SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF EUROPE AMONGST 10-16 YEAR OLD BRITISH CHILDREN[1]

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Abstract: The study described in this paper adopted a distinctive research strategy founded on social representations theory (Emler & Ohana, 1993; Moscovici, 1988). The specific aim was to examine how different social anchors indicating a belonging to specific social groups (i.e. social class, travel experience and parental attitudes), in addition to age, affect British children's social representations of Europe. The participants were 190 children aged 10-16 years old from southern England. The knowledge and beliefs components of the children's social representations were assessed using five different methods, including two map interpretation tasks, a naming task, a photograph evaluation task and informal interviewing. The results showed that the children's social class group helps mediate the develop of both the knowledge and beliefs components of children's social representations of Europe. However, the other potential forms of social anchoring, namely parental attitude and travel experience, had an insignificant effect on the children's social representations. Age differences were apparent in the children's knowledge of Europe, but not in relation to the content of the children's beliefs regarding Europe. The results suggest that future research is needed into the precise social processes that cause social class and age differences in children's social representations of Europe. It is argued that this research would benefit greatly from a closer relationship between developmental psychology and social psychology.

INTRODUCTION

The research project, which provides the empirical basis of this paper, began in 1994 when the author became a British Academy Post-doctoral Fellow at the University of

Surrey. He had learnt something about Moscovici's theory of social representations and was keen to apply this theory in the area of children's psychological development. It was in that same year, 1994, he first presented a paper using the concept of social representations at a British Psychology Society Developmental Section Conference. Once the presentation about children's social representations had finished a member of the audience asked two very legitimate questions: Are you not just re-labelling what we have so far called 'knowledge' or 'cognitive structures' as 'social representations'? What is new about the research you describe, since you seem to use the procedures that others already use in the study of cognitive development?

These questions raise important concerns for social representations theorists. How can we avoid the accusation that we are "just pouring old wine into new bottles" (see Emler & Ohana, 1993)? Initially, it was difficult to find an adequate response to this charge. However, it soon became apparent that social representations theory was not original because it provided advancement through methodology. Indeed, the progress of science should not only occur through progress in methodology but must primarily be theory-driven. An understanding of how the study of children's social representations is different from the traditional study of cognitive development lies in an understanding of the theory. The theory of social representations itself leads to the emergence of a distinctive research strategy in the same way that the original theoretical work of Vygotsky (1978) and Piaget (1928) immediately suggested specific programmes of research.

Social representations theory is a grand theory about how the various systems of social regulation within society interact with and constrain the system of cognitive functioning (Doise, 1993; Doise, Clémence & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1993). This theoretical focus can be found in the early work of Moscovici on the social representations of psychoanalysis. In this research Moscovici found that the forms of social regulation within society were 'normative regulations which control, verify and direct' (Moscovici, 1976, p.254) the cognitive functioning of individuals. It is essential that social representations researchers study how different social regulations or social anchors engage with cognitive functioning in a whole variety of contexts. The study of social representations in essence involves an analysis of the relations between forms of social regulation within society and the cognitive system. A crucial feature of this form of analysis is an understanding of how social positions or social identities anchor or impinge upon the cognitive system (Breakwell, 1993; Doise, 1993; Wagner, 1995).

The grand theory of social representations leads to very specific empirical concerns which have often been ignored within the study of cognitive development (Emler & Ohana, 1993). First, this theory puts weight on an examination of the actual content of thinking in addition to the cognitive processes that give form to thinking. The main concern is the content of the knowledge the children use as a basis for their judgements, and also the content of the children's beliefs or opinions, rather than the universal cognitive operations that might guide their thinking. Though the theory is also concerned with detecting the underlying structures of social representations conceptualised as the 'core nuclei' and 'common field' (see Doise, Clémence & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1993; Guimelli, 1993; Moliner, 1995; Wagner, Valencia & Elejabarrieta, 1996). Second, children not only think but they communicate their thoughts through language. Therefore, it is important to study how children precisely represent the content of their knowledge in communication. Language is a means of gaining access to the content of children's

knowledge in a particular social context, rather than just being a way to discover the children's underlying mental processes. Thirdly, social knowledge is culturally and historically situated. The knowledge held by any particular child is also known by that child as member of a specific culture in a certain period of historical development. This means that the study of social representations necessitates an appreciation that all social knowledge has a cultural history. Finally, children not only hold social knowledge as individuals but also share such knowledge with others. This fundamental 'socialness' of knowledge means that it is also the property of social groups and is constructed within the context of such groups. Therefore, it is important for social representations researchers to study the types of social groups to which children belong, inter-group relations and how social groups shape representations. Methodologically this means researchers need to compare very distinctive groups, recognise that a child's responses are examples of representations contained within that child's group and identify issues which are familiar and meaningful in the context of the child's collective experience.

The study described within this paper is concerned with British children's social representations of Europe and as such is based upon the four empirical concerns outlined above. In line with social representations theory the study focuses upon the content of children's knowledge of Europe and their beliefs and opinions regarding Europe, rather than underlying cognitive processes which might be responsible for children's thinking about Europe. A distinction here between the knowledge component and belief component of the children's social representations of Europe might be useful. Both these components together describe the content of the children's social representations of Europe. This content will be assessed through their language and how they understand symbolic representations (i.e. maps). Furthermore, as a study of social representations, a deliberate attempt is made to examine how different forms of social anchoring within society impinge upon children's social representations of Europe. The specific forms of social anchoring under investigation are the children's social class group, their travel experience and the attitudes of their parents towards Europe. In addition, this study will also investigate any age differences in children's social representations of Europe.

The issue of Europe continues to be an important social and political concern as we near the twenty first century. Recent socio-political and economic changes (e.g. European Integration, the Single European Currency, enlargement of the European Union) mean that Europe will probably be even more central to people's everyday lives, including children who will soon be entering an adult world increasingly centred around a European job market and integration across the European Union (EU). Europe is an ideal topic for social representations research for two main reasons. Firstly, Europe is a concrete issue which is familiar and significant in the context of many groups within which children interact. Secondly, the study of social representations seems appropriate in the context of Europe since it is difficult to imagine how to study of purely logical cognitive operations is applicable. The form and cognitive structure of children's thinking about Europe is certainly less than obvious. Piaget & Weil (1951) argued that universal cognitive structure which provides the basis for children's understanding of nations is the concept known as class inclusion. However, the importance of the class inclusion schema in the context of Europe seems limited, since the exact relationship between different levels of categorization (i.e. nation and Europe) is certainly very much open to debate (Cinnirella, 1996; Gellner, 1994; Mann, 1998; Rutland & Cinnirella, in press; Smith, 1992, 1995).

Presently, to represent yourself as both British and European and to acknowledge that the category 'British' is inclusive within the category 'European' is very much an ideological and political statement rather than necessarily an expression of logical thought. This is even true for children, who may not necessarily be taking a political position but may be just reflecting the political climate of their society. For example, the English journalist Richard Hoggart recalls this story from his childhood "long ago, at school, we used to write on the front of our exercise books our names and then: Hunslet, Leeds, Yorkshire, England, Great Britain, The World, The Universe. We knew what we were and where we were; incidentally, hardly anyone included Europe" (*The Independent*, 5th September 1998).

It is rather surprising, given the centrality of Europe to current socio-political concerns, that at present we have little knowledge of what factors are involved in the development of children's social representations of Europe. The majority of studies on attitudes towards Europe and European identification in Britain have primarily concerned themselves with adults (see Breakwell & Lyons, 1996; Cinnirella, 1996, 1997; Hewstone, 1986; Huici, Ros, Cano, Hopkins, Emler & Carmona, 1997; Reif & Inglehart, 1991). The few previous studies which have examined children's thinking about Europe have been unable to reach any firm conclusions. They have suggested age-related sequences in children's thinking about Europe with older children showing high levels of knowledge of Europe than younger children (see Barrett, 1996; Barrett & Short, 1992; Barrett & Farroni, 1996; Rutland, 1998). Some studies have hinted that other factors apart from age are important to understanding children's knowledge and beliefs about Europe. For example Barrett, Lyons, Purkhardt and Bourchier (1996) and Rutland (1998) showed that middle class children had significantly more knowledge of Europe than working class children. Studies have also suggested that travel experience within Europe increases children's knowledge concerning Europe (Barrett & Farroni, 1996; Rutland, 1996, 1998).

To summarise, this study examines social representations of Europe among 10-16 year old British children. The research strategy adopted within this study is based upon social representations theory. Therefore, the specific aim is to study how different social anchors indicating a belonging to specific social groups (i.e. social class, travel experience and parental attitudes), in addition to age, affect British children's social representations of Europe. This is achieved through sampling children from distinctive social class groups and examining the content of both their knowledge of Europe and their beliefs or opinions regarding Europe. The study primarily focuses on children's thinking about the European Union rather than Europe generally. It is recognised the European Union is different from Europe as a geographical entity. The European Union is a formal political and economic body and a more precise concept than Europe. Consequently, measurement of the children's knowledge and opinions regarding the European Union was considered more reliable and valid than assessing the children's views on Europe.

Method

Participants

A total of 190 southern English children (99 females and 91 males) aged between 10 and 16 years old participated in this study. The design of the study meant the participants fell into four subgroups as defined by their age and social class. Table 1 shows the age and social class characteristics of the participants in each of the four groups. Half of the sample was drawn from either a primary or secondary school situated in a local authority housing estate within a working class district. The parents of the children from these two schools almost entirely had skilled or semi-skilled manual occupations. The other half was drawn from either a primary or secondary school in middle class districts where all the housing was privately owned. These schools were attended by pupils with parents who primarily had intermediate or professional occupations.

The parents of every child included in this study were sent a questionnaire. Eighty nine of the parents (47%) returned this questionnaire. Table 1 shows the percentage of parents in each group that responded to the questionnaire. There was no significant difference in the parental response rate between the two age groups. However, more middle class parents responded than working class parents. There was no recognisable bias effect due to the low response rate among working class parents, because measures of travel experience and social class were obtained from the children if the parental questionnaires were not returned. Moreover, it is still possible to examine the correlation between each parent's attitude towards Europe and their child's social representation of Europe with a low response rate among working class parents.

Table 1
The mean age and age range of the children within each of the four subgroups as defined by age and social class (ages are in years and months).

Age groups (years)	Social Class	N	Mean age	Age range	% responses to questionnaire
10-12	Working class	50	11:5	9:10-12:9	36
	Middle class	44	11:4	9:11-12:7	71
14-16	Working class	48	15:4	14:1-16:5	38
	Middle class	48	15:3	14:1-16:4	42

Procedure

The children were interviewed by the researcher over a period of approximately 20-30 minutes. This interview was used to assess both the knowledge and belief components of children's social representations of Europe. First, the children's knowledge of Europe was tested using two maps of Europe. Map 1 was black and white. It showed the outline of each country from Russia in the east to Portugal in the west and from Iceland in the north to Turkey in the south. Map 2 was a coloured version of Map 1, which also showed the name of every country, with the fifteen European Union (EU) countries coloured red and non-European Union countries coloured green.

Four types of tasks were used to assess the children's knowledge of Europe: (i) a naming task - the children were given two minutes to name as many countries as possible outside Britain; (ii) an outline black and white map interpretation task - the children were given Map 1 and asked to identify the countries shown on this map. The interviewer noted the number of EU countries correctly identified; (iii) a coloured map interpretation task - the children were shown Map 2 and asked to explain any differences between the two coloured areas. The interviewer noted whether the EU was mentioned in the children's answer; (iv) verbal questioning - the children were asked whether they had heard of the EU and how would they define the EU. The interviewer noted whether they defined the EU as a group of European countries that attempt to cooperate or work together.

Next the belief component of the children's social representations of Europe was measured using a photograph evaluation task and an open-ended question. The photograph evaluation task measured each child's evaluation of Europeans as a social category. The procedure adopted was similar to the one used in previous studies (Tajfel, Nemeth, Jahoda, Campbell & Johnson, 1970; Rutland, 1999). Each child in this task was shown two head and shoulders photographs of people randomly selected from a set of twelve photographs. The people shown in the photographs were all white and had no abnormal facial features. The children's were tested individually in two successive sessions, the sessions being separated by approximately two weeks.

In the first session, the children were presented with the two photographs (1 female and 1 male) randomly selected from a set of twelve photographs and asked to evaluate them on a four point scale: 1 = "I like very much", 2 = "I like a little", 3 = "I dislike a little" and 4 = "I dislike very much". In the second session, each participant was presented with the same two photographs in reverse order. However, within this session the photographs were assigned the label of 'European'. The children were then asked to evaluate these two photographs on the same four point scale used in the first unlabelled session.

Each child received a d-score, or difference score. This represented each child's evaluation of Europeans. The d-score was calculated by subtracting the child's score (1-4) for the labelled second session from their score in the unlabelled first session. The child's overall d-score was the mean of their d-scores for the male and female photographs. The higher the d-score the more positive the children's opinions regarding the category of European.

Immediately subsequent to the photograph evaluation task the children were asked one open ended question: *what things do you think are good and bad about the European Union?* This question was also a measure of the belief component of the children's social representations of Europe. Responses to this question were analysed using content analysis, which involves the counting of categories or themes (cf. Holsti, 1969; Weber, 1990). This analysis involved careful reading for recurrent themes in the children's responses, and counting the number of children who mentioned each theme. This produced six categories or themes of responses. Only categories used by more than five percent of the children were included in the analysis. To establish the reliability of the content analysis, a second rater independently categorised a random sample of 10 per cent of the total. Cohen's Kappa (K) was 0.8, which confirmed a satisfactory level of inter-rater reliability.

The children's travel experience within Europe was calculated by asking how many weeks they had spent in European countries (excluding the United Kingdom). Their responses were double checked via the questionnaire sent to their parents. The were only two cases when the children and parents did not provide similar answers and on these occassions the parent's answers were chosen since it was considered that parental replies were generally more reliable. The social class of the children was determined by asking the children and their parents (via the questionnaire) to name the occupation of the main earner within the family. An adequate description of the main occupation within the family was provided by 'either', 'or' both the child and parents in the case of each participant. The children were defined as working class or middle class using a classification scheme devised by Reid (1981, pp. 41).

The attitudes of the children's parents towards Europe and the European Union were examined via the questionnaire. The parents had to rate their agreement with 12 statements along a five point scale (see Appendix). An overall aggregated score was calculated for the parents of each child. A Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of .86 was obtained for these 12 statements. The higher the score recorded by the parent the more positive their opinion of Europe and the European Union. The maximum possible score was 60 and the lowest was 12.

RESULTS

There were five measures of the knowledge component of the children's social representation of Europe: (1) the number of EU countries mentioned in the naming task; (2) identification of EU countries in the black and white map interpretation task; (3) identification of the EU in the coloured map interpretation task; (4) whether they had heard of the EU and (5) whether they could provide a correct definition of the EU. A Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of .50 was obtained for these 5 measures.

Factor analysis was performed on the above five measures to ensure their unidimensionality as a scale measuring knowledge of Europe. Inspection of the resulting factor structure indicated that only one factor was required. This factor contained all five measures and accounted for 56% of the total variance. The factor loadings for measures 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were .66, .68, .62, .88 and .87 respectively. The resultant factor scores were used in subsequent analyses as a measure of the knowledge component of the children's social representations of Europe.

The factor scores were analysed using a 2 (age) x 2 (social class) x 2 (sex) ANOVA. There significant main effects for age ($F(1, 180) = 52.61$, $p < .001$), social class ($F(1, 180) = 15.49$, $p < .001$) and sex ($F(1,180) = 5.75$, $p < .05$). The older children aged between 14-16 years were significantly more knowledgeable than the younger children aged between 10 and 12 years ($t(191) = -8.20$, $p < .001$). The middle class children's knowledge of Europe was significantly higher than that of the working class children ($t(179) = 4.04$, $p < .001$). Finally, the males were significantly more knowledgeable than the females ($t(191) = -2.89$, $p < .05$).

A stepwise multiple regression was conducted to examine the relative independent effects of age, social class and travel experience on the knowledge component of the children's social representation of Europe. The result is shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Stepwise multiple regression: Knowledge component of the children's social representation of Europe (factor scores).

Variable	Step	Adjusted R	F	Beta	t	p
Age	1	.22	52.15	.93	7.22	.000
Class	2	.29	38.38	-.54	-4.39	.000

The stepwise multiple regression clearly showed that only age and social class, not travel experience, had a significant independent effect on the children knowledge of Europe. Age explained the largest amount of variance in the children's knowledge (22%). The addition of social class also had an independent effect, as it significantly increased the amount of variance explained to 29 per cent. This result indicated that age followed by social class was the most powerful predictor of the knowledge component of the children's social representation of Europe. Finally, a partial correlation (controlling for age, social class and travel experience) found no significant relationship between parental attitudes towards Europe and the children's knowledge of Europe (r = .06, n.s.).

The belief component of the children's social representations of Europe was measured using a photograph evaluation task and an open-ended question. First the children's d-scores, which were a measure of their preference for the category of European within the photograph evaluation task were analysed. A 2 (age) x 2 (social class) x 2 (sex) ANOVA indicated a significant main effect for social class (F(1,183) = 6.22, p < .05), but no effect for age or sex. Table 3 shows mean d-scores for each of the four subgroups and the total mean d-scores by social class and age.

TABLE 3

Mean d-scores and standard deviations by social class and age group.

	Age				Total	
	10-12		14-16			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Middle Class	.21	.66	-.07	.50	.04	.59
Working Class	.23	.54	.28	.71	.26	.63
Total	.22	.61	.11	.64		

Table 3 shows that the mean d-scores were significantly lower in the middle class group than the working class group (t(182) = -2.17, p < .05). This result indicated that middle class children were less favourable to the category of European than working class children. The difference in beliefs about Europeans between the middle class and working class children can also be seen in Figure 1. In this figure the higher the children's rating score the more negative their opinion of Europeans. The figure shows a significant difference between the working class children's ratings, on the four point scale, in the label session compared to the no label session (t(91) = 3.88, p < .001). Whereas, there was no significant difference between the middle class children's rating in the two

sessions. The middle class children's mean rating remained negative in the label session, while the working class children's mean rating was neutral in the label session.
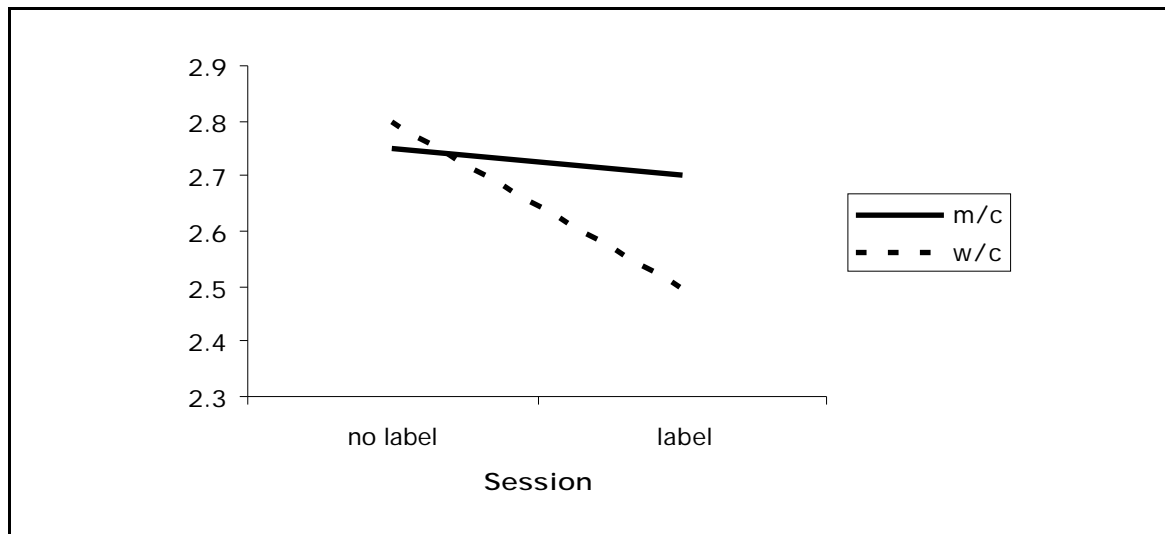

Figure 1
Mean rating in no label and label sessions by the middle class (m/c) and working class children (w/c).

In addition, a partial correlation (controlling for age, social class and travel experience) between parental attitude towards Europe and the children's d-scores was non-significant (r = -.03, n.s.).

The second method used to examine the belief component of the children's social representations of Europe was an open ended question: *what things do you think are good and bad about the European Union?* Content analysis of the children's responses to this question produced 6 categories: keeps the peace (peace); makes trade easier (trade); improves communication between people (communication); threatens our nation, in particular our identity and sovereignty (threat); improves living standards (living standards) and educates people about other nations (education). Table 4 shows the differences in the children's beliefs regarding the European Union depending on their social class and age group.

The content of the responses produced by the two age groups were very similar, with the top four responses among both age groups being exactly the same: peace, communication, threat and living standards. The only age differences were in terms of the quantity of children in each age group which gave these responses. The older fourteen to sixteen year old children also used the peace category significantly more than the younger age group ($\_(1) = 14.79$, p < .01). Typical examples of a peace response would be: 'The European Union helps keep peace throughout Europe, so reducing the threat of war...' (P33, 12 year old, middle class); 'It (the European Union) helps stop wars in Europe like World War II and now countries no longer fight each other...' (P84, 14 year old, working class). The older children also used the communication response ($\_(1) = 5.25$, p < .05) and the trade response ($\_(1) = 8.67$, p < .01) significantly more than the younger children.

TABLE 4
Number of children in the age and class groups who used each category of
response when asked: *what things do you think are good and bad about the
European Union?* (% of children is shown in parentheses)

Middle class n = 92	Working class n = 98	10-12 year olds n = 94	14-16 year olds n = 96
Peace	Peace	Peace	Peace
25 (27)	15 (15)	10 (11)	30 (31)
Threat	Living standards	Threat	Communication
19 (21)	8 (8)	9 (10)	15 (16)
Communication	Communication	Living standards	Threat
14 (15)	6 (6)	7 (7)	14 (15)
Living standards	Trade	Communication	Living standards
12 (13)	6 (6)	5 (5)	13 (14)
Trade			Trade
5 (5)			10 (10)
Education			Education
5 (5)			6 (6)

There were quantitative differences in the children's responses between the social class groups, but importantly there was also a difference in the content of the middle class and working class children's responses. The peace and communication responses were popular among both social class groups, though middle class children used the peace response ($\_(1) = 4.02$, $p < .05$) and the communication response ($\_(1) = 4.17$, $p < .05$) significantly more than the working class children. The difference in the content of the responses produced by the two social class groups concerns the only negative category generated by the children. The threat category was used significantly more by the middle class children than the working class children ($\_(1) = 13.15$, $p < .001$). In fact, under five percent of the working class children actually produced a threat response. Examples of responses within the threat category include: 'The European Union is a bad idea, because countries should decide everything individually. England is an island and they will always try and tell us what to do...' (P50, 12 year old, middle class); 'All the ideas introduced by the European Union are bad for us, such as the single currency and fishing laws...' (P63, 14 year old, middle class); 'Other countries should not tell us what to do. We are different and have survived OK up until now, so why do we need them...' (P107, 16 year old, middle class). There were no other significant differences between the social class and age groups in terms of their use of particular categories.

DISCUSSION

This study examined how different forms of social anchoring impinged upon British children's social representations of Europe. The results suggest that the social class group of a particular child helps regulate both their knowledge and beliefs concerning Europe. Both components of the children's social representations of Europe, the knowledge and the belief, differed depending on their social class group. However other forms of social anchoring, namely travel experience and parental attitudes towards Europe had an insignificant effect on the children's social representations. Age only effected the

knowledge component of the children's social representations of Europe. Though age differences were apparent in the quantity of responses produced to the open-ended question, there were no age differences in the actual content of the children's responses or in the opinions expressed by the children in the photograph evaluation task.

The results showed that differences in children's knowledge of Europe are related primarily to age and to a lesser extent, independently, to social class background. There was a linear progression in the children's knowledge of Europe, with a significant shift in the children's knowledge between the two age groups. The most plausible explanation of this finding is the differences in the educational curricula experienced by the age groups. The National Curriculum in Geography for England and Wales (Department of Education and Science, 1991) requires children aged about ten years to identify on a map up to four countries within Europe. Children are only expected to identify up to ten European countries over the age of fourteen. This shows that the curriculum experienced by the two age groups would have differed significantly in terms of its emphasis on learning about Europe.

In addition to age, social class also independently effected the children's knowledge of Europe. Middle class children in this study proved significantly more knowledgeable than working class children. It is likely that the effects of social class reflect class differences in ability and access to information, the middle class children had simply more available information about Europe and had learnt this information quicker than the working class children. Nevertheless, data from an ability measure would be required to verify this explanation.

The results of this study also suggest that parental attitudes towards Europe and travel experience may provide a poor explanation of differences in children's knowledge of Europe between the ages of ten and sixteen years. Parental attitudes and travel experience did not correlate significantly with the children's knowledge of Europe. These results suggest the social regulation of children's knowledge of Europe may not be attributable simply or directly to parental attitudes towards Europe or travel experience within Europe, but rather is related in part to children's social class group.

Social class proved the only significant form of social anchoring in terms of children's beliefs and opinions about Europe. The results of the photograph evaluation task showed middle class children had more negative opinions about Europeans than working class children. In addition, middle class children were significantly more likely than working class children to represent the European Union in a negative manner as threat to the power of Britain and their sense of national identity. The belief that the European Union is a threat to the independence and sovereignty of Britain was virtually non-existent among working class children.

It is possible that the effects of social class on beliefs and opinions about Europe reflect the higher degree of access to information about Europe among middle class children. Indeed, this might account for the larger quantity of beliefs concerning the EU among middle class children compared to working class children. Furthermore, it could also explain why older children expressed more beliefs about the EU than the younger children. Nevertheless, it is difficult to explain class differences but not age differences in the actual content of the children's beliefs about the EU with such an account. The content of the middle class beliefs about the EU were significantly more negative and their opinions about Europeans expressed in the photograph task were also more negative than

among working class children. The notion of the EU as a threat to the political power and status of Britain is a particular ideological stance which among the middle class (who are arguably a very powerful social class in Britain) is possibly more extensively developed and prevalent among its members. Therefore, it is possible that middle class children's more negative beliefs about Europe may be explained by the strong presence of this particular ideological position within their class group.

The ideological assertion that the EU is a threat to the power and independence of Britain is commonly found in the mass media in Britain. Indeed, there were many British newspaper articles at the time of this study which represented the EU as a threat to British power and sovereignty. For example, the *Daily Telegraph* (May 29th 1996) published an editorial about the EU ban on British beef because of the BSE crisis entitled 'Bigger than Beef'. The *Daily Telegraph* is the most popular broadsheet newspaper in England and has a predominantly middle class readership. The editorial argued that Britain had collectively discovered its 'powerlessness in Europe', that the EU ban on British beef was an 'affront' to British 'nationhood'. The editor continued by stating that 'we (Britain) know we have lost authority, and we know that we want it back' and called for a policy which 'insists on repatriating powers to member states'. The *Daily Mail*, the most popular middle market tabloid in England and also with a predominately middle class readership, took a similar line on the EU ban on British Beef (May 22nd, 1996), with the front page headline 'Major (the then British Prime Minister) goes to war' and quoted Mr. Major saying British interests had been 'brushed aside by some of our European partners with no reasonable grounds to do so'.

This study can not offer a definitive account of the precise influences that cause social class differences in children's beliefs and opinions about Europe. Though it does suggest that social class differences may reflect the existence of a particular ideological stance within society at a specific moment in history which is distributed unevenly among socio-economic groups. Nevertheless it should be remembered that there was a relatively high degree of consensus regarding many of hildren's beliefs about Europe. This suggests that while differences maybe explained by the children's various group memberships the children may also have shared many common experiences (e.g. in school or via the mass media) which help to provide a significant level of consensus in their beliefs.

To conclude, this study has begun to examine how various forms of social anchoring impinge upon British children's social representations of Europe. It has identified age and social class differences in children's knowledge of Europe and also social class differences in children's beliefs and opinions about Europe. However, the aim of this study was not to provide causal explanations but to show that our understanding of how different forms of social anchoring engage with children's social representations of Europe is limited and further research is needed. This study should only be seen as a beginning, the further advancement of research in this area really requires a closer relationship between developmental and social psychologies. The theory of social representations has much in common with the early work of developmental research of Piaget and Vygotsky who both described cognitive development in terms of the socialization of thought. This common link should be enough to start a rapprochement between developmental psychology and social psychology, which hopefully should result in an improved understanding of how social processes such as intergroup relations and social comparison affect the psychological development of children.

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APPENDIX

The 12 statements included in the questionnaire sent to the children's parents to measure their attitudes towards Europe and the European Union. They were asked to choose an answer from the following scale.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

1. Britain has not benefited from membership of the European Union.
2. The European Union is a bad idea.
3. The European Union helps reduce the possibility of conflict between countries.
4. Britain is economically stronger because it is in the European Union.
5. My child should learn about other European countries.
6. It is important that my child is able to speak a second European language.
7. I would not want my child to live and work in another European country.
8. I would not like my child to have a close friend who came from another European country.
9. I would call myself a European.
10. The fact I am European is an important part of my identity.
11. I do not care about Europe.
12. I do not like the people I have met from other European countries.