

25th International Lab Meeting – 20th Summer School 2014 13th – 19th July 2014, Rome (Italy)

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

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***“TAKING STOCK OF THE LITERATURE IN THE THEMATIC
FIELD OF “SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS & POLITICS:
MULTIDIMENSIONAL IDENTITIES, INTERGROUP
RELATIONS, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND ACTIVE
MINORITIES”***

WHAT NOW IS THE STATUS OF SR?

- ✘ SR theorists have an eclectic method
- ✘ SR is a phenomenon which needs data and theories (Moscovici, 1985)

HOW MANY LEVELS OF SR DO EXIST?

LEVELS OF SR

- ✘ Level a) SR as a phenomenon: “ways of knowing”
- ✘ Level b) SR as a theory: the collection of methodological definition and elaboration of constructs regarding SR
- ✘ Level c) as a meta-theory: the sum of criticism also in comparison with *other theoretical models*

RELEVANCE OF SR FOR POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

- ✘ SR are shared knowledge, and the way interpretations of the world are collectively elaborated is critical to the way people are able to act within the world.
- ✘ SR are meta-knowledge, which implies that collective behavior can often be influenced more powerfully at the level of meta-representations than of intimate beliefs.
- ✘ SR are enacted communication, which means that social influence is exerted by the factors that constrain social practices as much as by the discourse that interprets these practices.
- ✘ SR are world-making assumptions: collective understandings do not only reflect existing realities but often bring social reality into being

EXAMPLES

- ✘ The anchoring of Arabs to social representations of German Nazis perhaps meant that both Arabs and Nazis were perceived as posing an ‘existential threat to the personal and collective Jewish self’ (Bar On, 2008).
- ✘ Awareness of social representations of the Holocaust, may enhance the belonging and continuity principles of identity in particular between Israeli Jews, and it is argued that the maintenance of national in-group security constitutes a source of (group) continuity (Jaspal & Yampolsky, 2011).

META-ANALYSES?

- ✘ The conflicting historical narratives regarding the historical injustices committed and the ways to rectify them presents the SR literature on these issues as rich of theoretical references to other constructs and theories, as well as of a great thematic variety.
- ✘ In accordance with the specific research focus, the literature of SR, in this respect, might reveal a configuration of groups, subgroups, and coalitions that through dialogue construct *polemic representations* to challenge *hegemonic ones*.