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Participants Presentation

Genesis, development and actuality of the Social Representation theory in more than fifty years (1961-2011 and beyond): the main paradigms and the "modelling approach"



European/International Joint Ph.D.
in Social Representations and Communication



The Ethnographic Approach to Social Representations

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*This approach promotes analyzing how Social Representations are shaped by **sociogenetic**, **ontogenetic** and **microgenetic** factors (de Rosa, 2013).*

*From the **sociogenetic** viewpoint, Social Representations are in a constant process of change, of evolution.*

Mechanisms → representations circulate within a society, successive historical processes

*From the **ontogenetic** viewpoint, the birth of a SR precedes the birth of the human baby.*

Access to them → community

*From the **microgenetic** viewpoint, SR are constantly being shaped up across human interactions, as the actors involved try to reach some form of consensus about the problems at hand through conversation and discourse.*

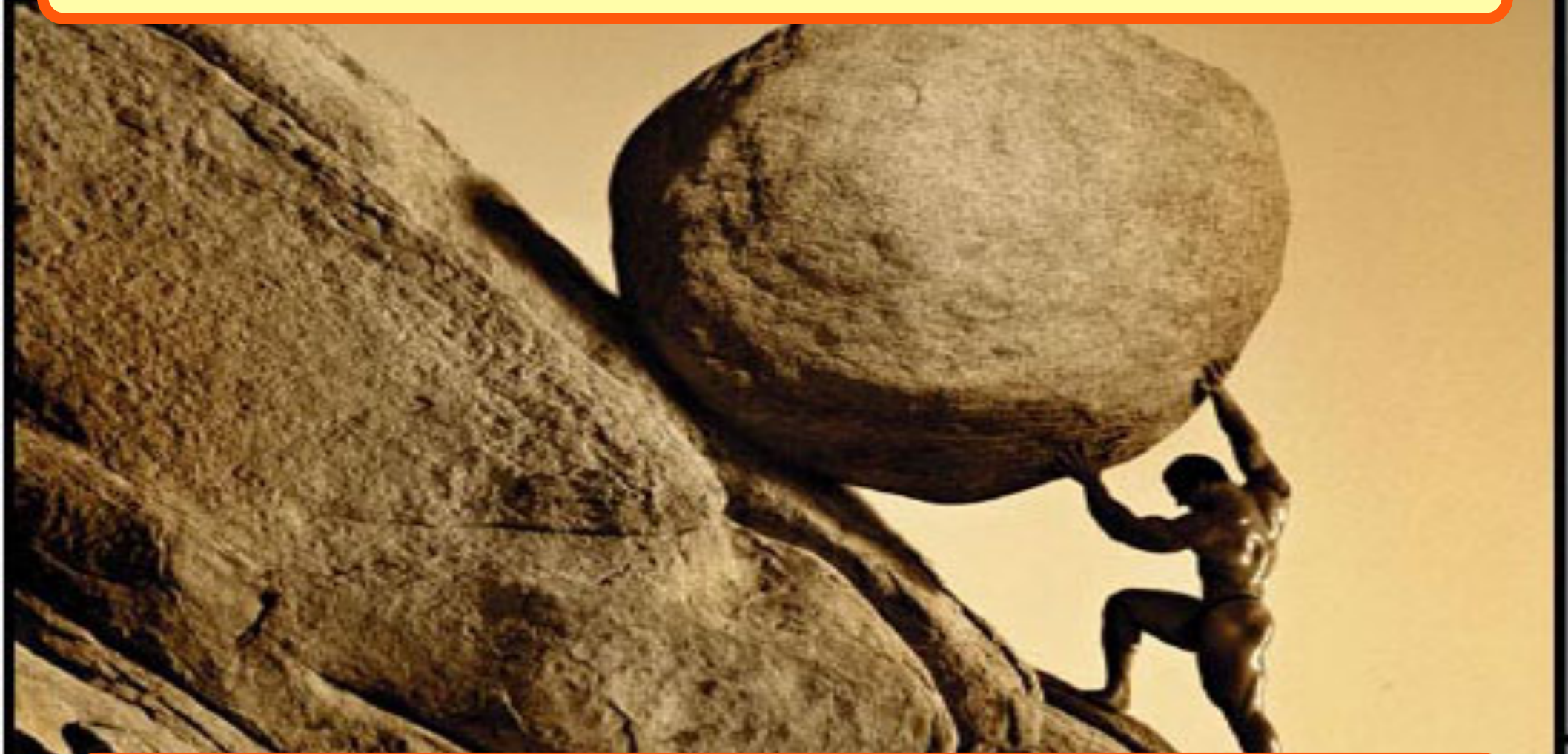
SR need to be explored within the socio-cultural context in which they occur, and to depict them by only offering a formal account of the psychological and cognitive processes that come into play in their construction may be inadequate and, ultimately, reductionist.



The genesis of our social knowledge is considered within the social and interactionist framework in which it is created.

SR have a very dynamic and volatile nature given ← they are positioned inside “the triadic asymmetry of self, other and object”, => to “not study culture in general, but our culture in a particular historical context and with a specific historical purpose.”

*Social Representations Theory should be considered as the anthropology of contemporary culture.
Moscovici, 1987*



The researchers working within the domain are practically interested with the dynamic life of the populations they investigate – that is, their myths and beliefs, their understanding of different social objects and the afferent imagery, their social exchanges and daily practices. In order to grasp these fluid worlds, one must understand them in the interrelated manner in which they exist.

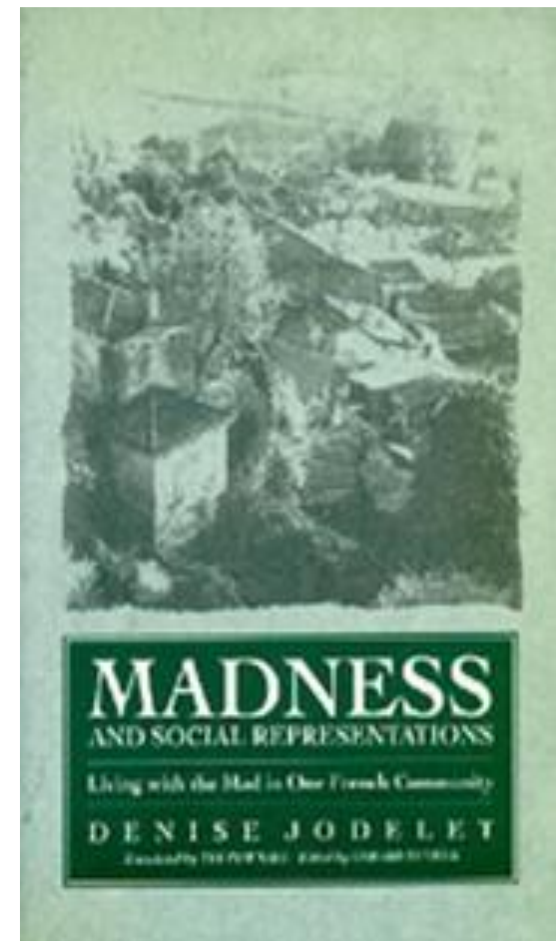
Researchers who cross the boundaries of a specific collective universe of a community observe the interactions taking place, listen to what the group members tell them, and do not use this information to see if those people perceive reality accurately or in a distorted fashion – individuals' own thinking is documented, such as it is.

Seminal works within this approach

1. Denise Jodelet (1991)

*“Madness and Social Representations:
Living with the mad in one French community”*

- * Participant observation;*
- * Interviews with the residents to trace back their history of the “family colony”;*
- * Examination of documents about how this historical unfolding of events came to pass;*
- * Interviews with the nurses who cared for the patients and the families in the households of which the mentally ill lived.*



Duveen and Lloyd (1993)

** observation of the interactions of children in two different primary schools to see how the Social Representations of gender in children are developed over their multiple interactive contexts. They focused on how children interacted in the play groups they themselves were organizing, as well as how they interacted in groups formed by the teachers*

Children are socialized to fill in the gender roles they are expected to - and assigned to - by their community, as the members (the adults around the child, the teachers, and so on) already share a collective social representation of gender that the children have to access in order to be able to join the life of that community.

Gender identity is constructed both externally and internally, it is about both identifying yourself and about being given an identity by others.

SR of gender is internalized by children over the course of their development, through all the practices and modes of behaviour to which there are introduced by their respective community.

