Introduction to the Series "Towards a More Relational Social Psychology". Social Psychology is Innovative, Vital

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This Series of the International Journal of Psychology and Psychological Therapy, dedicated to Social Psychology, includes six papers by authors from different countries (the US, Australia, Portugal, Germany, and Spain). The works cover a wide range of psychosocial topics, such as stereotypes, attitudes, identity, group perception, intergroup conflict, intergroup emotions, and prejudice, among others. Since each paper makes its own contribution, the reader has the option of choosing the topic of his or her own preference.

In the first paper, Pearson, Dovidio and Pratto (2007) analyse the role of hate within prejudice. Using Sternberg's model of hate as their starting point, they try to show how the different components of hate impact the severity of punishment recommended for prejudice targets in legal contexts. Two aspects of this paper need to be emphasize: the importance given to the social context of prejudice and the mediational analysis performed on the data in order to show that hate mediates blatant and aversive prejudice impact.

The paper by De Marree, Petty and Briñol (2007) embarks on a thorough review of current research on attitude certainty, given its demonstrated importance and functionality both for attitudes and the self. Some of the antecedents of centrality are discussed at length and special attention is given to the role of individual differences. At the same time, the role of the cultural context in which these individual differences operate is emphasized.

In their paper on intergroup threat effects on implicit stereotyping, Gonsalkorale, Carlisle and von Hippel (2007) show for the first time the influence of collective self-esteem threat on stereotyping at the implicit level.

Alexandre, Monteiro and Waldzus (2007) focus on how children of minority groups struggle for positive distinctiveness without disregarding the general societal consensus about status hierarchies: comparisons with the majority group allow them to show acceptance of its status superiority, while strategic comparisons with other minority groups open the door to achieve a moderate degree of positive distinctiveness.

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Gómez, Morales, Huici, Gaviria and Jiménez (2007) deal with the issue of social consensus about hierarchies and how people try to reconcile the achievement of positive distinctiveness with the acceptance of negative identities under certain conditions. Here is where the self-verification processes fit in. After reviewing the impressive amount of evidence supporting the existence of these processes, the authors argue for the need of studying self-verification at the group level, predicating that it is different from self-verification at the individual and the collective level.

Méndez, Gómez and Tropp (2007) address the impact of metaperception on intergroup relations. They analyse the role of prototypicality in metaperception and make a plea for a more "social" social psychology. In their own words, "research about metaperceptions acknowledges the mutuality of the perceptual process in intergroup relationships, such that it is necessary take into account the perspectives of both targets and perceivers".

In case the reader chooses to get an overview of the whole set of papers of the monograph, he or she will find it can be done with ease, since all the topics, as already noted, belong to the core of the discipline (stereotypes, attitudes, identity, group perception, intergroup conflict, intergroup emotions, and prejudice, among others). In addition, most of the papers address very similar problems, regardless of their avowed topic of study. Such is the case of intergroup relations (or conflict) that pervades all the papers, including DeMarree et al's on certainty of attitudes and the self, in which intergroup processes are implicit not only in the processes associated to the self but in certainty itself, one of whose antecedents is social support and past experience. Something similar can be said about self-verification theory, especially when the source of self-verification may be a group.

Social context and the self can be also considered common threads connecting all the papers. Social context plays the main character in Alexandre et al.'s paper, where it enters as consensus about societal status hierarchies. It also plays a central role in Pearson et al's paper, with its presence both in the legal domain and the historical background of ethnic relations in the US, and it is present in the rest of the papers in a variety of ways. Concurrently, it can be said with respect to the self.

To some extent, then, the monograph puts the reader in contact with the traditional issues of the discipline. But this does not imply that innovation is absent. There is innovation in the specific contribution of each paper to its topic of study, in their ability to establish novel relationships among concepts and variables, in their showing the role of the context in shaping and moderating psychosocial processes. There is also innovation in the use of methods and measures that tap directly into processes that not so many years ago the discipline presumed to be active. Now they are studied with precision and objectivity.

All together, the papers of this monograph are another proof of Social Psychology's vitality in its commitment to the understanding of those processes that make up the "social fabric". They provide an answer to Darley's (2004, p. 406) call that "psychology will inevitably be a social and organizational one, rather than centered on the individual acting alone".

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