

**European Ph.D. on Social Representations and Communication International Lab Meetings
New series of events 2005-2008**

 <p>MARIE CURIE ACTIONS</p>	<p>European Commission Research Directorate General Human Resources and Mobility</p> <p>MARIE CURIE CONFERENCES & TRAINING COURSES (MSCF-CT-2004-013264)</p>		<p>Social Representations in action and construction in Media and Society</p> <p>SoReCoMedia & Society</p>
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2nd International European Ph.D. Lab Meeting

**Social Representations
in action and construction in Media and Society**

**“Image-based research methods for analysing representations in action
in different cultural contexts”**

at the Multimedia Lab in Rome

in combination with worldwide online connection points

The Brazilian research on social representations in 2003

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1. Some notes to tell the story

Why social representations in Latin America?

The 70's

- Paris/Europe: cultural and political effervescence
- EHESS = meeting point for latinos: seminars by Moscovici/Jodelet: resistance, active minorities, diffusion and transformation of ideas

The beginning:

- Latin American students return to their countries
- 1982 – Denise Jodelet invited to Venezuela by Maria Auxiliadora Banchs → invited to NE of Brazil:

- course on Social Representations (SR)
- consultancy for the projet SR of mental and physical health, Federal University of Paraiba (UFPb)/National Centre for the Development of Research (CNPq)
- visit to the Master and PhD Program on Education(UFPb)

→ São Paulo – invited by the Brazilian Association of Social Psychology (ABRAPSO) for the Congress of Brazilian Society for the Advance of Science

→ 3 fields of major presence of SR in Brazil: Education, Health and Psychology

Latent period of SRT in Brazil: till the 90's

Reasons:

1. difficulties for diffusion:

- few specialists, living far from the scientific centres of the country; distances, communications --> spread production, lack of contact among researchers

2. The crisis of psychology and the alternatives in the late 70's

- positivist paradigm still hegemonic in Psychology
- marxist paradigm in Social Sciences

~ Europe

Beginning to change

Two important occasions:

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- 1992 – VI National Congress of Social Psychology (ABRAPSO – Brazilian Association of Social Psychology) in Rio de Janeiro
- 1994 – II International Conference on SR in Rio de Janeiro
- > visibility of the SRT grows --> the microscopical work spread in different regions of the country appears; researchers who did not know each other get together
- > 1997 IX National Congress of Social Psychology (ABRAPSO) in Minas Gerais gathers researchers who discuss strategies of articulation and visibility such as:
 - collecting data throughout the country for the state of the art
 - organizing a journey of discussions with the participation of different perspectives in the field of SR: Moscovici, Jodelet, Doise, Rouquette, Wagner, Markova, Lahlou (Abric can't come) --> I International Journey on SR in Natal, 1998, attended by 400 people

2. The proposal

This text will describe what can be considered the major Brazilian production in 2003: the texts of communications to the III International Journey on SR (IJSR), which took place in Rio de Janeiro in september 2003. These texts were reviewed by specialists and, when approved, integrally published in the CD Rom of the Journey.

The IJSR take place in a different city and region of the country at each time. The first journey took place in 1998, in Natal, NE of Brazil, the second in 2001 in Florianopolis, South of the country . In 2003, more than 500 people attended the third Journey in Rio. The next IJSR will be in november this year, in Paraiba, NE region, and after that, it will be in Brasilia, central region of the country.

The IJSRs, besides the presence of senior researchers, intend to contribute to the training of junior researchers in Brasil. It is not an ordinary congress, where communications are read in seminars and round tables. Its goal is the discussion among scholars of different levels of familiarity with the theory so as to improve understanding and application of the SRT. Therefore, besides the conferences and symposia, the strategy adopted is the working group by theme, where senior and junior scholars discuss together.

In the 2003 journey 336 communications were presented. Of these, 187 were published in full. Most of them were presented during the thematic working groups (TWG). Some others were presented as posters. The themes established by the organization of the IJSR were:

- Education
- Health
- Communication and Science
- Memory and culture

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- Politics and Justice
- Brazilian Problems

The two first coincide with specific fields of knowledge and present the largest production in SR. Memory and Culture included communications about the imaginary; Politics and Justice dealt with research on Human Rights, among others; Brazilian Problems included exclusion, violence and also environmental issues. Transversal themes such as gender, for example, were allocated according to their object. This division reflects and confirms the Brazilian interdisciplinary production in the SRT field.

Table 1 shows the texts orally presented and those which were published in full, according to the theme. Education, pioneer in the field of SR and so far champion in the number of works in the last IJSRs, was equaled by Health. They have around one third of all the TWG published texts each (29,9 and 29,4% respectively). The second position goes to three themes: Memory and Culture (12,3%), Brazilian Problems (12,3%), Communication and Science (11,2%). Politics and Justice come far behind (4,8%)

Table 1. Papers orally presented (TWG & posters) and papers published in full, according to the theme - III IJSR, Rio de Janeiro, 2003

	Presentés	%	Publiés	%
Education	102	30,2	55	29,4
Santé/Health	99	29,4	56	29,9
Communic & Science	37	11	21	11,2
Memoire & Culture	48	14,3	23	12,3
Politique & Justice	26	7,7	9	4,8
Problèmes brésiliens	24	7,1	23	12,3
Total	336	100,0	187	100,0

For this analysis, papers presented in working groups were chosen because the criteria for submission established that they should report a finished research, while communications presented as posters could relate to on progress research or even unstarted research projects.

All the texts were fully read. This helped to separate research works which claimed to apply the SRT and those which only referred to it. The 124 texts which claimed to apply the theory (table 2) were the analysed *corpus* .

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Table 2. Published texts in TWG and texts that claim to apply the SRT, according to the theme - III IJSR, Rio de Janeiro, 2003

TWG or theme	TWG texts Published	Claimed to apply SRT	%
Education	43	42	97,7
Santé/Health	46	42	91,3
Communic & Science	15	10	66,7
Memoire & Culture	13	9	69,2
Politique & Justice	7	7	100,0
Problèmes brésiliens	17	14	82,3
Total	141	124	88,6

A grid for analysis was applied to these 124 texts. We will now see the following aspects:

- References chosen with main quoted authors
- Dimension of studied population
- Collecting data procedures
- Analysis procedures
- Content of the texts

3. Preference rankings

Table 2 offers an indication of adherence to the SRT: it presents the number of texts that claim to apply it to each theme, even though sometimes this did not fully happen. Only one group presents total adherence: Politics and Justice (100%), which is the smallest one. The next one is Education, (97,7%), almost in the same proportion as Health (91,3%). These are interesting proportions, considering the size of such groups. Note that while Education takes a slight advantage over Health concerning the number of texts, when it comes to the declared adherence to the SRT it goes the other way around. Brazilian Problems comes next (82,3%). The last ones are Memory and Culture (69,2%) and Communication and Science (66,7%). These groups had participants from History and Anthropology, used to the different approaches in the study of SR, and this may explain their position.

Table 3 points out the ranking of texts presented and published in each theme. Almost all texts about Health were accepted for publication (95,8%), followed by Education (89,6%) and Brazilian Problems (85%). On the other hand, Memory and Culture texts have the lowest score (65%), and the average zone includes Communication and Science (72,3%) and Politics and Justice (70%). The explanation for this distribution cannot be based exclusively on the amount of texts in each theme, nor on a better

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quality of an area over others. As we worked on the reception of the reviewed texts, we noticed that authors not always sent the modifications requested. For different reasons, they gave up publishing, but there is no register of the frequency of giving up in each theme.

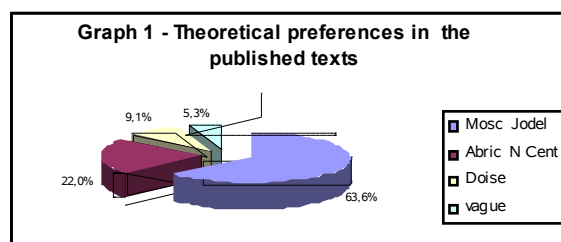
Tabela 3. Papers orally presented in TWG and texts published according to the theme III IJSR, Rio de Janeiro, 2003

TWG or theme	Presented	Published	% published
Education	48	43	89,6
Santé/Health	48	46	95,8
Communic & Science	21	15	72,3
Memoire & Culture	20	13	65
Politique & Justice	10	7	70
Problèmes brésiliens	20	17	85
Total	167	141	84,4

4. Theoretical Preferences

Moscovici & Jodelet are the major references, with three fifths of the indications (63,6%). As they represent the foundational trend of the theory, they are mentioned even when other affiliations are declared. These other references give more precision to this distribution. The Central Core theory (CCT), generally referring to Abric but also mentioning authors such as Guimelli and Flament, gets almost another fifth of the preferences (22%), while the Geneva School, which refers to Doise, has almost one tenth of the choices (9,1%).

The preference for Doise goes mainly with justice and human rights themes. It seems to get some visibility in a IJSR for the first time. The CCT was also a surprise. A higher score in the preference of the researchers was expected for it. To conclude, even if we took the amount of all the other choices from the number of references to Moscovici & Jodelet, these would still remain the most frequent confirming the place of the “grande theorie”, as Doise said.



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Table 4 shows the distribution of choices according to the themes. The plain preference for Moscovici & Jodelet appears clearly in Health and Education (38,1 and 36,9% respectively), may be because these are the fields in which the theory first penetrated, but it may have to do with the characteristics of this trend of research and the needs of these fields.

The CCT is equally distributed in those two fields (34.5% each). The same goes for Memory and Culture and Brazilian Problems (10,3% each).

The Geneva school is present in the studies about Brazilian problems (36,4%), Politics & Justice (27,2%) and Education (18.2%). Such studies are generally about the same themes Doise and his colleagues are most interested.

Texts without a clear reference to specific SRT authors are not very frequent. Half of them come from the Health TWG (50%), and one fourth from Brazilian Problems

Table 4. Theoretical preferences in the published texts according to the themes
 IJSR, Rio de Janeiro, 2003 *
 N= 132

TWG or theme	Mosc	%	Abric	%	Doise	%	Vague	%	Tot	%
	Jodel		CCT						al	
Education	31	36.9	10	34.5	2	18.2	1	12,5	44	33.3
Santé/Health	32	38.1	10	34.5	1	9.1	4	50	47	35,6
Communic & Science	7	8.4	2	6,9	1	9.1	-	-	10	7.6
Memoire & Culture	6	7.1	3	10,3	-	-	1	12,5	1	7.6
Politique & Justice	3	3.6	1	3,4	3	27.2	-	-	0	5.3
Problèmes brésiliens	5	6	3	10,3	4	36.4	2	25	7	10.6
Total	84	63,6	29	22	11	8.3	8	6,1	132	100

Theoretical choices according to the themes

Education is the group of texts with the highest adherence to the original trend of the SRT (70,4%, table 5). The same proportion appears in Communication & Science (70%), but this group is much smaller. Health themes come next (68,1%). These three areas present a coincidental order of choices: the CCT is the second choice and the Geneva School is hardly chosen. Memory & Culture, also two small groups, follow the same pattern Politics & e Justice and Brazilian Problems bring another pattern: Doise comes before the CCT..

* The total in this table is more than the number of texts because some of them mention two types of references, generally Moscovici/Jodelet, considered as the same, and a second one.

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Table 5. Theoretical choices according to the themes - III JIRS, 2003²
 N=132

Theor choice	Edu cat	%	Hea lth	%	Co Sci	%	Me Cul	%	Pol Just	%	Bra pro	%	Tot al	%
Mosc Jodel	31	70,4	3	68,1	7	70	6	60	3	42.8	5	35.7	84	63,
Abric	10	22,7	10	21.3	2	20	3	30	1	14.3	3	21.4	29	22
CCT														
Doise	2	4.5	1	2.1	1	10	1	10	3	42.8	4	28.6	12	9,1
Vague	1	2.3	4	8.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	14.2	7	5,3
Total	44	33,3	47	35,6	10	7,6	10	7,6	7	5,3	14	10,6	132	100

The following synthesis helps visualize these results and the hierarchy of preference. Doise's presence, which is new in Brazil, indicates that probably a better adjustment between objects and theoretical choices is being made. The original moscovician approach remains second to none, and sometimes is associated to other references. The CCT has a constant presence although we had expected it to be more important.

Synthesis of theoretical preferences according to the theme

	Education	Health	Communication and Science	Memory and Culture	Politics and Justice	Brazilian Problems
1	Moscovici/ Jodelet	Moscovici/ Jodelet	Moscovici/ Jodelet	Moscovici/ Jodelet	Doise Moscovici/ Jodelet	Moscovici/ Jodelet
2	CCT/Abric	CCT/Abric	CCT/Abric	CCT/Abric	Abric	Doise
3	Doise	Doise	Doise	Doise	-	CCT/Abric

5. Methodological choices

The methodological choices to be presented here will be:

- The size of samples,
- The procedures for data collecting
- The procedures for analysing the material

Size of samples

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The size of samples was a sensitive point in the first Journey (1998), as we noticed that there was a certain amount of research based on very small samples, while less works dealt with large numbers. Five years later we found out that this was not an issue any more: according to table 6 the range of samples had widened in 2003: there was a reasonable proportion of samples of all sizes; the smallest ones were no longer predominant (18,5%); the majority of the results were based on samples with less than 100 subjects, but there were also almost one third of the texts with samples between 101 and 500 (31,4%). This indicates more adequate ways to approach the producers of SR, and probably an enhancement of the quality of research.

Table 6 – Number of participants in the samples mentioned in the published texts
 III IJSS, Rio de Janeiro, 2003
 N=124

N ° of participants	%	
Less than 20	23	18,5
21-50	19	15,3
51-100	19	15,3
101-500	39	31,4
+ than 500	9	7,3
Not indicated	15	12,1
Total	124	100

Bellow is a synthesis of the 3 major choices regarding sample size, according to the theme. Education concentrates the largest amount of works with samples of 101 to 500 participants (37,5%). The other sizes are not as significant. Some texts here are essays, hence they indicate no sample. Health also chooses samples of 101 to 500 (31,7%), although this a less significant figure, and the next preference is the samples of less than 20 participants (24,3%). Communication & Science is a small group with a well distributed range of choices and a slight preference for the predominant sample size (30%). Some theoretical essays can also be found in this TWG. Memory & Culture, also a small group, shares its samples between those with 101 to 500 and those with less than 20 participants (33,3% each). Politics & Justice, the smallest group, follows the same distribution pattern as Health: 101 to 500 (42,5%), and less than 20 (28,5%). Brazilian Problem changes this pattern: its preference goes to samples of 21 to 50 participants (35,7%), while those of 101 to 500 get the second position (28,6%).

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Therefore, some themes are similar to others, some are different. Education show a preference for bigger samples, considering all the works with samples of more than 100 participants. Health, on the other hand, has about half of its works with samples of less than 100 participants. The smaller working groups also choose samples of less than 50.

Synthesis of the most frequent sample sizes according to the themes

	Education	Health	Communication & Science	Memory & Culture	Politics & Justice	Brazilian Problems
1	101 - 500 38,1%	101 - 500 30,2%	101 - 500 30%	51 - 100 33,3% < 20 33,3%	101 - 500 42,9%	21 - 50 35,7%
2	51 - 100 14,3% 21 - 50 14,3% < 20 14,3%	< 20 25,6%	51 - 100 20% 21 - 50 20%		< 20 28,5%	101 - 500 28,6%
3		51 - 100 13,9%				

- Preferences for research procedures

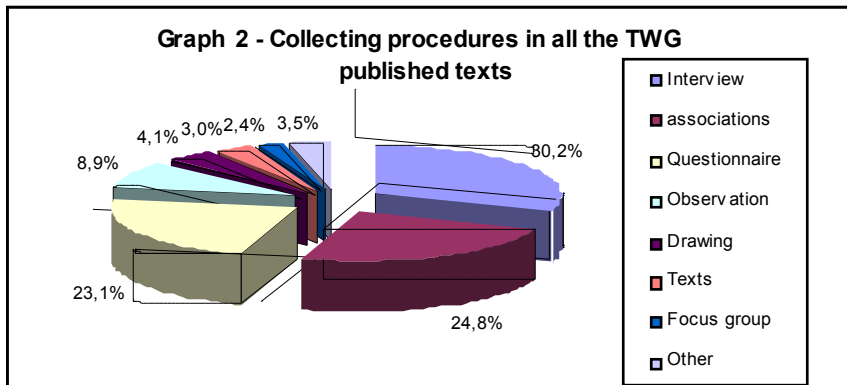
Data collecting procedures

The figure beneath shows that the interview is the favorite collecting procedure (30.2%). Word associations/evocations and the questionnaire follow (24,8% and 23,1% respectively). Observation comes far behind (8,9%), and the rest of the possibilities – drawing, texts and focus groups – are not very important (less than 5% each). Nevertheless, their presence may indicate the search for new paths for collecting data, new efforts towards a more comprehensive approach of objects.

Inventories and psychological tests were included in the category “others”.

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In a synthesis below we can read that interviews was the first preference in three TWGs: Education, Health and Memory & Culture. It was second in the other three. The questionnaires was the first choice in two TWGs: Communication & Science and Politics & Justice. They were the second choice for the Education TWG and the third for those in the Brazilian Problems group. Associations were the first choice only for this group. They were the second related to Health and Memory & Culture. The latter, by the way, is the only group not to place the questionnaire among the three first choices, which comprise observations, ethnographic procedures, and drawings instead. Once again, the origin of the researchers involved with memory and culture, as much as their interests lead them to choices different than the rest of the working groups.

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Synthesis of the most frequent procedures of data collecting according to the themes

	Education	Health	Communicat & Science	Memory & Culture	Politics & Justice	Brazilian Problems
1	Interview 26,7%	Interview 34,6%	Questionn 35,7%	Interview 33,3%	Questionn 33,3%	Association 36,8%
2	Questionn 25%	Association 30,8%	Interview 28,6%	Observatio n Ethnograph y Association 25%	Interview 25%	Interview 31,6%
3	Association 21,7%	Questionn 21,1%	All others 7,1% each	Drawing 16,7%	Associatio n 16,7%	Questionn 21%

These figures confirm the primacy of the interview over all other procedures, and the major presence of associations, which is slightly bigger than that of the questionnaire. They also show the singularity of each field of work when it comes to collecting data, even though only Education and Health contain a significant number of communications. There is no pattern for collecting data: not two TWG proceed the same way. Finally, the appearance of less usual alternatives, such as observation, drawing, and focus groups, may be promising.

These results arise the question about the use of more than one procedure at a time, as we will see now.

Triangulation

Almost half of the works (60) indicate the use of more than one collecting procedure, which possibly indicates triangulation.

Table 7 shows that the use of more than one collecting procedure is relatively more frequent in the TWG Memory & Culture (88,9%), but this is not a big group. Its characteristics, as mentioned above, is the anthropological and historical references. This may have contributed to such a configuration. Half or more of the works concerning Education (54,7%) and Communication & Science (50%) also use at least two procedures. This last group has professionals of different fields, such as communications, litterature, and mathematics, which may have influenced the choice of procedures. Politics & Justice (42,9%) stays in the middle. Here, psychologists are the ones who use two collecting procedures. Only two themes – Health and Brazilian Problems (35,7% each) have around one third of their works in the same case.

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Table 7 –Works that use more than one collecting procedure (CP) according to the themes
III IJSS, Rio de Janeiro, 2003

N=124

TWG or theme	> 1 CP	%	Total of works in the TWG	
Education	23	54.7	42	100
Santé/Health	15	35.7	42	100
Communic & Science	5	50	10	100
Memory & Culture	8	88.9	9	100
Politics & Justice	4	42,9	7	100
Brazilian Problems	5	35.7	14	100
Total	60	47.6	124	100

In table 8 there are the combinations of procedures found in the analysed material.

Table 8 – Combined collecting procedures

III IJSS, Rio de Janeiro, 2003

N=124

Collecting procedures	%	
Association + questionnaire	15	25
Association + interview	11	18,4
Interview + questionnaire	7	11,7
Interview + observation	7	11,7
Questionnaire + observation	5	8,4
Interview + drawing/maps	5	8,4
Documents + interv/associat	4	6,7
Focal gr + docum/observat	2	3,4
others	4	6,7
Total	60	100

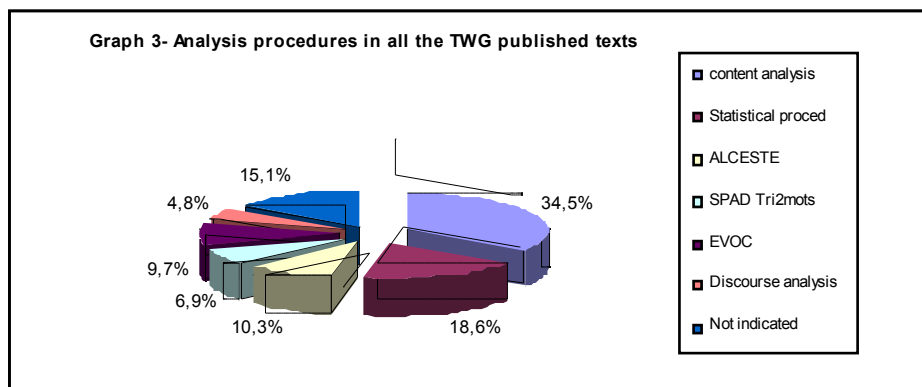
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Analysis procedures

As for the analysis procedures, the major preference was for content analysis³ with more than one third of the indications (34,4%), as can be seen below. Statistical procedures, either or not implying the use of softwares (SPSS, EpiInfo or more specific ones, as MSA), are the second choice with almost one fifth of the mentions (18,6%). The French softwares ALCESTE (10,3%) and EVOC (9,7%) come next. Softwares SPAD and Tri-deux mots are in the fourth position (6,9%), and discourse analysis is the last choice (4,8%).

However, 15,1% of texts either do not declare the analysis procedures applied or are not clear about them. It seems that the analysis still presents some difficulty to part of our scholars, and this will have some repercussion in the identification of the SR.



The synthesis of the three major preferences of each TWG shows different choices according to the group. Education presents the same pattern of distribution seen above. Health shows a clear preference for content analysis (42%), and brings a specific contribution: the software Tri-deux mots (18%). The presence of Statistics (12%) confirms the so-called “quali-quantitative” approach which is current in Health studies.

Communicat & science as well as Memory & Culture have a similar configuration:

- Content analysis is the first choice – approximately one third for each (30 and 33,3%)
- Indifferenciation among the other alternatives
- A certain amount of works that either neglect to mention the procedure of analysis or are not

³ The main reference regarding content analysis is Bardin (1977).

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 <p>MARIE CURIE ACTIONS</p>	<p align="center">European Commission Research Directorate General Human Resources and Mobility</p> <p align="center">MARIE CURIE CONFERENCES & TRAINING COURSES (MSCF-CT-2004-013264)</p>		<p align="center">Social Representations in action and construction in Media and Society</p> <p align="center">SoReCoMedia & Society</p>
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clear about it. In the Memory & Culture group this is the majority of the cases (44,4%), even though this is a small group.

Politics & Justice, despite being a small group too, presents a peculiar distribution: no content analysis, major preference for Statistics (28,5%) and the same degree of preference for all other alternatives. Texts with no procedure specified have the same frequency as the first choice in this group.

Brazilian Problems' first and second choices are the same as those of Education, but the software EVOC comes as the third choice instead of ALCESTE, and it is the group with the smallest proportion of undefined analysis procedure (5,5%).

Diversity of analysis procedures is present in all TWGs' texts, sometimes including more than one technique as in the Education, Health and Brazilian Problems groups.

Synthesis of the most frequent procedures of analysis according to the themes

	Education	Health	Communic & Science	Memory & Culture	Politics & Justice	Brazilian Problems
1	<i>Content analysis</i> 33,3%	Content analysis 42%	Content analysis 30% Not mentioned 30%	Not mentioned 44,4%	Statistical techniques 28,5% Not mentioned 28,5%	Content analysis 33,3%
2	<i>Statistical techniques</i> 25,5%	<i>Tri- deux mots</i> 18%	All the others 10% each	Content analysis 33,3%	All the others 14,3% each	Statistical techniques 27,8%

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3	ALC EST E 13,7 %	Stati stical tech niqu es 12%		All the others 11,1% each		EVOC 16,7%
	Not mentioned 15,7%	Not mentioned 8%				

6. Content of the production

The content of this production was also analysed. The categories of a previous classification (Sá & Arruda, 2000) applied to the Brazilian production from 1988 to 1997 was used, but had to be enlarged. The main themes in 2003 were work and professional practices (14.5%); social exclusion and violence (12,1%); health/illness processes: reproductive health & AIDS (9,7%); human development (8.9%); educational processes, mental health (8% each), as in the table below.

Table 9 - Content of the production on Social Representations
III IJSS, Rio de Janeiro, 2003
N=124

Contents	%
Work & professional practice	18 14.5
Social exclusion & violence	15 12.1
Educational processes: teaching & learning, teacher-student relationship	15 12.1
health/illness processes: reproductive health & AIDS	12 9.7
human development	11 8.9
health/illness processes: mental health	10 8.0
health/illness processes: professional/patient relation & others	9 7.3

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Theoretical/methodological development	6	4.8
Public policy	5	4.0
Environmental issues	5	4.0
Gender & family	4	3.2
Processes of communication & diffusion	4	3.2
Identity and intergroup relations	2	1.6
Institutional relations/organizations	1	0.8
Others	7	5.6
Total	124	

The ten most frequent content items of the production of 88-97, which can be found below (Sá & Arruda, 2000), shows some similarities and some differences with our material. Of course, these are not fully comparable *corpi*, as the first one contains all sorts of productions, from PhD theses to articles – 867 productions. Nevertheless, we consider those content items as indications from that period, knowing that there was not such a thing as a IJSR by then to be compared to.

We decided to put together some of these categories so as to make them more comparable to the contents in 2003. Hence, Educational processes became the first content in 1998, and the second in 2003. Educational processes also become more frequent in 2003 than reproductive health/AIDS in 1998, although the total of health/illness processes is bigger than the educational processes.

While Work and professional practices shift from the second to the first position in 2003, Social exclusion and violence go from the 8th position in 1998 to the second in 2003. Would this be the consequence of the characteristics of the 2003 material or of the fact that these phenomena are even more crucial in the present than they were in 1998? The item Methodological and theoretical development seems to confirm the first hypothesis, as the IJSR requests that communications refer to research work, and so only few theoretical texts are submitted.

Some classics of social psychology such as identity and intergroup relations, or institutional relations also loose importance in the 2003 material. At the same time, some items were detached from the 1998 categories, as they get to be more important in the 2003 sample: mental health and public policy/environment.

At first sight, the 2003 material seems well in syntony with the present, which confirms what 1998 already showed: a deep interest in our problems, supported by a strong local vision.

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Table 10 - Content of the production on Social Representations in 1998
 and in 2003
 N=124

Content	1998	2003
Work & professional practice	15.8	21.8
Social exclusion & violence	6.9	12.1
Educational processes: teaching & learning, teacher-student relationship	27.7	12.1
health/illness processes: reproductive health & AIDS	13.3	9.7
human development	10.9	8.9
health/illness processes: mental health	-	8.0
Public policy, Environment	-	8.0
Theoretical/methodological development	11.4	4.8
Gender & family	6.6	3.2
Processes of communication & diffusion	-	3.2
Identity and intergroup relations	9.6	1.6
Institutional relations/organizations	6.1	0.8
others	-	5.6
Total	124	100

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8. Last Comments

If we look back into the IJSR in 1998, these results demonstrate a great effort that has been made concerning methodological aspects: in 2003 there was a variety of procedures that had not appeared before. Clearer research designs, the appropriate size of the samples and the use of analytical softwares are some of the progresses that have been achieved. The biannual IJSRs seem to provide a chance for the Brazilian new generations of scholars, to show the progress achieved every two years.

On the other hand, these results confirm the multidisciplinary vocation of the SRT. This has probably influenced the characteristics of the different TWGs production, as they were mostly attended by professionals of those fields: teachers, educational psychologists and other specialists in Education; nurses, medical doctors and other Health professionals, which are the largest groups, and so forth.

This brings an immediate conclusion: in Brazil, the SRT is a tool for the discussion of relevant issues such as social exclusion, AIDS, mental health; it may help the assessment of situations and the quest for solutions. Those who resort to the theory come mainly from specific fields of activity and search for answers they need in their practice. This is one of the peculiarities of the Brazilian production.

Along with the multidisciplinary comes the variety of interests which sustains some of the original proposals we could see in 2003. I will give a couple of examples from different TWGs.

Scientific literacy is a very new item in the Brazilian scientific agenda. Nascimento-Schulze et al. studied the SR of science and technology among high school teachers. They investigate the teachers' performance in Laugksch & Spargo's Test of Basic Scientific Literacy (TBSL). Besides, 49 teachers were asked about their understanding of science and technology and chose issues to be prioritized in scientific divulgation programs. The results of the textual analysis showed a convergence on the representation of science and technology. Science was associated with the study of nature and of experimental method, having the objective of reaching a theoretical body. Technology was associated with scientific knowledge which promotes greater quality of life after being transformed into technique. Technology is seen as an application of science. Among the chosen issues to be shown in scientific exhibitions, the most mentioned were: environment, genetics and universe. The sample's level of scientific literacy was 81,6%, which is low if one has in mind that teaching requires high levels of knowledge about science. The information provided by the study inspired a local program for science divulgation. Furthermore, it could assist the construction of a simplified version of the Scientific literacy test, to be used in other contexts.

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Prado & Tavares studied the SR of the self-esteem concept and the problem of its use in Education. This concept is being used in social programs, self-aid and religious books. In the educational area the belief that seems to be predominant among educators is that students with a positive view of themselves would believe in their own possibilities and would show a better scholar performance. The study was based on huge national educational assessment studies with significant representative samples of 3000 to 13.000 participants. The researchers pointed out that while the students' good performance did correlate to positive results in the self-esteem tests, bad performance did not correlate with bad results in the same tests. The results of such studies lead the authors to interview students and teachers in schools which had participated in those studies. The analysis constructed by ALCESTE revealed that there was a SR of the good teacher, the good student and the good school. At the same time, the educational discourse reinforced the idea that affection is the strategy for developing self-esteem. The authors found out that while students with a poor performance at school still had a high self-esteem based on other aspects of their lives, teachers considered that the psychological condition of the child and the socio-economical situation of the family were to blame for the child's poor performance. Therefore, teachers thought they had no responsibility in it. Teaching practices aimed at the development of learning were hardly mentioned. As self-esteem is a guideline for the accelerated learning programs, these findings are extremely relevant for the Brazilian Educational system.

Duarte & Mazzotti present the SR approach as a basis for the discussion of the senses of music in the regular school and in the music school. The problem is (a) approached as a negotiation, and thus a pragmatic, which states what is of value to and for the various social groups, (b) recognizing that each and every human activity has a referent which pertains to the human; it is on the human, in its history of negotiations of sense, that we find the ultimate reason for music and musicality. The SR of 'music' and 'music education' would establish the educational purpose, and thus the criteria adopted to state that this or that musical product is adequate, always marked by the attributed purpose. The authors consider that the analysis of these representations will probably lead to the principles and purposes of music in the formation of the 'musical' character.

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Furthermore, there is an expansion of the interest for the STR. In 2003 we could find research on SR done by dentists and architects, new fields that resort the SRT. Fontes et al. proposed a study focusing Architecture as a key element of the process of the Psychiatric Reformation. As part of an experience of participative planning carried out in a traditional psychiatric complex in Rio de Janeiro, the study aimed to produce subsidies for the reform of a building composed of infirmaries for long term patients, whose spaces were being 're-qualified' in order to become a transitory housing place, dedicated to the exercise of autonomy and reconstruction of social references. Using the SR approach and research techniques such as cognitive maps, questionnaires and observation, a field research was carried out aiming to catch users impressions of the current space, expectations for the ideal space and the physical form to be undertaken in the unit, involving them in the process of architectural planning. From data analysis it came out that, while the ideal place to live appeared as home, and although most of the patients had been living there for many years, the building was represented as a limiting space, where no privacy existed: a treatment place rather than a living one. The results provided a valuable collection of information for design recommendations.

I hope these examples illustrate what I am trying to express as one of the strong characteristics and contributions of the Brazilian production: it encompasses a wide range of interests which is closely connected to relevant issues in different fields of knowledge. A part of this production gets to provide an assessment to support solutions for specific problems.

The other side of this coin is the need for theoretical developments which expand the discussion of the theory and associate it to other concepts such as social memory (Sá and his research group), social imaginary (Arruda and her research group), ideology and media (Guareschi and his research group) and others. You have had an example of this in my other speech.

This production therefore seems to answer an old question raised in Europe in the midst of the crisis of psychology, and in Latin America, for the same reason: what can Social Psychology do about real concrete problems? Why can't social psychology deal with local issues? As an anthropology of the contemporary world, the STR shows a vocation to give the answer to such questions, and the Brazilian production seems to illustrate this.

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