

Identities, memory and the construction of citizenship

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INTRODUCTION

This special issue of *Papers on Social Representations* is dedicated to *identity, memory and the construction of citizenship*, which are conceived as phenomena of interest both for Social Psychology in general and for the Theory of Social Representations in particular. Although multiple conceptions about these issues have been studied for a long time, they are still essential to understand the processes of representation in contemporary societies, even more in these difficult times of migration, nationalism and globalization.

We know that social identity emerges based on social representations themselves and that this identity implies being identified and identifying with (Breakwell, 2010; Duveen, 2001). This leads people to the activity of taking a position within the symbolic scope of culture, given that identity is constructed and elaborated both externally and internally. Identity is a way of organizing meanings, of being constructed as a social subject.

Identities, held and to be hold, and the symbols associated with them constitute a point of reference and definition of current societies (Hobsbawn, 1992) since they carry meanings that are constructed and endowed with cultural attributes. Although these start from dominant institutional aspects, identities become such when they are considered to reflect the thinking and feeling of the person, which means that meanings and roles are built around them.

In terms of social representations, groups tend to highlight interindividual differences with those groups with which they are related and to accentuate similarities with members of their own group, which has as a result social integration or differentiation. We know that people do not belong to a single group since their future entails a series of interactions that have the effect of a multidimensional identity. This process can create disagreements between the various elements of the representations by contrasting the different identities (Doise, 2002), hence identity is also a constituted and constituent process.

In the construction of social representations people are assimilating the various referents of their environment rooted in the uses and customs of groups and peoples, thus their identity is manifested through the meaning they give to their social representations. This constitutes them as a metasystem that allows social regulation through evaluation and categorization supported by common sense explanations of the relationships between groups and social objects (Di Giacomo, 1981).

These categories, which are the axis of social relations, are based on consensual thinking. Thus, social regulations dominate social relations rather than logical regulations (Moscovici, 1998). These regulations and social interactions share information loaded with opinions which may or may not be shared, giving rise to social union or disunity depending on whether or not to recognize those opinions, which leads to forming groups based on the position they assume towards that information and opinions. These opinions may be fossilized as to their origins. Thus, social representations tend to be an effect of interindividual communication and interactions.

As discussed in other works (Doise, 2002), the research of social representations addresses the complex cognitive systems of people as meta-systems of symbolic relationships that characterize a society. In that sense, the contrast between different identities entails a complex categorization process where similarities and differences between categories come into play, which leads to other processes such as the so-called interclass and

intraclass, which allows differentiation processes in some conditions are reduced and in others accentuated (Hewstone, Islam, & Judd, 1993)

Now, we know that the memory and the relationship of societies with their past play an important role in the construction of identities, being one of the central functions of memory to preserve and defend the identities of groups and communities (Hass & Jodelet, 1999). Therefore, when identities are threatened, a series of processes arise to safeguard them or transform them, which becomes more evident in conflict situations.

Contemporary societies are characterized by accelerated trends in globalization, the use of technologies, social conflicts, poverty and the struggle for human rights, to name but a few. In this context, it is necessary to question the way in which people conceive and represent identities, whether national, ethnic, urban or gender. It is equally important to ask ourselves about the role of memory in the definition of identities and in the construction of citizenship, which according to Rouquette (2003) is a particular category of social representations in political psychology.

The articles that make up this issue lead us to reflect on these issues, enriching the theoretical and methodological work of the Theory of Social Representations focused, in this case, in Latin America.

In the work of Juárez-Romero, Álvarez and Olivares developed in Mexico, the social representations associated with the Indian and the indigenous and the related categories are examined, emphasizing the role played by ideology and collective representations. It is possible to say that these subjects were chosen since they have been historically controversial within Mexican society. The social thought of that culture is approached through four axes: social-historical (past-present-future); ethnic-civic; generic-specific and psychosocial. It also addresses the essential role that the concepts of Indian and Indigenous have played since the country's origins and their ideology, both in their connotations and positive and negative assessments in relation to historical and current contexts. And also how this is seen in the northern, central and southern regions of that country.

On the other hand, the work of Flores-Palacios and Serrano carries out a review of gender identity and identity studies, observing the relationship between the perspectives centered on the individual and those oriented towards culture and the social. It also reports on research that addresses the issue of gender and identity in a community in southeastern

Mexico, focusing on the dimensions of vulnerability and emotional distress, to close by pointing out the importance of research with action in a community.

Cappello's article addresses the issue of Mexican national identity from a political psychology approach, interpreting identity as the social representation of the sense of belonging and participation regarding the institutions of the nation state and the concepts of civic and political. He exposes data from various investigations on the subject over two decades and discusses what he calls institutional collapse and how that is associated with the increase in the phenomenon of anomie and the breakdown of solidarity among citizens, all associated with this the growing processes of instability, violence and inequality in the country.

The paper by Alves and Cabecinhas discusses the role of otherness in societies and their role in the history of Latin America and the construction of identities and social categories. It addresses the issue of the social representation regarding being Latin American from the point of view of students from Brazil, Chile and Mexico and how they consider it to be people who are not from the region. From the theoretical-methodological notion of the structural approach to the theory of social representations, they find that the representations of others about Latin Americans focus on negative stereotypes such as poverty, violence, expressiveness, lack of instrumentality and responsibility. This leads them to discuss the dynamic, ambiguous and multi-phase nature of social thinking.

The purpose of Gutiérrez's text is to expose the need for the incorporation of emotions and affections as a dimension of social representation, this due to the role they play in the judgment and interpretation of social objects, as well as in social interactions, the construction of meanings and the way in which we communicate. The author takes as an example an investigation into the social representations of Donald Trump and his position regarding illegal immigration associating them with the processes of creating an emotional atmosphere and emotional anchoring. Using a qualitative approach, the author examines the language and speech strategies of the politician and how they build a representation of illegal immigration as one of the main problems facing his country and how the contents of this representation are based on making immigration look like a problem that carries a threat and at the same time a challenge, since it has consequences associated with costs, employment and insecurity.

The article by Ortega Rubí addresses how the social representations of young people guide their social participation, taking as a contextual framework for this the political, economic and social crises of the national states. An analysis is made of the attitudes, motivations and expectations of young people as part of the construction of citizenship and the strengthening of civic and political culture and the process of social change. For this, it is hypothesized that the subjects do not integrate historical thinking into their social representations, so it is not an element for the formation of shared identity or the construction of citizenship. For that, it is based on the paradigm of the individual to the social that indicates that a socialization system prevails that imposes a standard lifestyle for social isolation.

In his article Suarez Molnar aims to use the theoretical framework of social representations to respond to the notion of modernity in the Mexican 19th-century political class, seeing this as a problem of Mexican social, cultural and intellectual history. The concept of nation as an anchor and the impatience for the creation of citizens as a figurative nucleus are used for this. The author explores the use of social representations for the study of historical phenomena, discussing the conceptual and methodological limitations but also the possibilities of the theory's contribution to the historiographic question. Based on the ideas presented by some scholars on the subject, the author exposes how a representation of modernity and its association with the nation is perceived, which in his opinion shows the essentially historical character of psychosocial objects.

We consider that the articles in this issue will contribute with both theoretical and methodological elements to the topics addressed and serve the conceptual advancement of the Theory of Social Representations.

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