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Social Identity in Connection to War and Peace in France

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Abstract

This paper presents studies of conflict from psychological perspectives, particularly the theory of social representation. Some French specificities, including conflicts such as World War 2, the colonial war with Algeria, and terrorism in Paris illustrate how they contribute to build a national discourse, where different social groups construct social representations and social identities. These events shaped French perceptions of peace and war and interpret the French discourse. A survey of men and women of different ages was conducted. Peace was dominantly associated with quiet, calm, love and friendship, while war was associated with death, fighting, and conflict. We discuss differences according to age and connect these to social identity building.

Unfortunately the one thing that humanity shares is the experience of conflict and war, whether between tribes, regions, countries, or about religions and cultures. While many authors have tried to understand why people are so easily driven to fighting one another, others have focused more on the concept of peace, which is known to have a positive flavor, and is, therefore, often presented in contrast to war. This is made explicit by the United Nations' definition that states that *"The Culture of Peace is a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviors and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations"*[1]. In this paper, we are especially interested in grasping the set of values, and representations French people express and share about peace, war and terrorism. We will concentrate on the theory of social representations. Then, we will present some French specificities due to the legacy of the French Revolution. We will also describe various conflicts that marked France's recent history, focusing particularly on World War 2, on the war France waged with Algeria, during the early 60s, and on the 1995 terrorist attacks in the Parisian subway, since these events have shaped today's perception of peace and war in France. Thus, the analysis of collective memory based on the legacy of the French revolution on these events will allow the interpretation of the discourse used when referring to wars and terrorism.

1. Social representations and the meaning of war

Social representations express the shared values, norms and attitudes of a social group. Therefore the concept should enable us to throw light on how a social object or a social situation, such as war or peace, is perceived. Initially conceived by Emile Durkheim (1898) at the end of the nineteenth century, the concept of social representations was revived by Serge Moscovici (1961, 1989) in his study of psychoanalysis in French

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1 UN Resolutions A/RES/52/13: Culture of Peace, and A/RES/53/243, Declaration and Program of Action on a Culture of Peace.

society. Social representations are social forms of knowledge, free from scientific constraints and formalized in figurative schemata. They can serve as a basis for perceiving and interpreting reality, as well as for channeling people's behavior. Furthermore, they are related to the social characteristics of people. Empirical evidence shows that, most of the time it is possible to distinguish different social representations corresponding to particular groups, and/or at specific epochs, when specific events occur, such as wars.

Moscovici's initial formulation focuses on the genesis of social representations through two major processes: objectification and anchoring. Objectification translates some of the characteristics of an unfamiliar situation, such as war or terrorism, into the terms of our reality. In this process, the individual selects some specific information of that unfamiliar situation; with this selected information, the participant reorganizes his/her knowledge by "de-contextualizing" it; and is then ready to reconstruct into a new schema built with certain specific dimensions this unfamiliar situation into something more familiar. Anchoring includes two different aspects: a cognitive aspect, according to which the situation is integrated into the previous thoughts of individuals, e.g. terrorism reminds us of wars; the second aspect is a social one, having to do with a social group giving meaning to a representation, e.g. it must be Muslims attacking Christians. Thus, interpretations of a particular situation can differ from one group to another.

Since Moscovici's early work (1961), different theoretical approaches have been developed. The theoretical approach which we use in this chapter to describe the French representation of war and peace considers the cognitive organization of social representations in terms of different kinds of elements: central versus peripheral ones. We follow Jean-Claude Abric's structural approach (1976, 1984), which states that social representations are composed of a central nucleus surrounded by peripheral elements. This theoretical approach, based on a hierarchical structure of representation, was completed by Claude Flament (1981, 1994) and by Abric (1994); they also argued that social practices were a major factor in the determination of representations. Given that no previous studies based on social representations have been conducted on the perception of peace versus war and/or terrorism among French people, we hope, by relying on this theory, to contribute to a better understanding of these issues.

2. France's experience of contemporary wars and conflicts

As many other countries, France experienced the horror of wars. Since we want to study the general opinion towards war and peace, despite the fact that France can be seen as one of a kind from its heritage, we believe that the experience of war and conflict among French society is the key to a better understanding of the social representation of war and peace. Therefore, we will focus on the recent wars the French underwent. We will start with World War 2, followed by the decolonization war in Algeria, and by recent acts of terrorism.

2.1. France and the World Wars

France was one of the major protagonists of the two World Wars. Indeed, before the First World War, tension between France and Germany was serious. France, that had lost the Alsace and the Loraine (two French regions) in 1871, wanted to seek revenge

and to get back these two lost regions -in schools, at the time, children were taught that Alsace and Lorraine were two French departments and that they had to be re-conquered, to be taken back. But this alone does not explain the First World War; there were also tensions around colonial issues. England and France were, at the time, the two most powerful colonial powers. Such a position caused animosity and jealousy from the rest of Europe, especially from Germany. France also had specific ethnic issues, with parts of France who wanted to be recognized as autonomous nations (e.g. Corsica). All this created a complex context in which the First World War was bound to break out. Everybody wanted the war and believed that it would be short; in fact, it was to last four years. The memory of important battles and of great heroes still lingers as part of our collective memory: for example, General Pétain, the hero of the battle of Verdun, or the battle of the Somme, remembered as the deadliest battle for France. If during the First World War, France managed to find enough military resources up until the end of the war, the situation was completely different during the Second World War. Then, France was faced with defeat, occupation, collaboration and resistance.

The Second World War was another worldwide military conflict, based on two initially separate conflicts. The first began in Asia in 1937 as the Second Sino-Japanese War; the other began in Europe, in 1939, with the German invasion of Poland. This global conflict split the majority of the world's nations into two military alliances: the Allies and the Axis Powers. Spanning much of the globe, World War II resulted in the death of over 70 million people, making it the deadliest conflict ever in human history. The armistice, in June 1940, marked the defeat of France and separated the country in two halves. The Northern part of France was occupied and ruled by the Germans, while the newly formed French government settled in the South of France, in Vichy, under the leadership of General Pétain, the hero of the First World War. This government openly collaborated with the Nazis, economically with the STO (Force Work Services), and politically with the Gestapo, a police force that arrested and deported to Nazi extermination camps Jews, homosexuals, communists, etc. General Charles de Gaulle, on June 18th, 1940, on the BBC, appealed to the French not to collaborate with the enemy and summoned them to resist the invaders. He formed the FFF (Free French Forces), based in Algeria, with the population of the French and the English colonies. In 1944, Jean Moulin succeeded in organizing the French resistance and the FFI (Instate French Forces) who helped the Americans to liberate France from the Nazis. At the end of the war, de Gaulle managed to bring France on the "Winner's Side" for all the resistance actions and involvement and collaboration acts were deliberately forgotten (cf. Durand, 1998).

2.2. France and its Colonies: War with Algeria

The self-determination generated by the war gave rise to decolonization movements in Asia and Africa, while Europe itself began moving toward integration. In this context, after the war, the French Algerian colony and its members, who had fought against the Germans, were forgotten. Despite the commitment of the soldiers from the colony, they did not receive any sign of gratitude. French history textbooks did not even mention their role in the victory. Such disloyalty led the colony to seek its independence and autonomy. It was the beginning of the Algerian War, which took place between 1954 and 1962, and led to Algerian independence from France (cf. Rotman & Tavernier, 1992). It was one of the most important French decolonization war; it was a complex conflict characterized by rural guerrilla warfare, terrorism against civilians, use of torture on both sides, and counter-terrorism operations by the French Army. Effectively started

on the 1ˢᵗ of November 1954, during the *Red All Saints day*, the conflict shook the French Fourth Republic's (1946–58) foundations and led to its collapse. Under the directives from Guy Mollet's government, the French Army initiated a campaign of "pacification" of what was still considered at the time to be fully part of France. This "public order operation" quickly developed into a full-scale war. Algerians who, at first were mostly in favor of peace and tranquility, turned increasingly toward wanting independence, supported by other Arab countries and, more generally, by worldwide public opinion gained by anti-colonialist ideas. Meanwhile, the French divided themselves on the issues of "French Algeria".

Because of the instability of the French parliament, the French Fourth Republic was dissolved and Charles de Gaulle returned to power during the May 1958 crisis. He subsequently founded the Fifth Republic, with the establishment of a new Constitution tailored by de Gaulle himself and his followers. De Gaulle's return to power was supposed, according to the Army, to ensure Algeria's continued integration in the French Community, which had replaced the French Union, an organization that linked together France's colonies. However, de Gaulle progressively shifted in favor of Algerian independence, seeing it as inevitable. Therefore, he engaged in negotiations with the FLN, leading to the March 1962 Evian Accords, which granted Algeria its independence. The Algiers putsch (in April 1961) was organized by generals who were hostile to the negotiations and headed by Michel Debré's Gaullist government and the OAS (*Organization of the Secrete Army*), which grouped far-right radicals. It initiated a campaign of bombings in Algeria as well as in France that aimed to put an end to the implementation of the Evian Accords and to the exile of the French settlers. Ahmed Ben Bella, who had been arrested in 1956 along with other FLN leaders, became the first President of Algeria. The Algerian war, a founding event of Algerian history, left long-standing scars in the French society. The relations between France and Algeria are still deeply affected by this conflict.

2.3. During the 80s and 90s: Strong waves of terrorism in France

The French have a long and intimate acquaintance with terrorism, earned in years of attacks by Algerian independence fighters. Even recently, France has been regularly hit by strong waves of terrorism, mainly during the 80s and 90s. In the early 1990s, Islamist radicals found a pool of willing recruits among the youth in the impoverished suburban ghettoes that house many of France's six million people of Arab origin. The point of connection, between the suburbs of Paris, Marseilles and Osama Bin Laden's Afghanistan-based networks, came via Algeria. There, the military-backed government overturned elections won by the Islamists, banned their party and drove its most extreme elements underground - where they've led a merciless war of terror against politicians and citizens alike. Men who fought as volunteers alongside Bin Laden in Afghanistan's anti-Soviet 'jihad' founded the most notorious Algerian terror faction, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). When the war in Afghanistan ended with the Soviet withdrawal, these men moved to France and began recruiting young people and building an infrastructure to attack France for its support of the Algerian government. As a result, France nested terrorist networks in the mid-1990s and the outcome was a very violent attack in the Parisian subway in 1995.

3. Research methodology

In terms of methods, non-directive interviews tend to constitute the ideal way to study social representations, but face-to-face questionnaires also yield meaningful data. They provide significant information and make it possible to use different tools. In fact, face-to-face questionnaires were applied in this study in order to study the social representations of peace, war and terrorism. Free association tasks were used to distinguish the hypothetical central nuclei of our three groups who not only differed in age and social classes, but also in their "contact" with war and or terrorism.

3.1. How to identify the central concepts of a representation?

By providing a first key target word: *peace*, followed later by the second key target word *war*, finishing with the last key target word: *terrorism* we were looking for the most important aspects, called central nucleus or central core, of a social object. Knowing that a series of questions separated these tasks, the participants were asked to spontaneously associate to each key target word a minimum of 6 words or expressions; each association was then evaluated by the participants who were asked to provide a value: positive, neutral or negative in relation to the target word. The associations were analyzed by taking into account their frequency of appearance, their rank of appearance (the first term or expression proposed is said to be of rank 1, and the last of rank 6), and the most dominant value attributed to the association (positive, neutral or negative). Only the terms shared by many were considered as part of the central elements; this implies that only terms with a relatively high frequency of appearance will be part of the shared representation; moreover, these frequent terms also need to be proposed among the first associations, therefore with a low rank, in order to belong to the hypothetical central nucleus of the social representation (for more on the methodology, see Vergès, 1998 or 2001).

3.2. Participants

In this study of the French perception of war, terrorism and peace, we chose specific samples of participants based on their different "practices" of war or terrorism. The three samples were composed of participants, both men and women, of three age groups. The first group was between 18 and 25, mean age is 21,73 at the time of our study (40% of our participants); the second group was composed of participants between 35 and 60, mean age is 50.61 years old (37% of our participants); while the last group was made of participants aged 65 and above, mean age is 77 years old (23% of our participants), knowing that the oldest participant was 92 years old at the time of the interview. Altogether, we had 286 French participants with 151 women (53%) and 135 men (47%). The oldest age group was determined by the assumption that its members could have been active members or witnesses of World War Two. The intermediate age group could be the children of those who participated in or witnessed World War Two and they potentially could either have been involved in the Algerian War or might remember the various OAS bombings which occurred in France in the late 50s and early 60s. Finally, the youngest age group could remember quite well the strong waves of terrorism France has been hit by, during their childhood or early adult years, mainly from 1986 to 1995. We hypothesized that participants would not choose the same association depending on how closed an event was to his/her experience. In other words, we expected to find different central elements according to experience,

versus no experience, knowing that, of course, our oldest participants might have been directly involved in World War Two, in the Algerian War and could also remember the waves of terrorism of the mid 90s. They would then accumulate specific experiences of peace, war and terrorism, while the youngest age group might have only experienced the Parisian subway terrorist attacks.

In our questionnaire, we also had some questions to verify if each participant had been active, and in which way, during one -or more- of these events, and/or had known someone who had been active (parents, grandparents, uncle…). If they were themselves directly involved, we had a series of questions constructed to help us better understand their involvement. Altogether, out of our total sample of nearly 300 participants, less than 30% declared that they had, at some point, been directly involved in or witness to one or more of the following situations: World War Two, the Algerian War, and/or the Paris terrorist attacks.

4. What do the French perceive?

It has already been demonstrated that peace, conflict and war have specific meanings and symbols in different cultures. Here we want to see what these terms represent for French citizens today. In our study of the French general view of war, terrorism and peace, we have chosen specific samples of participants based on their different "practices" of war or terrorism. We will first examine the general discourse of all our participants: What do they associate to the three key words 'war, terrorism and peace'? Then, we will look at the differences according to age, thus taking into account the participants' personal contact with war or terrorism. Finally we will focus on gender differences as well as on specific differences, such as differences connected to political views, or to religious beliefs.

4.1. Overall perception of peace, war and terrorism.

The 286 participants, who were consulted in our study, in France, in the fall of 2007, appeared to share some main ideas for each of the target words. Let us successively look at what peace, war and terrorism meant to them, keeping in mind that the words were provided in this order.

- Overall, for our French participants, **"peace"**[2] was predominantly associated to nice feelings: being *quiet* and *calm* (271; 3)[3], as well as, for half of our participants, to *love* (132; 3)*, as in 'Peace and Love' or to *friendship* (132; 3), which is followed by the *dove* (83; 3), knowing that the biblical white dove holding an olive branch is the worldwide symbol of peace, both in Judaism and in Christianity; France being of Judeo-Christian tradition, it is not a surprise that it should share this symbol with many other nations*. Liberty, Equality* and *Fraternity* (77; 3)*, the motto of the French Republic born of the French Revolution, was also associated to "peace"; *freedom,* alone, is even more strongly associated to "peace". *War* (98; 3) was also connected to "peace" for

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2 The target words are between "…..", while the terms produced by the participants are in *italics*.
3 In parenthesis, the frequency of appearance of a term is the first figure, while the second is the mean rank of appearance, showing the importance of the idea: the smaller the mean rank is, the most important the notion is to the participants.

34% of our participants; this could be linked to Leo Tolstoy's novel 'War and Peace' (1865 to 1869), or to the film made from Tolstoy's book (1956), which is well known to most French people, especially those in the 35 to 60 age group.

- On the other hand, concerning our second key word, **"war"**, the first three dominating ideas were clearly negative: *death* (134; 3.1), *fighting* and *conflict* (107; 2.5); the other shared associated ideas were connected to the means of waging "war"; i.e. with *weapons* (97; 3.5), while the last main series of associations were connected to the *horror* (97; 3.5) of "wars", which includes *suffering* and *sadness* (89; 3.4), as well as to the consequences of "war": *destruction* (65; 3.5) and *blood* (64; 3.5). Even though, it was expected that the word *peace* would spontaneously be associated to the key word **"war"**, as *war* was to the key word "peace", it was not; this is in fact quite surprising since *peace* could be considered the sign of the end of "war" itself.

- Finally, the French people we talked to mainly connected "terrorism" to *September 11th (164;* 3.3), along with (other) *attacks* with *bombs* (111; 3.2), including the Parisian *subway explosion* in 1995. *Religions* and *extremism* (103; 3.7) stood among the two other main ideas that were also associated to "terrorism"*; extremism* being connected to *terror* yielded *insecurity* (97; 3.6).

4.2. Specific perception of peace, war and terrorism, according to age

Out of 286 participants, only 80 (28%) stated that they felt that they were, in one way or another, directly involved in at least one of the following situations: World War Two, the Algerian War of independence, and/or experience of the Paris terrorist attacks. Nevertheless, among these 80 participants, 47 men (58%) and 33 women (42%) said that they were directly involved in one of the above situations. In fact, fifteen persons in each of the two youngest groups (13% for each age group; 19% each, of the total population) said that they were either implicated in or witnesses to one of the situations. Of course, for the 18 to 25, this could only be the subway attacks, while for the 35 to 60 age group terrorism could be both connected to the OAS bombings of the late 50s, early 60s, or to the more recent explosions from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s. Fifty of the participants, from the oldest age group, 65 years old and above (77% of this age group), explained that they were directly involved with at least one of the three mentioned situations. Since the youngest members of this age group were children during the Second World War, and the oldest who is 99 today, was in her 30s during the war, these 50 participants were all potentially involved in some action during World War II.

In the following part, it was decided not to take into account separately the discourse of the 28% who declared being directly involved, and to focus on potential specificities in connection to each of our three age groups.

4.2.1. The 18 to 25 years old group

If we look at the results obtained from the youngest age group, composed of one hundred and fifteen 18 to 25 year olds, war is often more connected to movies, or to their grandparents. The war of Algeria is unknown to most of the participants of this age group, except for those connected to Algeria in one way or another. Finally, all have

lived through terrorism, not only with September 11th, but also with the wave of terrorist attacks that we have had in France for the past twenty years, that is to say for most of their life. We should keep this in mind when analyzing their social representation of the three key words.

- For this age group the notion of "peace" is, like for 90% of our participants of all ages, focused around *being quiet* and *calm* (86; 3.1). What changes according to the age-groups is what comes next: in the case of the 18-25, what follows is *war* (62; 2.7) as being the opposite of "peace"; the next most central associations are connected to *love* (potentially referring to the slogan used by their parents in the 60s-70s: 'Peace and Love'?) and *friendship* (59; 3.2), which are immediately tailed by the biblical symbol of "peace": the *dove* (48; 2.5). Finally, the ideas of *peace treaty* which appears in 31% of the cases (36; 3.5), but with a somewhat higher rank than the previous terms, along with the three pillars of the French Republic: *Liberty, Equality* and *Fraternity* (32; 3.1), which appear among the peripheral elements for this age group, are specificities of this age group.

- The 18 to 25 year olds describe "War" as a synonym of *death* (69; 2.8); it is, for them, connected to *weapons* (55; 3.5) as well as to *fighting* (50; 2.7). For this age group, *peace* (39; 1.9) is associated to "war", in connection to the *end of war,* with the lowest mean rank of all terms (1.9), implying that for those who refer to this idea, it is most central and important. We can mention write away that this reference to *peace* connected to "war" is clearly specific of this age group.

- Finally, "terrorism" is, for these young adults mainly connected to *September 11th* (108; 3.2). Other main ideas, which are also associated to "terrorism", are *attacks* (44: 2.6) with *bombs* (48; 3.4), linked to *religious extremists,* which appears in 34% of the cases (39; 3.5), associated to being *frightened,* also in 34% of the cases (39; 3.7), but with an even lower rank, because it causes *death* (37; 3.3)…

In conclusion, for this age group "peace" is directly associated with *war*, and in the same way, "war" is presented as the opposite of *peace*… The biblical symbol of "peace" is provided by more than 50% of the participants from this age group; they also refer a lot to the important notion of *peace treaty*… "Terrorism" is, for all these young adults interviewed, first connected to *September 11th,* which is a very *frightening attack* produced *by religious extremists* with *bombs* in order to provoke *death.*

4.2.2. 35- to 60-year-olds

If we now turn to the results collected from the one hundred and six 35- to 60-year-olds, one should recall that they are the children of the war. They were all born after World War Two, from parents who lived through the war.

- Concerning "peace", we can first note that the most central elements for "peace" are being *quiet* and *calm* (100%) and all the participants of this age group share this. What is more specific here is that, for nearly 50% of the sample, are the ideas -directly derived from the slogan used in the 60-70s: 'Peace and Love'- of *love* and *friendship* (50; 3.1), along with *happiness* (40; 3.2). Unlike the youngest age group, *war* (20; 3.1) is not as central; it belongs to

the peripheral elements, as it is not shared by so many (low frequency of appearance); it appears near the *dove* (25; 2.3) which is a strong symbol for those who mention it (lowest rank of appearance, which means that it appears among the first spontaneous associations produced). Among the peripheral elements, the *peace treaty*, which was quite central for the youngest age-group, is replaced for the 35-60 by the three pillars of the French Revolution: *Liberty, Equality* and *Fraternity* (31%) followed by the fact that "peace" comes thanks to *negotiation* and via *armistice* (25; 4.2).

- For the 35- to 60-year-olds, who did not directly experience World War II as they are born among the baby boomers, born soon after the end of the war (mean age of this group is: 50.61 years old); members of this age group, who were the children of those who lived during the war, perceive "war" as predominantly bringing *death* (42; 3), along with a lot of *suffering* and *sadness* (42; 3.2). It is clearly connected for them to *conflict* (40; 2) and to *struggling* (40; 2.2). For this age group, *peace* is very weakly present (only 11% of the participants in this age group refer to *peace* when associating to the key word "war"). In a similar manner, *terrorism* is mentioned in connection to "war" by less than 9% of the participants of this age group.

- "Terrorism" is what they should have 'directly' experienced, maybe in their childhood, as most were young children during the terrorism attacks connected to the OAS bombings of the late 50s, early 60s, as well as to the more recent explosions which took place in Paris, from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s. For these participants, as for the overall population of this study, "terrorism" covers acts which are intended to create *fear* or *terror*, and which are usually perpetrated for an *ideological goal*. It is mainly linked to deliberate *attacks* (33; 2.2) -among which *September 11*[th] (28; 2.8) is mentioned, but not as systematically as by the younger generation. For the majority of this age group, the *attacks* are carried out with *bombs* and *explosions* (36; 2.7)*, which are usually perpetrated for an ideological goal, mainly by *religious fanatics* (46; 3.8), who share the intend of provoking *death* (37; 2.9); thus it creates *fear* and/or *terror* (30; 3.3), as well as *horror* and *atrocity* (26; 4). What is interesting is that "terrorism" does not seem to really constitute a shared common social representation as, especially for this group, no concept or idea really covers it all. Nevertheless, what is mostly shared, by 43% of this age group, is that "terrorism" is connected to *religious fanatics*.

In conclusion, the perception of peace and war is, for this generation, affected by the memory of the parents, transmitted by what the relatives accepted to share, knowing that, quite often, talking about the war is not an easy thing to do for those who lived through it. As a result, for them, the shared social representation of "war" which is not from direct lived experience, is mainly connected to *death*, *suffering*, *sadness* and *struggling*… It appears that they are quite closely connected to typical stereotyped notions, such as the *dove,* and the three pillars of the French Revolution: *Liberty, Equality* and *Fraternity*; "Peace" is also mostly associated to the slogan of 'peace and love' from the 70s. Concerning the last key word, "terrorism" is mainly linked to idea of deliberate *attacks*, among which *September 11*[th] is often mentioned, but not as systematically as by the younger generation. "Terrorism" does not seem to bring clear-shared ideas in this age group.

4.2.3. The 65 and above age group

As already mentioned, 50 of the 65 participants (77%), aged 65 and above, clearly stated that they were involved in at least one of the three mentioned situations, which includes World War II -since the youngest of this group were children during the Second World War, and our oldest, who is 99, was in her 30s during the war, with a mean age for the group of 78 -. In fact, the 15 participants in this group who did not feel involved are only slightly younger (mean age = 73).

- If we concentrate on the overall results gathered from the sixty-five participants aged 65 and above, we can first note that the most central elements for "peace" are, like for the other age groups being *quiet* and *calm* (59; 3.6), which covers 91% of the answers of these participants. What is different from the previous groups is the importance which is given to the *armistice* and to *reconciliation* (39; 3.4), which brought *happiness* and *joy* (24; 3.5) as well as *friendship* and *love* (24; 3.6). Of course this is directly linked to the fact that this generation is the one who survived the war, and who still describes the arrival of the *armistice* as one of the most *joyful* event in their whole life, bringing *solidarity* (18; 3.7). Unlike the youngest age group, the *dove* (15%) is not perceived as connected to peace, and *war* (20; 3.1) is not central at all, as 24% of the participants associated war to peace. Finally, "*Liberty, Equality* and *Fraternity*" is connected to "peace" by 18% of this age group.

- On the other hand, for the 65 and above, "war" is perceived as bringing *horror* and *atrocities* (27; 2.6), as well as *death* (24; 3.8). Forty percent of the associations, from this age group who survived the Second World War, are directly connected to that war (e.g. *World War*, *Nazi*, *Hitler*, *German*, *extermination…*). Another 40% of the associated terms, which are linked to *military terms* (e.g. *army, guns* and other *weapons, troops, officers, general, soldiers…*), are also connected to these associations. What is then associated to "war" is a lot of *suffering* and *sadness* (28%), along with *fright* and *terror* (25%). Only among those who lived through the war, war is connected to the *lack of food* and to *misery* (31%). As for the previous group, *peace* is very rarely spontaneously associated to the key term of "war" (11%) by members of this age group.

- For this age group, "terrorism" is mainly connected to *horror* and *atrocity* (46%; 4), produced by *attacks* (32%; 2.2), carried out with *bombs* and *explosions* (43%; 3)*,* among which *September 11th* (27; 3.6) is stated and represents 42% of their associations. "Terrorism" clearly brings *fear* and/or *terror* (31%). It is, according to these participants, also produced by *religious fanatics* (31%; 3.8), who aim at generating *suffering* and *pain* (23%), as well as at provoking *innocent victims* and *death* (14%; 2.9).

In conclusion, as most of the participants of this age group stated that they were involved in at least one of the three mentioned situations, and since their mean age is of 73, we can expect that a few of the youngest participants were in fact children during the Second World War. The perception of peace and war is for this group clearly centered on a shared common collective memory. For them, "peace" is clearly what they have experienced after the war: it is the result of the *armistice* and comes along with *reconciliation*; it provided *happiness* and *love*. To them, "war's" associations are

rooted in their direct contact with it; 80% of their joint associations can be divided into two groups of ideas: first we find 40% of the associations which are connected to the two world wars (*Hitler*, *Nazi*, *German*, *extermination…*) while the other 40% are linked to military terms (*army*, *guns…*). Off course, "war" is associated to many direct souvenirs such as *suffering, sadness, lack of food, fright and terror, atrocities* and *horror*, along with *death*. "Terrorism" is produced to provoke *fear* and/or *terror*. Very few of these participants refer to *September 11th* as if the word was more connected to their experience of terrorism during the second world war, which was in a way stronger than anything else as they really had to survive from varied unexpected terrorist attacks during the war.

4.3. Gender differences

For the 151 women who answered our questions, without taking into account their age group, "peace" is always connected to being *quiet* and *calm* (100%; 3.2), but the two ideas, which appear as especially important as they gather the smallest median rank, for the women in France, are *war* (52; 2.7), followed by the symbol of the *dove* (47; 2.4). These two ideas were not produced by so many participants, but for a third of them they are most important.

When comparing with the 135 male participants, "peace" is also mostly connected to being *quiet* and *calm* (112; 3.2), along with *love* and *friendship* (66; 3.2), these associations being especially true for the men who belong to the oldest age group, those who are on the average around 77 years old today and who were about nine or ten years old at the beginning of the war. We could have expected that women would have tended to associate this idea of *love* more often than men, but this is not the case.

"War" is mainly linked to *death* for both men and women, but for men it is first connected to *going to combat* and to *fighting* (48; 2.5), while for the women of the three age groups "war" essentially brings *suffering* and *sadness* (58; 3.5).

Concerning "terrorism", *attacks,* with the evocation of *11/9/2001,* is clearly the strongest association that comes to mind for both men (92; 3.2) and women (73; 3.3). But, what comes immediately after differs according to gender: *bombs* and *explosions* (56; 3.6) are the next most important associations for men, while it is *fear* and *anxiety* (67; 3.5) which appear most often for women.

To summarize the differences concerning gender, women's perception of "war" is connected to *suffering* and *sadness,* while "terrorism" provides them with *fear* and *anxiety;* "peace" is associated by our female participants to *war* as well as to the *dove* symbol. On the other hand, men's perception of "peace" is connected to *love* and *friendship*; "war" is associated with *going to combat* and to *fighting,* while "terrorism" is linked to *bombs* and *explosions.*

As we can see, some of the most central elements are common to men and women, but the peripheral elements clearly vary according to gender, and this is confirmed with the three key terms. This in fact allows us to conclude that the social representations of war, terrorism and peace are similar and share among men and women (same central nucleus) but that there are differences in the peripheral zones, which could imply potential changes of social representations for one or the other group…

4.4. Are ideological differences based on political affiliation?

Overall, our population has been divided into three groups; right, center and left, according to what they declared in terms of their political affiliation, without taking into account their age group. Globally there are some interesting differences. One of the surprising elements is that, while those who see themselves as on the right wing and those who identify themselves as being on the left wing, share many more similarities than those who declare themselves as being in the center; for example, in relation to "war", *death, fighting* and *conflict* are presented by both right and left wing participants, while *death* disappears from the associations of the center. In the same way, for "peace", left and right share the ideas of war and the *dove*, plus *liberty, fraternity* and *equality* in the peripheral zone; on the other hand, the only central common term for those coming from the center is *war*. Concerning "terrorism", what is somewhat surprising is that those in the right wing only have in their potential central nucleus the idea of *attacks*, while for the center there is anther idea added: *horror* along with *atrocities*. The ideas of *attacks* along with *horror* and *atrocities* are shared by the left wing but they also include in the core of the representation the idea of *bombs* and *explosions*.

5. Can collective memory alone shape our social representation?

In order to understand and explain better the social representation of the French participants, of peace, war and/or terrorism, it seems necessary to refer not only to the concept of social representation, but also to one of the main concepts in social psychology: collective memory.

As Arthur Neal, a British politician (1862-1933), expressed "*in the telling and retelling the stories of our past, the events in question become stereotyped and selectively distorted as they become embedded in our collective memory,*" even an important event is going to be gradually filtered and details will be forgotten. The significance of the collective memory lies in the event's meaning rather than in the accuracy of the memory. The events meaning is the part of collective memory that remains in the collective discourse, analyzed in this study thanks to the study of social representations with the association task. This idea of collective discourse expressing the collective memory is extremely important to us. Of course, collective memory is first based on historical heritage, such as the traces of the French revolution, but it is also affected by events which have been experienced by a whole generation: World War II, the Algerian war or the bombing of the time, and or the more recent terrorism attacks, both in France and in the USA, are examples of events which clearly affected and shaped collective memory. Collective memory selects and keeps only some aspects of the reality of events. One of the major reasons that collective memory fades is that successive generations do not attach the same meaning and significance to specific events.

If we take the example of September 11th, most people between ten and thirty now will attach more meaning to this event than anyone who will come later or has lived before, which explains why this item appeared so central for the youngest age group and somewhat less central, but still important for the other two groups. Those over thirty -as well as those not yet born- have their own events, and in particular the experience of World War II, as well as of the Algerian war of independence, that will hold the focus of their generational collective memories. This is not to say that they will not or do not care about what happened on September 11th but it will not be for them as it is for those who

"witnessed" the whole attacks on television, on and on, or for those who knew people who might have been there at that time, and so on. For those who did not "experience" this event, it will be remembered, but the details and causes will blur.

This fundamental difference in memory structures is demonstrated by philosophy of Henri Bergson (1859-1941), who states that there are two types of memory: intentional and spontaneous memory. Intentional memory consists of encoding and retrieval; it is an intentional, deliberate, quantitative act, such as memorizing a poem or a history lesson. Intentional memory may be memorizing the sequence of events of the eleventh or how many people died; this 'quantitative' information is in a way easy to recall. Spontaneous memory is impromptu; it is mainly qualitative. One may remember a sound or a feeling from the day, or something someone said, this would be in the back of the mind behind a veil of intentional memory. The intentional memories fade with time as more relevant ones replace them, but the spontaneous memories will be in the background waiting for a trigger for the rest of one's life.

For example, one may hear an airplane-flying overhead and it might trigger the video of the raw footage of the first plane hitting the World Trade Center. People who were alive at the time, in the United States or France, as in many other places, thanks to the role of mass media, will share both types of memories; people who were born after can only create intentional memories on this specific event. The spontaneous memories make up part of our collective memory.

This is easily demonstrated by looking at the answers provided by the three separated generations in our study which clearly made them live again or not, various historical events. For example World War II, for our oldest age group who directly lived through the war told us, in great emotional details about the events during and progression of the war it self; it clearly had a personal tie for them and for their generation.

This was quite similar, though not as emotional to the next generation, the children born after the World War II, but who might have lived during the Algerian War of Independence: for them, the history of the wars, was transmitted through the discourse of their families loaded with emotion.

On the other hand, the youngest age group, who were not alive during World War II, nor during the Algerian War of Independence, could discuss the causes and effects of the war, but as we have said, collective memory's significance lies in the overall meaning more than in the details, which might for example explain why the mention ideas such as peace treaties where the intermediate group refers to the armistice.

We have had history texts, classes and even movies to explain the basics, but they do not contain the original emotion of the event. Movies attempt to pass on the emotion of the event, but fill in the spaces with other irrelevant information further blurring history to fit their plot line. Our memory of an event will grow more distorted through theatrical reproduction of it. As soon as the event is dramatized it begins to lose meaning, to borrow from a previous group, the raw footage obviously carries more meaning and immediacy. Those who experienced the footage and coverage first hand will always place greater significance on an event. This could also explain why our youngest age group is the one that really connects terrorism essentially to *September 11th* that they "saw" and "experienced" directly.

Archiving is one way in which we can preserve the memory, saving as many artifacts as possible whether by traditional collecting or digitally archiving information online. This will afford people an opportunity to revisit the event and maintain its presence in our collective memories, seeing it as we saw it, real, as it happened on the eleventh and the following days.

6. Summary of main results and conclusion

In one way, it is clear that collective memory shapes the meaning of social objects, but the direct experience is even stronger than the discourse on a social event. In that sense, both collective memory and experiences mold the social representations of French people towards the three key words "peace", "war" or "terrorism".

For example, France still appears to be the country of human rights by excellence. The three key words *Liberty, Equality* and *Fraternity* that lie at the root of the French democratic Republic are proudly displayed on the front of every school and public building, thus contributing to both promoting the collective memory of the French Revolution and guiding the transmission of a collective discourse. It is interesting to note that, today, French people, especially the young people, still spontaneously mention these three words when they want to express the idea that the French democratic Republic represents "peace" for all, as we have seen in analyzing the associated terms constructing their social representation.

Concerning "terrorism", for our three groups, it does not seem to really constitute a shared social representation, as the participants do not produce any strong common concepts or ideas. All our participants have in a way experienced terrorism, during the Second World War, during the Algerian war of independence, with attacks in France and especially in Paris, and during the 80s and 90s. All have also witnessed, via television, the destruction of the World Trade Tours. Nevertheless, these events do not contribute to form a similar view of terrorism, besides the fact that it is a strategy used in order to reach religious events, political ones, or military ones, by terrorizing the population using bombs and attacks.

In fact, concerning religions, France is an interesting country since, as we have explained, it is a secular country, which has always carried out -religious or anti-religious- values which have shaped our societies and remain very pregnant in our collective memory. In this context, "terrorism" being for our participants mainly carried out by *religious fanatics*, it would be motivating to see if we would obtain any differences when our participants have -or not- a religion, also taking into accout the degre of importance they say religion has for them?

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