



**MEMORY AND DENIALISM: CONSIDERATIONS ON RESEARCH IN
HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY**

***A MEMÓRIA E O NEGACIONISMO: CONSIDERAÇÕES SOBRE A PESQUISA EM
SOCIOLOGIA HISTÓRICA***

***LA MEMORIA Y EL NEGACIONISMO: CONSIDERACIONES SOBRE LA
INVESTIGACIÓN EM SOCIOLOGIA HISTORICA***



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How to reference this article:

ALMADA, P. E. R. Memory and denialism: Considerations on research in historical sociology. **Estudos de Sociologia**, Araraquara, v. 28, n. esp. 1, e023009, 2023. e-ISSN: 1982-4718. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52780/res.v28iesp.1.16110>



| **Submitted:** 05/03/2023
| **Revisions required:** 22/04/2023
| **Approved:** 11/05/2023
| **Published:** 01/08/2023

Editor: Prof. Dr. Maria Chaves Jardim
Deputy Executive Editor: Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

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ABSTRACT: The article analyzes the foundations of historical sociology and its pertinence in collective memory concepts to elucidate the understanding of denialism and its incorporation in sociological research. Initially, we confront the conflictive tradition of sociology and retrieve individual and collective memory formulations, setting a contact point of the macrostructure and its social micro-relations. From this, we identify how to understand the conception of denialism discursively through disputes over the meaning of memory, albeit in terms of a manipulative and political appropriation that differs significantly from historical revisionism. Finally, we present some results of our research on the memory and politics of 1968, intending to interpret how denialism builds itself in the dispute for the memory of the recent past, mapping out a place to falsify and deceive public opinion.

KEYWORDS: Historical Sociology. Collective memory. Identities. 1968. Denialism.

RESUMO: Neste artigo, analisamos os fundamentos da sociologia histórica e sua pertinência no estudo da memória coletiva, de modo a elucidar a compreensão do negacionismo e sua incorporação na pesquisa sociológica. Inicialmente, confrontamos a tradição conflitiva da sociologia e resgatamos a formulação da memória individual e coletiva, estabelecendo um ponto de contato entre a macroestrutura e suas microrrelações sociais. A partir disso, identificamos como a concepção de negacionismo pode ser compreendida discursivamente, por meio das disputas pela significação da memória, ainda que em termos de uma apropriação manipuladora e política que se diferencia significativamente do revisionismo histórico. Finalmente, apresentamos alguns resultados de nossa pesquisa sobre a memória e a política de 1968, com vistas a interpretar como o negacionismo se erige na disputa pela memória do passado recente, demarcando um lugar de falseamento e ludíbrio da opinião pública.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Sociologia histórica. Memória coletiva. Identidades. 1968. Negacionismo.

RESUMEN: El artículo analiza los fundamentos de la sociología histórica y su pertinencia en los conceptos de memoria colectiva para dilucidar la comprensión del negacionismo y su incorporación en la investigación sociológica. Inicialmente, confrontamos la tradición conflictiva de la sociología y rescatamos la formulación de la memoria individual y colectiva, estableciendo un punto de contacto entre la macroestructura y sus micro-relaciones sociales. A partir de esto, identificamos cómo la concepción del negacionismo puede ser entendida discursivamente a través de las disputas por la significación de la memoria, aunque en términos de una apropiación manipuladora y política que difiere significativamente del revisionismo histórico. Finalmente, presentamos algunos resultados de nuestra investigación sobre la memoria y la política de 1968, con la intención de interpretar cómo el negacionismo se ensambla en la disputa por la memoria del pasado reciente, demarcando un lugar de falsificación que atrapa a la opinión pública.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Sociologia histórica. Memória coletiva. Identidades. 1968. Negacionismo.

Introduction

Sociology, from its specific concerns initiated by its founders regarding the differentiation of other fields of knowledge, makes much use of theoretical, methodological and epistemological resources from History for the conception and construction of its research objects. The strand of Historical Sociology, in turn, presents a field of formulations that is not very well circumscribed nominally, but with its specificities quite present in research themes in Brazil and internationally.

In the so-called theories of conflict (COLLINS, 2009), with an emphasis on the macro-historical perspective, it is common to refer to concepts such as Theory of History, Historicity and debates on the relationship between structure and history and between history and subjectivity. Although it has sedimented a mostly conflicting posture of the historical relationship, the point of view of sociology was directed at the opposition between the past and the present, as suggested by Marx (2011, p. 25, our translation) when problematizing individual agency restricted to circumstances “bequeathed and handed down from the past”. These limitations are configured as one of the main references found and shared in sociological literature and research.

Historical Sociology, when configured under the reference of research objects circumscribed to the past, offers significant interpretations of social relations for the explanation of the present time. This encompasses several lines of analysis, from the questioning of its foundations (ABRAMS, 1983; MONSMA; SALLA; TEIXEIRA, 2018; SKOCPOL; MISKOLCI, 2014); the approach of the History of the Present Time (POLLAK, 1989, 1992; SANDOICA, 2004); the critique of political and ideological continuities and ruptures caused, above all, in the second half of the 20th century (WIEVIORKA, 2018); and, still, the historical disjunctures proposed by cultural studies and deepened by comparative and epistemological approaches of postcolonialism (CHAKRABARTY, 2001).

This article considers the foundations of historical sociology to discuss the concepts of collective memory and denialism and their incorporation in sociological research. For memory, we emphasize how it allows understanding the identities of individuals and groups that articulate and dialogue with the past by composing possible foundations for their actions. As for denialism, we shed light on some current explanatory challenges, understanding them through the aggressive ad hominem attack against established memorial identities, raising interest in appropriation by far-right social movements, illustrated by the incarnation of postures that reject scientific and historiographical consensus.

To illustrate the development of the previous questions, a synthetic overview of a research conducted around the memories and policies of 1968 in its 50 years will be presented, which analyzed the transformations of the collective memory of those events, identifying the meanings of the interpretative changes. Some conclusions observe the narrowness of disputes over memory and the meanders through which denialism is erected, identifying it as a problematic discourse that involves political agents and their relationships with the media.

Historical sociology: disciplinary issues and the rescue of memory

Sociology has almost always proceeded “historically founded and oriented” (SKOCPOL; MISKOLCI, 2014, p. 7, our translation), since its founding fathers showed enormous interest in the development and historical processes to better understand their objects of study, with an emphasis on continuities and historical ruptures. In this sense, some contributions of the discipline are in the conception of possibilities inscribed in the historical moment, in the investigation of the origin of categories of thought that structure the way one thinks and acts in the world, and, finally, the offering of a research material that explores the dualisms by which sociology confronts itself (MONSMA; SALLA; TEIXEIRA, 2018). The contours of historical sociology indicate “an ongoing tradition of research [...] devoted to understanding the nature and effects of large-scale structures and fundamental processes of change” (SKOCPOL; MISKOLCI, 2014, p. 11, our translation).

Interest in contemporary historical sociology was established in the 1960s and 1970s and took on classic issues such as “the origins of capitalism, class consciousness and conflicts, social revolutions, the formation of the State” (MONSMA; SALLA; TEIXEIRA, 2018, p. 69, our translation), added to the problems involving the new developments of global capitalism and its local resistance. The revival of interest in historical dynamism in the 1960s was consolidated against two currents at the time: against the North American sociology of the 1950s, represented mainly by Talcott Parsons, who idealized watertight models that were applicable regardless of the place and era considered, and, on the other hand, against the Stalinist readings of Marx and the development of rigid models of historical evolution that would lead to the socialist utopia. One of the new issues was that of the memory of historically oppressed groups, which presents itself as a “grid of intelligibility of contemporary social and political conflicts”, with emphasis on Foucault, regarding the use of historical investigation as a form of criticism of the present (MONSMA; SALLA; TEIXEIRA, 2018, p. 73, our

translation), revealing points of tension and multiplicities at the origin of processes considered univocal. In order to investigate the implications of memory in the construction of sociological theory, it is essential to rescue the Durkheimian tradition that proposes an interaction both between the “large-scale macrostructures of society and the small-scale microinteractions, or rituals” (COLLINS, 2009, p. 167, our translation).

Since at least the beginning of the 19th century, several authors have identified the individual and collective dimensions of memory, so that the conceptualization of Maurice Halbwachs (2004) raises the perception of its own complexity and density. Based on *La Mémoire Collective* and deeply inspired by Henri Bergson's phenomenology and Émile Durkheim's theory of collective consciousness, he is one of the forerunners in the development of studies focused on memory, especially with regard to the analytical and social foundations of individual and collective memory. It is worth highlighting the centrality of the collective and its effects on the consolidation of memory, which creates a set of effects and conditions raised by a “borrowed memory, which is not mine” (HALBWACHS, 2004, p. 55, our translation). A reconstructive dilemma arises: “if you want to reconstitute the memory of such an event in its integrity, it would be necessary to gather all the deformed and partial reproductions of what it is the object among the members of the group” (HALBWACHS, 2004, p. 54-55, our translation).

The dialogue that emerges from the perception of individual memory in Halbwachs (2004) inspires his conception of collective memory. If until then the subjectivity of individual memory seems to be the synthesis of a process of perception, this is only erected collectively when a genesis of memory is constructed. Individuals only have the ability to remember something from the moment they take the point of view of a group and place themselves within the collectivity, that is, they find themselves belonging to an affective community. Halbwachs (2004, p. 26, our translation) states that “our memories remain collective, and they are remembered by others, even if they are events in which only we were involved, and with objects that only we saw”, because, he says, “in reality, we are never alone”, since “we always have with us and in us a number of people who cannot be confused”.

The theme of the people who live in our lives, in this case, allow us to reveal a collectivity intrinsic to the subject itself. In Halbwachs (2004), this dialogue is present, not in a sense of linguistic exploration with an interdisciplinary predisposition, but in order to materialize the various affections of individual insertion in social groups, so that personal impressions are concretized around the sum of the individual memories with the contribution

of collective memories, that is, “our confidence in the accuracy of our evocation will be greater, as if the same experience were restarted, not only by the same person, but by several” (HALBWACHS, 2004, p. 25). Belonging to one or more groups is fundamental from the perspective of Halbwachs (2004), since, in order for the individual to have memories, the author expresses that the validation of the testimonies and reports of any subject will only make sense for the specific social group in which one is inserted, in which he and the others experienced or were informed of singular events, building a common frame of reference for the members of that milieu.

This point of view is quite different from the memoirs of *In Search of Lost Time*, by Marcel Proust (2003), although points of adhesion are found subsequently. They reveal to us the changes in the behavior of French society at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th and enunciate a modern individual whose search for identity is present in the memories and narratives of a *flâneur*. It is about recognizing the power of images that, at the same time, define places and individuality itself. Proust's narrative turns precisely to a perspective of unfolding his feelings, exposing himself in minutes or seconds that, even fleeting and unnoticed in the present moment, become facts of a unique contribution to the construction of his personality and his ability to understand the world. The *flâneur* walks while looking at the landscape, discovering and creating new ways of appreciating places, which can only be apprehended within a different temporality, of carefree and observant walking.

The Proustian *flâneur* allows us to understand, in a Benjaminian sense, how urban centers present themselves to people, their grandiosity and monumentality, set and imposed by an order of Paris, the capital of the 19th century, and its modernity of lights and territorialization of capital, which become inseparable from these places, even if seized in transit. However, in Proust, the meaning of places is not evidently objective, since “the places we know do not even belong to the world of space, where we place them for greater ease”, that is, they “are nothing more than a thin slice among the contiguous impressions that formed our life at that time; the memory of a certain image is nothing more than the longing for a certain moment; the houses, the paths, the avenues, unfortunately, are fleeting like the years” (PROUST, 2003, p. 414, our translation).

In other words, the urban flow, in this view, reveals a greater affection of the fact in the subject than the individual's objective and desirous possibility of contact with what affects him, moving away from a possibility of non-affection suggested by the “*blasé* attitude” driven by the modernity of large cities, as described by Simmel (1987). If memory can be constructed

outside of the individual and depends on the immediate effect of the condition, how could it demarcate, guide or offer meaning to individuals' reminiscences?

It should be noted that Proust (2003) brings to the debate the issue of discontinuity, flight and the singularity of the instant, elements that were not perceptible in the phenomenology of Halbwachs (2004). However, as Seixas (2004, p. 40, our translation) interprets, collective memory in Halbwachs is “spontaneous, disinterested and selective”, in order to keep from the past “only what of it can be useful to create a link between the past and the present [...], being above all oral and affective, is pulverized as a multiplicity of narratives”, factors that both allow the separation of memory from history (the written, organized, systematized activity) and allow history to begin its path as it “holds” the collective memory. Already in Proust (and also in Baudelaire), memory is constructed “out of time”, that is, in lost time and place, composed of several discontinuities that carry out a constitutive operation of the real: “weaving the threads between beings, places, events [...] recovering them, rescuing them or describing them as they really happened” (SEIXAS, 2004, p. 50, our translation). It is, in other words, a memory that also projects the future and not a return to it, although it constantly deals with gaps and discontinuity.

By escaping from the procedures of discontinuity of memory, history begins to appropriate memory and build it continuously, discursively organizing its gaps. As Nora (1993, p. 9) presents, the interpretation of memory as a “lived tradition” is fundamental for the reconstruction and updating of the present. The dialogue between history and memory is consolidated both through an “always problematic and incomplete reconstruction of what no longer exists [...] a representation of the past” and due to the fact that memory is “an always current phenomenon, a lived link in the eternal present” (NORA, 1993, p. 9, our translation). The “place of memory” is a result of the voracity of modern times, since these would be the means found by the present to conserve traditions, as well as a response to shorten the distance between the history of society in oblivion and the collective memory. Therefore, “places of memory [...] are born and live from the feeling that there is no spontaneous memory, that it is necessary to create archives [...]” (NORA, 1993, p. 13, our translation), that is, they are spaces where memory will crystallize no longer as individual memory, but attributing meaning to the experience and to what was felt and became the experience of the community.

In sociological terms, memory, a constituent of individual and collective subjectivity, projects the importance of its study for understanding the action of different groups and the way in which they represent themselves. Understood as a “collective operation of the events and

interpretations of the past that one wants to safeguard”, memory is integrated into “more or less conscious attempts to define and reinforce feelings of belonging and social boundaries between collectivities of different sizes: parties, unions, churches, villages, regions, clans, families, nations etc.” (POLLAK, 1989, p. 9, our translation). Therefore, the collective aspect here goes beyond the sense of a willingness to recognize what is external to the individual and starts to affirm the individual belonging to the collective, defining its place, its limits, irreducibility and, mainly, its unity. Collective memory can gain the meaning of a national identity, consolidated from multiplicity, as well as the forgetfulness and erasures caused by it, although this does not rule out the presence of underground memories, responsible for ruptures with institutionalized identities and official memories. On the other hand, as a maker of identity, self-representation and its reference to exteriority, memory establishes itself as an object of social struggles and tension, which makes it unstable and requires constant re-elaboration and maintenance over time.

A form of (re)elaboration of the unit of memory, however, must be thought of differently from a single sense of individual history and the conditioning of the narrative, because, as Bourdieu (2006) warned, the projection of this unit distances the understanding of collective history. Biographical illusions, these artificers that condition the meaning and coherence of history, build “the set of objective relationships that united the agent under consideration [...] to the set of other agents involved in the same field and confronted with the same space of possible” (BOURDIEU, 2006, p. 190, our translation). In other words, although the biographical trajectory can be thought of in terms of memory stabilization, its resignifications and reformulations may indicate a dispute over the meaning of memory that recreates subjectivities, understanding the connection between individual trajectories and individual and collective positioning in social space, projecting, in the same way, the access and possession of symbolic capital (ABRAMS, 1983; BOURDIEU, 1996a).

Denialism: from revisionism to alternative history

The epistemological and methodological renovations of History, which paved the way for the History of the Present Time and its rescue of memory (SANDOICA, 2004), enabled complex discussions about the historian's "craft". Consequently, several academic debates on historical revisionism gained prominence, offering methodological reconsiderations around discussions of collective identities, political discourses and the reminiscences of memory — in short, offering historiographical revisions that allow both the revision of the values that guide historical research regarding the reconsideration of historical events and processes (CAPELATO, 2016). This points to a debate about the rules and power games subscribed to in the academic field, although this was not the only sense of revision raised by the historian's craft.

Revisionism also acquires a second meaning, now no longer restricted to the standards and methods of the historical discipline. It is in this context that data manipulations, distorted interpretations of the past, factual inaccuracies, decontextualizations, among others, appear in the dispute and recognition of the historiographical debate. This historiography, which presents itself in a "therapeutic" way, aims to present a set of subjective propositions, in order to mitigate the negative effects of the past on the subjectivity of groups and collectives in the present time. The denial of the so-called official story and the assumption of another story, which has yet to be revealed by an unsuspecting professional body, is one of the theoretical elements that identify this manipulative historiography.

The turning point towards denialism occurs in *a posteriori* interpretations of the Holocaust. The German *Historikerstreit* of the 1980s was left with an incipient notion of polemicizing about Bolshevism, violence and the extermination of Jews and the existence of concentration camps in Nazi Germany, questioning the Soviet totalitarian model and its policy of control and ideological manipulation, of in order to suggest that the Nazi ills could also be shared with the communists/Stalinists (MELO, 2014; ALMADA, 2021b). However, the "historians' quarrel" still leaves the way in which this vision is operationalized in the scientific field of History and in politics.

Thinking about the French historiography of the late 1980s, the implicit meanings of the exercise of the historian's craft, when trimmed by fraud, fables and the maintenance of personalist myths, offer greater meaning to political appropriation, followed by an improvement in the denial of violence and torture, projected in the denial of the existence of the Nazi genocide (VIDAL-NAQUET, 1998). With this, a symbolism permeated in and by later generations is

projected, referring directly to memory and its manipulation. These effects can either be generated by the reluctance to recognize supporting documents or by the use of less rigorous methods in the analysis of the sources, or even by simple conclusions, resulting in an alignment with nationalist, neo-Nazi, anti-Semitic or anti-Zionist postures (VIDAL-NAQUET, 1998).

A more detailed investigation of this revisionism/denialism leads us to the path of its interpretative origin, intertwined with the disputes and divisions of the left in post-1968 France. It was up to the left-wing *Vielle-Taupe* bookshop, previously influenced by the situationist movements (CORRÊA, 2021), to publish, in the 1970s, several works that simplified what Auschwitz and the genocide of the Jews were like, such as those by Paul Rassinier, Robert Faurisson and Serge Thion, interspersing economicist arguments, pure and simple denial and methodical doubt, revealing a profound misunderstanding, on the part of that left, of what anti-Semitism was (VIDAL-NAQUET, 1998). Over the years, this simplifying view will mix with the conclusions promoted by mediatization movements of the May 1968 undulations (ROSS, 2018) and with views defended by the traditional and nationalist right, such as colonial regret and the critique of multiculturalism, noting in this the decadence of contemporary France (AUDIER, 2008). With the support of Catholics, conservatives, nationalists and extremists, this discourse gave rise to a culturally pessimistic and, to some extent, revanchist thinking of the past, also presenting *ad hominem* arguments against deconstructionist and post-structuralist philosophers.

Supported by a situation of “crisis of the social question”, this thought emerges in French universities, breaking a positive consensus of May 1968 until then existing. The political culture that arose from this consensus began to be systematically knocked down to its pillars: relativizing and refusing the existence of the Holocaust, denouncing French collaboration with Nazism and the sectarianism of Marxist groups, thus giving rise to a public debate around political views that come to defend a defense of pluralism and equality (ROUSSO, 2006). This discursive perversion aimed at confronting and challenging the collective memory built around the Holocaust, May 1968 and, more broadly, the defense of human rights. With this, a political manipulation of history was evidenced that reverses victims and executioners, in addition to the mitigation of episodes of violence and extermination, based on a right to voice built on the defense of freedom of expression.

At this point, it is essential to understand that, endowed with criteria that are not very objective, the evocation of freedom of expression takes on a contemporary political contour that brings together values inspired by the political liberalism of Alexis de Tocqueville and

John Stuart Mill, through which the attempt to repudiate public opinion can be conceived, in a simplified way, as an act of tyranny. As Hannah Arendt (2008) demonstrated in her analysis of the “*Pentagon Papers*” of the 1970s and the reaction of the United States in manipulating the events of its defeat in the Vietnam War, the lie orbits politics and poses risks to the Republic and liberal democracy (ARENDR, 2008). The tension between freedom of expression and the use of lies in politics leaves open the way in which the negationist history can be operationalized in contemporary political discourse, since the presence of ideological assumptions reinforces the presence of an identity and a political language that apparently open themselves up or the democratic construction of their meanings. However, the fable created by the Pentagon is an example of how another alternative vision of history and, evidently, the passage through the sieve of acceptance or rejection of public opinion allows or not the publication of this version.

The manipulation of history, in this case, gains its own discursive meaning, candidate for the position of “*epistēmē*”, that is, disputing the meaning of a “set of relationships that can be discovered, for a given time, between the sciences, when these are analyzed at the level of discursive regularities” (FOUCAULT, 2020, p. 231, our translation). Considering alternative history as an “episteme” makes its capacity to produce discourses and practices of knowledge that, although changing in terms, expose the pertinence of its right to exist, and that, if this right is curtailed, the established democratic limits are broken. If the content of this “episteme” is the manipulation of history and the projection of a parallel factuality, its meaning can no longer be confused with any revisionism.

A multidimensional science of its own is constructed, where various discursive practices overlap: the historical denial of archives and historical evidence; belief in cyclical or teleological history; narratives that assume a theory of degeneration rather than an understanding of change; the mythologization present in the substitution of facts for chimeras; nostalgia for an imagined past, selecting historical facts and narratives; the presence of an ahistoricism based on lies; the use of fragmented and biased memory present in popular public memory (VALENCIA-GARCIA, 2020).

The historical and discursive meanings suggested by Alternative History recover, finally, the same dynamics of the past and present relationship on which historical sociology focuses, in addition to forging the perspective of truth, rigor and scientificity, through an intentional distortion of the facts. Therefore, the dispute with science is relentless, as denialism rejects the scientific *illuſio*, that is, the meaning of the scientific game, “[the] conventional codes, [the] socially founded assumptions, [the] socially constituted” (BOURDIEU, 1996b, p.

367, our translation). However, their dispute does not only take place at the level of science and rationality, but of beliefs, ideologies and political passions, which need to change the facts and their interpretations to find a discursive and, mainly, political statute, valid and accepted in society.

As they are the collective and public memories that could establish a subjective counterpoint to the authoritarianism invested with freedom of expression of denialism, the claims of its existence start to face subjectivities said stigmatized or allegedly dissonant, which only find in means of real freedom of expression the possibility of a 'frank' speech with its intended audience. Extremist right-wing, nationalist or conspiracy-theorized groups that have moved towards the production of Alternative History, in this case, argue with revanchism when their ideological views, once rejected in public debate, appear with some prominence. They start to argue in favor of their legitimacy and the previous non-recognition of these versions as an oppositional political act, which can be carried out by oppositionists, scientists, historians or by individual and collective memory, disputing their silencing and forgetting.

Memory and Politics: research notes

In order to elucidate some propositions previously elaborated, I intend to present the direction of the research agenda conceived around the investigations about the 50 years of 1968. With it, I propose to offer the conceptual operationalization of historical sociology, memory and denialism around four moments.

The first moment starts from the re-elaboration of the “1968 events” as a research object, according to the disciplinary interrelationships of Historical Sociology and the History of the Present Time. When considering 1968 in a broader perspective, we can understand a gradual departure from sociology's concerns around these social conflicts, followed by an expansion of research on this field in historiography. The resonance of the events of 1968 in Contemporary Sociological Theory is an element of reconstruction of the debate, which is fundamental for the understanding of several theoretical and conceptual assumptions usually present in the Social Sciences (ALMADA, 2020a), but which, in a way, emphasizes macro-structural relationships to the detriment of subjectivities (not just revolutionary) that were projected by these events. In other words, if 1968 was understood as an event with significant effects across the globe, its consequences cannot only be measured in terms of a production of subjectivities restricted to a revolutionary ethos. This event served as a basis for reflection on various theoretical

formulations of Marxism, critical theory, structuralism, post-structuralism and postmodern currents, each with a specific interpretation. Grouping such interpretations together, one finds three distinct approaches in sociological theory to these events: rebellion, social fragmentation, and the new political culture of social movements. Having identified these three matrices, it was possible to establish analytical lines for changing the interpretation of these events over the last 50 years.

There are also two other elements that came together in the “celebrations” of the 50th anniversary of 1968: i) the dispute over the meanings of events; ii) the dispute between different actors for the memory of 1968. The construction of a broad historical and sociological balance allowed understanding and deepening an existing gap in studies: to differentiate what would be the history and what would be the memory of 1968, a dilemma that could be resolved, in methodological terms, through a framework of memory and academic studies on the subject. This reveals not only the limits of the analyses, but also the set of ideas and social, economic and political processes that served as the background for each of the historical researches and memorialistic reports. Grouping, classifying and seeking regularities in the bibliographies on the subject allowed us to go beyond the disciplinary and academic scope of the studies, integrating them through the nuances and differences in the speeches of protagonists and interpreters about 1968, as well as following a division through the decades of these writings.

In a second moment, we observed that these questions were interrelated with an aspect that was little problematized in the academic field: the representation of memory in the past and its intertwining with the revolutionary vision, predominant in most of the writings. When dealing with the contexts of Portugal and France, the shift of the revolutionary imaginary of the 1960s from the North to the global South stands out, composing a third-world image of its aspirations and utopias (ALMADA, 2020b). It was concluded that, in addition to the scenario of the youth protest carried out in those central countries, there would be a little revealed memory that would build and deconstruct the revolutionary places idealized and conceived by a Eurocentric matrix, which subsumes the production of contesting subjectivities to a mimicked subjectivity of the events of 1968 in France.

Analytical decentralization indicates the epistemological limits of well-established versions of the French 1968, especially those that consider that these events boosted occurrences in other parts of the world or, even, that build a historiography based on problems, chronologies, actors and its class actions according to what is considered valid for the French case. This paradox indicates that there is a co-occurrence of singularities of the various 1968s

(extended 1968) and that these, on the contrary, do not result in the synthesis of the French May: the attempts at synthesis, in this case, end up discrediting the various 1968s and producing them as non-existent in their uniqueness.

The third moment investigated how the protagonists and interpreters of 1968 offered non-fixed interpretations of those events, guiding interpretative and memorialistic changes that can be evidenced in the 'commemorative' decades (ALMADA, 2021a). Dealing with the issue from the analysis of works that encompass the vision of intellectuals and the memoirist account of former participants, in Brazil and Europe, these points of view were analyzed, elucidating the relations between the memoirist return, oblivion and the silencing. Consequently, interpretative lines were pointed out for understanding the 1968 memory disputes in the present time, launching a balance of the differences between the academic perspectives and those of former participants, which would encompass a more general field of memory policies. This path considered how the interpretations and memories of the events of 1968 were transformed over the course of their ten-year commemorations. The qualitative analysis of the Memory Policies offers an important indication that the set of meanings and interpretations of this period cannot be considered stable, since there is a heterogeneous group of actors who both claim the "inheritance" (and its particular terms) and seek to move away from it, and thus renew collective memories.

Until then, the three marked moments reveal a theoretical, symbolic and memorial dispute of the events of 1968, highlighting the various actors (protagonists, interpreters, social movements, political actors) involved in this field. We were also interested in understanding the erasure dynamics of those events, as well as the field of disputes of these memories in the present time, which will reveal intrinsic relationships between revisionism and denialism, elucidating the "battles for memory" (RICOEUR, 2007). However, it was necessary to analyze the conflicts presented in the political field between the inscription in memory and the imposed oblivion, because, if there are political actors who claim the "inheritance", there are also those who postulate themselves, in the expression of Pierre Vidal-Naquet (1998), as "killers" of memory.

Finally, the political history of recent Brazil reveals how the origins of the negationist discourse are configured, mainly with regard to its support for violence, arbitrariness and serious violations of human rights committed by the civil-military dictatorship. I tried to address these tensions in the field of memory, investigating how Jair Bolsonaro (President of the Republic between 2019 and 2022), when he was a federal deputy (1991-2018), operationalized

a political position contrary to the National Truth Commission (CNV, Portuguese initials), built on the precepts of the negationist discourse (ALMADA, 2021b). The results of this research reveal some characteristics of this denialism: a simplifying and Manichaeic view of historical processes (on which there is extensive historiography and research constituted over the years); the falsification and misuse of historical sources; constant revanchism and mention of “wounds” that cannot be opened, inversion of victims and perpetrators; perverse defense of freedom of expression, even when defending non-democratic positions or those that violate human rights; translation of historical factuality into a fable of historians or specialists guided by exclusively political and ideological interests; operationalization of conspiracy theories regarding the support and financing of left-wing groups, among other aspects.

The conclusion of this study revealed that historical denialism may present some nuances in Brazil. One of them is the refusal of the existence of the civil-military dictatorship, followed by the defense of its violent methods of oppression of the opposition, an argument that has been evoked by right-wing and extreme-right movements in Brazil in consonance with the defense of the claim of a “true history”, different from that understood by historians, specialists and political forces contrary to or associated with the democratic and left-wing field. Another nuance concerns the assumption of the presence of unsuspected sources unknown to the general public, which reveal the indisputable truth, but which are only known and disseminated by the negationists. This aspect is very important, as it not only leads to the belief that there is a “secret” and dissonant historiography, but that the lack of knowledge about it is an intentional and ideological way for groups, mainly on the right, to deceive public opinion.

Final considerations

In historical sociology, memory operates a connection between social macrostructures and microinteractions, in order to offer an interpretative substrate for the most diverse processes of subjectivation. Both from an individual and collective point of view, memory indicates the insertion of individuals in groups and their figuration as such, which allows identifying belonging, individual interactions with places and symbolic relations between the past and the present. However, disputes over memory are not only competing narratives, but also discourses that aim at a deliberate attack against memories, mainly of minorities and groups of political opponents.

Denialism operates in this attack. Although it relies on a perspective of defending freedom of expression, there is a concealment of a perverse argument, which interconnects from the falsification of historical and scientific sources to the ad hominem attack and the assumption of a history “untold” and held by few specialists whose political interests prevail over any others. When facing the denialism debate, historical sociology must not only pay attention to the architects of the refusal of historical events, but also to the construction of discursive realities that go beyond certain contexts and start to link specific and challenging knowledge of science, history and sociology. In this case, a research anchored in the understanding of the relations between past and present allows one to differentiate the dispute over memory on the part of the actors, on the one hand, and, on the other, attempts at silencing and denialism.

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CRediT Author Statement

Acknowledgements: Graduate Program in Social Sciences, School of Sciences and Languages of Araraquara (FCLAR/UNESP) Center for the Study of Violence, University of São Paulo (NEV/USP).

Funding: CAPES and FAPESP.

Conflicts of interest: There are no conflicts of interest.

Ethical approval: Not applicable.

Data and material availability: Study conducted with publicly available books and scientific articles.

Authors' contributions: Pablo Emanuel Romero ALMADA is responsible for the research, analysis and writing of the article.

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.
Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation.

