

# The social representation theory in Brazilian organizational studies: a bibliometric analysis from 2001 to 2014

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## Abstract

The social representation theory (SRT) proposed by Serge Moscovici in the 1960s has gone through a process of growth and expansion, and where once it was restricted to the field of social psychology, today it is utilized by various fields and areas of knowledge. This article aims to show the results of a bibliometric survey of the literature concerning the usage of SRT in the field of organizational studies (OS), during the period from 2001 to 2014. We've analyzed papers related to OS from scientific events organized by the Brazilian National Association of Graduate Programs in Administration (ANPAD) and Brazilian periodicals with A1, A2, and B1 ratings in the Qualis/CAPES database in the areas of Administration, Accounting, and Tourism. We've identified 90 articles, 67 of which were published in 7 scientific events (out of a total of 27 editions), and 23 were published in 6 periodicals. Out of this total, 83 have a theoretical and empirical nature, and only 7 are exclusively theoretical. This bibliometric survey has enabled us to ascertain that the use of SRT in OS is still incipient, and that, in the articles addressed, authors use SRT in a superficial manner, without exploring the potential of this theory for the understanding of social phenomena. In addition, we've managed to observe some theoretical and methodological inconsistencies concerning the use of SRT in the texts we've analyzed, especially in terms of mistaken approaches to representational objects, a reductionist adaptation of the concept of social representation (SR), and the use of SRT as a research method. In terms of future research, we point out the need for the evolution and maturation of SRT in OS, in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

**Keywords:** Organizational Studies. Social Representation Theory. Social Representation.

## *Teoria das representações sociais nos estudos organizacionais no Brasil: análise bibliométrica de 2001 a 2014*

### Resumo

A teoria das representações sociais (TRS), proposta por Serge Moscovici na década de 1960, tem passado por um processo de crescimento e expansão, deixando de ser um corpo de conhecimento da psicologia social para alcançar diversos campos e áreas do conhecimento. Este artigo tem por objetivo apresentar os resultados de uma pesquisa bibliométrica acerca da produção científica que envolve a utilização da TRS no campo dos estudos organizacionais (EO), referente ao período de 2001 a 2014. Foram investigadas publicações em eventos científicos organizados pela Associação Nacional de Programas de Pós-Graduação em Administração (ANPAD) e em periódicos brasileiros classificados nos estratos A1, A2 e B1 do Qualis Capes, para a área Administração, Ciências Contábeis e Turismo, relacionados aos EO. Foram identificados 90 artigos, dos quais 67 foram publicados em 7 eventos científicos (do total de 27 edições) e 23 foram publicados em 6 periódicos. Deste total, 83 são de natureza teórico-empírica e apenas 7 são teóricos. A pesquisa bibliométrica permitiu identificar que a utilização da TRS nos EO ainda é incipiente e que, nos artigos investigados, os autores utilizam a TRS de forma superficial, sem explorar o potencial que essa teoria proporciona para a compreensão dos fenômenos sociais. Além disso, foi possível constatar nos textos investigados algumas inconsistências teóricas e metodológicas no uso da TRS, merecendo destaque o tratamento equivocado dos objetos representacionais, a adaptação reducionista do conceito de representações sociais (RS) e a utilização da TRS como método de pesquisa. Como contribuição, aponta-se a necessidade de evolução e amadurecimento da TRS nos EO, tanto em termos quantitativos como qualitativos.

**Palavras-chave:** Estudos Organizacionais. Teoria das Representações Sociais. Representações Sociais.

## *Teoría de las representaciones sociales en los estudios organizacionales en Brasil: análisis bibliométrico 2001-2014*

### Resumen

La teoría de las representaciones sociales (TRS), propuesta por Serge Moscovici en la década de 1960, ha sido objeto de uno proceso de crecimiento y expansión, dejando de ser un cuerpo de conocimiento de la psicología social para lograr diversos campos y áreas de conocimiento. Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar los resultados de una búsqueda bibliométrica de estudios científicos que impliquen el uso de la TRS en el campo de los estudios organizacionales (EO) para el período 2001-2014. Se investigó artículos publicados en eventos científicos organizados por la Asociación Nacional de los Programas de Posgrado en Administración de Empresas (ANPAD) y en las revistas brasileñas clasificadas en los estratos A1, A2 y B1 del Qualis Capes, para el área de Administración, Contabilidad y Turismo, relacionados con los estudios organizacionales. Se han identificado 90 artículos, de los cuales 67 fueron publicados en 7 eventos científicos (un total de 27 ediciones) y 23 fueron publicados en 6 revistas. De este total, 83 son naturaleza teórica y empírica y sólo 7 son teóricos. La investigación bibliométrica identifica que el uso de TRS en el EO es aún incipiente y que en los artículos investigados, los autores usan la TRS superficialmente, sin explorar su potencial para la comprensión de los fenómenos sociales. Por otra parte, se observó en los textos investigados algunas inconsistencias teóricas y metodológicas en el uso de TRS, con énfasis en el tratamiento incorrecto de objetos de representación, la adaptación reduccionista del concepto de representaciones sociales (RS) y el uso de TRS como método de investigación. Como una contribución, se advierte la necesidad de evolución y maduración de la TRS en EO, tanto en términos cuantitativos como y cualitativos.

**Palabras clave:** Estudios Organizacionales. Teoría de las Representaciones Sociales. Representaciones Sociales.

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## INTRODUCTION

The theory of social representation (SRT), proposed by Serge Moscovici in 1961, with the publication of *Psychanalyse: son image et son public*, was characterized as an innovative approach in comparison to traditional social psychology at the time. In this new form of understanding social psychology, individual behavior and social phenomena are learned according to their historical context, without ignoring the content of these social phenomena.

Even though SRT arose within the field of social psychology, its reach has not been restricted to it, and on the contrary, it has generated much debate, theoretical development and research in various fields of knowledge (EICHER, EMERY, MARIDOR et al., 2011). Serge Moscovici himself “would characterize his approach not as a model [with all of the implications that a model possesses], or a paradigm [even though it’s broader than a model, but none the less limiting], but rather a ‘point of view’” (PHILOGENE, 2011, p. 380). It’s based on this aspect that the Moscovician approach presents itself as an interesting, and at the same time, innovative alternative for social sciences, to the extent that it contributes to the understanding of the construction of thought and common sense knowledge in everyday life, especially in its genesis and its use in the social interactions that are developed in contemporary contexts (ALMEIDA, 2009).

In fact, the study of social representation (SR) permits an articulation between social psychology and other areas of knowledge in human and social sciences, including applied social sciences. The concept of SR is structured in such a way that it encompasses sociocognitive mechanisms of social thinking, such as language, the symbolic and the imaginary, being a fertile field for these areas of knowledge (JODELET, 2001). Currently there are studies of SR in sociology, anthropology, linguistics, political science, history, social services, health, education and also administration, which includes organizational studies (OS) (ALMEIDA, 2009; PIMENTEL, 2007).

Administration (or administrative science) was developed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century under the influence of the positivist paradigm which was dominated by the mechanical industrial model, rigid organizational structures and the concept of an operational man with psychological characteristics which conformed to the rules imposed by the capitalist system (MOZATTO and

\* Image Source: SerParaAção Blogspot. Available at <[http://serparacao.blogspot.com.br/2011\\_05\\_01\\_archive.html](http://serparacao.blogspot.com.br/2011_05_01_archive.html)>. Accessed on 15 June 2016.

GRZYBOVSKI, 2013). This form of development was based on modernist assumptions compatible with the capitalist logic of the accumulation of wealth, favoring dominant groups to the detriment of dominated groups, and an absence of criticism (SOUZA, SALDANHA and ICHIKAWA, 2004).

A revolt against these original characteristics of administration studies led researchers and intellectuals to search for a more critical approach to the field, which resulted in new proposed theoretical approaches that favored the appearance of OS. Reed (1996) states that the field of OS, while it is a dynamic intellectual practice permeated by theoretical controversies and ideological conflicts, is oriented around the conception of what an organization can and should be. Within this context, the study by Burrell and Morgan (1979) is the most referenced work in the field, due to its impact in terms of defining the assumptions for meta-theory and laying out 4 paradigms for organizational analysis which permit the definition of theoretical positions and methodologies (HASSARD and COX, 2013).

Reed (1996) characterizes OS as a *historically contested* field, marked by theoretical disputes in which different languages, approaches and philosophies fight for recognition and acceptance (always subject to challenge), which makes it possible to construct organizational knowledge. Given this diversity, the field of OS offers innumerable possibilities for investigating the organizational universe in which multiple forms of conversation can be established. Among these investigative possibilities, this study focuses on the conversation between SRT and OS as a way of understanding organizational phenomena. To guide our study we've defined it by the following research question: "What are the characteristics of scientific works, published in Brazilian scientific events and periodicals, in the field of organizational studies that have used the theory of social representation?"

Our central objective is to perform a bibliometric study (ARAÚJO, 2006), identifying the characteristics of this type of scientific production between the years of 2001 and 2014, including within its scope 7 categories which will be outlined in the section dealing with our research method.

Bibliometric research dealing with the utilization of SRT in OS is justified by various theoretical and methodological theories, which respect the nature of OS as a *historically contested* field which makes it possible to develop organizational knowledge (REED, 1996). Among these arguments are: (1) the conception of SR itself which permits the understanding of the construction and use of knowledge in real everyday life (JODELET, 2001), in the specific case of OS and organizational phenomena; (2) the technical framework that SRT offers for the understanding of individual behavior and social phenomena due to the historical perspective it provides, which offers an alternative theory for the comprehension of organizational phenomena without, however, excluding other forms of analysis; (3) the absence of bibliometric studies that relate SRT to OS; and (4) a lack of mapping in regard to this relationship, which leads us to seek to understand better how OS researchers have used SRT from a theoretical and methodological point of view.

To contribute to the understanding of SRT within the field of OS, this article is divided into a total of seven sections including the introduction. The second section presents SRT as a field of knowledge, including its formative processes, theoretical and methodological divisions, and its critiques; in the third section we will elaborate considerations in regard to the field of OS; in the fourth section we'll present the methodological aspects of this study; the fifth section will present the results; the sixth will be a discussion of the results; and the seventh section will present our final considerations.

## SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY AS A FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE

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In the more than fifty years of its existence, SRT has passed through a broad period of growth and has spread to six continents and various areas of knowledge. In Brazil, studies dealing with this theory appeared in the 1980s, and it was originally disseminated by university professors in the Central-West and Northeast who completed their doctorates with Serge Moscovici and Denise Jodelet in Paris at the School of Higher Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS). The development of research utilizing SRT demonstrated its heuristic value, which led to the theory being widely investigated and used. Currently, the number of SR studies in Brazil is increasing and more areas are using it as a reference (ALMEIDA, 2009), including administration and OS (PIMENTEL, 2007).

According to Arruda (2011), Serge Moscovici took a constructionist look at reality before the word constructionist existed. This means that an important issue for the theory's construction is the abandoning of the view of this subject as a dichotomy between two poles such as individuals-society, rational-emotional, social thinking-individual thinking. In other words, what it proposes is that of individual and social reality cannot be separated. In the words of Moscovici (2012, p. 45): "we believe that there is no boundary between the exterior universe and the individual (or group), that the subject and the object are not totally heterogeneous within their common ground."

From this perspective, what is striking is the active participation of the individual in his or her reality. Thus, the individual interferes, acts, modifies and also assimilates (but not just assimilates) his or her reality. This relationship between the individual and reality is governed through social groups which can be considered intrinsically dialectic (PHILOGENE, 2011), because the subject and object in their relationship blend together and are transformed (TRINDADE, SANTOS and ALMEIDA, 2011).

SRT's central question is the understanding of the construction and use of knowledge in everyday life. The concept of SR is proposed based on this theory. Social representations are complex phenomena constructed in an individual's everyday life, which become familiar or unfamiliar in a dynamic in which the object is recognized and understood through previous experience. Experience behaves as "a cognitive dimension to the extent that it favors experimentation in the world and about the world, and contributes to the construction of realities according to socially formed categories" (JODELET, 2005a, p. 32). Based on this, SR is also understood as "a form of knowledge, socially elaborated and shared, with a practical objective that contributes to the construction of a reality in common with a social group" (JODELET, 2001, p. 22). Social representations are, then, structured in a social context through communication between people, with the objective of "shaping the vision and constructing the reality in which one lives" (MOSCOVICI, 2001, p. 61).

Considering the questions presented, SR refers to theories constructed by common sense to explain the reality that surrounds an individual; however, it should be noted that there is not just one common sense theory, but several about the most varied topics. In this way, what exists is a thinking society which has its own logic which is different from scientific logic.

## The formative processes of social representation

The social representations conceived of by Serge Moscovici in his original work led him to formulate two central concepts: objectification and anchoring. According to Moscovici (2012), the formation of a social representation implies activities that transform something that is unfamiliar into something that is familiar through the processes of objectification and anchoring. In his research, Serge Moscovici has studied how scientific knowledge of psychoanalysis has been anchored and objectified by common sense.

The purpose of objectification is to make an abstract object concrete, replacing a feeling with an object (ALMEIDA, 2005), in order to understand how a concept or phenomenon becomes concrete (MOSCOVICI, 2009; TRINDADE, SANTOS and ALMEIDA, 2011); "for example, remember comparing God to a parent, and what makes a person fill his or her mind and awaken corresponding feelings" (LEME, 1995, p. 49). In the process of objectification, certain information is given importance to the detriment of other information, and in this way, the individual simplifies and disassociates the original context of production and associates it to the context of the imagistic knowledge of the subject or the group (TRINDADE, SANTOS and ALMEIDA, 2011). This process allows the subject to use familiar concepts to transform the complex and abstract into a concrete intelligible image, or in other words, objectification allows the individual to understand and construct the reality that surrounds him or her.

The anchoring process places an object within a context, or in other words, "it anchors strange ideas and reduces them to common categories and images, thereby placing them in a familiar context" (MOSCOVICI, 2009, p. 60-61). This process occurs when there is the "incorporation or assimilation of new elements of an object and a system of categories and functions which are familiar to individuals and readily available in their memories" (ALMEIDA, 2005, p. 126). In this manner, anchoring allows the individual to integrate "the representation object into a system of his or her own values, naming it and classifying it according to the associations that this object has within its social insertion" (TRINDADE, SANTOS and ALMEIDA, 2011, p. 110). In Moscovici's research (2012), the anchoring process transforms science into a system of meanings that are familiar to the individual. Through the study of anchoring social objects, it's possible to understand culture in terms of its historical, regional and institutional characteristics in the production of meaning.

To sum up, the objectification and anchoring processes are responsible for transforming the unfamiliar into the familiar. To do this, they transfer given objects to the subject's particular sphere in terms of the way the individual interprets it and compares it; and then they make it possible for the individual to reproduce this object as something that they can see, touch and control (MOSCOVICI, 2012; TRINDADE, SANTOS and ALMEIDA, 2011; ALMEIDA, 2005).

In anchoring and in objectification, it needs to be decided whether what is being evaluated is similar or different from a model, and this decision isn't neutral, "it implies an attitude toward a person or a thing and a desire to consider this person or thing normal or deviant" (LEME, 1995, p. 49). The participation of feelings, seen from this perspective, is very important for a greater understanding of SR, because feelings act as the mediators of its construction, or in other words, it is through feelings that connections are made with groups, with ideas and with the individual's world view (JODELET, 2001).

## Different theoretical and methodological approaches to social representation theory

Over the course of its existence, SRT has had theoretical and methodological differences of approach which have made it possible to deepen the original proposal made by Serge Moscovici. To make it easier for the reader to understand, we have subdivided this section in order to treat each one separately.

### *Different theoretical approaches to social representation theory*

The original theoretical core originally proposed by Serge Moscovici has become known in the field as the *grand theory* (ARRUDA, 2002; SÁ, 1996; DOISE, 1993), because it presents the basic propositions and central concepts of SRT such as the concept of SR and the SR formative processes that we have touched on in the previous subsections. These differences of approach have arisen, at least in part, because of Serge Moscovici's resistance to defining theoretical-conceptual terms, which appears to have had the effect of "impeding the premature crystallization of the operationalized groups of concepts, hypotheses and research techniques which have ended up constituting autonomous 'micro-theories' in relation to the 'grand theory'" (SÁ, 1996, p. 8). This way of operationalizing SRT has allowed the construction of complementary approaches which offer more detailed descriptions of certain structures as well as its functioning and have proved compatible with the overall theory.

There are at least three approaches. One of them is the structural approach, which has been developed in the Midi region of France and its principal exponent has been Jean Claude Abric. This approach is centered around sociocognitive approaches, with the study of SR structures based on the theory of the central nucleus. Another approach was developed by Willem Doise in Geneva. Its focus is more sociological, because its objective is to study the conditions of production and circulation of SR. The third is a cultural or procedural approach, of which Denise Jodelet has been the great exponent. This approach is the one that maintains the closest relationship to Serge Moscovici's original proposal, because it favors a historical and cultural focus (ALMEIDA, 2005).

The theory of the central nucleus seeks to identify representational structures to understand the constitution of SR and its content and structure to understand its functioning. Jean Claude Abric proposes that social representations are organized around a central nucleus, made up of one or more elements, and that these organize and give significance to the social representation. In this way, the central nucleus performs two essential functions in the structuring and functioning of social representations:

[...] a generative function: it is the element through which the meaning of the other constituent representational elements are created or transformed. It's through these elements that the others take on meaning, value and an organizing function: it's the central nucleus that determines the nature of the ties that unite the representation elements. In this sense, it is the unifying and stabilizing element of the representation (ABRIC, 2000, p. 31).

In addition to these functions, the central nucleus is characterized by stability, that is, it is the most stable element in a SR. This property assures the continuity of the SR in moving and evolving contexts. The central nucleus elements are determined by historical, sociological and ideological conditions and, that's why they are collectively shared and are, therefore, the most resistant to change (ABRIC, 2000).

Around the central nucleus are the peripheral elements which function as an indispensable complement to it. These peripheral elements constitute the interface between concrete reality and the central system, which is why they are more flexible and mobile. These elements have three main functions: (1) concretization, meaning the concretization of the central system in terms of the taking of positions and conduct: the peripheral elements make it possible to interface between reality and the central nucleus, and in this way make it possible to elaborate the SR and use it in concrete, understandable and transmittable terms; (2) the regulation and adaptation of the functioning of the central system to evolving contexts: the central elements are stable and are difficult to change, thus it is the peripheral elements which constitute the mobile and evolutionary aspect of SR; and (3) defense: the peripheral elements function as a system of defense of the central nucleus, because if there's a change in the elements of the central nucleus, it would cause a complete alteration of the representation. With this, in the case of transformations of representation, they first affect the peripheral elements – changing their weighting, admitting new interpretations, and the conditional integration of contradictory elements. It's the peripheral system where contradictions may appear and can be tolerated (ABRIC, 2000).

This theoretical divergence has contributed to the study of the configuration of social representations, as well as the reconfiguration and profound transformation of representations (on the central nucleus level) (FLAMENT, 2001) as well as the identification of the variations present within the same SR (TRINDADE, SANTOS and ALMEIDA, 2011). These are representations that are differentiated not by their social objective, but by the groups that they share. In this case, the social representations go through structural transformations to the extent that they go between different social spaces, sustained by distinct social groups (TRINDADE, SANTOS and ALMEIDA, 2011).

Another theoretical approach is known as the societal approach to SR, and it is three-dimensional in nature. It is strongly aligned with Serge Moscovici's seminal work, especially in terms of the dynamics of communication (diffusion, propagation and advertising) which are present in the formation of SR (ALMEIDA, 2009). The three-dimensional approach is supported by a specific hypothesis for each phase.

The first hypothesis states that different members of a population share beliefs, values, opinions and feelings about a certain social object. In this sense, the social representations of a social object are shared among the members of a society through communication relationships that assume a common language and references, those inserted in these symbolic exchanges (DOISE, 2002).

The second hypothesis refers to

[...] the nature of the taking of individual positions in relation to the field of SR. The social representation theory should explain how and why individuals differentiate themselves in terms of the relationships that they maintain with these representations. This implies that these variations in the taking of individual positions are organized in a symmetrical manner (DOISE, 2002, p. 30).

The third hypothesis considers that the differences observed in social representations due to different individual positions are anchored in other symbolic and collective realities. In this way, the process of making the content of a given social object intelligible is constructed "through the hierarchies of values and the perceptions that individuals construct in their relationships with groups and categories, and the social experiences that they share with others, in terms of where they belong and their position" (ALMEIDA, 2009, p. 728).

The third theoretical approach, the cultural or procedural approach, focuses on the processes responsible for the construction of social representations. Denise Jodelet, its main exponent, specifies the characteristics and phases of the construction of social representations seeking to establish how a group's social mechanisms and interpretive processes interfere in the elaboration of social representations and how this elaboration interferes with social interaction.

As Mendonça and Lima (2014) point out, this approach proposes that social representations configure themselves as a form of practical knowledge oriented towards the communication and understanding of the social context and the context of the materials and ideas in which they live. Social representations are forms of knowledge that manifest themselves as cognitive elements (images, concepts, categories and theories, for example), but can't be reduced to these elements. Because they are socially elaborated and shared, social representations contribute to the construction of a common reality that makes communication possible.

In her classic study about the SR of madness, Jodelet (2005b) presents the dynamic of familiarization with a social object in which there is a distortion or cloaking of reality in favor of the group's interpretative system, a process which is supported by normative values, which possess powerful meaning in regard to social objects. The dynamic of familiarization extends through three levels that affect representational content: distortion, supplementation and subtraction.

Distortion is the process that permits all of an object's attributes to be present, but they are accentuated or attenuated in specific manners. Supplementation consists in conferring attributes and connotations which do not belong to the object being represented, resulting in the addition of meaning due to the individual's investment in the object. Subtraction corresponds to the suppression of an object's attributes: in most cases, this is the result of repressive social norms (JODELET, 2001).

As pointed out by Sá (1996), these theoretical differences do not constitute incompatible approaches to SRT. On the contrary, they represent approaches that complement the grand theory conceived of by Serge Moscovici, because they possess the same basic matrix, however, each one of these approaches has its own specificity. In general, these different approaches seek to verify: 1) the process of forming and transforming social representations; 2) the elements that make up the social representation of an object; and 3) social representations as orientations for practices. These three possibilities can also relate possible group differences with different social contexts. Depending on the complexity of the methodology adopted, these studies seek to explain more than one of the issues raised (MARTINS-SILVA, 2009).

In addition to these approaches, there are other relevant approaches to the SRT field, such as the perspective of Marková (2000), to whom SRT and communication belong to a group of approaches that study the interdependence between individual knowledge and socially shared knowledge, which are based on an epistemological dialogue. In this sense, Marková (2000; 2006; 2008) articulates SRT as a dialogical concept. To the author, *dialogicality* is the source of human thought and language and, based on SRT, she assumes that social thinking as well as language can be characterized as social phenomena going through a process of change. As a way of broadening the understanding of the dialogue process, Marková (2000) articulates the concepts of *themata* and communicative gender with the concepts of anchoring and objectification (MOSCOVICI, 2012).

With this, we can observe that SRT and its theoretical differences make up a body of knowledge that's going through a process of evolution, which can be articulated with other theoretical approaches. One of these possibilities is an interlocution between SRT and OS.

### *Different methodological approaches to social representation theory*

The initial SRT study by Moscovici (2012) used a survey of the French population and documental research was performed using journalistic materials to investigate the communication processes in the construction and organization of SR. Even though these types of methodological approaches were used in the theory's original form, SRT didn't remain restricted to this type of methodology. On the contrary, the complexity of the phenomenon of social representation and the wide variety of research options that can be answered using this technique assumes a wide variety of methodological alternatives (SOTIRAKOPOULOU and BREAKWELL, 1992).

According to Nascimento-Schulze and Camargo (2000, p. 287-288), SR studies have two orientations, with one being "related to cultural and historical questions trying to understand the processes that generate and maintain live representations in the interactions between individuals and social groups," and the other being "related to structural questions regarding social representation, shared on the cognitive level as well as the linguistic level." These orientations, added to the complexity of the phenomena investigated by SRT, suggest the adoption of qualitative as well as quantitative approaches as well as a wide variety of methods and procedures for data collection and analysis, including, for example, ethnoGraph observation, experimentation, case studies, in-depth interviews, free association, focus groups, data triangulation, content analysis, and discourse analysis, etc. (NASCIMENTO-SCHULZE and CAMARGO, 2000; WAGNER, DUVEEN, FARR et al., 1999; SOTIRAKOPOULOU and BREAKWELL, 1992; FLICK, 1992).

This methodological diversity favors the comprehension of a complex phenomenon such as social representation. In this sense, Jodelet (2001) states that the diversity of methodological approaches makes it possible to look at specific sectors with studies related to SRT. According to the author, this diversity associated with other characteristics of the field favors the construction of coherent research, using conceptual instruments and solid empiric evidence.

The possibility of performing consistent and solid research using SRT as pointed out by Jodelet (2001), associated with the possibility of a theoretical conversation between SRT and OS, represents an advance in theoretical and methodological terms in the investigation of organizational phenomena. In addition, the field of OS, like the field of SRT, appears to offer studies that permit the articulation of methodological diversity, and that are capable of dealing with the complexity of organizational phenomena and social representations.

## Critiques of social representation theory

In its more than fifty year history, SRT has proved to be fertile soil for the understanding of social phenomena, and today represents one of the largest frameworks used to organize the knowledge of social psychology (JOVCHELOVITCH, 1996). In terms of its relevance to the field of social psychology and other areas of knowledge (EICHER, EMERY, MARIDOR et al., 2011; ALMEIDA, 2009), SRT has received various critiques, ranging from broad critiques by Anglo-Saxon social psychology (RÄTY and SNELLMAN, 1992) to discursive British psychology (VOELKLEIN and HOWARTH, 2005; POTTER and EDWARDS, 1999); and has also been supported by researchers who defend it (JODELET, 2001; JOVCHELOVITCH, 1996), provoking a debate that has enriched the theory itself. In this section we will present some of the main critiques of SRT as a way of establishing a counterpoint to the arguments made in favor of SRT that appear throughout this article.

Among the critiques that SRT has received, there's the point of view of Jahoda (1988), for example, who considers the definition of SR vague. According to the author, there's a lack of clarity in the distinction between SR and collective representations; in addition, there isn't a broad definition of the concept (a generalized character or one specific to SR), which doesn't permit the adequate understanding of the relationship between SR and culture, ideology and group thinking. Along with these aspects, the author questions the explanatory potential of SR due to the imprecision of the identification of SR as a dependent or an independent variable.

Potter and Litton (1985) also take a critical approach to SRT and affirm, among other things, that the notion of SR can be considered a concept in search of a theory and is not a proper theory as such. This is because, according to the authors, Serge Moscovici was reluctant to offer a precise definition of SR. The authors also criticize the absence of a common theoretical orientation in the studies that use SRT, as well as a lack of attempts to develop original theoretical formulations in these studies.

Another aspect has to do with the concept of the group, which is considered by SRT's critics to be problematic and circular. To Rätty and Snellman (1992), there's a vicious cycle if one defines SR through groups and assume that groups define SR. To the authors, Serge Moscovici doesn't offer any explicit analytical technique that can identify groups independently outside of their own representations and characterizations.

Also in regard to the group concept, Harré (1984) believes that SRT doesn't succeed in liberating itself from the individual paradigm. To the author, the point of departure for Serge Moscovici, like the statistical point of view of consensuality, is distributive plurality. According to Harré (1984), this is an individualistic concept, because it's concerned with the sharing of individual attributes. To the author, the opposite of distributive plurality is collective plurality, which is based on the idea that a group (a supra-individual concept) has attributes that no individual group member possesses. Because of this, Harré (1984) believes that social representations are reduced to the notion of individual representations.

In making a comparative analysis of SRT and discursive psychology, Potter and Edwards (1999) deal with a group of fundamental questions related to aspects such as action, representation, communication, cognition, construction, epistemology and methods. In all of these cases, the authors present arguments in favor of the way discursive psychology treats these items, pointing out inconsistencies in SRT.

Faced with these various critiques of SRT, Voelklein and Howarth (2005) show in a more detailed analysis that there's a mistaken interpretation and understanding of SRT, and that some of the other critiques are constructive and need to be taken seriously which will help refine the current theoretical framework of SRT. From the authors' point of view, there are four great controversies related to SRT, namely: (1) the theoretical ambiguities that have resulted from the fact that the theory is considered way too broad and vague, which have led critics like Jahoda (1988) to consider it pseudo-explanatory and Litton and Potter (1985, p. 385) consider it a kind of "vague catch-all term for all the aspects of ordinary explanations"; (2) it's considered



to be social determinism because it assumes a supposedly exaggerated emphasis on social influences on individual behavior and neglects the capacity of human beings to reflect – in terms of this aspect, Jahoda (1988) says that people are described as if they are passive entities who are incapable of freeing themselves from the SR framework. (3) it's considered cognitive reductionism which characterizes SR as a cognitive phenomenon that can be explained by psychological processes with few references to social influence (JAHODA, 1988); and (4) the absence of a critical agenda which leads it to be termed acritical, because it doesn't deal with questions of power and ideology in a consistent manner (JAHODA, 1988).

We believe that outside of possible errors in terms of interpretation or understanding the theory (VOELKLEIN and HOWARTH, 2005), the criticisms of SRT have an important role to play in stimulating reflection and self-criticism which can lead to theoretical and methodological advances. These kinds of advances may be extended beyond the field of social psychology to other areas of knowledge, such as OS. In terms of OS in particular, these critiques offer ideas of how researchers can deal with the complexity of organizational phenomena in a more careful manner.

## CONSIDERATIONS IN TERMS OF ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES

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The discussion of what constitutes OS is a fertile one permeated by distinct, sometimes divergent positions. Authors such as Nord, Lawrence, Hardy et al. (2006), Westwood and Clegg (2003), Clegg and Hardy (1996) and Reed (1996; 1997) have dedicated themselves to discussing what has come to be known as OS, recognizing that its definition is not an easy task and that this field of study has been considered historically and discursively contested, marked by theoretical disputes and conversations in the search for recognition, acceptance and even domination.

In part, the imprecision and difficulty in establishing a definition appears to be related to a group of subjective aspects which involve this field of study, such as the understanding of what an *organization* is, how it should be studied, what should be the role and position of a researcher in investigating organizational phenomena, what is the nature of the theory, and what methodological perspectives should be adopted in conducting investigations (CLEGG and HARDY, 1996).

In an attempt to conceptualize OS, Clegg and Hardy (1996) argue that this field of study involves a series of conversations of a progressive nature, which utilize emerging vocabulary and grammatical terms with various degrees of discontinuity which help construct the understanding of what are *organizations*. In fact, the concepts and perspectives of organizational studies are diverse (BASTOS, LOYOLA, QUEIROZ et al., 2014; REED, 1996, 1997; PUGH and HICKSON, 1997) indicating that this field of study is a long way away from a consensual definition. Organizations can be conceived of as having various forms, for example, as cooperative social systems made up of people who communicate with each other and develop actions to achieve a common purpose (BARNARD, 1979), or as a discursive production (WESTWOOD and CLEGG, 2003) or, even, as Boal, Hunt and Jaros (2003) argue, real entities with their own consequences.

In addition, these same conceptions, based on at least 4 paradigms of social theory in general, and organizational theory in particular (functionalist, interpretivist, radical structuralist and radical humanist) (BURRELL and MORGAN, 1979), permit distinct visions, theoretical perspectives and analytical narratives, indicating the diversity of organizational studies and analysis. Among these distinct possible visions are: (a) cognitivist, based on the thinking of Herbert Simon, which conceives of organizations as cooperative behavior systems oriented towards planning, and establishes conditions for action and for rational considerations of the consequences of action in a social group; (b) culturalist, in which the concept of the organization incorporates the influence of anthropology, being conceived of as mini-societies which have their own distinct patterns of culture, subculture and even counterculture; and (c) institutionalist, which conceives of society as a network, a fabric of institutions, organizations, establishments, agents and practices which can be subdivided into two poles: sociological analyses identified as neoinstitutionalism, and economic analyses which are called new institutional economics (BASTOS, LOYOLA, QUEIROZ et al., 2014).

According to Reed (1997), there are four theoretical perspectives regarding organizational management: (a) technical, based on systems theory, which views management as a rational instrument conceived of for the purpose of achieving mainly instrumental values, related to the systematic coordination of social action on a large scale and the continuity this offers over the long term; (b) political, which is based on the theory of action (the perfecting of managers' capacity to negotiate) and

promotes a vision of management as a social process dedicated to the regulation of conflict between interest groups in an environment characterized by considerable uncertainty in terms of the criteria for the evaluation of organizational performance; (c) critical, which is based on Marxist theory, and conceives of management as a control mechanism which is used to satisfy the economic imperatives imposed by the capitalist mode of production and spread ideological views that help obscure structural realities; and (d) praxeological, which understands organizational theory as a social practice and conceives of it as a process that permits the continual articulation (or pacification) of complex and diversified practices, which are always prone to disarticulation and fragmentation.

In terms of organizational analytical narratives, Reed (1996) identifies six possibilities that make up a group of historic conflicts that organizational analysis has developed, which are based on: (a) rationality, in which organizational logic provides a defense against social conflict and political uncertainty in establishing a new power structure based on technical capacity and its contribution to the functioning of society; (b) integration, which conceives of organizations as social units that integrate individuals into modern industrial civilization, under the tutelage of good and socially talented administrations; (c) the market, in which organizations (or firms) configure themselves as collective economic agents which intervene in market failures or system collapses; (d) power, in which organizations constitute arenas with conflicting interests and values fighting for power; (e) knowledge, in which the organization is viewed as the dispenser of knowledge (social and technical) and abilities, through which particular models of social relationships are born and are reproduced; and (f) justice, whose focus is the type of corporate controls which are predominant in contemporary organizations, and what are the bases for their moral and political judgements about what constitutes justice and impartiality.

In addition to the diversity of concepts and perspectives that involve the understanding of what's considered an organization, the subjective aspects related to the role and position of the researcher, the nature of the theory and the methodological perspectives adopted have also contributed to the imprecision of the OS field (CLEGG and HARDY, 1996). In this field of study, the researcher has a wide number of options to choose from, ranging from: (a) empirical meaning, defined by the type of representation the organization assumes (CLEGG and HARDY, 1996); (b) the scope of the analysis, which may be inter- and or intra-organizational, or be concerned with strategy and organizational structure or the analysis of the external environment (LOIOLA, BASTOS, QUEIROZ et al., 2014); and (c) the theoretical foundation, which involves various ways of using the general theory of administration (GTA) with a classic focus, or a human relations, structuralist, functionalist, or critical focus, among others (FARIA, 2004), and the methodological approach, which may be qualitative, quantitative, a case study, a survey, collection procedures and various forms of data analysis including triangulation, etc. (TRIVIÑOS, 2009; CRESWEL, 2010; YIN, 2015; BABBIE, 2005; DENZIN, 2009) that can be adopted in works that investigate the organizational universe.

With this wealth of possibilities, OS has developed over the years in the sense of dealing with research topics within the organizational universe and contemporary society. To illustrate this development, Clegg, Jossler, and Mehra et al. (2016) highlight the relevance of debating the appearance and proliferation of network forms of organization in OS; George (2014) calls attention to the need to explore the question of the compassion shown by organizations as a way of thinking about the human suffering due to the consequences of capitalism; and Brown, Colville and Pye (2015) are interested in discussing the construction of meaning in the organizational context as a way of understanding how people appropriate and organize their own realities.

In Brazil, researchers in OS have, among other interests, dedicated themselves to proposing theoretical advances, analyzing the evolution of OS in the Brazilian context, and discussing its theoretical contributions to the evolution of OS. For example, Paula (2016), inspired by Thomas Kuhn, proposes *the circle of epistemic matrices* as a possible improvement on the diagrams of sociological paradigms put forward by Burrell and Morgan (1979). Alcadipani and Caldas (2012) analyze, through a post-colonialist perspective, the process of Americanization of management in Brazil. Meanwhile Silva and Toledo (2016), Gobira, Lima and Carrieri (2015) and Amorim and Brüning (2015) analyze, respectively, the contributions of Robert Cooper, of Guy Debord and Maurício Tragtenberg to OS in epistemological and ontological terms.

Despite the diversity present in the OS field, the challenges of answering the central questions – what are the origins of an organization? How can it be and how should it be studied? (CLEGG and HARDY, 1996; REED, 1996) – seem to indicate that this field can absorb new points of view, theoretical perspectives, and organizational analytical narratives. In this context, SRT presents itself as an interesting theory to answer these central questions due to its theoretical nature, which allows us

to examine individual behavior and social phenomena that have been historically contextualized in the creation of individual and social reality (MOSCOVICI, 2012; JODELET, 2001).

## METHODOLOGY

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From the methodological point of view, this study consists of bibliometric research (ARAÚJO, 2006) with the overall goal of mapping how OS has utilized SRT, which was originally used for social psychology. We've investigated the scientific production of articles that deal with SRT in OS works published in scientific events organized and promoted by the National Association of Graduate Administration Programs (ANPAD) and periodicals in the areas of Administration, Accounting Sciences and Tourism, as defined by the Coordinating Body for the Furthering of Higher Level Education (CAPES).

We've investigated the ANPAD database (2016), which organizes 9 scientific events, and Brazilian periodicals published in Portuguese and classified in the Qualis/CAPES System – year 2014, which received the highest ratings, namely A1, A2 and B1 (SUCUPIRA PLATFORM, 2016) during a 14 year period from 2001 to 2014. It should be noted that the rating A1 was not used, because there is no Brazilian periodical with this rating. Periodicals related specifically to Accounting Sciences and Tourism were eliminated from our list because they do not have a close relationship to OS.

We justify our choosing of ANPAD scientific events and periodicals specifically linked to the area of Administration for the investigated period based on the following central arguments: (1) the desire to consider a relevant and qualified parcel of Brazilian scientific production; (2) ANPAD is the “main interactive body for associated programs, area research groups, and the international community” (ANPAD, 2016) within the field of administration, holding events that encompass sub-areas of administration, such as, for example, OS, Marketing, and Human and Strategy Management; (3) the Brazilian periodicals with ratings A2 and B1 are the ones with the best indicators in the H Index of the Scopus base and have an impact on the Journal of Citation Reports (JCR), which are used by Qualis/CAPES to evaluate periodicals (CAPES, 2016) and this confers research credibility; (4) the area of administration encompasses the production of the OS field; (5) articles in the OS field can be published in various sub-areas of Administration; (6) initiating the study in the year 2001 is relevant in that SRT celebrated 40 years of existence in that year, having become one of the most relevant theories in the field of social psychology and having been used by many different areas of scientific research (JOVCHELOVITCH, 1996; EICHER, EMERY, MARIDOR et al., 2011; ALMEIDA, 2009); and (7) our 14 year period is considered relatively extensive for mapping the usage of SRT in OS.

The imprecisions and controversies that exist within the OS field have been used as a central criteria for identifying and selecting texts related to the origins of an organization, how it can be and should be studied and what the role and position of the researcher is in the investigation of organizational phenomena (CLEGG and HARDY, 1996; REED, 1996), using SRT as a theoretical underpinning (MOSCOVICI, 2012) as well as its complementary approaches (ALMEIDA, 2005). In other words, our preoccupation has been to select texts that discuss the dynamics of organizations and within organizations that involve the understanding of organizational phenomena in their relationships and the social implications from the point of view of SRT. We've used the absence of an articulation between SRT and OS as a central criterion for exclusion.

Based on these justifications and the criteria for inclusion and exclusion of articles, we've set about identifying and selecting the articles based on the following steps: (1) first, we've accessed ANPAD's database of its scientific events; (2) second, we've accessed the list of qualifying periodicals in Qualis/CAPES and identified and selected the main Brazilian periodicals with ratings of A2 and B1 which are linked with OS; (3) we've searched events and periodicals for the words representation, social representation and social representations in the title, abstract and keywords, using the ANPAD and periodical databases; and (4) after selecting the articles (published in events and in periodicals) which contain at least one of these words based on a flexible reading to verify that the articles in fact deal with SRT in their entirety or partially. Those that have commonly cited expressions, but are not related to the theory in question have been eliminated.

In the process of identifying and selecting articles published in ANPAD events, we've researched 56 editions of 9 events. Of this total, 27 editions in 7 events have articles which fit our criteria, resulting in a total of 67 articles. The events “Symposium for the Management of Innovation Technology” and the “Information Administration Encounter” don't present articles that fit our criteria. In terms of the periodicals, 55 periodicals have been investigated and 12 have been selected as being specifically

linked to the areas of Administration and OS, because the others are linked to other areas such as accounting sciences, psychology, sociology and tourism, among others. Of this total, just 6 periodicals published 23 articles meet our research criteria.

In terms of limiting the database to including just ANPAD events and periodicals with ratings of A2 and B1 in Qualis CAPES – 2014, we were able to identify 90 articles to be investigated during this period. It should be noted, however, that this limiting means that the results of this bibliometric research can't be generalized for the entire OS field, given that most of the periodicals have received lower ratings and therefore were not investigated.

The data analysis consists of the articulation of two procedures: (1) a descriptive statistical analysis of the absolute and percentage frequencies of the publications; and (2) an analysis of the content (FRANCO, 2003), as a way of enriching the critical analysis of the selected texts. As Franco (2003) points out, an analysis of content is based on a critical and fluid perception of the language, which should be seen as a societal construct and a reflection of human existence, which in distinct moments of history, generates social representations in the dynamics of the interactions that occur between thinking, action and language.

Seven categories of analysis have been defined to orient the analysis of the evolution of scientific production without our criteria: (1) the number of articles per year and the nature of the scientific article (theoretical essay, theoretical-empirical, etc.); (2) type of SRT approach utilized; (3) type of representational object investigated; (4) methodological procedures adopted (research approach and data collection and analytical procedures); (5) justification for the use of SRT; (6) SRT references which these articles are most often based on; and (7) most cited authors associated with SRT in these articles.

## PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

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This section will present the results of our bibliometric research. It's divided by criteria for each of the 7 categories of analysis. In the text, the articles are referenced and identified with a sequential alphanumeric code and its year of publication. The alphanumeric code is identified in the following manner: "E" followed by a number from 1 to 67 for publications in events; and "P" followed by a number from 1 to 23 for publications in periodicals.

### Number of articles per year and the nature of the scientific article

After the selection of the articles for this study, we counted the number of publications from 2001 to 2014, verifying a total of 90 articles that meet our research criteria. Of this total, 67 were published in ANPAD events and 23 in Brazilian periodicals rated A2 or B1. Table 1 identifies the event, edition, year and number of publications, as well as the periodical, year and number of publications.

**Table 1**

**Articles published from 2001 to 2014 in ANPAD events in Brazilian periodicals with ratings of A2 or B1 in Qualis/CAPES 2014 that deal with SRT**

Events		Year	Number of Publications
Title	Edition		
ANPAD National Meeting (EnANPAD)	25	2001	1
	30	2006	2
	32	2008	7
	33	2009	4
	34	2010	3
	35	2011	5
	36	2012	2
	37	2013	7
	38	2014	6
ANPAD Organizational Studies Meeting (EnEO)	5	2008	5
	6	2010	1
	8	2014	2
Strategic Studies Meeting (3 Es)	1	2003	1
	3	2007	1
	4	2009	2
ANPAD Marketing Meeting (EMA)	3	2008	1
ANPAD Public Administration Meeting (EnAPG)	2	2006	1
	3	2008	1
	5	2012	1
Teaching & Research in Administration & Accounting Meeting (EnEPQ)	1	2007	1
	2	2009	2
	3	2011	1
	4	2013	1
Personnel Administration and Worker Relations Meeting (EnGPR)	1	2007	2
	2	2009	2
	3	2011	2
	4	2013	3
Subtotal of ANPAD Events			67
Periodicals		Year	Number of Periodicals
Organizations & Society (O&S)		2002	2
		2004	1
		2005	1
		2008	1
		2010	1
		2012	1
		2013	1
Contemporary Administration Magazine (RAC)		2007	1
		2008	1
		2012	1
Business Administration Magazine (RAE/FGV)		2002	1
		2005	1
		2006	1
		2009	1
		2013	1
		2014	1

Continue

Events		Year	Number of Publications
Title	Edition		
USP Administration Magazine (RAUSP)		2003	1
		2011	1
EBAPE.BR Folders (FGV)		2011	1
Mackenzie Administration Magazine (RAM)		2010	1
		2012	1
		2014	1
Subtotal of Periodicals			23
Overall Total			90

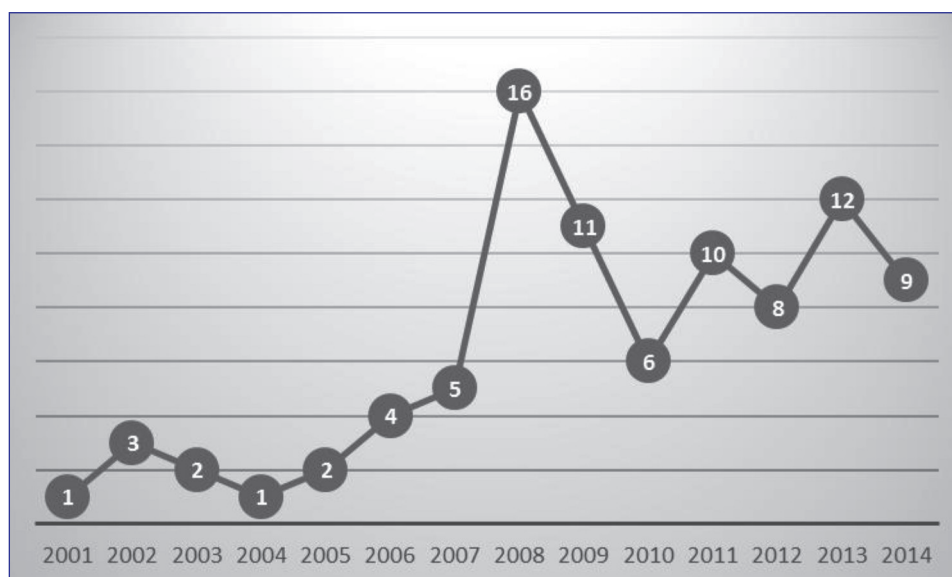
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Table 1 shows that the number of publications at events represents 74.4% of all publications. This result was expected for two reasons: (1) the process of submitting and evaluating articles is faster at events than at periodicals, because events have previously stipulated time limits; and (2) publications at events represent works that are in the process of development that, in many cases, are improved through suggestions made during evaluations and presentations at congresses, and are published in recognized periodicals in the area sometime later (MULLER, 2005). Thus, the number of publications at events tends to be greater than the quantity of publications in periodicals. Among the articles we have examined, 7 of the 23 articles published in periodicals were first published in ANPAD events.

In analyzing our data, it may be observed that the number of annual publications varied from 1 to 16. The years 2001 and 2004 had the fewest publications with just 1 a year, while the years 2008, 2013 and 2009 had the greatest number of publications with 16, 12 and 11 respectively. It can also be observed that after 2007, there have been an average of 10.3 publications per year, indicating that the utilization of SRT in OS has entered a stable phase in terms of the number of publications. Figure 1 illustrates the variation in terms of publications during the time period investigated.

Figure 1

Variation in the number of OS publications from 2001 to 2014 at ANPAD events and Brazilian periodicals with ratings of A2 or B1 in Qualis/CAPES 2014 that deal with SRT



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

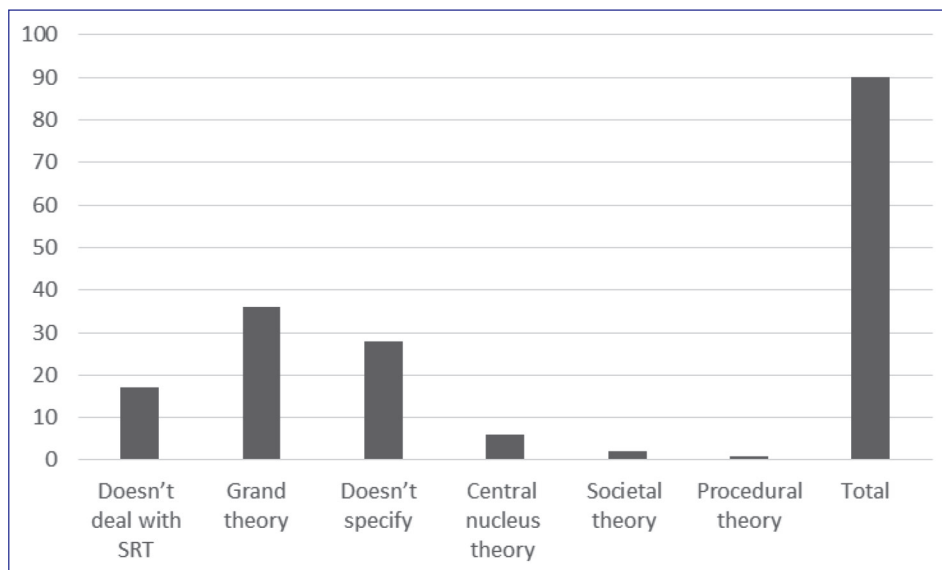
The data indicates that EnANPAD, EnGPR and EnEO were the events with the greatest number of publications within the events promoted by ANPAD, with 37, 9 and 8 publications during the time period investigated. In terms of the periodicals, the journals O&S and RAE/FGV represented the largest number of publications, with 8 and 6 publications respectively during this period. Among the events and periodicals, EMA and the Cadernos EBAPE.BR Folders (FGV) were the ones with the fewest publications, with 1 publication apiece during this 14 year span. Considering all the articles, 83 were identified as theoretical-empirical in nature, while just 7 were theoretical, indicating a tendency of favoring theoretical-empirical studies in OS.

### Types of Social Representation Approaches used

Based on the contributions of Doise (1993), Sá (1996), Arruda (2002) and Almeida (2005), the following subcategories of analysis were established: (1) the grand theory; (2) the central nucleus theory; (3) the societal theory; (4) the procedural theory; (5) doesn't specify an approach (uses just the concept of SR); and (6) doesn't deal with SRT (just contains the term *social representations* without a theoretical explanation). Based on these subcategories, we counted the number of articles verifying their relative frequency by approach type for the period from 2001 to 2014, as presented in Graph 1.

Graph 1

Absolute frequency of articles published from 2001 to 2014 by SRT approach type



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The results in percentage terms are that 40% use Serge Moscovici's *grand theory*; 31% of the articles don't specify an approach; 19% don't deal with SRT; 7% use Jean Claude Abric's central nucleus theory; 2% use Willem Doise's societal approach; and 1% use the procedural approach. Within the data presented, the most common approach used is the *grand theory*. A total of 50% of the articles analyzed fall into the two subcategories *doesn't deal with SRT* and *doesn't specify*. This indicates a superficial treatment of theory (VALENTIM, 2013).

## Types of representational objects and subjects investigated

Two groups of subcategories related to representational objects were identified (SÁ, 1998), namely, objects (representing social phenomena) and subjects. The former group consists of the following identified subcategories of objects: (1) gender, which includes the objects *gender and female relationships*; (2) management, which involves *research practices and multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary development and strategy*; (3) human resources management (HR), which includes *familial relationships* (in familial organizations) and *human resources*; (4) work space, which represents *commerce under an overpass, work space and commercial activity and confined working spaces*; (5) space and time, which involves the object *space and time*; (6) structures and roles within an organization, which includes *administrator, administration and organization, directors, managers, employees and organization, the role of company managers and modernization of business systems and their implications for worker relations*; (7) ethical issues, which represents the object *ethics*; (8) unemployment, which includes *unemployment*; (9) consumption, which covers *real estate purchases*; (10) social groups, which includes *social groups that occupy public spaces of commercial areas*; (11) popular participation, which includes *popular participation in the municipal management of a capital city in southeastern Brazil*; (12) groups in media, which includes aspects relative to *personal image (Afro-Brazilians and the obese)*; (13) professions, careers and work, which includes *various personal activities, skills and volunteer work*; (14) education, which includes the activity *higher education*, specifically related to *teaching*, excluding research and extension schools; (15) governmental actions, which involves *public policy in various sectors*; (16) human development, but more specifically *aging*; and (17) environmental issues, that include *the environment and agroecology*. The object subcategories which obtained the largest representation in these articles were professions, careers and work (28%), followed by management (17%), gender (10%) and HR management (9%).

In terms of the subjects studied, 16 categories were identified: professors, students, researchers, managers, labor leaders, print media, workers in general, public servants, volunteer workers, fired workers, real estate brokers, consumers and/or customers in general, relatives in family enterprises, forensic experts, minorities and the public in general. The subcategories which obtained the largest representation in these articles were workers, managers and businessmen (46%) and higher education professors and students (25%).

In analyzing the relationship between the subject (who represents) and the object (social phenomenon), it can be observed that in some cases researchers have not adequately explored the concept of the representational object (SÁ, 1998). There are cases in which the researchers indicate the representational object but don't indicate the subject, and others in which the articulation of the relationship itself is questionable in terms of SRT. These issues will be addressed in the discussion of the results.

## Methodological procedures adopted

The presentation of the types of methodological procedures adopted in the 83 theoretical-empirical articles investigated takes into consideration three central perspectives: (1) research approach (qualitative and/or quantitative); (2) data collection techniques; and (3) data analysis techniques. In terms of research approach, we found that 73 articles (88%) used a qualitative approach, 6 articles (7.2%) used a quantitative approach, and 4 articles (4.8%) used a mixed approach, or in other words, a qualitative and quantitative approach.

For the analysis of data collection techniques and instruments, 9 analysis subcategories were identified with the following respective frequency indices: (1) interviews (37%), which include *semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews, non-structured interviews, interviews, life stories and statements*; (2) observations (12%), which are made up of *systematic observations, participant observations, and non-participant observations*; (3) questionnaires (15%), which include *structured questionnaires and questionnaires*; (4) documental research (10%), which involves the research of documents such as *websites, regulations, documents, files, diaries, magazines and journals*; (5) focal groups (4%); (6) image research (2%); (7) projective techniques (1%), which include *completion tests, and construction of drawing themes in semi-structured form*; (8) evocation of words (1%); and (9) data collection triangulation (18%).

In terms of data analysis techniques, 6 subcategories were identified with the following respective frequency indices: (1) discursive analysis (38%); (2) content analysis (37%); (3) evocation matrix (6%); (4) various statistical analyses (9%); (5) photography analysis (1%); and (6) don't specify the data analysis technique (9%). Synthesizing the presented results, the predominance



of theoretical-empirical publications, which use a qualitative approach is clear. The most common data collection technique used is the interview, followed by the data treatment procedures of discursive analysis and content analysis.

### Justifications for the use of social representation theory

Since an analysis of justifications involves the arguments of the authors in terms of their reasons for using SRT as a field of knowledge in OS, a content analysis has been used to identify the subcategories. To this end, all of the articles have been analyzed to identify and group the subcategories according to the arguments they use to justify the use of SRT in the OS field. Six subcategories of justifications have been identified, namely: (1) the chance to understand organizational phenomena; (2) to reveal intrinsic subjective elements; (3) perception; (4) factors that make up and/or influence SR, which includes subjective, cultural, social thinking, symbolic and communication factors; (5) to base their research theoretically and/or methodologically on SRT; and (6) lacking any consistent justification, for the cases in which a justification was not presented and/or presented, but in an inconsistent manner lacking theoretical and empirical grounds. It should be noted that the number of justifications exceeds the number of articles (90), because any given article can articulate more than one argument to justify the use of SRT in OS.

The results indicate that the subcategory factors which make up or influence SR was used as a justification in 50 articles (36.2%); the understanding organizational phenomena argument was indicated in 43 articles (31.2%); to use SRT was mentioned in 23 articles (16.7%); there was no coherent justification in 19 articles (13.8%); perception was the justification in 2 articles (1.4%); and to reveal subjective elements was the argument for 1 article (0.7%).

As a way of illustrating the analysis and identifying the subcategories, two arguments presented in articles E56 (2011) and P10 (2008) stand out in reference to the subcategories which occurred most often. In the first case, the authors examined male domination to justify the use of SRT to further the understanding of two aspects related to it: *“a) the logic and views of the world underlying the social representations constructed in the business environment; and b) the ways in which they manifest themselves [...] and contribute to the construction of social order that sanctions behavior and lifestyles...”* (E56, p. 2). In the second case, it was argued that *“the study of representations makes it possible to identify and understand organizational reality and how it functions in motivating actors to make given choices that [...] are not based on logical or rational reasons, but are rather made for [...] emotional, symbolic or mystic reasons...”* (P10, p. 388).

The analysis of these two extracts indicates that, in the first instance, the argument is related to symbolic factors that make up or influence SR. In the second instance, the argument is focused on the desire to understand organizational phenomena, which also include symbolic, emotional and cultural factors, among others.

### The references to social representation theory which appear most often in these articles

Our data analysis was able to catalogue 223 references. The absolute frequency of each of them was calculated and, thus, we were able to identify which were the references most often used in these articles published from 2001 to 2014. In various cases, the same references were mentioned by given authors, but in different editions. Table 2 shows the references used.

**Table 2**

**List of the most often cited complete references in the articles published between 2001 and 2014**

Position	Reference	Edition
1 <sup>st</sup>	MOSCOVICI, S. <b>Representações sociais: investigações em psicologia social</b> . 6. ed. Petropolis, RJ: Vozes, 2009.	2003 2007 2009
2 <sup>nd</sup>	MOSCOVICI, S. <b>A representação social da psicanálise</b> . Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1978.	1976 1978
	MINAYO, M. O conceito de representações sociais dentro da sociologia clássica. In: GUARESCHI, P. A.; JOVCHELOVITCH, S. <b>Textos em representações sociais</b> . 2. ed. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 1995. 89-111 p.	1995 2003
3 <sup>rd</sup>	JOVCHELOVITCH, S. Vivendo a vida com os outros: intersubjetividade, espaço público e representações sociais. In: GUARESCHI, P. A.; JOVCHELOVITCH, S. <b>Textos em representações sociais</b> . 2. ed. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 1995. 63-85 p.	1995 2003 2008
4 <sup>th</sup>	SPINK, M. J. Desvendando as teorias implícitas: uma metodologia de análise das representações sociais. In: GUARESCHI, P. A.; JOVCHELOVITCH, S. <b>Textos em representações sociais</b> . 2. ed. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 1995. 117-145 p.	1995 2002 2003 2008
5 <sup>th</sup>	SPINK, M. J. O conceito de representação social na abordagem psicossocial. <b>Cadernos de Saúde Pública</b> , v. 9, n. 3, p. 300-308, 1993.	1993
6 <sup>th</sup>	CAVEDON, N. R.; FERRAZ, D. L. S. Representações sociais e estratégia em pequenos comércios. <b>RAE-Eletrônica</b> , v. 4, n. 1, p. 1-18, 2005.	2005

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

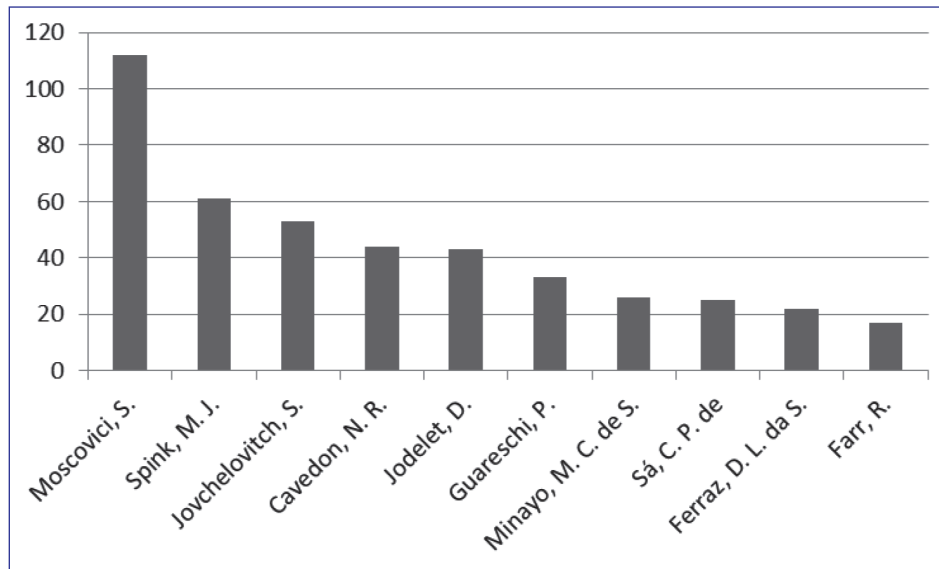
Among the 223 works referenced in the articles used for this study, most were cited only once or twice and just 7 were mentioned more times. The works in Table 2 were cited the following number of times: (1) the first was cited 31 times; (2) the second and third 26 times apiece; (3) the fourth 25 times; (4) the fifth 23 times; (5) the sixth 19 times; and (6) the seventh was cited 16 times. The results indicate that the two most often cited references were written by the founder of SRT. It can also be seen that the next most often cited references were part of the same work, namely *Texts in Social Representations*, in various editions.

### The social representation theory authors most often cited in these articles

This analysis considers all of the authors used to discuss SRT and their respective references. In total, 122 authors and 223 references were identified, which indicates that several of these authors were cited for more than one reference. Below Graph 2 presents the absolute number of citations per author.

Graph 2

Absolute number of citations for SRT authors in the articles published from 2001 to 2014



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Graph 2 shows the 10 authors with the largest number of citations: (1<sup>st</sup>) Serge Moscovici with 112; (2<sup>nd</sup>) Mary Jane Spink with 61; (3<sup>rd</sup>) Sandra Jovchelovitch with 53; (4<sup>th</sup>) Neuza Rolita Cavedon with 44; (5<sup>th</sup>) Denise Jodelet with 43; (6<sup>th</sup>) Pedrinho Guareschi with 33; (7<sup>th</sup>) Maria Cecília de Souza Minayo with 26; (8<sup>th</sup>) Celso Pereira de Sá with 25; (9<sup>th</sup>) Deise Luiza da Silva Ferraz with 22; and (10<sup>th</sup>) Robert Farr with 17. We can see that most of the 122 authors cited received few citations, between 1 and 3. The results for this category are consistent with the previous category (the most often cited SRT references), given that Serge Moscovici appears as the most cited author in the analyzed publications. In addition, it may be observed that all of the authors identified in the previous category are also present in this category.

## DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The mapping performed in this bibliometric study (ARAÚJO, 2006) using the investigated categories and subcategories has made it possible to identify a panorama for the usage of SRT in OS. This panorama reveals at least five central aspects: (1) the inclusive nature of OS; (2) the growth of the use of SRT in OS; (3) the underutilized potential of SRT in OS; (4) the limited and superficial treatment of representational objects, mainly in terms of the relationship between subjects and objects in social representations; and (5) inconsistencies in terms of concepts and methodologies which are probably due to the limited usage of SRT in OS. To make this presentation clearer, we have opted to subdivide this section into individual subsections for each of the five identified aspects.

### Inclusive nature of organizational studies

As pointed out by Nord, Lawrence, Hardy et al. (2006), Clegg and Hardy (1996) and Reed (1996), OS has a history of having been influenced by various areas of knowledge and academic disciplines, such as economics, sociology, engineering, political science and psychology, among others. This influence appears to have made OS an inclusive field, which despite the fact that it was formulated and has evolved based on its own body of knowledge, continues to welcome the addition of new theoretical perspectives and methodologies, such as SRT.

In part, OS's inclusive nature is related to the challenge that this area has in terms of exploring organizations and organizational phenomena scientifically, mainly in terms of how they can be and should be studied, the role and position of the researcher in investigations, what the theory's nature is, and which methodological perspectives should be adopted in investigations (CLEGG and HARDY, 1996). To face this challenge, the researcher has at least 4 paradigms at his or her disposal (BURRELL and MORGAN, 1979) which make it possible to articulate a wide range of views, theoretical perspectives, and analytical narratives, which gives an idea of this area's diversity (CLEGG and HARDY, 1996; REED, 1996).

In terms of the organizational analysis paradigms pointed out by Burrell and Morgan (1979), it appears that SRT is more aligned with the interpretist paradigm which is the result of the articulation between the subjective and sociological regulation dimensions, which are based on the view that the social world and social reality don't exist in a concrete sense, but are rather the products of subjective and intersubjective experiences of the subjects (MORGAN, 2007). This paradigmatic alignment of SRT can be verified by analyzing the perspective of Vala (1993), who presents these paradigms and their social psychology metaphors.

In this presentation, SRT follows the paradigmatic orientation of the actor subject and past social relationships to configure the metaphor of a *jazz orchestra*. In this paradigm, it articulates the idea of a subject actor and a subject indistinguishable from social ties, to indicate that cognition cannot be understood as an individual activity. On the contrary, it should be seen as a socio-cognitive activity of social actors that results from the creation of social ties. In this paradigm, the thinking subject is influenced by external stimuli, objects, and formalized doctrines and ideologies at the same time, and these elements serve as fuel for the subject to think about and transform everyday social interactions (MOSCOVICI, 2012).

Given this wealth of possibilities, OS has found SRT in the field of social psychology to be a theoretical alternative capable of facilitating the understanding of social phenomena. Besides OS's inclusive nature, the use of SRT in this field seems to be supported by the characteristics of the theory itself as pointed out by Jodelet (2001). According to the author, SRT seeks to understand the construction and use of everyday real life knowledge to offer a theoretical view that makes it possible to learn about individual behavior and social facts in historical contexts.

These characteristics present another way of analyzing and understanding organizational phenomena. By using it, OS has reinforced its characteristic as a historically contested field (REED, 1996), because it welcomes different perspectives for the analysis of organizational phenomena, some of them convergent and others divergent.

## Evolution of SRT in OS

An analysis of the data indicates that the evolution of the use of SRT in OS observed in the investigated publications may be divided into two main periods: (1) the first period, from 2001 to 2007, in which its usage may be characterized as incipient, with few articles being published; and (2) the second period, from 2008 to 2014, in which there was a significant increase in the use of this theory as an alternative for understanding organizational phenomena. In order to validate the identification of these two periods in terms of references, it's useful to have references with similar research results. For comparison purposes, we can present three studies: (1) a study of 45 health articles published in domestic scientific periodicals which was conducted from 2002 to 2004 (RUMMLER, 2007); (2) a study of nursing from 2001 to 2007, which identified 167 studies using SRT, 129 of these being theses and 38 being dissertations (SILVA, MARTINI and BECKER, 2011); and (3) a bibliograph study performed based on the PsycINFO (American Psychological Association), Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO.org), MedLine Complete (EBSCOHost), and Sociological Abstracts (ProQuest) databases, between August and September 2013, in which 2,526 abstracts related to SRT were identified, published in periodicals indexed by these databases (WACHELKE, MATOS, FERREIRA et al., 2015).

Comparing the research results of these three studies, one can see that the usage of SRT in OS is still incipient, however, it is already relevant to the analysis and understanding of organizational phenomena. It's believed that the evolution of the use of SRT in OS, depends, among other factors on OS researchers becoming closer to the area of social psychology through specialized events dealing with SRT, such as the International Conference on Social Representations (CIRS) and the Brazilian Conference on Social Representation (CBRS), which are itinerant international and national events.

Even though they are incipient, studies using SRT in OS present the following predominant characteristics: (1) a theoretical-empirical nature; (2) they indicate Serge Moscovici's "grand theory" as the main theoretical approach, even though a considerable number of articles don't specify the type of SRT approach that they use; (3) a qualitative nature, using interviews and discursive and content analyses as respective data collection and analysis techniques; and (4) they present *the factors that make up or influence SR* as their main argument for the use of SRT in OS. In part, these characteristics reveal two main aspects: the underutilization of SRT, and its growth potential given that its use in OS is still incipient and there are few studies that make use of SRT quantitative studies and other theoretical approaches (ALMEIDA, 2005).

## Underutilization of SRT in OS

The study results reveal at least four aspects of the underutilization of SRT in OS: (1) the type of SRT approach; (2) the methodology utilized; (3) the references used; and (4) the most cited authors. It may be observed that these aspects are interdependent and mutually influence each other in explaining the usage of SRT in OS as listed above.

In relation to the SRT approaches used in these articles, we were able to verify that 40% of the articles used Serge Moscovici's *grand theory*, 31% didn't specify the approach used and 19% didn't deal with SRT, and just cited the theory without explaining it. In other words, most of the articles published approach the theory in a very broad form, without demonstrating an in-depth discussion of SRT and frequently the theory is not explained in these articles, revealing a superficial use of it or, in some cases, a mistaken use of it. This data causes concern, because it shows that SRT is being used indiscriminately, without promoting a deeper discussion or reflection on this theory, which doesn't contribute to the development of this theoretical framework (VALENTIM, 2013).

It should also be noted that there is little discussion of the other 3 (three) approaches to SRT (ALMEIDA, 2005) which could reveal a theoretical ignorance on the part of the authors in terms of other perspectives or even little interest in them. This may further indicate a lack of discussion about the importance of these other approaches and the contributions that they can make to the development of the theory (VALENTIM, 2013) and OS.

As has been observed in the field of social psychology, SRT as originally formulated by Moscovici (2012) was welcomed by researchers who sought to make advances based on the author's original postulations (JODELET, 2001; DOISE, 1993, 2002; JOVCHELOVITCH, 1996), but was also criticized and questioned by authors such as Rätty and Snellman (1992), Potter and Litton (1985), Harré (1984) and Potter and Edwards (1999), among others, who have promoted a debate that has helped enrich the theory and led to its evolution. Apparently, researchers in the OS field have limited themselves to using this theory in an instrumental, superficial and even mistaken form, which doesn't contribute to the advancement of the field.

From the methodological point of view, studies have concentrated on a qualitative approach and its typical data collection (interviews, observations and triangulation) and data analysis (discursive and content analysis) procedures. Even though SRT admits using other methodological possibilities for the understanding of social phenomena, such as the perspective originated by Serge Moscovici, which was developed using documental research, questionnaires, and content and statistical analyses for data analysis (MOSCOVICI, 2012), OS researchers apparently are focused on one central methodology.

In methodological terms, it should be emphasized that there is no one methodological perspective that is mandatory for the study of SR. On the contrary, there are various methodological possibilities, or in other words, there are theoretical SRT studies ranging from ethnoGraph observations to laboratory experiments (WAGNER, DUVEEN, FARR et al., 1999; SOTIRAKOPOULOU and BREAKWELL, 1992). In addition to this wide array of methodologies, according to Nascimento-Schulze and Camargo (2000), SRT studies are innovative in the choosing and development of methodologies appropriate for each specific object, which is the case with Jean Claude Abric's prototypical analysis that developed the concept of the central nucleus (WACHELKE, 2009).

Similar to what has been observed in relation to the use of theoretical approaches to SRT, researchers in the OS field haven't taken advantage of the methodological potential that the theory offers in terms of conducting consistent and solid research (JODELET, 2001). In other words, the conversations between SRT and OS to identify factors that make up and influence SR for

the understanding of organizational phenomena are still restricted to the conventional methodological approaches, signifying that the field is not very creative.

In terms of the most often cited authors in these articles, it's possible to observe that the ideas of Serge Moscovici, Mary Jane Spink and Sandra Jovchelovitch have had a great influence on the debates involving SRT and that the publications of *Representações sociais: investigações em psicologia social (Social Representations: Investigations in Social Psychology)* by Moscovici (2009), and *Textos em representações sociais (Texts in Social Representations)* by Guareschi and Jovchelovitch (1995), have been extensively utilized as theoretical sources. In addition, it's possible to observe that the discussions and ideas developed in the analysed articles are based on the theoretical works of relatively few authors. We can see that important authors in terms of SRT, such as Jean Claude Abric and Willem Doise, who are references for the structuralist and societal approaches, are not among the most cited authors and important works in the field are also not among the most cited.

With this, we can observe that even though SRT has had a major presence in OS in recent years, most recent studies have limited themselves to making empirical studies that have used SRT in a superficial and limited manner. As Valentim (2013) points out, due to the applicability of SRT to many diverse areas, there appears to be the mistaken belief that there is no need for an in-depth discussion of theory, which results in empirical works which lack a proper theoretical reflection.

Given this scenario, SRT's theoretical richness and the possibilities it offers for understanding social phenomena, including organizational phenomena, should be emphasized. Among these possibilities is the structuralist approach of Jean Claude Abric, which has not been referenced often by these researchers. Using this approach, one can develop studies related to the functioning of representations, which means the characteristics that allow social representations to be stable and mobile at the same time, and the elements that give SR homogeneity and specificity (ABRIC, 2000).

An aspect that has been neglected in the articles analyzed, and which could be better discussed and used in OS, concerns the elaboration of the representations through objectification and anchoring (ALMEIDA, 2005; TRINDADE, SANTOS and ALMEIDA, 2011), which are treated in Denise Jodelet's procedural approach. These two approaches help us understand how unfamiliar knowledge becomes familiar (MOSCOVICI, 2009), thus making it possible to understand complex organizational phenomena.

Finally, given the importance that SR has attained in terms of social relationships and practices, it would also be relevant for OS to make advances in terms of exploring the 4 essential functions of SR, which according to Abric (2000), are: knowing (enabling the comprehension of reality); identifying (determining a group's identity); orienting (orienting behavior); and justifying (explaining the making of decisions). Thus, we can see that there are different aspects that can be investigated within SRT which can promote richer discussions in the field of OS.

### Limited treatment of representational objects

One of the central aspects of SRT is related to representational objects, or research objects, which are simplifications of the SR phenomenon, through theory, in this case SRT. As Sá (1998, p. 23) explains, "we can say that the construction of a research object is a process through which the phenomenon of social representation is simplified and made understandable by theory, for research purposes."

Even though he uses the term *simplification*, Sá (1998) clarifies that this activity is, in itself, reasonably complex and difficult, given the relevance of the construction of the research object. This research object is always related to someone (the subject) and something (the object), or in other words, you can't speak in terms of SR "about something without specifying the subject – the population or social group – which maintains this representation. In the same way, it doesn't make sense to speak of the representations of a given social subject without specifying the objects represented" (SÁ, 1998, p. 24).

It should be noted that none of the articles investigated included the term *representational object*, and there were few instances in which the authors even discussed the relationship between an SR subject and object in theoretical terms, thus this perspective is not being explored in a manner consistent with the SRT literature (SÁ, 1998). With this, it can be

observed that in terms of identifying representational objects in these investigated articles, the authors in general lacked the care and attention to establish parameters in the definition of the relationship between the subject and the object, as well as the articulation between the phenomenon, the theory and the method (SÁ, 1998), which are essential aspects for the study of SR.

## Conceptual and methodological inconsistencies

Our analysis of the results makes it possible to identify conceptual and methodological inconsistencies in the use of SRT in OS. We found several in the analyzed texts and have summarized them, for illustration purposes, in this section in relation to their five main aspects, which are: (1) a lack of clarity in the exposition of the arguments on which the use of SRT in OS is based; (2) the presentation of contradictory arguments to justify the utilization of SRT in OS; (3) incorrect treatment of representational objects; (4) adaptations of the SR concept, compromising the use of SRT; and (5) the utilization of SRT as a methodology.

The first aspect refers to the lack of clarity and even the presentation of contradictory arguments on which the use of SRT in OS is based. To illustrate this point, let's look at the contradictory arguments presented in article P10, published in 2008. To the authors of this article, SR has been studied on the epistemological plane and has rarely been examined from a theoretical point of view. The authors state that SR studies developed in the social sciences have not influenced the fields of administration or OS. For this reason, theoretical SR studies have remained in the social sciences, especially French sociology and anthropology like the founding works of Serge Moscovici. They continue by arguing that since there are no works about SRT in OS, the references used are necessarily those of the French social sciences.

We can observe from these arguments a lack of clarity in terms of defining what they mean to say by *epistemological plane* and *theoretical point of view*. This apparent obscurity could be an argument used by authors who have neither a solid knowledge of SRT fundamentals nor an idea of its evolution. In fact, SRT comes from the social sciences, however, it comes more specifically from French social psychology (as opposed to American social psychology) and has expanded to other areas of the social sciences (SÁ, 1998; ALMEIDA, 2009). In expanding to other areas, SRT has expanded to OS, and since 2008 it has increased its number of publications, including works by OS authors such as Alexandre de Pádua Carrieri, Neusa Rolita Cavedon, Marlene Catarina de Oliveira Lopes Melo and Monica Carvalho Alves Cappelle in publications in events and periodicals. The presence of SRT together with OS is already a reality, but it's one that's still under construction and suffers from a scarcity of authors delving deeper into SRT theory, methodology and epistemology.

In terms of the second aspect related to the arguments presented to justify the use of SRT in OS, a theoretical inconsistency may be observed in 2 texts (articles P5 and P15, published in 2008 and 2009, respectively), in which the authors justify the use of SRT from the point of view of perception. Obviously, combining SRT and perception represents a paradigmatic mistake, given that while SRT involves the understanding of social reality through social interactions in a constructionist perspective (PHILOGENE, 2011; ARRUDA, 2011), perception consists of an immediate response to external stimuli on an individual level (BARTLEY, 1981).

This implies that perception is considered a reality that is outside the individual and that this process is temporal, given that the human brain uses the entering of these stimuli according to its momentary state, which varies with time. With this, it can be said that the concept of perception cannot be confused with the concepts of knowledge and understanding (characteristics of SRT), given that these concepts develop according to a logic that has no temporal limits (BARTLEY, 1981).

The third aspect refers to representational objects. In the texts analyzed, we were able to analyze questionable positioning from the point of view of SRT itself. In article P23, published in 2011, the authors argue that defining the object *a priori* limits the subject, robbing it of the freedom of choosing the object and its association with the given representation. Apparently, the authors have confused the relationship between the subject and the object in Vygotsky's interactionist theory (2007) with the concept of the representational object (SÁ, 1998). From Vygotsky's perspective (2007), in a research project, the subject is the researcher who proposes, through his or her own choice, to investigate a given knowledge object. This knowledge object for SRT would be like the representational object that involves the representation of something for a given subject

(JODELET, 2001; SÁ, 1998). This doesn't imply that the researcher, in defining the representational object and the subject to be investigated, doesn't consider the subject in its totality and that this doesn't socially represent other objects, as Moscovici points out (2009). Continuing in this vein, Martins-Silva (2009) emphasizes that the representational object is never isolated. On the contrary, it's inserted within a broader context, identified by the author as a representational system which is influenced by various objects.

The fourth aspect refers to alterations of the SR concept as occurred with article P5, published in 2008. In this text, the authors use a reductionist adaptation of Serge Moscovici's SR concept, reducing it to just a *value* component. This is a position that impoverishes SR and SRT itself and deprives them of their characteristics. As Jodelet (2001) points out, social representations are complex phenomena that are always activated by an act in social life. To the author, it is in its richness as a phenomenon that various elements are discovered (such as cognitive, normative, beliefs, values, attitudes, and images, etc.), always organized as a form of knowledge that says something about the state of reality. To Jodelet (2001, p. 21), it's precisely this "significant totality that, in relation to action, is found at the center of the scientific investigation, which takes on the tasks of describing it, analyzing it, and explaining it in its dimensions, forms, processes and functions."

Seen this way, reducing SR to simply the concept of *value* means that the authors have abandoned the concept of SR and SRT itself to conduct an investigation through a simpler lens, which is also capable of being part of a scientific investigation. In other words, by simplifying the SR concept, the authors abandoned the concept of a complex phenomenon as pointed out by Jodelet (2001).

Also in relation to this fourth aspect, article E3, published in 2006, uses incorrect concepts. According to the author, social representations are the result of a combination of individual and collective representations. Put in another way, to the author, understanding a social representation requires mixing the conceptions that the subject possesses individually with the conceptions that society has of it. Considering, for example, Moscovici's concept of SR (2012), we can see that this is a conceptual error. As Moscovici (2012) points out, social representations are not created by individuals in isolation, but are shared collectively and reinforced by tradition, thus constituting a *sui generis* social reality.

The fifth and last aspect refers to the use of SRT as a methodology. In articles P22 (2003), E7 (2008), E10 (2008), E28 (2009), E25 (2010), P7 (2012), P11 (2012) and P16 (2013), the authors use SRT as a method. In article E7, the authors indicate that they have chosen SR as a method of analysis because it permits a form of biblical analysis guided by constructivist methodological assumptions. In articles P7 and P16, the authors consider the use of social representations as an application of research methodology to subject matter associated with administration. In articles P11 and P22, the authors emphasize that they turned to the theoretical-methodological approach of SR to collect representations produced by different social actors in the daily life of a family group.

Confusing theory with method is a trap which many researchers fall into in autonomous scientific practice. As Bruyne, Herman and Schoutheete (1991) point out, scientific practice possesses four poles that are not configured in different moments during the research, but are particular aspects of the same reality of discursive production and research practices.

The first pole is called epistemological, and maintains a vigilant, critical posture in regard to scientific practice. The second is the theoretical pole, which guides the construction of concepts and the systematic formulation of scientific objects. The third pole is morphological, which consists of the instance which declares the rules of the structure and the formation of the scientific object, imposing order among its elements. The fourth and last pole is technical, which controls the data collection and data analysis procedures, permitting a comparison of the data with the theory used to predict it (BRUYNE, HERMAN and SCHOUTHEETE, 1991).

From this perspective, it's inconceivable to confuse theory (the theoretical pole) with method (the technical pole). SRT, notably conceived of and adopted by social psychology as a theory, permits the articulation of various methodological procedures, as pointed out by Wagner, Duveen, Farr et al. (1999) and Nascimento-Schulze and Camargo (2000), among others. If SRT were a method, it would assume the condition of a mode of investigation and, in this way, would have the role of indicating practical choices that researchers can adopt in order to articulate empirical facts in scientific practice (BRUYNE, HERMAN and SCHOUTHEETE, 1991).



## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

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Ever since the beginning of this century, we've observed an evolution in the utilization of SRT in OS, without having detailed knowledge, however, of how this utilization has been occurring. Through this bibliometric study, made using scientific events organized by ANPAD and periodicals with A1, A2 or B1 ratings in Qualis CAPES for the areas of Administration, Accounting Sciences and Tourism related to OS, it has been possible to map this evolution. During the period investigated, which spans from 2001 to 2014, 90 articles in 7 events (and a total of 27 editions) and 23 articles published in 6 periodicals (O&S, RAC, RAE/FGV, RAM, CEBAPE/FGV and RAUSP) were identified. Of this total, 83 were theoretical-empirical in nature and just 7 were theoretical.

As a synthesis of the results, we can observe that the evolution of the utilization of SRT in OS may be divided into two distinct periods: (1) the first beginning in 2001 and ending in 2007, in which 18 articles were published, representing an average of 2.5 articles a year; and (2) the second lasting from 2008 to 2014, with a total of 72 articles published, representing an average of 10.3 articles a year. A comparative analysis of these results with similar studies of the use of SRT in the areas of health, nursing and psychology, among others (RUMMLER, 2007; SILVA, MARTINI and BECKER, 2011; WACHELKE, MATOS, FERREIRA et al., 2015), indicates that the use of SRT in OS is still incipient, but it has revealed itself to be a relevant theory in the understanding of organizational phenomena.

Because it is incipient, we've found articles in which the authors use SRT in a superficial manner, without making use of the theory's potential for the understanding of social phenomena (JODELET, 2001), including organizational phenomena. In addition, we've found articles with theoretical and methodological inconsistencies in their use of SRT, especially in terms of the incorrect treatment of representational objects; a simplification of the SR concept, compromising the use of SRT; and the use of SRT as a research method.

In general, the texts investigated are more concerned with identifying the social representations of the studied objects, without taking advantage of the potential to test the theory or enter into a deeper theoretical discussion which makes it possible to make contributions to SRT through its epistemological, theoretical, morphological and technical poles (BRUYNE, HERMAN e SCHOUTHEETE, 1991). This lack of in-depth theoretical discussions can lead to scientific articles that seek, in an instrumental form, to just apply the proposed concepts and methodologies, without generating any new reflections on, or critiques of, SRT itself. Thus, the use of SRT in a superficial and instrumental manner may promote the stagnation of the theory in the field of OS. This lack of critiques appears to run counter to the very essence of OS, which has arisen due to assumed critiques in relation to administration and its modernist assumptions (SOUZA, SALDANHA and ICHIKAWA, 2004).

Apparently, similar characteristics occurred in the field of social psychology when the first studies of SRT appeared. At the time, the first researchers focused more on the theory's application as an instrument. However, with the passage of time, new researchers entered the field, with some supporting the theory (JODELET, 2001; DOISE, 2002; ABRIC, 2000; JOVCHELOVITCH, 1996) and others assuming a critical position (HARRÉ, 1984; POTTER and LITTON, 1985; JAHODA, 1988; POTTER and EDWARDS, 1999), provoking a debate that has helped social psychology evolve and mature with more consistent and robust SRT studies (JODELET, 2001). In this sense, we can infer that the evolution in the utilization of SRT in OS depends, at least in part, on authors assuming a more critical and reflective position in relation to this theory, and not just using it as a mere instrument.

That being said, to encourage future studies and a strengthening of SRT in the field of OS, it's vital that the motives that have made the study of this theory relevant be taken into consideration, as Valentim (2013) points out. The first motive refers to the fact that SRT has a close relationship to important sciences, such as sociology, history and anthropology, which makes it possible to use it in relation to social issues which go beyond the intra-individual and inter-individual levels. The second is due to its particularities in the study of common sense, or in other words, through the concept that there is a meta-system of social regulations that influence the system of cognitive functioning. The third factor is related to the role of SRT as a *grand theory* which guides works in SR through general principles, without exhausting all theoretical possibilities, leaving space for future studies. And finally, the last motive is its role in social transformations, making changes in social representations possible and making it possible to understand how processes of social change occur.

Our study's results as well as the analysis we've conducted, permit the proposing of at least two agendas for research and/or reflections, one being theoretical and methodological, and the other being related to research practices. In terms of the agenda for theoretical and methodological reflection, OS researchers need to recognize SRT as a theory and not as a method. As a theory, SRT is a form of social knowledge that contributes to the construction of a common reality within a social system (JODELET, 2001) which enables researchers to understand processes that generate and keep social representations alive in social interactions, in addition to understanding structural questions related to SR that are shared on cognitive and linguistic levels (NASCIMENTO-SCHULZE and CAMARGO, 2000). In this sense, the utilization of the theory as a way of understanding social and organizational phenomena requires the adoption of various methodological approaches, compatible with the complexity of the phenomena under investigation (NASCIMENTO-SCHULZE and CAMARGO, 2000; WAGNER, DUVEEN, FARR et al., 1999; SOTIRAKOPOULOU and BREAKWELL, 1992; FLICK, 1992).

In terms of research practices, we suggest that OS researchers interested in understanding organizational phenomena through OS define the conception of the representational object when they establish the relationship between the subject (who represents it) and the object (the social phenomenon) (SÁ, 1998). It's based on this conception that researchers can evaluate the complexity of the phenomenon to initially define the appropriate type of SRT approach to use (ARRUDA, 2002; SÁ, 1996; DOISE, 1993; ALMEIDA, 2005; MARKOVÁ, 2000, 2006, 2008); and later define the methodological approach as well as the methods to be used for data collection and analysis (TRIVIÑOS, 2009, CRESWEL, 2010, YIN, 2015, BABBIE, 2005; DENZIN, 2009).

To conclude, this study has the following limitations: (1) it considers a period of 14 years of investigation; (2) the databases consulted are restricted to ANPAD events and periodicals with A2 and B1 ratings in Qualis/CAPES which deal with the field of OS; (3) the 7 categories of analysis investigated; and (4) Brazilian publications. Therefore, other studies may be performed which consider a broader selection of articles from events and periodicals with other ratings and areas of knowledge of Qualis/CAPES, or even other sources of scientific articles. It is also recommended that a broader time period and other categories of analysis be considered, which may include, for example, the investigation of researcher networks through sociometric studies.

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