

9 Integrating paradigms, methodological implications

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Doise, in Chapter 7 of this book, emphasizes that researchers have focused empirical work on only one aspect of the theory of social representations. They have been mainly concerned either with describing the content of existing representations or with examining how anchoring and objectification operate. They have left largely unexplored Moscovici's hypotheses concerning the ways in which, at the level of the metasystem, social groups generate representations which serve group purposes. Representations serve different types of group interest, and Moscovici describes three: diffusion, propagation, and propaganda. Representations serving these three communicative purposes have different structures and organization. They differ particularly in the extent to which they are consensually shared within a group or a subgroup. The defining property of a social representation is not simply that it should be shared: the predicted internal structure of the representation and the extent to which it is dispersed within a recognizable group or social category will depend on the functions that it is serving.

This has major implications for the empirical approaches which should be adopted when exploring social representations. It suggests that intra-group dynamics and inter-group relations will direct or channel the formation of any specific social representation. This requires that the theorist should formulate clear predictions concerning the structure of a representation as revealed in the thought, utterances, and action of the individual in relation to that individual's position in a group. It calls for the analysis of likely implications of changes in group structure for the representation. It necessitates consideration of the inter-group processes which promulgate the social representation and afford it a venue in which to be used. It emphasizes that representations are embedded in complex representational networks and that they are liable to change, whether in a subtle or a global way, as a result of their relationships to each other.

The empirical implications of this theoretical agenda range from the need to design studies differently, through issues concerning the appropriate type of data to collect, to questions about the optimal forms of data analysis. In order to illustrate the full range of the empirical implications of examining that part of the theory of social representations which focuses upon the

metasystem, it is necessary to first discuss some of the theoretical propositions which might be generated.

Social-identity theory and social-representation theory

Having emphasized the importance of intra- and inter-group processes in shaping social representations, it is hard to avoid asking whether it is now timely to seek to integrate the theory of social identity (Tajfel 1978) and the theory of social representations. In their original forms, these two theories represent two distinct paradigms. The word 'paradigm' is used loosely by psychologists: we talk about paradigms which are models of methods of discovery and about those which are models of description or explanation. In both senses, social-identity theory and social-representation theory reflect different paradigms.

Social-identity theory, while it attempts to explain inter-group relationships, is a model which focuses upon individual needs and motivation (the need for a positive social identity) as the means of fundamentally explaining interpersonal and inter-group dynamics. Social-identity theory represents a formal model, in that it presents definitions of the constructs it uses and clearly describes their relationship to each other. Social-identity theory makes direct predictions of behaviour; it is an explanatory, not a descriptive, model. Social-identity theory has been tested primarily using experimental or quasi-experimental methods. In contrast, social-representations theory, in describing how people come to interpret their world and make it meaningful, is a model which focuses upon processes of interpersonal communication as the determiners of the structure and content of the belief systems which are called social representations. Moscovici at least (though not some of his followers) has shunned formal propositional elaboration of the model. He has rejected the need for formal definitions of the constructs he uses in the model, and avoids prediction on the basis of the model. Social-representation theory is concerned largely with describing the content of representations, not with predicting what that content will be in any particular group context. It is primarily a functionalist model; much attention is paid to explaining the purpose of representations. Social-representations theory has occasionally been tested using experimental methods but researchers have chosen primarily to collect representations using survey techniques—sometimes using in-depth interviews, other times using questionnaire formats.

Social-identity theory and social-representation theory have characteristics which set them apart as quite distinct paradigms. Neither could be regarded as having introduced a paradigm shift (in the Kuhnian sense) into social psychology. Both have venerable ancestors within the discipline. They reflect the social cognition–social construction debate which has haunted social psychology since its inception. Social-identity theory and the theory

of social representations could be linked to create a more powerful explanatory model of action and could mark a step towards a real paradigm shift in social psychology.

Integrating the two theories could make both more ready to face their critics. Integrating them could also produce a generic theoretical framework which might replace, or at least contextualize, a large number of social-psychological models, each of which has been created to explain a narrow range of social behaviour in highly specific settings.

Social-identity theory (Tajfel 1978) could benefit from the alliance with social-representations theory because it has been too narrowly focused on explaining inter-group conflict and differentiation (Tajfel and Turner 1986). By addressing the issues of social representation, it can provide a model of the broader role of identity processes in directing the social construction of what passes for reality. The liaison may ultimately even encourage the integration of social-identity theory and self-schema theory, since recent work on schema has been shifting towards a recognition of the essential role of social processes in cognition (for example Deaux (1992), Gurin and Markus (1989), and Abrams (1992)).

The advantages for the linkage of social-identity theory and social-representations theory would not be one-sided — social-representation theory benefits, too. One of the major problems currently with the theory of social representations is that it cannot explain why a particular social representation takes the form that it does. Social representations, at one level, are cognitive structures which function to facilitate communication between members of a collectivity because of their shared or consensual form. For the individual, their role is to give meaning to novel experiences (whether people, objects, or events) by setting them in a contextual frame that makes them familiar (Moscovici 1981, 1984, 1988). At another level, social representations are public rhetorics used by groups to engender cohesiveness and to manoeuvre relative to other groups. What is unclear in the theory is any process which determines the actual form which the representation takes, or the likelihood that any one individual will be able to reproduce or accept it in its entirety. Social-identity theory could help to describe the processes which might be at work both in shaping the form of the representation and then determining the work it is made to do above and beyond simply making the new familiar.

In presenting here some preliminary explorations of how identity processes might be linked to processes of social representation, it is useful to start with questions about groups and representations.

Groups and social representations

The relationship between social identity and social representation is undoubtedly dialectical; their influences upon each other are reciprocal. It

should also be acknowledged that while in any one instance they may be causally linked, in others the relationship may be non-causal (both being determined by some external variable or complex network of variables). But, to analyse the potential relationship between social identities and social representations, it is necessary to take one step back and examine how social representations are tied to groups. Of course, Moscovici has acknowledged in some of his writings that social representations are intimately related to group processes (Moscovici 1981, 1984). The problem has been pinning down quite how they are connected.

Production, differentiation, and function

In examining the connection, it is important not to confuse a social representation with the process of social representation which produces it. Group processes affect both the process of social representation and the form of a social representation.

In considering the relationship of group dynamics and social representations, there is, firstly, the question of ownership. Obviously, a group may be the producer of a social representation. Alternatively, and equally obviously, it can be produced outside the group. Often, more interestingly, a social representation will be co-produced by different groups, with executive producers changing over time as the social representation develops. The tendencies to see social representations as the property of either unstructured concatenations of individuals communicating without a goal or a single, highly goal-orientated conglomerate are both misleading. There is no reason to believe that social representations are less likely to be generated over great periods of time, with contributions from many different sources who are motivated by quite different objectives. This is clearly most true of the development of those social representations which equate with political ideologies. It is also evident where social representations are, as it were, 'borrowed' by one group from another. An illustration of this comes from the work of Palmonari *et al.* (1987), who showed how psychologists seeking to professionalize themselves integrated into their representation of the professional psychologist images common to other professional groups.

To the extent that structured groups *are* the producers of social representations, their form and development will not be controlled by any simple intra-individual, or even interpersonal, processes of anchoring and objectification. The form will serve group objectives. The task of theorists now is to show how group dynamics influence the operation of the processes of anchoring and objectification at both the intra-personal and inter-personal levels. Moscovici has failed to specify how these processes operate, not in terms of their cognitive underpinnings, but rather the systematic biases which social influences introduce into their operation.

Power differentials are only one such influence which might be examined empirically. Inter-group power differentials will have an important impact

upon the development of social representations. The acceptance of alternative social representations of a single event is likely to be greatly affected by the relative power of the two groups generating them. This power may lie in the ability to propagandize the representation through the media. The alternative social representations of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 which emanated from the parties involved in the conflict provide a suitable example. In the early days of the occupation, descriptions of the Iraqi removal of babies from life-support machines in Kuwait were used cogently to symbolize and make concrete, even familiar, the horror of the situation. It became known later, after the land war had removed the Iraqi forces, that the machines had not been stolen. The power to manipulate the social representation of the invasion during the lead-up to the war was significant in readying whole nations for action. It was interesting to see that the social representation generated on US media, with the active involvement of the exiled Kuwaiti ruling family, was differentially accepted across Europe. The Germans were particularly hesitant to accept the social representation which had taken hold of the US people.

The implications of the need to consider inter-group power relations for those studying social representations are significant. It requires, firstly, that the analysis explicitly establishes what power hierarchies exist which are pertinent to the representation. This often means going beyond the target group for the study, and sampling members of sometimes very distant out-groups simply to verify assumptions about which groupings are relevant. Secondly, it will frequently require a historical analysis of the relationship between groups and their changing use of representations over time. Such an analysis may use a diverse array of sources and data types (for example autobiographical, archival, or legal). Thirdly, it will demand that the distribution of a representation within the group is discovered. A powerful group may be able to impose a representation on some members of a less powerful group, but not on all of them. Only by developing sophisticated indices of the diffusion and degree of acceptance of the representation across the subordinate group is it possible to test fully assertions about the effects of power. All of these considerations militate against using minimal-grouping experimental paradigms, since establishing arbitrary and recognizably-transient power differentials cannot be expected to reveal much about the operation of representational processes within real hegemonies.

Just as the relative power of groups is significant, the relative power of individuals in the group is also important. It may be these individual power differentials which explain why, even in homogeneous groups, not all members will reproduce the same representation of a target. Social representations may be most simply defined by their 'shared' status, but it would be ignoring the facts to assume that large numbers of people share identical representations. Even when the representation is meant to be consensual, as

in the case of stereotypes, there are still differences between individuals in the details and organization of the representation. As Potter and Wetherell (1987) have said, Moscovici has not specified what level of consensus or sharing must be attained before a social representation can be said to be shared within a group. Many of the early empirical studies (Di Giacomo 1980; Hewstone *et al.* 1982) used methods which ignored diversity or individual differences in representation. The implications of integrating the identity and representation paradigms is that methods used must allow the description of both consensus and diversity. This means that data must be collected from individuals, not simply from aggregates. It also means that sampling within the group should include individuals from different statuses or roles. Analysis should focus upon similarities between people but not to the exclusion of establishing their dissimilarities. Many of the statistical techniques for doing this are described in Part II of this book.

Differences in the extent to which a representation is available to, and used by, any one individual must be something to do with the individual's position in the group, but it is also linked with their relationship to the target of the representation and the context in which the representation is elicited. This has recently been clearly recognized where research on stereotypes is concerned (Billig 1985; Hewstone 1989; Hraba *et al.* 1989; Kleinpenning and Hagendoorn 1991) and, of course, stereotypes have been argued to be one type of social representation (Abrams and Hogg 1990; Hogg and Abrams 1988). If correct, this is important for the design of research. It means that greater care needs to be taken in establishing the significance of the representational target to the individual. It suggests that an inevitable question in any research on representations should be, 'What is the significance of X to you personally?' (where X is the target of the representation). Recognizing the relevance of context of elicitation also changes the shape of data collected: a structured analysis of the context in which people are asked to express their representations would be required.

The functions which the social representation serve for the group will also affect the processes of anchoring and objectification. At least, the functions served should affect the prior systems of representation chosen to act as the anchor for anything new, or any development of the old. They should shape the objects which will be chosen as the frame of reference or referent points for familiarization which permits objectification. It is interesting when exploring the social representations of AIDS/HIV that new beliefs about the disease were not, in the early years, tied to representations of other sexually-transmitted diseases but to rather less secular comparitors: it was widely represented as the plague meted out as divine punishment of homosexuals. This representation clearly served many intergroup prejudices.

In social-identity theory, Tajfel (1981) argued that stereotypes serve three types of function:

- (1) social causality—scapegoating;
- (2) social justification;
- (3) social differentiation.

By extrapolation, one can assume that social representations serve these functions, but the emphasis in echoing Tajfel is too one-sided: it suggests that the form of a social representation will be determined by group needs. Yet, this ignores the possibility that over time a social representation will constrain the group's range of options in seeking legitimation or differentiation. Lyons and Sotirakopoulou (1991) illustrated how established representations can constrain and channel attempts to achieve positive differentiation for the ingroup. They showed that not even the most ardent British nationalist would claim Britain to be superior to France in food or fashion (though they were also unwilling to acknowledge inferiority). Traditional social representations constrict any gambit for improving the group's position, by determining what will be credible as a claim. This is rather more than saying that the new social representation is anchored in the old. The issue here is credibility, not necessarily ease of information storage or retrieval, and not even the search for familiarity.

The functions identified by Tajfel focus upon the group's manipulation of facts and their interpretation in the service of self-interest in inter-group comparisons. But, social representations obviously serve other types of function for the group. Groups can also use representations to foster common consciousness among members which need not be associated with the inter-group context. Basically, this is merely to emphasize that social representations serve group functions at the intra-group level. Sharing the representation can become the badge of membership and the precursor of understanding the reason for sharing common goals. Some recent work on environmental-social representations illustrates that novices in green movements are virtually 'educated' into particular representations of the issues (Ashford and Breakwell 1992). Moscovici and Hewstone (1983) argued that social representation contributes to group-identity formation in the sense that merely by sharing a social representation, group members come to feel a common identity since they have a common 'world view'.

It is important to recognize that one implication of this power of social-representation processes to engender a common sense of identity will be that social representations, once created, are very persistent but, more importantly, that the processes themselves will not disappear or fade away. There is a very clear illustration of this point in the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the resurrection of ethnic and religious identities. The old social representations are as vivid as ever; they may have been lying low for nearly five decades or longer, but they are still there.

One of the most obvious empirical implications of integrating the social-

identity and social-representation paradigms is that this relationship between group identity and representational processes becomes a key issue. The methods used will need to take account of the longevity of representations tied to groups. Historical analyses would seem potentially valuable. Within the representation research tradition, they are already used to some extent. But, this would be a significant addition to the empirical armoury of social-identity theorists.

The function served by social-representation processes must be recognized as distinct from the function of the specific social representation which is then generated. There are actually two levels of function that we are dealing with here, the function of the process of representation and the function of a specific representation. The process of representation may function to anchor and objectify novel experiences and understandings. Knowing that anchoring and objectification occur does not help us to predict the actual shape of the representation which results or the action which it will motivate. Group dynamics and individual needs determine the function of the specific representation and consequently its actual structure. Only modelling these effects will help us to explain the forms which action actually takes.

Targets of representation

The second issue concerning the relationship between representation and group dynamics is the question of the object, or target, of the social representation. The connection of groups and social representations can come through the relationship of the group to the object of the representation rather than to the way in which it is produced.

A group may in reality be the object of the social representation either directly, because it is characterized in the representation, or indirectly, because its recognized out-groups are characterized in the representation. Either way, the social representation can come to reflect the existing group identity or posit an alternative identity for the group (affecting the defining properties of the group). The work which Jodelet (1989, 1991) has done to unearth the representations of mental illness illustrates forcefully the power that representation has in a community to create an identity for a social category.

Yet, a social representation may be significant to a group not because the group produces it or because it directly defines the boundaries of the group identity; it may simply be targeted upon an object which is important to the group at a specific time. An example can be drawn from the research conducted by a social geographer, Matthews (1981, 1983). A community group from an inner-city neighbourhood which included a red-light district and was facing redevelopment found the broader community's social representation of the prostitutes in the area important. The broader community (the city council) wanted to redevelop the area in such a way as to eliminate the sex-

industry enclave, based upon a strong negative representation of the effects of the male and female prostitutes working in the area. The proposed redevelopment adversely affected the interests of the community group (such as by breaking up a long-established working-class neighbourhood in an unsympathetic way). The social representation of prostitution in the area became a vital fulcrum for renegotiating the redevelopment plan.

Another example would come from the representation of genetic engineering by society. This is clearly significant for those who suffer from genetically-transmitted diseases. Legislative decisions affecting potential offspring are based upon reactions to the social representation of genetic engineering which dominates. This example shows that the representation does not have to be about people—it can be about a scientific process. Moreover, it shows again that social representations held by a powerful few (legislators) can have tremendously significant effects for those who may have no effective route to influence the representations.

Any research which takes the distal impact of representations seriously will have to tackle two problems which will affect its methodology. First, it must actively explore which groups of people are likely to be affected by the representation, other than the group producing it. Having identified them, they will have to be sampled. Sampling appropriately will depend upon having some criterion for inclusion, such as potential range of diffusion of the representation effects within the group. Whatever criterion for sampling is chosen, it needs to be explicit. One of the great problems in research in this area is that samples tend to be opportunistic. This means that when any questions which concern the extent of diffusion of the representation or its impact in the group are asked, it is difficult to know to what extent strong generalizations can be made. If the sampling is inadequate or inappropriate, it is obvious that any conclusions, but particularly those about diffusion or consensus, are invalidated. At least, if researchers specify the criterion used in sampling, it is possible to deduce the level of assurance with which generalizations are made. It can also help in interpreting apparent disparities in representations produced by members of a group over time.

The second empirical problem to be faced concerns the time-frame for the research. Distal effects of representations may be long-term consequences, not immediately apparent when the representation is produced. This means that studying the groups potentially affected at the same time as studying the group generating the representation may be fruitless. The empirical problem lies in guessing the sensible time-frame to adopt. One way around the difficulty is to employ a time series design: collecting similarly structured information on a number of different occasions from the same population but not necessarily the same sample.

Salience of representations

The third issue to address in analysing the relationship of representations and group dynamics concerns the importance of a social representation to the functioning of the group. In understanding the role that group membership has in shaping the process of social representation for an individual, it is important to look not only at the part that the group plays in the production of the representation, or the relevance of the target of representation to group definition and objectives, but also to consider how significant or salient the representation is for the group. The same social representation will vary in its actual importance to the group over time and across situations. The relative importance of different social representations will similarly vary with circumstance. It should actually be possible to develop at least a crude model of the factors which will affect the importance which a social representation has for a group. This has not been attempted yet.

One fairly uncontentious prediction would be: the more significant the social representation is to the group, the more likely it will be that group membership will affect the individual's involvement with the representation. This prediction can be tested in very simple quasi-experimental designs.

Relationships between representations

Finally, in considering groups and representation, there is the question of the networking of social representations. It is notable that most empirical research on social representations has chosen single targets for representation and treated the resulting representations in isolation (for example representations of health, mental illness, the city, a student protest, or the family). Yet, we all know that a social representation of one target relates to that of another (this is actually implicit in the notion of anchoring). The problem empirically lies in knowing when one finishes and another begins, and the decision may ultimately be arbitrary. Sotirakopoulou (1991), in her longitudinal study of the nature of anchoring, has shown empirically (in relation to the changing representations of the unification of Europe) how difficult it is to talk about one discrete social representation being anchored to a separate discrete but prior representation. It seems reasonable to suggest that groups can often dictate to members which are the appropriate linkages between representations for them to make, constraining the individual degrees of freedom in association.

Several of the chapters in Part II of this book examine how it might be possible statistically to distinguish the boundaries between representations. It is worth noting that these approaches impose structure without reference back to the individuals who provided data. A complementary approach to exploring relationships between representations would be to build into the data-collection an opportunity for individuals to provide representa-

tions of different targets, and then to describe how they perceive the connections between them. This approach does not prevent the researcher from subsequently analysing the structure statistically, but the two accounts of structure can be compared. It also provides more than one representation from each individual, so it is possible to do a meta-analysis of the structure of representations independent of their target. Such a meta-analysis is necessary if we are to examine empirically the generic structure of representations.

Social identity and representational processes

For the purposes of this chapter, Tajfel's (1978) original definition is used, of social identity as that part of the self-concept derived from group memberships with the value attached to those memberships. It could be extended to include Turner's rather broader notion of a group which includes any category recognized by the individual (even one without material existence—as in minimal-grouping experiments). Turner talks about self-categorization rather than social identity (see Turner (1991) for a review of his work). The term social identity is used here, but what is said would equally well apply to self-categorization. Since social identities are a product of group or category memberships, there are a number of ways in which social identity might influence processes of social representation.

Exposure

Memberships will first affect exposure to particular aspects of a social representation, as well as to the target of the representation itself. Groups ensure that members are informed about, or engaged with, social representations which are central to group objectives and definition. Out-groups ensure that members are presented with other aspects of social representations which may be rather less in keeping with the in-group's interests. Additionally there are, of course, many other purveyors of social representations (the media, the educational establishment, and the government). Memberships may influence exposure to these not directly but indirectly, influencing the level of attention paid to particular social representations, or affecting opportunities to interact with them.

The effects of exposure can be examined in developmental perspective. Augustinos (1991) has argued that age, in so far as it equates with length of exposure to a group's repertoire of social representations, will relate to the degree to which the individual shares with others of the same age a social representation. She tested this notion by examining teenagers' representations of different groups in Australian society. She showed that while individual differences were present in all age groups, they reduced systematically with age. This line of enquiry is clearly worth taking further; it has echoes

of Vygotsky's claims concerning the role of social influences upon apparent cognitive development.

Acceptance

Memberships will affect acceptance (or rejection) of the social representation. They do this sometimes by establishing the extent of the credibility of the source of the social representation, or at other times by explicit commentaries on the representation. Failure to accept the group's verdict on a social representation can put the individual at risk of censure or even rejection. The consequences of rejecting the group's preferred representation of an object clearly vary with the importance that it has for the group. The consequences will also depend upon the individual's power within the group.

It would be foolhardy, however, to overemphasize the tendency towards conformity within a group concerning social representations. Moscovici has shown that groups are capable of encompassing considerable divergence of representations among their membership. The problem of modelling the extent of the group's tolerance for disagreement is, in my opinion, very pressing.

Use

Memberships will affect the extent to which the social representation is used. Definition of 'use' in this context is difficult but would include: the frequency with which the social representation is reproduced (that is, communicated to others) and addressed (that is, used as a point of reference in making decisions, assimilating new information, and evaluating a situation).

Obviously, the importance of the social representation to the group and its relationship to the group's objectives and self-interest will affect the extent of the individual's exposure, acceptance, and use.

Some illustration of the relationship between social identities and social representation can be garnered from research on the political and economic socialization of 16–19 year olds (Banks *et al.* 1991). This project involved a longitudinal study of two cohorts of teenagers (15–16 and 17–18 at the start of the study) over a period of two years. One of the central concerns of the researchers was the exploration of political-party identification over this period when young people first officially participate in politics.

The first thing to say is that the representation of the political system which these young people held was clearly related to their political involvement. Those who had some consistent party preference – that is to say, those who identified themselves as consistently Conservative or consistently Labour over a period of three data collections taken at annual intervals – were more likely to represent the political system as responsive to the electorate, essentially as democratic. More importantly, those who had a consistent political-party preference were more likely to reproduce coherently in

their own representations the pattern of policy-related ideology which separates Left from Right in British politics. This was expressed in their opinions about taxation, welfare rights, nationalization, and other policy issues.

These data seem to indicate that consistency in political self-categorization is the key to coherence in reproducing the current party ideologies. It should be noted that direction of self-categorization is not significant. Labour and Conservative alike were more able to generate the coherent pattern than those who were inconsistent. It is notable that the data show a very marked trend: those who are totally inconsistent over three surveys are least systematic in reproducing party ideologies; those with total consistency are most likely to mimic the party line.

There is an obvious question: is it coherence which is causal, or consistency? Unfortunately, this cannot be answered. The relevant measures which might have permitted comparison of ideological sophistication across time were not taken at the start of the study. For the purposes of the current illustration, the question of causality is secondary anyway. The significant finding is that consistency in self-categorization is tied to ideological coherence. Consistency in self-categorization is linked to the coherent reproduction of a social representation of political issues matching that espoused by the political party preferred. It is possible that consistency allows for greater exposure to the party's ideology; consistency is likely to be reinforced if the ideology is found to be acceptable, and may encourage more intense use of it over time. It was certainly the case that those who were consistent were more likely to report engaging in more frequent discussion of politics.

Not just the stability of a social identity, but its centrality to the overall self-concept or self-schema, will affect exposure, acceptance, and use. There are many indirect illustrations of this point in the literature. For example, Gurin and Markus (1989), in a fascinating exploration of the cognitive consequences of gender roles for women, showed that women would espouse more intense representations of the gender inequalities in society where a non-traditional gender role was for them a central social identity than where it was not central.

Moreover, centrality of a social identity to the self-concept often motivates the active search for exposure to group-relevant representations. Some of the work done by Coyle (1991) on the development of gay identity shows a clear pattern of significant and unqualified self-definition as gay, being followed by a period of seeking affirmation from other gay men and the adoption of specific patterns of social representation.

While centrality of the social identity to the self-concept will affect the exposure to and acceptance of a social representation, one would expect that the centrality of the social identity will change across situations and thus

affect the differential use of the social representation. Even if a social representation is very salient to a group and thus to a social identity, it is unlikely to be used in a particular situation unless that social identity is seen to be relevant to the situation. The repertoire of social representations which can be addressed or used in any given situation is broad. The ones chosen will be influenced by the social identities pertinent to the situation. Kleinpenning and Hagendoorn (1991) illustrate this in the use of ethnic stereotypes, showing them to be context-specific and dependent on the group significance of the situation.

These effects of social identity upon social representations would imply that there will be considerable individual differences in any specific social representation which one cares to elicit. This is borne out empirically. Social representations, though shared, do not seem to be shared in their entirety—even within relatively homogeneous samples. Individuals customize their social representations to suit personal goals: in identity terms, these would include self-esteem, continuity, and distinctiveness (Breakwell 1986). This does not always work in the way that one might expect. Sometimes, social representations with a negative impact upon the individual's social identity are accepted and used. For instance, in the early 1980s unemployed young people were found to accept and reproduce aspects of the very negative social representation of unemployed youth common at the time (Breakwell *et al.* 1984). They did, however, add elements to it which set their version apart from the general one: combining self-recrimination for lack of ability and effort with a strong fatalism which was not present in the common version of the representation.

While social representations play a part in shaping social identities (both their content and their evaluation) through defining group identities and boundaries, social identities in turn, through influencing exposure, acceptance, and use of social representations, can shape their development. It does not take much imagination to see how a new idea might be stifled and never become a shared representation if group dynamics restricted its exposure, acceptance, and use.

The integration of the social-identity and social-representation paradigms puts these issues surrounding exposure, acceptance, and use forward as prime targets for empirical exploration. No methodological constraints are involved in pursuing them except the need to have data from individuals which is both pertinent and open to systematic analysis which will reveal individual differences.

Traits and social representations

In considering the relationship between social identities and social representations, it becomes evident that one really also needs to consider personality

traits as potential determinants of individual differences in involvement in the processes of social representation.

There is no need to go into the tired old argument about the distinction between personal and social identity (Breakwell 1986; 1987). The term trait is used here to refer to a psychological characteristic which is long-lived and, though differentially manifested across situations, can be said to relate to behaviour in a systematic manner. This definition would include as traits such facets of self-concept as self-efficacy (Bandura 1989) and psychological estrangement (Breakwell, 1992).

Clearly, traits and social identities, from the viewpoint of the entire biography of an individual, are not always so discrete and separate. Traits can become a part of self-categorization. For example, having the trait of shyness can lead to self-definition as part of some conceptual grouping of shy people; it may even lead to seeking out the company of other shy people and, thereby, to group membership. Traits certainly lead to classifications imposed by other people. The shy person is identified as such and whole domains of social behaviour are no longer expected of her. In contrast, group membership may call forth or intensify certain traits: membership of a women's group might actively promote assertiveness, while membership of the Conservative party might actually nurture Conservativeness.

From the perspective of the entire biography, traits may, therefore, not be so clearly separable from social identities. Yet, taken at a single moment or over a brief period in the person's development, when a social representation is to be acquired, evaluated, and applied, it may be useful to look at traits. It may be particularly useful to consider those self-evaluative traits, like efficacy, self-esteem, and estrangement, which actually may systematically influence the way group memberships are chosen and enacted.

At this point, it is not necessary to consider the potential relationships between traits and social identities. For clarity, they can be dealt with separately in relation to processes of social representation, yet it will become clear that there is a great deal of similarity between their respective links to social representation processes.

There are two sorts of ways in which traits relate to social representation processes:

1. Traits as *psychological states* shape the individual's exposure to, acceptance of, and use of a social representation. Moscovici argues that social representations are a product of inter-individual communication/interaction and many personality traits would recognizably influence the course of such interaction. To go back to our shy person, shyness could prevent participation in many areas of communication necessary either to acquire or to influence a social representation. There are other examples. The trait of curiosity has a self-evident relationship to gaining exposure to a variety of social representations. In our research on the public images of science and

scientists, we have shown that curiosity is also related to a general proclivity to accept and use, as well as access, novel ideas (Breakwell and Beardsell, 1992).

2. Traits as *self-conscious self-definitions* also shape readiness to expose oneself to, accept, or use a social representation. In so far as at this level traits are self-categorizations, it could be argued that they are also social identities. However, they still need to be treated as different from those social identities which are derived from group memberships. This is particularly relevant since identities derived from memberships will be subject to group-determined pressures towards particular types of social representation which are absent where self-ascribed traits are concerned.

The importance of self-attributed traits can be illustrated with data from research conducted on the sexual activities of 16–21 year olds (Breakwell and Fife-Schaw, 1992, Breakwell *et al.* 1991). The work is a cohort-sequential longitudinal study involving postal surveys of an initial achieved sample of about 3000 young people, drawn randomly from all those in the relevant age cohorts in three districts of England. One facet of the findings can be used to illustrate the current point. A series of questions were posed to elicit aspects of what might reasonably constitute a representation of AIDS/HIV: knowledge of the routes of transmission, beliefs about people with AIDS, convictions concerning the possibility for discovering a cure, and feelings about personal chances of contracting the virus (including levels of fear). An extensive set of questions about sexual activity (for example, age of first intercourse, numbers of partners, condom use, and patterns of sex acts ranging from kissing to anal intercourse) were also asked. Additionally, self-descriptions of traits, which included willingness to take risks, were elicited.

The trends in this data are clear: self-professed riskiness is correlated with less 'safe' patterns of sexual behaviour (basically, more partners and less use of condoms). One could argue that people responding to the questionnaire in this way are using both the trait descriptions and the report of behaviour to self-categorize as risky. There is no need to claim here that the behaviour reported is determined by the trait; for the purposes of this argument, what matters is the relationship of both behaviour and trait to the representation of AIDS/HIV. Riskiness (defined in terms of self-ascribed behaviours and trait) was positively correlated with a representation of AIDS/HIV which effectively diminishes the risks attached. So, risk-takers are more likely to feel that a cure is feasible, to think it is possible to identify a person with AIDS by looking at him or her, and to think that having sex with only one partner will prevent infection.

No indisputable reasons for this relationship between a self-ascribed trait and aspects of a representation can be offered here. It may be that the representation is just a justification or rationalization for risky acts, generated either before or after they occurred. The point is merely that this

sort of relationship between self-description, representation, and action exists and that researchers need to adopt the empirical approaches which will allow it to be explored.

The argument does not require that all traits affect the adoption of every social representation. It merely suggests that when examining the differential adoption of a social representation, either in its entirety or in some part, it is necessary to consider the role of personality traits. This is a somewhat unfashionable stance in social psychology. Yet, it is supported by the recent work of Gecas and Seff (1989, 1990) which has shown how closely related self-categorization (in terms of social class, for instance) and traits (namely self-efficacy and self-esteem) actually are. There is now reason to believe that the underlying trait of self-efficacy (as defined by Bandura) is fundamentally important in predicting not only action but also the acceptability and use of patterns of social representation.

Treating personality traits as important in the study of social-representational processes has significant implications for the type of empirical approach which is feasible. Clearly, the data source for both traits and representations must be at the level of individuals. Sampling must allow for individual variations in the target trait, and the form of data analysis chosen must permit exploration of individual differences. This effectively means that the analysis will have two apparently conflicting objectives. It will look across individuals for communalities in the structure of representations. It will also seek to pinpoint the patterns of differences between individuals and how these relate to trait variations.

It would be interesting to see how far it is possible to track the role of an individual in the generation of a social representation. Social identity clearly has a role to play in dictating the significance of any one individual (power differentials, networks, and so on) but it would also be intriguing to see how personality traits relate to involvement in developing a representation. At the moment, there appears to be no research on this type of issue and it is alien to the recent tradition of social-representation research. Yet, it is an arena where it would be possible to go that one step further in uniting the cognitive traditions in social psychology with the social-analysis movement in social psychology.

The empirical implication of the need to track individual inputs to the development of a social representation lies largely in the time-frame for the research. It requires a design which is, in one way or another, longitudinal—either continuously following the individual over some period which is predicted to be formative in the development of the representation, or time-sampling the relationship between the individual's activity and the structure of the representation.

The relationship between personality traits and social representation can be examined in reverse of course. It could be argued that, in so far as traits are socially-constructed domains (prototypes), they are a product of

social-representation processes. This notion that the dimensions of personality are socially-constructed segments, with a socially-determined meaning and significance, is attractive. It does not mean that the trait possessed by an individual is any less real, but it gets us away from assumptions that traits are individualistic and non-social explanations for action.

Action, identity, and social representations

Social representations relate to both individual and group actions. They often specify objectives for action and the course that it should take. The major problem in explaining, worse still predicting, individual action in any particular situation lies in the fact that the person will be characterized by several social identities and their attendant social-representational baggage at the time. These identities may push towards different, even conflicting, forms of action.

The emphasis which is nowadays placed upon notions of centrality or salience and contextualization of identities is meant to overcome this problem. The identity salient in the context will direct action, or so the line of argument goes. The problem is then that it is usually impossible to establish, except *post hoc*, that a particular identity is salient in the situation.

The other approach to this problem has been to examine the interactive effects of group memberships. This recognizes that identities do not have separate existences, like individual ice-cubes segregated from each other in their plastic tray, but interact; their interaction changes their implications for both representational processes and action decisions. The research which has explored these issues of 'multiple-category membership' or cross-category membership (Doise 1978; Deschamps and Doise 1978; Vanbeselaere 1987; Hagendoorn and Henke 1991) is in its infancy. It is, however, clear that attributional aspects of social representation are much influenced by such interaction of category memberships. One would expect action decisions to be similarly affected by it.

The research on cross-category memberships has so far tended to rely upon rather stylized pairings of memberships (Muslim-non-Muslims/high-low-class; male-female/arts-science students) and to explore them as if their interaction was global (without variations across individuals or situations). Moreover, it ignores the fact that there are different sorts of groups. This is hardly likely to produce a robust model for predicting action. The empirical problem lies in catching the implications amidst the fluidity of transitions in the relative importance of each membership. Billig (Chapter 2 of this volume) in analysing situated rhetoric, the arguments which disclose both identifications and social representations, may be getting closer to tapping into this flow. There may be another type of solution to the problem empirically. Instead of attempting to control for the interaction of group memberships by setting up relatively arbitrary experimental

cross-classifications, the impact of these multiple memberships upon representations could be examined statistically. The multivariate statistical approaches adopted in several of the later chapters in this book illustrate how, assuming that the sample size is large enough and the relevant information collected, it is possible to partial-out the effects of disparate networks of group memberships. Given the right indices of group salience, this approach could also allow researchers to explore the salience-related processes linking multiple memberships to representational preferences.

It would, clearly, be foolish to jump to the conclusion that there will be inevitably some high correlation between the requirements of identity, trait, or social representation and action. It is actually necessary to specify the conditions under which they do predict action (and are not merely *post-hoc* rationalizations for action taken, generated by the individual who has acted).

There is one pointer from recent analyses which could be pursued further. Skevington (1989) suggested that we should remember emotion when talking about the effects of social identity. She argued that the theory had omitted all reference to emotion and its impact upon action and social representation. Emotion could be more seriously analysed by social psychologists as an inevitable part of their models of action, predicted either by identity dynamics or by representational processes.

One of the clearest examples of the importance of emotion comes from research on fear. There is the enormous literature on the impact of fear upon persuasion, which must be pertinent when considering how social representations are propagated. We know that levels of fear are related in a complex manner to the facility with which people assimilate and act upon new understandings. The exploration of the effects of fear upon social-representation processes in inter-group contexts, where discrimination can be rather more realistically threatening than is reflected in the differential allocation of points in a minimal-group experiment, is important. At the level of individual action, fear can be an important factor in determining how a social representation is translated into action. Again, research on sexual activity provides an example. In intensive interviews, the young people studied would sometimes describe how their fear of alienating a partner would prevent them from suggesting that a condom should be used during sexual intercourse, despite the fact that they were fully aware of the dangers of AIDS/HIV and the social representation of what constitutes safer sex.

Taking emotion seriously in research on social representations would have some implications for the empirical approach adopted. First, it would suggest that manipulative designs (either experimental or quasi-experimental) would need to be used so that the researcher could be assured that the target emotion was present. If a manipulative design was not used, it would be necessary to collect structured information on the emotional context in which the representation was elicited or observed. Secondly, it would require

that systematic measurement of emotional state should be used. This would entail indexing the target emotion but also any other concurrent emotion. Thirdly, it would require a time-frame for the study which allowed any change in representation related to changes in emotional state to be monitored. Finally, it would need forms of analysis which would delineate both correlation and change in the representation and the emotion.

Conclusion

Integrating the social-identity and social-representation paradigms has a number of methodological implications. None of these involve the imposition of any single methodological orthodoxy. In fact, the theoretical integration calls for a parallel diversity of empirical approaches. The choice of method of data collection or analysis in any particular study should be determined by the theoretical proposition to be tested. In virtually all cases, a variety of methods will be needed to address the theoretical question fully. The real problem lies in relating findings drawn from different methods to each other. In studying the genesis of a representation, it may be important to use a historical analysis of the relative power of the groups producing it and affected by it. In looking at its spread within a group, it may be necessary to use surveys with carefully chosen samples. In assessing its persistence, time-series sampling may be utilized. There is no question of homogenizing or layering data from these different sources in some bland soup or, even, laying one upon another in some rather more substantial lasagne. They should be related to each other via the theory used. The empirical findings are not an end in themselves. They are valuable in so far as they can test and develop the theory. Integration is not at the level of empirical findings, but at the level of theoretical conclusions.

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