

# **“They Are Not Truly Indigenous People”: Social Representations and Prejudice against Indigenous People in Argentina**

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In Argentina, as well as in many countries, indigenous people have been the target of prejudice for centuries. This situation mostly dates to the “Conquest of the Desert”, a military campaign waged by the Argentine government against the indigenous population during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although in the last three decades, indigenous groups’ claims for reparation and equal social rights have increased in visibility, most are still victims of cultural segregation and poverty. This study analyzes the relations among social representations and prejudice against indigenous people in a small city, where the descendants of both military people and the European immigrants who arrived at the

beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to settle in the “conquered” lands, live alongside descendants of the Mapuche indigenous groups who originally inhabited that same territory. Our analyses suggest a contradiction in the attempts to vindicate the indigenous people while maintaining their subordinated and segregated status in the community. That opposition is reinforced by imaginary frontiers created by the organization of urban spaces and representations of the relations between past and present that relegate indigenous people to the past and place them into the poorest and most violent neighborhood, implicitly marking them as criminals. Hence, social representations may be at the basis of the subtle expressions of prejudice that are very frequent. However, when the inhabitants of the city have to actually face indigenous people who are not clearly very different from them and when these indigenous people’s claims become more visible, more blatant forms of prejudice become manifest.

**Keywords:** indigenous, social representations, subtle prejudice, blatant prejudice, collective memory

## **THE SITUATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN ARGENTINA**

The current situation of indigenous peoples in Latin America can only be understood as the historical outcome of a process that began with the arrival of Europeans to the Americas more than five centuries ago. As a consequence, indigenous peoples were deprived of their lands, their culture, and the communal spaces required to produce and communicate such culture (De Jong & Escobar, 2016). Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – based on the presumed need to expand the agricultural frontier and consolidate the emerging national states – multiple military campaigns were carried out throughout the continent that resulted in the decimation and subjugation of the indigenous populations.

In Argentina, the central historical processes leading to the current situation of the indigenous people were a series of military campaigns carried out at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, known as the "Conquest of the Desert". Through these campaigns, the Argentine state killed a lot of indigenous people in order to appropriate their territories and forced others to lose their culture and become invisible as a social group (Del Río, 2005). Furthermore, the dispersion produced by

the devastating military campaigns was so vast that it prevented the reorganization of indigenous peoples for generations (Nagy, 2013).

This invisibilization was further reinforced, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by scholars and politicians who, while strongly criticizing the violence perpetrated by the national army against the indigenous people, unwittingly installed the idea that indigenous people had been “exterminated”, thus relegating them and their culture to a no-longer-existing past (Lenton, 1992). It is indeed noteworthy that the current hegemonic narrative about the Conquest of the Desert denies not only the Argentinian state's responsibility for the injustices suffered by indigenous people in the past, but also the ongoing existence of indigenous communities in the Argentinian territory in the present (Barreiro, Wainryb & Carretero, 2017; Sarti & Barreiro, 2014). This purported absence of indigenous populations in Argentina does not correspond to reality, since in a population of more than 44 million inhabitants, almost a million people self-identify as indigenous, and as belonging to more than thirty indigenous communities (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos [INDEC], 2015). This situation contrasts starkly with that of other Latin American countries, such as Mexico or Peru, where mestizaje processes (and, by extension, the continuation of indigenous presence) have consistently been included in the national hegemonic narratives (Gordillo & Hirsch, 2010).

As was the case throughout Latin America and the world, in Argentina the last decades have also seen a process of re-emergence of indigenous identities, including ethnic groups that were believed to have disappeared, thus verifying the historical character of their identity positioning (Gordillo & Hirsch, 2010). In Argentina, after the last civil-military dictatorship (1976-1983), a process of communalization and political organization of indigenous peoples has occurred. Yet, in spite of the increased legal recognition of indigenous groups, effective reparation has not yet occurred. For example, although indigenous groups have now secured the right to communal ownership of the lands they inhabit, agreement about the specific territories to which they have rights has not been reached (Nagy, 2013). Similarly, although they have now secured the right to multicultural and bilingual education, only 10% of indigenous people know and use their native language (Instituto Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas [INAI], 2015). Notably, too, the suicide rate of adolescents and young adults in indigenous communities in Argentina (and other Latin American countries) is high and continues to grow (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC], 2014).

Beyond historical invisibilization processes, nowadays, as shown by studies in various countries (e.g., Sibley, Liu & Kirkwood, 2006; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), discursive repertoires – together with other symbolic resources – often serve to deny the claims of indigenous people or even the damages they have suffered (Barreiro, Wainryb & Carretero, 2016; Barreiro, Wainryb et al., 2017). Further support to this proposition can be found in the ubiquity of monuments, located throughout the main cities in Argentina, commemorating the "heroic" military that effected the subjugation of indigenous peoples—monuments which are consistent with the hegemonic historical discourse presented in school textbooks (Barreiro, Castorina & van Alphen, 2017).

In this article, we outline and discuss the social representations (SR) and prejudice held against indigenous people in Argentina. Our analyses involve a corpus of data drawn from a multi-study research project conducted over several years (2013-2016). As is often the case with multi-year projects involving several studies with distinct but related foci, portions of these data have been presented elsewhere (Barreiro, Ungaretti & Etchezahar, 2019; Barreiro, Wainryb et al., 2016; Barreiro, Wainryb et al., 2017); nevertheless, the present manuscript includes the first exhaustive presentation of this large-scale project<sup>1</sup>.

This large-scale research project was carried out in a town in southwestern Buenos Aires that was originally founded by the Argentine military forces during the “Conquest of the Desert”. In what has today become a small city, the descendants of the founding military people and of the European immigrants who arrived at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century to settle in the “conquered” lands, live alongside members of a Mapuche indigenous community who originally inhabited this territory. To date, this local indigenous community has begun organizing, pledging for its rights and demanding compensatory actions and cultural recognition from both the national government and the town residents, thereby threatening the established social order. To conclude, we discuss the relations between SR and prejudice that are illustrated by our data and some possible interventions, combining social cognitive approaches and community level actions, aimed at reducing prejudice.

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<sup>1</sup> The goals of this paper and its conclusions, as well as the writing of the text, are original contributions, even though most of the empirical data discussed here had been published previously in partial reports of the large-scale research project. The readers could find more detailed information on the methodological issues and data analysis techniques in the referenced publications.

## **COMMONSENSE KNOWLEDGE: SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS AND PREJUDICE**

The knowledge frames by which members of a social group perceive and understand their own reality rely on their shared background of commonsense knowledge (Moscovici, 2001; Wagner & Hayes, 2005). The representations stored and shared in commonsense knowledge depend mainly on the groups' ideological commitments or the broad system of beliefs and values that gives them a particular perspective on social phenomena.

Nowadays, SR theory is one of the most widely accepted perspectives for studying commonsense knowledge (Sammut, Andreouli, Gaskell & Valsiner, 2015). SR are the product of everyday exchanges and, as a form of collective knowledge, are meaning structures that provide a shared code to communicate about everyday phenomena and the challenges they face (Moscovici, 2001). Therefore, SR refer to a set of values, ideas, and practices with a dual function: they enable individuals to orient themselves and master their environment, and facilitate the communication among members of a group by categorizing the social world based on their common history (Moscovici, 1961, 2001; Wagner, 2015). SR are constructed in social practices when individuals face everyday issues, and are used to act upon the cultural environment. They are overarching structures across different patterns of social interaction and can be defined as dynamic units because people represent social objects in and through action. In this way, SR are fuzzy and inferred by people from stable patterns of correlation across the elements of that dynamic unity that cannot be defined away from its context (Wagner, 2015). Hence, SR, as emergent meanings, create the social object that only exists as the outcome of people's interactions over time in a specific context.

SR are developing structures, because the dynamic process of social representing implies a temporal dimension. Even though they can be described in any specific moment in time, their analysis requires a developmental perspective inasmuch as they are both the process and the product of social knowledge construction. As a consequence, the study of SR construction entails a level of sociogenetic analysis due to the dynamic process that takes place along a group history, following political, historical and cultural circumstances (Duveen & Lloyd, 1990; Kalampalikis & Apostolidis, 2016). In this sense, SR are constructed when a gap emerges in culturally-available meanings, due to the appearance of a new phenomenon or due to a transformation of the meaning traditionally attributed to an already known phenomenon, as is the case with the increasing claims for recognition of their rights by indigenous people. Because the unknown is

threatening, social groups engage in a process that enables them to become familiar with the unknown object by reconstructing it (Moscovici, 2001).

It bears emphasizing that the meaning-making process by which SR are negotiated and transmitted involves power conflicts among social groups that try to impose their specific versions of “reality” (Barreiro & Castorina, 2016). Every SR involves a political dimension that legitimizes or denies the historical basis of a group’s claims. Power struggles mediate the determination of what becomes reality and what should be remembered or forgotten, what is fair or unfair, or what is right or wrong based on historical experience (Barreiro, Wainryb et. al., 2017; Sibley, Liu, Duckitt & Khan, 2008). Social groups construct their social identity based on representations of their common past (Sibley et al., 2008). Individuals, in turn, develop a sense of themselves and others by appropriating the commonsense accounts of their past, thus recognizing themselves in their ingroup collective memory. People thus become active members of social groups when they appropriate the SR that, simultaneously, forge their social identity (Duveen, 2007). Therefore, social disputes about competing versions of the past carry significant political implications in the present, by legitimizing a specific group’s view of reality and affecting how individuals project themselves into the past, present, and future, and how they understand and relate to others.

Therefore, SR theory offers insights into the representational process underlying social order and political legitimacy, as well as into efforts to impose, maintain and change hierarchical group relations. These processes are based on exchanges between minority and majority groups trying to influence each other (Staerklé, 2015). Intergroup disputes about social order express the continuous tension between stability of the current agreements and claims of change at the cornerstone of any SR. Although SR are shared knowledge, not all members of a group think the same. The organization of individual knowledge is influenced by common principles, and the common grounds shared by people in any one community permit them to communicate with each other even when they disagree (Andreouli & Chrysochoou, 2015). Consensus and conflict are both essential parts of any social order. However, to participate in social debates, individuals need to know what is at stake; this is possible only if they share common frames of symbolic reference (Staerklé, 2015).

As mentioned earlier, one of the main functions of SR is to categorize the social world according to familiar meanings. According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986),

categorical thinking plays a central role when people try to understand other social groups. Societies have a set of normative categories that define the diverse social groups: there are representations that delimit who *we* and *they* are. In addition, according to SR theory, it is possible that some groups are classified as *others* and placed in a different scenario from *we* and *they* (Moscovici, 2012). These people end up becoming foreigners to that cultural field and classified as ontological, dehumanized entities. This ontologizing explains how it is possible to identify similar representations of the discriminated groups across different contexts (Pérez, Moscovici & Chulvi, 2002). Usually, the groups that become targets of prejudice are represented in ways linked to *nature*, with features that distinguish them from *culture* (Moscovici, 2011). Thus, every social group creates an intermediate category that works as a gap between culture and nature (Pérez et al., 2002). This intermediate category is used to become familiar with social groups that, for some historical or political reason, become threatening to the current social order. In this way, SR theory offers a sociogenetic explanation for why one group, but not others, becomes a target of prejudice in a specific context (Milland & Flament, 2016; Pérez et al., 2002). Specifically, stereotypes, as key elements of prejudice, express beliefs that are part of a SR that serves to understand a social group in a specific socio-historical context (Moscovici, 2012).

Hence, stereotypes are more than cognitive schemas, since they are constructed *in situ*, within a specific relational context at a particular point in time (Augoustinos & Walker, 1998). Researchers suggest that stereotypical beliefs and prejudice are strongly related, working together to create and maintain social inequality (Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2007; Devine, 1989; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2014). Although, historically, prejudice was thought to require a negative feeling (Allport, 1954), nowadays it is thought that the key to prejudice is the intent to support hierarchical and power relations between groups (Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick & Esses, 2010). These findings are in line with recent changes in prejudice definition, suggesting that antipathy towards groups or individuals (Allport, 1954) cannot be the key to prejudice anymore. Nowadays, prejudiced attitudes would reflect the intent to support hierarchical and power relations between groups (Dovidio et al., 2010). Bearing in mind that stereotypes constitute the perceiver's beliefs about a group's attributes, the perceiver's prejudiced attitudes should be a function of their evaluation of the most salient characteristics and the strength with which those beliefs are held (Mackie & Hamilton, 1993).

In the last few decades, studies in different countries demonstrated that prejudice as a hostile and direct way of expression has been replaced by a subtler and socially adaptive kind of prejudice (Cramwinckel, Scheepers & van der Toorn, 2018; Ungaretti, Etchezahar & Barreiro, 2018). Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) suggested that *blatant prejudice* – the direct and hostile expressions of negative attitudes towards minority groups – involves feelings of threat and rejection, as well as the refusal to establish intimate contact with outgroup members. Conversely, *subtle prejudice* represents more indirect and socially adapted expressions of negative attitudes, that can be inferred from the defence of traditional ingroup values, as well as from the exaggeration of cultural differences and denial of positive emotions.

### **THE “FRONTIERS” AGAINST INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**

In this article, we outline the functioning of social representations held against indigenous people in Argentina, and their links to manifest and hostile forms of prejudice. Our discussion draws on a multi-study research project conducted between 2013 and 2016 in a small community in the southwestern region of the province of Buenos Aires, in a geographical area known as the *last frontier against indigenous people* (Nagy, 2013). In that area, indigenous people used to live alongside *criollos*<sup>2</sup>, with a fluid social and cultural interchange among them. However, the Argentine government launched an offensive strategy against indigenous people. First, they ordered that a huge trench be dug to demarcate the border between the city of Buenos Aires and the indigenous territories and prevent indigenous incursions. The community where we conducted our project was founded as part of that border, to build the trench and control indigenous tribes, and functioned as a central military base during the Conquest of the Desert some years later.

Interestingly, this community was founded and developed in the midst of a pro-military account of its history, but nowadays the descendants of the founding militaries and European immigrants who settle in the “conquered” lands at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century live alongside the descendants of the indigenous Mapuche community that inhabited that territory since before the conquest. As is also the case in the rest of Argentina, during the last three decades, the local

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<sup>2</sup>Descendants from Europeans that were born in Latin-America.



indigenous community in this town has started to organize, demanding rights, compensation, and cultural recognition from the national government and the town residents.

In a first phase of this large-scale project, we performed ethnographic observations of daily interactions among different actors in the community (for more detailed information on the ethnographic phase of the research, see Barreiro, Wainryb et al., 2016; Barreiro, Wainryb et al., 2017), which provided useful insights into the collective narratives expressed by different symbolic resources, as well as by discourses expressed in daily interactions among the town's inhabitants. We also visited the local museum, the city hall, and family homes, and conducted meetings with various social actors (e.g., lawyers, politicians, psychologists, historians, doctors, and teachers), and interviews with key informants (e.g., a social scientist, a local historian, a teacher, and a former political figure). Although we also conducted interviews with members of the local indigenous people, the focus of this article is on SR and prejudice of the group that currently holds the political, economic, and cultural power—that is, the descendants of Europeans and military people.

In a second phase of the project (for more detailed information on this phase, see Barreiro et al., 2019), 304 adult inhabitants of that city completed a questionnaire that relied on a word association technique (Milland & Flament, 2016), with “indigenous” as the inductor term, along with an adaptation of the Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Scale (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Ungaretti, Etchezahar & Barreiro, 2018), a valid and reliable measure for the assessment of new expressions of prejudice (Álvarez-Castillo, Fernández-Caminero & González-González, 2018; Passini & Morselli, 2016).

Finally, to draw the joint conclusions that constitute the main body of the present article, we combined the data obtained in phases 1 and 2 of the project and analyzed it using the Constant Comparative Method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This approach involves an analytic strategy that makes it possible to articulate categories based on the systematic and recursive comparison of data obtained via different research techniques in different phases of a research project. In this way, we have been able to identify two broad categories related to the ‘frontiers’ constituted by the social representations of indigenous people, and the ways in which these frontiers are linked to different manifestations of prejudice against them.

## Creating Frontiers in the Urban Space

Our analyses of the urban spaces and the various memorials in this town (Barreiro, Wainryb et al., 2016; Barreiro, Wainryb, et al., 2017) suggest that indigenous people are considered an important part of the common past, but the specific ways they are represented underscore their misrecognition and subordination in relation to the military forces. In general, within cities and communities, the names of streets, plazas, or monuments act as *memorials* (Connerton, 2009), encapsulating a specific narrative. They serve to bring the past into the present, placing memory in the context of ordinary settings. Moreover, those who name public spaces or build symbolic objects in them (such as monuments), tend to be aware of the meanings that they want to impart. For example, in the community where we conducted our study, inside City Hall and framing the entrance to the Office of the Secretary of Culture, there are two imposing busts of the most important local historical figures. On the right, there is a clearly labeled bust of General Villegas, the military man who founded the city and one of the leaders of the military campaign. On the left, there is a bust representing Cacique Pincén, the ancient chief of the indigenous people. Notably, Pincén's bust is not labeled—indeed, the gypsum column that supports Pincén's bust had originally belonged to the bust of a different Argentine military-man. Approximately ten years ago, as the movement for indigenous vindication gained relevance in the community, the local authorities decided to replace the bust of that military individual with the bust of Pincén, but they never got around to replacing the bronze plaque in the gypsum. Therefore, unless one has previous knowledge of it, it is impossible to ascertain who that “indigenous-looking” bust represents—although the typical headgear and *poncho* clearly mark it as “indigenous”.

Similarly, most streets in the town have been named to commemorate military figures. The main street is named after General Villegas, but only recently was the name of chief Pincén given to a street in town—a narrow and unpaved street in the outskirts of the town. The choice to give the name of “Pincén” to a minor street in the sketchiest part of town can be reasonably interpreted as a perpetuation of indigenous people's exclusion (Barreiro, Wainryb et al., 2016).

The same relation between social prestige and commemoration is manifested in the only neighborhood named after an indigenous person. Most of our interviewees stated that this neighborhood is the poorest in town, with the highest levels of delinquency and violence. Notably, this was also the neighborhood where most of the members of the indigenous communities reside (Nagy, 2013). After the Conquest of the Desert, the “conquered” lands were

sold to wealthy landowners. Hence, the indigenous people who survived the military's attack returned to the periphery of the town, begging the newly installed landowners for work. They settled largely in two areas that nowadays, due to the population's growth, are part of the city. One was the area already mentioned, where the poorest neighborhood emerged; the other was a narrow and very short street, in which the house where Pincén's wife and daughters settled some years after the conquest can still be found. This is a meaningful place for the indigenous people, and Pincén's descendants still live there, underscoring a sort of continuity between past and present. Nevertheless, this house and its surroundings are not formally recognized as historical locations.

These examples suggest a contradiction in the attempts to vindicate the indigenous people while maintaining their subordinated and segregated status in the community. That opposition is reinforced by the imaginary borders created by the organization of urban spaces that relegates indigenous people to the town's periphery, and into the poorest and most violent neighborhood, implicitly marking them as criminals.

### **Creating Temporal Frontiers**

Thus far we discussed how the organization of the urban spaces and some symbolic resources within those spaces may serve to segregate indigenous people and reinforce their subordination. But there are other forms of borders that keep the indigenous people away from the present life in the community—these are temporal borders that relegate them to the past. Indeed, all the memory places mentioned in the previous section commemorate indigenous people from the far past, making it seem as though there had not been any relevant indigenous people or indigenous events since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A very important place in the community is the local historical museum—an institution that is uniquely significant to the aims of this study because of its role in the diffusion of SR. The exhibit begins with a room dedicated to pre-historical times, followed by another commemorating the indigenous people who inhabited the region in an undetermined faraway past. In this “Indigenous room”, visitors see a horse, primitive tools used to make food, traditional indigenous items of clothing, indigenous weapons, and pictures of indigenous people dressed in traditional attire. In addition to the massive chronological gap between the first room dedicated to pre-historical times and this one, the objects featured in this room include some

pertaining to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and others referring to famous local indigenous people who died as recently as a few decades ago. In this sense, this room represents a considerable time loop confusing past and present. Across from the “Indigenous room”, visitors find a “colonial room” dedicated to the conquest and colonization of America by Spaniards in the years 1492-1816, where the everyday life in the Argentine colony is depicted as entirely devoid of indigenous people. The sequence of the rooms in the museum suggests a narrative wherein indigenous people inhabited the region after pre-historical times and until the arrival of the Spaniards, but disappeared after that (Barreiro, Wainryb et al., 2017).

Aside from the representations expressed via the symbolic resources in the museum, we also examined how time is used in the discourse of community members when they speak about the indigenous people (Barreiro, Wainryb et al., 2017). For example, we had the opportunity to observe a visit of a kindergarten classroom and their teacher<sup>3</sup> to the “Indigenous room” in the museum. Below, we reproduce a fragment of our record of the teacher’s explanations, which helps illustrate the looping between past and present in the hegemonic discourse about indigenous culture, as well as the ensuing anachronic representation of indigenous identity:

[...] all these objects that we are seeing here show how many different things the indigenous people used to have and used to do. They used to have a flag, they used to take care of their children, they used to prepare their own food. They also used to have a thanksgiving ceremony that was called *nguillatun*, because they were a very grateful people (Barreiro, Wainryb et al., 2017, p. 132).

Notably, the objects and activities mentioned by the teacher still exist today and are an ongoing part of today’s indigenous culture. However, the teacher’s explanations were articulated in the past tense, implying that indigenous people and their culture no longer exist. In this way, indigenous identity is constructed anachronistically, fixed in the past without considering its possible and actual development through time.

This interpretation is reinforced by the results of the analysis of the SR of indigenous people, as obtained via the word association technique (Barreiro et al., 2019). The central core of a SR contains the most relevant and consensual elements that give sense to all the other elements

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<sup>3</sup>The social roles of all the people mentioned in this chapter had been slightly modified to preserve the anonymity of their identities.

that constitute the meaning structure (Abric, 2001). Specifically, the most consensual words that came to the mind of members of the community when prompted to think about an “indigenous people” were: *Indian, culture, poverty, original, person, humility, history, past, race, and ancestors*. The semantic field of these representational elements places indigenous people in a remote past. In addition, some of those elements underscore differences between them and the rest of society in terms of *culture* and *race*. Moreover, the fact that the term *person* arises suggests that their humanity may not be obvious and requires special mention. The reference to indigenous people as being *humble* could be seen as a positive trait; however, this descriptor may also suggest that indigenous people are passive, thereby denying them political agency and self-determination (Carretero & Kriger, 2011). Similarly, while the term “poverty” may be seen as merely a realistic depiction of their conditions, it can also be interpreted in terms of their stigmatization and the essentializing of their subordinated position. Finally, it is noteworthy that one of the most relevant associations was *Indian*. As it is widely recognized, *Indian* is a wrong label for the American indigenous people, forever associated to a mistake made by the first colonizers. Nowadays, this term is used frequently with a pejorative meaning by members of the community, as well as more broadly by people in other Latin-American countries, and is considered insulting by indigenous people when someone from outside the indigenous community uses it (Barreiro, Wainryb et al., 2016). This anachronistic and passive representation of indigenous people suggests assumptions about the primitive or uncivilized characteristics of indigenous people that differentiate them from the more ‘cultured’ or ‘developed’ society. Precisely, this representation places them in ‘nature’ rather than in ‘culture’. Thus, in line with Moscovici’s arguments (Moscovici, 2011, 2012), the crystallized elements of the SR that constitute the stereotype of the indigenous peoples of this study, place them in the past and outside the respondents’ culture, that is, in an indigenous culture, taking advantage of the themata *natura-cultura* identified in previous studies with other minority groups (e.g., Pérez et al., 2002).

### **IF THEY GO THROUGH THE FRONTIERS, “THEY ARE NOT TRULY INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, THEY JUST PRETEND THEY ARE, TO GET ALL THE BENEFITS”**

Thus far, we presented and interpreted some of the information collected by different sources during the two phases of our research project. On these bases, we claim that the SR of indigenous people function by establishing temporal and urban spatial frontiers that may serve to

deal with the perceived threats that the indigenous existence represents for the rest of the inhabitants. Although we can differentiate them for analytic purposes, these various frontiers are not independent from each other; rather, any one symbolic or social practice can represent both. Along with Gillespie (2008), we speculate that when a social group becomes aware of the presence of an alternative SR, as might be the case when the ongoing existence of indigenous people comes to the fore in a changing socio-political climate, group members may develop different barriers to defend their own representations. Indeed, the idea of the disappearance of the indigenous people, the use of the past tense to speak about them, the construction of an anachronic indigenous identity, their geographical placement in the poorest and most dangerous neighborhood—all may be seen as instances of protective barriers or frontiers against this threatening group. We suggest that, by these means, the SR of indigenous people may help avoid conflicts among the diverse groups that inhabit the community, by rendering the indigenous group invisible and keeping them away from the rest of society. It seems feasible, therefore, that this delegitimizes indigenous claims for recognition and reparation, and works to protect and reproduce the social order in the community. Altogether, then, we put forth the hypothesis that the SR of indigenous people reinforce their invisibilization and derogation – but in subtle ways of expression, by placing them outside of the social map occupied by the rest of the community.

This interpretation of the symbolic frontiers established by the SR of indigenous people is reinforced by the data from the Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Scale (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). In this community, the levels of subtle prejudice were higher than those of blatant prejudice (Barreiro et al., 2019). This finding was not surprising, as anti-racist ideals prevalent at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have led people to reject the more blatant expressions of prejudice. Indeed, most participants agreed that “Indigenous people are very different from other Argentines in the way they teach their children to follow the rules”, “in their beliefs and rituals” and “in the way they speak and communicate with others” (Barreiro et al., 2019).

However, the subtle forms of prejudicial expression that distinguished between indigenous people and the rest of the community are not sufficient to make sense of the aggressive and violent expressions against indigenous people recorded during the ethnographic phase of our project. Individuals in this community have daily interactions with some people they know to be indigenous but who do not fit the anachronic stereotype that crystallized the SR, when it comes to

looking like them, sending their children to the same schools, wearing similar clothing, and using the same technology.

Some of our observational records suggest a contradiction between a somewhat positive representation of the past indigenous people, and a negative representation of the very concrete living indigenous people of the present with whom they interact in their everyday lives. To further our arguments, next we present abbreviated records of some of our meetings with the community's inhabitants. The following transcription is a record of the interactions during dinner with a local upper middle-class couple in their 50s:

One of the hosts begins the conversation by telling us about the times he was a child at school, and he had a friend in his class whose last name was "Pincén", though he didn't remember his first name or whether he had any relation to the Chief. He did remember, however, that if anyone called him "Indio", the boy would get angry and would beat up whoever called him that. [...] Later in the conversation, when we asked him what he thought of the ongoing claims of the local indigenous community and why such claims may not have come up at an earlier time, he responded: "I'm sorry, but to be honest, and this is what I really think, they do it for the money." And his wife added: "They can get fellowships now, to send their kids to study in Buenos Aires [the capital city]". And the husband added, "You should do a survey among my friends. You'd see that no one agrees to give lands to these fucking Indians". And the wife commented, in a low voice "I met lots of people who surname was Pincén, that doesn't mean they feel like indigenous people" (Barreiro, Wainryb et al., 2016, p. 48).

What is noteworthy in this record is that one individual mentions the presence of indigenous people in the town since his childhood, but at the same time denies their indigenous identity—indeed, he claims that they themselves did not feel like *Indians*. Note also that there is no reference to the possibility that, in the past, members of indigenous groups may have hidden their indigenous origins precisely because they were considered inferior or because of the possibility of brutal repression during the military dictatorship. At the same time, both underscore some sense of certainty that indigenous people today assert their identity only for the purpose of economic gain, rather than because of a true identification with a culture. The next excerpt records the discussions observed during a meeting with members of the Local Council:

[A woman] explained that some years ago town people used to celebrate “the appropriation of indigenous territories in the ‘National Festivity of the Campaigns to the Desert’” and speculated that this may have been the reason why, when she was much younger, people might have felt ashamed of being (or being known as) indigenous. She also commented that “but these were really really good people.” A few minutes later, [...] a different participant commented: “My experience is that when you tell someone that you are working with “Indians”, everybody tells you: they are going to screw you”; many participants nodded in agreement. [...] Participants added comments such as: “If you lend them something, they won’t return it to you”; “They’re always asking for something” [...] (Barreiro, Wainryb et al., 2016, p. 49).

This meeting was striking because, at first, all the local politicians (who represented parties along the political spectrum) mentioned a “new history” that recognizes the past genocide of indigenous peoples, which had been neglected for almost a century. In addition, one claimed the indigenous people she knew in her childhood were “very good” people who passively endured mockery and insults. Interestingly, in line with the subtle forms of prejudice, she felt she had to remark that they were “good people”, as if this were something that needs to be pointed out. Nevertheless, a few minutes later, when we directly asked the same politicians to discuss the ongoing claims and demands of the local indigenous community, they referred to them as lazy and untrustworthy.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS: HOW TO TEAR DOWN THE FRONTIERS?**

Considering all the data collected over the entire research project, we conclude that there is a contradiction between the anachronic SR of previous indigenous people and the real indigenous people with whom members of the community interact daily. According to the SR held by the inhabitants of this town, the indigenous people are something from the past, with some identity-relevant features (e.g., a different culture and costumes, urban location, etc.) easily distinguishable from them. However, as the previous excerpts illustrated, when the members of the community’s SR is challenged by the presence of “real” indigenous people – concrete individuals they know by name and who are very similar to them – that do not fit within the stereotype, the subtle expression of prejudice may give way to the more aggressive and blatant



forms. Such were the expressions: “They are not truly indigenous people, they just pretend they are, to get all the benefits”.

Hence, the SR may be at the basis of the subtle expressions of prejudice that are very frequent. However, when the inhabitants of the city have to face indigenous people who are not clearly different from them, and when their claims become more visible, more blatant forms of expression may become manifest. But even the subtler forms of prejudice are very dangerous, inasmuch as they serve to preserve the subordinated position and segregation of indigenous people in a way that is socially accepted. Interventions aimed at deconstructing the indigenous misrecognition resulting from the SR are necessary. The most traditional way of intervening against prejudicial attitudes is to foster intergroup contact under controlled conditions (Allport, 1954), and many studies have shown that contact between members of groups in conflict can help improve their relations. However, negative intergroup contact (Graf, Paolini & Rubin, 2014), such as when the group members feel uncomfortable or angry during their contact with each other, is likely to actually trigger more intergroup antipathy.

In this vein, many studies have examined the conditions under which it is possible to develop a process of *deategorization* and *recategorization* (Gaertner et al., 2000). Surely, it will not be easy for people from social groups with a long history of aggression and suffering to consider their aggressors as part of their group. Furthermore, this process may threaten previously constructed social identities. It is important to note that we are not proposing to erase the particular identities of the different social groups, but to recognize them and include them in a broader category (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000), as has been done in multiculturalist countries such as Canada or Bolivia.

However, the cognitive or individualistic focus of the proposed interventions will be not sufficient to transform the anachronic SR of indigenous people, which ontologizes them and places them out of the participants’ culture, in a different time and space than the rest of the community inhabitants. As we have shown, such an SR is supported and expressed in the organization of the urban space and the many symbolic resources placed in it. Therefore, we suggest that adopting a sociogenetic approach to the study of the stereotype – as a cornerstone of prejudice – via contributions in SR theory, makes it possible to understand its historical and political dimension in the community. The segregation and subordination of indigenous people is supported in everyday interactions, but goes beyond the individuals’ interactions and beliefs.

Thus, any intent to transform commonsense knowledge must not only consider the subjective and intersubjective spheres, but must also make changes to the trans-subjective sphere, that is, in the social regulations that frame individuals' interactions (Jodelet, 2011). Therefore, to improve intergroup relations it may be necessary for the Argentine government to recognize its responsibility in the indigenous genocide that is currently being perpetuated, since their cultural and territorial constitutional rights are not yet realized. Furthermore, it is necessary to implement public policies – at national and communal level – aimed at integrating indigenous culture into the Argentine present. Finally, we argue that any such transformations will be possible only with direct participation from the indigenous people in drawing political policies, so as to avoid creating new forms of misrecognition and stigmatization.

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