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In recent years several attempts have been made to state the importance of the social dimensions of memory, in relationship both to the nature of memory processes and to the uses of memories in order to achieve social goals. Regarding the former point, it has been noted that, although memory consists of basic cognitive dynamics of information storage and retrieval, the actual outcome of the process is widely influenced by social variables, which determine what is worth remembering, which facts are more accessible or salient, when and how people are expected to remember or to forget and so on. As to the second point, it is now commonly accepted the idea that remembering and forgetting usually serve as tools of social interaction, with an important role not only in establishing relationships, but also in the social negotiation of power and in the overall designing of the social structure.

In addition, increasing attention has been paid to collective memory, in which the role of social dimensions is even more important, so that it may be conceived as a clearly distinct phenomenon. In this case, the aim of remembering goes beyond a purely interpersonal level, because collective memory's end is the safeguarding of the memory not of the individual but of an entire community. This collective heredity imposes itself on individuals as something obvious, a point of view which is not subject to debate or justification, but that is taken for granted or banal; in this case memory is transformed into habit, convention, literally "embodied" (Connerton, 1989) in a series of rites, formal organizations, objects, places, sayings. In short, collective memory acts as a generalized framework, a scaffolding which can bear interaction without appearing visible, except during social transitions and crisis, when different community memories come into contact. It is focused on concrete aspects (ritualized actions, habits, objects, places) of interpersonal exchange, while the social dimensions of the individual memory, on the other hand, mainly have to do with verbal and representational aspects. Also with regard to their theoretical explanation proposed above, social dimensions of individual memory and collective memory, although strictly connected, present themselves on two distinct levels: the first one at an intrapersonal and interpersonal level and the second one at group level and with reference to intergroup dynamics. In this way, the study of collective memory obliges psychologists to reconsider, also in methodological terms, their relationship with historical and cultural science.

Referring to this reconsideration of the social and collective dimensions of memory, the aim of this paper is threefold.

In the first place we want to highlight the importance of some early contributions to the field. In particular we think that in the pioneer work of authors such as Bartlett, Vygotskij, Halbwachs it is possible to find many interesting hints for our current work on collective memory (Leone 1996; 1998). In these pages we shall analyze these contributions not *per se,* but in reference to the different traditions that have originated from them.

The second point that we want to make is the problematic aura spread on this subject matter by one of the main theoretical and epistemological debates which now involve the fields of psychology, namely the contrast between the cognitive and the socio-constructionist and discoursivist approach.

Our final and main point is to stress the utility of a more direct connection between the field of collective memory and the field of intergroup relations, a link that could be very productive, but that surprisingly has not been fully explored to date.

1. BACK TO THE FUTURE

Regarding the first point, we maintain that contemporary and future directions of research on collective memory and social dimensions of individual memory may be better developed if social psychologists learn to look to their past. And not because of a nostalgic attitude, or for the good old times' sake; but because in our roots we can find a theoretical and methodological complexity on those themes that seemed to have disappeared in many contemporary works (Leone 1996; 1998). Referring in particular to the main point of our article, the relationship between collective memory and intergroup processes, we can easily find many relevant contributions on this topic in the tradition of our field. Nevertheless, this trend of research has been neglected for a very long time and only recently has been gaining a renewed interest, inasmuch as the study of collective memory is receiving a growing attention.

How may we explain this long silence on the social and collective dimensions of memory?

Perhaps one classic theory on these topics may help us. According to Halbwachs (1950), every community – and scientific groups are communities, too – shares two kinds of collective memories: one is a *winning* tradition, the other is a hidden stream, a *losing* tradition that waits for historical shifts to become visible once more.

Concerning the study of memory, the *winning* tradition refers to the methodological and theoretical perspective first established in Ebbinghaus's (1850 – 1909) researches. As it is well known, this approach aimed to study the basic processes of the individual mind, which was supposed to remain stable across different social or historical contexts. This perspective was, in fact, the most apt to accommodate to the features of a "positive" psychology, which was dominating the cultural climate and the epistemological debate of those years (Farr, 1996). Moreover, inasmuch as memory was located in individual heads, this trend of studies strongly contributed to the individualist conceptions of mind, which have been characterising up until now the dominant traditions in Western psychology and philosophy (Bakhurst, 1990).

Nevertheless, that was only one half of the story.

In a less evident but still very important series of studies, a few influential authors tried to conceive memory in a socio-cultural and historical perspective. Some relevant pioneering books on social and collective dimensions of memory were produced in Europe during the crucial period between the First and the Second World Wars. Empirical and theoretical contributions by authors such Lev Vygotskij, Fredric C. Bartlett and Maurice Halbwachs strongly directed studies of memory towards more complex models. To date their ideas remain not only seminal, but in some respects still unsurpassed.

It was a hidden but powerful trend of research, which had waited a very long time before fully influencing the study of memory. It seems that now, at last, the time has come for these old ideas to be renewed. Not only the theoretical debate, which is heating up in our fields, but also many dramatic problems that are disrupting the social life in recent years urge us to adopt a more societal approach to memory phenomena. Social psychologists are therefore forced to make fresh reference to these more hidden roots.

So far, it's evident that the dominant paradigm in the study of memory remains the individualistic one, even though often exploring the social aspects of memory. A good instance of this kind of orientation are some recent models of Social Cognition (e.g. Wyer & Srull 1989; Fiske and Taylor 1991), which study mechanisms of memory in terms of individual information processing on social objects. Nonetheless, in the last two decades a flourishing new trend of study

has been focused on the social and collective dimensions of memory from a more societal perspective (for an update, cfr. Pennebaker, Paez & Rimé, 1997; Bellelli, Rosa & Bakhurst, 2000).

By the end of the Eighties, some important attempts at systematization of these more societal approaches on social and collective dimensions of memory have been made (cfr.Carraher & all, 1987; Nerone & Wartella, 1987; Middleton & Edwards, 1990). Nevertheless, until now these studies remained fragmented, if not somewhat eclectic (Clark & Stephenson, 1995) and some authors tend sometimes to confound collective memory with social memory (Swidler & Arditi, 1994).

Putting apart these theoretical problems, in a recent article Paez & al. (1997) maintain that the *contents* of this kind of studies may be divided into three main areas of interest:

A first area examines the societal uses of collective memories, in order to consolidate *historical or national identities* (Swidler & Arditi, 1994).

A second area refers to the problem of *selection* of public events that seem worth remembering, in the stream of news that reaches us daily (cfr. Bellelli, Leone & Curci, 1999).

A third area tries to understand the processes that *negate or repress collective memories* of social events, as for instance during political repression or when a traumatic event is denied by the same community that feels a greater responsibility for it (Pennebaker & Banasik, 1997).

In summar, the vigorous and still for many aspects untidy development of these studies seems to suggest a theoretical fermentation which allows many insights of the past, up until now considered minority views, to re-emerge.

In these pages we will try to show, among other things, that some important aspects of this debate are influenced by a conflict between different re-constructions of the past of our discipline, and then between different collective memories by means of which the identity of the discipline has been actually created.In order to illustrate this point, the tradition of commentaries originated from the research carried out by F.C. Bartlett may give us an excellent example.

Let us consider the various reactions to the original concept of *schema*, proposed by Bartlett. Initially, the majority of the psychologists rejected it as too loose and scarcely defined. Then they accepted it and quoted it ubiquitously, turning this hypothetical explanation for a specific memory process (long term storing resulting from multiple reproductions) into an over-generalized and therefore unverifiable theoretical frame (J. M. Mandler, 1994).
In short, we may say that Bartlett, the most quoted and successful among the few authors firmly dedicated to the study of the social dimensions of remembering, was accepted into the mainstream only inasmuch as his theory was transformed into a more individualistic and "basic" (i.e. without any reference to historical or cultural dimensions) perspective.

This transformation of Bartlett's contributions occurred in the same way described in his own experiments: a series of subsequent reproductions gradually re-shaped his proposals into more familiar schemata, using a process that in his very words we may label as a *conventionalisation* (Bartlett, 1932). In this new perspective, the social, cultural or historical dimensions of the theory gradually disappeared, while individual and internal processes became increasingly central.

Referring to the main point of our article, i.e. the link between collective memory and intergroup relationships, the conventionalisation of Bartlett's work produced two main reductions.

First, the research, originally organized to hilight *a cultural difference between groups* (e.g. the most famous data on multiple reproductions of the story known as *The War of the Ghosts*)

was gradually transformed into the empirical proof of the existence of *individual structural patterns*. Second, a theory supposing *a collective frame of memory* was reduced to maintain *a social dimension of individual remembering* .

A similar trend of reductionism may be noted not only in the academic resonance of his research, but also in the later developments of his own works, compared with his early theoretical positions. Some authors noted that it was as though Bartlett, by gaining an increasing influence in the rigid structure of academic power, decreasingly "remembered" his strong theoretical positions on the cultural dimensions of psychology (Douglas 1987). However, Bruner (1990) judged this somewhat ironical criticism expressed by Douglas too scathing.

On this same topic, Rosa has recently stressed the importance of the early Bartlett's training in the psychological study of anthropological issues. He refers in particular to the period when Bartlett, as a young man, tried to understand and master the lesson of W.H.R. Rivers (Rosa 1996). By rediscovering this facet of Bartlett' s work, Rosa aims to stress the importance of an intellectual project devoted to see "the connections among social practices, cultural materials, meaning and affection" (p.358). A kind of similar sensitivity, according to Rosa's point of view, characterized a few important authors working in the same years in very different cultural contexts (Bartlett in England, G.H.Mead in the US, Pierre Janet in France and Lev Vygotskij in Russia).

How may we explain such a difference in comments on Bartlett's work?

We agree with Middleton and Crook (1996), that a major danger in historical reconstruction is to try "to uncover some lost resolution", as if we were "searching for some disciplinary grail" (p.380). Nevertheless, this attitude could be conceived only if we were all sharing an idea of science, as a solitary adventure of few isolated heroes. Now, neither Rosa nor any of the contemporary authors working on historical reviews seem to be affected by this kind of romantic idea. In fact, the very first lines of his article show that " Rosa is sensitive to the way histories are written for contemporary consumption" (Middleton & Crook, 1996, p. 380).

Choosing a benevolent and somehow selfironical understatement, Rosa describes himself as just putting another label on Bartlett ideas, according to the new priorities of today's intellectual market. In these pages, we propose another metaphor, borrowed once more from Halbwachs theory (1950).
We think that in the commentaries on Bartlett's ideas from the very start, two kinds of tradition were continually present: one effective, the other *potential*. As the more influential perspective, leading to main developments in our discipline, stressed the intrapsychic dimensions of memory, commentaries highlighted overall the individualizing conventionalisation of Bartlett's work.

 But recently a new perspective, stressing societal and cultural dimensions of our studies, enabled the other tradition, the potential one, to come to light again. This new balance between potential and effective traditions hidden in Bartlett's work (as in any valuable masterpiece) allows scholars, aware of this less agreed on perspective, to more carefully consider today the cultural and societal aspects of Bartlett's production, therefore enhancing this emerging stream of the collective memory of our discipline.

2. THE CONVENTIONALISATION OF BARTLETT' S SCHEMATA

During all his theoretical and empirical work, Bartlett repeatedly stressed that he conceived memory not as a static property of an individual mind, but as a dynamic process of

reconstruction of the past. In his very words, memory was "an effort after meaning". His methodology, based on serial reproductions of the same stimulus, tried to highlight this never-ending effort. In fact, the task of reproducing the original stimulus several times simulates the usual activity of long-term memory, which is continuously engaged, though not always on a conscious level, in trying to reconstruct past experiences and feelings. Using Bartlett's very words, memory is not a storage of "lifeless copies" of the past; and the definition of accuracy as a perfect match between an input and an output is only an "unpleasant fiction" imposed by the unreal requests of experimental conditions. In real life, on the contrary, in order to respond to sudden and unexpected needs imposed by a "never-ending changing world", memory has to be highly dynamic (Bartlett 1932).

We agree to the remarks of Kintsch who, introducing the reissue of *Remembering* (1995), comments Bartlett's original presentation of schema theory saying that "this is particularly worth rereading, for what a surprisingly fresh and sophisticated version of schema theory it is! (…) Schemata as fixed memory structures that are pulled out for use on demand, as in most applications of modern schema theory, are not very helpful, either for understanding human or for artificial intelligence" (Kintsch, 1995, p.XIII). The remark of Kintsch sounds extremely scathing, when stating that these mechanical theories, born from the similarity between the mind and computers, are not apt to explain the flexibility and context sensibility that even a computing machine needs to have to be able to work. Moreover, it praises Bartlett' s theoretical sophistication as it deserves, if we remember that, talking not only about the human mind but about *any organism*, he clearly states that "an organism has somehow to acquire the capacity to turn round upon his own 'schemata' and to construct them afresh" (Bartlett, 1932/1995, p. 206).

For our article's purposes, we are especially interested in the research in which Bartlett explored this "effort after meaning" not as an individual but as a *social activity*. In the most frequently quoted example of this kind of studies, he used a story (the famous *"The War of the Ghosts"),* coming from a North-American culture, that was extremely unfamiliar to his Cambridge subjects. In one methodological path, repeated reproductions of the story were produced by single subjects; in a second, the repeated versions were "passed" from one subject to another; i.e., each subject had to hear the story from one person first and then to tell it to another, who, in turn, had to relate it to someone else and so on. In this way the original story passed through several reproductions, slightly changing from one subject to another. The results show that, in every reproduction, the subjects gradually molded the story into a more familiar shape, forgetting or changing elements, which were difficult to understand *because of their cultural distance*. In an overall summary of his data, we may also see that the schema-driven changes were much more evident in this social serial reproduction than in the reproductions produced by a single subject (Kintsch, 1995).

Discussing his data, Bartlett referred to two *social* explanations: the uneasiness of hearing a story coming from the culture of another group (i.e. *an intergroup variable*) and the empathic closeness that links more and more subjects, as the story becomes more and more conventional to their cultural features (i.e. an *in-group variable*). All these reflections on social and cultural dimensions of schemata, very clearly stated in Bartlett's original work, seem to have completely disappeared from the majority of our current versions of schemata theory.

In fact, Bartlett borrowed the concept of *schemata* from Henry Head. In the original version of this concept, Head and Holmes used it to describe the internal structure which guides without subjects' awareness of it, the *spatial orientation of their bodies*. In fact, σκημα, the Greek root of the word *schema,* means a representation of the dynamic balance of a body *during*

a movement, as in the famous statues of Olympic players, which represent the athletes' bodies not as motionless structures, but caught in the effort of their athletic performances.

As a matter of fact, this emphasis on processes and not on contents was clearly illustrated by the very title of the book, *Remembering.* As it is well known, in fact, the English language uses two different words for the *act* of memory (to remember) and for the *contents* of memory (memories). And we may explain the striking difference between the tradition of Ebbinghaus and that of Bartlett, both essential for further developments of our understanding of the memory, simply by noting that they were actually studying two different aspects of this faculty, which is doubtlessly one of the most complex matters of interest in psychology.

Ebbinghaus was interested in the memory that originates from *exercise,* and that may be calculated by the differences from repeated trials; while Bartlett was interested to the formal rearranging originated from the effort to find the *meaning* of the emotional trace which distinguishes that single memory in the subject's awareness. In a certain sense, this difference recalls the classical distinction between involuntary memory, based on exercise, and voluntary memory, based on a conscious effort of comprehension made by the subject (cfr. Bergson, 1896).

We may see, on the background of this difference, the consequences of a more comprehensive theoretical struggle on the controversial topic of relationships between consciousness and behavior. As noted by Rosa, referring to the early work of Bartlett, "(he) was not naïve -- behavior for him was not a result of the work of consciousness. But this does not mean that consciousness plays no role in behavior. The consciousness he considers (…) was phenomenological consciousness" (Rosa, 1996, p. 374).

The same observation can be repeated for studies on the memory. The tradition started off by the work of Ebbinghaus considers the memory as a subtraction, as an implicit explanation of the difference between two cognitive performances that is as a basic mechanism for the grasping of stimuli in controlled situations. On the contrary the effort "towards the meaning", elicited by purposely loose instructions and by the complexity of the stimuli proposed by Bartlett, highlights the phenomenological aspect of memory, which appear to the subject himself as a conscious attempt to reconstruct the meaning of what he has been proposed, although many of the processes involved in this reconstruction lie beyond his awareness. If it is true that the individual in the laboratory is by no means passive, but on the contrary is involved with the experimenter in "playing the game" (Bartlett, 1923, p. 270), we can certainly say that the subjects of the experimentation *à la manière de* Ebbinghaus are playing a very different game from the Bartlett's subjects. Can we imagine that Bartlett gave up the fight in the face of the methodological complexity he himself had evoked? Or may we conclude that, as Kintsch observes in a philosophical manner, "he did things his own way, and (…) we should not complain"(1995, p. XV)? Or may we suppose that, having been early trained in the subtleties of anthropological observation, he was more aware of the roles of subjective reconstruction in laboratory settings?

If we now consider the tradition of study originated from the seminal work of Bartlett, we can see that the concept of schemata was developed mainly as an inner faculty of the individual mind, that accommodates the incoming information in order to preserve the individual structure. This *structural bias* (Larsen 1988) was greatly amplified by the proposal of Minsky to apply the concept of schemata to studies on Artificial Intelligence. Applied in an emerging field of interest, this concept assumed a more central position in the "academic bourse" (Bruner 1990), but at the same time it was reduced to being synonymous of some structural and rather mechanical device, as the notions of format, information re-labeling and so on.

One of the major problems of this kind of development is that it misses both the *social nature* and the *social goals* of the act of remembering. Not only memory is represented as an inner faculty, guided by structural properties and limits of an individual "remembering machine" (in fact, an even too rigid rather than effective machine!); but its aim also appears to be a rather passive one, limited to representing the past by means of something like pictures inside the head. These oversimplifications risk missing the very point of the phenomena described, that seems to us strictly linked not only to individual, but also to *intra-group* and *intergroup processes*.

Let us consider again how Bartlett organized his research. From a methodological point of view, the task proposed in the *War of the Ghosts* research was very simple: each subject had to hear the story and then to tell it again. The other participant could not reply to the version of the story that s/he heard from the former subject. Every participant was supposed to have the same "weight" on memory transformation. The exchange was meant to be one-way, and the possibility of any feedback was not explored. In short, this methodology intended to reduce the social dimensions of memory just to a mere *inter-subjective level*, and in fact reached not a real inter-subjective level, but only an *interpersonal* condition (Nye & Brower 1996).

Nevertheless, the participants in the research belonged to the same cultural group as Bartlett, i.e. British. On the contrary, the story was part of the North-American Indian culture, and was therefore full of more or less incomprehensible symbols for the participants. Therefore, the relationship between subjects during the serial reproductions was an *interpersonal* one; but the relationship between each subject and the material to remember was an *intergroup* one.

It was precisely this interaction between the two levels of variation of the phenomena observed (the serial reproductions between subjects on the one hand and the competition between different cultural frames of the story on the other) that produced this kind of result, clearly showing the *social aims* of remembering. In fact, molding the story into a more familiar shape, the participants not only protected their "internal structures", but created an *emotional closeness* among themselves, that we may represent as a "sympathetic weather" (borrowing a Bartlett metaphor that -- speaking about cultural conventions -- really sounds very English) .

If we consider these results from the point of view of the *contents* of memory (i.e. the accuracy of every single version of the story), the individual "remembering machines" of participants seem to be very ineffective. But if we consider the *processes*, looking at the same results from the point of view of social relations between participants, they seem on the contrary very effective. In fact, the subjects managed to change an extraneous, implausible story into a more familiar narrative, much more adapted to their cultural expectancies (and this is the structural dimension of the process, often stressed in literature). But, moreover, these processes created an *emotional climate* in which participants felt more at ease, communicating each other a sense of closeness and expelling the elements perceived as coming from an extraneous outsider-group. In this way, they changed a very simple memory task into a real, although implicit, communication about their cultural belongings.

In short, the same results that from an individual perspective may be interpreted as a *limit* of basic memory structures, from a social perspective become a *resource* able to create a feeling of interpersonal closeness and cultural familiarity.

The fact that the same results may be interpreted in quite opposite ways clearly shows the theoretical and methodological complexity of the study of social and collective dimensions of memory. Although the research conditions created by Bartlett reached, as we have already stressed, only an interpersonal level, the processes elicited may be referred to a multiple levels of explanation, ranging from intra-personal (such as "the effort after meaning") to inter-group

dynamics (such as conventionalisation or emotional closeness). One can argue that these intergroup dynamics could have been activated mainly by the kind of stimulus chosen by Bartlett: using a story coming from a foreign culture, he may have elicited defensive processes aimed more specifically at solving individual comprehension difficulties than managing intergroup relations; moreover, he overlapped social and cultural aspects of memory.

This is a serious problem with Bartlett's research. In fact, on a *methodological* level, he reduced a comparison between cultural groups to a comparison between individuals, without creating any control situation (i.e. he did not explore the remembering of culturally familiar history and/or he did not compare memories produced by European vs. memories produced by North-American natives). This is a striking deficit in procedures. Experimental results are always based on a *comparison*: between stimulus (an extraneous story vs. a familiar story), between subjects (belonging to the same culture of the stimulus; belonging to a different culture from the stimulus one). In his observation focused only on the familiarization of a "strange" story, Bartlett was making the same mistake as anthropologists did labeling as "primitive" the behavior of individuals, simply because they belong to a culture which differs from their own. Yet, Bartlett himself, some years before this famous research, when commenting on studies of "social and abnormal psychology" noted that: "the error here (…) is not that the primitive or the abnormal are wrongly observed, but that the modern and normal are hardly observed at all" (Bartlett, 1932, p. 284) .

The lack of control situations is perhaps the most serious methodological problem with his research. In fact, when the variable referred to the cultural familiarity is under control, other different variables appear to influence the quality of story recall, such as the level of intelligence of the subjects, long or poor practice in the skills required for story recall (Dube, 1982) or social belogniness to groups which are more or less implicated in the story plot (Leone, 1997).

Other problems referred mainly to the very informal way of presenting data (choosing only some examples, without details or overall information) and to the casual taking of experimental instructions. Anyway, this second kind of methodological "casual" standards was not so confused as to make it impossible to replicate Bartlett's results. On the contrary, recent experiments carried out by E.T. Bergman and H.L.Roediger III (1999) have proved that Bartlett's results on repeated reproductions of The *War of the Ghosts* can be fully replicated.

We may conclude that when a social process of memory is activated, using a complex stimulus that needs re-constructive interpretation, a full set of dynamics are activated, ranging from intrapersonal to social and collective levels. In other words, the very nature of social and collective aspects of memory is that this topic inextricably interlocks individual and social processes, when the contents of memory refer to differences not only between individuals, but also between groups and cultures. Because of its intrinsically complex nature, this kind of phenomena cannot be studied in a reductive way, without missing the very essence of the processes themselves.

If we accept this point of view, each episode of social remembering has to be considered, *per se*, as necessarily involving not only interpersonal but also intergroup and societal dimensions -- although individuals become aware of these dimensions, through a feeling of uneasiness or a stronger consciousness of their re-constructive efforts, only when the stimulus is not familiar to them .

Finally, according to its historical and etymological roots, the notion of memory schemata as first proposed by Bartlett implies *an orientation in the social space*, as the notion of neurophysiological schemata implies an orientation in physical space. Therefore the schema theory is useful to explain how memory is shaped not only by the inertial force of individual structures, but also by the changing dynamics of *intergroup relations*.

If these interesting and compelling interpretations of Bartlett's theory were quite forgotten after the recent developments of our research on memory, and if these are now coming up again on our research agenda, this is perhaps due to the relation between two different streams of memory studies: one, focused on individuals, is leading our research mainstream; the other, focused on groups, increasingly emerged during last years. The changing balance between these different streams of studies has influenced the ways through which our scientific community has studied or "forgotten" the social and collective aspects of memory.

3. COGNITIVE VERSUS DISCURSIVE ROOTS OF MEMORY

Recent developments in the balance between a more individualistic and a more societal approach to the study of memory have been influenced by one of the main contrasts which has recently emerged in the theoretical debate in psychology, i.e. the opposition between classical cognitive position vs. discursive and socio-constructionist approach (Conway 1992; Middleton & Edwards 1990).

In short, from the cognitive point of view the act of expressing a recollection is treated as the external manifestation of an inner process (the memory) which is considered the real phenomenon to study, and which consists in the ability of storing and retrieving correctly, i.e. with the minimum of differences between input and output, information about the past. From a discursive point of view, instead, the act of remembering is in first place just *an act*, undertaken as a part of a wider and complex process of negotiation among many different explanations of the past, conducted within the subject or among individuals. In this perspective, the issue of a more or less exact reproduction of the original stimuli fades away, while dynamics of interaction between different social positions of people remembering together become central.

As a matter of fact the classical model, which is more typically expressed in laboratory experiments, has been criticized from within the same cognitive field, by those claiming the opportunity of studying memory in its real context (Neisser 1982; Neisser & Winograd 1988). In this perspective different definitions of accuracy have been proposed: for example as the possibility of extracting a sort of gist from a great number of heterogeneous facts, whose essence is not contained in none of them in particular, but in the gist itself, so that it represents the facts as a whole in their overall meaning. Discursive options put forward this need to assign value to the context, reaching the point of denying the existence of "something true" to be remembered, even though not contained in a single event but spread over a series of events; it is stressed, in other words, that remembering should be studied not as more or less corresponding to the "truth", but in its conversational contingencies and in its pragmatic functions, which express substantially a comparison between competing points of view.

By means of this epistemological shift, from inner processes to discursive interaction, the socio-constructionist approach aims to highlight the very social nature of memory, arguing that this goal could not be reached by any reference to representational functions, but only by reference to the intrinsic social nature of language and communication. The act of remembering is therefore considered part of the more complex process of the explanation and interpretation of reality, which also includes an opportune management of the processes of casual attribution and

the evaluation of the responsibility, and which takes the form of social actions (Edwards, Potter & Middleton 1992). According to this point of view, what counts is not the capacity that the memory has to correctly reproduce the events of the past, but rather its descriptive function, meant as a narrative support to specific versions of the events in relation to purposes of comparison and social competition. For this reason memory, both individual and collective, often results explicitly or implicitly articulated around an interpretative dilemma, and the differing versions of the events appear rhetorically reconstructed in order to sustain different points of view.

Generally speaking the socio-constructionist and discursive model has been recognized as having the merit of drawing attention to the importance of the context and on the fundamental role of social interaction; but, at the same time, numerous shortcomings have been pointed out both on an epistemological plane and on a more strictly methodological one

Above all the problem of the relationship between accounts of memory and the effective turn of events, a theme which recalls the fundamental contrast between realism and anti-realism which makes up the philosophical basis of socio-constructionism. If it is actually true, as it has been demonstrated by Bartlett himself, that memory is always to a certain extent a re-constructive process, it is also true that some reference to external events must be safeguarded, unless the very object of study is to be changed and one would not be discussing memory, even though socially reconstructed. In other words, even if it is true that many possible different versions of the events exist and that it is interesting to examine the social reasons of each of them, it has to be admitted that the number of such versions is not infinite; on the contrary, referring to what can be defined as "the basic structure" of the account, it is actually possible to observe quite a limited number of variations.

Another crucial point regards the breadth of the context which it is opportune to refer to. Certainly it is possible to agree on the utility, strongly expressed by the discursive approaches, of studying the context in which memories are expressed. Nevertheless too often such a context is considered in an excessively restricted manner, actually limited to the particular conditions of verbal interaction in a given moment. In such a way some more stable and transituational elements are ignored, which belong both to the individual (traits, personal dispositions, motivations etc.) and to the social situation (values, ideology, culture in the broad sense), and which clearly contribute to the shaping of the overall context (Contarello & Mazzara 1999). On close observation, an exclusive emphasis on the network of verbal exchanges *hic et nunc* only apparently can be considered as a manifestation of a strong interest for the context; in reality it ends up by excluding several dynamics which, although cannot be observed in action in the particular circumstance, however make up a very important framework of reference, whose role in the definition of the context cannot be ignored.

A further controversial issue is the relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of the memory. A radical discursive approach results in an underestimation of those manifestations of memory which are not achieved in linguistic form and are based on processes and abilities other than the verbal ones. According to some (for example Baddeley 1992), the specific object of the studies on memory would be precisely to find, beneath such different phenomena such as speeches, images and emotions those common characteristics which allow it to be spoken of as a unitary psychological process.

A final relevant point regards the methods of empirical investigation. In this field, as has been said, the classical paradigm of laboratory experimentation has been subjected to largely useful criticism. The problem is if it is useful to safeguard the general methodological framework, even

though shifting empirical research into the sphere of real life and adding to the list of variables under examination the features of context; or if it is necessary, as solicited by the more extreme approaches, to abandon the classical model and its neo-positivist assumptions in favor of a totally different mode, of an interpretive kind, more adapted to the specific nature of psycho-social phenomena. This debate, which in general terms puts into comparison quantitative vs. qualitative methods in the human sciences (cf. Guba & Lincoln 1994), is clearly expressed also in the specific field of studies on the memory. To this point it has been rightly observed (for example Hyman 1992) that most empirical studies moving from a discursive perspective do not guarantee an accurate control of the relationship between memory and the dynamics of the context, because they lack of a thorough procedure of systematic observation and they often consist only in a series of ideas of the researcher followed by examples drawn from the transcriptions of the verbal interaction.

All these problematic points, which are typical of the general contrast between the cognitive and socio-contructionist approaches, can be found without wide variations in the field of memory processes. What we want to uphold here is that from the more specific area of collective memory and above all from a cross intersection - up till now rarely carried out - between the collective memory and the intergroup relations fields, suggestions can arise for a possible integration of the two competing points of view. It can be held in fact that each of them contains interesting and productive ideas and that therefore, for the comprehension of the phenomena under study, an approach that in some way integrates the two perspectives could be useful. On the contrary, an excessively radical opposition, which presents the two approaches as truly antithetical, leads to miss the potentialities for interpretation that both of them are able to offer.

First of all, it can be said that there is not an excessive distance between the emphasis, attributed on the discursive side, to the processes of social construction and the idea, common to many of the classical approaches including the cognitive ones, of the memory as a motivated re-constructive process, socially based and therefore broadly connected to socio-cultural dynamics. In particular, most of the studies on collective memory share the conviction that memory must be conceived as a social activity, functional to the shaping of collective identities and to the effective management of the relations between social groups. In this sense various authors (for example Banaji 1992) hold that the discursive proposal does not constitute an upheaval relative to the knowledge so far consolidated in the field; on the contrary, it can be considered as perfectly complementary, adding itself to other approaches which have for long time highlighted the social dimensions of memory.

One point in particular on which a greater integration between the classical cognitive and the recent discursivist perspective will be useful is the relationship between linguistic and non linguistic factors in the process of comprehension, encoding, storage and retrieval of information. Even if it is possible to agree on the interest of the discursive approach for the linguistic dimension, it would be useful to take into greater consideration the results of the collective memory lines of research in which social interaction is described as a function of the attachment of an individual in a context of meaningful symbols, which are widely informed by non linguistic factors (Connerton 1989). On the same topic, it would be useful to take into account the fact that different levels of text comprehension do exist (van Dijk & Kintsch 1983), which are called on variously in inference processes and in the meaning construction in the long-term memory. So that,definitly, the sense of an interaction to the ends of collective memory building cannot be obtained exclusively from the explicit contents of verbal exchanges.

However the aspect which we want to underline mostly in this paper is the usefulness of a greater connection between the line of research on collective memory, in its double cognitivist and discursivist core, and the line of studies on intergroup relations. It can be sustained, in fact, that intergroup relations constitute a contextual tie of extraordinary relevance, of which all the approaches that, under various headings, show interest for the role of the context must necessarily take care. On the other hand, an approach to collective memory which studies mental and social dynamics as strictly interlocked, may certainly be useful in the study of intergroup relations, a topic in which the intertwining between cognitive processes and social interchanges seems especially evident. In fact, it is easy to see that a great deal of the scientific knowledge accumulated in the collective memory tradition is directly useable in order to better understand several social psychological dynamics which are commonly recognized as roots of intergroup relations. Hereafter some points of contact between collective memory and intergroup relations will be highlighted, which probably deserve specific attention.

4. COLLECTIVE MEMORY BASES OF INTERGROUP DYNAMICS

The first and most evident link between collective memory and intergroup dynamics is the way in which *social identities*, though expression of basic drives of cognitive and motivational nature, are actually constructed and maintained by means of typical social products, apt to define group boundaries. Language, symbols, customs, artifacts are the most common visible signs of difference; they are usually supported by references to the history of the group as well as to the history of the relations with other groups, and very often these histories are properly chosen, elaborated or re-written in order to accommodate group-identity aims. These processes are specially active in the initial stage of group formation, or when a previously neglected social identity undergoes a quite sudden rebirth (Worchel 1998), or when group identity is threatened, with reference to shared values or even to the very existence of the group as a separate entity (Breakwell 1986). In short, it is possible to identify at group level the usual processes that at an individual level direct the acquisition and treatment of information in order to reach a better self-image. Several attempts have been made to describe the features and the functioning of this rather autonomous level of identity processes and in some of them the role of collective memories has been clearly recognized (e.g. Lyons 1996). It has been argued that by means of re-constructions of the past, selections of significant events and even gross distortions of actual facts, groups maintain a sense of distinctiveness, continuity in time, and collective self-esteem. In particular the link between consistency in time and self-esteem seems to be of special importance: a proper collective reconstruction of group history forms an useful basis in order to mark boundaries, share accounts about group existence, sustain perception of similarity and unity of group, hold positive opinions about in-group and negative about out-groups.

In this sense, with reference to a line of research recently developed within the field of social cognition, it can be said that collective memory is one of the means of improving *entitativity* in the groups. If it is true, as it has been suggested (Hamilton et al. 1998), that the perception of a group as a coherent and stable unity usually varies along a continuum, and that in such variation both out-group and in-groups are involved (though the latter in a more restricted range), it is possible to think that collective re-elaboration of the past is often used in order to enhance the sense of *being an entity* that in-groups may, in certain circumstances, partially lose. Social construction of the past can be seen as a main tool in the process of establishing and supporting

group beliefs, beginning with what is called the fundamental group belief, i.e. the belief concerning the very existence of the group as a separate entity, and continuing with the wide range of group beliefs which sustain the shaping and maintaining of social identity, i.e. those concerning norms, values, goals, ideologies (Bar-Tal 1998). Specifically, the reference to past history (of both in-groups and out-groups) improves one of the most powerful elements of group beliefs in relation to the construing of a social identity: the awareness that those beliefs are widely shared, and effectively constitute an ancient, and therefore solid, coherent and validated set of group characteristics.

A special aspect of social identity, which is surely implied in the most serious cases of intergroup hostility, is *national identity.* As it is well known, the phenomenon of nationalism results from the complex interaction of cultural, historical and even economic variables. Nevertheless it is easy to see the relevance to this matter of the whole set of concepts developed within the social identity tradition in social psychology. In particular, it has been suggested that the reference to the national level of categorization derives a special force from the fact that it offers an illusion of transcendence to the individuals, linking them not only to unknown people but also to the past and the future, so giving them a sense of eternity (Salazar 1998). In performing this function, collective memory plays a crucial role: the feeling of belonging to a long-lasting entity needs to be nourished by continuous references to a shared past of common important events.

A second major area in which a stronger connection can be developed between collective memory and intergroup relations is the topic of *stereotypes.* Although plenty of recent research within the social cognition tradition deals more with the process of stereotyping than with the actual contents of stereotypes, there is no doubt that the basis of knowledge and beliefs on which cognitive processes operate are not insignificant, and that collective memories usually function as valid support for such contents. The contrast and, to a certain degree, the possibility of integration between a more cognitive-individualistic and a more social and cultural approach to stereotypes have been discussed on several occasions. In particular it has been noted that from the cultural perspective the sets of shared information on social groups that we call stereotypes are among the constitutive elements of social thinking and contribute to the "fabric of the society" itself (Stangor & Shaller 1996, p.10). Because of this constitutive character, stereotypes are part of the social heritage, and are transmitted from generation to generation together with traditions and general worldviews (Ehrlich 1973). So, great attention has been devoted to the transmission of cultural stereotypes, with special reference to the role of language (Hoffman et al. 1986; Maass & Arcuri 1992) and the media (van Dijk 1991; Gabriel 1998).

In this sense it can be said that the theme of the stereotypes is among the most suitable to underline the complexity of the articulation between the individual level and the social level, given that they are based on cognitive processes but are in reality formed in the course of social and cultural dynamics. It has often been noted that such a conviction, widely diffused, has not been followed by an adequate analysis of the concrete ways by which the two levels are interconnected (Haslam 1997). To this end a useful reference can be made to a series of processes which can be considered typical of the collective memory, and which express a close integration between the individual and social level. One of these is the support function which collective memories can carry out in the face of the illusory mental database which assures the reproduction of stereotypes (Hamilton & Sherman 1994). Collective memories could contribute to this process not only by enlarging on the quantity of information shared, but also in particular by means of the social authority that usually is embedded in collective products. This function is evident in the

case of self-stereotypes, whose role in the upholding of the social project of the groups has been widely recognized (Reicher et al 1997). Since they can be conceived much more as instruments for interpreting the reality and directing the action than as means for reducing the complexity, it can be held that an appropriate memory of one's own group history and of the history of intergroup relations are to be considered as fundamental elements in the establishing of a positive in-group image.

Last but not least, the specific connection between collective memory and stereotype reproduction may be useful also in order to reduce the cognitive-discursive contrast, a goal that often has been posed as productive (Augoustinos & Walker 1995, among others). Collective memories are in fact conceivable as rooted both in cognitive processes of storing and retrieving information and in social practices of meaning construction by means of everyday communication and this widening of the theoretical perspective could throw a new light on several controversial points of the field. One possible example is the problem of the activation of stereotypes and of their being more or less automatic and more or less context-dependent. To this purpose it can be useful to make reference to the idea that social information are connected in memory by means of associative networks (Stangor & Lange 1993) in such a way that the activation of a single node can be easily spread to large portions of the entire network. Transferring this idea to the field of collective memory, it can be suggested that the reconstruction of significant episodes of collective life plays the role of main junctions in the associative network, ready to become easy points of activation of the information linked to them. It can be observed, however, that both the definition of these junctions and their activation are in fact achieved by means of communicative exchanges. In this way, adopting an approach to collective memory which seriously takes into account both the cognitive and the social nature of the processes involved, it is possible to think that the presence in everyday discourse of collective memories about intergroup relations may work as an effective context of activation. In this light it is possible to explain activation instances in which a real context is apparently absent and at the same time support can be given to the conviction that even social constructive processes need to be founded on basic processes of cognitive nature.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article we have intended to show the utility of a closer link between the recent reassessments of the social and collective dimensions of memory and the line of research on intergroup relations. Such a link, which seems extremely productive to us, has been to our mind hindered by at least two factors.

The first factor is the partial - and to a certain extent misleading - reading of the contribution of the first psychologists who worked on the memory, a reading which only recently has been reviewed and partially corrected. Among the many relevant contributions produced in the first half of this century and then in part forgotten or reduced to the mere individual dimension, we have examined in greater depth the case of Bartlett, who seems to us as being particularly significant.

The second obstacle is the exasperated tone of the clash between the cognitivist and socio-constructionist approaches, which has made difficult an integration of the results obtained in the two fields, in particular regarding the relationship between the individual and social dimensions of psychological processes.

As to the first point, our analysis has shown that many of the results of Bartlett's research, as for example the repeated reproductions of the famous *War of the Ghosts*, cannot be totally understood unless one refers to the connection between the individual memory and the social and cultural dimensions. On the whole, it can be said that different currents of collective memory, coexisting in our field, have influenced the different interpretations, which have been given in time to Bartlett's contribution. One current, which leads to the mainstream, focuses on the individual aspects; the other, a minority current, maintains the necessity to differentiate the level of explanation referred to the groups from the intraindivual and from the inter-individual level. The reappearance, in the last decade, of the latter current of thought, until now marginal and unexplored, has qualitatively changed some authoritative comments on Barlett's work. In reality, even if there are some important flaws in the research plan (above all the absence of control conditions, both as regards the stimuli used and the subjects chosen) the results of Bartlett's work show a great complexity and an astonishing freshness.

The new attention given to group dimensions enables us today to note that both the theoretic concept of schema and the research procedures based on the remembering of ambiguous, complex and culturally extraneous stimuli produce results that clearly show the interaction between the social and the collective dimensions of the memory. The former act as an inter-subjective influence on the memories of the individual (even if the situation of the research in reality usually reaches only an interpersonal level, due to the impossibility of feedback between one subject and another); the latter are present in a less conscious way and are more widespread, as an emotional uneasiness in the face of the cultural externality of the stimuli. In other words, the actual dimensions of collective memory act on individual memory prevalently as a modification of the affective aura prompted by memories, putting into question that sense of strangeness or familiarity which intimately connects, often in an entirely unconscious way, the thoughts of individuals with their basic need to belong to a social group; a need that cannot be explained exclusively at the level of the structural necessities of the individual mind.

As regards the second point, i.e. the clash between the cognitive and socio-constructionist approach, we sustain that the radical opposition has hindered both parts from benefiting from the possibilities of contributing the one to the other, and that this separation has not favored the possible connection between the two fields of collective memory and intergroup relations. The socio-constructionist approach, in fact, often proposes itself as the only one able to account for the collective dimension of the memory, as if the cognitive approach, due to an epistemological choice, were irrevocably locked to the individual dimension. In this distancing, the socio-constructionist approach, especially in its more radical versions, has concluded by getting mixed up in a series of shortcomings both of a theoretical and methodological nature, which have effectively hindered a full realization of the interesting proposal. The cognitive approach, on its part, has failed to conveniently utilize the reflections and results of research belonging to the other side, considering them defective from the outset, due to erroneous choices and to deficiencies in method that could not be overcome. Our opinion on the matter is that more serene and productive collaboration can be achieved between the two approaches, and that from such an improvement a better connection can arise between the studies on collective memory and the ones on intergroup relations. In other words, we hold that with an integration of the two points of view on the field of collective memory it will be possible to clarify more efficaciously some of the fundamental dynamics of intergroup relations. It can be observed that collective memories carry out a crucial role in the definition of identities and of boundaries of groups, but also in the formation and maintaining of auto- and etero-stereotypes: in fact, they are able to continuously reconstruct the

history of the groups and the history of social relations, which constitute the real environment within which intergroup relations actually are achieved.

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