
Chapter 12

Discourse and Racism

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Introduction

For most people, and probably also for many readers of this chapter, the notion of racism is not primarily associated with that of discourse. More obvious associations would be discrimination, prejudice, slavery, or apartheid, among many other concepts related to ethnic or "racial" domination and inequality dealt with elsewhere in this book.

And yet, although discourse may seem just "words" (and therefore cannot break your bones, as do sticks and stones), text and talk play a vital role in the reproduction of contemporary racism.

This is especially true for the most damaging forms of contemporary racism, namely, those of the elites. Political, bureaucratic, corporate, media, educational, and scholarly elites control the most crucial dimensions and decisions of the everyday lives of immigrants and minorities: entry, residence, work, housing, education, welfare, health care, knowledge, information, and culture. They do so largely by speaking or writing, for instance; in cabinet meetings and parliamentary debates, in job interviews, news reports, advertising, lessons, textbooks, scholarly articles, movies or talk shows, among many other forms of elite discourse.

That is, as is true also for other social practices directed against minorities, discourse may first of all be a form of verbal discrimination. Elite discourse may thus constitute an important elite form of racism: Similarly, the (re)production of ethnic prejudices that underlie such verbal and other social practices largely takes place through text, talk, and communication.

In sum, especially in contemporary information societies, discourse lies at the heart of racism. This chapter explains how and why this is so.

Racism

To understand in some detail how discourse may contribute to racism, we first need to summarize our theory of racism. Whereas racism is often reduced to racist ideology, it is here understood as a complex societal system of ethnically or "racially" based domination and its resulting inequality (for detail, see van Dijk, 1993).

The system of racism consists of a social and a cognitive subsystem. The social subsystem is constituted by social practices of discrimination at the local (micro) level, and relationships of power abuse by dominant groups, organizations, and institutions at a global (macro) level of analysis (most classical analyses of racism focus on this level of analysis; see, e.g., Dovidio and Gaertner, 1986; Essed, 1991; Katz and Taylor, 1988; Wellman, 1993; Omi and Winant, 1994).

As suggested above, discourse may be an influential type of discriminatory practice. And the symbolic elites, that is, those elites who literally have everything "to say" in society, as well as their institutions and organizations, are an example of groups involved in power abuse or domination.

The second subsystem of racism is cognitive. Whereas the discriminatory practices of members of dominant groups and institutions form the visible and tangible manifestations of everyday racism, such practices also have a mental basis consisting of biased models of ethnic events and interactions, which in turn are rooted in racist prejudices and ideologies (van Dijk, 1984, 1987, 1998). This does not mean that discriminatory practices are always intentional, but only that they presuppose socially shared and negatively oriented mental representations of Us about Them. Most psychological studies of "prejudice" deal with this aspect of racism, though seldom in those terms, that is, in terms of their role in the *social* system of racism. Prejudice is mostly studied as a characteristic of individuals (Brown, 1995; Dovidio and Gaertner, 1986; Sniderman et al, 1993; Zanna and Olson, 1994).

Discourse also plays a fundamental role for this cognitive dimension of racism. Ethnic prejudices and ideologies are not innate, and do not develop spontaneously in ethnic interaction. They are acquired and learned, and this usually happens through communication, that is, through text and talk. And vice versa, such racist mental representations are typically expressed, formulated, defended, and legitimated in discourse and may thus be reproduced and shared within the dominant group. It is essentially in this way that racism is "learned" in society.

Discourse

Definition

Without knowledge of racism, we do not know how discourse is involved in its daily reproduction. The same is true for our knowledge about discourse. This notion has become so popular, that it has lost much of its specificity. "Discourse" is here understood to mean only a specific communicative event, in general, and a written or oral form of verbal interaction or language use, in particular. Sometimes "discourse" is used in a more generic sense to denote a type of discourse, a collection of discourses, or a class of discourse genres, for instance, when we speak of "medical discourse," "political discourse," or indeed of "racist discourse." (For an introduction to contemporary discourse analysis, see the chapters in van Dijk, 1997.)

Although it is often used in that way, we do *not* understand by discourse a philosophy, ideology, social movement, or social system, as in phrases such as "the discourse of liberalism" or "the discourse of modernity," unless we actually refer to collections of talk or text.

In the broader, "semiotic" sense, discourses may also feature nonverbal expressions such as drawings, pictures, gestures, face-work, and so on. However, for brevity's sake, these will be ignored here, although it should be obvious that racist messages may also be conveyed by photos, movies, derogatory gestures, or other nonverbal acts.

Structural analysis

Discourses have many different structures, which also may be analyzed in many different ways depending on general approaches (linguistic, pragmatic, semiotic, rhetorical, interactional, etc.) or the kind of genres analyzed, such as conversation, news reports, poetry, or advertisements. It will be assumed here that both written/printed text and oral talk may thus be analyzed at various levels or along several dimensions. Each of these may be involved directly or indirectly in discriminatory interaction against minority group members or biased discourse about them, for instance, as follows:

- Nonverbal structures: A racist picture; a derogatory gesture; a headline size or page layout that emphasizes negative meanings about "Them."
- Sounds: An insolent intonation; speaking (too) loudly.
- Syntax: (De-)emphasizing responsibility for action, for instance by active vs. passive sentences.
- Lexicon: Selection of words that may be more or less negative about Them, or positive about Us (e.g., "terrorist" vs. "freedom fighter").
- Local (sentence) meaning: for instance, being vague or indirect about Our racism, and detailed and precise about Their crimes or misbehavior.
- Global discourse meaning (topics): selecting or emphasizing positive topics (like aid and tolerance) for Us, and negative ones (such as crime, deviance, or violence) for Them.
- Schemata (conventional forms of global discourse organization): presence or absence of standard schematic categories — such as a resolution in a narrative schema, or a conclusion in an argument schema — in order to emphasize Our Good things and Their Bad things.
- Rhetorical devices: metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, euphemism, irony, etc. — again to focus attention on positive/negative information about Us/Them.
- Speech acts: e.g., accusations to derogate Them, or defenses to legitimate Our discrimination.
- Interaction: interrupting turns of Others, closing meetings before Others can speak, disagreeing with Others, or nonresponding to questions, among many other forms of direct interactional discrimination.

Although not yet very detailed, nor very sophisticated, this brief list of levels and some structures of discourse gives a first impression of how discourse and its various structures may link up with some aspects of racism. Note also that the examples given show the kind of group polarization we also know from underlying prejudices, namely, the overall tendency of ingroup favoritism or positive self-presentation, on the one hand, and outgroup derogation or negative Other-presentation, on the other.

In other words, with the many subtle structures of meanings, form, and action, racist discourse generally emphasizes Our good things and Their bad things, and

de-emphasizes (mitigates, hides) Our bad things and Their good things. This general "ideological" square not only applies to racist domination but in general to ingroup-outgroup polarization in social practices, discourse, and thought.

The cognitive interface

An adequate theory of racism is nonreductive in the sense that it does not limit racism to just ideology or just "visible" forms of discriminatory practices. The same is true for the way discourse is involved in racism. This is especially the case for "meanings" of discourse, and hence also for beliefs, that is, for cognition. Discourses are not only forms of interaction or social practices, but also express and convey meanings, and may thus influence our beliefs about immigrants or minorities.

The point of the analysis of discourse structures above, thus, is not only to examine the detailed features of one type of discriminatory social practice, but especially also to gain deeper insight in the way discourses express and manage our minds. It is especially this discourse-cognition interface that explains how ethnic prejudices and ideologies are expressed, conveyed, shared, and reproduced in society. For instance, a passive sentence may obscure responsible agency in the mental models we form about a racist event, a special type of metaphor (such as in "an invasion of refugees") may enhance the negative opinion we have about Others, and a euphemism such as "popular resentment" may mitigate the negative self-image an expression such as "racism" might suggest. In this and many other ways, thus, the discourse structures mentioned above may influence the specific mental models we have about ethnic events, or the more general social representations (attitudes, ideologies) we have about ourselves and Others. And once such mental representations have been influenced in the way intended by racist discourse, they may also be used to engage in other racist practices. It is in this way that the circle of racism and its reproduction is closed.

The social context: the elites

Research suggests that the discursive reproduction of racism in society is not evenly distributed over all members of the dominant majority. Apart from analyzing their structures and cognitive underpinnings, it is therefore essential to examine some properties of the social context of discourse, such as who its speakers and writers are. We repeatedly suggest in this chapter that the elites play a special role in this reproduction process (for details, see van Dijk, 1993). This is not because the elites are generally more racist than the nonelites, but especially because of their special access to, and control over, the most influential forms of public discourse, namely, that of the mass media, politics, education, research, and the bureaucracies. Our definition of these elites is thus not in terms of material resources that are the basis of power, such as wealth, nor merely in terms of their societal positions of leadership, but rather in terms of the symbolic resources that define symbolic "capital," and in particular their preferential access to public discourse. The elites, defined in this way, are literally the group(s) in society who have "most to say," and thus also have preferential "access to the minds" of the public at large. As the ideological leaders of society, they establish common values, aims, and concerns; they formulate common sense as well as the consensus, both as individuals and as leaders of the dominant institutions of society.

This is also true for the exercise of "ethnic" power - in which the dominant majority needs guidance in its relationships to minorities or immigrants. Given our analysis of the role of the "symbolic" elites in contemporary society, we conclude that they also have a special role in the reproduction of the system of racism that maintains the dominant white group in power. This means that an analysis of elite discourse offers a particularly relevant perspective on the way racism is reproduced in society.

At the same time, however, further sociological and political analysis is necessary to examine in more detail how the symbolic elites relate to the population at large, including incorporating and translating popular confusion or resentment into the forms of dominant racist discourse they deem to be most relevant to maintain their own power and status. For instance, critique of unemployment and urban decay against the (political) elites may thus be deflected by blaming them on the immigrants. More extremist forms of popular racism, whether or not organized in political parties, may then be publicly denounced so as to protect one's own nonracist face and to propagate more "moderate" forms of racism in mainstream parties. It is not surprising therefore that racist parties are "useful idiots" and, with reference to democratic values, seldom prohibited. The various social and political processes may easily be detected in an analysis of elite discourses in contemporary societies.

Of course, this special perspective on the role of the elites in the reproduction of racism, based on the simple argument that they control public discourse, also explains the role of small groups of elites in the nondominant forms of *antiracism*. If it is generally true that the leaders are responsible and need to give a good example, this conclusion also implies that antiracist policies and change should not so much focus on the population at large, but on those who claim to need it less: the elites. If the most influential forms of racism are at the top, it is also there where change has to begin.

The role of context

Current discourse analysis emphasizes the fundamental role of context for the understanding of the role of text and talk in society. As will also appear several times below, dominant discourses do not merely exercise their influence out of context. When defining discourse as communicative events, we also need to take into account, for example, the overall social domains in which they are used (politics, media, education); the global social actions being accomplished by them (legislation, education); the local actions they enact; the current setting of time, place, and circumstances; the participants involved, as well as their many social and communicative roles and (e.g., ethnic) group membership; and not least the beliefs and goals of these participants. These and other properties of the social situation of the communicative event will influence virtually all properties of text and talk, especially those properties that can vary, such as their style: *how* things are said. That is, similar prejudices may be formulated in very different ways depending on these and other context structures - for example, in government discourse or parliamentary debates, quality- broadsheet or tabloid, on the left or on the right, and so on. In other words, the large variety of racist discourses in society not only reflect variable underlying social representations, but especially also adapt to different contexts of production: who says what, where, when, and with what goals. A theory of context also explains in part why, despite the dominant ethnic consensus, not all talk on minorities will be the same.

Conversation

After the more theoretical introduction about the way discourse is involved in racism and its reproduction, we now proceed to some examples of the various genres whose role in racism has been studied.

A genre is a *type* of discursive social practice, usually defined by specific discourse structures and context structures as spelled out above. For instance, a parliamentary debate is a discourse genre defined by a specific style, specific forms of verbal interaction (talk) under special contextual constraints of time and controlled speaker change, in the domain of politics, in the institution of parliament, as part of the overall act of legislation, engaged in by speakers who are MPs, representative of their constituencies as well as members of political parties, with the aim (for instance) to defend or oppose bills, with formal styles of address and argumentative structures supporting a political point of view ... And this is merely a short summary of such a definition of a genre, which usually needs both textual and contextual specification.

Thus, in the same way, everyday conversation is a genre, probably the most elementary and widespread genre of human interaction and discourse, typically defined by lacking the various institutional constraints mentioned above for parliamentary debates. Indeed, we virtually all have access to conversations, whereas only MPs have access to parliamentary debates. Much of what we learn about the world is derived from such everyday conversations with family members, friends, and colleagues. The same is true for ethnic prejudices and ideologies.

Study of conversations of white people in the Netherlands and California about immigrants (van Dijk, 1984, 1987) shows a number of interesting characteristics. Casually asked about their neighborhood, many speakers spontaneously begin to speak about "those foreigners," often negatively (see also the following studies of racist conversations: Jager, 1992; Wetherell and Potter, 1992; Wodak et al., 1990).

Whereas everyday conversations are often about other people, and anything may come up in such talk, *topics* about minorities or immigrants are often limited to a few topic types, namely, the increasingly negative topic classes of difference, deviance, and threat. Thus, ethnic outgroups are first of all talked about in terms of how they look and act different from us — different habits, language, religion, or values. Such talk may still be neutral in the sense that such differences need not be negatively evaluated; indeed, differences may even be discussed in a "positive" way as being interesting, exotic, and culturally enriching. More often than not, however, different characteristics will be negatively framed when compared to those of the ingroup. Next, Others may be talked about even more negatively in terms of deviance, that is, of breaking our norms and values, in Europe typically so in negative remarks about Islam, or the way Arab men treat women. Finally, immigrants or minorities may be talked about even more negatively, in terms of a threat, for instance, in stories about aggression or crime or presented as taking away our jobs, housing, or space, or (especially in elite discourse) when seen as threatening "our" dominant culture.

Whereas topics are meanings that characterize whole conversations or large parts of them, a more local semantic analysis of everyday talk about minorities or immigrants reveals other interesting features. One of the best known are *disclaimers*, that is, semantic moves with a positive part about Us, and a negative part about Them, such as:

- Apparent Denial: We have nothing against blacks, but ...
- Apparent Concession: Some of them are smart, but in general ...
- Apparent Empathy: Of course refugees have had problems, but ...
- Apparent Ignorance: I don't know, but ...
- Apparent Excuses: Sorry, but ...
- Reversal (blaming the victim): Not they, but we are the real victims ...
- Transfer: I don't mind, but my clients ...

We see that these local moves instantiate within one sentence the overall (global) strategies of positive self-presentation (ingroup favoritism) and negative other-presentation (outgroup derogation). Note that some disclaimers are called "apparent" here, because the first, positive part primarily seems to function as a form of face-keeping and impression management: the rest of the text or fragment will focus on the negative characteristics of the Others, thus contradicting the first "positive" part.

In the same way, we may examine several other dimensions of everyday talk about minorities. Thus it was found that in *narrative structures* of everyday negative stories about immigrants, often the resolution category was lacking. This may be interpreted as a structural device that enhances precisely the negative aspects of the complication category of a story: stories that have (positive) resolutions of problems or conflicts are less efficient as complaint stories about Others.

Similarly, stories also often have the role of premises that present the undeniable "facts" of personal experience in *argumentations* that lead to negative conclusions about minorities. It need hardly be stressed that such argumentations are replete with fallacies. Thus negative statements about the Others will typically be supported by the authority move that says that people "saw it on TV." In the same way as prejudices are stereotypical negative social representations, arguments themselves may be stereotypical and conventional. Thus, refugees will typically be described as a "financial burden" for Our society, who would be taken better care of "in their own region," dissuaded from coming because they may "suffer from popular resentment" here, or recommended to stay in their own country in order to "help build it up."

Finally, even at the surface levels of actual talk management, for instance, in turn-taking, fluency, and so forth, we may witness that white speakers appear to show insecurity or uneasiness, for example, by the extra use of hesitations, pauses, and repairs when they have to name or identify minorities.

As we have stressed before, these and other properties of discourse about Others have interactional-social conditions, functions, and consequences, as well as cognitive ones. Thus, outgroup derogation is itself a social, discriminatory practice, but at the same time its discursive manifestations express underlying prejudices, which may in turn contribute to the formation or confirmation of such prejudices with the recipients.

News Reports

Everyday conversations are the natural locus of everyday popular racism. Because they do not have active control over public elite discourse, ordinary people often have no more "to say" or "to do" against the Others than talking negatively to Them, and about Them.

Of course, ethnic stereotypes and prejudices, just like rumors, may spread fast in such a way.

As suggested, however, much everyday talk about minorities is inspired by the mass media. Speakers routinely refer to television or the newspaper as their source (and authority) of knowledge or opinions about ethnic minorities. This is especially the case for those topics that cannot be observed directly in everyday interaction, even in ethnically mixed countries or cities. Immigration is a prominent example, in which most citizens depend on the mass media, which in turn depend on politicians, bureaucrats, the police, or state agencies. Of course, in cities, regions, or countries with few minorities, virtually all beliefs about the Others come from mass media discourse, literature, textbooks, studies, or other forms of elite discourse. In other words, not only for ordinary citizens but also for the elites themselves, the mass media are today the primary source of "ethnic" knowledge and opinion in society.

It is not surprising therefore that the representation of minorities in the media such as television, newspapers, and movies has been extensively investigated (Dates and Barlow, 1990; Jager and Link, 1993; Hartmann and Husband, 1974; van Dijk, 1991). Much earlier work is content-analytical, that is, quantitative research into observable features of text or talk, such as how often members of a specific ethnic group are portrayed in the news or advertising and in what roles. These studies offer some general insight, but do not tell us in detail *how* exactly the media portray minorities or ethnic relations. Sophisticated discourse analysis is able to provide such a study, and also is able actually to explain why media discourses have the structures they have, and how these affect the minds of the recipients. It is only in such a way that we get insight into the fundamental role of the media in the reproduction of racism.

If we focus more specifically on the media genre that is at the basis of most beliefs about minorities, namely the news, we may proceed in a way that is similar to that presented above for conversations. That is, we examine each of the levels identified above, and search for structures or strategies that seem typical for media portrayals of the Others.

News reports in the press, for instance, have a conventional schematic structure consisting of such categories as summary (headline + lead), main events, background (previous events, context, history), comments, and evaluation. Thus, we may focus on *headlines* and see whether these typical summaries of news reports are different for minorities than when they are about dominant group members. Following the general ideological square introduced above, we may for instance assume that headlines in the news tend to emphasize the negative characteristics of minorities. Much research has shown that this is indeed the case. In a Dutch study, for instance, we found that of 1500 headlines on ethnic issues, not a single one was positive when it involved minorities as active, responsible agents, whereas such is much more normal when one of Us is the semantic agent in a headline. Also the syntax of headlines may thus be biased in favor of the ingroup, for instance, when passive constructions diminish their responsibility for negative actions.

Headlines summarize the most important information of a news report, and hence also express its main topic. Further analysis of these overall meanings of discourse confirms what we already found in everyday conversations, which apparently seem to follow the media in that respect (and vice versa, the media in a sense also reflect commonsense beliefs), namely, that *topics* can be classified as being about difference, deviance, and

threat. If we list the most important topics in "ethnic" news in different Western countries, or countries where Europeans are dominant, we always come up with a standard list of preferred topics, such as

- Immigration and reception of newcomers;
- Socioeconomic issues, (un)employment;
- Cultural differences;
- Crime, violence, drugs, and deviance;
- Ethnic relations, discrimination.

In other words, of the many possible topics, we again find a short, stereotypical list, in which the categories are usually defined in a negative way. Thus, immigration is always defined as a fundamental problem, and never as a challenge, let alone as a boon to the country, often associated with a financial burden. The same is true for the other main topics. Crime or crime-related topics such as drugs are virtually always among the top five of minority portrayals – even focusing on what is seen as "typical" ethnic crime, such as drug trafficking and sales, but also what is defined as political "terrorism" (for instance about Arabs). Cultural differences tend to be overemphasized, and cultural similarities ignored. Even discrimination and racism, which may provide a more balanced view of the "negative" aspects of society, are seldom news about the prevalence of discrimination and racism in society, but at most about popular resentment (very seldom or never about elite racism), about individual cases of discrimination, for example, on the job, or about extremist racist parties. In other words, discrimination and racism, when discussed at all in elite discourse, are always *elsewhere*.

Whereas topics are undoubtedly the most important, while also the most memorable aspect of news, they merely tell us *what* the media report about ethnic issues, not *how* they do so. Although we have less detailed insight into the local aspects of meaning, style, and rhetoric of news reporting on "race," there are a few findings that appear to be fairly reliable.

We already have observed for headlines that responsible agency may be enhanced or backgrounded by active or passive sentences. In the same way, backgrounding agency may occur in nominalizations, or word order of sentences. Again, the (largely unintentional) strategy that governs such local structures is the combined polarized tendency of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. Thus, we may find references to "resentment" or "discrimination" in the country, but it is not always spelled out *who* resents or discriminates against *whom*, as if discrimination or racism were phenomena of nature instead of practices of dominant group members.

Besides such aspects of discursive surface forms (syntax), it is especially the rich system of *meaning* that incorporates the many underlying beliefs that represent mental models of ethnic events, or more general, shared social representations of ethnic groups or ethnic relations. Following the now familiar ideological square, we thus may expect, and indeed do find, that in general information that is positive about Us or negative about Them will get highlighted, and vice versa. Semantically this means that such information will tend to be explicit rather than implicit, precise rather than vague, specific rather than general, asserted rather than presupposed, detailed instead of dealt with in abstractions. Thus, our intolerance, everyday racism, or discrimination will seldom be reported in much concrete detail, but their crimes, violence, and deviance will.

Taking into account the cognitive interface discussed above, we suppose that such meaning structures are a function of underlying mental representations which simply portray ethnic events and ethnic groups in that way. These may be *ad hoc*, personal mental models with personal opinions, but also widely shared stereotypes, prejudices, and ideologies. And the less these are conscious (as is often the case for more subtle forms of racism), the more the consensus is intertwined with dominant ethnic ideologies. Indeed, detailed news analysis about ethnic events provides a rich source for a study of contemporary social cognition.

Note though that what people say and mean in discourse is not only a direct function of their ethnic beliefs, but also a function of *context*, such as the setting, genre, speakers/writers, the audience, and so on. Thus news on ethnic affairs in serious broadsheets and in tabloids is very different for those contextual reasons, even if the journalists' underlying mental models about the ethnic events would be roughly the same. These contextual differences especially manifest themselves in the variable surface structures of style (layout, syntax, lexicalization, rhetorical devices).

News reports also have an important intertextual dimension. Newsmaking is largely based on the processing of a large number of source texts, such as other news reports, press conferences, interviews, scholarly studies, and so on. Such intertextuality in news reports shows in various forms of citation and other references to other discourses. Thus, it comes as no surprise that newspapers will generally take (white) elite source texts (e.g., of government, scholars, or the police) as being more credible and newsworthy than source texts of minority group members. Indeed, minority groups have little direct access to the media. If they are cited, they are always accompanied by declarations of credible majority group members. Statements about discrimination and racism will often be downgraded to the dubious status of allegations.

Whereas these and many other aspects of news reporting about race clearly express and reproduce dominant ethnic attitudes and ideologies, and hence crucially influence racism, it should finally be emphasized that problematization and marginalization do not only apply to minorities in the news, but also in the newsroom. Especially in Western Europe, leading reporters are virtually always white Europeans. No wonder that these will follow a beat, search for sources, and believe opinions that are consistent with their own and other members of their group, and much less those of minority groups. So far, thus, minority journalists have had less access to the media, especially in leading positions. As we have seen, the elites, especially in Europe, are virtually always white, and they also control the contents, forms, style, and goals of news and newsmaking. And it comes as no surprise therefore that the mass media, and especially the right-wing tabloid press, is rather part of the problem of racism than part of its solution.

Textbooks

Arguably, after the mass media, educational discourse is most influential in society, especially when it comes to the communication of beliefs that are not usually conveyed in everyday conversation or the media. All children, adolescents, and young adults, are daily confronted for many hours with lessons and textbooks — the only books that are obligatory reading in our culture. That is, there is no comparable institution and discourse that is as massively inculcated as that of school.

The bad news is that this is also true for lessons about Them – immigrants, refugees, minorities, and peoples in the Third World – and that such discourses are often very stereotypical and sometimes plainly prejudiced. The good news is that there is no domain or institution in society where alternative discourses have more possibilities to develop than in education.

Many studies have been carried out on the portrayal of minorities and Third World people in textbooks. Even simple content analyses have repeatedly shown that such portrayal, at least until recently, tends to be biased, stereotypical, and Eurocentric, and in early textbooks even explicitly racist (Blondin, 1990; Klein, 1985; Preiswerk, 1980; van Dijk, 1993).

As suggested, much has changed in contemporary textbooks. Whereas minorities were earlier virtually ignored or marginalized in textbooks, at least until the late 1980s, and despite their prominent presence in the country and even in the classroom, current textbooks in the social sciences as well as other fields seem finally to have discovered that there are also minorities to write about. And whereas information about Us that could be negative (such as colonialism) used to be ignored or mitigated, there is now a tendency to want to teach children also about the less glorious aspects of "our" history or society.

And yet, this is a tendency but still far from the rule. Many contemporary textbooks in many Western countries remain basically Eurocentric: not only our economy or technology, but also our views, values, societies, and politics are invariably superior. They keep repeating stereotypes about minorities and other non-European people. Third World countries tend to be treated in a homogeneous way, despite -the huge differences. As is the case in the press, the Others are invariably associated with Problems, for which however We tend to offer a solution. All this is equally true for minorities *in* the country, which largely are dealt with in terms of cultural differences and deviance, and seldom in terms of their everyday life, work, and contributions to both culture and the economy. Finally, textbook assignments too often ignore the presence of minority children in the classroom, and if not, these may be spoken about as Them, and not always addressed as part of Us.

These and many other properties of textbooks obviously are hardly an ideal preparation for the acquisition of ethnic beliefs that prepare children adequately for contemporary, increasingly multicultural, and diverse societies in Western Europe, North America, and elsewhere where Europeans are dominant over non-Europeans. As is the case for the media and the adult population, textbooks and lessons based on them form the discursive crucible for the everyday reproduction of biased ethnic beliefs and the often discriminatory practices based on them. We have argued that racism is learned and not natural or innate. This learning process already begins at school.

Political Discourse: Parliamentary Debates

Finally, among the influential symbolic elites of society, that is, those who have special access to and control over public discourse, we should mention the politicians. Indeed, sometimes even before the mass media, leading politicians have already preformulated a definition of the ethnic situation. State institutions such as the immigration service and the police, as well as their sustaining bureaucracies, are often the first to actually "talk to" new immigrants, as well as talk about them. Such discourse will rapidly become official,

both as to meaning/content and style, and routinely adopted by the media which cover these agencies and institutions, thus spreading dominant definitions of the ethnic situation among the population at large. Also depending on political parties and contexts, such discourses may again be stereotypical, biased, or even racist, or indeed take a dissident, antiracist position based on human rights, multiculturalism, and diversity (see, e.g., Hargreaves and Leaman, 1995; Hurwitz and Peffley, 1998; Solomos, 1993).

Historically, political discourse on the Others, whether minorities within the country or non-Europeans in Third World countries or colonies, has been among the most blatantly racist forms of elite discourse (Lauren, 1988). Until at least World War II, leading politicians would openly derogate people of Asian or African origin, and claim their white, Western superiority. But due to the Holocaust and World War II, and as a result of the discrediting of racist beliefs because of their use by the Nazis, postwar political discourse has become increasingly less blatant on the right, and more antiracist on the left. This development, however, should not be seen as a steady form of progress, because in the 1990s problematizing and stigmatizing discourse on refugees and immigrants has reappeared more openly, even in mainstream parties.

Analysis of parliamentary debates on minorities, immigration, refugees, and ethnic issues more generally shows many features that are consistent with those of other elite discourses we have examined above (van Dijk, 1993). Specific for this discourse genre are of course especially its contextual characteristics: the political domain, the institution of parliament, the overall sociopolitical act of legislation, the participants in many different roles (politicians, party members, MPs, representatives, opposition members, etc.), and the local acts involved, such as defending or opposing a bill, giving a speech, criticizing the government, attacking opponents, and so on.

Large parts of parliamentary debates on immigration and ethnic issues are organized as a function of these context dimensions. Thus, populist strategies of talk, in which the will of the people is invoked, for instance, to restrict immigration, is of course a function of the position of MPs needing votes to stay in office or to toe the party line. Positions on ethnic policies taken and defended in parliament, thus, are not primarily personal opinions, but expressions of shared political party attitudes. And topics selected are those that are a function of the actual business of legislation at hand, such as dealing with an immigration bill or the arrival of refugees from Bosnia or Kosovo.

Political context similarly defines the nationalism that transpires in debates on immigration and minorities. In the same way as we find disclaimers in everyday talk, parliamentary speeches may begin with long sections of positive self-presentation in the form of nationalist glorification of "long traditions of tolerance" or "hospitality for the oppressed." But of course, "we can not let them all in," "we have no money," and so forth. That is, the rest of such debates will often be quite negative when it comes to the characterization of the others or the legitimation of further restrictions on immigration. That at least is the dominant voice — because occasionally we also find more tolerant, antiracist, dissident voices which make appeal to human rights and universal principles.

Structurally speaking, parliamentary debates are organized sequences of speeches, by government and opposition speakers respectively. Given the respective political positions and roles, thus, each speaker will speak "to" a specific issue, such as a recent ethnic event or a bill, and argue for or against a number of standpoints, for instance, aspects of ethnic or immigration policy. This means that such debates and their speeches will be largely argumentative and rhetorical.

Apart from the well-known rhetoric of nationalism, populism, or human rights mentioned above, what is perhaps most fascinating in parliamentary debates on immigration are the *argumentative moves*, for instance, those that are used to legitimate immigration restrictions. Many of these moves have become standard arguments or *topoi*, such as the reference to our ("white man's") financial burden, the regrettable reference to "resentment" in the country, the suggestion of receiving refugees in their own country, the need to listen to the will of the people, and so on. Similarly, such argumentations are replete with *fallacies* of various kinds. Credibility rather than truth is managed by referring to authoritative sources or opinion makers, such as scholars or the Church. Selected but emotionally effective examples are used either of immigration fraud or of torture by foreign regimes in order to argue against or for liberal immigration laws for refugees, in both cases giving in to the fallacy of generalization from single cases. Again, the overall strategy in the selection of argumentative moves is positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. The Others in such a case may be not only the immigrants, but also those members of (opposed) political parties who defend their rights, or vice versa, those who are seen to infringe upon such rights.

Parliamentary debates are public, for the record, and official. This means that both content and style are strictly controlled, especially in written speeches. There is less formality in spontaneous debate, with large variation according to countries: in France such debates may be heated, with many interruptions, heckling, and many rhetorical styles, unlike the Netherlands and Spain, where parliamentary debates are formal and polite. This also applies to meanings and style of debates on minorities and immigration.

Self-control and public exposure prohibits, for instance, explicit forms of derogation or lexical selection that is obviously biased. This means that such official discourse will seldom appear very racist. On the contrary, tolerance and understanding may be extensively topicalized. But we have seen that this may also be a move, a disclaimer that introduces more negative topics. And in order to legitimate immigration restrictions, thus, speakers need to spell out why immigrants or immigration are bad for Us, and such an overall statement can only be conveyed by the general strategy, implemented at all levels of discourse, of negative other-presentation. Thus, in parliament, there will be references to fraud, drugs, or crime of immigrants, as well as to cultural differences and conflicts, and to the disastrous impact on the job market.

Concluding Remark

In sum, we see that influential public discourses, namely, that of the elites and elite institutions, show a large number of related characteristics. These not only reflect similar underlying mental models and social representations shared by the elites, but also similar ways of social interaction, communication, persuasion, and public opinion formation. Differences are mostly contextual, that is, depend on the aims, functions, or participants involved in them. But given similar aims, namely, the management of public opinion, legitimation, and decision making, we may assume that very similar structures and strategies will be at work in such discourse types. We will encounter stereotypical topics, conventional *topoi*, disclaimers that save face and hence manage impression formation; they engage in similar argumentative fallacies, make similar lexical selections when talking about Them, or use the same metaphors to emphasize some of their (bad)

characteristics. All these different structures at different levels, and of different elite genres, contribute to the overall strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. We have seen that precisely such structures may derive from and be geared towards the construction of similar mental structures, that is, negative attitudes and ideologies on minorities and immigration. And since among the elites as well as among the population at large such dominant group cognitions will again inspire similarly negative discourses and social practices, we may begin to understand how discourse, and especially public elite discourses, is crucially involved in the reproduction of racism.

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