Mapping Current, Future and Ideal Family Structure and Relations in Emerging Adults

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Among a large repertory of empirical studies inspired by the *modelling approach* (de Rosa, 1990, 2013b, 2014 a) and briefly summarized in de Rosa's theoretical article included in this special issue, this empirical contribution presents some considerations based on a recent pilot investigation on social representations of current, future and ideal family. Imaginary and normative dimension of such social representation were explored by a *multi-method approach*, including verbal and graphical projective instruments: a) hand- drawings; b) associative network (de Rosa, 2002a, 2003a); c) questionnaire. Given the space limits, we selected some reflections based only on the

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use of images and figurative techniques, administered both as stimulus (artistic representations) and as product (hand drawings) on a population of emerging adults (138 Italian university students, aged between 20 and 29 years). Taking into account the transformations occurring in the family relations during the last decades in the Italian society, we started to explore in this preliminary study how social representations of the *roles* within the family (gender issues) and social representations of generational bonds emerge in their iconic representations of the current, future and ideal family.

1. A MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING THE FAMILY AS A SOCIAL REALITY: INTEGRATION OF PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVES

Families transmit a model for a relational system, for mutual expectations, for objectives and values reflecting the personal living experiences of its members. At the same time, such values have a dialogue with social representations coming from the cultural context to which the members of the family belong. As a matter of fact this shared values system, to which the family refers as privileged interpretation system, relies on the way every member of the family organizes his/her experience in multiple forms of knowledge (emotional, cognitive, relational etc.). Though every individual inherits the experience and the values of his/her family, the representation of family is moreover defined by a comparison with other families and their members, perceived as more or less similar to his/her parents and his/herself, according to the *semiotic triangle* model "*ego - object – alter*" (Peirce, 1967) that Moscovici (1961/1976, 2000) puts forward as a fundamental key to understanding all psycho-social phenomena, thus overcoming the linear causality of subject-object.

At a given historical moment, family representation co-constructed in different groups may converge on a certain hegemonic social representation of family. However this does not exclude the possibility of having minority representations standing as alternative interpretations of the family.

Finally, the family as a social representation can be studied either as a *product* or as a *process* through those mechanisms taken from social reality appropriation from the individual and psychological elaboration of such reality (D'Atena, 1996).

With reference to our specific study of social representations of the *current, future and ideal family,* it is particularly interesting the Scabini and Iafrate's statement (2003: page. 45) concerning the family as " the only peculiar organisation that connects and keeps together the originate and fundamental differences in human dimension, that is:

- gender (male and female),
- generation (parents and children),
- lineage (from mother and father side), with an inherent objective in *generativity* ".

From theory to social reality, the ways in which any family keeps together gender, generations and genealogies determines how the family works from a relational and material point of view. These peculiar ways of linking males and females, children, parents and grandparents and mother and father lineage, is drafted upon the social representations, shared in the family, of each of these conceptual categories. This representation mirrors the general functioning model of social representations. Thinking of *gender, generation and lineage* as objects of a social representation allows us to link the general and the abstract - that is the conceptual category relevant to all families in a given social context – to the specific and the actual – that is the particular meaning a family attaches to these social objects and which underpins the way it works, its practices and identity systems. Also, with reference to the *ego-object-alter* semiotic triangle, it is possible to insert the mentioned social representation objects in a dialectic and circular relationship with *others* (the community) and the family. These social representations actually have a relationship of mutual influence with the culture of any community: on the one hand they are influenced by the history, values and rules of the community and daily interaction between the members of the family has an obvious role in building and transforming the social representations active either in the family system or in the cultural macro system (*Centro di Ateneo Studi e Ricerche sulla famiglia,* Ed. 2012).
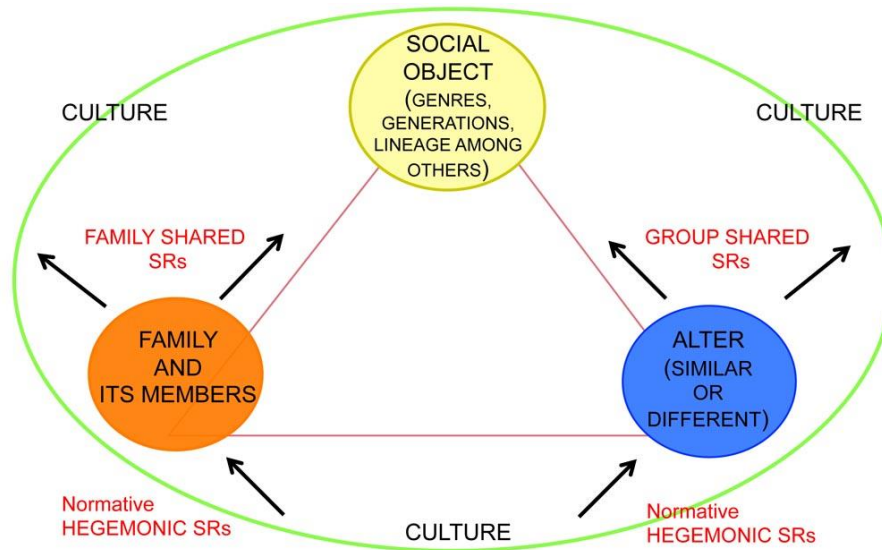
Figure 1: Integrating the symbolic-relational model and social representation theory

Finally, certain social representations and beliefs shared in a family with reference to the social objects *gender, generation and lineage* and relevant relational models, operate in the unfolding of social comparison with others (either meant as similar or different), that is, through the social representation it expresses, the family itself may define its position in the system of social relationships.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

Studying the family as an *object* of social representations allows exploring the features families embody in the naïve theory of individuals (the *subjects* who elaborate or re-elaborate their social representations of the family, on the basis of their own experience), either in spotting the more personal aspects or the more widely shared ones both on social and collective levels. Our pilot study has been guided by two main objectives:

a) the analysis of some important paintings and sculptures made from the XV century that we have considered an expression of *collective shared representations* of *gender, generation and lineage*, widespread in knowledge and in thematic content;

b) the study of the *iconic and verbal aspects of family social representations of young*

> *"emerging" adults* in the process of leaving the original family unit; we assume such *social representations* fully express the tension of our time between morphostatic and morphogenetic aspects of the family system.

Studying differences and similarities in participants' representations of:

- *current family* (the personal experience level),
- *future family* (the personal expectations level that can be considered as an imagined projection in the future),
- *ideal family* (the family as a normative-cultural object), will help us to define how the relationship between experience and ideals, between a perception of continuity and change in the family as a social framework works to define evolutionary objectives for young people and their families.

3. METHODOLOGY

The pilot study on *current, future and ideal family* social representations consisted of a sample of 138 undergraduate students of Medicine and Psychology at Sapienza University in Rome, mostly women (87%). A deeper and wider investigation is still going on. Sample range for age was 20 to 29 years old, the age that literature defines *emerging adulthood* (Arnett, 2007*).* 80% of the sample was composed of people living in Rome, in the house of their married (87%) parents.

Participants were shown 13 well-known artworks, a technique that we consider as absolutely explorative for this specific genre of study where they had to use as a starting point for free associative networks and for some questions used to understand to what extent the subject already knew the single artwork. Following the *modelling approach* (de Rosa, 1990, 2013b, 2014 a), a multi-method questionnaire was administered, in order to investigate the above-mentioned social representations and to explore how iconic and symbolic dimensions integrate in the representational system we were analysing:

- graphic projective tools: *drawings of the current, future and ideal family;*
- verbal projective tools: the "*associative network*" (de Rosa, 2002a, 2003a), for the three

stimuli of *current, future and ideal family*;

- structured interview: a *questionnaire* was created to obtain socio-demographic information about the students.

4. MEASURES

Iconic dimension of social representations. We thought it would also be interesting to include a graphic projective technique asking participants to draw *current, future* and *ideal families*. Drawings are able to provide profound dimensions rooted in representation, memory and collective imaginary, sometimes in contrast with the ideological constructions that subjects put forward in verbal techniques (de Rosa, 1990, 2013b, 2014 a). Graphic results have been analysed according to a number of variables identified according to sound and well acknowledged literature on the interpretation of the drawing (Castelli and de Rosa, 1979) of the human figure (Goodenough, 1926; Harris, 1963; Machover, 1949) and family (Corman, 1976; D'Amore[1], 2001; D'Amore, de Rosa, 2006; de Rosa, D'Amore, 2002)

The *symbolic dimension* of social representations[2] was studied through associative networks (de Rosa, 2002a; 2003a), using a projective technique which is based on verbal associations allowing the investigation of the social representation field according to *content, structure[3] and polarity[4],* as the evoked word displays a positive, negative or neutral value for the subject. The sample was asked to draw associative networks for: *current family* (the family the subject was part of in that moment), *future family* (the family the subject was expecting to be part

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[1] de Rosa and D'Amore's research project (2002, 2006) is meant to explore social representations of body and eating in 60 Italian adolescents, trying to integrate social and cultural practices together with related shared collective imaginary about eating, considered as a medium in our society to transmit values and models about gender and generations. A multi-method questionnaire was administered: projective graphic tools (drawing of a person and drawing of a family while eating), projective verbal tools (associative networks), semi-structured interview about eating practices and a structured one (Eating Attitudes Test – EAT from Garner and Garfinkel, 1982). Results provided several, interesting points of view about social representations of the eating practices as evoked, discussed and drawn by participants. Lisa D. Hinz's "*Drawing within: using art to treat eating disorders"* (2006) was not published yet.

[2] For a discussion of results refer to de Rosa, , Aiello , d'Ambrosio (2014). For the extension of the research program aimed at cross-cultural comparison of Social representations of the Current, Future and Ideal Family in "*emerging adults"* in Italia and Romania., see de Rosa, Aiello and Pascal. (2013, fortchoming).

[3]   Elements in the representational space are intertwined and structurally hierarchised, more or less close to the central nuclei of meaning of the representation itself.

[4] The polarity has a range between -1 a +1 and it is calculated by dividing the number of positive words minus the number of negative words with the number of all evoked words.

of in ten years time) and *ideal family*. Collected data was analysed by Lexical correspondences analysis (LCA)[5], function in SPAD-T (v. 5.1) software.

       Socio-demographic and familiar profile. At the end of the interview, questions were asked to classify population characteristics (age, sex, job, family composition, parents' marital status, family life if the subject lived in the family's house and its assessment).

5. SOME CONSIDERATION ABOUT THE ARTWORKS: SEMANTIC VALUE IN THE VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF GENDER, GENERATIONS AND LINEAGE

Though widely stated as interesting in literature, the use of artwork in psychosocial studies about the family is not very common (de Rosa, A. S. 1995). Cigoli (2009) has proposed a seminal work in this research area through family paintings, involving a psychological analysis of the transformation of family relationships over time. He attaches a value to images (paintings in particular) as the definition and transmission of social knowledge. In this perspective, the use of paintings allows us to observe and analyse the most important transformation of families together with the *weltanschauung* the painter intends to put forward in the cultural context he/she belongs to. In a way, the artist becomes an actor in the social debate over the pictured object and in the way it is represented, summarises his/her position vis-à-vis that specific representation. This conception of pictorial iconography is also reflected in the idea Moscovici himself put forward about images (figurative nucleus) as a building block and fundamental part of a social representation, that is an expression of a symbolic system of meanings that one or more social groups share at a given time in history. For us, this very idea has been a spark for this work. In fact, by taking into account the main points addressed in de Rosa's article included in this special issue about the role played by images in the study of social representations, artwork can be considered either as a *product* of an existing social representation, resulting from the objectification process, or a *medium* for transmitting a values' and interpretations system for the exploration of a reality of family relationships.

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[5]   LCA is a statistic technique used for qualitative data, which is able to organise words associated to stimuli in a continuum of factors more or less close to the stimulus. The positioning is rendered through the word's frequency and its concurrent association with other words. (Ercolani, A.P., Areni, A., Mannetti, L. 1990).

In our research on family social representations we used well-known paintings and sculptures that we deemed representative of the values' system about family relationships acknowledged in European culture. In particular, in accordance with Scabini and Cigoli (2000) and Scabini and Iafrate (2003, p. 45), the connection between genders (male and female in a couple), generations (relationships between parents and children) and lineage (meant as family heritage) is represented. The selection of artworks was made taking into account some prototypical aspects associated to each of those culturally and historically determined key thematic foci (see, among others art historians, Argan, 1968).[6]

We chose 13 artworks and asked 138 students from the Faculty of Medicine and Psychology in Sapienza University (Rome, Italy) to carry out verbal association (adapting de Rosa, 2002a, 2003a *Associative Network technique*). Every image was used as a stimulus. They were also asked:

- if they already knew that artwork (to explore the familiarity with the image by participants) and
- to point out the main theme (in order to verify the *acknowledgement of the thematic content* as an input for the semantic value in the representation of gender, generation and lineage), in accordance with the expert interpretation by artists, art historians and art gallery directors retrieved from the literature.

Images we selected are the following in Table 1, regrouped according to *five key thematic focuses* about the family relations:

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[6] For the *feminine*: motherhood, sensuality, physical and bodily generativeness; for the *masculine* the contemplation and protection of motherhood, rationality, intellectual creativity paralleling the subjects to God; for the *connection between genders* the idyll and transformations of the representation of a kiss as a symbol of *joining* body and soul, and the genders, and how such a meeting is idealised, complicated, based on incommunicability; for the *wedding* the sacred private rather than public and social alliance; for the *connection between generations* the family heritage, the distribution of work and responsibilities, consistently with Scabini and Cigoli (2000) model of peculiar kind of care for each kind of familiar ties (parental tie is associated with responsible care).

KEY THEMATIC FOCUS	ARTWORKS	TITLES
Masculine Gender		*La tempesta* – Giorgione (1507)[7]
		Genesi – Michelangelo (1508)[8]
		La grande guerre - Magritte (1964)[9]

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[7] Giorgione's *La tempesta:* On the front, right-hand, we see a woman, hardly dressed, breastfeeding her baby, on the left-hand we see a man possibly looking after them, just as if he intended to protect them from a threat (represented by the coming storm). No verbal dialogue is occurring between the different characters. Retrieved from http://www.italiaculturale.it/giorgione-vita-opere/.

[8] Michelangelo's *Creazione di Adamo*: Adam's body is laying, still missing the spark of life. God reaches out a hand, thus almost allowing a contact between their fingers. It is interesting to notice how the comprehensive picture of God, the angles and the mantle looks like the right part of human mind. This outlook seems to be intended by the author in order to point out that mankind, which was created by God at his resemblance, has in turn its own clear idea about God. (Mangano, de Bernardis and Scapagnini). Retrieved from http://www.debernardis.it/diocervello.html

[9] ...we have a shown face, the apple, which hides what is visible but hidden, the person's face. It is something always happening...We are interested in what is hidden that the visible doesn't show. This interest can be assumed as a strong feeling, a sort of conflict between the visible but hidden and the visible but appearance (Magritte). Retrieved from http://www.tuttomagritte.altervista.org/

Feminine Gender		*La tempesta* – Giorgione (1507)
		Danae – Klimt (1907)[10]
		Roots - Kahlo (1943)[11]

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[10] Klimt's *Danae:* No other Klimt's work displays such a complete identification between the woman and her sexuality. Retrieved from http://www.centroarte.com/

[11] Frida Kahlo's *Roots* "shows the artist reclining in a bright orange dress with leafy roots growing out of her body into the ground _ a symbol of being nourished by the earth. It was completed after Kahlo remarried Diego Rivera, the renowned Mexican muralist. The couple was unable to have children, and *Roots* expresses Kahlo's desire for fertility and to be a part of the life cycle". Retrieved from http://www.thehour.com/ archived at http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1916anddat=20060527andid=2BIhAAAAIBAJandsjid=OnUFAAAAIBAJandpg=4860,3882790
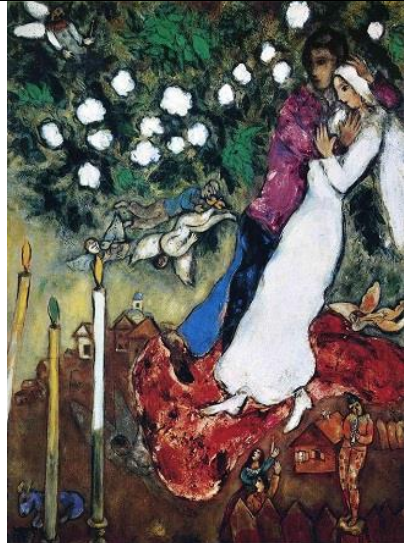
Connection between Masculine and Feminine Genders		*Amore e Psiche* – Canova (1788)[12]
		The Kiss – Klimt (1907)
		Le baiser – Picasso (1969)[13]
		Les Amants – Magritte (1928)[14]

[12] We chose artworks representing a kiss as a moment of physical and spiritual meeting (the exchange of a breath representing the inner soul) between men and women (Dupont, 1998).

In his sculpture Canova intents to transmit perfection out of time in which nothing can be modified and life is considered as complete and everlasting. (Gramatica, P.) Retrieved from http://www.antoniocanova.it/

[13] "the violence of the eroticism, both male and female, to which Picasso gives material expression in his painting, expresses itself in concrete form in the theme of the kiss. Man and woman, the infernal couple, are seen in every conceivable position" (Bernadac, 1988, pp. 80-81).

[14] In *Les amants*, Magritte purports an intense feeling, that is a contrast between what you can see hidden (emotivity and personality) and what you can see shown (rationality and formality). It is a fight between images as the shown face and the real one fight for being seen (Rodoni). Retrieved from www.rodoni.ch/surrealism.

Wedding		*Lo Sposalizio della Vergine* – Raffaello (1504)[15]
		Three Candels – Chagall (1938)[16]

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[15] Raffaello's Sposalizio della Vergine portraits the priest and the brides, with women side by side with the Virgin and men with Joseph. The staircase on the back takes to the temple, entailing the sacred dimension in their union. "The focus of the composition is the priest as centered character, holding from one side Joseph's hands (who in the meanwhile is giving the holy ring to Maria) and Maria" (de Marinis, 2003).

[16] "The loving couple and the village, mutely available to the painter, consolidate his safety from danger. Melancholy colours predominate, and the fearfulness expressed in the timid gesture of the figures acquires a still-life rigidity, like an emblem of transience, and is transfigured by the death symbolism of the candle into a sombre memento mori" (Ingo, 2000, p.65).
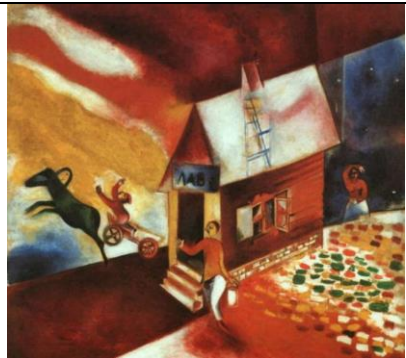
| Connection between Generations | | *The Flying Carriage* - Chagall (1913)[17] |
| | | *Family Tree* – Kahlo (1936)[18] |

Table 1: Artworks presented as stimuli in a verbal association task, regrouped by key thematic focus

Besides the possibility of taking into account alternative artworks[19], according to our results only five among the selected artworks were known by more than 50% of the subjects. These artworks refer to the key thematic categories focused on *masculine gender, connection between masculine and feminine genders and wedding,* as shown in Table 2:

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[17] Chagall's *The flying carriage*: we chose this painting in order to represent the family objective of generativity which Erikson (1982) intents as the possibility to allow the coming generation to make a powerful leap forward.

[18] Frida Kahlo's *Family tree* represents a particular relationship with the origins, that is with the generational. On the low middle we see a child , Frida, holding a red rope in her hand. The rope represents her origins which are Mexican and European in a work where all the author's pride for *mestizaje* is outstandingly expressed (Cigoli, 2009).

[19] We realize that the selection of artworks as stimuli to semantic inputs for gender, generations and lineages Allan, G., Hawker, S., Crow, G. (2001). Social representations could have been explored according to completely different criteria. For example, we could have included homosexual relationships or wedding rituals from catholic sacred traditions. For instance, as this is meant as a pilot study to test the methodological interest in using artworks as stimuli, we will not put forward general findings out of the answers we had. Furthermore, we used artworks already partly analysed in literature (Cigoli, 2009), in order to witness specific collective representations that, in the Italian context, bear a "prototypical" and "dominant" value due to the long standing hegemony of catholic ideology about family patterns (such as religious marriage, the relationships between genders and generations). An extension of the study including alternative models coming from different values' systems and cultural contexts (religious or not), for example referring to the growing multiculturalism (quite recent in Italy), is surely suggested in order to widen this methodology.

KEY THEMATIC FOCUS	ARTWORKS
Masculine Gender	• *Genesi* – Michelangelo (1508) • *La grande guerre* - Magritte (1964)
Connection between Masculine and Feminine Genders	• *Amore e Psiche* – Canova (1788) • *The Kiss* – Klimt (1907)
Wedding	1. *Lo Sposalizio della Vergine* – Raffaello (1504)

Table 2: Artworks presented as stimuli in a verbal association task, known by at least the 50% of participants and regrouped by key thematic focus

A first analysis of verbal association content was carried out on all the presented works. The main findings can be summarised as following:

- *Masculine/feminine Gender*: Even though an insufficient number of participants (less than 50%) recognised the artworks chosen for the social representation of feminine and two images for the social representation of masculine were known from more than 50% of participants, we cannot say that the correspondence between image and concept is more stable and accessible for the masculine. In fact, if we look at the verbal contents evoked by those images, the known works representing the masculine gender show association with polysemic and ambiguous meanings whereas the less known images for the feminine gender evoke verbal contents which are quite well defined. Just as an example, "*Grande guerre*" and "*Genesi*" respectively associate for 25% and 22% of the sample the word *man*, that in Italian could also be a way to say *mankind*, but Giorgione's "*Tempesta*" resulted in an almost 42% association with such words as *motherhood* and *mother*. Frida Kahlo's "Roots" is associated for 25% to *woman* and Klimt's "*Danae*" is respectively associated by 22% and 24% to *woman* and *feminine*.
- *Connection between genders*: the images chosen as most familiar were Canova's "*Amore e Psiche*" and Klimt's "*Kiss*". Both works highlight the fundamental myth of *love* and passion. In fact, the words *love* (associated by 32% of participants for Klimt and 71% for Canova) and *passion* (respectively 11% and 15%) stem as hyper-inclusive non specific

macro-categories which do not allow to single out the subjects holding those feelings from their differences, peculiarities and identities (gender identity to begin with). This image of love idyll, which is dominant in common knowledge, does not leave any room for more complex representations of the meeting between a man and a woman, as similarly represented in the other works selected for this conceptual category.

- *Wedding*: only Raffaello's "*Lo Sposalizio della Vergine*" was known by more than 50% of the sample. This enforces the social and public aspect of the wedding ritual rather than the private relevance of the wedding promise, which we hypothesise as opposite polarity expressed by Chagall's "*Three Candels*". It is not by chance, in fact, that while both works result in an association of the word *wedding* (respectively 28% and 32%), the word *ceremony* is only evoked by the first work (10%). Chagall's work, on the contrary evokes a more intimate dimension through the words *brides* and *marrying*.

In synthesis:

- for *masculine* and *feminine genders* we discovered a particular dialectic between known artworks which showed ambiguous contents for the masculine and less known artworks (according the participant to our study) but which resulted in well identified associations for the feminine;

- the c*onnection between genders* is meant by artworks where the two sexes relationship is a love idyll, thus expressing a relevance for the idealisation process of the rooting of these social representations to the myth of love and passion:

- finally, *wedding* holds a priority for the social and rituality meaning attached to it, as shown by the artwork chosen for this key thematic focus. Either this is desired for oneself or not, versus a characterisation of "*normative individualisation*" (Bozon, 2004), which is surely growing in contemporary communities.

It is now time to consider what allows a certain image, and not others, to spread and be internalised by common sense and collective imaginary. Why is an image acknowledged as a collective representation of a given social object and of some of its prototypical dimensions? According to our results from this pilot study, relevance emerges for the expressive capacity of the artwork in shaping and "flavouring" ideas and meanings integrated in the community's values

and belief systems and stress more the normative dimension of the social representations rather than its inner, hidden dimension. This can be explained also due to the constrictions imposed to artworks, for example, in the past constrictions by Popes, aristocratic families, political power and to the social dynamics which encloses avant-gardes and alternative artists in marginal positions with respect to the dominant ideologies, at least until new expressive conditions and social acknowledgement patterns started developing for those active minorities artists. Thus, art images often become a powerful means to re-narrate what dominant social groups have already built and shared as part of the image-identity that the groups have of themselves. Hence, new questions probably arose, deserving further systematic studies:

- Why does the image of a man in artwork that is produced and well known in our culture evoke an overlapping meaning of masculine (*man as gendered person*) and mankind (*humanity as human race*)?
- On the contrary, why do artworks depicting women, though less ambiguous, become better known if associated to the issue of motherhood?

6. STRUCTURE, ROLES AND EMOTIONAL DIMENSIONS IN THE SOCIAL REPRESENTATION OF FAMILY: RESULTS FROM THE DRAWINGS

Current, future and ideal family social representations investigated through drawings have been analysed under three different points of view:

- Structure: operationalised in terms of *family composition, disposition, picturing order* of family members and subsystems;
- roles[20]: operationalised in terms of *picturing order* of family members graphic characterization of respective roles;
- emotional dimension: operationalised in terms of *contact* between members and distance *oneself-others.*

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[20] Roles are here intended as family shared expectations about the interpretation of the position held within the family system, with reference to Byng-Hall's *Re-writing family script* (1995).

6.1. Structure analysis

In the *composition* of *current, future* and *ideal family* which are, respectively, an expression of *experience, expectations and values' system* of participants we found out a relevant difference between the picture of *ideal family*, which is consistent with a traditional model of big family (with two to five children) based a united couple, and that of *current family,* which is focused on a model of family, with no more than two children and a possibly separated parents. In fact, *current family representation*, and *future family representation* reflect, even more, direct or mediated models of family: mono-parental, singles, couples without children, just as if the self-projection in the future is something on average between ideal model, its reproducibility condition and actual experience. As family composition is concerned, the self and the mother are the only members, which have always been pictured. This is a result which we think is very interesting, the more so for those drawings where *current* and/or *future families* are presented as made up of single parents and children. Also, the analysis of *current family drawings* heavily remarks that the *disposition* of pictured members is still fundamentally linear (disposition of the family members on the same row, frontally - 92,30%). It is just like if there is a tendency not to represent family ties but, actually, a mere presentation of all the members of one's family. Finally, with respect to the picturing *order of family members and subsystems*, in most cases parents are pictured first, then the children.

Summing up, we remark that the representation of *current family* is consistent with Minuchin's (1976) theoretical model on familiar structure. In fact, the clear boundary between the parents' couple and siblings subsystem, that clearly comes out of family social representations emerging from the drawings we analysed, seems to point out a significant level of connection, and possibly osmosis, between this scientific paradigm and the common sense on family.

6.2. Roles analysis

We remind the reader that roles' dimension has been operationalised in terms of *picturing order of family members* and the *characterization* of their role as a function of gender and generation.

The stability of *picturing order* (father first, then the mother, third the interviewed or the eldest sister) in a linear disposition caught our attention and suggested a new meaning for this variable: the *picturing order*. Most literature explains the *picturing order* as an indicator of the psychological relevance[21], while in our study it rather seems to detect the stable elements in the representation of the family from the point of view of the *roles' system*. In most cases we see a stereotypical representation based on *a traditional roles' system*:

- the father - "*pater familias*" - is pictured first (43%), then the mother (41%) that, even if second in a linear representation of the family, she is closer to the siblings subsystem;
- in this perspective, the third place, that is the first for the *siblings subsystem*, puts forward a sense of bridging parents' and siblings' subsystems, and is mainly self-occupied (33%), though in 23% of the cases is held by the eldest sister.

These results entail how traditional is the social representation of parents with regards to the family relations: the father is still strictly connected with a concept of authority while the mother's one is anchored to a concept of emotional proximity and bridge between the parents' couple and the siblings subsystem.

The comparison between *current, future and ideal family* reveals in most cases a perspective of a progressive change in the roles' system, as it can be seen in differences relative to different characters of drawings in Picture 2, for example:

- *contact between the members*: an evolution from absence to presence of a contact;
- *family members disposition*: a transformation from a linear disposition to a triangular one, in which members can see each other, with pets amidst;
- *picturing order stability for members and subsystems*: an evolution from a frozen disposition of familiar subsystems to more various and dynamic possibilities;

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[21]   For example, in Bene and Antony's *Family Relations Test* (de Rosa, 1991, de Rosa, 1991)) the mother is expected as the first choice in the boxes the test is made of, and that the subject is asked to align on the table to represent its familiar circle. In our study the picturing of the father as first is something that looks consistent with the still dominating role of the father in the representation of the family, especially from the point of view of the roles' system.
   In our multi-method research the *Family Relations Test* results attach to the mother the role of main object, and source, of love even if it is pictured in second place.

- *characterisation of family roles*, in terms of evolution of expectations about the distribution of powers in the married couple: as we can see in the example below, the broom, symbolising house works, is associated to the mother in the current family, to both parents in the future family, but totally disappears in ideal one.
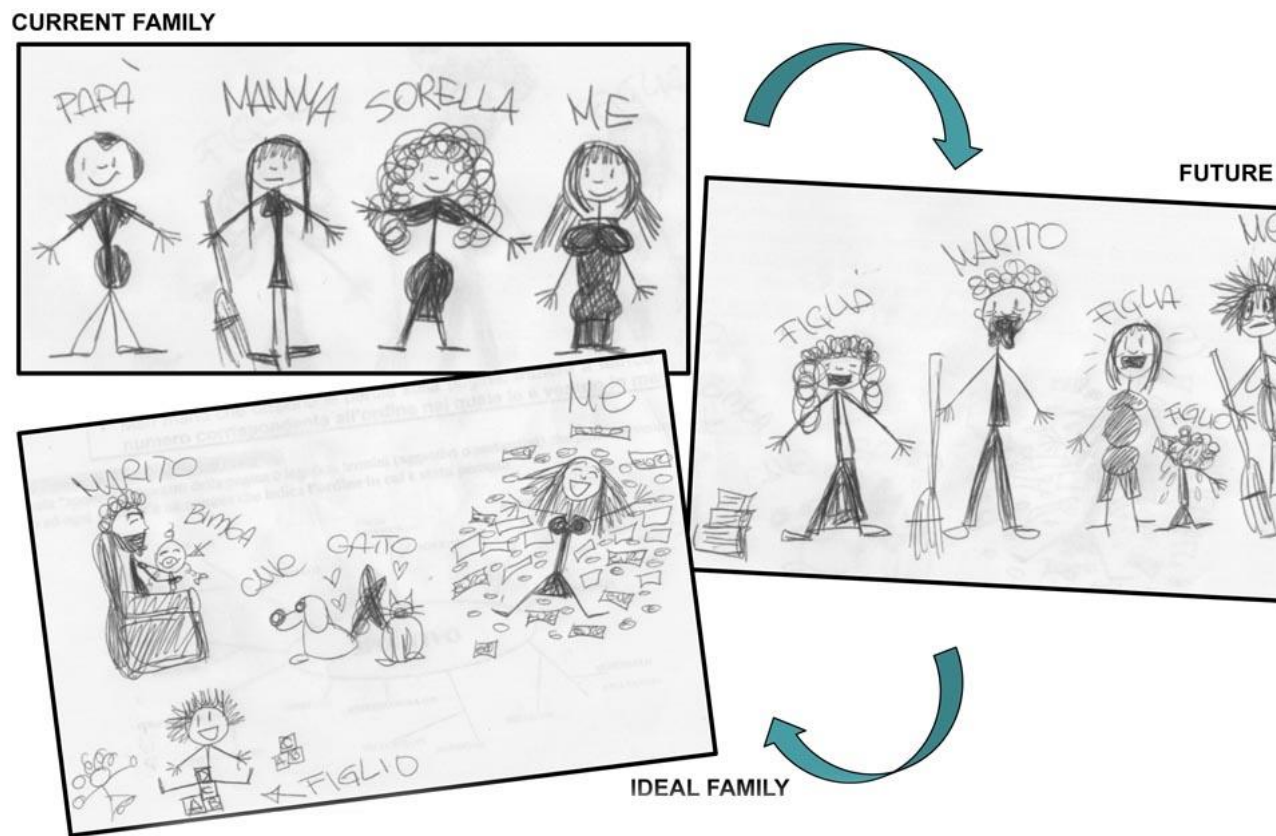
Figure 2: Drawings and gender models: changes in the roles' system

A curious spot is the presence of twins in *future* and *ideal family* pictures (respectively 10% and 12%) while it is present in only one case for the *current family* (0.7%). We interpret the fact that twins are perceived as the best prototype of siblings referring to the famous study from Flament (1989) about social representations of the egalitarian group (positive affective relations, no

differentiation, equity, no hierarchy) as an ideal group. In our case, such a prototype is nevertheless based on paradoxical assumptions:

a) the *paradox of equality*: twins are supposed as the most equal siblings (same birth position) but there is always a predominant twin (Del Miglio, 1995). On the contrary, differentiation by age when siblings are not twins introduces a hierarchic dimension and consequently changes the sibling group in a non-equal one;

b) *the paradox of sharing*: equality and equivalence work only for those groups which members are not differentiated. When members of a group (in this case siblings) are not differentiated, they fully share emotional and relational experiences, having in return the risk of symbiotic / fusional relations and some difficulties in the self-differentiation process.

6.3. Emotional dimensions analysis

The emotional dimension in *current, future and ideal family* has been operationalised through indicators of *physical contact* and *distance between oneself and family members*. As *current family* drawings are concerned, the mainly linear disposition shows an intention to provide a mere frontal presentation of one's family. This idea is possibly endorsed by the fact 83% of the subjects do not represent any physical contact between family members (Figure 3).

The analysis of the second variable, *distance oneself-family members, suggests* that the father is represented as the most distant member from the self (41%), though he is pictured as first, while the percentage of subjects who represents the mother as the closest or the most distant person are almost equivalent, respectively 23% and 26%, expressing therefore contrasting attitudes. The subject who is more frequently pictured as the less distant from oneself is the eldest sister (31%). This suggests that, as the sample majority is made of women the relationship between sister is felt as more intimate.
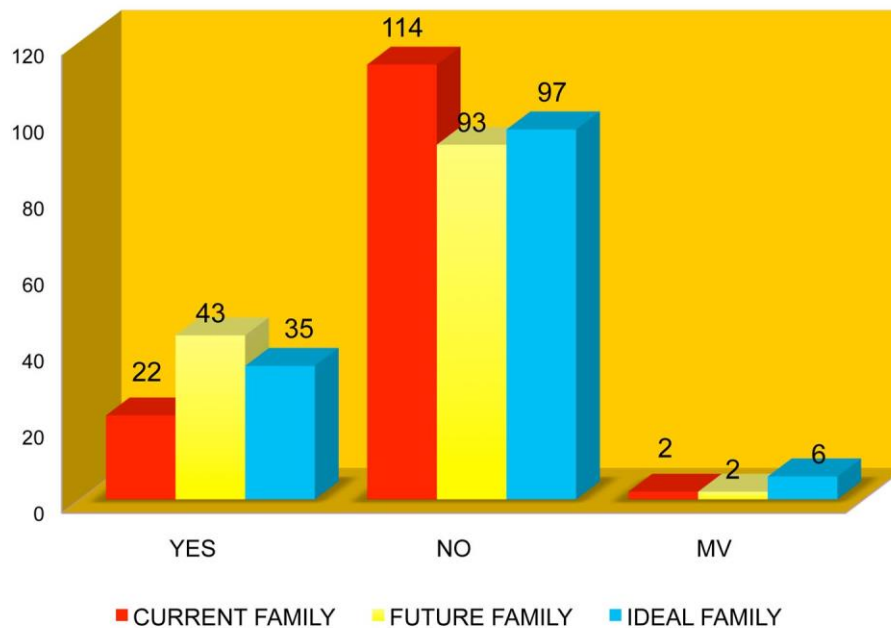
Figure 3: Frequencies' distribution for the variable "*presence of physical contact between members in the current, future and ideal family*".

Finally, if we assume that the contact between the members reveals emotional/relational projections (more/less level of *current, expected, ideal* intimacy), we can say that:

a) Generally speaking, it emerges a representation of family which is quite *emotionally "freeze",* as most drawings do not figure a contact between characters and show a *linear disposition.* However such "freezing" should not be considered as absolute interpretation, since this is not the only indicator of the emotional/relational dimension. We also assume that this result might be owing to the subjects' technical skills: young adults may have some "technical" difficulties in expressing themselves through a graphical-figurative tool, using, for example, more complex multilevel perspective than the easier linear disposition. Given the well-known decreased skills in the use of the drawing language

compared the written textual language parallel to the schooling, we assist generally to a drastic involution since the adolescence becoming a "forgotten language" (Castelli and de Rosa, 1979).

b) A higher level of contact and a closer intimacy (as more contacts have been figured and family members dispositions are diversified) are expected for the *future* and *ideal family* (participants show this way very high expectations), vis-à-vis a lower level of what is actually experienced (the *current* family).

c) Finally, in the *future family* there are more contacts than in *ideal* one, just as if for emerging adults the seek for more relational intimacy is an immediate need, something more material than a mere conceptual aspiration.

7. FINAL REMARKS

Even if the study here presented is only a pilot, and, although, due to the words limit, we couldn't present the related verbal tools results, it confirms the interest for the integration of different research methodologies, and relative hypotheses, to understand "complex social phenomena" (Jodelet, 1992) as social representations. Particularly, taking into account complementary results out of either verbal or graphic techniques allows to point out connections and cleavages, continuities and unbalances between the different dimensions of the same social representation, between different levels of social representations genesis (onto-genesis, micro-genesis, socio-genesis), between different moments of the story of a social representation with reference to social and cultural changes.

The use of different methods, not merely summed up, but driven by specific hypotheses about the influence on results of different expressive channels (iconic, verbal-textual), may be a source of interesting aspects (such as apparent contradictions) in the two mentioned communicational streams, which normally intertwine in shaping common sense, (de Rosa, 1990, 2013b, 2014 a). Such methods may allow to both analyze normative aspects, generally better framed in the verbal-textual language and implicit and latent ones, investigated through projective, and mainly figurative, techniques, which avoid social desirability pressures, revealing in the end implicit dimensions. The result will possibly be a more complex and meaningful model to read reality and detect the social imaginaries dimensions (Arruda and de Alba, 2007).

In our research, for example, *ad hoc* selected artworks are assumed, more than other works, as expressions of gender, generation and lineage (Cigoli and Scabini, 2000) hegemonic social representations out of their relevance and social acknowledgement. We cautiously used them in this pilot study as stimuli to explore attributed meanings. The result has been a hint in a first question about the process of de-codifying the semantic-symbolic value of a figurative message, with an eye on how much are they known: we can ask how an image is recognised as representative for a given social object or some of its prototypical-normative dimensions related to hegemonic and dominant social representations?   The answer we attempted, from an iconographic and socio-genetic point of view, stands in the expressive synthesis of a given image as an opportunity to re-narrate the dominant social representation in a more efficient way[22]. Also, the results given by the analysis of the drawings produced by the participants, confirm how some of the themes we repeatedly find in these artworks belong to common sense, not only in the artistic allegory:

- artworks related to the masculine gender, though well known, are characterised by ambiguity and lack of neat definition, thus allowing an interpretative ambiguity between man and mankind;
- artworks related to the feminine gender are better defined, and the best known among then are those referring to motherhood. This is also reflected in family drawings in several ways:
    o the primacy of the mother as far as closeness to siblings subsystem is concerned,
    o her bridging the familiar subsystems,
    o motherhood as a fundamental element in defining the subjects' adult identity,
    o motherhood as the only familiar relationship that cannot be severed any way even nowadays (the mother and oneself are the only family members who are always drawn)[23].

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[22] By "efficient", we mean "performing or functioning in the best possible manner with the least waste of time and effort". www.dictionary.com

[23] A wide literature (Théry, 1998; Scabini and Iafrate, 2003) arises the issue of the emerging value of choices' reversibility in the affective and relational linkages and the detection of parenthood as the only relation allowing/deserving a safe and persisting investment (Théry, 1998).

Of course we are also aware that in this pilot study our sample was mostly composed by women. Consequently, the hegemonic representation of mothers we found could be linked to their identification with the parent of the same sex.

Thus, it emerges a new awareness that couple relationship can be severed, though in drawings, on a structural point of view, for all type of analysed families, we still find quite a continuity of a united couple, which is consistent with the myth of unity emerged from associative networks results (de Rosa, Aiello, d'Ambrosio, 2014). On the other hand, the couple keeps being represented as a couple of parents, and not only brides. This stresses the relevance of the vertical and intergenerational axis of family social representations of the participants to the research.   Nevertheless, *future* and *ideal family* drawings show some changes in gender social representations and in the distribution of power in the couple, the latter being expected, in the *future family*, less dependant on a traditional roles' system.

Power distribution among family members, through the functions re-definition, stands as a fundamental dimension in expected changes, together with a new focus on intimacy and emotional contact. These latter aspects seem to be the two sides of the coin, where the risks entailed by change and the controversial issues are dealt with sticking to the myth of love and passion. In fact, the analysis of meanings attached to kiss' artworks (encounter between masculine and feminine, body and soul) proves that the only well known images and socially shared are those representing the love idyll (*Amore e Psiche* − Canova 1788*; The Kiss* − Klimt 1907) versus those representing controversial aspects (*Le baisier* − Picasso 1925; *Les Amants* - Magritte 1928). So, from an emotional/relational point of view, the dimension of future and ideal expectations provides an evolution with respect to actual reality. This happens also for the relationship in the siblings' subsystem, whose future representation shows more frequent contacts, the higher frequency of twins, with the abovementioned paradoxical aspects.

It is finally very relevant to notice how the idealisation process characterizes the social representations of both horizontal axes of the family, namely brides couple and siblinghood, that according to literature are, in recent times, the weakest axes of the family system[24]. Such conclusion seems to be the most consistent result cross the synthesis of the different techniques we used to study family social representations. We wish that some of the hints we spotted in

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[24] The crisis of the couple (Campanini, 1977; ISTAT**,** 2005; EUROSTAT**,** 2009; Scabini and Iafrate, 2003) and the only child model (Théry, 1998; ISTAT, 1998; Scabini and Iafrate, 2003) have internationally been widely studied since the last decades.

such a provisional pilot study might be better analysed and verified in the on-going subsequent wider research program that is going to:

a) have a balanced sample in terms of sex. Cohabitation with family of origin, economical conditions and geographical origins of participants will also be taken into account;

b) use a multi-method modelling approach administering together with the above mentioned tools (drawings, associative networks and questionnaire) the FACES III (Olson et. Al., 1985) and the Zimbardo TPS (Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999);

c) be an extension of the study in the context of Romania in a cross cultural comparison[25] perspective, comparing the results based on the Italian sample with those collected in a post-communist European country with a quite different socio-economic and cultural development.

Further studies about the quite unexplored thematic area of social representations of the family might be a promising research field and play the role of a bridge between other disciplinary traditions in the psychological domain (the social psychology of the family, psycho-dynamic of the family and several approaches of family therapies), in the sociological tradition (the sociology of the family), in the anthropological literature (the anthropology of the family) and in the media studies with their rich sources based on cinema, music, theatre, literature, art and other cultural artefacts including modern large archives of clipart images as common-sense categories (Dillon, 2006) to understand the collective and social representations of the family in different societies and historical periods.

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[25] Other comparative studies on family relations exist in cross-cultural psychology (see among many others: Allan, Hawker, Crow, 2001; Georgas, J., Berry, van de Vijver, Kagitcibasi, and Poortinga, 2006). However they are outside the paradigm on social representations.

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