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Chapter 7: Representations, identity and resistance in communication

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Key terms

Social Representation: *A system of common values, ideas and practices that enable people to understand each other and communicate about similar issues. It also involves a degree of subjective interpretation that leads to differences in understanding, different readings of texts and therefore the motivation to communicate. Representations may be hegemonic, negotiated or oppositional.*

Encoding-Decoding: *A circular process by which mass communication is imprinted with meanings (codes) and read through the meanings salient to different audiences. There is often a 'lack of fit' between the processes of encoding (or the production of communications) and decoding (the reception and interpretation of communications. Both processes feed into, and sometimes challenge, each other. Encoding-decoding occurs in different communicative genres:*
> ***Diffusion****: the anchoring of the unfamiliar into familiar knowledge in an seemingly neutral manner, characterised by sceptical intelligence*
> ***Propagation:*** *the association of the unfamiliar to particular beliefs, established by central authorities (such as the church)*
> ***Propaganda:*** *the ideological manipulation of new ideas to support and defend the political interests of a particular group (such as a political party).*

Ideology: *A system of hegemonic representations that sustain the dominant cultural order. Here it is more useful to examine the ways in which communicative practices operate ideologically through the systematic manipulation of knowledge in the service of power and the defence of unequal social relations.*

Culture: *Often taken to mean a broad collection of values, ideas and practices (that is a network of representations) that define a particular group or community, such as the British community or a student community. Culture is something produced in and struggled over in communicative practices.*

Cultural difference: *The ideological construction of differences between cultures. This frequently invites stereotypes about 'us' and 'them' and evaluations that present certain cultures as superior. In practice when we examine cultural differences we often find that there are more similarities than differences across cultures, and therefore it is difficult to separate cultures as distinct.*

Identity: *An individual's sense of who they are in relation to others around them. This simultaneously incorporates a sense of belonging and shared knowledge and a sense of difference and individuality. Different forms of identity and so different types of social groups lead to different communicative genres.*

Resistance: The ways in which communicative exchange enables dominant representations to be challenged, rejected or transformed, for example through the articulation of oppositional representations. Here we are interested in Social Psychological change and so examine the psychological processes that enable resistance (e.g. representation) and the communicative genres that also may facilitate resistance (e.g. particular community dialogues).

Representations, identity and resistance in communication

"We cannot communicate unless we share certain representations"
(Moscovici and Marková, 2000, p. 274).

Representations sometimes call our very identities into question. We struggle over them because they matter – and these are contests from which serious consequences can flow. They define what is 'normal', who belongs – and therefore, who is excluded" (Hall, 1997, p.10).

Our identities, the ways we see and represent ourselves shape how we communicate, what we communicate about, how we communicate *with* others and how we communicate *about* others. Hence identity, representation, culture and difference are all central to a Social Psychology of communication. Take culture: Germans and Greeks differ considerably in the amount of small talk in business discussions, which is seen by Greeks as important to building up relationships (Pavlidou, 2000). American English speakers tend to be talkative and inquisitive in conversations with people they do not know well, and relatively quiet in the comfort and intimacy of close relationships, while the reverse is true for Athabascan Indians (Tracy, 2002). Added to such cultural differences are communication patterns relating to gender (Duveen and Lloyd, 1986), religion (Miike, 2004), class (Skeggs, 1997), language and dialect (Painter, 2008), amongst others. What's more, it is very difficult to untangle the intracultural nature of identity and how this impacts on communication (Martin and Nakayama, 2005). Hence communicative exchanges are "deeply cultural", as "groups of people will speak and interpret the actions of those around them in patterned ways" (Tracy, 2002, p. 34). One of the questions for a Social Psychology of communication is: Do such cultural patterns facilitate or obstruct communication? (see box 7.1).

Box 7.1

Do cultural differences facilitate or obstruct communication?
Communication is often studied with reference to *inter*cultural differences, that is communication between people from *different* national and linguistic groups. Hence the fact that there 'are' different cultures - distinct and discrete, relatively homogenous cultures that can be defined against one another is taken for granted in much work on communication. Following an encoding-decoding model (Hall, 1980, detailed below), for example, messages are seen to be encoded in the symbols and nuances of one culture which may not be accessible for someone from another culture. As Porter and Samovar (1988, p. 21) explain:

> When a message reaches the culture where it is to be decoded, it undergoes a transformation in which the influence of the decoding culture becomes a part of the message meaning. The meaning content of the original message becomes modified during the decoding phase of intercultural communication because the culturally different repertoire of communicative behaviour and meanings possessed by the decoder does not contain the same cultural meanings possessed by the encoder.

Culture informs the ways we think and act in relation to everything – even the ways in which we think *about* communication. Hayakawa (1978) for example, points out how communication is represented in Western cultures, where the listener is often positioned as subordinate to the active and independent speaker. In other cultures where collective understanding is more highly valued than individual success, there are not so much different roles of the speaker and the listener, but rather a joint enterprise for meaning, empathy and building connections with others (Fitch, 1998). It is very important that we bear this in mind when doing research into communication. The social sciences as a whole but especially anthropology and cross-cultural psychology have in fact fuelled a whole communications industry that examines, records and advises on cultural difference – what to do where, how to act, how to please, how to do business, how to negotiate, how to order from a restaurant menu, et cetera (Bennett, 1993). Clearly there are different cultural practices across all sorts of located and virtual social encounters and such knowledge can be enormously helpful, as detailed in chapter 3.

However such intercultural texts, albeit produced with the best intentions and sometimes acclaiming the importance of inter-cultural respect, may often be "somewhat inclined toward stereotyping, occasionally given to exaggerating cultural differences" (Hannerz, 1999, p. 398), offer one-dimensional accounts of culture that downplay the interconnections between culture, gender, class and history, and possibly endorse ideologies of prejudice (Orbe, 1998). In many settings such claims of cultural difference attract an array of obstacles to successful communication, namely overstated assertions of difference/similarity, states of anxiety about difference and prejudiced attitudes (as already described in chapter 3). Representations of 'other cultures' often impose homogenising claims of how 'our culture' is compares (favourably) to others (Hall, 1997), while talk about 'our culture' may do symbolic violence to the identities and practices of minoritised groups (Orbe, 1998).

Once we accept the diversity and ongoing transformation within all cultures, it becomes very difficult to speak of 'different cultures' very meaningfully (Howarth, 2009a). However, as the literature demonstrates (Martin and Nakayama, 2005), there clearly are various cultural practices, forms of identity, different social groups and relations of power that do lead different forms of communication. But rather than examine different 'cultures', I suggest we see culture as something that we *do* through systems of representation, rather than something we have. In this way we can now examine how all cultures change and transform, meet and merge with others, clash and crystalise into distinct and sometimes hostile factions *and* contain competing representations, interests and voices. We then begin to see communication as a political struggle (Hall, 1981) or cultural negotiation (Holliday *et al,* 2004), a way of presenting and re-presenting cultural knowledge in a ongoing system of negotiation – though we are not all positioned equally in this dialogue, as is evident when we consider representations of 'race' (Hall, 1988, 1997; box 7.2).

Hence we need to examine the 'patterned ways' of speaking, interpreting and acting and so explore the relationship between communication and identity. Interestingly, in two distinct disciplines, theories of representation have emerged as a means of examining such patterns in

communication, and connections between communication, identity and resistance. In Social Psychology this is Social Representations Theory (SRT), as developed by Serge Moscovici (1961/2008); in Cultural Studies this is the extensive work of Stuart Hall (1980, 1988, 1997).

SRT has been described as a theory of communication since its inception. Indeed, as Duveen (2000) has pointed out, "representations may be the product of communication, but it is also the case that without representation there could be no communication" (pp. 12-13). Representations (as common structures of knowledge and social practice produced in social psychological activity) can *only* exist in communication through the development of shared systems of values, ideas and practices; and social representation (as a psychological process that is at once cognitive *and* cultural) is *only* possible through the communication of emergent and relational identities, shifting claims to difference and claims to commonalities. SRT studies make use of many different communicative genres: everyday talk, narratives, scientific discourse, media images, historical documents, institutional practices, cultural artefacts, advertising posters, and even drawings and weavings.

And yet, SRT does not offer a precise theory of communication *per se.* Rather it is a theory about the role of representations in communicative practices, particularly in the transmission of knowledge and the presentation of identities. This is valuable for a Social Psychology of communication as it highlights the simultaneously ideological and collaborated nature of communication, the relationship between communication, difference and identity, and the possibilities for resistance and transformation within communicative exchange. It is in though studying SRT that we learn about these aspects of communication, with a particular focus on the *social psychological* processes involved. However, by incorporating the work of Hall, as we do below, we are able to develop a much more compelling account of the *politics* of communication, consider the ideological role of the media and other public institutions in the development and dissemination of representations, and possibilities for resistant identities to emerge in communicative practices. Hall (1997) describes his approach as:

> more concerned with the effects and consequences of representation – its 'politics'. It examines not only how language and representation produce meaning, but how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constrains identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practised and studied (p.6).

Hence an 'articulated' account of representation that draws on both SRT and Hall proposes a more *political psychological* version of communication than either theory provides alone[1]. Furthermore it demands an integrated focus on what Moscovici and Marková (2000) call the primary genres of communication (everyday debate and conversation) and secondary genres of communication (mass communications, institutionalised discourses and so forth).

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[1] Hall refers to 'articulation' as a practice of bringing together different theoretical frameworks in order to move beyond the limits of either theory on its own.

<u>What is the relationship between representation and communication?</u>

Social representations are "systems of values, ideas and practices with a two-fold function: first, to establish an order which will enable individuals to orient themselves in their material and social world and to master it; and secondly to enable communication to take place among members of a community by providing them with a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of their world and their individual and group history" (Moscovici, 1973, p, xiii).

From this widely cited definition, we see that representations "provide collectivities with intersubjectively shared means for understanding and communicating" (Duveen and Lloyd, 1990, p. 2). Because they are the codes we use to explain the past and the past is always changing to accommodate the present and support ambitions for the future, these codes (and the identities they support) are always in a process of transformation (Hall, 1988). Moscovici first employed the term *social* representation to distinguish the concept from Durkheim's (1898) notions of collective and individual representations. For Durkheim a collective representation is a 'social fact' which is imposed on us, difficult to challenge, uniform and coercive in its effects. Social facts are more common in traditional societies, where there is comparative uniformity in belief, knowledge and communicative practices. In contemporary society, different knowledge systems (relating to science, religion, health, economics, politics and so forth) compete in diverse settings. As a result there is more critique, argument and debate and so less stability in knowledge and communication. Most collective representations have now fragmented under these pressures, giving birth to more dynamic, unstable and oppositional representational fields (Hall, 1980). Under the pressures of globalisation, meanings become highly contested and negotiated, as Lewis (1994) recognises:

Meanings becomes a battleground between and among folk cultures, class subcultures, ethnic cultures, and national cultures; different communications media, the home, and the school; churches and advertising agencies; and different versions of history and political ideologies. The sign is no longer inscribed within a fixed cultural order. The meaning of things seems less predictable and less certain. (p.25)

Or simply as Hall (1997) has put it, "meaning floats. It cannot be finally fixed" (p. 228). Hence the process of representation in and of itself invites social and psychological change. As Philogène's (2001) research demonstrates "social representations are vectors of change, because they are the medium by which we communicate new situations and adjust to them" (p. 113). Representation is something we do in order to understand the worlds in which we live and, through communicating our understanding, we convert these systems of values, ideas and practices into a social reality, for others and for ourselves. In this process the idea or practice may be confirmed or perhaps re-articulated in some way (Hall, 1980). And representation is not something we do independently as *thinking individuals*, but something that is always a relational, collaborative and deeply political process evident in "*thinking societies* in clubs, museums, public libraries, political libraries, cafes, economic or political associations, ecological movements, medical waiting rooms, therapy groups, adult education classes" (Moscovici, 2001, p. 12). Hence the process of communication encourages both change and stability, resistance

and containment in the genesis of knowledge (Hall, 1981), as we see in both primary communicative genres (everyday debates and conversations) and secondary communicative genres (in mass communications and scientific debates, for instance).

<u>Communication across science, the media and the everyday</u>
Moscovici's own classic study of the circulation of knowledge about psychoanalysis in media and everyday discussions is generally seen as the communication of scientific knowledge into popular discourses. This can easily be related to Hall's model of encoding-decoding. This presents a powerful critique of theories that characterise mass communication as a transparent and straightforward system of inscribing and discovering the intended meaning in discourse, where audiences read off the intended meaning in media texts for example (Hall, 1980). Hall demonstrates the 'lack of fit' between the circular process of encoding (by producers and reporters) and the decoding (by audiences) and the ways in which this opens up possibilities for polysemic values and oppositional accounts to develop. In a similar way, various studies using SRT examine "how science manages to become part of our cultural heritage, of our thinking, of our language and daily practices. … by leaving the labs and publications of a small scientific community to penetrate the conversation, the relationships, or the behaviour of a large community and to get diffused in its dictionaries and current reading matter" (Moscovici, 2001, p. 10).

This is often described as the relationship between the reified world of science, where representations are encoded, and the consensual world of everyday conversations and commonsense, where representations are decoded. Just as Hall critiques studies that present this as a one-way process from encoding to decoding, we need to be critical of SRT studies that only examine the transmission of science into the everyday (Batel and Castro, 2009). Just as for Hall's encoding-decoding model, we need to see these worlds (of science and the everyday) as intimately connected and reactive to each other. Hence we also need to examine the impact of everyday knowledge on scientific discourse (Howarth, 2009b). As we see in this chapter (e.g. box 7.2), SRT studies have examined the construction and communication of different identities – in children's stories, institutionalised practices, and school curricula, for example. We may still find that certain representations become reified as normative beliefs and practices, but that the relationship to science is much less specific. What may be more productive to a Social Psychology of communication is an analysis of the processes of reification and consensualisation (Howarth, 2006a). In a similar way to Hall this would allow us to examine the ways in which representations become *systemically distorted* and *naturalised* in the maintenance and defence of the dominant cultural order.

Box 7.2

Community dialogues and challenging representations that 'race'.
The relationship between identity, difference and resistance has been at the centre of my own studies on racialised identities. Drawing on both SRT and Hall, I have looked at the role of 'race' in young people's efforts to assert and communicate positive cultural identities (Howarth, 2002a). In particular I have examined the impact of racism on children's sense of self, of

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community and culture (Howarth, 2006b). I have shown how 'race' may limit identities – restricting one's sense of possibility and of ambition, and how such representations may be communicated and institutionalised within the symbolic culture of schools (Howarth, 2004). In being seen in a particular way, for example, as black, brown or mixed, pupils are positioned as different, as other and, often, as *less than* in contexts of intellectual achievement and learning (Howarth, 2007). These contemporary racist stereotypes remain tied to our history of colonial relations, slavery, the denigration and economic exploitation of particular cultures and the maintenance of white privilege and hegemony (Hall, 1997). Because these "are widely known and shared in the culture, or among the stigmatized, it is not necessary for a prejudiced person to communicate the devaluation of the stigmatized for that devaluation to be felt" (Crocker, 1999, p. 103). Such representations, then, are *ideologically* constructed, communicated and resisted in systems of difference and privilege that constitute and communicate the social norms and consensual beliefs of a culture. Once again, we see that values, ideas and practices are communicated symbolically – through the media, material culture, social spaces, embodied practices and so forth. Very little may be actually *said* for racialising stereotypes to be felt.

This research into 'race' highlights the symbolic violence of communicative exchanges that marginalise, stigmatise and exclude others. I have also found that it is in supportive collectivities and community dialogues where such negative experiences can be discussed that identities are debated, defended and sometimes re-made. Children and teenagers in educational and community groups, often with the explicit aim of challenging prejudice and spoilt identities, collaborate innovative ways to problematise racism, disrupt its gaze and so rupture its hold over their identities (Howarth, 2004; see also chapter 2). The opportunity for communicating one's experiences of identity and racism and developing a sense of relationship and community can provide the social support and psychological resources to re-construe threats to identity (Howarth, 2009b). Thus, we can see how particular communicative practices both assist and challenge ideologies of prejudice, such as racism or sexism.

Both SRT and Hall assert that communication is both normative yet transgressive, individual yet shared, prescriptive yet malleable. Representations, as Abric has described, are both "consensual but marked by strong inter-individual differences" (1993, p.75). Hall has also explored the deeply ideological and restrictive nature of representations and also their very agentic and transgressive nature. How do we explain this contradiction? Abric (1993) suggests that in communication it is not *all* of a representation that is open to elaboration, development or contradiction. There are different constituents: the core and periphery. The core of a representation is the 'heart', the fundamental elements of a representation "determined by historical, sociological, and ideological conditions" (p.74). It is "stable, coherent, consensual and historically marked" (p.76). It resists change and is relatively continuous and consistent. The periphery is more responsive to the communicative exchanges within which it occurs. Peripheral elements are open to challenge and revision, and are "flexible, adaptive and relatively heterogeneous" (p.77). Hegemonic representations, similar to ideologies, are comparatively unchanging over time and so are almost completely dominated by the central nucleus of ideas. Other representations, particularly those that oppose the dominant order, are more contested and so more reactive to the peripheral elements.

These include what Moscovici defines as emancipated and polemical representations. The former "are the outgrowth of the circulation of knowledge and ideas belonging to subgroups", separate from the main spheres of public debate. The later are "generated in the course of social conflict, social controversy and society as a whole does not share them" (Moscovici, 2000, p. 28).[2] In a similar way Hall distinguishes between dominant-hegemonic (also 'preferred meanings'), negotiated and oppositional readings. The former are obviously akin to hegemonic representations in that they saturate commonsense and support the dominant cultural order. Negotiated readings are more complex as the reader/viewer has the potential to adopt *and* oppose dominant discourses more in line with local conditions and so are comparable to emancipated representations. Finally oppositional readings, related to polemical representations, but are in direct opposition and critique to mainstream beliefs and discourses.

What is also common in these accounts is a focus on the cultural embeddedness and multi-accentuality of representations, highlighting their polysemic (Hall) or polyphasic (Moscovici) nature. Hall draws on Bakhtin (1981) and Volosinov (1973) to highlight the ways in which meanings are 'accented' by those who speak them, historically and contextually continguent and characterised by oppositional meanings and contradictions. As described above, there is always a 'lack of fit' or a tension between the processes of encoding and decoding, which fuels debate, argument, opposition and resistance. Moscovici, also influenced by Bakhtin, takes this a little further: while there is always such a lack of fit between intended meanings and interpretations in the process of representation at the level of *thinking societies*, there may also be a 'lack of fit' between the representational systems of *thinking individuals*. Hence ambivalence, tension, contradiction, what Moscovici terms 'cognitive polyphasia' exists both at the level of psychology and at the level of culture; both in terms of what individuals say, do and think and in terms of how representations are communicated and understood more broadly (Wagner and Kronberger, 2001). As close reading of Hall, suggests he would have little to argue with here, although he would demand more analysis of the politics at stake in the polysemic nature of representation, as we turn to next.

The politics of representation
In using representations, we incorporate them into our current ways of understanding and everyday talk, through the processes of (a) anchoring and (b) objectification. Anchoring integrates new phenomena into existing world-views in order to make the unfamiliar familiar. Anchoring involves ascribing meaning to the object being represented. "By classifying what is unclassifiable, naming what is unnameable, we are able to imagine it, to represent it" (Moscovici, 1984, p.30). In the course of anchoring the unfamiliar in the familiar, representations are modified. An informative example of anchoring can be found in Augoustinos and Riggs (2007): through the analysis of everyday talk they demonstrate the ways in which contemporary representations of culture are anchored in "old and discredited social Darwinist notions of biological hierarchy" (p. 126) which present Aboriginal cultures as 'very

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[2] For a detailed discussion of these types of representations and illustrative examples from debates on immigration, see Deaux and Wiley (2007).

very primitive' and white cultures as 'modern' and 'advanced'.   In this way what was non-communication (the unknown, strange and vague) becomes communication. Too often anchoring process is narrowly interpreted as an individual psychological process (Howarth, 2006a); what Augoustinos and Riggs demonstrate are the ways in which this is simultaneously a deeply ideological process.

The process of objectification produces a domestication of the unfamiliar in a way that is more active than anchoring because it saturates the idea of unfamiliarity with reality, turning it into the very essence of reality. This produces the materialisation of an abstraction. Deaux and Wiley (2007) provide a good example of this with reference to debates about immigration that are organised about the tangible metaphor of the melting pot and references to blending, mixing, forming and the crucible. In this way images cease to be images or signs; they become a part of reality, just as 'Dolly the sheep' ceases to be an image of cloning but has come to embody the material reality of genetic manipulation (Gaskell, 2001). The media play an important role in the production, dissemination and debate over different representations and the images on which they rest (Hall, 1997) – as do all communicative exchanges "in social, scientific, political or religious communities, in the worlds of theatre, cinema, literature or leisure" (Moscovici, 2000, p. 111). Through objectification, images become constitutive elements of social and ideological reality, rather simply than elements of thought.

These are not, then, neutral psychological processes. By classifying a person, a thing, an event, or a nation, we are at the same time assessing and evaluating it/her. For example, Jodelet (1991) found that images such as 'decay' and 'going off like butter' were common in people's talk about mental illness. While this tells us something of the everyday experience and identity of the villagers (as close to the land and nature, Wagner and Kronberger, 2001), they also reveal the prejudice and fear of contagion that has been "unconsciously transmitted for generations" (Marková, 2007, p. 229), communicated through collective memories and ideological practices. Similarly in my research in Brixton, South London, for example, I have found that prejudiced representations of the poor and of black people are articulated with other representations of crime and come to form commonsense knowledge about Brixton (Howarth, 2002a). By looking at how dominant discourses manipulate values and ideas in the service of particular interests we can study the 'ideological battle' of representations.

This relates back to Hall's dominant-hegemonic readings or preferred meanings. Hall is particularly interested in the ideological role of the media in producing systems of representations that serve to *prefer* particular interests and identities over others, and so systematically distort particular representations and sustain systems of power and inequality. Hence he is interested in the ongoing ideological construction of reality. Similarly, Moscovici (2000) sought to answer this question: "how do people construct their social reality?" He continues:

> While the actor sees the problem, the observer does not see the whole
> historical solution. Marx was well aware of this dilemma when he wrote:
> 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please:
> they do no make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under

circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past'
(Marx, 1852/1968, p. 97).

This quote connects different levels of representation: *microgenesis, ontogenesis* and *sociogenesis.* These are terms developed in SRT, but we can see important correlations with the work of Hall. Both perspectives are concerned with the microgenetic level of communication: communication between individual actors in particular readings, encounters and contexts. They both are profoundly interested in the ontogenesis of identities and the representations individuals have of themselves. But, crucially, for both Hall and SRT, the cultural, historical and ideological aspects of communicative practices, that is the sociogenetic level, frames both the ontogenetic and microgenetic levels. Hall (1981) illustrates this nicely in this quote referring to the particular media portrayal of an event:

> The choice of *this* moment of an event as against that, of *this* person rather than that, of *this* angle rather than any other, indeed, the selection of this photographed incident to represent a whole complex chain of events and meaning, is a highly ideological procedure. (p. 241).

It is here, in the sociogenesis of communicative practices, where representations appear at their most ideological – pervading the media, social institutions, cultural arrangements, advertising campaigns, political discourses and so forth. This is also where we see how different values and practices are reified and prioritised over others, how some representations (and the social groups and social identities to which they relate) are marginalised and excluded from mainstream systems of discourse and how the process of representation supports ideological systems. Hence networks of representations support *a priori* hierarchies of knowledge, restrict the development of identity and sustain discourses of difference, privilege and power (Howarth, 2004). This immediately provokes Hall's question: "Can a dominant regime of representation be challenged, contested or changed?" (1997, p. 269).

Resistance and identity and communicative exchange

Hall's question speaks to heart of representation – as it highlights the transformative nature of knowledge, communication and identity. This was evident in Moscovici's seminal study of the image of psychoanalysis in three subcultures in 1950s Paris: "the transformation of knowledge as it is communicated across different groups and parts of society. … and the ways in which each social group reconstitutes knowledge according to its own interests and concerns" (Duveen, 2008, p. xii). The same is true of individuals: they take up and rework, re-interpret and re-present knowledge in a way that fits into and develops their sense of self (Howarth, 2006a; box 7.3).

Box 7.3
Possibilities for resistance and connection in multicultural settings
We have seen that representations of others pervade communicative exchanges. In chapter 4 we have also seen that successful communication is based on the ability to connect with the other ('dialoguicity'). This was something I have explored in research into intracultural identities in multicultural settings (Howarth, 2009b) – where the ability to communicate across difference

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is central to the identity of the group and individuals in that context. The acute intersectionality of these communities can be seen as a resource in diverse settings and an asset to global communication and community-building. For example, Bennett (1993) examines the experiences of 'constructive marginals' and their efforts to transcend the confines of essentialised ideologies of cultural difference. What we can see from this research is that the ontogenetic experience of intracultural identities (such as British Mexican or British Caribbean) can lead to a comprehensive understanding of cultural difference – particularly an understanding of the (co-)production of difference and the impact on identity. Such an appreciation and sensitivity for the power of representations to ascribe identities, limit the possibilities of self and stigmatise particular communities is a valuable asset for communicating in multicultural settings. Indeed, some researchers have found examples in history where intracultural groups such as 'Creoles' were recognised as "astute traders with a mastery of the finer points of intercultural negotiations" (Bird, 2009, p. 61).

In order to communicate effectively – ones needs to find some level of connection and common knowledge. It is vitally important in multicultural settings to have a good understanding of the intersubjective production of cultural difference and to know how to use difference to build commonalities and not obstacles in forging intracultural relationships and successful dialogues. This requires not simply learning about 'others', but learning about the processes that *other*. As Martin and Nakayama (2007) have argued, successful communication requires "the ability to understand what it's like to 'walk in someone's shoes'" (p. 10), and to "go through the eye of the needle of the other" (Hall, 1988, p.30). Indeed, the more you do this, the more you learn about others, the more you learn about yourself; the more you realise that 'other' cultures are not so 'other'. The more experience you have in multicultural settings the more you realise that all cultures are deeply complex and diverse and that all cultural generalisations are problematic. This leads to an understanding that all identities are also deeply complex and constantly changing. Thus an understanding of the essentially intracultural nature of identity is valuable for successful communication.

We can also relate Hall's encoding-decoding model and concept of articulation to Moscovici's distinction between propaganda, propagation and diffusion within secondary or more formalised communicative genres (in mass communications and public institutions). Through his detailed analysis of the highly differentiated sections of the French Press in the 1950s in *La Psychanalyse* (1961/2008) Moscovici gives examples of the different ways in which representations are encoded and decoded within three social groups, and the different psychological phenomena they give rise to: stereotypes, attitudes and opinions. Most clearly, he shows how representations of psychoanalysis were encoded with stereotypes of American decadent culture and Western imperialism by Communist Party press in order to denigrate and reject psychoanalysis as a pseudo-science. This is propaganda. Within Communist writings Moscovici found that psychoanalysis is always articulated with representations of American bourgeois culture, creating and cementing new meanings and readings (Moscovici and Marková, 2000) in ways that promotes and defends a commitment to Communist politics and identity. By contrast propagation was used in Catholic discussion to accommodate particular aspects of

psychoanalysis into the existing religious doctrines and so develop particular attitudes to psychoanalysis consistent with the authority of Catholicism. Diffusion occurred in liberal debates with the aim of informing public opinion. Such liberal professionals would claim a certain sceptical intelligence and characterise out-groups as dogmatic. As Duveen (2008) explains:

> What one sees in *Psychoanalysis* is not only the way in which distinct social representations both generate and are sustained by different communicative genres, but that these different communicative systems also reveal different forms of affiliation amongst the publics drawn together around each communicative system. (p. 371).

What this suggests is that different forms of mass communication are tied to different forms of groups and different identity positions. In Hall and SRT we also see that it is in social interactions and activities, in communicating with others, that representations and identities become meaningful, debated, contested and transformed. This is because communication is central to the social psychological connections between the transmission of shared knowledge and individuals' positioning in relation to this knowledge (their identities). As Kronberger and Wagner (2007) have argued:

> Our membership in social groups constrains the ways in which we come to understand an object, and conversely, by positioning oneself with regard to an object and by the style we communicate about it, we ascertain our belonging to a particular group of people, and simultaneously distance ourselves from others. (p. 177)

This focus on identity demands a connected analysis of primary and secondary communication genres: everyday debate and more formalised public discourses. Identities are often described as the stories individuals and communities "tell themselves and which locate them in society" as Cieslik and Verkuyten (2006, p. 79) have put it. However, as they go on to point out, "the stories available to tell are not unrestricted. … Historical, social and political patterns limit and shape the possible group narratives or the available narrative space through which groups can manage and negotiate their multiple identities" (*ibid)*. Hence it is in communicating in its broadest sense, through the media, material culture and social space, social interactions and embodied practices that identities come alive, invite common histories to be told and establish the (constructed and so shifting) boundaries of culture, common identities and difference. However, there are very real limits to the (co)production of identity.

The huge disparities in communication mean that we are not equally positioned in producing or contesting knowledge about 'us' or 'them' in mainstream debates. As Moloney (2007) illustrates very vividly with editorial cartoons of refugees these "inequities in the media access allow for the proliferation of one version of events over others, which not only reproduces the identities of voiceless groups in society but also reconstructs them" (p. 63). And such groups do not have the material or cultural capital to challenge representations of them that they see as inaccurate or destructive: the communicative genres of propaganda, propagation or diffusion are not available to them. Her study gives a very fine-tuned analysis of the visual and textual codes used

in the media that turn indirect stigma into blatant stereotypes that produce social distance between "us" and "them" and demonise and dehumanise the individuals and communities so represented – often in quite contradictory ways. As Hall (1997) has argued such stereotyping "is part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order. It sets up a symbolic frontier between the 'normal' and the 'deviant', the 'normal' and the 'pathological', the 'acceptable' and the 'unacceptable', what belongs and what does not or is 'Other', between 'insiders and 'outsiders', us and Them" (p.258).

And at the same time, Hall reserves a place for resistance and agency against such propaganda: cultural identity, he insists, "is a matter of 'becoming' as well as being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past" (1991, p. 225). Hence identities are not merely imposed or ascribed; identities are also a matter of negotiation, connection, imagination and resistance. As Duveen (1994) asserts, "the circulation of representations around the child does not lead to them being either simply impressed upon the child, or simply appropriated by the child, rather, their acquisition is an outcome of development" (p. 112). Even in the face of negative stereotypes of self, there are the possibilities of resistance and social creativity as we find ways to co-construct and communicate more positive versions of self, community and culture (Tajfel, 1978). This means that there is room to debate, resist and potentially transform stereotypes and practices that *other* and exclude (through a process of conscientisation for example, see chapter 2). As Philogène's (2001) research into representations of black Americans and African Americans has vividly illustrated, "when new circumstances force us, as a group or a community, to rethink the present and imagine the future as part of adjusting to a changing reality" we develop to new or 'anticipatory representations' (p. 128). Hence, as Hall would say, the politics of representation always provokes a struggle over meaning and therefore is always unfinished.

Our psychological capacity to imagine alternative futures is highlighted by Moscovici in his original study (1961/2008, p. xxxi):

> Social representations is an organised *corpus* of knowledge and one of the psychical activities that allow human beings to make physical and social reality intelligible, to insert themselves into groups or day-to-day relations of exchange and to free the powers of their imagination.

What are important here are the notions of exchange and imagination. As Hall has pointed out, communication cannot be seen as a top-down dissemination or a process were the informed elite (scientists, the church, heads of social institutions, media gurus) inform the masses (see chapters 2 and 14); this is simply one side of communicative exchange where particular meanings are encoded. Communication is always unstable and unpredictable because these meanings are decoded in constantly shifting and oppositional ways. We should (perhaps rather hopefully) see communication as an *imaginative exchange* that potentially leads to a qualitative change in all parties involved. As Moscovici argues "Communication is never reducible to the transmission of the original messages, or the transfer of data that remains unchanged. Communication differentiates, translates and combines" (2008, p. xxxii). Similarly, Hall proposes that we look for moments of negotiation, struggle and *"imaginative resistances"* where people express their discontent and agency, develop new identities and propose alternative social

relations (1960). While otherising representations can be internalised and so pose a threat to identity and esteem (box 7.2), our intrinsic psychology and communicative capacities for dialogue, debate and critique, bring to the fore the possibilities for social and political psychological change (box 7.3). Hence communication involves 'the double movement of containment and resistance' (Hall, 1981) or a 'double orientation' (Marková, 2000) that invites *and* contests different versions of reality through the interconnected social psychological processes of representation and identification. Hence, while representations always stem from somewhere and bring with them ideological connections to previous systems of knowing, identifying and excluding, they are simultaneously dynamic and open to be elaborated in new, transgressive ways.

An articulated account of representation founded on both Hall and SRT draws attention to these dialectics and demands an integrated theory of the complex connections between psychological processes, relations of power and the potential for resistance contained within and invited by communicative exchange. SRT is profoundly useful as it highlights the cultural and ideological nature of the psychological processes that sustain communication. Hall's work deepens a more political reading of representation and presents an important reminder that "cultural meanings are not only 'in the head'. They organise and regulate social practices, influence our conduct and consequently have real, practical effects" (1981, p. 3). Hence, I suggest, a Social Psychology of communication requires such an articulated account of representation that highlights the ways in which communication is itself always ideological, collaborative, agentic, potentially imaginative and transformative.

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