Part III

General Discussion

VI

Summary of Results and Implications

Shared reality theory (Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Hardin & Conley, 2001; Echterhoff et al., 2009) offers an explanation of communication effects on memory. All along this work, it has been made clear how tuning to an audience during communication leads people to integrate the audience's perspective in their own cognition. This subjective experience of a gained commonality between inner states corresponds to the achievement of shared reality. The theory posits that people create shared reality to connect and to know. On the one hand, relations are established and maintained to the extent that a shared reality is created all along these relationships. On the other hand, beliefs and attitudes are established and maintained to the extent that they are validated through shared reality achievement (Hardin & Conley, 2001). Although they are conceptually different, the empirical research on shared reality achievement hardly disentangled these motivational forces.

Our dissertation aimed at filling existing gaps in literature, by paying a specific attention on two aspects. On the one hand, we wanted to extend the external validity of the saying-is-believing effect for unravelling one ubiquitous process responsible for the formation of individual attitudes, which are interpersonally negotiated and thereby spread. On the other hand, we wanted to contribute to the understanding of the motivational underpinnings of shared reality, by highlighting their specific and relative impact in determining a) to what extent shared reality with others can be achieved within a given situation and b) to what extent an audience could become an appropriate shared reality partner as a function of the communicator's motives.

6.1 Brief overview of the main results

The first two experiments verified that shared reality creation matters in communication about potential sexual harassment. They supported the key role played by epistemic needs in shared reality creation through an original procedure, by showing a failure of its achievement with disambiguated material (Experiment 1). Also, they lead to defend the idea that even external (vs. internal) uncertainty enhances the motivation to

create shared reality, thus contributing to the analysis of one out of tree epistemic inputs within the paradigm: The communicator's own evaluation of the target when receiving the original information (cf. sections 2.5; II.1; 4.4 & 5.1). Finally, the second experiment evidenced the differential motivational processes driving men (versus women) in communication within such a setting. Several limitations of these studies are reported in chapter VII.

Experiment 3 applied the saying-is-believing paradigm to everyday life interactions with strangers. Through this setting we manipulated for the first time the relational motive driving shared reality and thereby supported the key role played by communicators' relational needs, when the epistemic motivation to sharing was maintained constant. Indeed, while participants were equally motivated to disambiguate the original target information, only those motivated to relate with the audience tuned and displayed the audience-congruent memory bias. Thus, this experiment represents the very first step to disentangle the differential role played by epistemic and relational characteristics of the audience in determining his/her appropriateness as shared reality potential partner.

Finally, the fourth and fifth experiments extended the saying-is-believing effect when people communicated with in-group audiences about an out-group target in the specific Belgian context, highlighting the role played by shared reality creation in the spread of prejudices. Experiment 5 was conceived with the very purpose of making an additional step in disentangling the differential role played by epistemic and relational characteristics of the audience. As an audience-congruent memory bias was found with a racist audience despite an absence of tuning, the results seem to suggest that epistemic rather than relational motives are more diagnostic of shared reality creation with such audience. Some reflections on this eventuality are proposed in section 6.2.3. Nevertheless, as largely discussed in section 5.5, the results of this study are difficult to square with shared reality theory.

In the following paragraphs, we will first highlight the practical implications of our studies with respect to their three specific contexts. Later, we will discuss the theoretical contribution of the findings with respect to shared reality theory.

6.2 Ubiquity of shared reality achievement

Despite limitations and minor unsolved issues, our empirical part provides strong arguments supporting, originally, the ubiquity of the shared reality creation process through the replication of the saying-is-believing effect in several new contexts.

6.2.1 Sexual Harassment and Gender Issues

As previously noted, saying-is-believing research has applied the paradigm to different situations on only two occasions, through studies focusing on eyewitness incidents, a forensically relevant domain (Kopietz et al., 2009; Hellman et al., 2011) and within an organizational context (Echterhoff, Lang et al., 2009). Applying the paradigm to the sexual harassment context, our first two experiments were of major interest for at least two practical reasons.

First, extant research focused either on conversational analysis about sexual violence (e.g., Anderson & Doherty, 2008; Gavey, 2005) or on the cognitive processes involved in the perception of sexual aggression (e.g., Carli, 1999) and harassment (e.g., Blumenthal, 1998). However, the interaction between communication and cognition, within this domain, has not been addressed since recently (Marchal, 2011). In her work, Marchal argues that the communication context under which aggression events are evoked determines the interpretations of those events and the psychological distance witnesses take from them (see also Marchal, Pierucci, Douglas, Sutton & Klein, 2012). For instance, it may happen that people have to communicate about the focal event in a biased manner, by lying or by propagating beliefs not personally endorsed before communication (see Douglas & Sutton, 2003): This could impact on later cognition. Hence, the study of people's reaction towards such events cannot ignore the interaction between communication and cognition (as more generally suggested in our first chapter). This is important especially if we consider that negative and surprising events are often the referent of intense communication (Heath, 1996) and of rumors (Allport & Postman, 1947; Pezzo & Beckstead, 2008). Our studies join the effort of examining the interplay between communication and cognition in understanding reactions to sexual harassment, by focusing on the specific communication process involved in the saying-is-believing paradigm.

Second, in Chapter III we have argued that many behaviours surrounding sexual

harassment are ambiguous and allow different interpretations (Pryor & Day, 1988). A key theme of social psychology is the ambiguity of observable behavioural information when judging the meaning of the event and the psychological properties (intentions, feelings, etc.) of social actors. To this matter, signs of harassment are not always directly perceptible by witnesses and can often be identified only across time (Garcia, Hue, Opdebeeck, & Van Looy, 2002). This is because behaviours often allow different inferences and interpretations. For example, a female employee's sexy clothing or mild physical contact with a supervisor can be construed as invitations to sexual overtures (and may provide post hoc justifications for sexual harassment) or (usually more accurately) as devoid of such intentions. Such ambiguity is especially problematic in the domain of norm-violating or antisocial acts, including sexual harassment, because observers' assessments can have serious consequences for potential perpetrators and victims. For instance, the ambiguity of the surrounding acts can complicate and impede the unequivocal detection of harassment– a hallmark that arguably also fuels media scrutiny of infamous cases of possible sexual aggression, as the one involving the former director of the International Monetary Fund.

We have also argued that, when learning about episodes that might involve sexual harassment, people try to interpret the reported facts and to establish responsibilities (Blumenthal, 1998) and may do this through shared reality achievement. This establishment of a specific shared reality may indirectly have serious consequences for the reputation of both aggressors and victims, for instance through the spread of rumors (Hurley, 1996; Leymann, 1996). In most cases, victims of harassment perceive the reactions of their entourage as negative: Witnesses appear passive or even indifferent to the victim's fate (Garcia, Hue, Opdebeeck, & Van Looy, 2002; Leymann, 1996). In this respect, the psychological cost of the aggression often depends to a greater extent on others' reaction to the aggression than on the aggressive act itself (Dejours, 2000). Victims of aggression at the workplace may be individuals who have difficulties to "build up a stable social network" (Zapf, 1999). Thus, the contribution of our studies in considering the impact of the saying-is-believing effect within such a setting, is important to the extent that communication may exert detrimental impact (e.g., by serving to stigmatize a victim), or vice versa helpful impact (e.g., when facilitating the identification of the perpetrator's responsability) especially when the situation is perceived as ambiguous.

Hence, our experiments have demonstrated that communication shapes the way

indirect witnesses perceive harassment. We found that women communicating to a female audience about a potential sexual aggressor tune and form audience-congruent representations about him when experiencing high levels of ambiguity (Experiment 1). Exploring possible gender differences in the communicative creation of shared reality about sexual harassment, we replicated the effect for both genders but found that men expressed more negative descriptions and memories about the target than did women (Experiment 2). We argued that, because they belong to the aggressor's group, men should have tried to take distance from the derogated target to maintain a positive in-group identity in front of the female audience. In section 7.1 we will propose further directions for research, which should investigate other social motives (e.g. in-group identity protection) which may drive communication in such settings.

To sum up, our two experiments illustrate some of the implications of perceiving sexual harassment at the workplace. Ambiguous harassment related behaviours lead people to rely on their audience's attitude to form and shape an opinion about the situation. The conditions under which colleagues create a shared reality about whether behaviours qualify as antecedents to or components of sexual harassment are those of 1) high perceived uncertainty about the event and 2) high perceived trustworthiness of the audience. Under these conditions and through a saying-is-believing process people are susceptible to trivialize or conversely detect sexual harassment. By a) recognizing the interplay of communication and cognition in the interpretation of those situations, we have therefore b) considered shared reality processes in the disambiguation of those events, which are c) hardly detectable but d) full of serious consequences for protagonists.

Nevertheless, the present studies represent only a first step in this direction. Further research (as we will precisely suggest in section 7.1) needs specifically to focus, among other issues, on the relative contribution of the relational motive that, was not directly considered here. As we know, and as suggested by the results obtained with male participants about the overall valence of messages and recalls, the relational bounds between the communicator and the audience are particularly crucial in communication about sexual harassment. Thus, the contribution of our studies needs to be further developed to better establish the role of shared reality creation in sexual harassment communication processes.

6.2.2 Relations with strangers

Our fourth chapter answers the following question: Can our snap judgments about an unknown audience influence shared reality creation with such audience? We have demonstrated that this is possible because participants in our study created shared reality with high (versus low) desirable audiences. The audience's desirability was manipulated thanks to the assessment of the participants' snap judgment about the audience at the beginning of the experiment. Nevertheless, it may be argued that this finding is anything but new.

Indeed, in all saying-is-believing studies participants are usually asked to communicate with audiences whom they actually do not know. But, what is important here is that our specific manipulation really focused on those aspects that characterize interaction with strangers. When we are led to interact with people whom we previously did not know, we form a first impression about the other person. This impression could impact on the relational motives driving the following interaction and therefore, as predicted by shared reality theory, influence the outcome of such interaction. That is why it was important for us to specifically focus on first impression formation and to let participants communicate with a partner arousing a specific impression (i.e., high or low desirability of an expected interaction).

Research has largely focused on factors that influence people's initial impression about others (e.g. Asch, 1946; Kelley 1950; Luchinis, 1957; Hamilton, Katz & Leirer, 1980). First impressions are found to depend on stereotypes based on the others' characteristics such as age and gender (e.g., Brewer & Layton, 1989), on evaluation of physical attractiveness (e.g. Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972; Jackson, Hunter, & Hodge 1995), on attribution of central traits (Kelley, 1950; *Widmeyer* & *Loy,* 1988), but also on observed behaviors (e.g. Chaplin, Phillips, Brown, Clanton & Stein, 2000; Borkenau & Liebler, 1992). Initial perceptions of others have been shown to depend on situational factors (such as interaction distance: Patterson & Sechrest, 1970), on mood and feelings (e.g., Abele & Petzold, 1994*; Forgas & Bower, 1987*), but also on individual characteristics of the perceivers: It is now well established that the self influences perception of others (e.g., Fong & Markus, 1982). For instance, the self-perceived centrality of some traits has been demonstrated to impact on the information about others that is considered in further

processing (Riggs & Cantor, 1984). Although the influence of personality traits in impression formation is now unquestioned, the pathways that mediate these effects and the conditions under which the self impacts on perception of others still pose a lot of questions (Sedikides & Skowronsky, 1993). This is why we decided to assess individual impressions people formed about the proposed audience and to use those subjective evaluations as a basis for our manipulation (i.e., high versus low communication desire participants). It is unclear whether the impression formation is driven by the partners' attractiveness, by participants' assumptions derived from the audience's facial expression, by the correspondence between the self's and the audience's traits inferred by participants, or by a combination of all these elements. Thus, as the factors driving the relational motives with strangers are various and not always clear, we capitalized on subjective snap impressions, an aspect of everyday interaction, to have differential levels of those motives towards the audience. It was found that shared reality was created with desirable rather than undesirable communication partners. Hence, the implication of such study joins the previous demonstration of the potency of impression formation. In line with studies showing that attractiveness of others impacts on people's interest in establishing social bonds (e.g., Eastwick & Finkel, 2008; Garcia, Stinson, Ickes, Bissonnette & Briggs; 1991, see Bernard, Pierucci, Leys, Mercy & Klein, 2012), our findings demonstrate that unknown people we desire to communicate with are likely to impact on our validation of reality, regardless of the reasons why we like them. In section 6.3.2 we will also discuss the specific characteristic of such audience.

6.2.3 Shared reality and the spread of stereotypes

The ubiquity of the saying-is-believing effect has evident consequences when considering intergroup relations. Indeed, as argued in chapter V, the impact of shared reality creation when the judged target belongs to a stigmatized group is crucial for the spread and maintenance of stereotypes, especially if the communicator does not hold a priori attitudes towards the out-group. In the best case, people may be influenced positively by people holding positive attitudes towards the target but most probably, when the target belongs to a stigmatized group, negative stereotypes are likely to be spread through shared reality. Our first replication of the saying-is-believing effect about an out-group target corroborates this idea. Before our demonstration, saying-is-believing had been found about an out-group

target in only one study (Stukas et al., 2009) but, in that case, communicators were not supposed to be aware of culturally shared beliefs about the target group. Conversely, this was observed in our study (i.e., being North Africans often the object of Belgian prejudices, cf. chapter V). Results of our first experiment resonate also with previous research in close domains.

Stereotype communication literature shows that, as cultural shared representations, stereotypes can become consensual within groups (e.g. Haslam, Oakes, Reynolds, & Turner, 1999; Haslam, Turner, Oakes, McGarty, & Reynolds, 1998) and, as above mentioned, stereotype-consistent information is more likely to be transmitted through communication (Clark & Kashima, 2007; Kashima et al., 2007; Klein et al. 2007; Klein, Clark & Lyons, 2010; cf. also section 1.2.1). We have underlined one reason for this: The spread of stereotypes responds to a relevant conversational norm, which constrains people to start from what is shared in order to make messages understandable (Kashima et al., 2007; cf. sections 1.2.1; 5.5.). By virtue of being shared within a community, stereotype consistent information is easily groundable and thus facilitates pleasant interpersonal interactions and relational goals to be pursued in communication (e.g. Kashima et al., 2007; Ruscher & Duval, 1998; see Bratanova 2008). Mainly focusing on communication through chains and on the serial reproduction paradigm, this previous research never considered the shared reality specific process (at least as theorized by Echterhoff et al., 2009) in the phenomenon of stereotypes spread. Also, as we illustrated in section 1.2.1, to the extent that the spread of the stereotypic information through the expression seems to depend on the anticipation of the communication consequences, those phenomena can be conceived as pre-locutionary effects of communication. Our studies tackle the role of shared reality achievement in the spread of stereotypes through the saying-is-believing process, a post-locutionary communication effect.

A second implication of our fifth chapter comes specifically from the fact that perceivers, and in our case communicators, are aware that stereotypes are shared by other in-group members (e.g. Devine, 1989; Krueger, 1996; see Klein, Demoulin, Licata & Lambert, 2004). This is exactly the case for participants communicating with a racist audience. We have argued that a shared reality process is responsible for our findings. Nevertheless, the empirical evidence lacks unequivocal demonstration of this. But, the notion that stereotypes serve to fulfil epistemic goals has been amply demonstrated in previous literature (e.g., Lyon

& Kashima, 2003; see also Oakes, Haslam, Turner, 1994). Stereotypes become to be thought as accurate depictions of reality by means of perceived social sharedness and endorsement by others (Lyons & Kashima, 2003). As epistemically valid depictions of reality they influence people's views and become fundamental for individual and group functioning (Bar-Tal, 2000). As argued, communicators in our second experiment were aware that their audience held culturally shared beliefs. According to Bar-Tal's (2000) model, being aware that beliefs are shared validates those beliefs. This may explain why the racist audience did finally impact on communicators' memory.

In hindsight, the results of our experimental manipulation are not particularly encouraging. Indeed, to the extent that a racist audience mostly holds, by definition, negative attitudes towards out-group members, it is more likely that such an audience exerts negative influence on in-group members holding no a-priori attitudes towards out-group members. If this worst assumption is true, even more serious consequences can be envisioned when considering the following possibility. Communicators tuning to a racist audience with negative attitudes towards a target not only may end up endorsing a negative view, but also are likely to orient subsequent behaviour in line with this process. For instance, people may decide not to socially engage with the target group (Stukas et al., 2009). If this implication of the memory effect is true for all saying-is-believing studies (and also in the other -positive way) it is particularly crucial here, when people are influenced by racist audiences.

Finally, regardless of the specific process responsible for the impact of the audience (i.e., shared reality or even mere influential mechanisms), which has to be highlighted through future research, one consideration stays. Accordingly to the socially situated cognition approach (Clark, 1998; Smith & Semin, 2004; Clark & Kashima, 2007), the way people transmit messages serves a specific communicative function (Smith & Semin, 2007). For example, in our study participants constructed a message that best accomplished the task at hand, that is, to distance themselves from the racist audience. Nevertheless, the final representation was the result of an online construction, as a function of the specific context (see Smith & Semin, 2007). This is yet another reason why it is important to study the critical features of the situation of shared reality achievement and to remain vigilant about the

specific characteristic of the available audience, with respect to the fulfilment of communicators' needs within a specific context.

6.3 Implication for theory

Our empirical part described saying-is-believing studies, which focused either on one or both the core motivational processes assumed to drive shared reality. This strategy was geared at disentangling the role played by these two motives in shared reality creation. Thus, chapter III addressed open questions with respect to epistemic motives, chapter IV presented research where the relational motive was manipulated for the first time and chapter V one specific case of competing motivational levels. We discuss the contribution of those findings for the theory.

6.3.1 The present results: implications for epistemics

6.3.1.1 Sexual harassment experiments and the ambiguity manipulation

As we have largely discussed in chapter III (cf. section 3.6.1), our sexual harassment experiments raise two main implications with respect to the epistemic account to shared reality achievement.

First, as ambiguity of the input information, and thereby uncertainty, was directly manipulated, we found evidence for one theoretical assumption never tested before: The ambiguity of the communicated material is a precondition for shared reality creation within the saying-is-believing paradigm. With a disambiguated material, indeed, shared reality was not achieved. Already in their first study, Higgins and Rholes (1978) explicitly suggested that the ambiguity of the target stimulus might influence the saying-is-believing effect. To this purpose, they distinguished ambiguous and unambiguous items in the description of the target. They found that the ambiguous descriptions were more likely to be distorted in the direction of the audience's attitude than the unambiguous descriptions. Nevertheless, in this study, ambiguity was manipulated within-subjects and was defined at the level of each item considered separately rather than at the level of the description as a whole. Thus, by explicitly incorporating both negative and positive items (in addition to ambiguous items) in the description of the target, these authors clearly elaborated an ambivalent portrait, which aroused uncertainty in the perceiver. Here, we relied on ambivalent material (a mix of

harassment-consistent and inconsistent behaviors) but disambiguated it through narrative closure. But, when the target material, which is the first source of epistemic uncertainty within the paradigm, did not provide closure, it heightened ambiguity and made difficult for communicators to reach the sufficient epistemic confidence on their own evaluation of the target. For this reason, they had to rely on the other epistemic inputs of the paradigm, which were the evaluation of their audience and their own evaluation depicted in the tuned message (cf. sections 2.5; II.1; 4.4 & 5.1). Epistemic trust was also correlated with the shared reality created in communication, corroborating such idea.

Second, according to Kahneman and Tversky (1982), the study focused on external uncertainty, which is attributed to the target of judgment rather than to the perceiver's limited insight. The latter was the case of Kopietz and colleagues' (2009) study, where participants' confidence in their own judgments was manipulated. In the present context, this analysis had a potentially critical implication: The extent to which other people (or, alternatively, groups and institutions) can serve as sources of additional insight is lower for external uncertainty than for internal uncertainty (see Kahneman & Tversky, 1982; Kruglanski et al., 2005). By this view, creating a shared reality with others might not be useful for satisfying epistemic needs from external uncertainty. However, we found that this was not true. As members of an "ultrasocial" species (Campbell, 1983), humans are highly motivated to interpret and understand social events. This tendency is particularly pronounced for events with a potentially negative outcome (Baumeister, 1991), such as sexual harassment. Hence, people's motivation to reduce uncertainty about the event should be relatively high. Here, perceivers had no other means of reducing uncertainty and drew on the information available, that is, cues about the others' inner states towards the target stimulus (i.e., the audience's evaluation). By this view, the critical factor underlying attempts at shared reality creation is the strength of uncertainty and related epistemic needs, rather than a systematic analysis of relevant circumstances, such as assessments about the match between type of uncertainty and source of uncertainty reduction. In conclusion, high epistemic needs lead to shared reality achievement through audience tuning even when the uncertainty is external. This finding is consistent with the general notion that motivational forces can be sufficiently powerful to guide various cognitive processes (e.g., Kunda, 1990).

Also, for the first time, the results of both studies demonstrate that mixed behaviors (i.e., both consistent and inconsistent with a sexual harassment outcome) are as efficient as evaluative ambiguous ones to arouse those levels of uncertainty necessary to motivate people to share reality with the audience. Although in Higgins and Rholes's (1978) study among others (Higgins & McCann, 1984; McCann & Hancock, 1978; McCann et al., 1991) both types of items were present (i.e., ambiguous and mixed) within the same target description, a critical epistemic need to the occurrence of the saying-is-believing effect has never been demonstrated to arise just from mixed items.

Finally, the second experiment also corroborated epistemic accounts to shared reality creation through the replication of the effect. Nevertheless, a combined measure of trust (combining both epistemic and relational dimensions) was associated to the memory bias found with female participants. As argued (cf. sections 3.5.3 & 3.6.3), just in this condition we can properly support a shared reality creation process because of the found correlations between the recall bias and trust, which was not the case for the male participants. Thus, even if epistemic uncertainty motivated women to shared reality with their audience, such audience was also appropriate to satisfy relational in addition to epistemic needs. In section 6.3.2.2 we will discuss some insights of this study with respect to relational concerns.

6.3.1.2 The remaining studies with respect to the epistemic account

The experiment described in chapter four (Exp.3) was specifically designed to manipulate relational motives driving communication with the audience. Nevertheless, an epistemic motivation driving shared reality creation cannot be excluded in such a setting. Indeed, 1) the given target information was ambiguous and participants were therefore facing uncertainty, and 2) epistemic trust in the audience was measured and found to be higher than the scale midpoint. In other words, it reached a sufficient threshold to be appropriate for satisfying epistemic needs. Thus, even if findings in that study account for a relational motivational process driving shared reality (cf. section 6.3.2), epistemic motives were also playing a role here. Once recognized that epistemic needs influenced participants to some extent and that the given material was ambiguous as in our two first studies, one may wonder why such a motivation was sufficient to trigger shared reality in those sexual harassment studies but not in this latter case. An answer to this question could be given by

considering the relevance of the target material (cf. section 6.3.4.2). In the first case, the epistemic need motivated the disambiguation of a complex scenario with potentially negative outcomes for protagonists, both of which were supposed to be known by the audience. In the case of our third study, the shared reality process served the disambiguation of an unknown character description, by using information from an unknown audience, not even being a desirable communication partner in one of the two conditions. We suggest that the relevance of the topic should have impacted on the motivation to engage in a shared reality process (cf. next section and section 6.3.4).

We now turn to consider the last two experiments described in chapter V.

The first of these two (Exp. 4) typically illustrated that the audience's perspective served the creation of a shared reality about a communication topic (i.e., the out-group target). Thus, in line with previous literature and with the positive correlation found between trust and the recall bias, the in-group audience was considered as sufficiently trustworthy to furnish the additional epistemic input useful for participants' disambiguation of reality. A combination of this and of the epistemic input represented by participants' own evaluation of the target contained in the message (cf. input b & c, 2.5; II.1; 4.4 & 5.1) led participants to achieve a confident judgment.

The study considering communication with a racist audience (Exp. 5) is of greater interest with respect to the shared reality epistemic account. As predicted by the theory, if the impact of the audience's attitude really was a matter of shared reality achievement with the racist audience, a correlation should be found between the bias and participants' trust in the audience. Nevertheless, we have argued that that measure did not necessarily capture participants' real judgments about the audience's epistemic competence adequately. Our manipulation was also based on a plausible, yet untested, assumption: As holding culturally shared beliefs, an audience relying on stereotypes should satisfy epistemic needs to a certain extent. This remains a plausible assumption to the extent that no other alternative measures tested participants' epistemic trust in the audience beyond social desirability issues, but need to be further demonstrated.

Also, in this study, the given material was ambiguous and, more importantly, relevant enough to motivate participants to engage in the shared reality process. At least, this

assumption seems plausible based on to results found in the first of the two intergroup experiments (Exp.4) as well as in the control condition of this one (Exp 5).

In sum, the epistemic motivation drove shared reality in the first two experiments, where it was a necessary condition to the process. But, was it also a sufficient condition or, as suggested by the second study, the fact that the audience was probably an appropriate partner with respect to relational needs played also a crucial role? Moreover, in the third study (the relation with strangers one) the epistemic motivation was not a sufficient condition for shared reality creation whereas in study four (the first of the intergroup studies), if the audience was an epistemically trustworthy person, it is not excluded that it was also a suitable relational partner, as belonging to the in-group. This possibility is excluded in the last study, where the racist audience probably served as epistemic source of information. If a shared reality was achieved in that condition, it was rather a matter of epistemic input b (i.e., the audience's evaluation of the target) rather than the enhanced confidence in the evaluation conveyed in communicators' own message, because of audience tuning failure.

Section 6.3.3 will try to clarify the epistemic contribution in shared reality creation with respect to the relational one. But let us first focus on the insights of our results regarding the relational motive.

6.3.2 The present results: implications for relational motives

6.3.2.1 Communication with strangers and the audience's desirability manipulation

Experiment 3 was specifically designed to test the driving force of the relational motive per se (with respect to shared reality creation). It was found that only those participants who were highly motivated to get along with the audience actually engaged in shared reality creation. An epistemic motive was surely motivating participants (given the ambiguous target material and their sufficient levels of epistemic trust in the audience) but was not sufficient for shared reality creation in all conditions. Only those participants who were additionally motivated to relate with the audience actually tuned to such an audience. Trust in the audience's evaluation of the target (epistemic input 2, cf. section 4.4) was responsible for participants' confidence in the own evaluation conveyed in their message

(input 3, cf. section 4.4), but just for participants who were actually motivated to tune for relational reasons, as revealed by the moderated mediation. We may argue that, if relational needs were necessary for the achievement of shared reality, that motive was not sufficient. Indeed, even if participants could have tuned only for a relational motivation, a sufficient epistemic trust was necessary to integrate their audience's perspective in their own. We may suggest that, if the material was less ambiguous, for example as in our first study, an eventual tuning for relational reasons should not have triggered shared reality, because of the lower need to disambiguate the event. Here, even if crucial, such a need was not sufficient, probably in reason of the (low) relevance of the communication topic. Although the audience was sufficiently trusted and used as a source of epistemic information, without an additional motivation to get along with that reliable audience, participants would not have reached the critical threshold to engage in the process. Probably, the disambiguation of the target information was an insufficient driving shared reality interest, if not combined with an extra (i.e. relational) scope.

6.3.2.2 The role of affiliation in the remaining studies

As argued, the disambiguation of the stimulus material seemed to be a necessary and sufficient condition in our first study about sexual harassment. Nevertheless, the correlation found between the recall bias and audience trust did not exclude that such an audience was also satisfying relational motives. This was for example the case of the second study, where trust was measured combining epistemic and relational items (cf. section 3.5.1.2). Thus, an important point should be noticed here. In the first study, female participants communicated with a female audience about a man's potential (verbal) aggression against a female character. Considering the shared in-group membership of the communicator and the audience, as well as the fact that the event represents some sort of threat for an in-group member, it is plausible that communicators were also motivated to get along with such audience. Indeed, as we know, affiliation serves also goals such as self-identity protection in threatening situations (e.g. Turner, 1991; cf. section 2.4.3.3). Results in the second experiment (cf. the trust measure) confirm this hypothesis. Thus, in both experiments shared reality was achieved because of a high epistemic need and thanks to the available source of additional epistemic input (i.e., the audience), who was epistemically

trustworthy. Besides, if not really motivating participants to get along with her, this audience was at least not relationally inappropriate. In other words, if an epistemic motivation was necessary to drive shared reality creation, we cannot undoubtedly affirm that it was a sufficient condition. Indeed, we cannot exclude that the appropriateness of the audience as shared reality partner was not dependent also on critical levels of relational adequacy.

The same argument can be made for our intergroup studies. As mentioned above, being a member of the in-group, the audience should have also triggered relational motivation in those participants. We have already argued that, validating beliefs through sharedness about out-group members can also respond to a need for strengthening the bond with the in-group (cf. section 6.2.3). This was not the case when the racist audience was the communication partner (cf. Exp.5). Relational motives were surely not predicting shared reality creation in such a condition. Those motives determined the extent to which participants adapted their communication as a function of the audience's attitude. In the racist audience condition, similarly to other studies (e.g. Echterhoff et al., 2008; cf. section 2.4.3.2), communication served other (non shared reality) goals: Here, it allowed communicators to take distance from the in-group audience, rather than create a shared reality with such an audience. Thus, the eventual shared reality creation in this case was not driven by the explicit adoption of the audience evaluation of the target. Plausibly, a distinction could be introduced between participants' rejection of the person, a matter of affiliative function of communication, and their rejection of his epistemic attitude, which could have been endorsed even after being explicitly invalidated through anti-tuning.

To sum up, if a necessary epistemic need was the driving force of shared reality creation, it cannot be excluded that shared reality served jointly relational motives in the sexual harassment studies. As for the specific context of Experiment 3 (presented in chapter IV), relational motives have been demonstrated to be necessary for the creation of shared reality in addition to a critical level of epistemic motivation. Finally, as for the intergroup studies, surely epistemic and probably relational motives were satisfied through shared reality creation in all conditions except in communication with a racist audience. This last did not satisfy participants' affiliative motivation, but was probably still used as a valid epistemic source.

In conclusion, one question remains : Could each one of these motivations drive shared reality creation independently from the other? If this possibility seems plausible, as

timidly suggested by our last study at least with respect to the epistemic motivation, it is surely not firmly demonstrated and, most importantly, it seems rather an exception than a typical condition of shared reality creation. The next section will help us deepen this question also with respect to other saying-is-believing studies.

6.3.3 Our results in perspective: Implications with respect to the appropriate motivation driving shared reality

When introducing the rationale of our studies, we have defended the importance of trying to disentangle the two core motives driving shared reality achievement. Even if those motives are theorized as clearly distinct concepts, empirical research was never aimed to define their relative and specific force. Faithful to the logic of experimentation, we assumed that this precise goal would be achieved by orthogonally manipulating those motives within the saying-is-believing paradigm. As represented in the table below, shared reality achievement (i.e., SR) remains unquestioned when both these driving forces are motivating communicators, as demonstrated by several studies (e.g., Echterhoff et al., 2005; 2008; Echterhoff, Lang et al., 2009). Conversely, when both motives fail to drive communication no reason exists to posit shared reality (cf. Echterhoff et al., 2009). Nevertheless, open questions remain for the other conditions, as represented in the following table.

Table 1. Theoretical open questions

Motives driving SR	Relational High	Relational Low
Epistemic High	SR	?
Epistemic Low	?	No SR driving motives

Relying on manipulations, which were also motivated by the relevance of the specific context considered, our studies could be seen as covering some of these conditions.

First, the sexual harassment (SH) studies (i.e., Exp. 1 & 2), manipulating levels of epistemic need, could be situated as follows.

Table 2. Shared reality about SH with respect to the core motivational processes

Motives driving SR	Relational High		Relational Low
Epistemic High	SR		?
Epistemic Low	Not SR	SH - Exp. 1	No SR driving motives

Motives driving SR	Relational High		Relational Low
Epistemic High	SR	SH - Exp. 2	?
Epistemic Low	?		No SR driving motives

As mentioned above, to the extent that we used a female audience in a setting describing potentially harmful outcomes for women, it is likely that communicators were motivated to get along with the audience, especially when they were women. In those conditions shared reality was achieved only with high epistemic needs (Exp 1, unknown-outcome condition & Exp.2). Low epistemic needs did not drive shared reality with the probably (relationally) appropriate audience (cf. Exp 1). Thus, corroborating the previous study specifically manipulating communicators' epistemic motives (Kopietz et al., 2009), an epistemic motivation is necessary for shared reality creation.

The first intergroup study of chapter V (i.e., Exp. 4) is also relevant with respect to conditions of high epistemic needs and still sufficient relational motivation towards the audience (cf. Table 3). Indeed, if the latter motivation was not measured, there is no reason to think that communicators were not motivated to get along with their in-group audience (i.e., an appropriate partner in matters of relational characteristics) as in other studies (e.g. Echterhoff et al., 2005, Exp. 2, Echterhoff et al., 2008, Exp 1).

Table 3. Shared reality about an out-group target with respect to the core motivational processes

Motives driving SR	Relational High		Relational Low
Epistemic High	SR	Exp. 4	?
Epistemic Low	?		No SR driving motives

Through the study presented in chapter IV (i.e., Exp. 3) we found that the relational motivation is critical when sufficient levels of epistemic trust in the audience are met (cf. Table 4). Shared reality achievement failed when participants were not driven by relational motives in their communication with the audience.

Table 4. Shared reality with strangers and the core motivational processes

Motives driving SR	Relational High	Relational Low
Epistemic High	SR	Not SR
	Exp.3 - Communication with strangers	
Epistemic Low		No SR driving motives

Finally, our last study illustrating communication with the racist audience (i.e., Exp. 5) could be placed as follows in such a theoretical framework.

Table 5. Shared reality (?) with a racist audience and the core motivational processes

Motives driving SR	Relational High	Relational Low
Epistemic High	Racist audience manipulation - Exp.5	
	SR	SR
Epistemic Low		No SR driving motives

We have argued that, in such a specific study, the low relational motivation towards the audience did not impede shared reality creation. Nevertheless, this cannot be taken for granted.

The following schema summarizes the overall results of the present work.

Figure 1. State of affairs of our findings with respect to the two core motivational processes
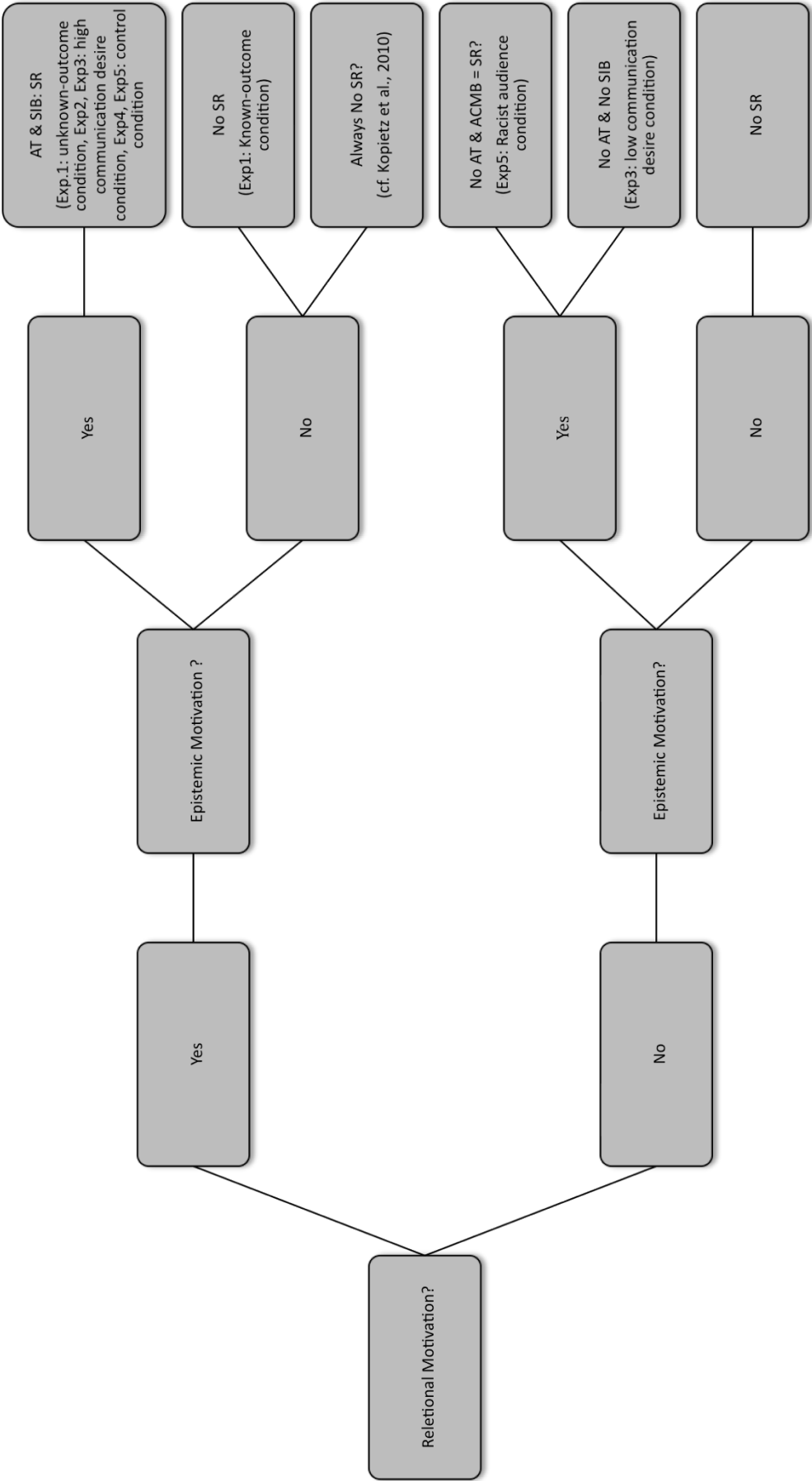
A few remarks need to be made regarding this framework.

First, the combination of an high epistemic motivation and a low relational one remains critical to the extent that, on the one hand (cf. our low communication desire condition of Exp. 3; Figure 1), it seems to impede shared reality creation, whereas in the case of the communication with a racist audience (i.e., epistemically but not relationally appropriate, cf. Exp. 5) this process seems still to be plausible. If another process (cf. section 5.5) was responsible for the impact of the audience's attitude on communicators' memory in this latter case, the contradiction is solved. Only further research can resolve this doubt.

Another condition remains critical: When the communicators' epistemic motivation does not reach a sufficient threshold in addition to the relational (high) motivation, shared reality achievement seems to fail (cf. our Known-outcome condition of Exp. 1; Figure 1). Nevertheless, one contradiction with extant literature remains. In Kopietz and colleagues' (2010) study, which extended the paradigm to the eyewitness memory context (cf. section 3.3) participants communicated either to a (generic) fellow student or to a law student about a bar brawl they had witnessed. The audience-congruent effect was only found when students communicated to an in-group audience (i.e., the generic student). The authors explained shared reality creation in such a condition through higher "psychological proximity" and "motivation for sharing" expressed by participants. These two measures seem better to capture relational rather than epistemic motives driving communication. Moreover, the authors found no difference between conditions in the assessed epistemic scale, the mean of participants' trust being even lower than the scale midpoint and with a trend of lower trust expressed towards the generic student audience. This specific study, if compared to our results, calls into question the demonstration that, at low levels of the epistemic motivation (in addition to high relational motives), no shared reality is achieved (cf. our first sexual harassment study). Nevertheless, it should be noticed that our epistemic manipulation really disambiguated the given material, in the critical condition. Even if participants in Kopietz and colleague's study did not express high epistemic trust towards their shared reality partner, they surely experienced uncertainty about the given material to a higher extent than in our (known-outcome) condition. Thus, a minimal need for disambiguation should have been still present in that specific situation rather than in ours.

This could justify why those participants created reality with their audience. Again, further research could contribute to better disambiguate this critical condition.

6.3.3.1 State of affairs with respect to the appropriate motivation driving shared reality

At this point, one important claim should be made. Our effort of schematizing the findings with respect to a hypothetical orthogonal manipulation of motivational forces (cf. also Table 6) is artificial to the extent that it responds primarily to a logic of methodological rigorousness. Also, it is not comprehensive of the specificity of each situational context susceptible to drive shared reality achievement.

Table 6. State of affairs with respect to the two core motivational processes

Motives driving SR	Relational High	Relational Low
Epistemic High	SR	To share or Not to share?
Epistemic Low	No SR: Is this always the case?	No SR driving motives

As argued above, cognition is a process that emerges from the interaction between the communicator and the environment (here, the communication context) and fulfills regulatory function (Smith & Semin, 2004). The different situations considered in the present work were characterized by different contextual factors (e.g., the relevance of the communication topic, the characteristics of the audience, the relevance of the expected consequence of the formed judgment), each one potentially moderating the process under investigation. Accordingly, we will take into account other features of the situation with respect to the shared reality theory in the following section. Also, as we will later illustrate (chapter VII), one limitation of the present work is the failure to distinguish the differential levels motivating communicators (in terms of their epistemic and relational needs) from their levels of expressed trust (epistemic and relational) towards the audience (cf. section 7.3). Hence, three claims can be made with respect to the main specific questions raised in our introduction to the empirical part (cf. section II, p 78).

First, when some cues tend to lower the perceived uncertainty, and thereby the epistemic need fails to motivate people to a critical threshold in the communication

situation, shared reality is not achieved. The ambiguity of the situation is a necessary precondition for shared reality creation.

Secondly, when the epistemic need reaches a sufficient threshold, the lack of an additional relational motive could impede the achievement of shared reality. This is true in particular circumstances. For instance, when the communication is engaged with undesirable strangers and, probably, when the disambiguation of the communication topic is not relevant enough for communicators (cf. section 6.3.4.1). Thus, under certain circumstances, a relational motive driving communication is also necessary, in addition to a minimal epistemic motivation, to share reality. The features of those circumstances need to be further investigated.

Finally, we suggest that shared reality could be achieved also when the communication partner fulfils one but falls short of satisfying the other motive. We have insights for arguing that this process would happen with an audience satisfying epistemic needs but not relational motives (cf. our racist audience condition). In comparison with the previous claim, the circumstances of this for happening were different with respect to the relevance of the topic as well as to the characteristic of the audience (e.g., group membership). Further research should better test this specific claim and also manipulate the conflicting motives in the other direction (i.e., high relational but low epistemic satisfaction, cf. section 7.3).

6.3.3.2 Conclusions with respect to the appropriate motivation driving shared reality

To conclude, shared reality theory posits that people create shared reality to connect and to know (e.g. Hardin & Conley, 2001). Even if clearly differentiating the two concepts (Echterhoff et al., 2009), one only process is proposed to be responsible for the fulfillment of both these motives. The integration of the two motivational forces within one process echoes previous perspectives in the social influence literature.

To this matter, we have highlighted Turner (1991)'s rejection of the distinction between analogous concepts, informational and normative influence (cf. section 2.4.1). In contrast to previous dual pathway models, the author proposed a unified theory that is, the self-categorization theory. According to his vision, the informational and normative dual

processes could be reduced to one process of social interdependence, which is the basic process driving social interaction, because they both imply the dependence of the individual to others and therefore can be combined. In this sense, the individual and society are interdependent: Social norms convey information and information validation is socially mediated (Tuner, 1991).

Informed by Turner among others, we do not deny that shared reality could satisfy both motivational processes. Indeed, as epistemic motives are fulfilled through shared reality, and as this last is achieved with others, it involves a relational dimension. Also, the motivation to connect as driving shared reality creation leads to the establishment of what is real, and thus, satisfies an epistemic human concern.

In other words, to the extent that shared reality achievement in communication involves a relational dimension, it is easy to confound both motivations, the epistemic and relational one. The paradox resides in the fact that, on one hand, we can be motivated to communicate (and thereby to really relate to others) for achieving epistemic goals. On the other hand, we can be driven in our communication by relational goals, which have nothing to do with epistemic needs, but which will probably trigger epistemic consequences. In other words, we should clearly distinguish the epistemic antecedents of shared reality creation from its epistemic consequences.

Hence, we reject a position integrating the two driving forces to the point of considering them as identical. Claiming that shared reality satisfies the two motives does not mean to claim that the two motives cannot be distinguished. The theory (e.g. Echterhoff et al., 2009) seems to posit such a distinction but researchers have not actively attempted to demonstrate it or to clarify this vague assumption. We claim that relational and epistemic motivation can co-occur or operate separately in shared reality achievement. Our empirical tests, even if really far from being exhaustive in exploring open questions on this matter, could be inscribed in such an effort. Our purpose was to contribute to a better understanding of the conditions under which those motives separately drive shared reality creation. This would be much more informative about the chance we have that other people furnish us with inner states that we could subjectively experience as valid (i.e., shared reality achievement). This will happen through a process of reality co-construction and as a function of the specific motivation at stake in the communicative situation.

We will now turn to the implications of our studies with respect to the other features defining the shared reality current concept.

6.3.4 Implications for the other features of shared reality

6.3.4.1 The subjective experience of a commonality between inner's states.

Our studies are also relevant to theorizing about other features of shared reality such as the subjective achievement of a commonality with other inner states (cf. section 2.2.2). To this matter, we have highlighted that, in some cases, sharing overt behaviors does not necessarily imply a match of inner states. Also, this commonality should be subjectively experienced and people should really be convinced of the correspondence of inner states about the same referent (cf. section 2.2.2). Two of our studies illustrate the importance of these criteria. On the one hand, in our second experiment investigating shared reality about sexual harassment, we had reasons to think (and argued) that men expressed an audience-congruent memory bias but not as a result of a shared reality process. To this matter, we cannot affirm that their expressed memory did not really correspond to their inner state. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that it corresponded with a subjective experience of an achieved commonality. Indeed, although these participants expressed high levels of trust in their audience, such measure was not correlated with the memory bias, which is rather the case in shared reality creation and happened for female participants.

Secondly, our experiment testing shared reality creation with a racist audience also informs about one of the above-mentioned criteria. In that case, as trust in the audience was probably not a sufficiently sensitive measure of participants' real judgments about their audience's reliability (cf. sections 5.4.4 & 5.5), we argued for shared reality creation despite failing to find a correlation between that measure and the recall bias. This was argued also despite communicators' anti-tuning. If this is true (as it should be established by future research) this experiment furnishes an example of conditions where the participants' overt behaviors of audience rejection, expressed through the communicative act, are not corresponding to the subjective experience of a commonality with the audience's inner states.

In our other conditions of shared reality achievement (cf. Experiment 1, 3 & 4) correlations between recall bias and trust, as well as meditational effects of message tuning in the relation between audience attitude and participants' recall (cf. Exp 3 & 4), were indicative of both features of shared reality (i.e., commonality of inner states and subjective experience of such a commonality). Also, they represented conditions under which overt behaviors corresponded to inner states.

We now turn to the implications of our findings with respect to the aboutness criterion (cf. section 2.2.2).

6.3.4.2 Aboutness: a closer look to the target of shared reality

A third building block of the new definition of shared reality is aboutness, that is, the achievement of commonality is always about a target referent (Echterhoff et al., 2009; cf. section 2.2.2). Two observations can be deduced from our results with respect to such a criterion.

6.3.4.2.1 On the relevance of a match between the target of uncertainty and the shared reality target

The first one concerns the extent to which a shared reality creation could be achieved when the target of the communication and the target of the audience's inner states did not match perfectly. To this matter we already noticed that, in our sexual harassment experiments, participants lacked closure and thereby experienced uncertainty about the event's outcome but received audience's information about one character participating in the event (cf. section 3.6.2). Shared reality was achieved despite a necessary shift from the target of uncertainty (i.e. the event) to the target of sharing (i.e., the characteristics of one protagonist). In standard saying-is-believing studies the original input information is about specific behaviors of a target person, whereas the audience's attitude and the communicators' subsequent evaluations are about enduring qualities (traits, dispositions) of the target. Hence, a detailed inspection reveals that also in the classical paradigm there is a partial, but not a perfect, match between the target of the input information and the target of the subsequent shared reality. In our two first studies this mismatch was even higher and informed us about the strength of the shared reality motivation to disambiguate reality.

Another observation arises from the experiment on communication with a racist audience: Here, there was a partial match between the target of the input information and the target of subsequent shared reality (as in the classical paradigm) but a corollary information was given about another target referent (the target's whole group). We were wondering whether this peripheral information could or could not invalidate the information about the target referent of shared reality. Although we argued against this possibility, this still needs to be verified. Plausibly, other situations exist where the awareness of the inner state of the audience about other targets than the shared reality referent could impact on the communicator's motivation to share with such an audience. In other words, this knowledge could impact on the communicators' judgments of the audience appropriateness. Further research should clarify to what extent others' inner states about something different from the target referent could impact on the evaluation of specific inner state about that target.

6.3.4.2.1 On the relevance of the communication topic

A second observation with respect to the target of shared reality concerns the relevance of the communication topic. We have previously argued that, whereas in our first experiment high levels of epistemic need were sufficient to lead communicators share reality with the audience (i.e., cf. the first sexual harassment study), a reasonable level of epistemic trust in the audience was not sufficient to make participants endorse their audience's attitude, when they were not motivated to get along with their audience (cf. the communication with stranger study). We have argued that, probably, the audience in the former case also satisfied relational motives (i.e., belonging to the victim group). But, we additionally claimed that, plausibly, an important feature of the situation matters here. We know that people are highly motivated to disambiguate events with potential negative outcome (Baumeister, 1991; cf. also section 6.3.1.1). Here, the relevance of the topic was probably higher for communicators than in the relation with strangers study. In such case, participants had the opportunity to rely on an undesirable audience to form their own judgment about a third unknown person, with no additional benefit or expectation of meeting the person later. In that particular case, it is conceivable that the topic of the communication was not enough relevant to motivate participants to engage in an effortful

process of shared reality. This is why, plausibly, an additional motivation was needed in such a condition.

This example highlights the importance of considering the relevance of the target referent of shared reality, to better understand when people would be really motivated to engage in such a process. We will propose in the next chapter new ideas for further research on this issue (cf. section 7.3).

6.3.5 Distinctiveness: A Closer Look at Related Approaches

There is a prominent body of research concerned with the role of perceivers' epistemic motivation in the susceptibility to social influence (Baron, Vandello, & Brunsman, 1996; Darke et al. 1998; Festinger, 1950; Lun, Sinclair, Whitchurch, & Glenn, 2007; Lundgren & Prislin, 1998; Sherif, 1935; Castelli et al, 2001; for reviews, see Crano, 2000; Prislin & Wood, 2005), as well as with the role of relational motivation (Schachter, 1959; Kelman, 1958; Chen et al. 1996; Sinclair & Huntsigner, 2006 ; Sinclair et al.,2005 ; see Baumeister & Leary 1995 ; Hustinger & Sinclair, 2010).

As highlighted in chapter I (cf. section 1.2.2.3) a chief consequence of social influence, especially informational influence (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955), is conformity, in other words, commonality at the level of inner states like attitudes and judgments. In this respect, the present work is related to this broader research field[22]. In other respects, however, our studies are distinct. First, in our work, interpersonal communication is the specific arena of creating interpersonal commonality. Second, we have examined effects of communication on the source of communication (the communicator). Existing research differs from our work in at least one of these aspects.

For example, the studies by Darke et al. (1998) and Lundgren and Prislin (1998) involved communication (of a persuasive message) and included a manipulation of accuracy motivation, a form of epistemic motivation. However, the focus was on effects of communication on the recipients rather than the communicators, and no uncertainty regarding the target was created. In Sherif's (1935) classical autokinesis studies one possible

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[22] Here, we focus on approaches in social influence that can be subsumed under the current definition of shared reality, that is, the creation of a commonality with one or more others' inner states about a target referent (see Echterhoff et al., 2009). Other sharing phenomena (e.g. mood contagion, mirroring, etc.) are discussed in section 2.2.2.1 and not considered in the present discussion because not completely matching with such definition.

means of interpersonal convergence was communication, and uncertainty was external (cf. section 3.2) since it arose due to the properties of the perceived target (i.e., the apparent movement of a light in a dark room). Also, uncertainty was reduced in some studies, for instance, by revealing the room's dimensions to participants before the study (Sherif & Harvey, 1952) reducing social influence. However, these studies did not address effects of communication on the communicators' own inner judgments.

Of particular relevance to this discussion is also the recent work on the social tuning of attitudes (Lun et al., 2007). As argued in section 3.2, this research suggests that people's attitudes can spontaneously shift toward the attitudes of an interaction partner (Sinclair & Lun, 2010). Like shared-reality theory, the emphasis is on the role of motivation, including epistemic motivation. But, as mentioned above, this approach did not consider the role of communication about the target of the commonality. Also, with respect to our studies precisely testing the role of the epistemic motivation in driving shared reality (Experiments 1 & 2, chapter III) the uncertainty created in those experiments was internal, whereas we were concerned with external uncertainty about the topic as a trigger of epistemic needs.

Finally, Castelli and colleagues' study showing subtle conformity to a source of influence relying on stereotypes (see section 5.4) on an estimation task also focused on the epistemic validity attributed to the information coming from that source. Nevertheless, again the process leading to the alignment of judgments was not interpersonal communication.

As pertaining the relational motivation, we should consider our previous argument claiming that even normative influence (Deutsch & Gerard, 1995) could lead to conformity that involves a cognitive change (cf. section 1.2.2.3). As theorized by Kelman (1958), people driven by affiliative motives could conform with the source of attitudes through identification, under condition of salience of the relationship with such source. A commonality is therefore created because of others' approval and for establishing a satisfying relationship. Again, the present work is related to this previous literature on social influence but still distinct. For instance, Kelman's model of conformity process, although being indicative of relational determinants of attitudes' convergence (in addition to epistemic ones; cf. the internalisation concept, section 1.2.3.3) did not consider the

communication process as an active mean for the communicator to achieve the interpersonal commonality.

In Chen and colleagues study (1996, cf. section 4.4) participants motivated to impress their audience (vs. accuracy-motivated participants) where particularly likely to express attitudes that were consistent with the view of their expected communication partner, when given the goal of having a pleasant interaction. However, the creation of the interpersonal commonality through this so-called "go along to get along" heuristic (Chen et al., 1996) was demonstrated in the anticipation of the communication, and participants actually did not discuss with their partner.

In the same vein, the affiliative tuning hypothesis emphasized the role of affiliative motivation on tuning of attitudes (Sinclair & Hustinger, 2006, Sinclair, Hustinger et al., 2005; cf. section 4.4). For instance, implicit ethnic attitudes were shown to align to the ostensible attitude of an interaction partner with egalitarian (rather than unknown) ethnic attitudes (Sinclair, Lowery et al., 2005). Again, differently from our studies, this affiliative tuning was not mediated by an active process of communication about the target of the expressed attitude between interaction partners.

In sum, the distinctive contribution of our studies is to demonstrate the influence of the very act of interpersonal communication on communicators' own judgments of ambiguous situation, as driven by epistemic or relational needs. These novel findings are not merely a matter of academic nicety, but point to the wider importance of the present research. Telling others about observed events is a key means for socially constructing and validating their meaning (Bruner, 1990), and people constantly make use of this means (Pasupathi, McLean, & Weeks, 2009). Furthermore, by talking about other people's behaviors communicators jointly create impressions about social actors with their communication partner (Ruscher, Hammer & Hammer, 1996). The distinctive approach of our research, specifically the focus on communication effects on communicators' judgments 1) about an ambiguous social episode with potentially negative outcomes, 2) when motivated to get along with an unknown audience and 3) when being epistemically but not relationally motivated to connect, resonates well with these broader insights from various domains.

VII

Limitations and New Perspectives

In this chapter we briefly highlight some of the limitations of our studies, suggesting possible remedies. We additionally focus on methodological and conceptual limits of the overall work. Directions for further research will be suggested.

7.1. Gender and Intergroup accounts

An important limitation of our experiments focusing on communication about sexual harassment was to test the attitude communicators developed towards the potential aggressor without taking into account the victim's evaluation. Indeed, the message and recall tasks required participants to specifically focus on one target (i.e., the boss): We focused on an absolute evaluation because of our specific interest on the possible creation of a shared reality with the audience about the potential perpetrator. Nevertheless, the past literature on sexual harassment showed that evaluation about victims have an influence on judgments about perpetrators (e.g., Alicke, 2000; Alicke, Buckingham, Zell & Davis, 2008; see also Marchal & Klein, 2012). As mentioned in chapter III, the input material described the interaction at work between two target persons, which was pretested to evoke sexual harassment congruent as well as incongruent interpretations of the behaviors of both characters (cf. Appendix I). In future research, experiments should ask participants to describe the whole scenario to the audience (rather than just one target and examine messages and recalls deducing a relative (rather than absolute) evaluation of the specific target (cf. Kopietz et al., 2009, Hellman et al., 2011). This will allow to tap the process of shared reality creation about the target, without neglecting other moderating dimensions crucial for an evaluation closer to real situations.

One of the innovations of the present research involved considering scenarios involving two characters (e.g., the victim and the perpetrator). We chose however to focus on only one of them (i.e., the perpetrator). Future research should investigate how the communication activity about the first person (e.g., the perpetrator) may affect the judgment and the memory about the other one (e.g., the victim, see also Marchal et al.,

2012). Further measures (in addition to free recall) should be included such as communicators' impression about the target as well as about the other involved characters.

Also, as mentioned above, by including the gender factor, our second experiment offered insights about the differential processes unfolding when women and men tried to disambiguate the given situation. Manipulating the audience's gender (cf. section 3.6.3) would allow to test social motives (such as in-group identity protection) involved in communication about sexual harassment in such settings. Indeed, this will be an interesting way to test whether men's messages and recalls will be less negative because of a need to defend the in-group member in front of an in-group target. To this matter, men (in comparison to women) have proved reluctant to characterize a behavior as being "sexually harassing" (for a review see O'Connor, Gutek, Stockdale, Geer, & Melaçon, 2004). Hence, it should be worthwhile to examine different perspectives endorsed as a function of gender when considering interpersonal events involving both parties (cf. Blumenthal, 1998). This is true to the degree that probably men are likely to identify more with the aggressor than with the victim and vice versa. Nevertheless, when taking the victim's perspective, women should also feel threatened and should rather prefer the observer perspective, which would allow them to take distance from the victim (see e.g. Marchal, 2012). Also, it is conceivable that female participants communicating with a male audience would fail to share reality. Indeed, they may consider him as a less reliable source of information for judging an event involving a perpetrator who belongs to the same group. Further research could answer these questions by manipulating the audience gender but also by including new measures as identifications scales to the characters as possible moderators.

7.2 Implicit measures of trust

Experiment 1 also lacked measures of relational motivation or trust towards the audience. Further research should not neglect such an important aspect, even with more subtle measures rather than explicit trust. Indeed, in some cases, this could fail to be a valid measure: For instance, when male communicators judged the perpetrator in front of a female audience they even seemed to express higher levels of trust (cf. section 3.5.2.3 & 3.5.3). This could reflect a self-presentational goal: appearing "pro-female".

The same recommendation was made for prospective research developing studies presented in chapter five. As argued, only an implicit trust measure should be indicative of

epistemic reliability attributed to a racist audience (cf. sections 5.4.4 & 5.5).

Integrating more subtle measures of the evaluation of the audience's appropriateness with respect to epistemic and even relational characteristics should be considered in all situations triggering social desirability issues and impression formation motivation. This possibility should not be neglected to the extent that the association between those measures and the recall bias is apparently rooted in the communicators' motivation to create a shared reality (Echterhoff et al., 2005) and therefore represents one of the powerful tests of the presence of this process.

7.3 Topic relevance in communication with strangers

Experiment 3, testing communication with strangers, demonstrated that a sufficient level of epistemic trust in the audience is necessary but not sufficient for shared reality creation in that situation. This seems to be at odds with an interpretation of the findings of our last experiment in terms of shared reality. We have argued that the relevance of the communication topic should matter in the extent to which people would be motivated to engage in the shared reality process (cf. section 6.3.4.2.1). An additional study could be conceived for replicating the findings of Experiment 3, but the topic of the communication should be made more relevant or triggering salient consequences for the communicator. This would contribute to understand if, in the case of relevant consequences of disambiguating the situation, communicators' epistemic need would have been a necessary but even sufficient condition to drive shared reality.

7.4 Remaining conditions to test regarding the motivational processes driving shared reality

With respect to the distinctive and relative role of epistemic and relational motives driving shared reality achievement, the interpretation of some of the post-locutionary effects obtained in the present research remains somewhat speculative. For example, we found apparently incongruent effects of the audience's attitude on the communicator's memory under conditions of high epistemic but low relational motivation (cf. Exp. 3 & 5). Also, conclusions about situations characterized by high relational motives and low epistemic ones remain somehow obscure (cf. section 6.3.3). It has been suggested that the relevance of the target material should be considered to explain those findings. Maybe,

future research could specifically manipulate this dimension to define its role in the saying-is-believing effect.

However, to draw more definite conclusions on the epistemic and relational contributions, our findings need to be replicated and the two motivational process need to be manipulated orthogonally, testing for their respective role through an experimental situation as valid as possible. Nevertheless, we notice that the rationale driving our manipulations (e.g., the racist audience one) could be justified by the attempt to rely on conditions closer to real life situation.

To this matter, and mirroring the reasoning of our last study, a future research should apply the saying-is-believing paradigm in communication with an audience still arousing competing motives, but in the opposite way. This also would be a potential case of shared reality creation in close real-life situation. For instance, family members could sometimes represent appropriate relational partner to whom people do not recognize epistemic reliability. What would happen in such a case? Would the need to get along with the suitable relational partner lead communicators to share reality with them or will they merely tune to them? Given the lower reliability attributed to such an audience, the latter option may seem more plausible. Nonetheless, we propose that, as already suggested for other conditions, the relevance of the communication topic should be an important moderator here. Conceivably, tuning to a desirable relational partner would drive the audience-congruent memory bias in situations where the target topic is not much relevant. On the other hand, if participants perceive their judgment as highly consequential (e.g., if their judgment of the target may impact on the future life of this person), the unreliability of the audience would be more salient and impede the saying-is-believing effect.

This consideration leads us to focus on a broader limitation of our work. We posited that the main purpose of our research was to test the specific and relative contribution of epistemic and relational motives in driving shared reality. Nevertheless, valid measures of these motives were not always included in all the experimental designs. A primary reason for this is certainly that this purpose had not yet been clearly formulated in the early stage of our works. However, another consideration should be mentioned: Often in our experiments we seemed to confound or overlap the motivational forces of the communicators with their trust expressed in the audience. This last evaluation, even if extremely subjective, also depended on the audience's characteristics. In other words, sometimes we used the

audience's appropriateness (to fulfill relational and epistemic needs) for the purpose of manipulating the communicators' motives (e.g., in the racist audience condition).

Here, we suggest that the extent to which people should be epistemically motivated to share reality should mostly depend on factors related to the communication topic, such as the relevance of the topic or the importance of the anticipated effect of adopting a specific attitude (cf. Kelman, 1958). Whereas the extent to which people should be relationally motivated to share reality will depend more on the communication partner. Thus, further research would gain from considering the combinations of those different dimensions. For instance, manipulating the epistemic motive arising in such a situation independently of the audience appropriateness (cf. Figure 2).

Thus, when the epistemic motivation is high, even less reliable audiences may become suitable shared reality partners if no other epistemic inputs are available within the situation. On the other hand, a low epistemic motivation (e.g., due to the topic) may be satisfied even when the audience is less trustworthy, provided that it is relationally attractive. Figure 2 illustrates these possibilities, among others, in the epistemic pathway driving shared reality. As shown, we consider high, moderate and really low levels of the epistemic motivation. Then, we highlight different effects of the audience's trustworthiness on the elaboration of shared reality as a function of this motivation.

The relational motives become relevant only when trustworthiness is moderate and is considered in the next pane of figure 2[23]. We suggest, for instance, that relational characteristics should be taken into account by the communicator especially when he/she is moderately motivated to disambiguate the situation. Indeed, if highly motivated, the epistemic characteristics of the audience or the presence of other potential epistemic sources will play a greater role in the elaboration of shared reality.

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[23] Obviously, people may be sensitive to relational aspects of the audience even when the epistemic need is high (as it is often the case: cf. sections 2.4.3.4, 4.2 & 5.2) but, as previously mentioned, we hypothesize that epistemic needs override relational needs in this situation.
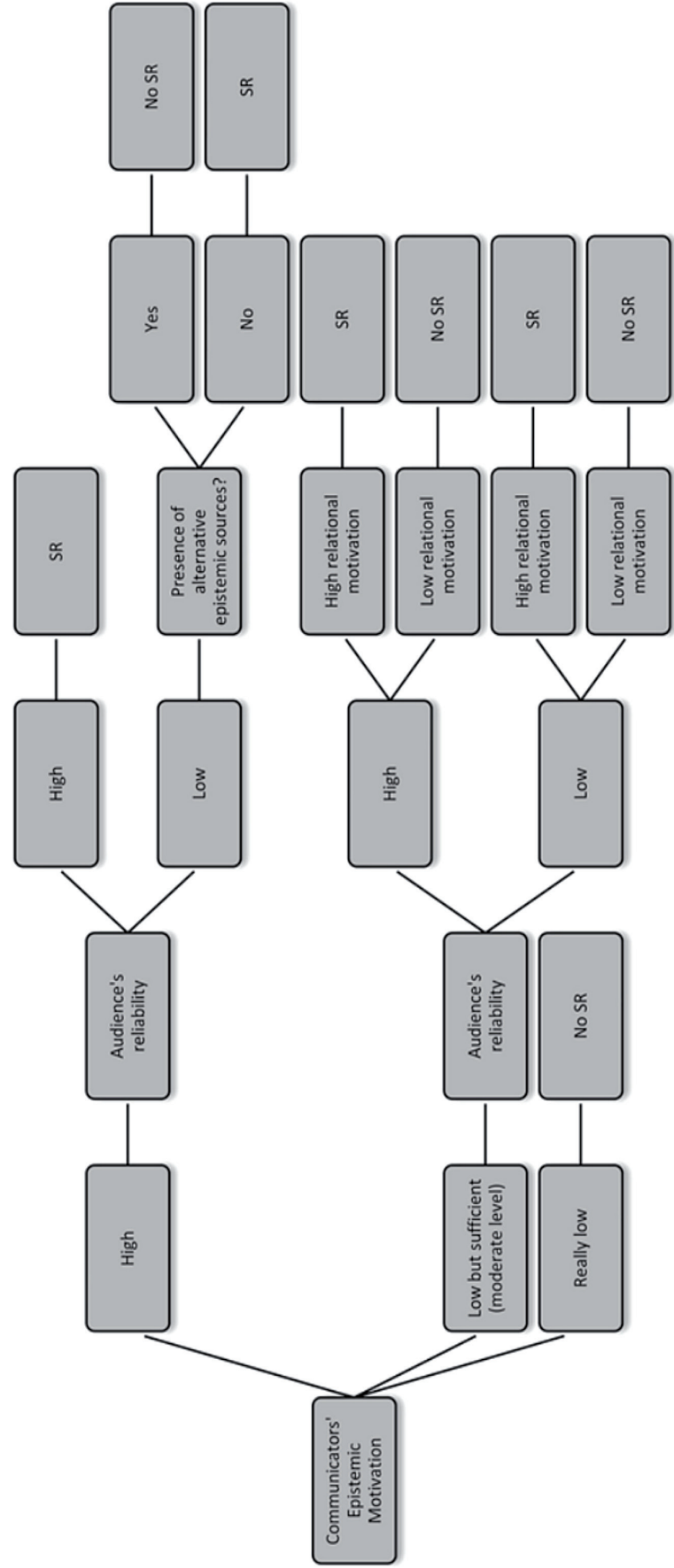
Figure 2. Epistemicl pathway towards shared reality

Figure 3, on the other hand, represents the hypothetical pathway towards shared reality creation, when the communication is primarily driven by relational motives. As illustrated, high, moderate and really low levels of the relational motivation are considered. We should notice that really low levels of relational motivation do not necessarily impede shared reality (cf. the racist audience case), but such a possibility would be covered by the epistemic pathway towards shared reality (i.e., because of the epistemic motivation being the real driving force of communication in such a case). Also, when the relational motivation is high, we suggest that shared reality creation depends on the relevance of the communication topic. If disambiguation is not important, shared reality would be achieved independently of the audience's characteristics in matter of epistemic reliability. The impact of the communicator's evaluation about the audience's trustworthiness would increase as a function of the topic's relevance, which will trigger an epistemic need in the communication activity (cf. Figure 3).

This model should only be conceived as a heuristic tool for considering the hitherto unaddressed factors involved in the creation of shared reality. Obviously, the boundaries between these two pathways are likely to be more permeable than this dichotomous representation may suggest.

Figure 3. Relational pathway towards shared reality
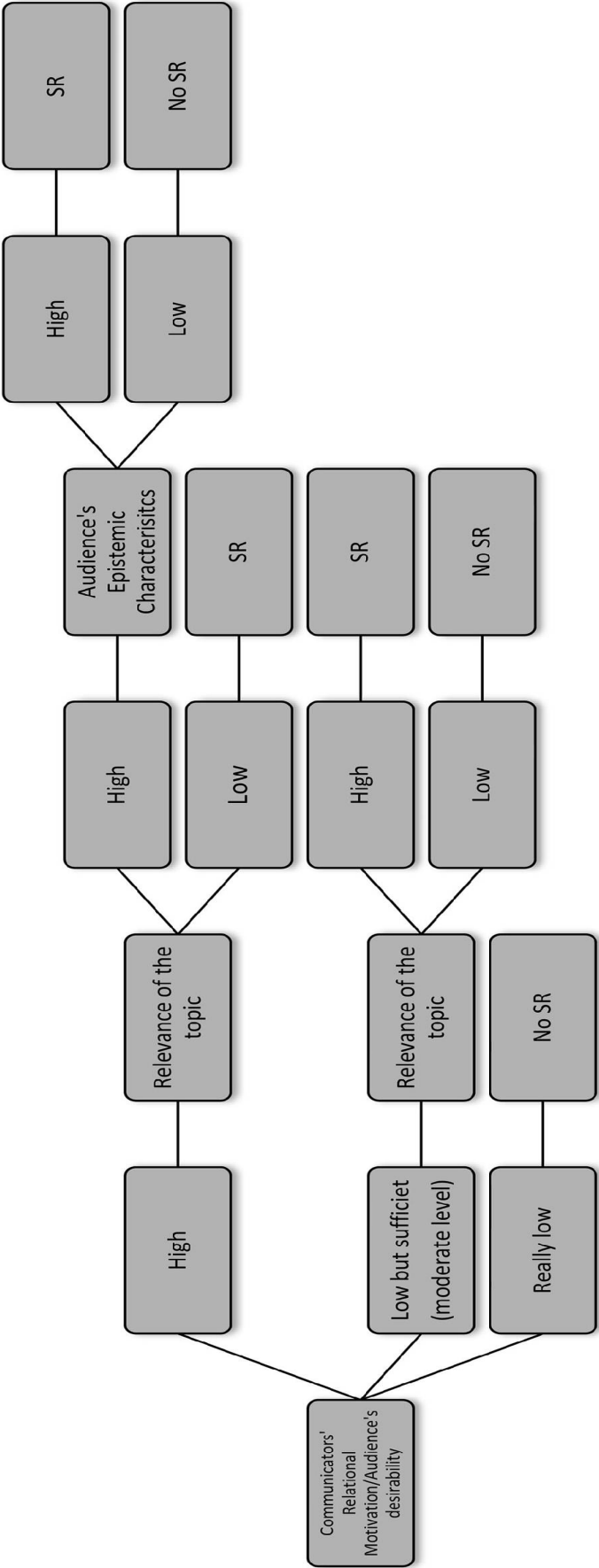
7.5 New theoretical perspectives

To summarize our former argument and take a global overlook on shared reality theory we suggest the following perspective. Epistemic and relational motives, which could jointly drive shared reality creation, refer to different motivational dimensions and need to be considered separately. Consequently, they could be conceived as two parallel pathways towards shared reality creation, as represented in the following figure.

Figure 4. Prospective Model of Shared Reality Achievement
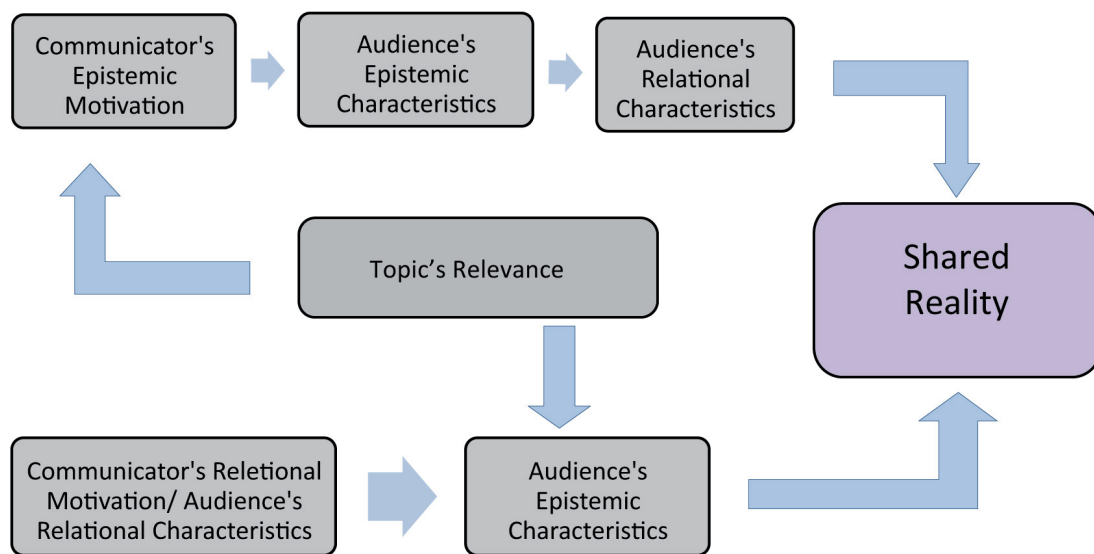
Whereas the relational motivation of the communicator is typically driven by the audience's characteristics (i.e., relational appropriateness), sources of uncertainty driving the communicator's epistemic motivation do not necessary imply others and could arise independently of the audience's epistemic characteristics (cf. Figure 4). Thus, in this latter case, the (epistemic) motivation of the communicator should not be confounded with the epistemic appropriateness of the audience. Hence, it should be analyzed separately. Also, the relevance of the communication topic should affect the epistemic motivation driving communication through the first (i.e., epistemic) pathway towards shared reality. Within the alternative pathway (i.e., relational), this variable should impact on the extent to which epistemic characteristics of the audience will be considered by the communicator when he/she is mainly driven by relational concerns.

Thus, the shared reality theoretical formulation would be improved not only in widely specifying the differential motivation driving sharing, but also in better considering the impact of the aboutness criterion (cf. sections 2.3.2, 6.3.4.2.1) within the process.

Although being partially hypothetical, we believe that this model adequately captures the distinctive dimensions involved in shared reality achievement.

Conclusion

"Culture is to society what memory is to individuals"

-Kluckhohn Cloyde, 1954-

All along this dissertation, we have insisted on the relation between the communication process and the communicator's own attitude about a topic, in other words, between interpersonal communication and cognition.

The early approaches that we have considered viewed communicators as merely translating into words preexisting mental representations. We have then explored several perspectives in the social influence literature, conceiving the individuals as passive targets of external influence, which in turn drives the expression of a matching mental representation. This journey continued by exploring the pre-locutionary and post-locutionary effects of communication. Indeed, we have argued that the very act of communication impacts on the mental representation (e.g. the attitude) of the speaker in two main ways.

On the one hand, studies have shown how the anticipation of communication as well as the goals pursued through communication influence the very expression of the communication content. On the other hand, this expressive behavior during communication leads to the establishment, change or reinforcement of the cognitive representation (e.g., the attitude).

We have specifically focused on the latter aspect, considering the role of the communicator as an active co-constructor of his/her mental representation through communication. This very process is depicted in shared reality theory, which was approached in terms of the defining features theorized by the authors of the revised concept (Echterhoff et al., 2009). Building on Smith and Semin (2004), we notice that this conception resonates well with the claim that cognition is a process emerging from the interaction between the agent (here, the communicator) and the situation (here, the communication context) and that fulfills a regulatory function. Accordingly, the theory posits that communication shapes communicators' memory and knowledge to the extent that it is motivated by the goal of shared reality achievement with the partner. This corresponds to a

context-specific function of communication. The two motivational forces driving shared reality creation were explored with the attempt of defining their specific contribution.

Our dissertation defended the distinction of those two distinct processes driving shared reality creation for one specific reason. Cognition is contextually situated (Clark, 1998; Smith & Semin, 2004; 2007): Reflecting on the real contexts we encounter in everyday life, we believe that these motivational processes are not always intertwined or confounded. The case of the racist audience (i.e., an epistemically reliable but undesirable partner) is one example. Others exist where the opposite is true (cf. section 7.4). For instance, we proposed we could often be the targets of a shared reality achievement motivation with people with whom we want to maintain or reinforce social bonds (e.g.,, family members), but in whom we lack epistemic trust.

Thus, shared reality is a process responding to both motives, but those remain distinct. Disentangling them helps to better understand the situated cognitive process taking place within specific communication situations. Indeed, following Smith and Semin's (2007) recommendation, we conceived attitude (the representation and disposition about an object, cf. chapter I) as a reality that is constructed online in a specific context, the communication context, which specifically offers people the opportunity to share reality with others. Hence, adhering to the socially situated cognition hypothesis, our effort (of disentangling the motivational forces) has to be understood as guided by the goal of defining those characteristics of the specific situation that promote shared reality creation. This responds to the attempt of delineating some boundaries of socio-cognitive responses, because the processes leading to a specific effect (here, shared reality achievement) are not activated if not serving a specific function (Smith & Semin, 2007).

Thus, it was shown that a biased representation could be adopted under several conditions. Our work added insights about conditions of shared reality achievement in situations close to everyday life interaction and new with respect to the past literature in the field. Although further research need to be pursued in this direction, among others, to build more solid conclusions, the following statement could be made.

On the one hand, this analysis shows us how humans are motivated to fulfill their fundamental epistemic and relational needs through shared reality achievement at an interpersonal level. On the other hand, it sheds light on an ordinary mechanism potentially underlying the construction of culturally shared beliefs and knowledge (cf. Echterhoff et

Higgins, 2011). Indeed, communicators can achieve shared reality and spread it through multiple pathways. This spread of cultural information could precipitate both serially, through communication chains, and in parallel, through star-like radiation (Bratanova, 2008). As argued by Kashima and colleagues (2007), the analysis of communicative activities taking place in people's everyday life is a prominent way to understand the complex phenomenon of culture. To this matter, we were specifically interested in focusing on the microlevel of sociocultural processes, even if recognizing its interdependence with the macrolevel (Kashima & Bratanova, 2012). Cultural knowledge is produced and reproduced through communication as a function of the motivational underlying processes driving the communication activity (Echterhoff et Higgins, 2011): Our dissertation and findings arguably show all the interest of the present approach for understanding of the emergence and perpetuation of shared representations and, thereby, of the diffusion of cultural knowledge.

Whereas our approach may help address a large scale of phenomenon such as cultural transmission, the main contribution of the present work certainly concerns interpersonal interactions. A simple way to summarize it would be: Saying may well be believing but it always depends on who is listening! We have demonstrated the importance of differentiating the affection we may experience towards our interlocutors from the reliability we attributed to them. We have garnered new insights on the cognitive consequences of our communication with others, as a function of our desire to befriend them or to benefit from their wisdom.

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