Psychological transition from meaning to sense

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This work presents an approach aimed at modeling the sensemaking underlying psychological transition in an educational setting -though not confined to such types of setting. The psychological transition is understood as change that is to move from a state of psychological equilibrium (eg, identification with a certain vision of the world) to another. This approach is derived from our combined socio-constructivist and psychoanalytic standpoint. It distinguishes two levels of analysis: the representational content, and the shared latent affective dimension, the latter working as the symbolic frame of sensemaking. According to our model, psychological transition has to be defined as a change in the affective structure of sense. We present our theoretical model and a method of analysis following from it. In order to exemplify and to validate our approach, we examine the case of young people entering high school in Italian schools. This study depicts the students' representations involved in role transition. It shows how, in spite of deep modifications of representations related to their entrance to the high school setting, the latent dimension of sensemaking does not change.

Key words: Psychological transition, affective sensemaking, high school.

Transición psicológica de significado a sentido. Este trabajo presenta un enfoque que define un modelo de construcción de sentido (sensemaking) subyacente a la transición psicológica en un ambiente educativo, aunque no se limite a este tipo de impostación. La transición psicológica tiene que entenderse como ese cambio consistente en pasar de un estado de equilibrio psicológico (por ejemplo: la identificación con cierta visión del mundo) a otro. Este enfoque deriva de nuestro punto de vista que combina tanto la teoría socio-constructivista como la psicoanalítica, y que evidencia dos niveles de análisis: el contenido de la representación y la dimensión afectiva latente, quién actúa como marco simbólico a través del cual la "construcción de sentido" tiene lugar. Según nuestro modelo la transición psicológica tiene que definirse más propiamente como un cambio en la estructura afectiva de sentido. En este sentido presentamos nuestro modelo teórico junto con una metodología de análisis consecuente. Con el objetivo de ejemplificar y validar nuestro enfoque, examinamos el caso de jóvenes que entran en el instituto en las escuelas italianas. Este estudio describe las representaciones de los estudiantes en una transacción de roles. Esta demuestra, que, a pesar de las profundas modificaciones de las representaciones ligadas a su ingreso en el instituto, la dimensión latente de la construcción de sentido no cambia.

Palabras clave: Transición psicológica, sentido afectivo, instituto.

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This work presents an approach to psychological transition in an educational setting -though not confined to such types of setting- derived from our combined socio-constructivist and psychoanalytic standpoint (Salvatore *et al.*, 2003) and characterized by the distinction between two levels of analysis of sensemaking: the individual and collective representational content and the latent affective dimension.

Our model puts forward the following 4 statements:

- Intersubjective sensemaking does not end at the level of representational content, but entails socially shared latent affective dimensions of sense (LADS);
- LADS are the core of the psychological meaning;
- Given their social and affective nature, LADS tend not to change;
- LADS tend not to change even when there is a major change in the reality perceived by people, and the related change in the content of their representation.

These statements lead to the following conclusive propositions: that (A) a psychological transition for a given person has to be defined as a change of the latent affective dimensions of sense, and that (B) a change in reality as well as in its related representational content is not a valid criterion in itself for psychological transition. This does not necessarily imply that changes in the individual representational content are not relevant. Rather, our assumptions claim that such changes are not to be seen in themselves as psychological transition.

In the following pages we present our theoretical model and a method of analysis deriving from it. In order to exemplify and to validate our approach, we examine the case of students entering a High School (HS) setting in Italy. This study highlights how, in spite of the major modifications of the representational content related to the students' entry to a HS setting, the latent dimensions of their sensemaking tend not to change.

Entering High School

Italian students face a significant change in their life-path when they turn 14. The Italian educational system involves a change of school between the 8th and 9th grade: students finish the 3-year stage called "Primary Middle School" (PMS) and enter the next stage: the 5-year High School (HS) from 9th to 13th grade. Such a change means coming into a new institution and a new community of teachers and classmates. HS is very different from PMS: it is above school leaving age, has specialized curricula (scientific, humanistic, linguistic, or technical) and educational aims. The teachers working in it have specific professional cultures, focusing more on the subject contents than those of PMS teachers, the latter being more centered on the relationship with students as well as on the methodological issues of teaching. Therefore, incoming students have to deal with the process of becoming part of a new system of practices, with its own evaluation criteria, work organization, role demands, models of relationship, and temporal perspectives (Salvatore, Mannarini & Rubino, 2004). Becoming a HS student is therefore a *critical shift* - not only in a student's life-path, but more broadly in the ontogenetic development of the young subject. However, this does not necessary mean that it has to be seen as a *psychological transition* in itself.

From a naïve standpoint, transition for a given person occurs every time there is a major shift from a quite stable state of reality to another state. But psychology is (should be) a modelistic science. It does (should) not see phenomena as taken for granted. On the contrary, it first has to build its objects theoretically in order to analyze them (Salvatore, 2006).

In order to do this, we assume the fundamental object of psychology to be the role of semiotic devices as mediators between human experience and environment (Salvatore & Zittoun, in press). According to this general epistemological orientation, psychological transition for a given person has to be defined as a shift between two quite stable states of the sensemaking process - and from our standpoint we add that such shift has to concern the *intersubjective* level of sensemaking. This means that *psychological* transition and *functional* transition (that is, transition as a change happening in the world) do not necessarily overlap: in some cases a change of the reality does not entail a shift in the representation of reality; in other cases, a shift in representation occurs even where there is no change in the reality.

We can therefore conclude that conceptualizing HS entrance as a psychological transition means depicting a change in the intersubjective sensemaking processes involved in becoming part of that school setting.

Representational content and affective sense

In different areas of psychological science a large number of researchers analyze semiotic processes in terms of *representational content* (Salvatore & Pagano, 2005). Nevertheless, according to a combined socio-constructivist and psychoanalytical standpoint (in particular we are referring to the psychoanalytical approach adopting a semiotic and intersubjective point of view; Salvatore & Zittoun, in press) we consider the analysis of the representational content necessary but not sufficient. As a matter of fact, socio-constructivism and psychoanalysis have independently underlined that the content of representational processes is quite contingent to the intersubjective dynamic of sensemaking (Salvatore & Zittoun, in press). Socio-constructivism points out that producing a sign is not a mere linguistic operation, but a speech act (Austin, 1962): an action of communication that is an integral part of and is carried out in an intersubjective system of activity. Consequently, the psychological meaning of a sign is not given by its mere semantic-linguistic content; rather, the psychological meaning is the sign's communicative function as performed in the discursive exchange. And it is evident that this communicative function is not immanent to the sign, but depends on the way it is used in relation with the other signs within the intersubjective circumstances (Wittgenstein, 1953; Salvatore, Tebaldi & Potì, 2006/2009).

Coming back to our starting point, one has to conclude that an analysis only focused on meaning (i.e. on representational content) is unable to retrieve the psychological value it has for the actors involved in the intersubjective situation: the same representation may have a very different meaning according to *who* makes it, to *whom, when, where*, and *why* (Salvatore, Ligorio & De Franchis, 2005). In other words, psychological meaning (henceforth: sense) is not what is said, but what is communicated by the act of saying it. Therefore, *understanding the psychological process entails not*

stopping at the representational content, but grasping the meaning expressed by this content in a specific intersubjective situation.

Semiotic and interpersonal psychoanalytic theory (Salvatore & Zittoun, in press) –underlines that the sense of every speech act has not only a public/conventional/manifest side, but also an affective/unconscious one. That point of view does not underestimate the illocutionary and performative levels of sense: rather it asserts that those levels work at the same time as significant of a further level of sense, that is the affective/unconscious sense.

It may be worth underlining that in the perspective we are presenting here, the unconscious is not conceptualized as an inner structure or a covert set of contents belonging to a marginal area of the mind, but as a dimension of the intersubjective process of sensemaking - a *facultas signatrix* (Fornari, 1979), characterized by three fundamental aspects.

A) Unconscious sensemaking categorizes experience in terms of affective significances. In short, affective significances are generalized models of relationship (Stern, 1985). In other words, when a person (a set of persons) gives affective sense to a piece of reality s/he is perceiving and feeling that piece *as if* it were a living subject endowed with relational intentionality towards him/her/them. This semiotic mechanism is the one that makes a child hit the table s/he has just bumped into.

B) The unconscious has its own logic of functioning (Matte Blanco, 1975), different from the paradigmatic one but no less systematic. The unconscious works in terms of *hyper-generalizing homogenizating* and *absolutizing* categorization: unconscious categorization of reality treats its object as *identical* to the category it belongs to- and this latter category as identical to the category it belongs to, and so on (*hyper-generalization*) - and having at the maximum degree all the properties of those other categories (*absolutization*). As a consequence, each object is made identical to the other objects falling into the generalized category (*homogenization*).

Many phenomena of everyday thought show cues of the affective way of categorization - for example, the generalizing form of stereotypical thought).

C) Being hyper-generalizing, affective sensemaking does not focus on discrete objects of experience, but is the way of representing the intersubjective (interpersonal, organizational, social, institutional) space as a whole. Hence, from this point of view, *unconscious sensemaking generates the context of intersubjective space* (Salvatore & Freda, 2010). In short, actors in an intersubjective context and performing a speech act are making discrete meaning. Yet at the same time they are unintentionally and latently generating an affective categorization of their shared context. In so doing, they are jointly defining the affective sense of their relationship; that sense works as the super-ordinate socio-symbolic frame mediating their exchange.

A definition of psychological transition

As we have just underlined, affective sense is the ground of the psychological experience of intersubjectivity. This idea entails a particular view of psychological transition. In view of our previous discussion, we must therefore conclude that psychological transition has to be defined as a change at the level of affective sense. I.

In many circumstances a modification of the representational content does not necessarily involve a transformation of the affective sense. These circumstances happen every time subjects sharing a frame of affective sense have to face a modification of their practices, and therefore of the content mediating them. In such circumstances - for instance, an organization with a change in top management - new contents can be used in order to deal with the new state, but without the affective frame grounding the social group being modified. In cases like these many modifications at the level of content can take place, but usually the cultural roots - that is the affective dimensions of sense working as the grounds of the organizational membership - persist, even if by means of new contents.

In sum, while the content of the sensemaking tends to change according to the evolution of the reality, such modification does not necessarily entail a change of the latent dimension of the sensemaking itself, therefore a psychological transition.

How to model affective sense
This last statement raises the issue of how to depict affective sense.

As we have sketched out above, affective sense works as a super-ordinate and socially shared structure of generalized signification that *grounds, orients* and *shapes* the collective - therefore the individual - cognitive processing of reality, therefore the representational content. According to this psychoanalytic point of view, that last assumption allows us to model affective sense in terms of a set of *basic latent structures of generalizing signification*, each of which can be described as a dichotomic tension between two opposing patterns of symbolization of an overall quality of the context. For instance, a fundamental latent structure of signification is that which leads to the symbolization of the context from the point of view of its relational attitude toward the symbolizer. In psychoanalytic literature this structure is often called *good/bad scheme* (Salvatore & Freda, 2010). The huge literature on Semantic Differential puts forward empirical evidence supporting the idea of depicting affective sense in terms of generalizing latent oppositional structures of signification (Osgood, Suci & Tannenbaum, 1957). Those latent oppositional structures of signification define the shape of the symbolic field.

There is a circular linkage between representational content and symbolic field: on the one hand, the representational content acquires sense according to its position in the symbolic field; on the other hand, the representational content works as the *significant* carrying the latent affective structures and in this way making them reproduce over time. This means that sense depends on the position of the sign on the latent symbolic field for which it is used.

A method of depicting affective sense
We have deduced a method of depicting affective sense from the model of conceptualizing it (see, *inter alia*: Carli & Salvatore, 2001). Broadly speaking, such a method is aimed at singling out (dis)similarities in the subject's way of using meaning in order to connote relevant objects of experience - obviously the method focuses on (dis)similarities that cannot be explained as just being due to the semantic relationship

between the objects. They can therefore be interpreted as a marker of generalized classes of symbolic significance.

The steps of the method are the following. Firstly, we select a repertoire of objects, relevant for the social group to be analyzed. In this study objects used as stimuli are particularly meaningful aspects of the school universe. At the same time most of the questions recall them in terms of generalized classes (i.e., "teachers", "my life" "future"), which facilitates a projective mode of categorization.

Secondly, we use a set of signs carrying connotative meaning, based on global attributes, which encourages an evaluative attitude in responding rather than a computational one, focused on what we have here defined the level of meaning. Connotative meanings are selected and combined according to the following general criteria. 1) Meanings are organized in terms of oppositional structures (for instance, a subject is asked to connote his/her future as *nice* or *depressing*), which makes them isomorphic to the oppositional architecture of the affective dimensions. 2) Meanings have to allow interpretations of subject's responses not as mere descriptions of states of the world, but as acts of positioning.

Thirdly, we combine objects and meaning, so as to have each meaning associated to several objects and vice versa. This combination takes the format of a questionnaire, made up of items each in the form of a statement carrying a set of alternative connotative meanings associated to an object, among which the respondent is forced to choose. Answers are not designed to cover the most representative possible answers, but to work as "bait" for a corresponding symbolic connotation of the object. For example, the object "what do young people want?", prompts answers such as "to be guided", "to provoke", "to succeed" (evoking connotations of affiliation, counter-dependence, achievement, etc).

Fourthly, multidimensional procedures of statistical analysis enable the whole variability of the population's answers to be broken down into factorial dimensions. Each factor then identifies a structure of opposite subsets of co-occurrences of signs. Similarly to other authors (Landauer & Dumais, 1997), we conceptualize these factors as the markers of the *latent structure of symbolic signification shared* by the population, which we interpret from a psychoanalytic standpoint.

Moreover, we conceptualize the main subsets of meaning co-occurrence as being the specific representations of the context active in the symbolic field. We call each of these representations *Image* in order to highlight its constructive and not merely passive nature. Each subset of meaning/object combinations is carried by a segment of the population. Therefore, each subset *of meaning co-occurrence marks a specific Image of the context characterizing a group of students and differentiating it from the others.*

METHOD

Subjects

Our analysis is aimed at depicting the Images of school experience and the symbolic field entailed by characterizing a student population of a high school (technical school, part of the Italian HS system) situated in a middle-sized town of Southern Italy.

In order to analyze the psychological impact of entering the HS context, we depict and compare the systems of representation carried by two cohorts of that population: first level students (equivalent to the 9th grade of Italian education; 14-year-old students usually attempt that level) versus third level students (11th grade; 16-year-old students attending). Therefore our study is not a longitudinal one, using the second cohort as a representative substitute of the repeated observation of the first cohort. This choice, whose practical motivations are easy to understand, entails some limitation, otherwise typical of this kind of methodological schema (McBurney, 2001).

A questionnaire drawn up *ad hoc* was given to all the students of the two cohorts, and administered during school time. The questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the school year, as part of a collaborative project with the school, with the agreement of the teachers involved, who were entrusted with the task of presenting the questionnaire to the students. Participation in the research was on a volunteer basis. However all the students present on the day participated.

We obtained valid data from 303 participants (more than 95% of the whole population): 175 attending first level versus 128 attending third level.

Instruments

The multiple choice questionnaire is a short version of a previous one used in a survey based on a national sample of Italian HS students (Salvatore *et al.*, 2004). Questions were selected in order to incite participants to express perceptions/opinions/judgements concerning four general areas of experience characterizing a high school student's life:

- the experience of the micro and macro environment (examples of questions of this kind: judgement on the place where the participant lives);
- own social identity (i. e. representation of the young person)
- school system (i.e. opinions about teachers);
- feelings related with schooling (i.e. feeling related to classmates).

Each question is associated with a set of answers, each of them structured in terms of a 4-point scale (*not at all, just a little, rather, a lot*). We have used an even point scale with the aim of making the questions more polarized, pressing the respondent to side with one position or the other. As a whole, the final questionnaire is composed of 43 questions correspond to 215 response modes (according to the idea of sign as an act-we consider "not responding" as a further informative response mode rather than as missed value).

Procedure

We analyzed the two cohorts separately, in order to make a cross-population comparison. For both the cohorts we subjected the matrix of answers to two complementary procedures of multidimensional analysis.

We applied a Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA, Benzecri, 1992) - conceptualizing the first two factorial dimension extracted by the analysis as the most

relevant latent structures of sense - and a Cluster Analysis procedure (CA, hierarchic classification), in order to depict the Images. In both analyses, in order to define the optimal partitions we increase the number of clusters till we pass the threshold of 0.33 as internal cluster inertia/total inertia ratio.

RESULTS

In the MCA applied to the first level cohort (below: MCA1), the first two factorial dimensions extracted explain 38.63% of the inertia (respectively 22.23% and 16.40%). In the other MCA (applied to the third level cohort; below: MCA2), the first two factorial dimensions explain almost the same quote of inertia: 37.56%, (respectively 23.04 and 14.52).

Tables 1 and 2 report the most significantly associated response modes for the factorial dimensions emerging from MCA1 and MCA2.

Table 1. First Level Cohort. Output of Multiple Correspondence Analysis (Factorial Dimension 1 and 2)

V.TEST	LEVEL	ITEM
*Factorial Dimension 1*
(-) Pole
-4.95	rather	WORKING IS: opportuneness
-4.81	rather	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: understanding the world
-4.49	rather	MY FAMILY IS: useful
-4.18	rather	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: studying
-4.13	rather	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: earn a lot of money
-4.11	rather	MY FAMILY IS: authoritative
-3.99	rather	MY FAMILY IS: cosy
-3.81	just a little	MY SCHOOL IS: useful
-3.79	just a little	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: relationship with classmate
-3.74	just a little	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT. SCHOOL IS a place to drop out of
-3.72	rather	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: commanding respect
-3.63	just a little	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: taking risks
-3.63	rather	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: future
-3.61	just a little	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: priest
-3.58	just a little	MY SCHOOL IS: cosy
-3.47	rather	MY FRIENDS ARE: cosy
-3.44	just a little	WORKING IS: frustration
-3.40	rather	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT. SCHOOL IS student-oriented
-3.34	rather	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: relationship with classmate
-3.31	just a little	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: competence I acquired
-3.29	rather	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: competence I acquired
-3.28	just a little	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: psicologist
-3.27	just a little	MY FRIENDS ARE: cosy
-3.24	just a little	INTERNET IS: job
-3.21	rather	MY SCHOOL IS: useful
-3.14	rather	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: leave home & set up for myself
-3.08	rather	I LIKE HERE I LIVE
-3.04	rather	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: being with the family
-3.03	just a little	AGREEMENT: it is better not to think of the future
(+) Pole
5.95	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: school
5.90	much	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT. SCHOOL IS student-oriented
5.82	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: society
5.81	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: future
5.76	much	WORKING IS: opportuneness
5.44	much	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: relationship with classmate
5.32	much	MY FRIENDS ARE: cosy
5.26	much	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: keep on with my studies
5.22	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: studying
5.15	much	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: competence I acquired
5.13	much	MY SCHOOL IS: useful
5.07	much	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: psycologist
4.66	much	WORKING IS: frustration
4.41	much	MY SCHOOL IS: cosy
3.98	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: commanding respect
3.98	much	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: leave home & set up for myself
3.93	not at all	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT. SCHOOL IS a place to drop out of
4.27	much	MY FRIENDS ARE: well-prepared
4.15	much	MY FAMILY IS: useful
4.14	much	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: coach
4.05	much	MY FAMILY IS: cosy
4.01	much	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: understanding the world
4.00	much	RELIABILITY OF: Community WHERE I LIVE
3.59	much	WORKING IS: satisfaction
3.49	much	MY FAMILY IS: authoritative
3.44	not responding	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: following the fashion
3.38	not responding	AGREEMENT: it is better not to think of the future
3.33	not responding	INTERNET IS: provocation
3.33	not responding	AGREEMENT: society must protect the weakest persons
3.33	not responding	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: forming an alliance with the strongest
3.33	not responding	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: understanding the world
3.26	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: being with the family
3.15	not responding	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: competence I acquired
3.13	not responding	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: priest
3.12	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: taking risks
3.12	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: keeping to the rules
3.04		LEVEL OF OVERALL SATISFACTION
3.03	not responding	AGREEMENT: I don't believe people change
3.01	not responding	MY FAMILY IS: useful

Table 1 (continue). First Level Cohort. Output of Multiple Correspondence Analysis
(Factorial Dimension 1 and 2)

		Factorial Dimension 2	
		(-) Pole	
V.TEST	LEVEL		LIBELLE DE LA VARIABLE
-5.08	rather		MY FRIENDS ARE: well-prepared
-4.80	not at all		LEVEL OF AGREEMENT. SCHOOL IS a place to drop out of
-4.79	rather		SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: school
-4.54	much		MY FAMILY IS: cosy
-4.39	much		SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: being with the family
-3.40	rather		FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: leave home & set up for myself
-3.12	rather		FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: earn a lot of money
		(+) Pole	
6.91	much		WORKING IS: frustration
6.89	just a little		SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: studying
6.51	much		LEVEL OF AGREEMENT. SCHOOL IS a place to drop out of
6.28	just a little		SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: being with the family
6.17	much		AGREEMENT: it is better not to think of the future
5.54	just a little		SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: school
5.49	just a little		IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: understanding the world
4.89	just a little		MY SCHOOL IS: cosy
4.87	not at all		SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: school
5.00	just a little		MY SCHOOL IS: useful
4.31	just a little		AGREEMENT: society must protect the weakest persons
4.25	rather		MY FAMILY IS: cosy
4.23	just a little		MY FAMILY IS: useful
3.83	just a little		MY FRIENDS ARE: well-prepared
4.11	just a little		SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: competence I acquired
3.70	not at all		FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: earn a lot of money
3.66	just a little		LEVEL OF AGREEMENT. SCHOOL IS student-oriented
3.65	just a little		SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: commanding respect
4.04	much		FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: leave home & set up for myself
3.39	much		TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: priest
3.33	not at all		TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: psycologist
3.32	much		IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: forming an alliance with the strongest
3.28	much		AGREEMENT: I don't believe people change
3.24	just a little		LEVEL OF OVERAL SATISFACTION

Table 2. Third Level Cohort. Output of Multiple Correspondence Analysis (Factorial Dimension 1 and 2)

	Factorial Dimension 1				Factorial Dimension 2	
	(-) Pole				(-) Pole	
V.TEST	LEVEL	ITEM		V.TEST	LEVEL	LIBELLE DE LA VARIABLE
-6.10	just a little	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: keep on with my studies		-4.71	rather	WORKING IS: opportuneness
-5.51	just a little	AGREEMENT: society must protect the weakest persons		-4.71	rather	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: leave home & set up for myself
-5.49	just a little	LEVEL OF OVERAL SATISFACTION		-2.87	rather	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: competence I acquired
-5.24	just a little	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: studying		-2.76	rather	AGREEMENT: society must protect the weakest persons
-5.23	rather	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: being with the family		-3.61	rather	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: school
-4.77	just a little	MY SCHOOL IS: useful		-3.43	rather	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: keeping to the rules
-4.59	just a little	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: school		-3.33	rather	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT. SCHOOL IS student-oriented
-4.48	not at all	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: future		-3.22	rather	MY SCHOOL IS: useful
-4.47	not at all	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: psycologist		-3.08	rather	WORKING IS: satisfaction
-4.30	rather	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: understanding the world		-3.04	just a little	AGREEMENT: it is better not to think of the future
-4.23	just a little	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT. SCHOOL IS student-oriented			(+) Pole	
-4.13	rather	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT. SCHOOL IS a place to drop out of		7.16	much	WORKING IS: frustration
-3.90	much	AGREEMENT: it is better not to think of the future		5.41	much	AGREEMENT: it is better not to think of the future
-3.71	not at all	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: school		5.39	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: school
-3.60	just a little	I LIKE HERE I LIVE		5.39	not at all	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: leave home & set up for myself
-3.59	just a little	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: future		4.97	much	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: psycologist
-3.40	just a little	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: competence I acquired		5.35	much	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: priest
-3.40	not at all	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: priest		4.49	much	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: competence I acquired
-3.28	rather	WORKING IS: satisfaction		4.39	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: society
-3.18	just a little	RELIABILIY OF: Community WHERE I LIVE		3.92	much	WORKING IS: satisfaction
-3.11	not at all	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: ticket inspector		3.91	much	WORKING IS: opportuneness
	(+) Pole			3.69	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: future
5.67	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: being with the family		4.09	much	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: ticket inspector
5.40	not at all	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT. SCHOOL IS a place to drop out of		4.05	not at all	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT. SCHOOL IS student-oriented
5.38	much	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: understanding the world		3.64	much	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: leave home & set up for myself
5.17	rather	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: school		3.43	much	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: keep on with my studies
4.27	much	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: keep on with my studies		3.29	much	LEVEL OF OVERAL SATISFACTION
4.00	much	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: competence I acquired		3.23	rather	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: magician
3.45	much	MY FAMILY IS: useful		3.22	just a little	I LIKE HERE I LIVE
3.31	rather	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: psycologist		3.21	not at all	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: earn a lot of money
3.29	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: commanding respect		3.17	just a little	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: understanding the world
3.23	much	MY FAMILY IS: cosy				
3.19	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: studying				
3.17	rather	LEVEL OF OVERAL SATISFACTION				
3.13	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: keeping to the rules				
3.10	rather	I LIKE HERE I LIVE				
3.02	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: free time				

Table 3. First Level Cohort. Output of Cluster Analysis (Response Profile)

V.TEST	PROBA	LEVEL	ITEM
CLUSTER 1			
5.85	0.000	not at all	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT: SCHOOL IS a place to drop out of
4.02	0.000	not at all	WORKING IS: frustration
3.67	0.000	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: studying
3.20	0.001	not at all	AGREEMENT: it is better not to think of the future
2.95	0.002	much	MY FAMILY IS: cosy
2.85	0.002	rather	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: psycologist
2.71	0.003	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: being with the family
2.69	0.004	much	MY SCHOOL IS: useful
2.65	0.004	not at all	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: following the fashion
2.63	0.004	just a little	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: free time
2.60	0.005	much	LEVEL OF OVERAL SATISFACTION
2.58	0.005	much	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: competence I acquired
2.53	0.006	much	MY SCHOOL IS: cosy
2.52	0.006	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: keeping to the rules
2.51	0.006	much	MY FAMILY IS: useful
2.45	0.007	not at all	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: magician
2.33	0.010	much	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: understanding the world
CLUSTER 2			
4.72	0.000	just a little	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT: SCHOOL IS student-oriented
4.65	0.000	not at all	WORKING IS: satisfaction
3.83	0.000	not at all	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: coach
3.46	0.000	rather	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: being with the family
3.15	0.001	just a little	MY SCHOOL IS: cosy
3.04	0.001	rather	AGREEMENT: it is better not to think of the future
2.68	0.004	much	INTERNET IS: job
2.62	0.004	just a little	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: keeping to the rules
2.61	0.004	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: free time
2.47	0.007	just a little	AGREEMENT: society must protect the weakest persons
2.45	0.007	not at all	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: ticket inspector
2.34	0.010	much	INTERNET IS: provocation
CLUSTER 3			
5.87	0.000	rather	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: future
5.38	0.000	rather	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: school
4.79	0.000	rather	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT: SCHOOL IS student-oriented
4.09	0.000	rather	MY SCHOOL IS: useful
4.05	0.000	just a little	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT: SCHOOL IS a place to drop out of
3.93	0.000	just a little	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: psycologist
3.84	0.000	rather	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: studying
3.82	0.000	rather	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: earn a lot of money
3.59	0.000	just a little	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: forming an alliance with the strongest
3.55	0.000	rather	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: understanding the world
3.53	0.000	rather	MY SCHOOL IS: cosy
3.53	0.000	rather	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: competence I acquired
3.51	0.000	rather	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: leave home & set up for myself
3.50	0.000	rather	WORKING IS: opportuneness
3.15	0.001	just a little	INTERNET IS: job
3.03	0.001	just a little	WORKING IS: frustration
2.98	0.001	rather	MY FRIENDS ARE: well-prepared
2.90	0.002	rather	MY FAMILY IS: authoritative
2.82	0.002	high school	HEAD OF FAMILY QUALIFICATION
2.70	0.003	rather	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: coach
2.47	0.007	rather	MY FAMILY IS: useful
2.40	0.008	rather	LEVEL OF OVERAL SATISFACTION
CLUSTER 4			
4.94	0.000	just a little	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: competence I acquired
4.54	0.000	just a little	MY FRIENDS ARE: well-prepared
4.26	0.000	just a little	MY SCHOOL IS: useful
3.85	0.000	just a little	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: studying
3.68	0.000	much	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT: SCHOOL IS a place to drop out of
3.39	0.000	not at all	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: society
2.75	0.003	rather	MY FAMILY IS: cosy
2.70	0.003	just a little	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: school
2.69	0.004	just a little	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: coach
2.53	0.006	just a little	MY FRIENDS ARE: cosy
CLUSTER 5			
6.19	0.000	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: society
5.46	0.000	much	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT: SCHOOL IS student-oriented
4.65	0.000	much	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: coach
3.58	0.000	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: future
3.34	0.000	much	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: psycologist
3.15	0.001	much	AGREEMENT: I don't believe people change
3.05	0.001	much	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: understanding the world
2.96	0.002	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: school
2.85	0.002	much	MY SCHOOL IS: useful
2.70	0.003	much	WORKING IS: satisfaction
2.66	0.004	much	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: relationship with classmate
2.34	0.010	much	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: ticket inspector
CLUSTER 6			
4.99	0.000	much	WORKING IS: frustration
4.81	0.000	much	AGREEMENT: it is better not to think of the future
4.72	0.000	just a little	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: being with the family
4.59	0.000	rather	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: magician
4.39	0.000	just a little	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: understanding the world
4.36	0.000	rather	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT: SCHOOL IS a place to drop out of
3.19	0.001	much	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: forming an alliance with the strongest
3.14	0.001	much	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: leave home & set up for myself
3.05	0.001	much	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: priest
2.64	0.004	just a little	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: earn a lot of money
2.48	0.007	rather	INTERNET IS: job

Table 4. Third Level Cohort. Output of Cluster Analysis (Response Profile)

V.TEST	PROBA	LEVEL	ITEM
CLUSTER A			
6.61	0.000	much	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: leave home & set up for myself
5.78	0.000	much	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: understanding the world
5.74	0.000	much	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: keep on with my studies
5.19	0.000	much	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: competence I acquired
3.97	0.000	not at all	LEVEL OF LEVEL OF AGREEMENT: SCHOOL IS a place to drop out of
3.83	0.000	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: studying
3.56	0.000	not at all	AGREEMENT: it is better not to think of the future
3.20	0.001	rather	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: psycologist
2.96	0.002	much	WORKING IS: opportuneness
2.95	0.002	much	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: earn a lot of money
2.58	0.005	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: being with the family
2.45	0.007	much	INTERNET IS: provocation
2.40	0.008	much	WORKING IS: satisfaction
2.34	0.010	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: future
CLUSTER B			
4.23	0.000	not at all	I LIKE HERE I LIVE
4.23	0.000	not responding	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: future
2.88	0.002	much	AGREEMENT: I don't believe people change
2.71	0.003	rather	AGREEMENT: it is better not to think of the future
2.55	0.005	rather	LEVEL OF LEVEL OF AGREEMENT: SCHOOL ISa place to drop out of
2.43	0.008	not at all	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: psycologist
2.38	0.009	just a little	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT: SCHOOL IS student-oriented
CLUSTER C			
4.14	0.000	rather	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: competence I acquired
4.02	0.000	much	MY FAMILY IS: cosy
4.00	0.000	much	MY FAMILY IS: useful
3.97	0.000	just a little	AGREEMENT: it is better not to think of the future
3.94	0.000	just a little	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: ticket inspector
3.73	0.000	rather	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: leave home & set up for myself
3.33	0.000	rather	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: school
3.21	0.001	rather	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: society
3.16	0.001	rather	WORKING IS: opportuneness
3.16	0.001	rather	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: studying
3.02	0.001	rather	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: future
3.01	0.001	rather	RELIABILITY OF: Community WHERE I LIVE
2.76	0.003	rather	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT: SCHOOL IS student-oriented
2.74	0.003	rather	MY FRIENDS ARE: well-prepared
2.60	0.005	just a little	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: psycologist
2.48	0.007	rather	LEVEL OF OVERALL SATISFACTION
CLUSTER D			
5.21	0.000	much	WORKING IS: frustration
3.50	0.000	much	TEACHER LOOKS LIKE: priest
3.00	0.001	much	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: school
2.65	0.004	much	AGREEMENT: it is better not to think of the future
2.62	0.004	not at all	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: leave home & set up for myself
2.45	0.007	just a little	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: understanding the world
CLUSTER F			
5.22	0.000	rather	MY FAMILY IS: useful
5.21	0.000	just a little	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: future
5.03	0.000	just a little	LEVEL OF OVERAL SATISFACTION
3.93	0.000	just a little	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: school
3.78	0.000	just a little	RELIABILITY OF: Community WHERE I LIVE
3.20	0.001	rather	IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF YOUNG PERSON: understanding the world
3.20	0.001	rather	MY FAMILY IS: cosy
3.10	0.001	just a little	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: studying
3.10	0.001	just a little	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: society
2.94	0.002	just a little	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: keeping to the rules
2.92	0.002	just a little	SATISFACTION OF MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: competence I acquired
2.77	0.003	just a little	FOR NEXT YEARS, I DESIRE: keep on with my studies
2.77	0.003	rather	SATISFACTION OF THIS ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE: being with the family
2.67	0.004	just a little	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT: SCHOOL IS student-oriented
2.61	0.005	just a little	I LIKE HERE I LIVE

In both Cluster Analyses, a 6-cluster partition satisfies the defined threshold. (In order to create the partition we used the first 8 factorial dimensions for both ACs, corresponding to about 75% of explained inertia in both ACs - computation made according to the Benzecrì method). Figure 1(a,b) illustrates the cluster distribution within the corresponding populations. One cluster (Cluster E) having a percentage lower than 2% was omitted in the further analyses.

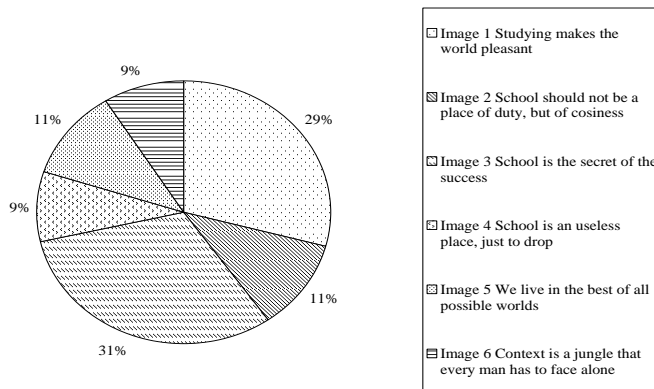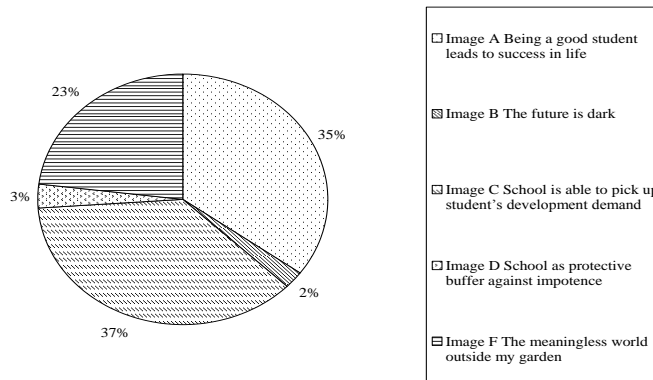*Figure 1a.* Cluster distribution within the first level cohort

- ☐ Image 1 Studying makes the world pleasant
- ⊠ Image 2 School should not be a place of duty, but of cosiness
- ☐ Image 3 School is the secret of the success
- ☐ Image 4 School is an useless place, just to drop
- ⊠ Image 5 We live in the best of all possible worlds
- ⊟ Image 6 Context is a jungle that every man has to face alone

Figure 1b. Cluster distribution within the third level cohort

- ☐ Image A Being a good student leads to success in life
- ⊠ Image B The future is dark
- ☐ Image C School is able to pick up student's development demand
- ☐ Image D School as protective buffer against impotence
- ⊟ Image F The meaningless world outside my garden

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of the factorial dimensions

We present our interpretation of the factorial dimensions in terms of latent affective structures of sense. The dimensions are very similar in the two MCAs, although

with inverted rank. The meaning of factorial dimensions proves to be quite similar throughout the two cohorts.

1) *MCA1's factor 1 and MCA2's factor 2.* Models of Self-Context relationship: *Agentive Participation* versus *Idealizing Identification*

This factor opposes two response mode patterns, both characterized not so much by their content, but by the attitudes they express. Many items are present in both polarities; yet what changes is the point level of the answer. More specifically, on the (-) pole one finds items sharing the reference to the two intermediate points of the scale ("just a little" and "rather"); while on the (+) pole there are items characterized by extreme points ("much", and in one case "not at all") or by omitted answers.

According to the distribution of items we propose to interpret the factor as an expression of two opposite ways of globally representing the context/experience, each of them entailing a *model of self-context relationship*. The (+) pole depicts the context in terms of absolutizing connotation, typical of a position of *idealizing identification* with the various areas of membership (school, family, peers, society). The (-) pole presents modalities that seem to be the expression of a process of critical evaluation, that can lead in some cases to quite, in others to bad judgements; but they are always intermediate, as a result of the recognition of the complexity and dynamicity of reality. This way of representing means that membership is seen as not being taken for granted, but rather linked to the capability of the context to allow the achievement of the goals pursued. In order to recall that quality, we have labelled such polarity "agentive participation". Ultimately, while the *idealizing identification* position is driven by the need to be supported, to define one's own identity as part of the membership context, the *agentive participation* position is aimed at doing something with membership.

2) *MCA1's factorial dimension 2 and MCA2's factorial dimension 1.* Evaluative connotation of the context: *Bad* versus *Good*

On the (-) pole one finds positive judgments of the different aspects of experience (friends, school, family) as a source of gratification. They thus maintain and support the student's commitment to his/her future.

In contrast, modalities associated with the (+) pole depict a globally negative connotation of the various contexts brought together in a homogenizing representation of meaninglessness, fostering students' feelings of rejection and desire to drop out.

In short, this factorial dimension expresses the affective connotation of the context in terms of good/bad evaluation of it.

It is worth noticing a difference between the two MCAs. Unlike what happens in the first class, in the third class no item concerns family and friendship. Therefore, both agentive participation and idealizing identification seem to deal with secondary contexts of relationship (school, work, society), while hiding the primary one (family, friendship) as significant anchor points.

Interpretation of the Cluster in terms of Images
CA1-First level cohort
Image 1. Studying makes the world pleasant

School and family are comforting and useful, sources of gratification. Context and future may be used and developed thanks to one's own commitment to studies.

Image 2. School should not be a place of duty, but of comfort

School is a source of frustration; it is indifferent to the students, not comforting like the family is. Breaking the rules and provoking is the only way of maintaining a relationship with this world.

Image 3. School is the secret of success

School is useful and comforting at the same time. It enables student to use their own initiative to achieve success.

Image 4. School is a useless place, just to be dropped

School is of no use, one has to leave it. The skills it allows one to build are not used in coping with a social context perceived as highly problematic. Only the family is seen as outside this dark vision, depicted as quite comforting.

Image 5. We live in the best of all possible worlds

Everything is perfect: society, future, school, teachers, classmates. Membership and rules are not in contrast (teachers are seen as psychologists and ticket inspectors at the same time): context and people naturally suit each other (thus people have no reason to change)

Image 6. The context is a jungle that everyone has to face alone

Similarly to Image 4, everything is felt in a negative way – also the family in this case. The context is a jungle where there is nobody to rely upon. Everyone has to think of themselves adapting to the dominant law of the strongest.

CA2-Third level cohort

Image A. Being a good student leads to success in life

Study makes students competent, enabling them to understand the world, and therefore to plan the future. Thus, school experience is a source of self-confidence leading to belief in one's own agentivity and power to be successful, in terms of earning a lot of money.

Image B. The future is dark

The context is an unpleasant place, where the future is literally unthinkable (these subject do not respond to items about the future) and people can only be subject to it with no chance of learning from experience. "In the dark night every cow (school) is black".

Image C. School is able to pick up student's development demand

The context is a source of gratification and meaningful experiences. Family is useful and comforting, study is satisfying and productive, school is student oriented, the future offers opportunities. As the use of the intermediate points of the scale indicates, these perceptions do not seem to be the result of an absolutization - as in Image 5 - but a consequence of more critical judgements.

Image D. School as a protective buffer against impotence

The Image expresses a feeling of impotence. Agentivity is beyond the horizon. Thinking of the future is to be avoided. Understanding the world does not help to be successful in life. The only place where one can find satisfaction is school.

Image E

Not analysable

Image F. The meaningless world outside my backyard

School and social context are experienced as sources of frustration. But that does not mean a reactive attitude; rather, the profile seems to evoke a feeling of disinvestment. The segment of students carrying this Image proves to have an alternative object of commitment: the family, a place in which functionality and relationship match each other (family is useful and comforting). This Image seems to reflects a commitment to the future: students carrying this Image are not satisfied with the future but they are involved with it. Their anchoring to the family seems rather to entail choosing to invest in the family system as alternative to the other - the public one.

In sum, Images from the two cohorts are different from each other with some partial similarities between Images 1 and 3 with Image A, Image 4 with Images B and F, Images 5 and 3 with Image C.

The latent dimension of sense

The results seem to validate our theoretical distinction between content and LADS (Statement 1). In fact the factorial dimensions extracted can be understood as the latent structures of affective sense. Each factorial dimension brings together items concerning a broad group of objects. Besides, in most cases, it presents response modes that would appear to contradict each other from a strictly rational point of view. In this sense, the factorial dimensions depict processes of global, homogenizing and generalized symbolic categorization. The categorisations are *global* in the sense that they are not concerned with discrete objects of experience, but rather with the context as a whole. They are *homogenizing* in the sense that they treat each object not for its own properties but as a member of the global context, therefore attributing the qualities of this global object to it. Finally the categorization can be said to be *generalized* because these symbolization processes express general connotative meaning (i.e. good/bad schema), rather than specific significances.

According to our analysis, the identified LADS involves what can be considered the fundamental issues in the sensemaking process: the semiotic construction of the subject-world relationship. From this point of view, the two factorial dimensions extracted by the MCAs can be understood as the symbolic premises according to which every further dialogical construction of sense becomes possible. In the final analysis, these premises concern the essential issues raised by any experience of a context, that is by any encounter with a strangeness: defining *who we are* and *who the other is* (Salvatore *et al.*, 2005).

From that point of view students of both populations seem to be carriers of two fundamental semiotic dialectics. One concerns the opposition between *becoming* and *being*, that is between agentivity and identification as a way of connoting their positioning with respect to the context (i.e., something like "I'm staying here to get something" versus "I am here since I'm part of it"). The second semiotic dialectic concerns the qualification of the context, which constituted the otherness with which students are faced. Here the opposition is radical, referring to two basic constructions of scenario: a world where one's encounters will be of a friendly nature and a world where otherness is seen as a threat, as an obstacle between the self and one's own desires.

This opposition reminds us of McClelland's articulation between achievement and affiliation needs (McClelland, 1961), ultimately recalling the basic psychodynamic dialectic between autonomy and dependence (Singer, 1985). From a different standpoint, both oppositions recall two of the three Semantic Differential factors (Active-Passive and Evaluation; Osgood *et al.*, 1957). Such similarities reinforce the impression of being faced with basic processes of affective symbolization deeply involved in the regulation of sensemaking, consistent with our statement about the affective dimension of sensemaking as the core of the sense (statement 2)

Image and latent dimension of sense

Other observations can be drawn from the analysis of the relationship between Images and latent affective dimension of sense. According to our model, we interpret each Image as a peculiar way of positioning on the two latent affective dimensions of sense. The analysis of the position of the Images on the symbolic field draws attention to an element that is coherent with our statement 2: in several cases the position of the cluster on the factorial dimension is coherent but not deducible from the content of the Images. For instance, at the level of content, Image 4 seems to express an attitude of reaction and rejection and only by referring to its position in the field can we see that this attitude can be understood as a form of commitment to autonomy - albeit unsuccessful. Moreover, the position of Image 6 within the symbolic field leads us to assume that the *homo homini lupus* vision conveyed by that Image seems to be at least partially a reflection of an unsatisfied demand for affiliation.

This result legitimates our assumption that the representational content is not the place of the psychological significance, but the way in which the psychological significance is conveyed. In other words, the psychological value does not lie in the content of the Image, but in its sense, as it emerges from the position of the Image in the whole symbolic field shared by students.

Comparison of the Latent dimension of sense and the Images between cohorts

It is worth noticing that the two main factors extracted by both MCAs are interpretable in a very similar way between the analyses. Consistent with our statement 3, this would mean that the two years were spent in HS without changes of the affective frame of sense of such an experience. Ultimately, we have to conclude that becoming a HS student does not entail psychological transition, as we have defined it. Rather, our findings induce us to think that the structure of sense we have depicted is shared by PSM students too, working as a basic dimension of continuity between the two school settings (and perhaps working as a resource that facilitates role identification).

According to our statement 4, the permanence of a latent structure of sense between first and third level HS students occurs even if representational contents change. As a matter of fact, the Images enucleated are quite different between the two cohorts. We focus here on three main aspects.

Firstly, according to our interpretation, the representational contents of the Images are differentiated, with only some - however partial - similarities.

• Third level students' Image A is similar to first level students' Image 3 as regards the commitment to one's own future success, although in the former case it is the

activity of the student rather than the feeling of membership of the school context that nourishes this commitment;

- Image B is similar to Image 4, although the latter focuses on the here and now of the school experience, while Image B projects depressive feelings far beyond the school arena;

- Image F shares with Image 4 the juxtaposition between family and public context (school, local community); yet in Image 4 the family is not connoted as a specific and alternative system of values.

From a general standpoint, one can easily understand the content differences between the two cohorts as an obvious effect of the expansion of the sphere of autonomy of the older students, entailing a stronger reference to secondary relationships (work, social context).

Within the limitations of the method adopted, our analysis has shown that both cohorts share the same frame of affective sense, even if they interpret it in different ways, developing the sensemaking process in terms of different kinds of representational content. This leads us to conclude, according to our model, that at least in the case analyzed, entrance to HS has produced relevant semantic change, but no psychological transition. Obviously we propose this conclusion as not definitive. It needs to be submitted to longitudinal analyses, in further school settings.

Our analysis highlights how very constraining it can be to focus on the discrete content of items: the same items, or items with similar meaning, can have a very different psychological sense, depending on which other items they are associated with. As we said, this assumption has led us to a structural model of psychological transition. This has conceptual implications that must logically arise from our findings. From a theoretical point of view they are coherent with our combined socio-constructivist and psychoanalytic approach to sensemaking, modelling it in terms of a double level of analysis: the representational content, and the shared latent affective dimension, the latter working as the symbolic frame of sensemaking.

From a more general epistemological point of view, our findings underline the need for psychology to go beyond the naïve way of looking at psychological phenomena, in our case at psychological transition.

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