Social representations and pictures of migrants in two French news magazines

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There has been a massive influx of refugees into Europe since 2012. In this research we wanted to know how this phenomenon had been interpreted by two French news magazines with very different ideological orientations. Unlike classic studies that analyze media communication from texts, we focused our attention on the photographs that these news magazines had used to illustrate their articles. While it is generally accepted that the media can have an impact on the social representations of the objects that they talk about, this phenomenon is generally studied on the basis of textual corpus. However, with the advent of the Internet the most press articles are illustrated by photographs. It can therefore be assumed that these images also play a role in media strategies and contribute to shaping the SRs of the social objects they illustrate.

1 Media and social representations

The idea that media communication could maintain close links with social representations (SRs) has been put forward since the first formulations of the social representation theory (Moscovici, 1961). This idea naturally follows the works realised by the Yale school on the effects of the media on public opinion (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). However, within the framework of the SRs theory it seems that the studies that have focused on the media can be grouped into two main families. On the one hand, there are the studies that explore the role of media communication in the dynamics of the SRs (i.e. Fouquet & Baugnet, 2010; Gendron & Dumas, 1991; Joffe & Orfali, 2005; Lagacé, Laplante, & Davignon, 2011). In line with Moscovici's first proposals, the results of these studies show that the media can play a role in the SRs formation, and even in their evolution. On the other hand, there are the studies that assume that the analysis of media messages is a pathway to the SRs circulating in society

(i.e. De Rosa, Bocci, & Bulgarella, 2010; Fouquet, 2006; Valence & Roussiau, 2009). From this perspective, media content is considered to reflect the representational content specific to an audience or a part of that audience. It should be noted that the two families mentioned above are not exclusive and that when Moscovici studied the media discourses on psychoanalysis, he considered these discourses as much as the source of representations emergence and as factors that likely to modulate these representations. More specifically Moscovici proposed to distinguish three forms of media communication, *diffusion*, *propagation* and *propaganda*.

2 Diffusion, propagation and propaganda

When a media source adopts a diffusion strategy, its main objective is to reach the largest possible audience. This concern may be based on various motivations, such as the desire to provide a public information service or to sell as many newspapers as possible, or to attract advertisers. From the point of view of its positioning, a source that practices diffusion will constantly try to maintain a neutral position. It will therefore be a matter of never taking sides in a debate and reporting, in equal parts, any contradictory points of view. It will also be a matter to avoid giving the impression that a particular subgroup is being addressed, that this particularity is based on socio-economic, cultural or ideological criteria. Finally, the source will try to maintain a close relationship, even similarity with its audience. It will not claim any distinctions other than its ability to access information that the audience could not obtain directly. In diffusion, the source therefore positions itself as a neutral intermediary, capable of transmitting content to a large number of relatively undifferentiated people. From the point of view of the messages' form or if one prefers, their style, the diffusion will be characterized by a will to make its contents both attractive and simple. It is a matter of attracting the largest possible audience, while being understood by all. For example, talking about a technical innovation or a medical discovery, one will adopt a very educational tone and will insist on the most spectacular applications of the topic that could come to modify the daily life.

In case of propagation media sources claim an ideological orientation. They therefore consent to smaller audiences than those for diffusion. In fact, they target an audience composed of individuals who share the orientations they claim. Their main objective is then to deliver a content while respecting the principles and values dictated by the claimed ideological orientation. Therefore the positioning of the source is clear. It doesn't claim to be neutral and the audience knows it. Thus, for example, the readers of a clearly identified « right » or « left » daily newspaper come looking for (by reading it) a « right » or « left » point of view, and they do so with full knowledge of the facts. From the point of view of the messages' form, propagation is characterized by the regular recall of the principles and values coming from the claimed ideological orientation. It is also characterized by the selections in its content since it will generally ignore content that likely to contradict or to question the principles and values it shares with its audience. For example, a newspaper in favour of a particular political party will omit to mention the possible legal problems of the party's leader, or will try to minimize them, etc.

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Finally, in case of propaganda the sources also claim an ideological orientation and their audiences share it, but their objectives are different from those of propagation. Propaganda is primarily aimed to strengthen the cohesion of its audience. It is about exalting a sense of belonging among the individuals who compose it. Second, it attempts to stimulate action. In other words, it aims to engage individuals in actions. From the point of view of the source positioning, these objectives oblige it to adopt a position of authority. From the point of view of the messages' form, propaganda is characterized first of all by its conflictive style. It is a matter of denouncing, of pointing to public revenge, of fighting. This style can be understood in the light of the first objective of propaganda. One of the best ways to strengthen a group's cohesion is to identify an enemy. Propaganda is also characterized by the transformations that it brings to its contents. This reformatting work corresponds to the second objective. Since it is a matter of triggering the action, it is appropriate to give the world an image that will make this action legitimate. For example, if one would like to encourage voting in favour of a candidate advocating an ultra-secure policy, one will insist on crime rates by taking some liberties with statistics.

3 The study of pictures

Since the pioneering work of Bateson and Mead (1942) many researchers from different disciplines have turned their attention to pictures, considering them not only as means of capturing the social, but as data in their own right that should be analyzed (i.e. Lynch, 1960 in sociology ; Panofsky, 1967 in history of art; Worth & Adair, 1972 in ethnology). This interest in pictures has been accompanied by ongoing methodological questioning (Banks & Zeitlyn, 2015; Margolis & Pauwels, 2011; Reavey, 2012; Rose, 2016; Stanczak, 2007). In addition to it, there is another series of works and manuals inspired by the founding proposals of Barthes (1964) and which constitute the basis of semiology (Darras, 2008; Gervereau, 1997; Joly, 2011; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001).

Overall, three epistemic positions can be distinguished among the works dealing specifically with image analysis. The first one is in line with ethnological or anthropological works which, as early as the 19th century, had recourse to photography (Boas & Cultee, 1894). It is based on the idea that pictures make it possible to capture certain aspects of social reality that are beyond the discourse. The second one, more inspired by the proposals of semiology, starts from the principle that the image delivers a message that should be decoded by identifying the signs that it carries (i.e. Joly, 2011). The third, which is more common in sociology or history, is based on the idea that the pictures produced by a society say something about the worldviews, representations or imaginaries that circulate in that society at a given moment in its history (i.e. Harper, 2000; Vovelle, 1978). In social psychology the scarce works on iconographic materials realised within the framework of the SRs theory adopt this last position (i.e. Marillonnet, 2010; Vinet & Gosset, 2014).

When we look at the literature devoted to pictures in the humanities and social sciences, we are struck by a double impression diversity and methodological similarity. On the one hand, there is the coexistence of diversified typologies such as the

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distinction « denotation/connotation » (Barthes, 1964), the triptych « content/intention/context » (Goldstein, 2007), the categorization « imitation/scheme/pictogram » (Darras, 1998) or the typology « graphic/optical/perceptual pictures » (Mitchell, 1986). This diversity of image classification systems or their content suggests that there is not yet a consensus among researchers on how to categorize pictures. However, one can also see a superposition of levels of analysis, from great distinctions between types of pictures to small distinctions in terms of content.

On the other hand, in most of the works on image corpus analysis whose methodology is clearly explained, we find almost always the same analytical approach that consists in qualifying each image of these corpuses on the basis of a certain number of criteria. These criteria vary from one study to another, sometimes they are developed for the needs of a particular problem, but they can also be directly related to the typologies mentioned above. In any case, we can say that they almost always form the methodological basis of an approach to image analysis which, with more or less sophistication, is applied to very diversified research objects (Bakar, Othman, Abdul Hamid, & Hashim, 2016 ; Caron, 2005 ; Lee, 2010 ; Pedrazzini, 2010).

Finally, accounting for these criteria allows researchers to produce an overall description of their corpus or to compare corpuses of pictures from different sources. From our point of view, while this analytical approach produces satisfactory results in descriptive and comparative terms, it remains superficial because it generally neglects an essential element: an image forms a whole, it is a whole whose meaning goes beyond that of the elements that compose it, and depends on the relations between these elements. In other words, the image is a structure.

It was probably Barthes (1964) who first proposed to apply the notion of structure to image. But at almost the same time, Panofsky (1967) also proposed a structural approach to pictures. According to this author, three key concepts should guide the analysis of a picture.

Forms are configurations of lines and colours that draw naturally perceptible forms. The forms maintain a variable analogy with the objects to which they correspond. They are precisely forms because we recognize in them these objects.

Motives are combinations of forms, this assembly describes a situation, an event or an action. For example, a picture that shows several people sitting around a table, each with a sheet of paper and a pencil in front of them and each facing the others identifies a « meeting » type situation.

Theme correspond to what the picture illustrates (a concept, a class of objects, people or situations, a mythical story, a literary work, etc…). A theme can be treated by different motives which in turn will be put in picture through different forms.

According to Panofsky, the concretization of the forms of an image obeys graphic conventions based on a principle of analogy. But the choice of a motive to illustrate a theme is more ideological. From a socio-psychological point of view, it can be argued that these principles can also refer to SRs, but also to other socio-cognitive constructions such as categories of people or stereotypes. From this perspective, it

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can be expected that a media whose journalists share certain beliefs about a given object might tend to publish pictures of that object containing motives congruent with those beliefs.

Based on Panofsky's basic proposals, a methodology to analyse corpus of pictures has recently been proposed (Moliner, 2016). It takes place in three stages. The first one consists in listing all the forms contained in a corpus on the sole basis of the analogies they present with perceptible objects (limitation of the researcher's subjectivity). The second one consists in qualifying each image from the identified forms and the third stage aims to highlight the structure of the correlations between these forms using multivariate techniques. This last step makes it possible to identify the motives of the corpus. This is the method that we have implemented in this study.

4 Iconography of migrants in *Marianne* and *Valeurs Actuelles*

In the first study, we wanted to compare photographs of migrants published in the two weeklies that are clearly divergent in terms of their ideological orientation: *Marianne* and *Valeurs Actuelles*. We obviously suppose that because of this discrepancy the different iconographies could be highlighted. One might expect that, because of the strong ideological influence of these two weeklies, they would be engaged in propagation strategies. Indeed, it is known that in France, the most hostile positions towards the migratory phenomenon are found rather to the right of the political chessboard, it is the zone where one can locate *Valeurs Actuelles*; while the most favourable ones are located to the left of this same chessboard (the zone of *Marianne*). Consequently, we suppose that there are the differences between the photographs published by the two weeklies, without prejudging the nature of these differences. This first study was conducted to test this hypothesis.

4.1 Method

At the first step, we have selected all articles related to migrants published by the two weeklies on their Websites during the period from January, 2015 to January, 2017. The articles were identified by the key words as « migrants », « Calais » and « refugees ». Thus, 99 articles and 103 photographs were identified. By retaining only photographs showing at least one person who could be identified as migrant, we finally selected 72 photographs (46 from *Marianne* and 26 from *Valeurs Actuelles*).

4.2 Results

Persons

In the first analysis we were interested to know if the persons shown in the photographs were rather men, women or children. It can then be seen that men are present in an overwhelming majority of the photographs (see Table 1). It is also noted that the two weeklies do not differ in the presence of men, women or children in the photographs they published (Chi-square test).

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Table 1: Percentages of photographs showing men, women and children for *Marianne* and *Valeurs Actuelles*

	Males	Females	Children
MARIANNE	86,95%	30,43%	36,95%
VALEURS ACT	92,30%	23,07%	23,07%

Contexts

We were interested to know in which contexts migrants were shown. The three series of criteria were retained: the national territory (France vs abroad), the place (outside vs inside a building vs inside a camp), and the time of day (day vs night).

Table 2: Percentages of photographs taken according to different context criteria.

	MA	VA
France	41,30%	58,84%
Abroad	58,69%	46,15%
Outside	50,00%	61,53%
Inside	23,91%	19,23%
Camp	26,08%	19,23%
Day	62,21%	76,92%
Night	19,56%	03,84%

As it can be seen in Table 2, there are about as many photographs taken in France as abroad, but these photographs are much more often taken outside than inside or in camps. They are also taken much more frequently during the day than at night. However, there was no significant difference (Chi-square test) between the photographs of the two weeklies.

Small or large groups?

Taking into account our starting hypothesis, we were interested in the number of migrants presented on each photograph by distinguishing the groups lower than 5 people, between 5 and 10 people and more than 10 people. From the point of view of this criterion, there is no difference between the photographs of the two weeklies (Chi-square test). Most migrants are shown either in small or large groups (see Table 3).

Table 3 : Percentages of photographs showing small (<5), medium (5-10) or large (>10) groups in both weeklies

	MA	VA
<5	43,47%	30,76%
5 to 10	19,56%	19,23%
>10	36,95%	50,00%

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Angle of view

Finally, we wanted to know how migrants were photographed. The four criteria were retained (see Table 4).

Table 4 : Percentages of photographs showing migrants in front, profile, back or faceless in both weeklies

	MA	VA
Front	43,47%	38,46%
Profile	19,55%	42,30%
Back	32,60%	19,23%
Faceless	4,34%	3,84%

Here, we see that photographs from *Valeurs Actuelles* show migrants in profile more often than those from *Marianne* (42.30% vs 19.55%, Chi-square=4.28, p=.03). But for the other criteria there are no significant differences.

Motives

The various criteria that we reviewed above have finally been the subject of a hierarchical classification analysis. This analysis clearly shows two classes corresponding to the photos showing men, women or children (see Figure 1, bottom of the diagram).

The first class of criteria (outside, >10, men, day) can be interpreted as the « horde » motive. Men are represented in large groups (therefore potentially dangerous), outside (therefore out of control) and during the day (therefore they are identifiable from the point of view of their ethnic origin).

The second motive that interests us is the one that corresponds to the representation of women and children (lower class: women, children, abroad, face). These migrants are represented face to face and abroad. From our point of view, this motive is more ambiguous than the first one. It could refer to both humanitarian and demographic considerations.

It is revealed that 21 photos out of 72 photos in the corpus show the complete « horde » motive (the 4 forms are presented), or 29.16% of the total, while 8 show the « Women/Children » motive completely, or 11.11%. In this sense, the « horde » motive seems to be the dominant one used to illustrate the published articles. Finally, there is a difference in the use of this motive by the two weeklies at the marginal significance level. Indeed, 21.73% of the photos (n=10) published by *Marianne* show completely the « horde » motive against 42.30% (n=11) of the photos published by *Valeurs Actuelles* (chi-square=3.40, p=.06). Therefore this result suggests a more frequent use of the « horde » motive by the latter weekly.

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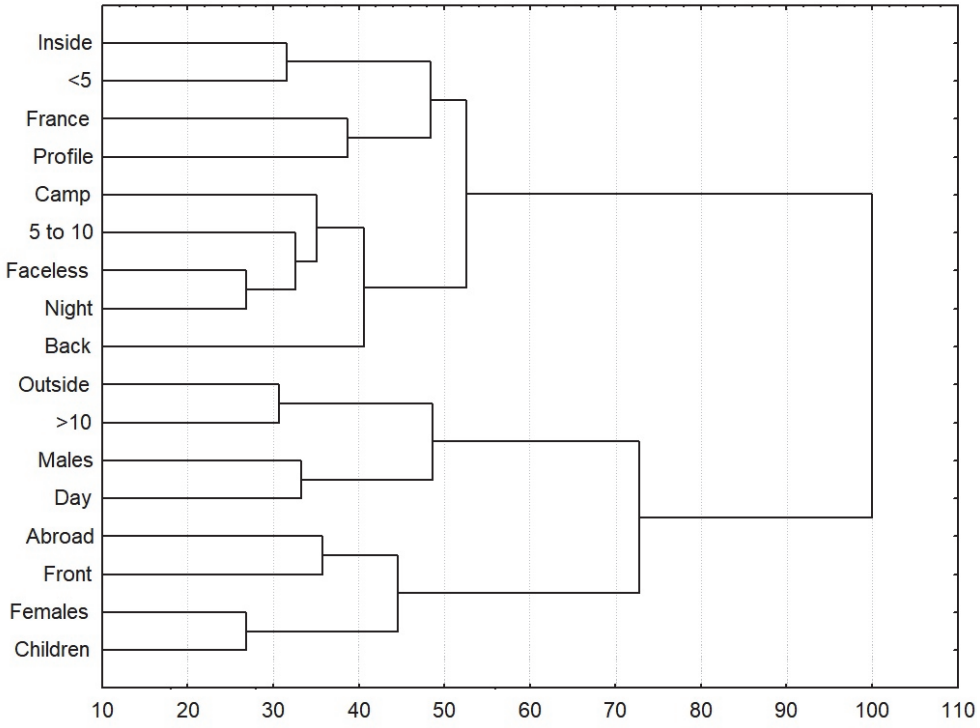


Figure 1: Hierarchical classification analysis based on criteria of persons, context, group size and angle of view for the 72 photographs

4.3 Discussion

One of the first contributions of this study is the identification of a dominant motive to show migrants, that of the « horde ». Marginally, this motive is more frequent in photographs published by *Valeurs Actuelles* than in those published by *Marianne*. This result is consistent with our hypothesis, even if the difference observed is only at the marginal significance level. It should be noted that the meaning that emerges from the « horde » motive corresponds quite well to the iconography disseminated by certain political parties, French or foreign ones, whose hostile positions towards migration are well known. The other contribution of this study is methodological. As it can be seen, the « flat » comparison of each of the criteria we used in our analyses yielded very few results. While taking into account the combination of these criteria (the motives) a difference between the photographs of the corpus appears.

5 Familiarity of motives and representativeness of migrant photographs

When the media frequently use the same motive to illustrate a given theme, it can be expected that the motive will become familiar to audiences. However, it has been known for a long time that familiarity with a stimulus is accompanied by an increase

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in preferred judgments about that stimulus (Zajonc, 1968). In this sense, one can expect that a photograph will be judged even more illustrative of a theme, that is, the more effective (positive judgement) when it shows a familiar motive to the viewer. This is the hypothesis that we wanted to test in this second study.

5.1 Method

A total of 88 participants was asked to evaluate the representativeness of the 72 photographs in the corpus. In order to make the task easier, we had constructed two online questionnaires, each one is presenting only half of the photographs. Thus 41 participants answered the one questionnaire (68.3% of women, median age 30 years) and 47 answered the other one (70.2% of women, median age 30 years). Participants were recruited *via* the Internet and were asked to evaluate to what extent it was « representative » of migrants for each photograph. This evaluation was made on a 5-point scale (1 = « not at all representative » / 5 = « totally representative »).

5.2 Results

The adopted procedure allowed us to assign two scores to each photograph. The first is the average of the evaluations of representativeness. The second corresponds to the number of forms of the « horde » presented in the photograph (from 0 to 4). A significant correlation between these two scores (r=.43, p<.01) was revealed for all 72 photographs.

Moreover, taking into consideration only photographs showing men (N=64), we find that those containing the four elements of the dominant « horde » motive are evaluated as more representative than those containing only the « man » element (N=21, M=3.46, SD=.36 vs N = 10, M = 2.93, SD =.65; t = 2.90, p<.01). More precisely, if we compare the average scores of representativeness of the photographs, according to whether they contain 1, 2, 3 or 4 forms (see Table 5), we note that the photographs showing only one form are not distinguished from those showing 2 ones (M=2.93 vs M=3.27). However, they differ significantly from photos showing 3 forms (M=2.93 vs M=3.38, p<.05) and from those showing 4 forms (M= 2.93 vs M=3.46, p=<.02). Finally, it is not possible to distinguish the photos showing 3 or 4 forms (M = 3.38 vs M = 3.46).

Table 5: Comparison of mean scores for representativity scores (LSD Fischer) according to the number of forms contained in photographs showing men. In brackets – number of photos (column) and standard deviation (row).

Number of formes	1	2	3	4
	M=2.93 (.65)	M=3.27 (.73)	M=3.38 (.39)	M=3.46 (.36)
1 (n=10)		ns	p=.04	p=.01
2 (n=16)			ns	ns
3 (n=17)				ns
4 (n=21)				

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5.3 Discussion

These results are consistent with the hypothesis and therefore suggest a clear link between the presence of the « horde » motive more or less completly in a photograph and the representativeness of that photograph, as evaluated by the participants. In other words, the dominant motive used by *Marianne* and *Valeurs Actuelles* to show migrants seems to be recognized by the participants. On the other hand, despite the fact that in the French language the word « migrant » is masculine, photographs that show men in the absence of any other element of the motive are considered as less representative than those showing men in accordance with the motive. Therefore this result suggests that motives probably play a particular role in how pictures are perceived and evaluated. Finally, these results suggest a threshold effect. Indeed, it seems that for a motive to be retained, a certain proportion of its forms must be present on the photos.

6 Conclusion

We have seen that there is a dominant motive used by the two French weeklies to show migrants. They are the most often shown as men, in large groups, photographed outdoors and during the day. This dominant motive is probably used by many other media since when photographs of migrants from these two weeklies are shown, the individuals who see them designate those that contain the « horde » motive as the most representative of the migrants. However, we have no reason to believe that the participants to whom we showed these photographs were exclusive readers of *Marianne* and *Valeurs Actuelles*. If they felt that the photographs that contained the dominant « horde » motive were the most representative, it was probably because they could also see them elsewhere. But how is the use of this motive by a media source part of a propagation strategy? To answer this question, two arguments can be put forward.

The first one is based on the results we have just presented. It is in *Valeurs Actuelles* that the « horde » motive is most frequently used. However, we know that in France the press has always displayed positions hostile to immigration. For example, on April 30, 2015, the headlines with a photograph of a boat full of migrants was accompanied by the following title: « Landing. A million refugees on our doorstep. 68% of French people against welcoming migrants ». We may, therefore think that by favouring the « horde » motive, *Valeurs Actuelles* is trying to spread an anxious image of immigration.

However, there is another argument that suggests that the use of the « horde » motive is indeed a propagation strategy. It is paradoxically the fact that it can be found on several propaganda posters used by political groups. This is the case, for example, of the Front National or Civitas, formations whose positions are clearly hostile to immigration.

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