

Long abstract – Monographic section

YOUNG PEOPLE BEYOND STEREOTYPES
Edited by Carlo Buzzi

Children's social categorisation practices and family background

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The aim of this essay is to deepen understanding of family background's impact on children's social categorisation practice.

Social categories correspond to groupings of various kinds of individuals based on characteristics that are considered similar. These groupings allow individuals to identify some aspects of someone's social identity (as well as the characteristics related to "gender", "sex", "age", etc.).

Indeed, children's social categorisation practices have been widely studied in many countries worldwide, but the influence of family background remains poorly researched.

Family background' influences have been studied in English-speaking and North European countries. These studies focus more on family socio-economic variables and their influence on children's socio-economic categorization. Similarly, the French tradition, based on the Bourdiesian *primary habitus* notion, takes into account the impact of the family's context, especially the socio-economic variable, on children's profession hierarchisation rather than on more general processes of children's social categorization.

This study focuses instead on the effects of overall family background variables (as well as cultural variables) and their influences on children's social categorization practices.

The research questions were therefore: i. Which are the main social categories used by children in first grade? (Compared to those used by adults); ii. Are there categories, amongst them, that literature has not yet discovered?; iii. What are the family variables that influence children's social categorisation practices? iv. What is the relationship between children's and mothers' social categorisation practices?

To investigate these research questions an empirical research study was conducted in Italy in 2019 on a sample consisting of ninety-six children (in three primary schools tracked according to ESCS- Economic-Social-Cultural-Status). First-grade children as well as their parents were interviewed using photo-elicitation interviews. The children's parents were also interviewed using a questionnaire to reconstruct the families' socio-economic and cultural profiles.

The responses of the children and their parents were grouped according to their semantic meaning. The ex post interpretative categories were then reconstructed and named according to the main social categories found in literature.

Gender and sexuality correspond to the categories most frequently named by all respondents among the eighteen photo-stimuli presented. The other categories indicated by the children are

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age, family role, geographical affiliation, religious affiliation, profession and economic positioning.

Thanks to the mixed-methods analytical approach, it was possible to cross-reference the responses from the photo-elicitation interviews with the responses from the parents' questionnaires.

Mixed methods analytic approach showed the relevant impact of family context on children categorisation processes. Family's *education level, nationality and some cultural practices* play an important role in child categorization.

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