SOCIAL WORKER AND MOVIES:
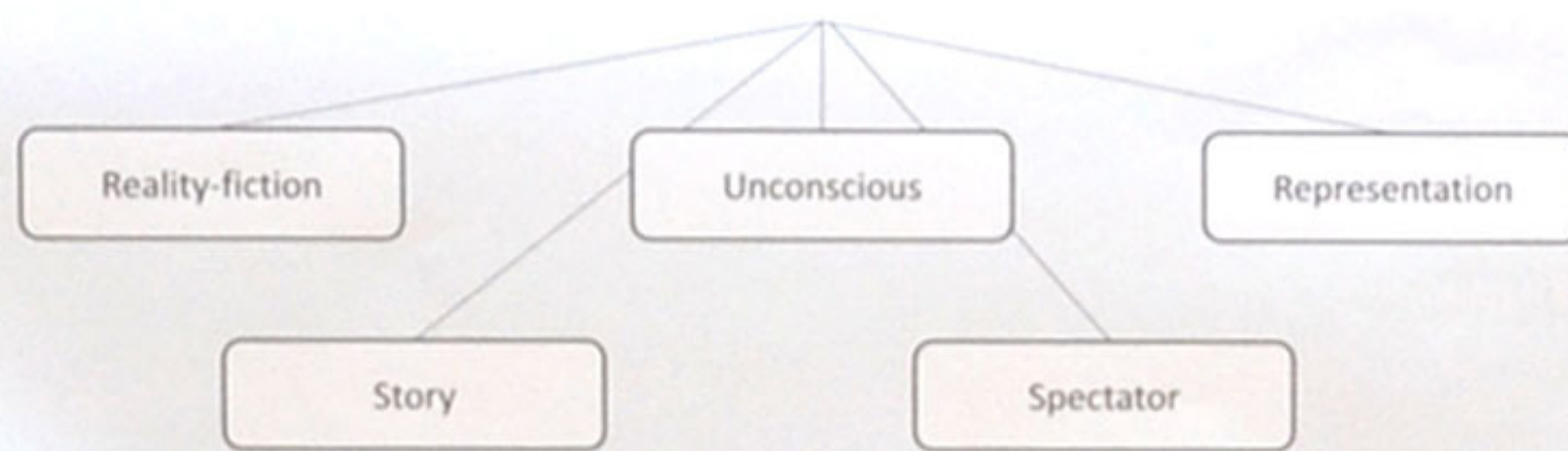## THE DUALITY OF REPRESENTATION AND REALITY

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CINEMA

- Reality-fiction
- Unconscious
- Representation
- Story
- Spectator

Stories allow identifying common meanings which in turn have the function of increasing groups' cohesion, and more generally of shaping values and beliefs systems in society.

Watching a movie is not a passive experience: movies activate metacognitive processes in the spectator that allows him/her to reflect upon his/her own experience and to critically engage with his/her own established cultural toolkits. This process has an educational purpose: a movie can push the audience to change, redefine, or create new interpretative frameworks to make sense of the reality and of the self.

OBJECTIVES

Is the social worker portrayed in the movie? If so, how?
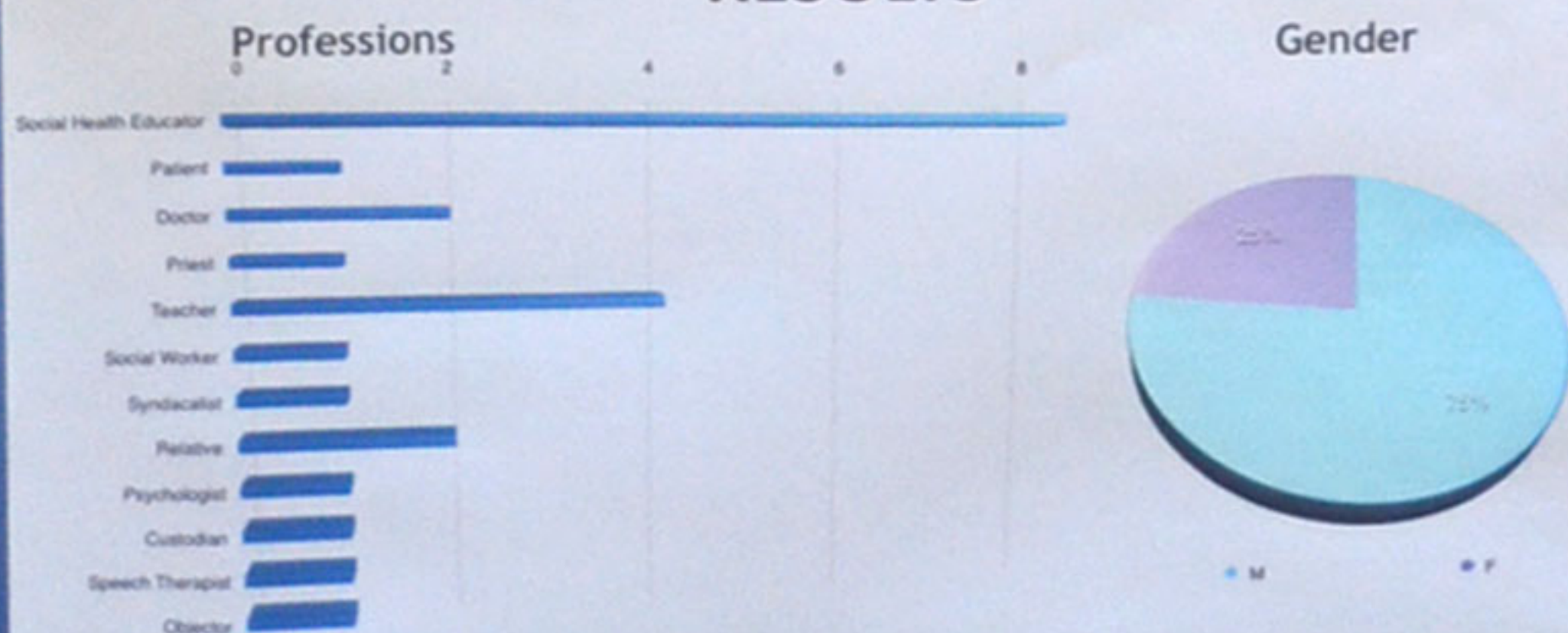Which are the analogies between film and reality?

Goal of this research is to analyze how cinema represents social health educators and related professions and to compare these representations with the actual portray of them in "real life", within the boundaries that constrain and define the profession in Italy

METHOD

I watched and analyzed 24 movies (10 U.S., 5 Europe, 9 Italy) selected through snowball sampling. The data have been organized along two main dimensions and relative variables:
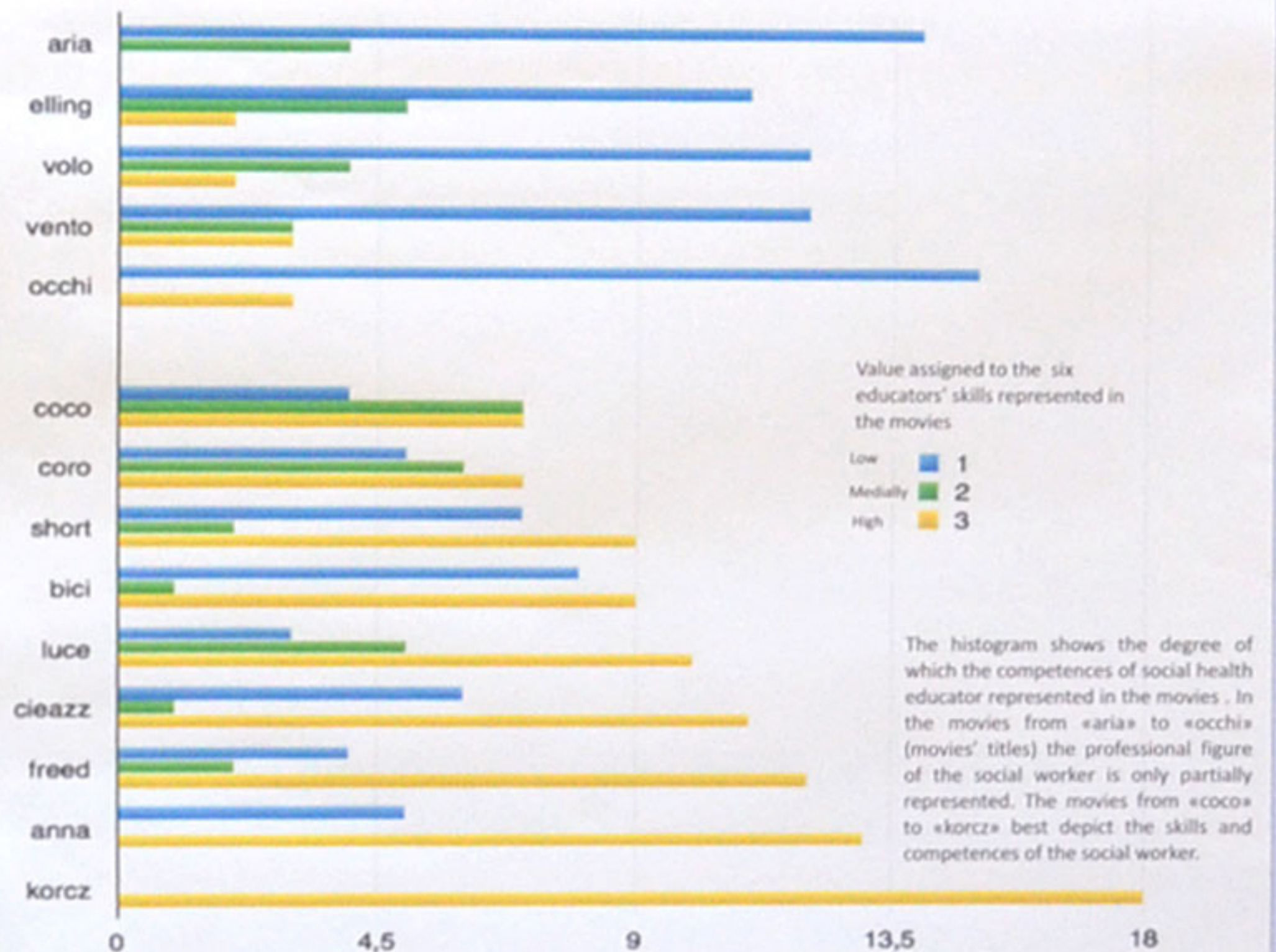
Data about movies
- Title
- Year
- Director
- Place of production

Feautures of social health educator
- Social-demographic data
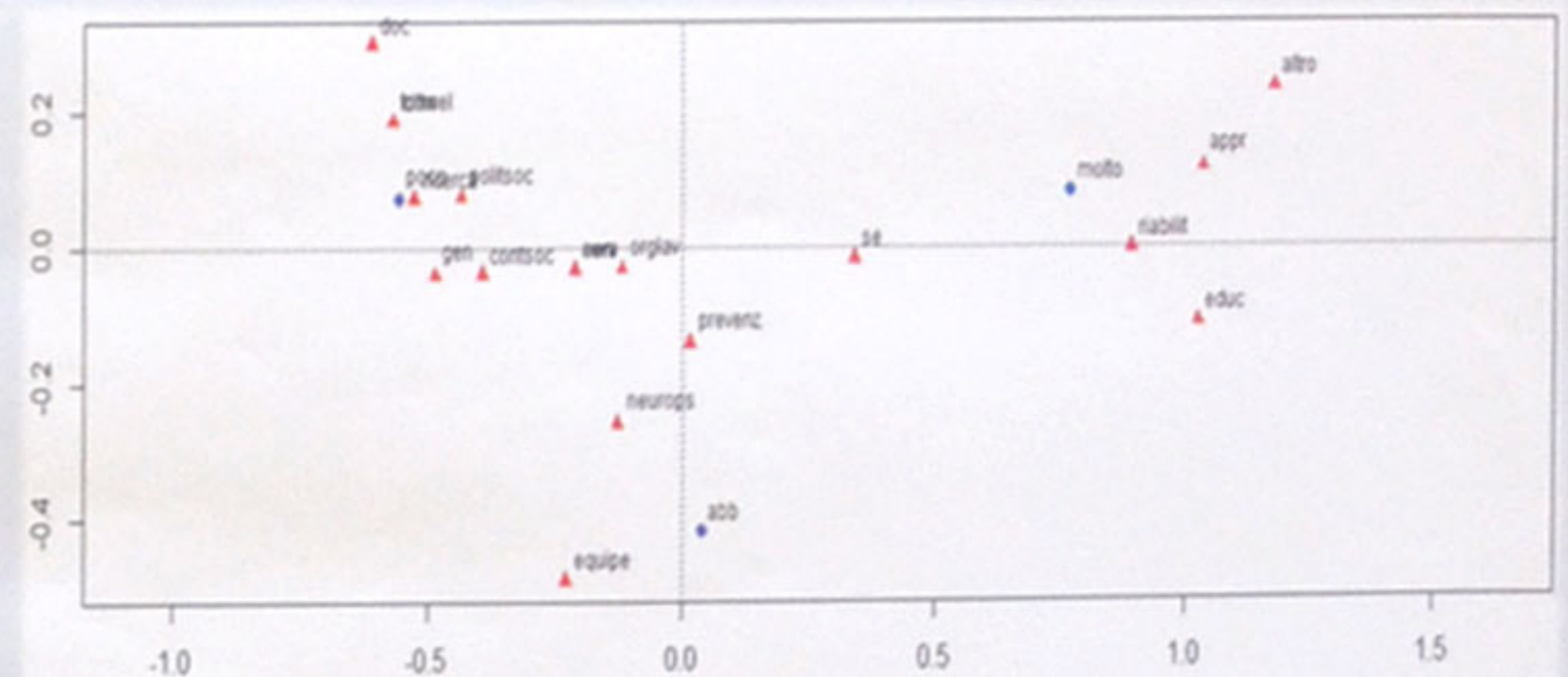- Main skills

RESULTS

Professions

Gender

In eight movies out of 24 the main character represents the social worker formally recognized as such. In the other 16 movies, the functions of the social worker are performed by other professional figures

75% of the actors analyzed in the movies are male, 25% are female. This data does not match with the data in real world.

Skills

Value assigned to the six educators' skills represented in the movies
- Low 1
- Medially 2
- High 3

The histogram shows the degree of which the competences of social health educator represented in the movies . In the movies from «aria» to «occhi» (movies' titles) the professional figure of the social worker is only partially represented. The movies from «coco» to «korcz» best depict the skills and competences of the social worker.

Correspondence analysis between movies and skills

The graph shows the correspondence analysis between the six competences of the social worker (each divided in three specific variables) and the presence of the in the 24 movies analyzed measured form 1 (low presence) to 3 (high presence). For example, the competences close to the point labeled «molto» (high presence) are: riabilitazione, educazione.
The most represented competences are the «competenza relazionale» (variables: «se» and «altro») and the competences of «progettazione e azione educativa» and «didattica e riabilitativa»

CONCLUSIONS

If we take representations in the movies as a proxy of social consciousness, my data suggests that the social worker is not yet clearly distinguished from other professions also in real world.

Changes in the social recognition and in the collective imaginary of the social worker as a professional figure might translate in changes in the representation of this figure in movies. And, conversely, movies might act as force toward change in the first place.

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