

The theory of social representations and the theory of mediations: A methodological proposal to draw both theories closer to each other

A teoria das representações sociais e a teoria das mediações: Uma proposta metodológica de aproximação

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ABSTRACT

This study summarizes research aiming to bring together Serge Moscovici's theory of social representations and Jesús Martín-Barbero's theory of mediations. A theoretical and methodological discussion is described based on a discussion of the main references of both theories in search of tangency aspects that can bring these theories closer together. Such research resulted in a diagram that suggests a methodological protocol for future studies in communication.

Keywords: Social representations, mediation, theory, communication

RESUMO

O artigo sumariza parte de uma pesquisa cujo propósito foi o exercício de aproximação entre a teoria das representações sociais, a partir de Serge Moscovici, e a teoria das mediações, de Jesús Martín-Barbero. Apresenta-se a discussão teórica e metodológica, baseada em referências principais de ambas as teorias, procurando aspectos de tangência que permitam a aproximação delas. O artigo resulta em um diagrama como sugestão de protocolo metodológico para estudos futuros no campo da Comunicação.

Palavras-chave: Representações sociais, mediações, teoria, comunicação

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THIS ARTICLE PROPOSES a theoretical-methodological approximation between the theory of social representations, by Serge Moscovici, and the theory of mediations, by Jesús Martín-Barbero, in order to analyze how representations are constructed and identify the main mediators of this process. To this end, it is assumed that the field of social representations and the field of mediations are closely linked to cultural aspects and responsible for the construction of the symbolic universe of subjects. Social representations circulate in words, messages, discourses, and also in the media. This condition means that they can crystallize and materialize (Domínguez Gutiérrez, 2006), making it possible to identify the mediations at play in the construction of social representations regarding an object.

The theory of social representations deals with a form of socially shared knowledge, which arises from the daily exchanges of thought and social actions in a group. Social representations are essential to understand the diversity of individuals, their behaviors and phenomena, in all their strangeness and unpredictability, as it is from these representations that subjects build the world in which they live. For Moscovici (2013) social representations can be identified in social phenomena. This is explained by Stropasolas (2002, p.24), when he writes that “social representations generate social facts, make social identities emerge, mobilize and socially organize people and groups around specific demands, redefining the history and dynamics of societies.” When social actors give meaning to the world around them, they construct their reality and such relationships are continually established.

In turn, the theory of mediations by Jesús Martín-Barbero was innovative in terms of breaking with the view centralizing the media in the communication process, and proposing to redirect the focus to what the scholar called mediations, which would be “between” the media and the subjects. Martín-Barbero understands mediations as a “tracing that connects in web the dispersed, different and distant dots and lines that weave a map to a reality that is verified or to a concept that is maintained and managed” (2018, p. 22). This is complemented by Orozco (1996), to whom mediations are influences that form the social subject and depend on the life path and cultural conditions of each individual. During their development as social beings, humans are in a constant process of socialization, learning how to act and react to each situation. In every new coexistence group, there is always a set of norms, values, statuses and roles to be played.

This article summarizes part of the interdisciplinary research carried out in the area of Social and Applied Sciences¹ and seeks to introduce to the area of Communication an interpretative possibility for the phenomena that it studies. After a theoretical discussion on both theories, it presents a methodological protocol that can be applied in future studies.

¹This is the doctoral thesis *Múltiplos olhares, múltiplas mediações: as representações sociais da ruralidade entre os jovens rurais da Microrregião de Santa Cruz do Sul* (2017), written by the author of this article under the supervision of the co-authors.

ABOUT THE TWO THEORIES

The phrase social representation was first used by Moscovici (2013) in the 1960s, based on the theory of collective representation initially proposed by Émile Durkheim in the late 19th century. The main difference between the two approaches is the fact that Moscovici believes that subjectivity should also be valued, not just the collective. For the author, the collective is not decisive, nor the strongest factor, which contradicts the homogeneous character of collective representations postulated by Émile Durkheim. According to Moscovici, the model of society considered by Durkheim to think about representations was not as complex as the character of modern societies. In Durkheim's world, which was more conservative and static, transformations were slower. Therefore, representations could be more structured and crystallized, justifying the term "collective", as they would be transmitted from traditions and from one generation to another. From Moscovici's perspective, this logic could not persist in the modern world, characterized by a fluid and dynamic reality, where representations could spread quickly, for instance, through the media. Due to several social, cultural, political, and economic changes, representations could even have a short life span. For the author, it would no longer be possible to disregard the new reality that was being established, where the media began to play a major role in the constitution of representations.

In this way, Serge Moscovici replaced the *collective* – associated with a more positivistic and static tradition – with the *social*, which would give a more dynamic and appropriate dimension to modern societies (Guareschi, 2000). For the author, representations.

are specific phenomena related to a particular means of understanding and communicating – a means that creates both reality and common sense. It is in order to emphasize this distinction that I use the term "social" instead of "collective" (Moscovici, 2013, p. 49).

Concurrently, Jodelet (2005) understands representations as forms of practical knowledge that connect a subject to an object. In order to qualify this knowledge as practical, one does not seek only experience, references and the conditions in which this knowledge is produced. It is necessary to consider mainly the way in which representations are constructed for a subject to act in the world.

This is based on the assumption that representations are plural systems consisting of ideas, beliefs, images that allow objects to be thought of in



various ways (Rodríguez Salazar, 2009). Moscovici (2013) further demonstrates that representations arise both between two people and between two groups, as they all have representations. They create conventions for objects, people, or events, intervening in the cognitive activities of subjects. “These conventions enable us to know what stands for what” (Moscovici, 2013, p. 39). For this reason, it is considered common sense knowledge, which, when shared by a given group, presents, in turn, unique dynamics. This, in continuity, would reflect social diversity and the plurality of its symbolic constructions (Piñero Ramírez, 2008). For this reason, Moscovici (2013) insists on saying that social phenomena allow us to visibly identify representations. Conversations, for instance, would be the places where popular knowledge and common sense are developed, and, based on this process, we would be able to identify them.

Common sense would be a way of enabling the existence of a certain cohesion in any given society because it is knowledge present in subjects. Such common sense, in some cases, can be used to justify an action or thought: “everyone thinks like that”, or “it has always been like that”. This happens because it is a more immediate and superficial thought, which can often even carry prejudice. At the same time, however, it can be considered very useful for society because it allows everyone to have the same knowledge, regardless of class, age, or gender. On the other hand, it prevents people from searching for scientific principles, truths and information on a given subject, since they supposedly know the answer from common sense.

According to Moscovici (2013), society has the need to reconstitute a “common sense”, by continuously creating a substrate of images and meanings, without which no collectivity could operate. For the author, forms of representation are stable, exert coercion and thus constitute society. Representations “have a reality which, however symbolic and mental, is just as real, if not more real, than a physical reality” (Moscovici, 2013, p. 287). For this reason, social representations have the status of common-sense theories, as they are theories resulting from the perception, interpretation, and consolidation of social signifiers. This is where mediations and representations connect, because they occur in everyday life and depend on it. This is possible because representations are responsible for the way social subjects learn about the world; from the characteristics of their environment; from their reality and lived experience; from the information that flows and is absorbed.

The way in which subjects represent a certain reality in their symbolic universe is related not only to collective life, but also to the processes of

symbolic elaboration, requiring that social subjects struggle to make sense of the world, understand it, and find their place in it (Jovchelovitch, 2000b). Therefore, our suggestion is to look at social representations considering that they are inherent to all communication processes, all daily activities, all lived experiences, being continuously mediated by the subject's trajectory. Furthermore, as Jovchelovitch (2000b, p.81) writes,

communication is mediation between a world of different perspectives; work is mediation between human needs and the raw material of nature; rites, myths and symbols are mediations between the otherness of an often mysterious world and the world of human intersubjectivity: they all to some extent reveal the search for sense and meaning that characterizes human existence in the world.

In order to capture the social representations of an object, it must be considered that these representations are the result of an analysis of associations and ideas from various questions (Spink, 2000). According to Sá (1998, the analysis of representations needs to be three-dimensional to be considered a thorough research, not limited to describing the cognitive content of a representation. It is also necessary to relate them at least “to the sociocultural conditions that favor their emergence” and carry out “a discussion of their epistemic nature in comparison with scholarly knowledge”(p.33). It is necessary to know how the subject relates to the object. This object can be a person, a situation or social event; it can be an idea, a theory, a moment, a feeling, or something abstract. Furthermore, this object of representation can be either real or imaginary, as there is no representation without an object (Domínguez Gutiérrez, 2006).

Every representation has two interdependent faces — the iconic and symbolic faces — which have an image and a meaning. To be able to identify the most significant mediations in the process of constructing a subject's representations, Martín-Barbero's approach may be the most appropriate. The author proposes the perspective of mediations when it comes to understanding popular cultures and the reality conveyed by the media, a fact very close to the way in which social representations can be explained.

The book *From the media to mediations* by Martín-Barbero, first published in 1987, has become one of the main studies to understand the changes that occurred in Latin America with the development of the Cultural Industry. It was a period where indigenous theoretical propositions were being built in Latin America, seeking to address regional problems.



It was not just the limitation of the hegemonic model that led to such a change of paradigm. It was the recurring facts, the social processes in Latin America, that are changing the object of study for communication researchers.” (Martín-Barbero, 2003, p. 285).

Martín-Barbero’s aim was to “understand the relationships between the mass culture created in the United States, or based on North American models, and Latin American local and traditional cultures” (Martino, 2009, p. 179). This was to be done considering objects of study that gave “a central role to the position of the subject, obliterated by hegemonic perspectives in communication studies of the time, which privileged the structure of media ownership and technological or textual determinism” (Escosteguy, 2018, p. 29). This has led to a theory that considers regional space-time and the protagonism of subjects, resulting in what may be the first or most original Latin American Theory of Communication (Lopes, 2018a).

We propose to demonstrate that Martín-Barbero’s communicational thought does not conform to a theory of reception nor to a theory of mediations, but constitutes a specific theory of communication, characterized by its own epistemology, methodology and concepts, which we call *Barberian theory of communication*. (p. 39).

Thus, by focusing on mediations, Martín-Barbero explores the cultural, political, economic, and social issues of communication, including those involving the media. To understand this articulation it is necessary to take into account some assumptions of contemporary cultural theory, whose bases are in Cultural Studies: communication and culture are interrelated, one does not depend on the other; communication is not restricted to means or media, it is at the constitutive level of social relations, either mediated or not by technological artifacts; these artifacts are cultural, both in their creation and in their use – they are configured as “cultural” technologies; and communication cannot be taken as something in itself, apart from the sociocultural, economic and spatial-temporal dimensions of reality. These assumptions make up the theory of mediations.

The cultural analysis proposed by the Barberian Communication theory broadens the understanding of the place of culture, placing it as the main mediator of communication processes. In the case of media communication, for instance, culture has a diachronic and historical relationship with the cultural product,

which is produced from certain cultural matrices; it also mediates a synchronic relationship between production and reception. Therefore,

mediation must be understood as the structuring process that configures and reconfigures both the logic of production and the logic of uses. It requires concurrent thinking about the space of production and the time of consumption, both articulated by everyday life (uses/consumption/practices) and by the specificity of the technological and discursive devices of the media involved (Lopes, 2018a, p. 17).

The work of Jesús Martín-Barbero – as well as of other contemporary researchers such as Néstor García Canclini, Guillermo Orozco and Renato Ortiz – has consisted of itineraries of the relationship between culture, communication, and society in recent decades, with Latin American territories as the locus of analysis. In the author's journey it is possible to understand that “[...] the embedding of communication in culture is no longer a mere cultural matter, as both economy and politics are committed to what is produced there” (Martín-Barbero, 2003, p. 224). He follows by affirming that “A recognition that was, at first, an operation of methodological displacement to re-view the entire process of communication from its other side, i.e., that of reception, the place of resistance and appropriation from its uses” (Martín-Barbero, 2018, p. 10). To see the condition of dominance or subalternity of societies, to a certain extent, through media communication. Miscegenation and hybridism are movements that highlight power struggles through the construction of meanings about social events.

Over the more than three decades in which Martín-Barbero produced this theory, his work was marked by a “cognitive cartography” (Lopesa, 2018): a sequence of complex maps in which (new) mediations were activated, evidencing a theoretical work of interpretation of different social times, built at the intersections between communication and culture. After working out three initial mediations – *cultural competence, social temporality and family daily life* – in *From the media to mediations*, in 1987, Martín-Barbero introduces the *night map*, or *Map of Cultural Mediations of Communication*, which highlights the close relationship between media and culture, as well as a procedural view of communication, with the diachronic and synchronic axes connecting the moments in the communicative process. A few years later, in 1998, he further developed this *night map*, calling the new design *Communicative Mediations of Culture*. According to Lopes (2018a), this is when the author strengthens his



theory as a communicational theory, recognizing the advancement of media in social processes. The maps are itineraries of the theory of mediations, which become methodological protocols.

The author's last two methodological maps, organized in the 2010s, propose the *Communicative Mediations of Cultural Changes*, with the recognition of a complex and articulated web of multiple mediations, incorporating the issues of a present full of new flows, identities, ritualities, spatialities, temporalities and technicalities, the latter having a theoretical density previously unprecedented in author's work². "The importance of this map lies in recognizing that communication mediates all forms of cultural and political life in society" (Lopes, 2018a, p. 56).

The maps are schemes that recognize situations based on mediations and subjects and in which the author radically brings communication and culture together.

This new perspective means placing communication problems in another field, that of socio-cultural processes [sic]. Therefore, it proposes the study of communication phenomena through mediations, that is, it indicates an entry into the field of study of institutions, organizations and subjects, through different social temporalities and multiplicity of cultural matrices (Jacks, 1995, p. 38).

The concept of mediations, broadly defined in Martín-Barbero's work, can be defined as the "articulation between communication practices and social movements, the different temporalities and pluralities of cultural matrices"³ (Martín-Barbero, 1993, p. 224). Mediations can be understood as all those factors and devices that permeate a political, social or cultural process and that were built along the evolution of these same processes. These are elements and facts that lie "between events" and often permeate them, modifying the configuration of meanings.

Mediations can be understood as meaning-producing structures to which the receiver is linked. Personal history, the culture of one's group, your immediate social relationships, your cognitive capacity, are all mediations, but your way of watching television, your relationship with the media and the messages conveyed also interfere in the process (Martino, 2009, p. 180).

For Gutiérrez Vidrio (2003), the media participate in the mediation process but this meaning-producing relationship also involves other mediating

² Recently, Jacks et al. (2019) organized a publication where all mediations created by Martín-Barbero are explored, comparing them with the theoretical bases of their "original" areas (Geography, Philosophy, History, etc.).

³ Our translation of: "articulaciones entre prácticas de comunicación y movimientos sociales, las diferentes temporalidades y la pluralidad de matrices culturales". (Martín-Barbero, 1993, p. 224).

instances: the family, school, or other groups with which the subject interacts. Martín-Barbero's first elaboration regarding the groups of influence that participate in the construction of meanings proposes three instances of mediation – *cultural competence*, *social temporality* and *family daily life*. These were chosen for this exercise of drawing approximations with the theory of social representations because they are understood as the “basic” mediations structuring the Barberian theory. In a specific application of the theoretical-methodological proposition, observing the phenomenon to be studied, other mediations can be selected from the cartography created by the author throughout his work. When the first mediations were chosen, the author himself expressed in his work that a mediation protocol does not replace a previous one but creates possibilities for approaching and understanding reality.

Thus, for the purpose of approximating both theories in this article, this initial set of three mediations is taken from the theory proposed by Martín-Barbero in the 1980s, which are considered the main ones for capturing cultural references and their implementations.

HOW TO APPROXIMATE BOTH THEORIES?

It is observed that social representations and mediations are interconnected. It can be said that the representations that subjects make of the reality in which they live can vary according to the social context and groups with which they relate. From this perspective, it can be said that it is from mediations that representations occur. Therefore, these are distinct theoretical approaches – with their own dynamics, logics, and boundaries – but closely interconnected. In order to understand representations, it is necessary to “understand the processes through which they are produced and transformed” (Duveen, 2000, p. 263). As Jovchelovitch (2000a; 2000b) explains, mediations do not only generate social representations. The latter, in turn,

are forged by social actors to deal with the diversity and mobility of a world that, although belonging to all of us, collectively transcends us. They are a potential space of collective construction, where each person goes beyond the dimensions of their own individuality to enter another dimension, fundamentally related to the first: the dimension of the public sphere. In this sense, social representations not only emerge through social mediations, but also become social mediations (Jovchelovitch, 2000a, p. 65).



Mediations “express the space of the subject *par excellence*, in their relationship with the otherness of the world, struggling to give meaning, interpret and construct the spaces in which they find themselves” (Jovchelovitch, 2000b, p. 81). It is known that the socialization process occurs in different ways, including family, school, and cultural consumption dynamics, as the mediating function is attributed to different groups in which the subjects participate.

It is in the explanatory space that social representations can be perceived. “An explanatory space is defined here as a set of concepts that can be linked by implicative relationships that support valid logical explanations” (Wagner, 2000, p. 157). When analyzing the speech of subjects, their opinions and the reality in which they live, it is possible to understand how they represent a certain reality or object. The phenomenon of social representations is widespread in culture, institutions, social practices, interpersonal and mass communication, and in individual thoughts” (Sá, 1998, p. 21).

Because social representations are conveyed in everyday life, it is necessary to seek support to understand them. These “are basically the discourses of the people and groups that maintain such representations, but also their behaviors and the social practices they use to express themselves” (Sá, 1998, p. 73). Likewise, “Social representations are historical phenomena, produced through channels of everyday interaction, and involve multiple aspects” (Jovchelovitch, 2000b, p. 212).

Therefore, in order to identify social representations and establish which mediations participate in the construction process, it is recommended to use qualitative methodologies, such as ethnography. Data collection techniques are also useful, including open and semi-structured interviews, life stories, family stories, associated with observation. From them it is possible to understand the social reality experienced by subjects, as it is in the trajectory that social representations are formed with participation of mediations. After all, “it is from the sum of common experiences and memories that the subject extracts images, languages and gestures necessary to overcome the unfamiliar, with its consequent anxieties” (Moscovici, 2013, p. 78). For this reason, every trajectory is significant and needs to be recovered. In this way, it is possible to show that mediations can become one of the ways of understanding how representations can be elaborated, constructed, reconstructed and re-elaborated. “The ‘someone who builds’ bases their construction on a symbolic territory that provides the ground for their reading of the world, reaffirming the previously mentioned contextual dimension” (Arruda, 2002, p. 16).

The construction of social representations is not a static and immutable situation but rather a process in constant transformation, influenced by factors external to the individual and where their field of representations is inserted. For Buss (2009, p.31), they “can be found in the habits of everyday life, in the knowledge that subjects transmit, in formal and informal dialogue, in organizational institutions, and in public spaces”. And, exactly for this reason, mediations can be a way of studying how social representations are built because, in the words of Jovchelovitch (2000a, p.81), “social life is not immediate; it is mediated”.

Social representations can only

be understood in relation to the ways in which they are shaped and transformed. The processes that shape and transform social representations are intrinsically linked to communicative action and social practices in the public sphere: dialogue and language, rituals and production processes, art and cultural patterns, in short, social mediations (Jovchelovitch,, 2000a, p. 80).

To understand how a subject understands and feels a given social object, we start from the principle that what connects the subject with the object are social representations (Moscovici, 2013). However, to be able to analyze these representations, three questions must be considered:

(1) Who knows and from where do they know?, whose answers point to the conditions of production and circulation of social representations; (2) What and how do they know?, which corresponds to research into the processes and states of social representations; (3) About what do they know and to which effect?, which leads to dealing with the epistemological status of social representations (Sá, 1998, p. 32).

From these questions it is also possible to identify the mediations in this process, as they help build social representations, being integral to this action. Based on these three dimensions, an interview script can be prepared, facilitating the identification of mediations. In that case, the *family daily life*, *cultural competence* and *social temporality* can be perceived in the subjects' speech. From their connection with social representations, it is possible to understand how the subject sees a certain object and how the subject elaborates its representations, as well as to understand which groups of mediations have become more significant in this construction. It is necessary to consider that “individuals or groups situate themselves through the communication



they establish with each other, through education (cultural background), codes, values and ideologies, related to the social situation they experience” (Kuhnen, 1995, p. 79).

This condition only becomes possible based on the subject’s experience and their trajectory, which provides support – that is, anchors – and afford objectivity to the reality in which they live. The constitutive processes, objectification and anchoring are related to the constitution and functioning of social representation, explained based on their conditions of emergence and circulation, which are the social interactions and communications (Jodelet, 2005).

Objectification and anchoring are the mediators of the representation construction process. Both “clearly show that the construction of social representations has some of its main elements in historical and social structures” (Jovchelovitch, 2000a, p. 41). In this sense, because mediations have a part in the process of building social representations, they can also become a way of understanding anchoring and objectification. This condition could facilitate the categorization process when working with a qualitative methodological proposal. When considering the anchoring and objectification system in the three groups of mediations, it is possible to identify categories and create groups in order to study them. It is known that the social function of objectification is to facilitate communication and express concepts. Anchoring, in turn, comprises mechanisms that facilitate the understanding of how an individual’s knowledge can be integrated with what already exists. Furthermore, it is necessary that the subcategories within each mediation are highlighted in the statements.

Objectification explains representation as selective construction, structuring schematization, naturalization, that is, as a cognitive set that retains, amongst information from the external world, a limited number of elements linked by relationships, which make it a structure that organizes the field of representation and gains the status of objective reality. Anchoring, as a rooting in the system of thought, attribution of meaning, instrument of knowledge, explains the way in which new information is integrated and transformed into a set of knowledge socially available to interpret reality, and is then reincorporated into it, as categories which can guide understanding and action (Jodelet, 2005, p. 48).

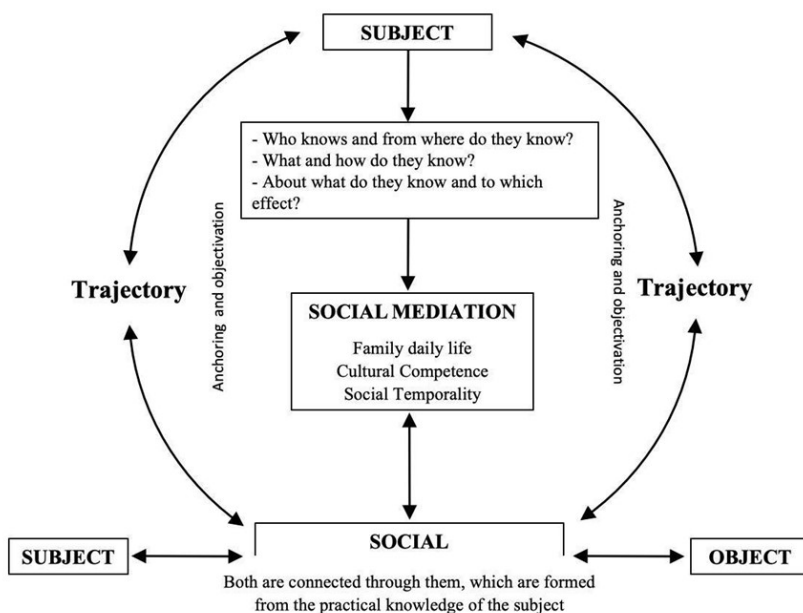
Social representations are responsible for the behavior and attitudes of individuals in a community and can undergo changes based on their coexistence and experience in the group, as well as acquired experience (Mesquita & Almeida, 2009). After all, “the individual creates ideas, concepts about events, people or objects in order to understand the surrounding world” (Chiodini, 2009, p. 47).

To facilitate the understanding of how research can be carried out using Serge Moscovici’s theory of social representations and Jesús Martín-Barbero’s theory of mediations, a methodological map was organized to help in the fieldwork and gathering of empirical material. The map makes it possible to understand how these two theories can be used for the study. It has four fundamental points: 1) The researched subject; 2) the object of representation; 3) mediations; and 4) the questions that need to be asked in order to understand how representations are constructed. This subject has his own life path, and, as a continuous process, social representations can change over time, building new representations and producing, in turn, new mediations⁴.

⁴In the thesis originating this article, this theoretical-methodological proposal was applied in interdisciplinary research carried out with a group of young people from the countryside in a region of southern Brazil. The research sought to understand how the social representations of this social group were built based on the three original mediations.

Figure 1

Methodological organization of the theory of mediations and theory of social representations



Source: Guerin, 2017, p. 145.

This workflow makes it possible to see how these two theories connect and can be valid for studying social representations from a qualitative perspective. It is from a subject’s trajectory that anchoring and objectification are supported. When mediations are identified, it is possible to understand how the subject’s representations of a given object can be constructed.



Thus, after conducting interviews, it is possible to identify the mediations of the subjects participating in the construction of representations. In this sense, some mediations identified in the interviews were grouped together to facilitate categorization and analysis. It is worth noting, however, that at the time of the interviews, they also had to be considered to make sense of the subjects' speech. Based on the mediations identified in this speech, it is possible to analyze how mediations connect to social representations. The group of mediations related to cultural competence identifies all situations that are somehow related to: formal education; ethnic, class and religious aspects; acquisition of knowledge and experiences obtained from living in different places; emotional and rational reactions of the subjects, in addition to the cultural consumption and use of communication technologies and information experienced that can connect to representations about the object to be studied.

This condition also applies to all aspects encompassing social temporality, which refer not only to changes related to time and space, but also to an estrangement felt when confronted with other realities. In this respect, the before and after are addressed, including changes felt in terms of economic, social, and cultural aspects; access to technology, which also changes the perception of time and space between people. To better understand how social time meets individual time, we have social temporality. This meeting enables diverse perceptions and experiences (Martín-Barbero, 1993), which, in turn, can influence the way of perceiving a given object. Furthermore, we should also bear in mind that every day different times and spaces come into conflict and somehow can also change our perception of the world. In turn, what is within daily family life deals with aspects that make people confront each other and show how they truly are through social relationships and their interaction with institutions (Wottrich et al., p. 4). From everyday life it is possible to understand daily practices and how individuals experience the space where they are inserted. Aspects of work, leisure and entertainment, religiosity, relationships with family, friends and neighborhood, in sum, everyday life itself, can interfere in the way how representations are constructed. Likewise,

communication is constituted as mediation in a world made up of infinitely diverse worlds; work constitutes a mediation between human needs and the raw material of nature; the development of rites, myths and symbols constitutes a mediation between otherness and the mystery of the world and the human

mind: all these mediations reveal, to a greater or lesser extent, the adventure of the human pursuit to give meaning and understand its own existence in the world (Jovchelovitch, 2000b, p. 81).

By understanding the connections between social representations and the theory of mediation, their analysis can be performed. The methodological map assists in this analysis process and can become a qualitative alternative for investigating social representations in studies in the areas of Social and Applied Sciences, especially in Communication, given the nature of its object.

WHAT TO THINK ABOUT THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIATIONS?

Social representations need to be analyzed based on the articulation of affective, mental, and social data, also considering social relations linked to cognition, language, and communication (Jodelet, 2005). Social constructions feed the subjectivity of subjects and the latter, in turn, feeds social relations. In this way, identifying representations of the world based on different life experiences makes it important to also recover the trajectory of a certain social group researched to identify the mediations related to the different faces that the social object itself provides. Thus, considering the different realities, it becomes clear that it is necessary to focus discussion on the trajectory of subjects in order to understand how they make their representations. Each individual has knowledge of their own experience and attaches importance to specific themes, moments or situations, depending on their own history. After all, observing the world involves a broader perspective and goes far beyond appearances.

It is believed that the relationship between mediations and representations occurs in a cycle. Mediations participate in the process of preparing representations and the latter, in turn, also participate in the mediation process. Hence the idea is that representations of the world can be identified from different life experiences, based on statements, with the aim of analyzing the elements that can bear influence on the *construction* of the social representations of the world in which the subjects live and the representations constructed through symbolic exchanges in the experience of cultural space. From the subjects' trajectories it is possible to know how the changes occurred and how a certain group constructed its social representations.

The identification of mediations makes it possible to identify elements of how the representations may have been created. From cultural competence,



social temporality and family daily life, the most significant factors in this construction are highlighted. The idea is not to identify which group of mediations may be the most significant, especially because mediations are interconnected and linked, but rather to propose a way of analyzing how social representations can be constructed.

Most studies on social representation work at the level of evocation or quantitative research, in which their essence and construction of social representations are not addressed. When using social mediations as a means to understand the social representations of a given group, it is possible to identify the construction processes and better understand how a given object is represented, in addition to understanding which mediations participate in the process. ■

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