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European Ph.D. on
Social Representations and Communication
At the Multimedia LAB & Research Center, Rome-Italy

Social Representations in Action and Construction
in Media and Society

"Identity and Social Representations:
Cultural and Mythical Dimensions"

From 26th April - 4th May 2008

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Participants Presentation



European Ph.D

on Social Representations and Communication

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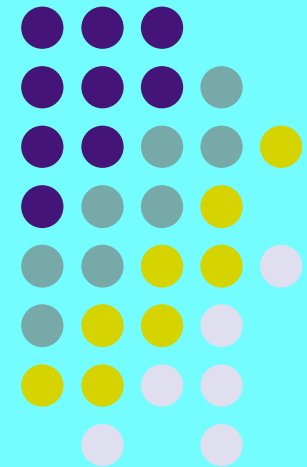
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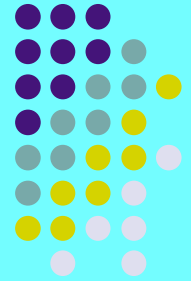
THE SOCIAL REPRESENTATION OF SUICIDE AMONG ROMANIAN ADOLESCENTS

MIOARA CRISTEA
ANDRA-MARIA CICIOC
RALUCA ALEXOAIE

11TH LAB MEETING, ROME, APRIL 2008

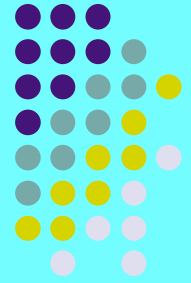


THE SOCIAL REPRESENTATION OF SUICIDE AMONG ROMANIAN ADOLESCENTS



„Almost 3000 people commit suicide every day which means that at every 30 second a person takes its own life” (World Organization of Health)

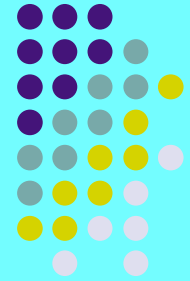
THE SOCIAL REPRESENTATION OF SUICIDE AMONG ROMANIAN ADOLESCENTS



ARGUMENTS

- a) *the delicateness of the topic* make it difficult for researchers to find appropriate methods to collect data from people;
- b) *the relevance of the topic for the Romanian society*, and not only, if we consider the fact that the cases of suicide and the attempts as well have become more numerous according to national and international statistic;

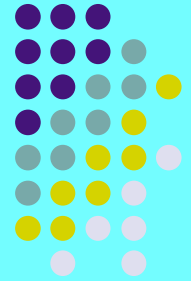
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EXAMPLE

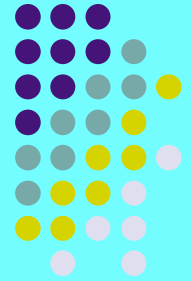
- The annual report of the legal medical network shows that in 2006, 27% of the deaths were the cause of a suicide attempt and, the number of suicide has increased with almost 20% percentage;
- There were 2913 reported cases of suicide in 2005 and, 3 187 cases in 2006. In Bucharest , the capital of Romania, the medical network has reported over 256 cases, a double number considering the year 1986, but half of the cases reported in 2000 (511 suicides).

AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS



 *Underpinning a preliminary descriptive study regarding the information teenagers share on the web forums on the topic of suicide (Romanian web forums) and, try to correlate the results with the further data in order to verify whether the “freedom of expression” and “anonymity” offered by the virtual space influences the disclosure of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in connection with suicide.*

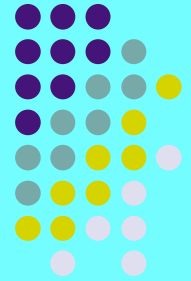
AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS



SO FAR...

- WE HAVE IDENTIFIED 6 ROMANIAN SITES WHERE ADOLESCENTS TALK ABOUT SUICIDE(METHODS, ATTITUDES, CASES OF SUICIDES, ETC);

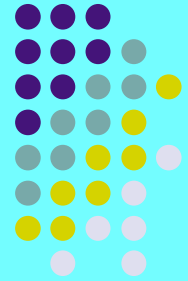
AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS



2. *Identifying the content and internal structure of the social representation of “suicide” among adolescents:*

- ✌️ ① the central core and the peripheral system of the SR of suicide using the free task association (Abric, 1973);
- 👉 ① the centrality of the core central elements using the model of Rouquette and Guimelli (1994) regarding the cognitive basis schemas.
- 👍 ① the content (emotions, thoughts, attitudes, the main themes) of the SR by using the “argumentative units task” (DiGiacomo, 1989).

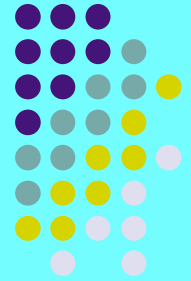
AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS



SO FAR...

- 81 adolescents(35 boys and 46 girls) have completed a free association task and, a questionnaire related to definitions, reasons and consequences of suicide among
- 81 adolescents have written an one-page essay regarding the meaning of life and death;

AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS

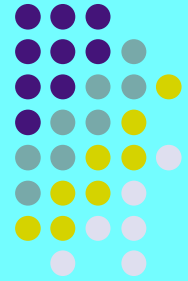


3. *Identifying the meaning of life and death for adolescents (main themes and dimensions).*

4. *Analyzing the relationship between the social representation of suicide and the conception about the meaning of life and death among students.*

Hypothesis: I assume that the social representation of suicide is not an autonomous representation; therefore, its core central should contain elements that are connected to the adolescents' conception regarding the meaning of life and death.

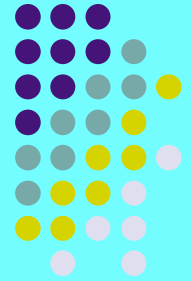
AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS



5. Analyzing the differences between adolescents who have tried to commit suicide or have thought about and adolescents who have never thought of suicide.

- ⌘ **Theory of disengagement** (Farberow, NL, Marmor, K., 1996) - suicidal individuals detach from the source of their pain, withdraw from social relationships and, become more self-oriented;
- ⌘ **Theory of Hopelessness** - suicide takes place during extended periods of sadness and desperation.
- ⌘ **The group attribution error** (Scott & Messick, 1985);

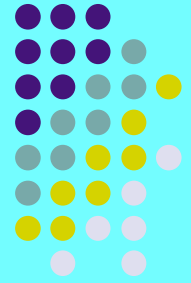
AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS



Hypothesis:

- ① The SR of suicide of the adolescents, who have tried to take their own life should contain more references to themselves, their inner self rather than their relationship with others and, also, more negative emotions and death related-issues.
- ② The meaning of life and death of the adolescents, who have tried to take their own life should contain elements that underline a more pessimistic view of life and, more references to death than life.
- c) The CC of the SR of the adolescents who have attempted to suicide should contain more elements that define the suicide person as a victim of the society (external attributions) while the SR of the adolescents who have never thought about it, should contain more elements that define suicide person as mentally deranged or weak persons (internal attributions).

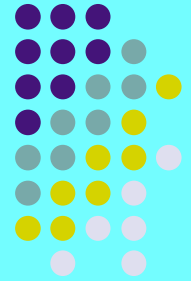
AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS



⌚📖 *Analyzing the gender influences on the social representation of suicide.*

Hypothesis: There should be significant differences between the social representation of girls and boys regarding suicide and the suicidal person: girls' representation should contain more adjectives describing the suicidal person as a victim, a person that is seeking help and, needs our support while boys' representation should contain attributes defining the suicidal person as a coward or the opposite as a courageous person who has enough power to chose when to die.

AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS



 *Analyzing the influence of the type of college attended by adolescents on the social representation of suicide.*

Hypothesis: There should be differences between adolescents' social representation of suicide due to the type of college they are attending: adolescents studying in prestigious high-schools interpret suicide as an act of "seeking for freedom": the person who tries it in fact wants to release himself from the psychological pressure exercised by the school and family while the adolescents studying in the peripheral high-schools might see this "act of courage" as a cowardly behavior.

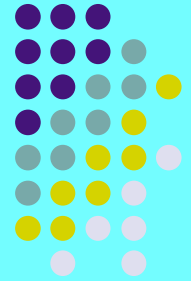
AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS



8. Analyzing the influence of social background of the adolescents on the social representation of suicide.

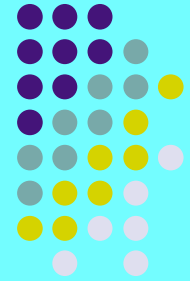
Hypothesis: I expect to find differences in the SR of suicide between adolescents living in the urban areas and adolescents living in the rural zone, differences that are due to their religiosity, moral values and, life experience.

AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS



9. Outlining possible intervention strategies based on the information collected from adolescents.

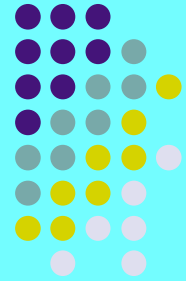
METHODOLOGY



PARTICIPANTS:

- ④ adolescents who have tried or have thought about taking their life versus adolescents who have never thought about adolescents who have never tried or thought about taking their own life;
- ④ adolescents of different sex : boys versus girls;
- ④ adolescents studying in prestigious high-schools and colleges versus adolescents studying in the peripheral high-schools;
- ④ adolescents from the urban zones versus adolescents from the rural zone;

METHODOLOGY



VARIABLES:

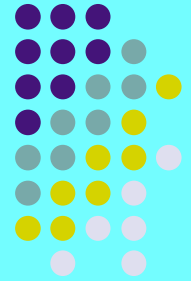
Dependent variables:

- a) *the content and the internal structure* (core and peripheral elements) of the SR of suicide;
- b) *the dimensions of the “life and death meaning” of adolescents;*

Independent variables:

- a) *Experience with suicide:* people with suicidal attempts versus people with no suicidal attempts;
- b) *Gender:* females versus males;
- c) *Social background:* rural versus urban background;
- d) *Type of high school attended:* prestigious versus peripheral high-schools;

METHODOLOGY



A. DATA COLLECTION

- a.1) free association task (Abric, 1973)
- a.2) argumentative units task (DiGiacomo, 1986)
- a.3) writing an essay task (Jodelet, 1989)
- a.4) the specific association and connection tasks proposed by Rouquette and Guimelli (1992)
- a.5) a questionnaire built upon the SR dimensions previously identified in order make comparison between the different groups;

METHODOLOGY



B. DATA ANALYSIS:

b.1) thematic content analysis;

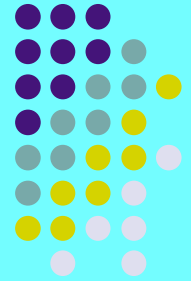
b.2) thematic content analysis;

b.3) *the prototypical analysis* (Verges, 1992, 1994) and the *Chi square analysis* (SPSS) to identify the elements of the central core and the peripheral system;

b.4) *multidimensional analysis* (Doise, Clémence & Loenzi-Cioldi, 1992) - relations and connections of the core's elements and, therefore, verifying the centrality of the core's elements;

b.5) *factor analysis and comparative analysis* (SPSS) to underline the correlations between the SR of suicide and the dimensions of the life and death meaning and, the possible differences between the different groups mentioned above.

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RESULTS...

- We will inform you about our results in the following meetings;**