

Political identities in parliamentary debates

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Introduction

In this chapter I examine some of the discursive formulations of political identities in parliamentary debates. After a theoretical discussion of the notion of identity and how it relates to talk and text, I present some fragments of an analysis of parliamentary debates in Spain and the UK related to the war in Iraq.

The framework for this discussion is a new theory of context, since participant identity is a property of the communicative situation as it is construed by the participants.

Against prevalent constructionist approaches, I advocate a position according to which at least some aspects of identity are not only locally constructed in talk, but also need to have a more permanent character as social representations shared by groups. Political identities, related to political ideologies, are an example of these more permanent 'identities'.

Social identity

'Identity' is one of these widely used but fundamentally controversial notions in the humanities and social sciences that defy precise definition. In this chapter, I shall limit my theoretical discussion to *social* identities, that is, identities associated with various collectivities of people, and further ignore *personal* identities, even when the basis of a personal identity is usually social.

There is a vast literature on identity in general, and on social identity in particular. It is however outside of the scope of this chapter to review even the main tendencies of this vast body of research. For instance, Social Identity Theory (SIT) has been one of the major approaches in European social psychology of the last

decades (see, among many other books, *Abrams & Hogg 1990, 1999; Brewer & Hewstone 2003; *Ellemers, Spears & Doosje 1999; *Tajfel 1981, 1982; see also *Augoustinos, Walker & Donaghue 2006).

More recently, identity has also received extensive attention from the perspective of discourse studies (see, e.g., *De Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg 2006), but most of this work ignores this social psychological tradition.

My own approach to identity is *socio-cognitive*, and integrates theoretical concepts both from the cognitive as well as the social sciences in the study of talk, text and context (see, e.g., *Van Dijk 1998, 2008, 2009). This approach holds that social identities, just like knowledge and ideologies, are distributed forms of social cognition, shared by various types of social collectivities, and reproduced by discourse and interaction. This means that they need to be studied both in cognitive terms, e.g., as specific types of mental representations, as well as in social, political or cultural terms, that is, as properties of groups and communities that enable and control social practices, interaction and discourse.

In this chapter, I shall focus on *political* identity as a specific type of social identity. For instance, Members of Parliament (MPs), of a political party or of a social movement may be said to have distinct political identities that shape at least some of their political activities. More specifically, I shall examine how political identities are expressed or 'performed' in *discourse*, and thus also are socially reproduced.

Some general properties of social identities

Since the notion of social identity is complex and the literature on this topic is enormous, I shall only summarize some of its general properties as they are relevant for our discussion of political identity.

- Social identities are defined for human **collectivities** of different types, such as social categories, groups, communities or organizations, e.g., those defined in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, class, origin, nationality, language, ideology, profession, social movement, or shared goals and interests. This is the irreducible *social* dimension of identities.
- Although social identities may under specific circumstances be developed by ad hoc groups (such as the passengers of a plane being hijacked), social identities generally characterize more or less **stable, relatively permanent collectivities**. Social identities may (usually slowly) change, but are seldom construed, communicated, confirmed and used overnight. They need time to be socially distributed within a collectivity, and acquired (used, adapted, etc.) by its members. The very notion of 'identity' implies that something is 'identical' and hence more or less stable.

- Social identities are **shared by the members** of social collectivities. This is also the way social and personal identities can be related. Generally, members are **aware of** (know, believe in, etc.) of their membership of such a collectivity (“I am an X”).
- Social identities are not ‘natural’ properties of collectivities of people, but (shared) **social constructs**, jointly construed (‘used’, confirmed, modified, etc.) by the members of the collectivity.
- Social identities are a form of **distributed (social) cognition, social (self) representations** that are gradually acquired, shared and used by the members of a collectivity. This means that social identities are **cognitive** in the sense that they are defined for the minds/brains of members, and *at the same time* they are **social** because they are representations that are socially shared in social interaction and by members of social groups, communities or organizations.
- The socially shared (self) representations that define social identity may be of different types, such as **knowledge, ideologies, attitudes, emotions, norms and values**.
- Members may cognitively, socially and/or discursively **identify** in different ways with ‘their’ social collectivities, for instance more or less consciously, strongly, passionately, frequently and/or positively.
- Social identities are usually **self-attributed** by members of collectivities, but in some cases also by (members of) other groups, as is typically the case for racists or male chauvinists, and thus perceived, treated and talked about as such.
- At the same time or at different moments, individuals may belong to, or identify with, several collectivities, and thus develop **complex social identities**. This is one of the ways identity interfaces between the social and the personal.
- At each moment, and in each situation, the complex social identities of social actors may be **hierarchically ordered**, in the sense that some identities are more active or **prominent** than others.
- Social identities enable and control the accomplishment and organization of the **social practices** of actors as members of collectivities.
- As cognitively abstract or ‘virtual’ self-representations, social identities will be said to be concretely ‘used’, ‘applied’ or ‘expressed’ in situated social practices by the members of social collectivities. It is this crucial relationship between the social-collective and the personal-individual dimensions of identity.
- Social identities may be the basis of (other) social representations, social practices and **social relations**, such as solidarity, cooperation, conflict, cohesion, domination, resistance, and so on.

- **Discourse** is one of the fundamental social practices engaged in by members of collectivities and that may function to **acquire, express, challenge** and **re-produce** social identities. Many social identities are **learned** through text, talk and interaction among members.

Most of the general properties of social identities briefly summarized above have been debated – and typically disagreed on – in much of the literature. This is especially the case for the individual-social interface of social identities, their more or less stable nature, and especially their definition as forms of social cognition. One of these debates, to which we shall return below, is about whether or not social identities are (more or less) stable properties people ‘have’, or rather situationally variable ways of acting or ‘performing’ such identities.

As is obvious in the summary given above, my own view of social identities is multidisciplinary and **socio-cognitive**: On the one hand they are social constructs shared by the members of collectivities, designed to enable and control social practices, but on the other hand they are cognitive, that is, distributed over and located in the ‘minds’ (memory, as implemented in the brains) of members, as is the case for language and (other) knowledge.

Neither of these fundamental properties of social identities can be reduced to the other (for details, see, e.g., *Van Dijk 1998, 2008, 2009). For instance, social identities on this view cannot be reduced to social practices, interaction or discourse, that is, the ways these social identities are being used or applied by their members in concrete social situations.

As studied in virtually all of the humanities and social sciences, the complex notion of social identity has cognitive, sociocognitive, social, political, cultural, historical, linguistic, literary, discursive, etc. dimensions. In this paper, as in my other work of the last decade, I examine **political identities** and do so within the (limited) framework of the **Discourse-Cognition-Society triangle**. More specifically, we shall see below that social identities defined as properties shared by speech participants are at the basis of the **context models** that control text and talk.

As is the case for other socially shared representations, such as knowledge and ideologies, we have as yet only a very vague idea of the detailed **contents and structures** of social identities. However, as I have done for group ideologies (Van Dijk 1998), we may assume that such representations feature a general schema consisting of a limited number of categories, such that members are able to acquire and use such an identity in their everyday lives as group members. For instance, a feminist social identity will probably feature categories such as *gender*, some general *goals* of the feminist movement, *norms* and *values* of feminist activities, *relations* with other groups (e.g., resistance to male domination), and so on (see, e.g., *Hekman 1999). We shall come back to such a schema below when we discuss political identities.

The stability of social identities

As shared social representations of groups and communities, identities need to be relatively *stable*. They may change, but usually do not change overnight – they need a social process of acquisition and change that takes some time, depending on the collectivity. Only such relatively stable representations can be effectively learned, shared and reproduced and thus serve as a basis and taken for granted presuppositions of social practices.

Social identities, as shared by a group, may of course change, but in general do so slowly, especially if their social basis is large, and under specific social conditions, such as serious threats, catastrophes and revolutions. Social identities (only) change when significant numbers of their members change, and especially if prominent members or leaders of collectivities change. Changes usually require interaction, discussion and collective decision making, and hence text and talk, for instance in the general mass media or those of the collectivity.

My theory of social identity – as most theories of social identity in the cognitive and social sciences – implies that social identities are *not* “locally constructed,” or “performed”, as discursivist and interactionist approaches hold (Burr 2003; Edwards & Potter 1992; Parker 1998; Potter 1996; see also *De Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg 2006).

Indeed, the very notion of identity is inconsistent with such an *ad hoc*, local production of identities. Identities are by definition presupposed and antecedent to social practices. Totally unique conduct in some situation is precisely *not* identified as (a part of) one’s social ‘identity’, but at most as a deviation from it, or as totally irrational or non-understandable. Social actors can only locally ‘perform’ a social identity if they already *know* who they are, that is, know their social identities – in the same way as one can only *use* English when one *knows* English.

Locally constructed, however, are the *uses* or *applications* of social identities, as is also the case for language and language use. This use may be personal, contextual, ad hoc, and so on, and ignore, or modify an existing identity, or contribute to the construction of a new social identity. In that sense, this conception of social identity is also non-essentialist. That is, one may ‘be’ a conservative and will often ‘show’, ‘display’ or ‘enact’ such an identity, when it is appropriate (e.g., politically correct), and sometimes not. It is only in this sense that identities are ‘locally constructed’, namely as personal, situational displays, uses or ‘performances’ of identities or constructions of new ones, or as the enactment of a unique combination of identities.

Personal and situational *variation* or *deviation* in this case must be described in *contextual* terms, as is the case for *style* and other discursive expressions or ‘performances’ of identity (Bucholtz & Hall 2004; Eckert & Rickford 2001; *Van Dijk 2008, 2009).

Social identity as defined here obviously is related to notions such as (**social**) **roles**. Roles may be defined as a specific type of social identity, but in the literature they have been studied especially from a sociological point of view, for instance in terms of the type of interactions, rights and duties related to such roles, as in traditional Role Theory (see, e.g., *Thomas 1979). Also, whereas social identities as defined here are relatively stable, roles may be more specifically defined as social identities that are only contextually assumed by social actors, for instance in relation to other social actors, as is the case for friends, enemies, bosses, etc. Although their cognitive structure may be similar to other social identities, we would not want to collapse the difference – e.g., between the current ‘role’ of speaker or of opponent, on the one hand, and between the identities of being feminist, conservative or professor.

Below, I shall provide a theoretical framework that combines the relative social stability of social identities as social representations, with the personal flexibility and variability of identity manifestations in different social situations.

Discourse and identity

The functions of social identities also define the conditions of their *acquisition*, for instance in various types of socialization. In general, identities are acquired and used as part of social *interaction* among in-group members, as well as in interaction with members of out-groups, as is the case for identities of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, origin or profession. Acquisition and sharing through interaction among the members of collectivities is one of the social dimensions of social identities.

More specifically, the acquisition of social identities is largely *discursive*, for instance in terms news and commentary about the activities of other members, as well as by more or less explicit lessons, instructions, editorials, debates, stories and other normative discourses in which parents, teachers, leaders, or colleagues tell new members about the properties, activities, aims, norms, values, group relations and resources of a group, community or organization (*Androutsopoulos & Georgakopoulou 2003; *Baumann 1996; *De Fina 2003; *De Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg 2006; *Duszak 2002; *Gumperz 1982; *Hall & Bucholtz 1995; *Shotter 1989; *Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl & Liebhart 1999).

Social identities are usually but not *only* acquired by discourse. They may also be learned by inferences made on the basis of the observation of, and participation in, other forms of social interaction. Professional identities tend to be based both on professional discourse as well as on observing ‘hands-on’ professional practices (*Apker & Eggly 2004; *Connelly & Clandinin 1999), whereas political

identities are largely acquired by text and talk (*Laclau 1994; *Minnini 1991; for the role of language and talk in the constitution of gender and sexuality, see *Hall & Bucholtz 1995; *McIlvenny 2002).

As manifestations, expressions, uses, applications or performances of social identities, discourses may be studied by analyzing, at all levels and dimensions, the ways various properties of such identities are being *formulated* by members in specific communicative situations. This may happen by explicit categorizations and self-descriptions (e.g., “We feminists want...”), pronouns (“Us vs. Them”), typical actions associated with social identities (“govern”, “legislate”, “teach”, etc.), and so on, as we shall see in more detail below. It is also through such discursive formulations that social identities are construed, acquired, distributed, modified, challenged and abolished. In other words, in everyday life, social identities especially ‘show’ in text and talk. Hence the fundamental importance of a discursive approach in the study of social identity.

Social identity and context models

As all social representations, social identities are usually assumed to be located in ‘semantic’ memory, which I prefer to call ‘social memory’, because it contains the socially acquired and shared knowledge and beliefs. This social memory is distinguished from ‘episodic’ memory (Tulving 1983), in which people’s personal experiences are represented, and hence may also be called ‘personal’ memory.

In order to be ‘applied’ in social practices such as discourse and other forms of interaction, social identities as general social representations of “our” group, community or organization, need to be specified for specific settings (time, place, circumstances), actors and their goals, roles and relations. Social actors in general, and language users in particular, form, activate or ongoingly and dynamically adapt **mental models** of social situations, including of themselves and other participants. It is at this point of the process of the ‘use’ of social identities, that social actors activate one or more of their (known) social identities. General, socially shared knowledge and beliefs, and hence also social identities can only be concretely applied in discourse and other social practices through their instantiation in mental models in episodic memory, that is, through our experiences.

At each moment in interaction or discourse, some of these locally activated identities may **change** or become more or less prominent. Thus, at one moment, one has the role-identity of speaker, and the next moment one may have the role-identity of recipient. On the other hand, during the whole communicative event one may activate and apply the major social identity of politician, Member of

Parliament, journalist or professor, possibly at the same time one or more minor ones (e.g., those of gender, age, ethnicity or nationality) – which may become major ones in other situations.

The mental models construed by discourse participants about the current communicative situation, that is, about themselves, their roles and identities, their relations to other participants, as well as the current setting (time, place) and their ongoing – and changing – goals and knowledge, are called **context models** (Van Dijk 2008, 2009).

Context models control all situationally variable properties of discourse, such as their style (pronunciation, lexicon, syntax, etc.), overall organization (superstructure), local and global meanings, speech acts, turn taking and other aspects of talk in interaction. They enable language users to adapt their discourse to the social situation, and hence make their discourse socially **appropriate**. In that sense, context models also are the basis of pragmatics, while making explicit the appropriateness conditions of speech acts and other forms of conventional interaction. Hence, we may also call these models **pragmatic models**.

As all mental models (as is the case for the **semantic** models of the events we talk *about*, see *Johnson-Laird 1983; Van Dijk & Kintsch 1983), also context models are not only social and intersubjective because they instantiate social identities, as well as social knowledge, ideologies, norms and values, but also **subjective** and **personal**. They embody personal experiences, represent and update personal, autobiographical events, personal knowledge and opinions. This explains that despite their social and intersubjective basis, context models are by definition **unique**. It follows that also the discourses whose production or comprehension they control are by definition **unique**.

It is in *this* sense, and only in this sense, that the uses or performances of social identities are situational and ‘locally produced’, namely as unique applications or uses of socially shared identities, ideologies and knowledge.

In other words, in each communicative situation each participant construes, and ongoingly updates, a mental model of the current communicative situation. This mental model features their own social identities that at each moment are (more or less) relevant. Hence, **social identities are being applied or used in discourse through their activation and instantiation in context models.**

Besides different levels of strength or priority in each situation, and even at each moment of a situation, this also means that such identities may be more or less extensively be activated or applied. When speaking *as* a Member of Parliament or *as* a professor, one usually needs to activate much knowledge associated with such occupational identities. On the other hand, in the same situation, one’s gender identity, where relevant at all, may be only marginally and partly be activated and applied.

Context models not only control discourse production, but also **comprehension**. Different participants by definition have different context models (current communicative role and knowledge are always different, and so may be their goals, social identities, ideologies, and so on). This means that recipients usually understand the discourse, both semantically as well as pragmatically, in a different way than intended by the speaker (and as represented in the context model of the speaker). Thus, **participation structures** and their different footing (*Goffman 1981) or variable communicative roles are *subjectively* represented in the mental models of the participants.

Note that it is not the objective social or communicative roles or identities of the participants that influence text and talk, but their subjective interpretation and definition of the situation, and themselves as represented in their context models. In this sense, our theory of social identity is neither essentialist, nor realist-objectivist. This also implies that social situations, and hence social properties of participants do not *determine* the way they produce or understand discourse.

We now have a general idea about the nature, the structures and the functions of social identities, and the ways they interface with discourses and other social practices through subjective context models. For a theory of discourse this means that the appropriate theoretical location of the way social identities should be accounted for is within the theory of context.

Political identities

Political identities are social identities in the political domain. They obviously have the same properties as other social identities, but also some specific characteristics due to their political functions. For one, political identities are generally ideological, and presuppose membership of political in-groups as opposed to political out-groups, such as parties, movements or nation states. They are defined in a domain of power, control, decision making and competition for scarce resources. As ideologically founded identities, they also are associated with possibly very different world views, as is the case for the Left and the Right (*Billig 1995; *Chebel 1986; *Chevallier 1994; *Laclau 1994; *Mackenzie 1978; *Norton 1988; *Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl & Liebhart 1999).

Strictly speaking, there is not much literature on political identities as intended in this chapter. There is a vast literature on the related topic of 'identity politics', which however focuses on the political implications of gender, ethnicity, nationality and similar forms of identities (see, e.g. *Alcoff 2006; *Aronowitz 1992). The kind of political identity we examine in this chapter is closer to the phenomena

that have been studied as political knowledge, consciousness, awareness and socialization (*Claussen & Müller 1990; see also *Norton 1988). Our cognitive framework is partly shared with that of studies on political cognition in political science. However these do not focus on discourse (a lack of interest – unique in the social sciences – that is quite general in political science), and have not (yet) integrated the current cognitive theory of mental models proposed above (*Lau & Sears 1986; *Lodge & McGraw 1995).

Types of political identities

Political identities may be of different types, such as professional political identities, e.g., those of members of institutions or organizations such as parliaments and political parties, and positional or relational political identities, such as members of the opposition, leaders of parties, members of political action groups (activists), and so on.

Speakers in parliament not only may display the other social identities (e.g., those of gender, class, age, nationality and so on), but also various political ones, such as being an MP, member of the opposition, spokesperson for the opposition, member of a political party, chairperson of the party and so on. These social identities may variously combine with the political ones, as is the case for the relation between being member of conservative parties on the one hand, and the prominence of national identities – and nationalist ideologies – on the other hand.

In a broader sense of ‘politics’, social identities, such as those of gender, ‘race’, ethnicity, sexual orientation or nationality also have political implications (in terms of ‘identity politics’; see, e.g., *Croucher 2003). However, I shall focus attention here more specifically on the role of identity and identification in ‘official’ politics as the domain of more or less legitimate power, public decision making by elected representatives, as well as the roles of political parties, action groups and movements in the political process (*Abusada 1998; *Aronowitz 1992; *Castells 1997; *Czudnowski 1983; *Finkel & Opp 1991; *Greene 1999; *Laraña, *Johnston & Gusfield 1994; *Oberschall 1993)

Unlike many other social identities, political identities are acquired rather late in people’s lives. Unless by early imitation of their parents and their explicit indoctrination, many children do not spontaneously develop explicit political identities before adolescence, sometimes not even before being adults. People in many countries may vote when they are 18, which presupposes that at that age they are defined to be politically mature and able to choose and support some political party, a political act that in turn presupposes some kind of (perhaps rudimentary) political identity (see, e.g., *Claussen & Müller 1990).

For many citizens this kind of identity only confirms itself, more or less independently of parents or peers, in early adulthood, for instance as students – after which it may also gradually change. Stereotypically, people may be leftist when they are students, and become more conservative in later life when they have more vested interests that are inconsistent with a leftist, revolutionary or activist identity. Few people become more radical when they get older.

The structure of political identities

As suggested before, one of the crucial questions is what political identities actually *look* like. That is, we should go beyond a superficial usage of identities – for instance as ‘political roles’ people play, and examine their sociocognitive contents and structures as well as their social or political functions.

Obviously, we have no access to mental representations – whether as knowledge, ideologies or identities – but we may infer some general structural properties based on other insights in psychology and as derived from the obvious functions of ideologies in everyday life. That is, our assumptions about the nature of political identities are geared towards explaining discourse and other forms of social conduct – as is also the case for assumptions about grammar or discourse rules as shared knowledge controlling actual language use.

First of all, I shall assume that like many mental representations, also identities have some kind of schematic organization, based on some basic categories that facilitate acquisition, activation, change and actual usage. Thus, an identity most likely does not consist of a *list* of some 10,000 propositions. As I have assumed for ideologies (Van Dijk 1998), political identities probably feature between 5 and 10 basic categories that organize the actual ‘content’ of the identity. Political identities in this case might be articulated by the following basic categories:

Membership. Being formal or informal ‘member’ of a party, of parliament, or of a social movement. For informal memberships it suffices someone considers her- or himself a member. Formal memberships define “card-carrying” identities. Identification, thus, is clearly with a group or community of people, even for very general political identities as being ‘liberal’ or ‘conservative’, which also implies feeling ideological association with others of the same persuasion, that is knowledge about shared political attitudes. Political identity in this sense typically involves feelings of belonging, participation and solidarity. This category of political identity schemas organizes the information about who we *are*, politically speaking (e.g., for the UK: ‘I am an MP, member of Labour, a socialist, etc.’).

Activities/Discourse. Political identities usually feature information about (political) actions, activities or practices. These may be the professional actions of elected politicians (governing, legislating, etc.), of would-be politicians (campaigning, canvassing, etc.), of party members (meet, make propaganda, discuss policies, etc.) or of political activists (demonstrate, criticize, formulate alternatives, etc.). In politics many of these activities are discursive. It is in these (discursive) political activities that people actually display their political identities – one campaigns as a member of party X, one gives a speech on parliament as member of government, one vetoes a bill as president, and so on. The information in this category defines what we typically *do and say*, politically speaking, as members of a political group or as an incumbent in a political position.

Aims. Political activities usually have aims or goals, which are also defined in political terms, such as aspects of the political process of governing, legislating or dissenting. These may be the overall (macro) aims of political parties or movements – such as promoting social justice – or more local, micro aims such as defeating a bill or discrediting the president. We need the information in this category in order to define what we *want*, politically speaking.

Norms and values. Activities and aims require a general basis of norms and values that tell members what is good and bad, and what should (not) be done. These define what is ‘politically correct’ or not. Thus, for neoliberal politicians, government intervention in the market will generally be bad, because it violates the basic liberal value of the freedom of enterprise. These norms and values ultimately explain *why* or *why not* we do specific kinds of political things and what overall goals we seek to realize through political practices.

Ideology. Political identities are defined by what ‘we’ believe, that is, by our ideology, organized by the fundamental norms and values of ‘our’ group, such as the ‘freedom’ of enterprise, or the ‘freedom’ of the press. Thus, conservatives may embrace a neoliberal ideology, leftists a socialist ideology and political dissidents may variously adhere to pacifist, ecological or feminist ideologies that sustain and organize their attitudes and, indirectly, the mental models of experiences and action of their members. Thus, political identities may largely be defined in what we *believe* in. In that sense, political identities are different from social identities of social categories (e.g., of gender, age, ethnicity) that do not usually feature ideologies – which are rather associated with *chosen* identities, e.g. being a feminist or a transvestite, rather than being a woman.

Group relations. Political identities are usually defined in relation to *other political groups*. Being on the Left presupposes that others are on the Right. Socialist identities are generally defined in opposition to ‘capitalist’ or neoliberal ones. Political

ideologies tend to be polarized between *Us* and *Them*, as is the case for political struggle, domination as well as dissent and resistance. Hence, this category defines who are our political 'friends' and who are our political 'enemies.' It is also here that the fundamental power relations and resources of political identities are defined.

Power resources. Political groups and organizations not only need social identities, aims, norms, values and ideologies to be able to engage in relevant political action, but also various kinds of material and symbolic power resources. These may be merely symbolic such feelings of moral superiority (e.g., of pacifists over militarists), actual political power (such as government over opposition), political support (e.g., by number of members or voters), financial support (e.g. by business corporations) or moral support (by moral authorities). Perhaps most important as a power resource for political groups and organizations is their access to and control over public discourse, and hence, indirectly, to the minds of the citizens. Hence the fundamental role of the (preferential access to, control of) mass media as a power resource. Information in this category defines the fundamental political *affordances* of political groups and organizations: What they are *able* to do, and hence their political *power* (*Van Dijk 2008b).

These different categories are assumed to organize the sometimes complex information that defines our political identity. Recall though that political identities are defined for *groups*, and for individuals only 'as' group members, that is, as a political identity in which they share, but which they may or may not fully endorse, personally.

Since individuals may identify with various social and political groups, individual political identities, as well as their display or 'uses' in specific social situations, may be complex, hybrid and even contradictory. One may be 'liberal' on moral issues such as abortion or women's rights, but conservative (neoliberal) economically. People may be pacifist in international affairs, but hawkish when it comes to combating crime and favor the death penalty. These may be more or less stable personal political identities, but in actual interaction the manifestation of such complex political identities is again context dependent, and 'locally constructed'. One may generally be a pacifist in international affairs, but still 'be' – or rather 'perform' as a militarist in special circumstances, such as imminent threats or political pressure of political peers.

This implies that political discourse and other political practices, such as debates in parliament, may show these underlying contradictions of identity and ideology in political discourse and decision making. Thus, we know that in the opposition, a leftist party may oppose severe immigration restrictions, but once in power and in government, they may present a bill that implies such restrictions (*Van Dijk 1993; *Wodak & Van Dijk 2000).

As we have seen for social identities generally, also political identities and ideologies are general principles for action, talk and text, but do not *determine* them. Actual political discourse and other conduct always also depend on the constraints of specific social situations. Current political identities also depend on the identity chosen or displayed by other participants, and may be negotiated in actual political interaction.

Parliamentary debates

Parliamentary debates are a specific genre of political discourse and part of the global political action of legislation. They are types of interaction in which members of government and the opposition take turns to support or oppose bills, policies or declarations as constituent discourses of government and the political process. These debates are regulated by various rules and norms that vary from one country to the next, such as who controls the debate and turn taking, who may or must speak first or last, for how long, and on what possible topics, whether or not interruptions are allowed, and so on. Thus, we not only have 'order' in court, but also 'order' in parliament, as is also shown by the repeated admonitions of "Order!" by the Speaker of the British House of Commons (for details on parliamentary debates, see, e.g., *Bayley 2004; *Brand 1992; *Steiner 2004; *Van Dijk 2008b; *Wodak & Van Dijk 2000).

It should be emphasized that parliamentary debates, as is the case of all genres, are not merely defined by their formal properties, such as turn allocation, turn length, speaking rights, topics, style or conventional formulas – many of which can also be found in other public discourse genres of decision making organizations. Rather, such debates – as well as other genres – should be primarily defined in terms of properties of the communicative situations, such as Setting (Location, Time), Participants (identities, roles, relations), current local and global Action or Interaction (e.g., give a speech, and legislation, political decision making), political Goals, and political Knowledge and Ideologies. We have seen that these properties of communicative situations, abstractly defining genres, do not directly influence actual debates, *but the ways they are defined or constructed in the context models of the participants*. Since participant identities, as defined, are part of these context models, the analysis of the influence of political identities in parliamentary debates is actually an analysis of the context models of the participants. This also explains the vast diversity of the actual interventions in parliament – even by people who otherwise share many or most of their social and political identities.

In the rest of this chapter I shall analyze some fragments of parliamentary speeches in the British House of Commons and the Spanish Cortes, and focus on the ongoing displays, expressions or constructions of political identities, especially also as part of political interaction. Through such an analysis, we may also be able to formulate some further ideas about the actual contents and structures of political identities, as well as the functions in the debate as well as more globally in the political process.

Blair and the United Kingdom

In order to be able to compare speeches across countries, I have chosen examples of debates about the same event in international politics, namely those about the imminent war in Iraq in the spring of 2003. Both the New Labour government of Tony Blair in the UK (*Stothard 2003), as well as the government of the Partido Popular, led by José María Aznar, were in favor of supporting the U.S. decision to invade Iraq. Although leaders of politically opposed parties, of Labour in the UK and of the (conservative) Partido Popular in Spain, respectively, not only their support for US foreign policy and the Iraq war, but also on other points, Blair and Aznar often speak a similar language (for the language of New Labour, see also Fairclough 2000; see also my other analyses of various other aspects – knowledge, context, manipulation – these debates in *Van Dijk 2003, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2008a, 2008b, 2009).

Let us examine for these discourses how the political identities of these leaders are being formulated as part of their arguments in favor or against this war. I shall thereby ignore many other aspects of political discourse, such as political rhetoric, argumentation or semantic strategies (for details, see, among many other books, e.g., *Beard 2000; *Blommaert & Bulcaen 1998; *Chilton 2004; *Geis 1987; *Wilson 1990; *Wodak 1989).

Let us start with some observations on Tony Blair's speech of March 18, 2003 (published on the internet in the Hansard record of UK parliamentary debates), in which he defends a motion that allows the UK government to take military action against Iraq, "because of its continuing non-compliance with Security Council Resolutions".

Blair starts his defense of this motion as follows:

- (1) At the outset, I say that it is right that the House debate this issue and pass judgment. That is the democracy that is our right, but that others struggle for in vain. Again, I say that I do not disrespect the views in opposition to mine. This is a tough choice indeed, but it is also a stark one: to stand British troops

down now and turn back, or to hold firm to the course that we have set. I believe passionately that we must hold firm to that course. The question most often posed is not “Why does it matter?” but “Why does it matter so much?” Here we are, the Government, with their most serious test, their majority at risk, the first Cabinet resignation over an issue of policy, the main parties internally divided, people who agree on everything else?

[Hon. Members: “The main parties?”]

Ah, yes, of course. The Liberal Democrats – unified, as ever, in opportunism and error.

[Interruption.]

Also when speaking in the House, Tony Blair of course has or displays a number of *social* identities, such as those of gender, age, etc., which however I shall ignore here. The first relevant *political* identity on display in this debate is that enacted by Tony Blair as Prime Minister of the UK, explicitly signaled in the Hansard record, but only implicitly present by presupposed, shared knowledge of the MPs. That is, according to the transcript the Speaker does not explicitly announce the Prime Minister. Contextually, and hence relevant for a pragmatic account of this fragment, Blair’s identity as Prime Minister (PM) gives him the right to speak first (after the Speaker) and to present a motion. Also, as head of the UK government he has the right to propose the House to go to war, as formulated in the motion. The deictic expression *I* as usual indexes these various identities, in the sense that it is especially his formal identities as PM and head of government that are relevant here, and less his personal identity (named Tony Blair) and his identity as the leader of Labour, among others – identities that however may become more relevant later in the debate.

Examining the constituent categories (as defined above) of these political identities of Tony Blair, we find that part of his *activities* as PM and leader of government involve informing parliament, asking for approval of his policies, as well as to realize the local aim of getting a motion accepted. Other categories (such as norms and values, and relations to other groups) are enacted later in the debate.

Ignoring a host of other formal, semantic and pragmatic features of this fragment (and the rest of the debate) and focusing exclusively on the formulation or presupposition of political identities, we find that the next reference to a group or institution is that to the “House”, short for “House of Commons” or parliament, referring to the institution but pragmatically also to its members – whom Blair is now addressing. Since Blair is not only Prime Minister but also a Member of Parliament and hence speaks to his co-members, thus signaling another political identity. At the same time, however, the majority of the House may well vote against Blair’s motion, so that there is also a question of political polarization

within the House, and even within Blair's own party. As we shall see below, Blair is aware – in this case in his identity as Labour majority leader – that he cannot simply count on the unanimous support of his own party (Stothard 2003).

Next, when speaking about democracy that is “our right”, Blair uses the political possessive pronoun “our”, which signals this identity of members of parliament on the one hand, but at the same time a much broader political identity, namely being member of a democratic state or system. The next clause (“others struggle...”) confirms this identity by opposition (Us vs. Them), as we assumed in the Relations category of political identities: being members of a democracy is a fundamental political identity only when opposed to being a member of a dictatorship – in this case, as implicitly conveyed but not yet formulated, for Iraq.

I already suggested that co-membership as MPs of Blair and the other members of parliament does not mean unity. On the contrary, we may first of all expect opposition to government in general, in this case of the Conservative and Liberal parties. However, Blair and the other participants know that in the case of Iraq, the conservative party did not oppose the war. Rather, opposition came from the left in his own party and from the Liberal party.

The next sentence expresses (or construes) this new identity, namely of Blair as leader of the majority position in his own party and as a member of ‘those supporting’ to go to war in Iraq. Thus, in the same way people may construct identities as Pro-Life and Pro-Choice in abortion debates (Reicher & Hopkins 1996), we now find a Pro-War and Anti-War polarization (both in the Labour party and elsewhere) about Iraq. These polarized political identities may be associated with pacifist or non-pacifist ideological positions, but such identities need not be the same (Klandermans 1997). There may be people who are not pacifist, but still do not want *this* war. The polite double negation (“do not disrespect”) is a strategic rhetorical move to highlight the democratic values underlying the debate, and of course also contributes to the positive self-image of Tony Blair as a “fair” opponent.

The political identity being constructed here – those in favor of the war against Iraq – is much more contextual than the other ones (PM, MP, Labour, etc.), and so is the division in the British House of Commons. We see that what goes on here draws upon various of these identities at the same time. Blair emphasizes the respect for the Others by a well-known move of empathy (‘I understand how hard it must be for you’), but the use of “but” that follows it suggests that this is rather a disclaimer, and hence (also) a form of positive self-presentation.

Blair continues his combined identities as current speaker, as PM, as MP, as leader of government, and as someone who favors the war against Iraq: “I believe passionately that we must hold firm...”. This is hardly Prime Minister style. Rather, with such an expression he emphasizes personal emotions and commitments, especially also as leader of those in the UK who favor intervention in Iraq.

In other words, if speakers activate various identities at the same time, these may variably and dynamically become more or less prominent or salient at each moment. PMs in the UK may make formal declarations, but are not stereotypically associated with passionate beliefs, as would be the case for political radicals and activists. Note also the use of the characteristic political pronoun “we” (“the course we have set”, “we must hold firm”), which may variously refer to any one of the groups whose identities we have discussed above: Blair himself as PM (in which case “we” is pluralis majestatis), he and his government, or those in favor of intervention in Iraq. In a next sentence, he makes this identity explicit by referring to “we, the Government”, as well as to its (Labour) majority in parliament.

The reference to “British” troops explicitly introduces a new identity in the debate, namely a national one, which of course was implicit earlier in the debate: all MPs know and presuppose that they are members of the *British* parliament, and speaking about the involvement of *Britain* in the war against Iraq. Thus, perhaps more prominently than many other identities, Blair displays his identity as a Brit. When he formulates a choice of which one is formulated in explicitly negative terms (“stand the troops down”) he of course not only disparages those who would do such a despicable thing, but also appeals to nationalist sentiments, that is to national identity. And as protagonist of the other choice, and hence as defender of the British troops, Blair himself further contributes to his personal self-presentation by implicitly qualifying himself as a proud nationalist.

Blair goes on to activate other identities in the debate when he refers to the “main parties” (being divided about the war). That is, the identity of the MPs as members of parliament is a moment downgraded and replaced by that of their identity as party members.

However, as we can see from the interruption, some MPs, probably of the Liberal Democrats, don’t like the label used by Blair “main parties”, which would indeed presuppose that there are second rate, or less important parties. Again, this is obviously a question of identity, and hurts the political self-image of these MPs as members of the liberal party.

Blair reacts with a lightning-fast reaction to the interruption with a disparaging “Oh yes”, presupposing that the Liberal Democrats are mentioned as an afterthought, which politically implicates that they are, indeed, less important, and tend to be forgotten when one speaks about national and international politics. Blair ironically admits that the Liberals are not divided, but especially by derogating them as being unified in their error and opportunism. This biting rhetorical move at the same time highlights that whatever identities in parliament may be constructed ad hoc, the fundamental power play is between the political parties. Thus, in this case it is not just Blair as PM or leader of government speaking, but

especially as leader of Labour, displaying the political group relation category of Labour identity – that is, the relations to other political parties in the UK. A negative representation of the political Others in this case of course is the ideological base of such expressions as “error” and “opportunism”.

Let us examine the next fragment of this debate

- (2) The country and the Parliament reflect each other. This is a debate that, as time has gone on, has become less bitter but no less grave. So why does it matter so much? Because the outcome of this issue will now determine more than the fate of the Iraqi regime and more than the future of the Iraqi people who have been brutalised by Saddam for so long, important though those issues are. It will determine the way in which Britain and the world confront the central security threat of the 21st century, the development of the United Nations, the relationship between Europe and the United States, the relations within the European Union and the way in which the United States engages with the rest of the world. So it could hardly be more important. It will determine the pattern of international politics for the next generation.

One collectivity so far was still missing in this “democratic” debate: the people, the voters, the citizens, etc, denominated the “country” by Blair with the deictic definite expression signaling that all recipients know whom he is talking about. Thus, by recognizing a political division in parliament and claiming that this reflects the country, Blair also recognizes that there are also many ordinary people against his militaristic option. In the political identity of MPs, the people of course need to be represented in the Group Relations category of the political identity of MPs, especially when MPs identify themselves as delegates of the people. Especially in populist discourses in parliament, the people are routinely referred to enhance the position of a speaker.

In other words, there is not just a parliamentary debate, but also a debate in civil society. By referring to the people and by recognizing the controversial nature of his decision, Blair not only enhances his credentials as a democrat but also as a good, national leader. His further arguments should thus at the same time be read as arguments directed at the people.

Blair then speaks about Iraq more explicitly, and does so by introducing the political identities of the Iraqi regime, categorized as bad, and that of the Iraqi people, categorized as good. If the war will oppose or destroy the first and thus help the last, such an act of course reflects back positively on the Helper, and his government and country. We see how political identities are enacted as well as shaped and confirmed by alliances and misalliances: who are our friends, and who are our foes? If Blair wants to fight Saddam Hussein, and SH is bad (“brutalized”, etc.), then Blair is good by political implicature.

Finally, Blair extends political identities to the whole country, Europe, the USA and the world, and thus is 'doing' world politics, for an international audience. His own position on the war, as based on his various personal and political identities, is finally said to be shaped by the constraints of world politics, namely the aim of a secure world. Blair and Britain become Bush's buddies, forming a new identity (with some insignificant others, such as Spain, Portugal or Poland) called the Alliance, self-defined as good because of its active stance and action against the Saddam Hussein the mass murderer. Note that in this case the formulation of the identity is not yet a question of norms and values, but first of all a practical aim (a secure world), as well as the national group relationships that are necessary to reach this aim. Rhetorically, this aim and the need of alliances between groups are enhanced with the hyperbole "could hardly be more important", and the extension from the current world to next generations, that is, the future.

From this brief, relatively informal, analysis of two paragraphs we see that parliamentary debates on important national and international issues may involve a host of identities, both directly enacted in parliament by speakers as well as recipients, as well as by those of people spoken about (like the Iraqi people, the USA, etc.). Both the contextual interaction, such as the sneer at the Liberal Democrats, or addressing the division in the House, as well as the groups spoken about, offer the relational structure that define the identities displayed in the debate. Depending on each topic, argument or move, Tony Blair thus activates or emphasizes his identity as PM, as MP, as Labour Leader, and international leader, as leader of those in the UK who want to go to war, and so on. Instead of speaking of one hybrid identity, I shall assume that it makes more sense to describe this as the dynamic, contextually and textually controlled, activation and manipulation of various 'given' identities, and only sometimes in terms of strict, new political identities.

The discourse of Aznar in Spanish Parliament

On the same day Tony Blair held his speech in the British House of Commons, namely on March 18, 2003, (former) Prime Minister and Government President José María Aznar appeared "on his own initiative" before Spanish parliament, with the same aim: to convince MPs of his support for U.S. President Bush and for military intervention in Iraq. The official aim was to inform the MPs and the country about the Iraq crisis and the position of Spanish government. Aznar at the moment was also leader of the Partido Popular, which lost its majority and the government one year later because they had misinformed the public about the terrorist attack against commuter trains in Madrid on March 11, 2003, falsely claiming that ETA was behind the attack when it was already clear that the attack was due to Islamist radicals. Unlike the leaders of major other European

countries such as Germany and France, Aznar declared his support for Bush and Blair in the Iraq crisis.

Also because of the same date, topic and circumstances (also the vast majority of the Spanish population, including of the Partido Popular, were against the war), it is interesting to compare some aspects of these speeches, notably the kind of political identities assumed by Aznar. The debate is quite hectic and eventful, and some leftist MPs show slogans such as *Guerra No!* or *Aznar demisión!* (Aznar resign!). The president of Parliament has difficulty maintaining order, and condemns the use of banners with slogans.

This is how Aznar begins his opening speech of this special session dedicated to the Iraq crisis:

- (3) El señor PRESIDENTE DEL GOBIERNO (Aznar López): Señora presidenta, El pasado día 5 intervine para informar sobre el proyecto de resolución presentado por nuestro país, junto con los Estados Unidos y el Reino Unido, ante el Consejo de Seguridad de las Naciones Unidas. Un proyecto cuyo objetivo es incrementar la presión ante el régimen de Saddam Husein para que, finalmente, cumpliera las resoluciones que desde 1991 viene vulnerando. Para el Gobierno todavía hoy está en vigor el objetivo de la presión diplomática sobre Irak. En estas dos semanas he continuado hablando con numerosos representantes de (236,12056) la comunidad internacional dentro y fuera del Consejo de Seguridad de las Naciones Unidas, principalmente con jefes de gobierno de países europeos, iberoamericanos y árabes. Finalmente, el pasado domingo mantuve una reunión con el presidente de los Estados Unidos y el primer ministro del Reino Unido, países copatrocinadores del proyecto de resolución, así como con el primer ministro de Portugal. Los cuatro países, así como otros a los que me referiré más adelante, mantenemos un punto de vista común acerca de la situación actual. Constatamos que no se ha alcanzado un consenso en el Consejo de Seguridad sobre una nueva resolución. El acuerdo ha resultado imposible ante el aviso reiterado de veto por parte de algunos de los miembros permanentes del Consejo. (**Rumores.**) A pesar de que repetidamente los tres países copatrocinadores expresamos nuestra voluntad de diálogo y negociación sobre la propuesta, nos hemos encontrado ante una postura inflexible.

Mrs President, On the 5th of this month, I spoke here to report on the draft resolution submitted by our country, together with the United States and the United Kingdom, before the Security Council of the United Nations. A project aimed at increasing pressure on the regime of Saddam Hussein to finally comply with the resolutions he has been infringing since 1991. For the Government the aim of diplomatic pressure on Iraq is still in force today.

In these two weeks I have continued talking to numerous representatives of the international community within and outside the Security Council of the United Nations, mainly with heads of governments of European, Latin American and Arab countries. Finally, last Sunday I had a meeting with the U.S. President and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, countries sponsoring the draft resolution, as well as with the Prime Minister of Portugal. These four countries, as well as others to which I refer later, maintain a common view about the current situation. We note that no consensus in the Security Council on a new resolution has been reached. The agreement has proved to be impossible due to the repeated announcement of a veto by some of the Council's permanent members. (Noise) Despite the fact that as the three co-sponsoring countries we have repeatedly expressed our willingness to dialogue and negotiate on the proposal, we have been confronted with an uncompromising stance.

Just like Tony Blair, Prime Minister Aznar is identified as such by the transcript of the session, but in this case also the President of Parliament introduces him as President of the Government and gives him the floor, as first speaker. In other words, the first political identity activated and made salient here is his role as 'president', that is, as the leader of government. Aznar also addresses the national assembly (indirectly, by addressing the President of parliament), that is, the MPs, and his identity is thus also defined in terms of the relationship with parliament.

Secondly, Aznar reminds the MPs of his previous "intervention" (see Van Dijk 2005, for an analysis of the political implicatures of that previous speech, the first in a sequence, on the Iraq crisis). The use of political pronoun "nuestro" ('our') in the deictic expression "nuestro país" ('our country') suggests another identity adopted, namely that of being Spanish. Note though that this reference is a rhetorically effective metonymy, because obviously it is not Spain as a country that has presented a resolution to the Security Council, but rather Aznar's government by means of its UN representative. Referring to the whole country instead may be a usual metonymy in such cases, but here at the same time functions as a move of consensus – as if the whole country were in favor of that resolution, when in fact the majority of the country (nearly 90%) was opposed to the war in Iraq. Aznar thus also suggests that he is doing his democratic job as prime minister with such a resolution presented by 'our country'. He needs this kind of (implicit) positive self-presentation especially in the light of the very harsh criticism against his Iraq policy in the media, among the left and even among his own party.

By referring to the co-sponsorship of the resolution by the USA and the UK, Aznar at the same time constructs another political identity, namely as a (responsible) international leader, who is friends with two world leaders.

Aznar declares that the aim of the resolution was to increase pressure on Saddam Hussein to comply with the international demands established after the Gulf War in 1991. As 'president' he thus exhibits some of the contents of the relational category of this identity, namely another leader, but in this case a bitter enemy. In other words, as does Blair, Aznar enlists himself in the group of those who want to go to war in Iraq – thus exhibiting a more ad hoc political identity.

Aznar's assumed role and identity as international statesman emerges in a next sentence when he mentions continuing conversations with "numerous representatives of the international community" – thus enacting one of the typical activities associated with the identity of a prime minister. Also the Aims category of this identity is obvious, as he represents it, namely to put international pressure on those who defies UN resolutions. Repeated private conversations with Bush and Blair of course enhance the prestige Aznar aims for as a government leader.

Aznar not only leads the Spanish community in favor of the war, but is also part of the international community of leaders who support the war, thus displaying another political identity. At this point also emerges another prominent feature of political identity, namely sharing the same point of view (on Iraq) – that is, the same attitude and probably the same ideology, namely the one he defends in the Spanish *Cortes*. This identity as member of the international Pro-War coalition, becomes even more explicit when Aznar refers to that group in terms of 'we': 'we maintain the same point of view,' 'we found that there was no consensus,' etc.

The next sentence fills in the Group Relation category of the identity schema when Aznar refers to "algunos de los miembros permanentes del Consejo" ('some permanent members of the Council'), without naming these (France, Russia), forming in this case the group No-War group, that is, the opponent that co-constitutes the identity of the Pro-War we-group of which Aznar is a member. It is not surprising that this kind of explicit allegiance with a Pro-War coalition and against a No-War group provokes protest in Spanish parliament. This alignment of Aznar is further emphasized by the usual discursive strategy of the ideological square: emphasizing Our good things ('we want dialogue') and Their bad things ('they are inflexible'). That is, *We* respect international norms and values, whereas *They* don't. With this construction, Aznar now presents two enemies, namely Saddam Hussein, on the one hand, and secondly those 'pacifists' who do not want to go to war against him.

These constructions are not just politically relevant at the international level, whatever Aznar's ambitions. His most prominent identity in Spain is being prime minister and head of government, and he is now answering for his policies before the Spanish *Cortes*. This means that the international pacifist opponent also must correspond with an 'enemy within', namely those against the war in Spain, led

by the Socialist Party (PSOE). The political implicature of his speech, as we also found in the analysis of the earlier discourse on Iraq before Spanish parliament (Van Dijk 2005), is of course both to defend and legitimate the policy of his government and at the same time to attack and delegitimize the socialists and others against the war, thus implicitly branding them as allies of Saddam Hussein.

Conclusions

Social identities are shared mental constructs of groups and their members, exhibited in coordinated practices, and reproduced by text and talk. These representations are probably organized by a schema with a limited number of categories defining the basic parameters of groups: membership, activities, aims, norms and values, relations to other groups and ideologies. These underlying identities control people's individual experiences, discourses and other actions as represented in their subjective mental models, which in turn control these 'expressions' or 'enactments' of their social identities. Social actors may be members of several social groups and hence may have several social identities, which in concrete situations may be combined in complex ways in their mental models. This is also true for the models that control the contents and the forms of text and talk. Many social identities take years to acquire, such as those of gender and class, whereas others may be learned relatively briefly.

Unlike other approaches, I do not hold that social identities are (only) locally constructed from scratch and only contextual. Not only is such a view inconsistent with the very notion of identity, which implies at least some measure of stability across situations, but such a view is also incompatible with all we know about the sociocognitive basis of social practices, discourse and group life. I therefore distinguish between social identities as relatively stable mental representations, on the one hand, and the expression, uses or enactments of such identities in concrete situations by individual group members, on the other hand. This distinction is similar to that between language or grammar, on the one hand, shared by a community, and actual language use by its members, on the other hand. It is in the uses of identity that members are able to combine and display identities in unique ways, and construct new, or ad hoc identities.

Theoretically, the interface between general, socially shared identities of groups, as represented in 'semantic' (social) memory, and actual discourse is, consists of *context models*, stored in episodic memory. These dynamically updated models represent the subjective and ongoing 'definition of the communicative situation' of the participants. These context models control all discourse production and comprehension and account for the fact that language users are able to

adapt their text and talk to the social situation. In that sense, context models also are the basis of *pragmatics*, because they formulate the *appropriateness conditions* of discourse as action and interaction. Social identities are instantiated as properties of the Participant category of context models, and as such control part of the discourse.

Political identities are group identities in the domain of politics, and include such identities as members of government, parliament, opposition, political parties, social movements, action groups, and so on. Unlike some other social identities, such as those of gender, political identities are acquired quite late in life, even when parents, school and the mass media may engage in permanent propaganda – as was in the case with anti-communist propaganda in the West for decades.

For obvious reasons, some of the schematic categories of political identities take special importance. Thus, most political identities have quite explicit political ideologies, as is the case for leftist, conservative, socialist or neoliberal ideologies, or the ideologies of social movements such as pacifism and feminism. Since power is one of the major dimensions of the political domain, this also means that the Group Relation category is often articulated in the polarized terms of (positive) *Us* and (negative) *Them*, where the Others are often the enemy.

Parliamentary debates are political activities and discourses in which political identities are routinely expressed, displayed, enacted, formed and reproduced. We therefore finally examined some fragments of speeches on the Iraq crisis by Tony Blair and José María Aznar, pronounced on the same day, March 18, 2003, in front of the British House of Commons and the Spanish *Cortes*, respectively.

This analysis revealed how in just a few minutes, these leaders display and combine multiple political identities, such as being politicians, members of parliament, prime ministers, government leaders, leaders of their respective political parties, being English and British, members of an international Pro-War coalition, and so on. Depending on which identities are more salient at each moment, we have seen how the subjective mental models of these speakers – each with their own unique identity configuration – are variously and dynamically expressed in the structures and strategies of their political discourse.

In line with my previous work on ideology and context, I think that the approach to social identity and discourse advocated in this chapter embodies the combined advantages of classical concepts of identities as more or less stable properties of groups and their members, with the more flexible and dynamic dimensions of constructionist and ethnomethodological approaches, emphasizing the contextual, performed and interactional nature of identities.

Note

An older version of this chapter, "Political Identity in Parliamentary Debates" was read as paper for the colloquium "El joc de les identitats en els discursos orals", Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona, October 1–2, 2004.

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