23 Social order and political legitimacy

Christian Staerklé – University of Lausanne

In the wake of pioneering research on societal psychology (Himmelweit & Gaskell, 1990) and widespread beliefs (Fraser & Gaskell, 1990), there has been an increased interest in the representational processes underlying social order and political legitimacy during the last two decades (Doise, 1990; Duveen, 2001, 2008; Elcheroth, Doise & Reicher, 2011; Gillespie, 2008; Joffe & Staerklé, 2007; Jovchelovitch, 2007; Moscovici, 1988; Sammut, 2011; Staerklé, 2009; Staerklé, Clémence & Spini, 2011; Wagner, Holtz & Kashima, 2009). Even though social representations research specifically addressing social order is scarce, many empirical studies (e.g., Howarth, 2006; Liu & Hilton, 2005; Sarrasin, Green, Fasel, Christ, Staerklé & Clémence, 2012; Staerklé, Likki & Scheidegger, 2012) speak directly to issues of social order and social change.

Social representations theory offers many insights in the conditions and processes that uphold or contest social order, especially when understood in conjunction with conversion and minority influence theory (Moscovici, 1980). The present chapter outlines a social representations approach to social order from a societal perspective (Doise & Staerklé, 2002; Staerklé, 2011); such an account is necessarily rooted in systems of power and in the analysis of relations within and between social groups (Lorenzi-Cioldi & Clémence, 2001). A first section briefly describes some historical foundations of common social order thinking. We then describe central aspects of social representations approach to social order and apply the distinction between the three communication modes described by Moscovici (1961/2008) — diffusion, propagation and propaganda—to account for three interrelated systems of legitimation and transformation of social order. In particular, it will be argued that attempts to stabilise and to challenge social order are shaped by communication processes between minority and majority groups trying to influence each other.

Consensus and conflict in explanations of social order

At the heart of the issue of social order stands the question that has eluded philosophers for centuries: What is the glue that holds a human community together? Why is an organised collective of individuals—a polity—stable and viewed as legitimate by its members? These are the fundamental questions underlying the issue of legitimacy. In its broadest sense, legitimacy refers to "something" that is in line with the values, norms and beliefs of a collective (Zelditch, 2001). Legitimacy is one of the oldest topic of political and social theories, in particular the concern with the legitimate forms of governance and hence with political stability. Most theories of legitimacy concur that social order can neither be upheld on the sole basis of power and coercion, nor on the basis of instrumental motives such as self-interest or group- interest. Instead, legitimacy

requires some form of consent and voluntary acceptance that institutions, social practices and widely held beliefs are "right". A prime indicator of legitimacy is the situation where even those groups and individuals who would gain from alternative forms of social order still accept existing arrangements and believe in a system that is not necessarily in the best of their interests (see Jost & Banaji, 1994).

A legitimate social order is based on perceptions, beliefs and values that can be organised as a function of the three classical fields of justice perceptions: distributive, procedural and retributive justice (see Deutsch, 1985). Distributive justice refers to perceived justice and injustice of the distribution of rewards, and thereby to the level of acceptability of social and economic inequality and the legitimacy of status hierarchies (Ridgeway, 2001). Procedural justice describes the legitimacy of power, reflected in submission and obedience to state authority and its various institutions (executive and legislative government branches, courts)(Tyler, 2001). Retributive justice, finally, accounts for processes of social control, in particular institutional responses to norm transgression, deviance and crime (Garland, 2001; Young, 1999). These types of justice perceptions function as interrelated organising principles of social order, that is, positionings towards social order are likely to be organised along these justice perceptions. A given social order may for example be contested because inequalities are deemed inacceptable (distributive justice), because citizens do no trust their government (procedural justice), or because institutional control and repression is considered excessive (retributive justice).

Commonality and divergence of justice perceptions are central to explanations of social order. Theoretical accounts of social order follow two fundamental explanatory principles, consensus and conflict (Zelditch, 2001). Early perspectives on political legitimacy rooted in enlightenment thinking have in common that their explanations of political legitimacy rely on shared and often consensual representations of what is "good" for the society and of the principles guiding community life. Here, the upholding of the common good and the maintenance of a stable society requires citizens to believe in the same values and principles, that is, popular **consensus** about a society's guiding principles is paramount for social stability. Conversely, belief divergence and lack of consensus is likely to lead to political instability. For *Rousseau*, for example, legitimacy is based on the voluntary belief by all members of a society in the "general will". For *Kant*, legitimacy is grounded in public rationality, based on the principle of one correct, rational solution that is in the interest of all citizens to social order problems. Like other consensus accounts, this view presupposes a homogeneous (national) community and similar interests among citizens. The consensuality logic reaches its fullest expression in the functionalist sociology by *Talcott Parsons*. In this view, a stable society is underpinned by consensual norms and values all group members are expected to endorse. Any disagreement with common norms is viewed as a threat to the balance and stability of social order. Such a consensualist vision of social order is also found in *Durkheim's* early conceptualisation of collective representations consensually shared among members of a community. The historical legacy of consent theory in contemporary approaches is evidenced in accounts that attribute the source of legitimacy either to a principle of public reason—following Kant—or to a theory of democratic approval—following Rousseau—or a combination of the two.

The shortcoming of consensualist views of social order is that they fail to account for disagreement with existing forms of social order and for conflict between groups

supporting different models of social order. The legitimacy of social order can never be taken for granted, because alternative ways to organize the society and to define its priorities always exist. This is where the second broad logic of explanations of social order based on **conflict** comes into play (Zelditch, 2001). Two main features characterize a conflict view of social order. First, it is grounded in the assumption of conflicting interests in a society, in particular between groups defined by low and high positions in the social hierarchy. It thereby explains the circumstances under which discontent gives rise to minority movements claiming rights and promoting new forms of social order. A second feature of a conflict view is that social order is achieved through the control of ideological meaning systems and practices by which relations of power and dominance are justified and upheld (Foucault, 1975). In order to bring citizens to voluntarily believe in the system and thus to achieve legitimacy, the ruling class and associated interest groups need to mask their real interests. This logic is most clearly expressed in Marxian accounts of social order where the concept of false consciousness refers to the idea that people are unaware of the real stakes in a society.

A social representations approach to social order

A social representations approach offers insights regarding the social processes underlying legitimacy and social order. Since their inception, representations have been viewed as specific types of knowledge enabling communication and *organising social relations* (Doise, 1985; 1990; Moscovici, 1961/2008). The concept of social order and the theory of social representations are therefore intimately intertwined. This link becomes even more apparent when considering change and stability as a key dialectic in both concepts. The interplay between change and stability is at the heart of social representations theory (Duveen, 2001), and this interaction is also constitutive of the object of representation, social order. The extreme case of a completely frozen social order—as imagined by dark totalitarian and other authoritarian-minded spirits—is an order of total social control where any attempt to change is repressed as a sign of hostility against the rulers. Complete instability, in turn, is found in contexts with rapidly shifting and unpredictable power relations, for example in large scale revolutions and upheavals. Democratic debates about social order reflect this constant tension between the maintenance of existing social arrangements and demands for social change.

On the level of everyday communication, a similar tension between communication oriented towards stability and towards change can be found. Social representational approaches to social influence have analysed communication modes in the public sphere that oppose everyday communication oriented towards common understanding, consensuality and stability to strategic communication oriented towards shaping others' thoughts and behaviours (Sammut & Bauer, 2011). Strategic communication thus aims at achieving social change through attempts to persuade others of a given point of view, thereby accepting conflict between representations (see Gillespie, 2008).

Given its double focus on change and stability, a social representations view of social order takes up and articulates elements of both consensus and conflict theories. In line with a conflict view of social order, consent is neither seen as a necessary precondition for social stability nor as a routine outcome of community life. Instead, consent has to be actively and strategically produced, eventually leading to hegemonic

representations (Augoustinos, 1998). Such a view takes into account the fundamentally contested and dynamic nature of social order in contemporary societies, that is, it is rooted in a social psychology of conflict and influence between groups with unequal power and status (Moscovici, 1980; Duveen, 2001). The recognition of constant encounters between competing social order representations has led Moscovici to develop the concept of social representations as an alternative to the consensualist notion of Durkheim's collective representation. And recently this approach grounded in the inherent pluralism of societies in late modernity has given rise to new developments in social representations theory that deal with the negotiation and the psychological consequences of multiple values and discourses (Gillespie, 2008) and with the role of social representations in intercultural encounters (Sammut & Gaskell, 2010).

In order to engage, formally or informally, in social order debates, citizens must know what is at stake, that is, they must be able to refer to common frames of symbolic reference points which enable democratic discussion and contestation around issues of social order (Doise, Clémence & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1993). As an example of a widely disseminated frame of reference in social order debates, we can think of the question of priority of rights or duties in models of social order. Some forms of social order prioritise community-based duties of the individual and their subordination to the collective interests of the group, whereas others emphasise individual rights that have fundamental priority over community rights (Finkel & Moghaddam, 2005). Such a distinction thus organises the representations invoked in public debates about social order.

Recent research has started to explore such frames of reference—organising principles—underlying lay thinking on social order (Sammut, 2011; Scheidegger & Staerklé, 2011; Staerklé et al., 2012). Illustrating the renewed interest in issues of social order, the *Social Order Representations Model* (Staerklé, 2009) provides a framework for analysing the relationship between cognitive processes and social representations associated with social order. It distinguishes four generic social order representations called *Moral order, Free market, Social diversity,* and *Structural inequality*. These representations refer to four normative models of social order that are used as common frames of reference in political and everyday debates about the guiding principles of a society. The model assumes that particular belief systems (authoritarianism, work ethic, multiculturalism / racism and egalitarianism / social dominance, respectively) provide legitimacy and thereby sustain each type of social order.

Moreover, the model emphasises the centrality of difference within representations. Representations of social order are at play in processes of social inclusion and social exclusion, for example when group boundaries are negotiated in debates about welfare rights of immigrants or when antagonisms between social groups ("us vs. them") are strategically put forward by interest groups. The model therefore puts the basic psychological process of social differentiation (Tajfel, 1978) at the centre of the analysis and proposes that two forms of differentiation structure social order thinking: Normative differentiation that establishes boundaries between norm-conforming and norm-violating ingroup members (in the *Moral order* and *Free market* models), and categorical differentiation that creates boundaries between groups defined by self-declared or ascribed group membership (in the *Social diversity* and *Structural inequality* models) (see the Dual process model by Duckitt, 2001, for a similar

distinction). The social functions of these two forms of differentiation will be discussed in the sections on propagation and propaganda forms of communication.

More broadly, a social order analysis emphasises the centrality of processes of categorisation and differentiation in social representations theory and research (see Wagner & Hayes, 2005). Thereby, such an analysis joins the call for the theoretical necessity of *representations of difference* that are able to account for the various ways individuals deal with contemporary pluralism (Gillespie, 2008).In this view, social differentiation helps individuals subjectively define boundaries between social groups, based on shared and widespread definitions of the cleavages that structure social life (Lamont & Molnar, 2002). Differentiation thereby translates societal value conflicts into a psychological process that opposes positively evaluated groups to negatively evaluated groups and ultimately determines perceived entitlements of social categories. Hence, social categorisation and labelling of groups is a social struggle in itself (Bourdieu, 1984; Reicher & Hopkins, 2000) and thereby part of the legitimization process of social order. Processes of differentiation are also a prominent part of political theories that highlight the regulation of intergroup relations and the key role of perceived and constructed antagonisms between groups in democratic politics (e.g., Mouffe, 1993). These theories converge in the idea that the political process is fundamentally concerned with the regulation of relations between groups representing contrasting norms, values and interests.

In the remainder of this chapter, we show how pluralism of representations and differentiation motives can be linked to the communication and dissemination of social order representations. An extended and adapted approach to the classical distinction between the three modes of communication—diffusion, propagation and propaganda (Moscovici, 1961 / 2008)—appears useful for such an approach. In Moscovici's original conceptualisation, the three modes were each associated with a specific form of knowledge: loose and fluctuating opinions were the typical form of knowledge in the diffusion mode, more firmly held attitudes were put forward in the propagation mode, and rigid stereotypes were the typical communication tools in propaganda mode.

Duveen (2008) refers to this taxonomy to describe different forms of ingroup affiliation defined by these "communicative genres". Groups organised through diffusion are bound together in sympathy, those based on propagation are bound in communion, and propaganda groups are characterised by solidarity. The taxonomy has also been taken up in a dialogical perspective of social representations theory (e.g., Gillespie, 2008; Sammut & Bauer, 2011; Sammut & Gaskell, 2010). Here, the modes of communication refer to varying degrees of openness to other representations. The diffusion mode is seen as a closed, monological system of communication that does not allow for difference and contestation. The propagation mode entails the possibility of dialogue with other, legitimate representations, but retains the aim of asserting its rightfulness in the face of other representations. The propaganda mode is based on conflict and competition with other representations. Yet, at the same time propaganda may also be metalogical as it questions its own veracity and considers that other representations could actually be more right than one's own point of view. Somewhat ironically, then, this conflict-based model is therefore the only communication mode that has the potential to overcome difference and turn the diversity of points of view typical of late modernity into a societal strength. It should be noted, though, that in some analyses the three modes of communication from the *Psychoanalysis* are conflated with the three

types of hegemonic, emancipated and polemic representations (Moscovici, 1988). These two taxonomies clearly share important features as they are in many respects structurally similar. Nevertheless, it seems beneficial to keep the two concepts separate, since the former refers to communication modes and the latter to the representational outcomes of communication.

For the purpose of the analysis of social order representations, we put forward a more political or ideological use of the taxonomy, by associating the communication modes with processes of influence occurring between groups defined by unequal positions in the social hierarchy: diffusion refers to undifferentiated ("diffuse") influence of dominant, hegemonic representations, propagation describes processes of majority influence and their strategic attempts to construe consent around their ideas, and propaganda is associated to minority influence aimed at resisting majorities and promoting social change. In this view, the three types of influence are interdependent with each other, they may occur simultaneously, and the three of them are required to account for legitimisation and contestation processes of social order. The interplay between modes of communication and intergroup settings gives rise to different models of social influence and emphasises the dynamic nature of a representational analysis of social order.

Diffusion: Emergence and spread of social order beliefs

The diffusion mode accounts for the creation and dissemination of objectified beliefs and values justifying social order. In its original formulation, diffusion describes how information is disseminated in an undifferentiated manner, that is, without clearly identifiable sources or targets of communication. Diffusion is therefore a normalisation process that produces terms of reference (Sammut & Bauer, 2011). In a social order account, diffusion disseminates social order representations in society and provides citizens with the "raw material" through which they are able to make sense of and understand issues of social order. Disseminated social order representations orient citizens' thinking and provide normative signposts through which they can understand and engage in societal debates. They provide cues as to the importance of different values in a society and highlight potential threats to a stable social order based on these values.

The channels of communication of diffusion are either indirect (mass media) or direct (informal, interpersonal discussions). Tabloid and free commuter newspapers, for example, relate various events (elections, natural disasters, international conflicts, economic crises, etc.) without justifying their position or taking up a consistent stance towards them. Rather, information is circulated as a function of opportunistic commercial criteria. Media thereby contribute to the undifferentiated diffusion of multiple opinions and contrasting points of view among the public. Advertisements triggering the activation of ideological values (e.g., through the praise of the individualising nature of consumer products) also contribute to the diffusion of social order beliefs, as do informal private discussions on social order topics. The dynamics of the cultural distribution of social order beliefs has been analysed in studies on the emergence and spread of representations (Sperber, 1990). Diffusion thus gives rise to the "common field" of representations, made up by unquestioned and shared, but not

consensual reference points which individuals refer to in their debates about social order (Doise, Clémence & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1993).

Recent survey studies have for example analysed the emergence and development over time of representations of infectious diseases such as avian influenza that represent a public health threat to social order (Gilles et al., in press; Mayor, Eicher, Bangerter, Gilles, Clémence, & Green, in press). Through the temporal analysis of media coverage of disease outbreaks, this research shows the rise and fall of representations associated with the disease threat, and demonstrates that symbolic ingroup protection ("othering") occurs during the stage of divergence of representations, characterized by an uncertain symbolic environment (see also Bangerter & Heath, 2004). Other survey research on the impact of "ideological climates", in turn, has shown how conservative municipalities in Switzerland (assessed with municipality-level results of actual popular referenda over a decade) exert an influence on attitudes towards racial policies, over and above individual-level determinants (Sarrasin, Green, Fasel, Christ, Staerklé & Clémence, 2012).

It is in the diffusion phase that knowledge legitimising or delegitimizing social order enters the public arena, readily shaped into concrete and socially useful forms by processes of objectification (see Jovchelovitch, 2007). A powerful way to objectify abstract social order values such as freedom, equality, or responsibility is to associate them with concrete stereotypes of social groups. Joffe and Staerklé (2007) have shown how the ethic of self-control, a key value of Western societies, is objectified into stereotypical images of social categories useful for judging and evaluating people. Through this process, the self-control value is transformed and objectified into antagonistic stereotypes opposing those perceived to be conforming to the value (e.g., "responsible citizens with high levels of self-control") to those disrespecting and violating the value (e.g., "lazy, self-indulging scroungers").

Ultimately, the diffusion process may give rise to pervasive large-scale social order narratives and systems of social classification which define historical eras and societies. These historically developed representations of social order may take on the form of "hegemonic" representations (Moscovici, 1988) towards which citizens positions themselves. The contemporary period can be said to be characterised by two intertwined dominating representational systems, one known as neo-liberalism, the other one as neo-conservatism (Young, 1999). Neo-liberalism incorporates individualism and the fundamental creed in the "sovereign individual", reflecting the centrality of individual achievement, self-control, the freedom of individuals to maximise self-interest and participate in social life according to their own motivations and needs (Augoustinos, 1998). This belief system is at the root of contemporary individualistic societies with their distinctive articulation of individual freedom and liberal submissiveness (Beauvois, 1994). Neo-conservatism, in turn, stresses the necessity of norm compliance and enforcement, in particular with respect to harsh punitive treatment of deviant and non-conforming groups and individuals (Garland, 2001). These widespread belief systems incorporate a large array of shared reference points to which citizens and policy-makers alike may refer to in their defence of specific conceptions of social order. Both are hegemonic representations: pervasive (but not consensual), colouring all aspects of social life, fluid, and malleable. Diffusion does therefore neither imply consensus nor submission to hegemonic representations, since citizens may refute or oppose them.

Overall, the diffusion mode provides representational content to social order debates without strong normative pressure to endorse this content. Such normative pressures are however implied by propagation and propaganda modes of communication.

Propagation: The majority view and the production of consent

Once social order beliefs have penetrated common sense, they may be strategically invoked by social groups and institutions to provide legitimacy to those types of social order that further their interests. This is the propagation phase that is concerned with the purposeful creation of consent by majority groups that aim to maintain or to extend their dominant position in society (see Salmon & Glasser, 1995). Majority groups structure the debate and (re-)organise the information according to their norms and values—the "spin" of political communication. The communication process is framed in terms as to provide cues for citizens who wish to form an opinion. In contrast to diffusion, propagation is strategic and goal-oriented as it seeks to persuade others of a specific point of view. The majority group calls upon experts, lobbies, and think-tanks to affirm and justify its position. This phase is an attempt to disseminate a consistent way of looking at an issue, with often sophisticated communication strategies destined to impose a representation in order to make it hegemonic and subjectively valid in the eyes of a majority. This process of legitimation also aims to make the unacceptable acceptable, for example through justification (denying that a given situation or behaviour is wrong) and excuse (accepting that a situation or a behaviour is problematic, but denying responsibility for it). Majorities with hegemonic motivations are therefore actively engaged in disseminating representations in order to make them appear normal and to-be-taken-for-granted.

The production of consent is made possible by some form of ideological machinery that purposefully and strategically attempts to shape mass opinion. Many powerful organisms—political parties and governments, multinational corporations and financial organisations—have a vested interest to fabricate consent around representations that support their cause and provide legitimacy to it. These groups may attempt to impose representations by exerting a strict control on the content and form of public communication (media control) and on the language used in there (e.g., "job creators" instead of "wealthy" or "rich" people, as suggested by the U.S. Republican party). Through such channels can ideological domination and eventually hegemony of certain representations be achieved. A historical example of propagation is "Orientalism" (Said, 1978), a communication strategy enacted by Western governments and elites in the 19th century to set "us" Europeans apart against all "those" non-Europeans. The goal of Western elites was to justify their colonialist crusades by convincing European populations of the intrinsic superiority of European forms of social order. Traces of orientalism are still found in contemporary representations of democratic and non-democratic countries (Falomir, Staerklé, Butera & Depuiset, 2005; Staerklé, Clémence & Doise, 1998).

This view of the propagation process as a strategy to impose representations bears some resemblance with the Marxist "dominant ideology hypothesis" according to which hegemonic and virtually inescapable ideologies are disseminated in society by powerful ruling groups. Yet, citizens are not passive receivers of such attempts to make

representations hegemonic (see Augoustinos, 1998). The "dominant ideology" thesis does therefore not imply that all citizens are under the sway of a single dominant worldview; rather, it suggests that citizens are surrounded by a normative environment that exerts pressures to adopt elements of dominant ideologies (for example in educational and professional settings). Notwithstanding such pressures, citizens may still chose to accept or refute such representations in order to form their own positioning towards social order (Billig, 1991; Moscovici, 1988). Such variability is illustrated in a study on the group-level anchoring of orthodox beliefs that showed that neo-liberal free-market beliefs were more strongly endorsed by students in business and in law (compared to students in social sciences), especially by those who were confident in their own knowledge of economic issues (Scheidegger & Tuescher, 2010). These findings highlight the anchoring of hegemonic beliefs in specific subgroups and show that subjective certainty reinforces these beliefs.

In exceptional cases, propagation may nevertheless lead to a highly influential, hegemonic belief system to which members of a given subgroup are firmly committed to. In a series of experimental studies on orthodoxy, Deconchy (1990) has demonstrated the protective mechanisms in an "orthodox" group that defines itself by strong adherence of group norms, for example religious groups. Such groups tend to maintain their beliefs even in light of overwhelming disconfirming evidence. Deconchy's main hypothesis is that when external challenges make apparent the rational fragility and weakness of a given belief within an orthodox group, the group enacts defensive strategies to protect its foundational beliefs: it reaffirms the normative legitimacy of its beliefs and expresses demands for social and institutional control, in particular in terms of control of group membership. A similar defensive propagation process may be at work when dominant groups defend theories against overwhelming evidence that they do not accurately account for "real-world" problems. An example of such a desperate attempt to salvage majority domination concerns the stubborn defence by leading economists of the normative idea of individual rationality and self-interest on which most economic theories are based, even in the aftermath of the financial crisis in 2008 that should have shaken up the normative foundations of the capitalist system. Another example concerns the resistance with which the industrial lobby and associated political parties meet the ever growing evidence of global climate change.

Propagation is thus typically a form of *majority influence* where an ingroup source of influence exerts pressure to normative conformity, by highlighting symbolic benefits of conformism ("true citizens believe X") and pointing out negative effects of rejecting the majority point of view ("the country is doomed if too many people believe Y"). Classical research on reference groups highlights the impact of positive and negative reference groups which serve as important points of orientation when citizens form their attitudes towards social order (e.g., Newcomb, 1946; Sherif & Sherif, 1964). Citizens are urged to comply with the majority in order to be accepted as group members by other majority members and to receive social validation of their opinion. Propagation thereby underscores the importance of "meta-representations", that is, beliefs about what other people believe. This concept is akin to Noelle-Neumann's (1993) spiral of silence theory that explains political behaviour in terms of what people perceive to be the majority opinion in a given context (see Elcheroth, Doise & Reicher, 2011, for a discussion). From a propagation perspective, such meta-representations are

instrumentalised by interest groups ("most people trust in this institution, so should you") in order to persuade citizens to endorse positions consistent with their interests.

In propagation mode, the source of influence positions itself as the majority of a superordinate group or otherwise as the legitimate representative of a social category. It presents itself as the defender of the "real" values of the groups, that is, it strategically positions itself as the group's prototype. Thereby, it attempts to persuade others (the general population, a competitor group or minority groups) of the validity of its worldview. "Majority" is therefore a flexible and ambiguous concept that may shift as a function of the way majorities and minorities are categorised. Claiming that one's position reflects (implicitly or explicitly) a majority position is a strategic and rhetoric construction in itself that aims to provide legitimacy to the source of influence (Stevenson, Condor & Abell, 2007). More generally, the exact content of propagation communication depends on the communicative setting, defined by a categorisation process that defines the (majority) identity of the source of influence on the one hand and the identity of the target group, that is, the audience, on the other (see Klein, Spears and Reicher, 2007).

With respect to the above-mentioned types of differentiation, it could be expected that consent-seeking majority-influence in propagation is most effectively served by a process of normative differentiation that establishes boundaries as a function of perceived or constructed conformity with important norms and values (Staerklé, 2009). Through this communicative strategy, value pluralism is made illegitimate, since all group members are expected to endorse the very values advocated by majority groups, and these values provide the unique symbolic referents through which citizens are judged. Social cleavages can therefore be presented as the outcome of deliberate individual actions—for example in the myth of the lazy poor and the hard-working rich—and the boundaries between categories as permeable (anyone can work hard if one wants to).

The stabilising function of normative differentiation stems from the fact that any deviation by ingroup members from such values (e.g., the work ethic, self-reliance, obedience, tolerance) can be constructed as a potential threat to a social order based on these values. As a result, it becomes legitimate to discredit individuals on the basis of perceived norm transgression which at the same time reinforces the validity of dominant norms. Mitt Romney, for example, during his 2012 U.S. presidential campaign, divided the nation into "winners" and complaining "victims". In his system of differentiation, 47% of the American population were lazily scrounging from the rest of the population, implying that almost half of the population are not as motivated or hard-working as the "tax-paying" majority. In Gillespie's (2008) terms, normative differentiation by majority groups creates a caricature-like alternative representation of minorities that has a stabilising function as it protects the main representation from the challenge of alternatives.

To wrap up, propagation in the sense of a social order approach relies on normative differentiation through which dominant majorities take the liberty to judge "silent" individuals and groups as a function of their own set of norms and values. Propagation is therefore a defensive strategy of protection of dominant belief systems, a stigmatising strategy that does not shy away of purposefully encouraging exclusion in order to produce consent around issues of social order.

Propaganda: The minority view

The third mode of communication, propaganda, is a destabilising force for representations as it accounts for resistance to dominant social order representations, and thereby makes dissent and social change possible. Compared to majorities, minorities and subordinate groups have fewer resources to advance their positions. A different communication strategy is therefore called for, one that asserts more forcefully and with less compromise a given position *in opposition* to dominant majority positions. The propaganda strategy can be associated with minority influence as described in Moscovici's conversion theory (1980). Minorities put forward representations that propose an alternative to dominant social arrangements. The social function of propaganda is to rally ingroup members around a coherent position that stands in contrast to a given majority perspective, thereby contesting hegemonic forms of social order (see Klein et al., 2007). Entering in a confrontational relation with majorities, minorities advance firm and unyielding claims in order to achieve social change.

In the symbolic battlefield over the legitimacy of different representations of social order, majorities attempt to maintain their dominant position by resisting minority influence. As long as majorities are able to oppose minority influence attempts, the network of social influence is stable, representations upholding social order become normalised and naturalised, and existing social arrangements are maintained (Duveen, 2001). Innovative minority positions often trigger defensive reactions by the majority. Gillespie (2008) has argued that alternative representations (promoted by minorities) are isolated from dominant representations through various communicational strategies ("semantic barriers"), for example rigid ideological opposition and deliberate stigmatisation of particular representations or representors (e.g., the mainstream media treatment of minority or protest movements). A similar process has also been shown in minority influence studies where the "psychologisation" of minorities is used as a majority strategy to discredit minorities and thereby undermine their influence attempts (Papastamou, 1983).

This precarious and temporary balance of the intergroup influence system may shift, however, through active attempts by minorities to put forward new or modified social representations of social order (see Howarth, 2006), that is, through collective action (Reicher, 2004). There are numerous examples of innovative social order representations introduced by minority movements engaging in propaganda strategies, in particular the recognition of rights of women and homosexuals, a greater awareness of environmental issues and more recently anti-globalisation and anti-finance movements (see Isin & Wood, 1999). This view of intergroup communication is in line with conflict theories of social order as it acknowledges not only the legitimacy of dissent, but also its necessity as a driving force for social change. Minorities contest the legitimacy of a single, hegemonic order valid for all as implied by the consent seeking majority strategies of propagation. Instead, they show that alternative routes exist, based on a confrontational communication strategy that questions the legitimacy of dominant social order representations. In this view, conflict between groups defending opposing perspectives is fundamentally positive, an indispensable relation to achieve social progress and political change.

Research in the minority influence tradition has shown that minorities are able to exert social influence to the extent that the message recipients engage in a process of validation of the message that eventually leads to conversion (Moscovici, 1980). In order to be validated, a minority message needs to provide a clear alternative to prevailing norms, recipients must focus on the message itself rather than on the message bearer, and the message has to be advocated with both consistency and flexibility by the minorities (see Mugny & Pérez, 1991). Minorities need to induce a socio-cognitive conflict in order to be taken seriously and to exert influence. The difficulty for minorities is that in order for their influence attempts to be effective, they must manage not only to be perceived as a valid alternative to dominant norms, but they must also be categorised as a group whose positions are not completely incompatible with prevailing ingroup norms. Otherwise, propagation strategies by majorities retain the upper hand as minorities can be portrayed as a simple outgroup that may legitimately be discredited due to its unconventional point of view. In short, minorities need to be similar and different at the same time: they need to advocate new norms in order to be differentiated from majority norms, but they also need to strategically redefine representations and systems of categorisation such that they are no longer perceived as posing a threat to the identity of the majority group (see also Billig, 1985).

Propaganda differs from propagation also in terms of the most effective differentiation strategy. If normative categorisation is the strategy of choice of majorities (because it implies a single normative referent), minorities need to assert their position and their social identity as a valid alternative that cannot be judged as a simple deviation from majority norms. This can be achieved through categorical differentiation whereby group norms are pitted against each other, as opposed to normative differentiation whereby individuals are categorised as a function of their normative conformity . Put otherwise, successful propaganda requires a collective strategy (Tajfel, 1978) through which active minorities engage as self-conscious group members in a power struggle, based on politicized collective identities (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). This self-categorisation as members of a cohesive minority group leads to the hypothesis that the protest function of the propaganda mode of communication is best served by categorical differentiation that creates an opposition between antagonistic minority and majority group norms. In categorical differentiation, intergroup boundaries are represented as impermeable, for example between ethnic minorities and majorities, between protest groups and elites, or between groups with different sexual orientations. This type of categorisation is able to induce social change, because it gives minorities a clearly defined identity and a "voice" that provides them with the opportunity to disseminate new norms, thereby introducing an alternative to dominant norms.

The articulation between intergroup influence and the three communication modes is thus a central feature of a social representational account of social order. While there is a sequential logic to the three communication systems (social order beliefs need to be disseminated before they can be strategically defended by majorities and subsequently contested by minorities), the model is also recursive: contesting majority perspectives, minorities put forward new models of social order (propaganda) which, if received favourably, become disseminated (diffusion) and eventually advocated by new majorities (propagation). Put otherwise, formerly minority positions

may become majority positions, thereby attesting the dynamic nature of the representational process (Moghaddam, 2006).

Conclusion

This chapter proposed a social representations approach to social order and political legitimacy rooted in a social psychology of power and inequality. A brief historical overview evidenced two major explanatory principles of social order based on consensus and conflict. It was argued that a social representations approach combines these two foundations of social order, one whose function is to stabilise social order representations (consent-seeking propagation) and one whose function is to destabilise them (conflict-seeking propaganda). A social order approach to social representations therefore relies on the articulation of processes of minority and majority influence with the three classical communication modes of diffusion, propagation and propaganda.

Diffusion was presented as an undifferentiated and non-strategic system of dissemination of social order representations leading to widespread, diffuse and hegemonic social order representations, thereby creating the normative context in which intergroup power struggles over legitimate social order representations are played out. Propagation was associated with majority influence and described as a defensive strategy of active consent-seeking by self-declared majorities, thereby reflecting stabilising functions of social order. Propaganda, in turn, was linked to minority influence and thus accounted for social change and to the contestation of dominant social order representations. Various social psychological mechanisms at work within these three modes of communication were described, in particular normative and categorical differentiation accounting for social stability and social change, respectively. Overall, the chapter aimed to demonstrate the integrative potential of a social representations approach to social order. Such an approach offers insights for the study of pressing social order issues in contemporary societies many of which can be analysed from the perspective of representations of social order and political legitimacy.

References

Augoustinos, M. (1998). Social representations and ideology. Towards the study of ideological representations. In U.Flick (Ed.) *The psychology of the social* (pp. 156-169). Camdridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bangerter, A. & Heath, C. (2004). The Mozart Effect: Tracking the evolution of a scientific legend. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 43, 1-37.

Beauvois, J.-L. (1994). *Traité de la servitude libérale: Analyse de la soumission*. Paris: Dunod.

Billig, M. (1985). Prejudice, categorization and particularization. From a perceptual to a rhetorical approach. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 15*, 79-103.

Billig, M. (1991). *Ideologies and beliefs*. London: Sage.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste* (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (Original edition: 1979).

Deconchy, J.-P. (1990). Sociocultural context and psychological meachanisms. In H. Himmelweit & G. Gaskell, *Societal psychology* (pp. 177-192). London: Sage.

Deutsch, M. (1985). *Distributive Justice*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Doise, W. (1985). Les représentations sociales: définition d'un concept. *Connexions, 45*, 243-253.

Doise, W. (1990). Les représentations sociales. In C. Bonnet, R. Ghiglione & T. F. Richard (Eds.), *Traité de Psychologie Cognitive* (Vol. 3, pp. 111-174). Paris: Dunod.

Doise, W., & Staerklé, C. (2002). From social to political psychology: The societal approach. In K. Monroe (Ed.), *Political psychology* (pp. 151-172). Hillsdale, NJ : Lawrence Erlbaum.

Doise, W., Clémence, A., & Lorenzi-Cioldi, F. (1993). *The quantitative analysis of social representations*: Taylor & Francis.

Duckitt, J. (2001). A dual-process cognitive-motivational theory of ideology and prejudice. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 33, pp. 41-113). San Diego CA: Academic Press.

Duveen, G. (2001). Representations, identities, resistance. In K. Deaux & G. Philogène (Eds.), *Representations of the social* (pp. 257–270). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Duveen, G. (2008). Social actors and social groups: a return to heterogeneity in social psychology. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 38*, 369-374.

Elcheroth, G., Doise, W., & Reicher, S. (2011). On the knowledge of politics and the politics of knowledge: How a social representations approach helps us rethink the subject of political psychology. *Political Psychology, 32*, 729–758.

Finkel, N. J., & Moghaddam, F. M. (2005). *The psychology of rights and duties: Empirical contributions and normative commentaries.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Foucault, M. (1975). *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*. Paris : Gallimard.

Fraser, C., & Gaskell, G. (Eds) (1990). *The social psychological study of widespread beliefs*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Garland, D. (2001). *The culture of control: Crime and order in contemporary society.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gilles, I., Bangerter, A., Clémence, A., Green, E., Krings, F., Mouton, A., Rigaud, D., Staerklé, C., & Wagner-Egger, P. (in press). Dynamic collective symbolic coping with disease threat and othering: A case study of avian influenza. *British Journal of Social Psychology.*

Gillespie, A. (2008). Social representations, alternative representations and semantic barriers. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 38*, 375–391.

Glasser, T.L., & Salmon, C.T. (Eds.)(1995). *Public opinion and the communication of consent*. New York: Guilford.

Himmelweit, H. & Gaskell, G. (1990). *Societal psychology*. London: Sage.

Howarth, C. (2006). A social representation is not a quiet thing: Exploring the critical potential of social representations theory. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 45*, 65–86.

Isin, E. F., & Wood, P. K. (1999). *Citizenship and identity*. London: Sage.

Joffe, H., & Staerkle, C. (2007). The centrality of the self-control ethos in Western aspersions regarding outgroups: A social representational approach to stereotype content. *Culture & Psychology, 13*, 395-418.

Jost, J., & Banaji, M. (1994). The role of stereotyping in system-justification and production of false consciousness. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 33*, 1-27.

Jovchelovitch, S. (2007). *Knowledge in context : Representations, community and culture*. London: Routledge.

Klein, O., Spears, R., & Reicher, S. (2007). Social identity performance: extending the strategic side of SIDE. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 11*, 28-45.

Lamont, M., & V. Molnar (2002). The study of boundaries in the social sciences. *Annual Review of Sociology, 28*, 167–195.

Liu, J.H., & Hilton, D.J. (2005). How the past weighs on the present: Social representations of history and their role in identity politics. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 44,* 537–556.

Lorenzi-Cioldi, F., & Clémence, A. (2001). Group processes and the construction of social representations. In M. A. Hogg & S. Tindale (Eds.), *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group processes* (pp. 311–333). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Mayor, E., Eicher, V., Bangerter, A., Gilles, I., Clémence, A., & Green, E. G. T. (in press). Dynamic social representations of the 2009 H1N1 pandemic: Shifting patterns of sense-making and blame. *Public Understanding of Science.*

Moghaddam, F.M. (2006). Interobjectivity: The collective roots of individual consciousness and social identity. In T. Postmes & J. Jetten (Eds.), *Individuality and the group: Advances in social identity* (pp. 155–174). London: Sage.

Moscovici, S. (1961/2008). *Psychoanalysis: Its image and its public.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Moscovici, S. (1980). Towards a theory of conversion behavior. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 13, pp. 209-239). New York: Academic Press.

Moscovici, S. (1988). Notes towards a description of social representations. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 18,* 211-250.

Mouffe, C. (1993). *The Return of the Political.* London: Verso.

Mugny, G., & Pérez, J.A. (1991). *The social psychology of minority influence*. Cambridge, UK : Cambridge University Press.

Newcomb, T.M. (1946). The influence of attitude climate upon some determinants of information. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 41*, 291-302.

Noelle-Neumann, E. (1993). *The spiral of silence*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Papastamou, S. (1983). Strategies of minority and majority influence. In W. Doise et S. Moscovici (Eds.), *Current Issues in European Social Psychology, 1*, 33-83, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reicher, S. (2004). The context of social identity: Domination, resistance, and change. *Political Psychology, 25*, 921-945.

Reicher, S., & Hopkins, N. (2000). *Self and nation.* London: Sage.

Ridgeway, C. (2001). The emergence of status beliefs. From structural inequality to legitimizing ideology. In J. T. Jost & B. Major (Eds.), *The psychology of legitimacy. Emerging perspectives on ideology, justice and intergroup relations* (pp. 257-277). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism : Western conceptions of the orient.* London: Penguin Books.

Sammut, G. & Bauer, M.W. (2011). Social influence: modes and modalities. In D. Hook, B. Franks, and M.W. Bauer (Eds.) *The social psychology of communication* (pp. 87-106). Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, UK.

Sammut, G. & Gaskell, G. (2010). Points of view, social positioning and intercultural relations. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 40*, 47-64.

Sammut, G. (2011). Civic Solidarity: The negotiation of identity in modern societies. *Papers on Social Representations, 20*, 4.1 - 4.24.

Sarrasin, O. Green, E. G. T., & Fasel, N., Christ, O., Staerklé, C., & Clémence, A. (in press). Opposition to anti-racism laws across Swiss municipalities: A multilevel analysis. *Political Psychology.*

Scheidegger, R., & Staerklé, C. (2011). Political trust and distrust in Switzerland: A normative analysis. *Swiss Political Science Review, 17*, 164–187.

Scheidegger, R., & Tuescher, T. (2010). Does orthodoxy of knowledge polarize social anchoring? Representations of the market as a function of academic major and subjective knowledge in economics. *Papers on Social Representations, 19*, 25.1-25.22.

Sherif, M., & Sherif, C.W. (1964). *Reference groups*. New York: Harper & Row.

Simon, B., & Klandermans, B. (2001). Politicized collective identity: A social psychological analysis. *American Psychologist, 56*, 319-331

Sperber, D. (1990). The epidemiology of beliefs. In C. Fraser and G. Gaskell (eds). *The social psychological study of widespread beliefs*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Staerklé C. (2009). Policy attitudes, ideological values and social representations. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 3*, 1096-1112.

Staerklé, C. (2011). Back to new roots: Societal psychology and social representations. In J.P.Valentim (Ed.). *Societal approaches in social psychology*. Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang.

Staerklé, C., Clémence, A. & Doise, W. (1998). Representation of Human Rights across different national contexts: The role of democratic and non-democratic populations and governments. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 28*, 207-226.

Staerklé, C., Clémence, A., & Spini, D. (2011). Social representations: A normative and dynamic intergroup approach. *Political Psychology, 32*, 759-768.

Staerklé, C., Likki, T., & Scheidegger, R. (2012). A normative approach to welfare attitudes. In S. Svallfors (Ed.) *Contested Welfare States: Welfare Attitudes in Europe and Beyond* (pp.81-118). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Stevenson, C., Condor, S, & Abell, J. (2007). The majority-minority conundrum in Northern Ireland: An Orange Order perspective. *Political Psychology, 28,* 107-125.

Tajfel, H. (1978). *Differentiation between social groups*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tyler, T. (2001). Public trust and confidence in legal authorities: What do majority and minority group members want from the law and legal institutions? *Behavioral Sciences and the Law, 19*, 215–235.

Wagner, W., & Hayes, N. (2005). *Everyday discourse and common sense: The theory of social representations.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wagner, W., Holtz, P. & Kashima, Y. (2009). Construction and deconstruction of essence in representating social groups: Identity projects, stereotyping, and racism. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 39*, 363-383.

Young, J. (1999). *The exclusive society: Social exclusion, crime and difference in late modernity.* London: Sage.

Zelditch, M. (2001). Theories of legitimacy. In J. T. Jost & B. Major (Eds.), *The psychology of legitimacy. Emerging perspectives on ideology, justice and intergroup relations* (pp. 33-53). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.