

Editorial: Words from the Journal Editors

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The present issue of the journal is dedicated to the memory of Prof. Emda Orr, our friend and a veteran member of the social representations community, who passed away on May 2011.

As a researcher, Emda's major interest was in social psychology and political thinking. Like some of her colleagues (Eg, Tajfel, 1981) she thought social psychology could not continue concentrating on issues of the individual alone, but should move on to social and collective issues (Orr, 2007). Each of the studies she mentored dealt with a minority group and its relationship with the hegemonic Israeli society, a system of relationships that, by definition, stands for social representations. The studies shed light on the different social representations that characterise the uniqueness of each of the minority groups. It is in such cultural encounters between minority and majority group that identity representations are structured and constructed. In defining identities by the perception of the group as part and parcel of that of the self, we think of who we are within the boundaries of who is included and who is not included. In emphasising the common denominators of the group we strengthen the lines of similarity among its members and the distinction between the individual and his group and that of outside groups (Orr, 2007). Such an attitude, she claimed, should help the social psychologist understand the group members' different points of view and behaviours, and the social representations that construct their world, which they defend while other representations are ignored or contested (Howarth, 2010).

Unlike Duveen (2001), Emda classifies identities as social representations, and therefore there is no room for asking what comes first: ‘representations’ or ‘identities’. She focused her questions, instead, on how the group members structure their identity's representations and on identifying the role of this structuring in the wider context of the social world. The theoretical assumption on which Emda's work is based is that structuring social representations is a dynamic social negotiation process. Such interpersonal communication is not chaotic. Even if it does not always correspond with the laws of scientific logic, it follows the goals of society or smaller groups within it.

As our research mentor, Emda, demanded that we see exposing this logic and identifying its function within a given society as our primary role as social researchers. Indeed most of the research she mentored dealt with identifying social representations of unique groups in Israel and the logic behind their reconstruction. Emda's studies attempted to answer two questions: What are the implications of such structuring on our understanding of Israeli society? What are the implications of this study of identities in Israel on developing the theory of social representations?

Unlike other social researchers who use the study of social issues as a tool to better understand the theory behind it, Emda's main interest was to use the theory in order to enhance the understanding of Israeli society's social issues. For example, in the peace study she did with Sagi and Bar-On (Orr, Sagi & Bar-On, 2000) she tried to understand the reality of Israeli Jewish and Arab youngsters, looking at the themes of conflict, war and peace, as part of their social representations symbolic worlds in the context of the conflict saturated Middle East. Another study, that dealt with similar issues of representations of ‘peace’ and ‘war’ conducted by Wagner and his partners (Wagner & Hayes, 2005, Wagner, 2011), compared two groups, one living in a continually violent area of conflict, and the other that was only exposed to such conflict through the media. This study sharpened the understanding of the role of group discourse in structuring representations, while at the same time, the social issue studied was the basis for the researchers to deepen their theoretical understanding of social representations.

Emda believed that the study of social issues has a message of social value. The study of identity representations brings out the complexity of its context, relating to its multi-dimensional, dynamic characteristics, a context that influences processes of structuring

identity's representation by bringing together time, place and people. When we talk about 'time' we mean representations of an era that are the outcome of a formulating major event that comes up often in the discourse of a given social group. 'A place' refers to territorial space bounded by common physical, geopolitical and cultural borders that together constitute a common cultural setting for the peoples' identity, that contributes to social practices and the development and structuring of their social representations (Duveen, 1997). People weave time and place together on the basis of their life experience, memories and the sum of the needs and limitations within which they act, which is expressed in their social representations. This dynamic reality in which people live, this multi-dimensional quality of time, place and people woven together, emphasises the need to understand the socio-cultural context as seen through the 'eyes' of the group members whose processes of structuring social representations we study. The complexity and dynamic elements of the social reality led to the identification of different ways by which individuals and groups cope with conflicting social representations, as we can see in several of the papers in this issue.

One way of coping relates to an inner conflict experienced by group members. Turning the conflict into one of the identity themes of the group, helped its members cope and learn to live with this tension (Paryente & Orr, 2006). The second way of coping was identified as polyphasia [see PSR 2012, Vol. 21(1)]. It enables the individual facing the conflicting social representations to understand the world around him / her as if it was signaling the individual about the dynamically changing reality. It is also a functional tool that allows an individual or group to preserve it all as part of the competing complex reality they are facing (Friling, 2012). A third way argues that when conflicting representations are part of the hegemonic representations they tend to be taken for granted; no one discusses their incompatibility and people cope with it through day to day solutions of camouflage and compromise (Tuval, 2007, Tuval & Orr, 2009). As the third way argues, the complex and dynamic every-day reality that takes place in various places around the world makes it difficult for us to see the 'taken for granted' (Moscovici, 1984, 1988). The dynamic of the seemingly familiar reality makes people feel at home within it and therefore, it becomes the role of academic research to expose this 'taken for granted' façade of reality.

In practice, we could say that our everyday reality turns more and more complex as the lines between the research field and the researcher's home blur and mix with each other (Lavie & Swedenburd, 1996; Tuval, 2007). This unique situation of researching at home, that was true of us, Emda's group of researchers, all being part of Israeli society, caused us to move in different circles. A kind of reality "that weaves together the home and the research field into one piece that does not allow to make a distinction between 'here' and 'there', but disturbs and doubts the comfortable feeling of 'home'" (El-Or, 1998:47). In situations like this, it is the task of the researcher to step back and gain a new perspective, or, in Emda's words, 'to turn the familiar into a stranger' so that one could identify and characterise that which is represented as 'taken for granted'. As a researcher of social representations, Emda paid special attention to the socio-cultural context within which the study took place, be it quantitative or qualitative. Special research methods, some of which were qualitative, and used original methodological tools, were often constructed and adapted to the issues and the specific group studied.

This special issue, in memory of Emda and her academic work, aims to further our understanding of social representations' functions in dynamic, changing and deeply complex situations. The different papers explore the experience of negotiating identities in complex zones in different places around the world using varied research methods. The Journal opens with warm words written by Serge Moscovici in memory of Emda. The following paper is a concise review of Emda's overarching influence presented by **Laura Dryjanska**. It reviews 171 scientific articles dedicated to the phenomenon of street children over the last two decades where the street is their complex zone. She shows how scholars represent the street children using only already existing categorisations and recommends *an a posteriori* procedure, reclassifying those 'street children' as Emda had done during her research. Such *a posteriori* classification, according to Laura, will help with identifying ways of improving the street children's situation and is therefore, in Emda's terminology, a method that carries a message of social value.

Another study with a critical approach to social psychology research takes place in a community of struggle where issues of identity, ideology and protest represent a complex zone. **Caroline Howarth** examines networks of social representations of crowds, (using two different commentaries) and highlights the individual differences in the use of particular representations

as well as re-presentation, as part of a process in the negotiation of identity and the ideological nature of this negotiation. She emphasises the need for an inclusive psychology that can integrate multiple perspectives and their consequences in real life.

On a national level, **Bar-Tal**'s paper views an ongoing intractable conflict as a complex zone, and presents a collective memory as a core component of social identity. Focused on the role of collective memory in societies involved in intractable conflict, Bar-Tal describes the struggle between the social representations of collective memory among two rivals, who often entertain contradictory and selective historical collective memories of the same past. The social representations of collective memory are well integrated with, and supported by, the ethos of conflict and emotional collective orientations that were in ongoing interactions.

The relationship between identity and representation is intensified when it comes to analysing immigrants' identities, the focus of the next three papers.

Adi Mana explores how two adolescent groups of Israeli immigrants constructed their identity strategies in ways that led to 'successful adaptation' in Israel in comparison with their nonimmigrant peers. Taking into account that the 'newcomers' [as they are represented in Israel] were a minority compared to the veteran host population, we can see why 'successful adaptation' was a core social representation. Mana's finding is attributed to the State of Israel's gradually changing ideologies although the old monolithic social representations still reign.

Giovanna Leone, Maya Siag, and Mauro Sarrica invite us to learn about the social identity of another immigrant group, who are actually 'forced immigrants' - refugees. Their research on adolescent Palestinian refugees' emotions finds spontaneous self-definition of these adolescents' own social identity. The findings of the two- phase quantitative study show that although all the adolescents were born in the Diaspora, as half of their parents were too, they think of themselves as Palestinian and this self-definition has a deep emotional impact on them.

Rebecca Weber provide a lens for understanding gendered social identity as perceived by the second generation of immigrants taking place in a complex social context of family acculturation in which parents are raised in one country and their children in another. Gendered hegemonic representations appear as the object through which parents and children negotiate

opposite movements. While the parents express their desire for their children to reproduce a collectivist social structure, the children vacillate between the larger family unit and their desire for independent autonomy.

The next four papers explore negotiating identities between incompatible representations, and the various solutions identified in each of them.

Ella Daniel & Maya Crabtree demonstrate the influence that a complex reality has on gay men's identity. In their quantitative study they examined declared values of undergraduate students in Israel reporting gay or heterosexual sexual orientations. The differences found were attributed to the effect of the socially complex environment encountering discordant values across life contexts by gay men, which led to lack of coherence in their identity values.

Ella is also Emda's granddaughter who followed her grandmother's footsteps. Emda was full of pride for Ella, watching her professional development and achievements closely. Ella's paper represents the coming of a full circle of Emda's work.

Smadar Tuval presents ethnographic research taking place within Israeli elementary schools. It revealed a dichotomy in school life between inclusion and stratification. The declared school *ideology* was that of inclusion whereas daily practice and discourse were in the service of exclusion and stratification. The teachers developed different camouflage strategies to cope with this incompatibility, and created a camouflaged reality in which they can live.

A different perspective on conflicting identities is supplied by **Smadar Ben-Asher and & Ran Wolff** who claim that in the modern liberal western society, one is expected to have a number of identities that are often opposing, non-coherent and conflicting. They present privacy as a mechanism created by society to avoid the conflict when two or more identities dictate opposing actions. Guarding privacy is therefore not only in the interest of the individual but also that of society.

Dina Friling & Bilha Paryente's paper explores the possible contribution made by two different studies taking place in the common socio-cultural context of a minority group in the Israeli society. It focuses on the similarities and differences that can arise as researchers use different methods to look at issues of the group's identity.

Emda's academic legacy calling for a critical approach in contemporary social representation research is apparent in the variety of papers in this special issue. As Howarth (2010) highlights in her paper, since the theory deals with 'real life' according to Tolman (1994), it is important to examine different point of views; from the participants' perspective as well as from the researchers' perspective, and likewise to be aware of the 'real life' consequences of those different perspectives. Most of the papers demonstrate the varied point of view the dynamic complex zone creates. Having an understanding of them might highlight the processes of negotiating identities as well as the different strategies created by peoples and societies in those studies in order to cope with its complexity.

We would like to end this introduction on a personal note. Emda, whose memory we honour in this issue, was first our mentor in our doctoral studies and later, our valued colleague in our research and work. It is still hard for us to talk about her in the past tense, and we often find ourselves wondering what she would have said on this event or another, how she would have interpreted a theoretical issue, what else she could have said about ... Emda saw it as her mission to introduce and publicise the theory of social representations to her colleagues, members of the Israeli academia, before it was known and accepted. She spared no effort advocating it to her doubting academic partners and did so with enthusiasm and full hearted faith. As members of a group of women researchers who chose to view social representation as the theoretical anchor of our different studies, we were invited to take part in this process of exposure and publicising that was often quite complex.

Under Emda's leadership we established a social representations study group. Some of the papers in this issue originated from this group. This study group enabled a fruitful encounter among researchers moving along the different paths of their academic career (MA and Doctoral students). The group read texts relating to the theory of social representations and discussed the different dilemmas relevant to our own studies. Each of the group members could bring up issues from her own research and be helped by the others. The dialogues that took place during the many meetings we held were the basis for the construction of our identity as researchers and enriched our knowledge of social representations and other social issues we encountered.

Going over the different articles published in this special journal issue one more time, we feel that it too is a unique research group encounter, between authors, groups, states and countries, bringing together thoughts, assumptions, opinions, and personal research credo. This meeting point around the theory of social representations provided by the publication of this special issue has brought out a lot of the common elements between groups and researchers. Is it possible to assume that what seemed at the outset to be so particular and context dependent could be much more global than was seen at first glance?

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