

Who is poor? Analysis of social representations in an Argentine sample

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Abstract

Different organizations register alarming poverty rates in Argentina. However, there may be differences in who is considered poor according to these measurements and who is considered poor by society, from common sense knowledge. This work analyzes the social representations of people living in poverty in a sample of 605 Argentines, using the free-word association technique. The results suggest that the poor person is first understood as someone who suffers from hunger, a definition that corresponds to indigence according to the official entity that measures poverty and indigence in Argentina. However, while the core of the representation manifests a significant presence of elements of monetary poverty and its effects on nutrition (hunger), the peripheral system shows the deficit in various social rights, such as education, housing, work, and health. Following these results, it is argued that equating poverty with indigence would render the situation of millions of people in Argentina invisible.

Keywords: Social representations; Poverty; Indigence.

Quem é Pobre? Análise das Representações Sociais em uma Amostra Argentina

Resumo

Diferentes organizações registram índices alarmantes de pobreza na Argentina. No entanto, pode haver diferenças entre quem é considerado pobre de acordo com essas medidas e quem é considerado pobre na sociedade, pelo senso comum. Este trabalho analisa as representações sociais de pessoas em situação de pobreza em uma amostra de 605 argentinos/as por meio da técnica de associação de palavras. Os resultados sugerem que a pessoa que vive na pobreza é entendida principalmente como alguém que passa fome, definição que corresponde à indigência segundo o órgão oficial que mede a pobreza e a indigência na Argentina. Não obstante, enquanto no núcleo da representação se identifica a presença de elementos da pobreza monetária e seus efeitos sobre a alimentação (fome), no sistema periférico se identifica elementos relacionados à violação de direitos sociais, como educação, moradia, trabalho e saúde. Conclui-se que igualar a pobreza à indigência tornaria invisível a situação de milhões de pessoas na Argentina.

Palavras-chave: representações sociais; pobreza; indigência

¿Quién es pobre? Análisis de las representaciones sociales en una muestra argentina

Resumen

Distintos organismos registran tasas alarmantes de pobreza en Argentina. Sin embargo, pueden existir diferencias en quién es considerado pobre según estas mediciones y quiénes lo son para la sociedad, desde el sentido común. Este trabajo analiza las representaciones sociales sobre las personas en situación de pobreza en una muestra de 605 argentinos/as, administrando la técnica de asociación de palabras. Los resultados sugieren que la persona en situación de pobreza es entendida primeramente como alguien que sufre hambre, definición que corresponde a indigencia según el organismo oficial que mide la pobreza y la indigencia en Argentina. No obstante, mientras que en el núcleo de la representación social tiene una importante presencia la pobreza monetaria y sus efectos sobre la alimentación (hambre), en el sistema periférico se ubican elementos relativos a la vulneración de derechos sociales, como la educación, la vivienda, el trabajo y la salud. Se concluye que equiparar a la pobreza con la indigencia invisibilizaría la situación de millones de personas en Argentina.

Palabras clave: Representaciones sociales; Pobreza; Indigencia.

Introduction

Poverty is one of the most urgent issues facing the world today. The United Nations established the eradication of poverty as the first of its Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030, as it had already done with its Millennium Development Goals 2000-2015. This challenge is especially relevant in Latin America and the Caribbean, with an estimated 30.7%

of its population living in poverty at the end of 2020 (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2021). Likewise, within this region, 42% of the Argentine population is below the poverty line and 10.5% below the indigence line (National Institute of Statistics and Censuses [INDEC], 2021).

However, what is understood as poverty? First of all, it is necessary to know that there are important differences both in the conceptual definition and in the

operating definition of poverty among organizations studying this issue. Spicker (2009) identified twelve possible ways of conceptualizing poverty in scientific literature, whereas other economists contend that 6000 different ways of measuring poverty have been developed (Székely, Lustig, Cumpa & Mejía, 2004). The first scientific studies on poverty carried out at the end of the 19th century defined it as financial lack measured by both the salary and non-salary income of individuals and families (Booth, 1889/2012). This methodology is unidimensional, as it is only based on financial income, and indirect, as it does not guarantee that the income is used to acquire certain basic goods and services. However, nowadays, *income poverty* remains in force given that it is one of the measurements most utilized by international organizations (e.g. the World Bank) and by governments of different countries (Salvia, 2017).

In Argentina, the INDEC, as the institution that gathers official statistics, primarily measures income poverty. According to its assessments, households whose total financial income is insufficient for the acquisition of the Complete Basic Basket composed of goods and services to cover essential food and non-food needs -clothing, transport, education, health, etc.- (INDEC, 2020). From this perspective, poverty means a lack of the financial and material goods necessary to live in a certain society. Likewise, households whose income does not allow access to the Basic Food Basket are considered indigent (INDEC, 2020). Indigence is defined here as a lack of access to diverse foodstuffs, expressed as quantities sufficient for satisfying caloric and protein needs of household members.

However, as a result of recent advances in the fight for social, economic, and cultural rights, a conception of poverty from a human rights approach has become internationally relevant, an approach which proposes a multidimensional methodology for measuring poverty. From this perspective, poverty is understood as “submission to unjust deprivation, material and/or symbolic, which affects the development of human capacities and social integration (Salvia, 2017, p.7). One of the greatest proponents of this perspective is Amartya Sen (1992), who points out that the poor do indeed have rights and that the eradication of poverty is a government obligation essential for recognizing the human dignity of all people. As such, poverty implies a deprivation of social, economic and cultural rights including dignified housing, work, food security, clothing, education, and healthcare, among others (Salvia, 2017; Sen, 1987).

Nevertheless, beyond the definitions upheld by academics based on scientific knowledge, it is relevant to understand how people in poverty are thought of and represented in daily interactions, where everyday knowledge and common sense prevail. Though scientific knowledge does participate in the construction of everyday knowledge, scientific theories, and concept undergo changes as they become representations of common sense, acquiring another rationality and structure (Moscovici & Hewstone, 1986; Wagner & Hayes, 2011).

Social Representation Theory provides conceptual and methodological tools for identifying and analyzing these conceptions of common sense in the social world. This theory gives one the opportunity to explore the symbolic structuring of a social object through the concept of *social representations* (SR). SR are meaningful structures constructed through daily interactions with others which imply collective images loaded with values and emotions (Moscovici, 1961, 2001). Its functions are to allow communication between the members of a group, since they provide a common code, and guide the practice towards the social object (Duveen, 2007; Wagner & Hayes, 2011); in this study, with respect to people living in poverty.

According to the familiarization process described by Moscovici (2001), SR take shape when a phenomenon becomes important for a social group because of a particular historical situation, producing a void of meaning in the culture. This may be the case of poverty in Argentina, since in this country poverty has increased in recent years (INDEC, 2021) and is one of the social problems that most concerns Argentines today (Barreiro & Ungaretti, 2020).

As stated by the Structural Approach (Abric, 2001), SR are organized in a dual system: a *central core* and a *peripheral system*. The former determines the meaning and organization of the entire representation. Additionally, the core guarantees the stability of the representation as it is composed of elements widely agreed upon by the social group. The latter refers to the operating dimension of the SR and its components are flexible, in some cases even contradictory, without being widely agreed upon by members of the group (Abric, 1993, 2001). According to Abric (2001), the peripheral system allows for the integration of individual experiences with the object of representation and it is here where heterogeneity of the group can be identified.

Using Abric’s structural approach, some research has described the SR of poverty and the people who

suffer from this situation in the Latin American context. Denegri et al. (2010) utilized the natural semantic network technique (Valdez, 1998) to identify the core of the SR of “poor” in a sample of Chilean university students. According to their results, this core is composed of the following elements: *needy, lacking, hunger, marginalized, overcrowding, lack, marginal, excluded, unemployed, indigent, hardworking, humble* and, lastly, *discriminated, scarce* and *broke*.

Moreover, Mendoza (2008) explored the SR of poverty for 100 Mexican individuals, classified as poor or not poor depending on their income. The words most associated with poverty in the sample were *hunger, sadness, illness, money, and lack*. Upon comparing the productions of the poor and not poor groups, the author observed that the descriptor *humility* emerges differentially in the poor group, while in the not poor group, words such as *inequality, injustice, education, and ignorance* occur. According to the author, this suggests difficulty on the part of the poor to identify the situation of injustice that poverty implies, while the term *humility* may be due to the proximity of this group to religiosity. Likewise, the not-poor importance on education as a means of obtaining greater opportunities and better jobs.

Similarly, Reyes and Santiago (2011) used the word association technique with the inductor term “poverty” in a sample of Colombian adults and later carried out a Prototype Analysis (Vergès, 1992) to explore the SR structure. Their results show that the central core of the SR is constituted of the terms *sadness* and *misery*, while the periphery is made up of *hunger, necessity, pain, and humility*. As a synthesis of the findings of these studies in the Latin American context, it can be observed that, although the SRs of poverty and the poor refer to different needs or deficiencies, the food need stands out over the others.

On the other hand, in a context of less poverty and social inequality, Chauhan and Foster (2014) studied the SR of poverty in British newspapers, taking into account how the media shapes a population’s understanding of the issue. To this end, they analyzed articles from four newspapers published during one month in 2001 and one month in 2011. The results highlight the fact that representations of domestic poverty in Great Britain were developed “around three main themes: poverty in children, the inability to pay for winter heating and the topic of aid and welfare” (Chauhan & Foster, 2014, p.394). The authors of this study agree with Jeppesen (2009) when pointing out that poverty in

childhood is that which is most discussed by the media of developed nations. As opposed to how poverty is understood in Latin America, the representation of poverty in developed countries seems to be linked primarily to children. Thus, relegating the discussion of poverty in adults and, as a consequence, current social problems such as unemployment.

Among the studies that adopt the structural approach to explore SR of people affected by poverty, we can notice the lack of studies in Argentina. The present work aims to explore how people in poverty are thought of in everyday interactions, from common sense. It is considered that the way in which society represents this sector of the population is central to understanding behavior around the complex problem of poverty.

Method

Participants

We carried out an exploratory study with convenience sample of 605 university students residing in the province of San Juan, Argentina. The students belonged to two universities in the province and to five different faculties: Faculty of Social Sciences ($n = 149$), Faculty of Medicine ($n = 229$), Faculty of Economic Sciences ($n = 50$), Faculty of Law ($n = 57$), Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities ($n = 120$). Participant ages ranged from 17 to 47 ($M = 22.30$; $DT = 4.76$). 73% ($n = 439$) were female and 27% ($n = 166$) were male. 5% ($n = 31$) identified as belonging to the lower class, 61% ($n = 358$) to the lower middle class, 31.7% ($n = 192$) to the upper middle class, and 0.5% ($n = 3$) to the upper class, while 3.5% ($n = 21$) did not disclose social class information.

Procedures

Data collection was carried out in 2018. For this, the corresponding permits were requested from the authorities of each Faculty and then the most convenient class hours for data collection were agreed with the professors. The administration of a paper-and-pencil questionnaire was carried out within the classrooms of the universities, in person, individually and without a time limit.

Voluntary and informed consent by the individuals invited to participate in the study was solicited. Likewise, participants were informed that the data gathered from this research would be used exclusively for scientific purposes in accordance with National

Law 25.326, which protects personal information. Participant identities remained anonymous. Once the data collection was completed, the surveyors offered more information about the study to the participants and answered individual questions about the purposes of the research.

Instruments

For the present study, we employed a self-administered questionnaire which was composed of the following measures:

Sociodemographic data: Questions on age, gender, and university career in progress were included. Likewise, the participants were asked to find out their social class by answering the following question: What social class would you be in? With the following answer options: upper class, upper middle class, lower middle class, and lower class.

Word association. The word association technique originally proposed by Vergès (1992) was used, without resorting to a subsequent ranking. This is based on the assumption that the most frequent and first words in the evocation have a greater probability of belonging to the central nucleus (Pereira de Sá, 1996). The instruction used was the following: “Please write the first five words that come to mind when you think of a poor person.” Below it, five lines were drawn to be filled in by the participant’s evocations.

Data analysis

With the assistance of the IRaMuTeQ software, we carried out the Prototypical Analysis proposed by Vergès (1992). Analysis that reveals, in an exploratory way, the hierarchical organization of a SR (Moliner & Abric, 2015). To this end, we take into account the frequency of appearance of the elements and their rank or order of evocation (Barreiro & Castorina, 2015; Vergès, 2000). In addition, considering the behavior of the corpus of associations, the minimum frequency was set at five, which implied excluding 19% of the terms (Barreiro et al., 2014; Vergès, 2000). The intermediate frequency was determined at 20, since it corresponded to 58% of the corpus (Barreiro et al., 2014; Vergès, 2000), and the average range was 2.8. Thus, four quadrants or zones were distinguished in the structure of the SR: a) Central core: frequency greater than the intermediate, and range lower than the average; b) First periphery: frequency greater than intermediate, and range greater than the average; c) Contrast zone: frequency lower than intermediate, and range lower than

average; and d) Second periphery: frequency lower than intermediate, and range greater than the average.

Results

Participants produced 3172 words associated with the inductor term poor person, of which 998 were different. Words were reduced by gender (masculine-feminine), number (singular-plural), substitution by synonyms, and semantic context of belonging. In all cases, we chose the term that was more frequent to represent those that were less frequent (Barreiro & Castorina, 2015; Barreiro et al., 2014; Bastias et al., 2020). After reducing the corpus, we worked with 2908 words, of which 460 were different. Two hundred sixty-four words were mentioned only once (hapax) and the index of diversity -the quotient of different evocations and the total elements- was .16. This shows that among the participants there is a high homogeneity and a tendency towards uniformity in their associations with *poor person* (Wolter & Wachelke, 2013).

The Prototype Analysis revealed that the central core, located in the upper left quadrant of Table 1, is made up of the terms: *hunger, sadness, humility, necessity, low resources, inequality, lack, cold, marginalization, vulnerability, aid, malnutrition, food, injustice, exclusion, and no money*. These were mentioned with greater frequency ($f \geq 20$) and lower range of association, that is, they were mentioned in the first positions ($r > 2.8$). Therefore, they would be the most agreed and most important elements of the group. The term most frequently and one of the first associated was *hunger*. The relevance of this, together with *malnutrition* and *food* in the central nucleus, suggests that the poor person is first and foremost a person suffers.

Other needs also emerge, in terms of clothing or housing: *cold*; and in terms of finances: *no money*. The elements *low resources, necessity, and lack* also point to a general state of lacking. Likewise, *inequality, marginalization, exclusion, and injustice* could indicate an understanding of poverty as a social issue. This way of thinking about the people in poverty transcends a mere description of the conditions in which this sector of society lives and, with the mention of injustice, implicates the rest of society. The only emotion mentioned is *sadness*, which may refer to an experience of those who participated in the study in front of a person in poverty and/or could be alluding to an emotional state experienced by the poor person. In addition, a reference to the idea of poverty as a virtue can be found in the

Table 1.
Social representations of the poor

Range < 2.8			Range ≥ 2.8			
Central Core	f	Range	First Periphery	f	Range	
<i>f</i> ≥ 20	hunger	188	2.22	lack of education	80	3.23
	sadness	104	2.56	unemployment	59	2.86
	humility	98	2.10	filth	48	2.81
	necessity	95	2.48	suffering	44	3.18
	low resources	80	2.53	discrimination	43	3.26
	inequality	70	2.34	education	42	3.05
	lack	66	2.64	illness	42	3.19
	cold	59	2.64	housing	29	3.14
	marginalization	56	2.77	loneliness	29	3.17
	vulnerability	52	2.06	lack of opportunities	28	3.07
	aid	45	2.58	scarcity	25	2.80
	malnutrition	43	2.23	ignorance	24	2.80
	food	41	2.12	impotence	24	3.33
	injustice	40	2.75	solidarity	23	3.78
	exclusion	36	2.72	unsatisfied needs	20	3.10
	no money	33	2.70	work	20	3.30
Zone of contrast	f	Range	Second Periphery	f	Range	
<i>f</i> < 20	indigence	19	2.16	clothing	18	3.11
	no home	19	2.47	illiteracy	18	3.39
	precariousness	19	2.53	effort	18	3.61
	anguish	14	2.36	stigmatization	16	3.44
	pity	13	2.54	rights violated	15	2.93
	difficulty	12	2.50	healthcare	15	3.60
	poorly dressed	11	2.36	desperation	14	3.00
	slum	11	2.55	abandonment	14	3.14
	hygiene	11	2.73	delinquency	14	3.21
	precarious home	10	2.20	rights	13	2.92
	overcrowding	9	2.78	unprotected	13	3.15
	person	8	2.38	forsaken	13	3.69
	neglected	8	2.50	lack of safety	13	3.77
	street	6	2.50	family	12	3.58
	concentration of wealth	5	2.20	fighter	12	4.17
				anger	11	3.11
				absence of the State	11	3.39
				indifference	11	3.61
			informal work	11	3.44	
			money	10	2.93	
			disappointment	10	3.60	

(Continued)

Table 1.
Social representations of the poor (Continuation)

Zone of contrast	f	Range	Second Periphery	f	Range
			lack of clothing	10	3.00
			support	10	3.14
			laziness	10	3.50
			isolation	10	3.6
			worker	9	3.22
			children	9	3.56
			good	9	3.67
			no help	9	3.78
			addictions	9	4.11
			sacrifice	8	3.13
			low self-esteem	8	3.25
			simplicity	8	3.38
			social plans	8	3.50
			honest	8	4.00
			politics	8	4.13
			economy	7	2.86
			defenseless	7	2.86
			conditioned	7	3.29
			lack of willingness	7	3.29
			misery	7	3.43
			happy	7	3.57
			ignorant	7	3.57
			no access	6	3.17
			society	6	3.33
			state	6	3.50
			forgotten	6	3.50
			opportunity	6	3.67
			capitalism	6	4.33
			poverty	5	3.00
			equality	5	3.40
			humiliation	5	3.60
			disdain	5	4.00
			love	5	4.20
			fear	5	4.20
			no goals	5	4.20
			many children	5	4.80

Note. Some terms presented some debate in their translation, they were “humility” for “humildad”, “food” for “alimentación”, “forsaken” for “desamparados”, “neglected” for “descuidados” and “abandonment” for “abandonados”.

term *humility*. Finally, the word *aid* appears as a behavior which participants might engage in to reduce poverty or as a necessity of the poor themselves, though in both cases the term involves social connection with others, either to give or receive aid.

In the first periphery, located in the upper right quadrant of Table 1, we find the terms mentioned with greater frequency ($f \geq 20$) and greater range ($r < 2.8$). That is, these are elements with much consensus within the group, but which are not as relevant as those constituting the central core. Terms in this quadrant include *lack of education, unemployment, filth, suffering, discrimination, education, illness, housing, loneliness, lack of opportunities, scarcity, ignorance, impotence, solidarity, unsatisfied needs, and work*. With the elements *scarcity* and *unsatisfied needs*, like with the central core, we observe the idea that the poor suffer from different types of lack. Respondents even mention various social rights where these deficits exist, such as education, work, healthcare, and housing. Then, lack of hygiene is alluded to with the term *filth*. Furthermore, *loneliness* and *suffering* could be referring to the emotional state of the poor, while *impotence* could be understood as an emotional reaction to poverty on the part of the participants. *Lack of opportunities, discrimination, and solidarity* are also mentioned and, similar to the meanings derived in the central core, could indicate an understanding of poverty as a sociostructural issue.

The zone of contrast is made up of items which are very important ($r < 2.8$) for a small group ($f \leq 20$). In this zone, located in the lower left quadrant of Table 1, it is possible in some cases to identify a particular representation of some subgroup within the sample (Abric, 2001). This zone contains the terms: *indigence, no home, precariousness, anguish, pity, difficulty, poorly dressed, slum, hygiene, precarious housing, overcrowding, person, neglected, street, and concentration of wealth*.

The elements of the contrast zone seem to converge in an extremely precarious and extreme facet of poverty, condensed in the term *indigence*. Although judging by their close associations, the term does not seem to refer to lack of food but rather to homelessness. Indeed, there is a strong idea that the poor person does not have a home (a homeless), or at least a proper home, with the elements *no home, precarious housing, overcrowding, street, and slum*.

Also, in this zone the poor person is associated with aspects of hygiene and clothing, with the elements *poorly dressed, hygiene* and *neglected*. The emotions that emerge in this quadrant are *anguish* and *pity* and the only element referring to the sociostructural causes of

poverty is *concentration of wealth*. Lastly, participants refer to the poor as a *person*.

Discussion

The way in which society represents and think about those affected by poverty is key to understanding actions dealing with this complex issue. The results of this study suggest that poverty is primarily conceived of as financial, associated with income and having effects on hunger. This is the classic way of representing poverty in the Social Sciences, from the first measures and research into poverty at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century which directly linked poverty to finances and a lack of foodstuffs. SR of the poor as those who “do not have enough to eat” or those who suffer from “hunger” can also be observed in studies carried out in Latin America (Denegri et al., 2010; Mendoza 2008; Reyes & Santiago, 2011). Indeed, the term *hunger* appears in other works on SR (Denegri et al., 2010; Mendoza, 2008) as one of the most frequent and important elements, forming part of the central core of the representation of poverty and the poor.

For the university students who participated in this study, poor people would be mainly those who do not have enough money to fulfil basic nutritional needs and who suffer from hunger. Nevertheless, according to the official entity that reports and measures poverty and indigence in Argentina -INDEC-, this definition does not correspond to poverty but rather to indigence (INDEC, 2020). In this sense, there would be a discrepancy between the way these students think about poverty and its definition in institutional circles. Here it is important to emphasize that equating poverty with indigence would make the situation of millions of people in Argentina invisible -given that about 19 million suffer poverty and 4 million indigence (INDEC, 2021)-. According to this representation, all those people who have enough money for adequate food, but who go through many non-food needs considered essential and violations of social rights would not be considered poor. As can be seen, the way in which the poor are represented conditions their recognition and this, in turn, could become an obstacle for consensus on how to intervene in this situation.

However, beyond food insecurity, deficits in other social rights are included in the peripheral elements of the SR identified in this study, though they are secondary. A lack of protection is mentioned with the term *cold*, though it is not clear if this refers to a lack

of clothing or housing. The right to education, housing, work and healthcare are also mentioned. Which represents an approximation to the concept of multidimensional poverty. In this way, if the definition of multidimensional poverty from ODSA (2018) is taken as a reference, the periphery of the SR includes all social rights except two that are not taken into account: the lack of access to basic services such as water, electricity, drainage and natural gas and the right to connectivity. This suggests that mentioned rights would be alien to the notion of poverty.

As we can see, in the interior of the SR of the poor person a financial conception of poverty coexists with the idea of a multidimensional poverty from a rights-based approach. Although in the core we identify the important presence of elements related to income or finances, in the periphery we do find a deficit in various social rights. Considering this organization, it is interesting to note that, according to SR theory, the peripheral system represents a potentially destabilizing zone for the entire representation (Vergès, 1992). Moreover, in the peripheral elements we identify transformations in progress or potential transformations for the whole representation (Abric, 2001), something which would be interesting to delve into in future studies. In other words, the elements of the peripheral system could be elements in transition that over time may come to constitute the central core of the representation. In addition, the fact that the participants were university students might help us to understand how the peripheral system reflects an anchoring of the SR to the particular context of these students. Future studies could work with different samples and explore possible differences in the peripheral system.

In a complementary way, we observe in the sample of social science students the emergence of psychological and social aspects of poverty. The poor also suffer emotionally, facing sadness and loneliness. In addition, they experience discrimination, marginalization, vulnerability and exclusion by society. Furthermore, it is emphasized that “the poor” is a person. Previous studies on other surrogate groups have interpreted this type of association indicates that it would be necessary for the participants to mention this fact, since it is something that would not be obvious (e.g., Barreiro, Ungaretti and Etchezahar, 2019).

On the other hand, some associations link the person living in poverty with discrimination, marginalization, vulnerability and exclusion from society. At this point, the participants would understand poverty

as a socio-structural problem resulting from an unjust and unequal society, where not everyone has the same opportunities for human development. This understanding of poverty can be framed within the rights-based approach, where material and/or symbolic deprivations are unjust and affect the entire development of human capacities and social integration (Salvia, 2017; Sen, 1992). Furthermore, this definition of poverty transcends the mere description of the material and psychosocial conditions in which these people live and acquires a critical vision by pointing to the causes: a situation of injustice in which the rest of society and the State are involved.

With respect to the SR zone of contrast, it could indicate the existence of subgroup upholding a different representation (Abric, 2001). In this study, although the elements of this zone do not challenge the meanings included in the core, they do exclusively mention certain needs of the poor: the need for clothing and housing. This suggests that a subgroup of the participants may be equating poverty to homeless. Also, in the zone of contrast we observe the emergence of some emotions towards the poor which apparently are not experienced by all, such as *pity*. Farr and Marková (1995) point out that pity, as an element in the SR of disadvantaged social groups, functions to maintain inequality.

This work is one of the first to describe the SR of the poor in an Argentine sample. It has certain limitations in the strength of its conclusions due to it being exploratory and, as previously mentioned, due to it focusing on university students. As such, it is necessary to continue advancing in the study of the SR of the people affected by poverty through the use of other techniques which would allow for confirmation or refutation of these exploratory results. In addition, we propose that future research consider other populations in order to be able to make comparisons and analyze of representations about the phenomenon of poverty.

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