigrants"										
		Safe Dangerous	Good Bad	Beautiful Ugly	Strong Weak	Big Little	Taft Soft	Active Passive	Difficult Easy	Hot Cold
1	Word	1.9	3.4	2.6	10.9	9.4	12.7	10.1	23.2	2.6
	Photo	4.5	12.4	4.9	6.0	7.9	14.2	12.4	39.3	10.1
2	Word	3.0	3.4	2.6	7.9	6.7	13.1	15.0	18.0	4.9
	Photo	1.9	3.7	2.6	4.5	5.6	9.4	8.6	18.0	6.7
3	Word	6.7	7.1	7.5	16.1	19.1	23.2	14.2	21.7	6.7
	Photo	6.4	12.4	4.9	6.7	7.1	12.7	8.2	17.2	5.6
4	Word	22.8	39.3	42.9	28.8	39.7	33.0	21.0	21.0	32.2
	Photo	24.7	30.3	24.7	13.5	21.3	22.1	18.4	12.7	21.3
5	Word	22.5	22.5	19.5	17.2	13.5	6.7	12.7	7.9	14.2
	Photo	18.7	16.5	18.0	10.1	12.7	12.0	12.7	4.1	9.0
6	Word	22.5	12.4	8.6	10.5	4.1	1.1	11.6	5.6	16.5
	Photo	16.1	10.5	13.9	17.6	13.9	7.1	13.5	3.0	12.7
7	Word	20.6	10.5	13.2	6.4	4.1	2.2	12.7	1.1	20.6
	Photo	25.5	11.2	27.7	39.0	28.5	17.2	22.1	3.7	32.6

In relation to the *evaluation* dimension, it is possible to affirm that the judgement expressed to immigrant of the total sample is negative both in the case of stimulus-word and in the case of stimulus-photo. This is because both the direction and distance inside the social space of meanings, have a position that can be considered negative: in fact, for all three couple of adjectives (safe-dangerous, good-bad and beautiful-ugly) the major percentage concentrate towards the right part of the scale (value 4-7). Regarding the semantic space linked to the *power dimension*, the sample did not express any clear position: the majority for the stimulus, direction and distance, are around the neutral value (value 4). The percentage of opposite adjective pairs strong-weak and big-little are an exception (respectively 39% and 28,5%) for the stimulus-photo which not, only strongly differences the answer to type of stimulus, but it also inverts the judgement.

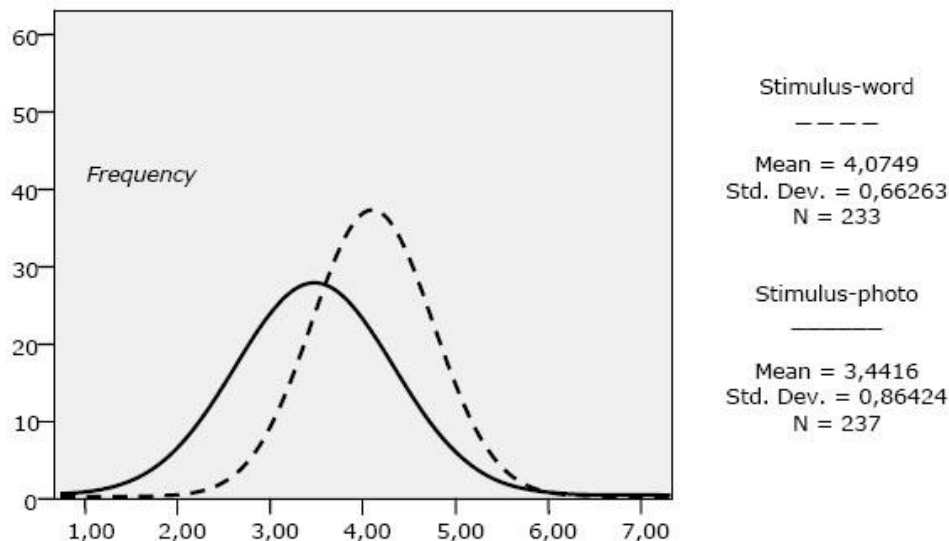
The individualized pairs of adjectives for the *activity dimension* were given answers that are related which the central values of the scale. These permit us to affirm that in this case the judgement relative to the stimulus (both for direction and for distance) do not express a clear negative orientation.

As for the semantic differential we operated a further type of analysis for the stimulus-word and for the stimulus-photo, which takes into account the average and the normal curve (Graph. 1). The valid cases are 233 for the stimulus-word and 237 for



the stimulus-photo. From the elaboration of the data two relevant aspects emerge: on the one hand the reduction of an average for the stimulus-photo (from 4,07 of stimulus-word to 3,44), on the other hand (cfr. the analysis of the curve) a shifting of judgement both for direction and for distance. In other words, from a negative judgement orientated for the stimulus-word (both for direction and for distance), we observe the passage to a judgement that we can define "softer" in the case of stimulus-photo, in the last case the curve is included within central values of the scale and then the judgement is more prudent (neutral).

Graphic 1: Comparison average stimuli word and picture "immigrants"



This means that the difference of stimulus defines a different answer for the semantic differential until changing the orientation of judgement. This permit us to affirm that the knowledge of the world and in this specific case of "the other" as an "immigrant" depends on his/her vision, the first act of a "getting to know" process that will to lead to reasoning, deciding and solving problems (Faccioli & Losacco, 2003). The relation between who perceives and what should be perceived is not constituted or defined from the outside. The subject is in part trained through what he/she sees and the way in which he/she sees it, its images and meanings are always relative and dependant on its positions and from its interpretative schemes which rely on it.

There is a difference if we judge an abstract concept or an image of it, but, in general, we do not register a difference if we disaggregate data for gender or age. In this specific research, even though we knew that a different picture could produce different results, we can state that the orientation of judgement respects the "immigrants" changes in a positive sense if the subjects see an images instead of an abstract stimulus. In other words we can infer that to be able to recognize or not recognize a category or a single subject as "enemy" is a process influenced by images.

#### 4. Conclusions

This paper presents a reflection about social representation through a socio-psychological perspective, because it is important to use the social representation phenomena as a descriptive instrument to understand the mechanisms and the processes of building the category of "enemy" through the modification of valorial orientations. In fact, when an individual or a group attributes a judgement of value (positive or negative) to another individual or group, it builds a social shared repre-



sentation that determines, in the case of negative orientation, a situation in which we attribute a responsibility to someone or a group identified as the "enemy". From the results of the study, we know that to see a different "stimulus-photo" will have produced different results (no modification or a modification in orientation in negative sense), it emerges that this process is strongly influenced by images. Therefore the young people who use widely the images in "their languages" reveal to be that part of the population which is more easily influenced (Ligorio, Andriessen, Baker, Knoller & Tateo, 2009). The images can function as a "deforming mirror". In fact, images promote the terms of language that they create; they highlight only some themes, concepts or mental categories, forgetting others (Moliner, 1996). They do not easily reflect the values of society, but they modify its hierarchy, although they do not create new values.

In other words, the images do not produce only symbolism that contribute to the self-building of identity, but they also give models of identification on which to base the interactions and social actions on. In this research, we present the modifications of young people's perceptions to immigrants. These modifications allow to switch the view into a different direction that assumes a positive value (to render more familiar what was not familiar), but it is fundamental to underline, that often the images produce contrary effects and instead of releasing themselves from stereotyped conditioning, they force the reason to reinforce their negative position.

In conclusion, to know that there aren't schema that efficiently explain the function of images and their consequences on the social actions it doesn't mean that these consequences don't exist at all. The variation of the mean presented (Graphic 1) and analyzed confirms that the stimulus-picture induce a modification of the valorial orientations (in this case in a positive way) producing consequents actions (Wolf, 1992). We are aware that we cannot generalized the results discussed in this paper, which is an explorative study on social representations of the immigrant and on how the images can affect the process of construction of those representations. Referring to the results, we suggest to put more attention on the models of behaviour daily proposed by mass media through several images that many times are object of imitation.

(Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961).

On the basis of the discussed data we can suppose that the images take part to the production of values, languages and way of acting. It need to transmit the images in a less conflictual and more equal terms especially whit respect to some categories. So that because they often are stereotyped object or persons fixing, in some case, the definition of a category of persons or a group (in this study the "immigrants") as "enemy".

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### Notes

- (1) Campania is a region located in the South of Italy. Its territories is formed by 5 provinces (Napoli, Salerno, Caserta, Avellino, Benevento).
- (2) The choice of students as research's participants is based on the considerations of the very delicate and vulnerable transitional phase young people are going through, in which they face the fundamental task of constructing their life actively in society and of social positioning in a wider socio-cultural word. Taking into account these dimensions, the university students seem a very critical and crucial target to investigate, because they are involved in a set of experiences (inside and outside the University) connected with the formation of their system of knowledge and believes
- (3) The connotative meanings is linked to the own abstract qualities of object or to designed class, in other words it defines the system of emotions and beliefs linked to a particular proposed "sign" and they depend from experience and then from historical reference context of person: the "meaning", as external representation of reality, it constitutes the mediation between the stimulus and the actions.
- (4) The data described in this paper represents a descriptive level of phenomena. The statistical treatment of data is in course of definitive elaboration that we consent to cross all different examined dimensions.
- (5) The percent indicate to refer at total number of answers because the question is a multiple answers.
- (6) For an accurate analyse of technique applications of semantic differential, of theoretical and metric problems to use it, you see Capozza (1977).
- (7) The *enemy*, real or imagined, reduces the semantic and territorial space (close/far) of people, from here the methodological plan to use the categories that occupies "spaces" of different relations.

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