CHAPTER 7

Political discourse and political cognition

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1. Relating politics, cognition and discourse

The aim of this chapter is to explore some of the relations between political discourse and political cognition. Separately, both interdisciplinary fields have recently received increasing attention, but unfortunately the connection between the two has largely been ignored: Political psychology has not shown much interest in discourse, and vice versa, most scholars interested in political discourse disregard the cognitive foundations of such discourse.

And yet, the relationships involved are as obvious as they are interesting. The study of political cognition largely deals with the mental representations people share as political actors. Our knowledge and opinions about politicians, parties or presidents are largely acquired, changed or confirmed by various forms of text and talk during our socialization (Merelman 1986), formal education, media usage and conversation. Thus, political information processing often is a form of discourse processing, also because much political action and participation is accomplished by discourse and communication.

On the other hand, a study of political discourse is theoretically and empirically relevant only when discourse structures can be related to properties of political structures and processes. The latter however usually require an account at the macro-level of political analysis, whereas the former rather belong to a micro-level approach. This well-known gap can only be adequately bridged with a sophisticated theory of political cognition. Such a theory needs to explicitly connect the individual uniqueness and variation of political discourse and interaction with the socially shared political representations of political groups and institutions. Thus, a biased text about immigrants may derive from personal beliefs about immigrants, and these beliefs

in turn may be related to the shared racist attitudes or ideologies of a larger group.

The theoretical framework of this chapter is complex and multidisciplinary. It relates various levels and dimensions of the political domain. The base level consists of individual political actors, as well as their beliefs, discourses and (other) interactions in political situations. The intermediate level, constituted by the base level, consists of political groups and institutions, as well as their shared representations, collective discourse, relations and interactions. The top level, which in turn is based on the intermediate level, is constituted by political systems, and their abstract representations, orders of discourse, and socio-political, cultural and historical processes.

Of course these levels are related in many ways, so that the micro and the macro levels seem to manifest themselves at the same time. Thus, a representative giving a speech in parliament speaks as an individual and thus expresses his or her personal political beliefs in a unique way and in a unique context. At the same time, that person speaks as a member of parliament or Congress, as a member of a party and as a representative of a constituency, thus possibly `doing' opposition against another party or against the government, and expressing the attitudes or ideologies of the own group. And finally, by doing so he or she is enacting a system of parliamentary democracy, reproducing the discourse order of democracy and democratic ideologies, and presupposing a historically variable Common Ground of cultural knowledge, norms and values, shared by all other groups of the same culture.

This chapter will focus on some of the relationships between the first two, lower, levels of political analysis, that is, on how political text and talk of individuals are related to socially shared political representations and collective interactions of groups and institutions.

Given the complexity of these relations between the individual and collective levels of analysis, this chapter must be limited to a few main topics. The first topic that needs to be examined in somewhat more detail is the role of the political context of discourse and how this context is cognitively defined and managed by political actors in the production and comprehension of political text and talk. Secondly, I shall show that political discourse structures (such as political topics, pronouns and metaphors) also require description and explanation in terms of 'underlying' mental representations, which in turn may be related to political structures and processes.

In terms of the three levels distinguished above this means that discourse

and politics can be related in essentially two ways: (a) at a socio-political level of description, political processes and structures are constituted by situated events, interactions and discourses of political actors in political contexts, and (b) at a socio-cognitive level of description, shared political representations are related to individual representations of these discourses, interactions and contexts. In other words, political cognition serves as the indispensable theoretical interface between the personal and the collective dimensions of politics and political discourse.

1.1 An example

In order to illustrate the theoretical argument of this chapter, let us take a concrete example of political discourse, viz., a fragment of a speech held in the British House of Commons on July 5, 1989, by Sir John Stokes, a (very) conservative MP representing Halesowen and Stourbridge. His speech is a contribution to a debate on immigration and DNA testing, and supports further immigration restrictions of the Thatcher government, which the Labour opposition (by mouth of Roy Hattersley) at the start of the same debate called 'racially discriminatory'. This is what Sir John Stokes has to say:

In the past 25 years, we have allowed hundreds of thousands of immigrants into
this small island so that we now have ethnic minorities of several million people
and in some cases, as we all know, their birth rate far exceeds that of
the indigenous population. This is primarily a problem for England, as the
5 other countries in the United Kingdom have much smaller immigrant
populations. Why are we English Members of Parliament here today? I ask
that question of the Opposition, too. Are we not the trustees of this beloved
England for posterity? What is the future of our country to be in another 25
years, even if all immigration is stopped tomorrow? What will be the effect on
10 our religion, morals, customs, habits and so on? Already there have been some
dangerous eruptions from parts of the Muslim community. Having served with
the Muslims during the war, may I say that I greatly admire many of them and
their religion. I also very much like the letter which my hon. Friend the
Minister of State, Home Offffice, wrote to Muslim leaders and which was
15 published in the newspapers today. It is foolish to ignore the problems and the
fears that those dangerous eruptions engender among the ordinary people
whom we are supposed to represent. We must not allow our feelings of guilt
over our treatment of immigrants to cloud our judgement. We in England are

a gentle, kind, tolerant and peace-loving people. We already absorbed large
zo numbers of newcomers. Except occasionally, there have not been the riots and bloodshed that some people prophesied. The burden of receiving and coping with these newcomers in our midst has fallen not on the intellectuals, Labour Members of Parliament and others of that ilk but on ordinary English working-class people. Surely they are entitled to a voice here. Vast changes have been
25 made in the cities because of the large numbers of immigrants living there, The local English people were never asked about this. They never had to vote on it. They must have views about the future of this influx. They look to us to safeguard their position. Everyone here - immigrant or non-immigrant - wants to safeguard our position. As I said, fortunately we have not had much
3o bloodshed or rioting, and relations generally are good, but as the figures on those who are still coming in are published, more and more people are starting to say, 'Will this go on, or can we say enough is enough?' This is a small attempt to have a little more control, and very wise it is. It should be welcomed by everyone in the House and outside. (Hansard, 5 July, 1989, columns 390-391).

In order to fully understand this fragment, a few remarks are in order about its political context. The speech was given in the summer of the year the fatwah against Salman Rushdie was issued by the Ayatollah Khomeiny, because of his book *The Satanic Verses.* This religious death sentence also raised tensions in the British Muslim community, some of whose members supported the fatwah. This even led to demonstrations and public burning of Rushdie's book. These are the 'dangerous eruptions' Sir John Stokes refers to (line 10). He also refers to a letter written by his conservative colleague, secretary of the Home Offffice, Douglas Hurd, to the Muslim community, warning them that undemocratic behaviour would not be tolerated in Great Britain.

Let us now return to the theoretical argument, and use examples from this speech by way of illustration.

1.2 The study of political cognition

The study of political cognition focuses on various aspects of 'political information processing'. It essentially deals with the acquisition, uses and structures of mental representations about political situations, events, actors and groups. Typical topics of political cognition research are: the organization of political beliefs; the perception of political candidates; political judgement and

decision making; stereotypes, prejudices and other sociopolitical attitudes; political group identity; public opinion; impression formation; and many other topics that deal with memory representations and the mental processes involved in political understanding and interaction (for details, see, e.g., Hermann 1986; Iyengar and McGuire 1993; Lau and Sears 1986; Lodge and McGraw 1995).

A review of this research is beyond the scope of this chapter. My aim is rather to construct a new framework that focuses on the relations between political discourse and political cognition. Of course, many of the dimensions of such a framework will also be relevant for a theory of the relations between political cognition and various other components of political structures and processes, as mentioned above. (Although there is virtually no specific work that combines systematic political discourse analysis with political cognition research, there is work that relates political psychology with the analysis of communication; see e.g., Crigler 1996; Kraus 1990; Kraus and Perloff 1985; one of the few scholars in political cognition who studies various discourse types, though with content analytical methods, is Tetlock 1981, 1983, 1984, 1985a, 1985b; for a survey of this research, see Tetlock 1993).

One crucial element of my framework that is lacking in other research on political cognition, is that of mental models, which serve as the necessary interface between socially shared political cognitions, on the one hand, and personal beliefs on the other hand. These models also serve as the cognitive basis of political discourse and political action, and thus also relate the political macrostructures of shared representations of groups and institutions, with the political microstructures of the activities of political actors.

2. A conceptual framework

In order to be able to reconstruct the systematic relations between political cognition and political discourse, I shall briefly summarize some elementary psychological notions of the theoretical framework in which these relations will be analyzed (for discussion of the relevance of such a framework for political information processing, see Wyer and Ottati 1993).

1. Cognitive processes and representations are defined relative to an abstract mental structure called 'memory.'

2. A distinction is traditionally made between Short Term Memory, STM (also called Working Memory) and Long Term Memory (LTM). Actual processing of information (e.g., perception, discourse understanding and production, the monitoring of interaction, etc.) takes place in STM, and makes use of information (e.g., knowledge) stored in LTM.

3. A further distinction is made in LTM between Episodic Memory and Semantic Memory. Episodic memory stores personal experiences that result from processing (understanding) in STM, and Semantic Memory stores more general, abstract and socially shared information, such as our knowledge of the language or knowledge of the world. Given the socially shared nature of the information in Semantic Memory, I shall call this 'Social Memory', in contrast to the more personal information stored in Episodic Memory.

4. Information in LTM is organized in various types of mental representations, each with their own schematic structure. For instance, general social knowledge about conventional episodes (such as shopping in a supermarket or participating in a scholarly conference) may be organized by 'scripts' consisting of a number of fixed categories, for instance categories for the typical setting, events, actions and participants of such episodes. Part of this social knowledge is also the general political knowledge people have, e.g., about politicians, parliamentary debates, elections, political propaganda or political demonstrations.

5. Knowledge is here defined as the organized mental structure consisting of shared factual beliefs of a group or culture, which are or may be 'verified' by the (historically variable) truth criteria of that group or culture. Note that what may be 'knowledge' for one group (period or culture) may be deemed mere 'beliefs' or 'opinions' by other groups.

6. Besides knowledge, people also have other socially shared information, viz., group attitudes (including prejudices), ideologies, norms and values. Whereas knowledge is culturally defined as 'factual' or 'objective', that is as `true beliefs' (of a group) attitudes are often defined as evaluative and (inter)subjective, because they essentially vary between different groups in society (see below, for details).

7. Although little is known about the organization of evaluative beliefs, it is likely that also attitudes and ideologies are organized by characteristic

schemas, for instance about the own and other groups and their relationships. Thus, male chauvinist opinions about women and gender relations are probably stored in interrelated group schemata about men and about women as groups.

8. The overall 'architecture' of Social Memory is still unknown. Yet, I shall assume that its basis is constituted by a Common Ground of socio-cultural beliefs, featuring generally shared (undisputed) cultural knowledge and opinions (for a related but different — more local and interactional — definition of `common ground', see Clark 1996). It is this cultural Common Ground that defines such notions as 'common-sense' and 'taken-for-grantedness.' Although fundamental for a given period or culture, even Common Ground beliefs may change historically. On the basis of this cultural Common Ground (which enables mutual understanding and communication) each social group may however develop its own group knowledge and opinions, which in turn are organized by underlying ideologies. Sometimes (fragments of) specialized group beliefs will enter the Common Ground (e.g., our elementary knowledge about the earth as a planet). And vice versa, Common Ground beliefs of one period may become special group or sectarian beliefs in a later period (as is the case for Christianity).

9. Besides socially shared beliefs of the groups they are members of, people also may have personal experience and knowledge, as represented in their Episodic Memory. These personal experiences are represented in mental models, which also have a schematic structure consisting of a number of fixed categories, e.g., for setting, actions, and participants and their various roles.

10. Contrary to socially shared beliefs, models represent specific events such as the events debated in the parliamentary debate which we used as an example. Models are the personal interpretation (knowledge and opinion) of such an event. That is, models are subjective.

11. Models form the cognitive basis of all individual discourse and interaction. That is, both in production and understanding, people construct a model of an event or action, e.g., the event a text is about, or the action which people perceive or participate in. Models also serve as the referential basis of discourse and thus help define local and global coherence.

12. Models integrate new information (e.g., from text understanding or event observation), fragments of earlier experiences (old models), instantiations of

more general personal information (personal knowledge, personality, Self), as well as instantiations of socially shared information (e.g., group beliefs or cultural knowledge scripts). In other words, models embody both personal and social information, and hence serve as the core of the interface between the social and the individual.

13. For the same reason, when shared, generalized, abstracted from, and socially normalized, models may constitute the basis of experiential social and political learning. That is the general and abstract social representations of social memory are first of all derived from our personal experiences as represented in our episodic models. Social and political knowledge may however also be acquired more directly, e.g., from general, abstract discourse, such as political treatises or propaganda.

This brief summary of some main features of the theoretical framework used to study the relations between political discourse and political cognition leaves out a host of details; only some of which will be spelled out below. Also, whereas some of these features are fairly generally accepted in psychology, others are less generally accepted or known, or even idiosyncratic to my approach. For instance, whereas the literature on political cognition does deal with knowledge, attitudes and ideologies, as well as their schematic organization and processing, it virtually ignores the theory of mental models, which however is quite generally accepted in the psychology of text processing (see, e.g., Garnham 1987; Johnson-Laird 1983; Morrow 1994; Oakhill and Garnham 1996; van Dijk and Kintsch 1983; van Dijk 1985, 1987b; van Oostendorp and Zwaan 1994).

Conversely, the psychology of text processing does integrate script theory and theories of knowledge, but virtually ignores evaluative beliefs (opinions), and socially shared attitudes and ideologies. We here find one of the consequences between the rather arbitrary division of labour between cognitive and social psychology. It is within this general framework that we shall now discuss a number of issues that define the relations between political discourse and political cognition.

2.1 Discourse processing

Language use in general, and the production and understanding of political text and talk in particular, may cognitively be analyzed in terms of the theo-

retical framework summarized above (among many studies, see, e.g., Britton and Graesser 1996; van Dijk and Kintsch 1983; van Oostendorp and Zwaan 1994; Weaver, Mannes and Fletcher 1995).

Relevant for our discussion are (a) the relations between shared beliefs (political representations) on the one hand and personal beliefs (models), on the other hand; and (b) the relations of these social and personal representations with discourse structures.

In discourse production, we assume that speakers (or writers) will generally start from their personal mental model of an event or situation. This model organizes the subjective beliefs of the speaker about such a situation. Thus, in our example, the speech of Sir John is produced on the basis of his model of the current ethnic and immigration situation in England, a model that is evaluatively defined in terms of a macro-proposition that he also expresses: 'A problem for England' (line 4). Part of his broader model about the current ethnic situation in the UK, there are more specific models of particular events, such as about the 'dangerous eruptions from parts of the Muslim community' and about the letter sent by Secretary Hurd to that community, both of which not only feature Sir John's interpretation of these actions, but also his opinions.

Sir John's models instantiate shared social and political beliefs, viz., those of all English people, in general, and those of the conservatives in particular. For instance, it is common knowledge that several hundreds of thousands of immigrants have come to England, and this general knowledge is here integrated into the model of the current situation. Similarly, as he claims himself, not only he but many others define such immigration as a 'problem'. And like others he specifically instantiates the racist attitude that (many) Muslims are `dangerous'. Conversely, he represents 'us in England' as gentle, kind, tolerant, peace-loving people. This contrast between Us and Them thus not only characterizes the attitudes and ideologies he shares with other (mostly conservative, white) British people, but also polarizes the current personal model he has about the present situation in Britain. These examples show some of the relationships between personal knowledge and opinions, and socially shared ones, that is, between representations in Social Memory and personal models in Episodic Memory.

Once such a personal model of an event or situation is constituted, speakers may express fragments of such models in discourse, using a number of detailed linguistic and discursive strategies that will not be analyzed here. It is

however important to note that speakers usually only express a small part of their models, viz., only the information that is relevant in the current context. I shall come back to this contextual constraint below. In other words, a text is usually only the tip of the iceberg of all information speakers have about an event or situation they are talking about. Thus, Sir John undoubtedly knows more about the 'dangerous eruptions' of the Muslim community, but only summarizes the model he has of this event, viz., by expressing the evaluative macro-proposition defining his model. The same is true for the expression of his model of Mr. Hurd's letter to the Muslim community.

What has here been summarized for the process of discourse production also applies to discourse understanding. Thus, Sir John's audience, as well as we as readers of the Hansard text of his speech, understand what he says first through a complex process of decoding and understanding words and sentences, and ultimately by constructing our own models of what he is talking about. Of course, if we agree with him, we would accept his models as essentially true or 'correct'. If not, we may construct alternative models of the situation, depending again on our own personal knowledge of the current situation as well as on socially shared, group knowledge and evaluations. If recipients read or listen to many similar discourses of politicians or the mass media, and have no competing, alternative information, such models may in turn be generalized to socially shared, abstract representations about Muslims, minorities, English people and immigration, for instance in ethnic prejudices and nationalist or racist ideologies.

This brief characterization of discourse processing shows several relations between political discourse and cognition. Thus, our example shows how conservative political attitudes and ideologies are used in the construction of an individual model of the current situation, and how some of this model information is selectively expressed in a parliamentary speech. Important for our argument is that this theoretical framework indeed offers the first elements of the necessary interface between the social and the individual, between group action and individual action and discourse.

That is, at the socio-political level of analysis, we witness how the Tories enact or defend a restrictive immigration bill and how such a political act of a group is actually 'realized' locally and contextually by a member (of parliament, of the Conservative Party) through a specific form of interaction, viz., a parliamentary speech. Similarly, and in parallel with the social-political con-

turn understand and evaluate us as a participant, and so on. For these and other reasons, language users multiply signal or 'index' their text and talk with elements of the context, as Sir John does with his question: 'Why are we English Members of Parliament here today?'. This question alone indexes the aim of the current session of parliament, the participants and their roles (MPs), as well as the Setting (location and time).

This way of formulating the relations between text and context is the standard one. It does however have a serious theoretical shortcoming, because it relates two types of entities that cannot simply be related in a direct way, viz., structures of a social situation (participants, settings, actions) and structures of discourse. Moreover, if such would be the case, all people in such a social situation would speak in the same way. That is, we again need a (cognitive) interface.

Indeed, it is not so much the social situation that makes Sir John speak as he does, but rather his personal interpretation or model of that situation. What discourses signal or index, thus, is not the social context itself, but the subjective mental models of the context as constructed by speech participants (for details, see van Dijk 1997a 1999). This allows personal differences be tween context models of different participants, and (different) personal opinions about the current communicative situation (including about ourselves and others in it). Context models also explain conflicts between speech participants because they have (and use) incompatible models of the current communicative situation. And perhaps most importantly, such personal models of the situation explain why all individual text and talk, even about the same topics, is always unique and different, while based on unique personal models of both the event and context.

It follows that in the overall framework presented above, a crucial component was still missing between event models and discourse, viz., the context models of the participants in a communicative event. It is the (subjective) information stored in these models that ultimately controls how speakers and writers adapt their text and talk to the current situation, and how speech acts and conversational acts may be (more or less) appropriate in such a situation. Finally, context models also define the very notion of (pragmatic) relevance (Sperber and Wilson 1986), namely in terms of those structures of the communicative situation that are constructed as context by the participants in their context models.

Context models are structured like any other model represented in epi-

sodic memory. More specifically, contexts feature such categories as a Setting (Time, Location, Circumstances, Props), Events, Participants and their various types of social, professional, communicative roles, the Actions they currently engage in, as well as current Cognition (aims, knowledge, opinions, emotions, etc.). At a fairly high level, they may feature an overall definition of the whole situation, which ultimately may be represented as constitutive of a specific social domain. (For earlier work on the structure of social situations and episodes, see e.g., Argyle, Furnham, and Graham 1981).

Thus, for our example we may assume that the MPs present in the parliamentary debate about immigration share information about the current domain (Politics rather than, say, Education), the current definition of the situation (Session of Parliament), the Setting (House of Commons, July 5, 1989), the Circumstances (a Bill presented by the cabinet), the various participants and their roles as MPs, representatives of their constituencies, the ongoing overall interaction or genre (a parliamentary debate), and a vast set of shared knowledge about the current issue (immigration, minorities, Muslims, England, etc.).

There are also elements where the models of the participants differ, more generally, and at any respective moment of the ongoing debate, in particular. Thus, obviously, there are differences of opinion, e.g., between the Tories and Labour, and possibly among Tory MPs as well (Sir John is notably more reactionary in his views than many other conservatives). Similarly, when speaking, Sir John has a different role and aim than the other participants, who have the role of listeners. These will in turn gradually confirm or change their opinion about what is being said, as well as about Sir John. Most crucially different and possibly changing during a discourse, are the mutual perceptions of participants, that is the mental models they construct about each other (for perceptions and representations of politicians, see Granberg 1993; Lodge and McGraw 1995).

Similarly, the participants in this situation may have different emotions. Sir John may express fears of threatening overpopulation or Muslim violence, while at least some people in his audience may be angry about his racist remarks. More generally, emotion is an important factor in political context models (Roseman, Abelson and Ewing 1986). Such a property of the context model will control specific properties (e.g., intonation, stress or lexicalization) of political discourse (Just, Crigler, and Neuman 1996).

Changing for all, dynamically, is also what has already been said at each

moment, that is, the preceding discourse. This confirms the intuitive idea of reflexivity, viz., that the discourse is of course part of its own context. In other words, some elements of a context model are shared by all participants, and some are different; some are stable throughout the whole communicative event, whereas others dynamically change as a function of the ongoing interaction and discourse. In other words, context models, especially in verbal interaction, are dynamic, and gradually change.

Whereas mental models of events may be seen as the basis of the 'content' or meaning of discourse, context models typically control not only what is being said, but especially how it is said. That is, they may be seen as the basis of the pragmatic and stylistic properties of discourse. The structures of context models define the appropriateness conditions of speech acts and interaction sequences more generally. They serve as the referential basis of deictic expressions. They control what 'relevant' information of event models is included in the semantic representation of a text. And they regulate how such meanings are variably formulated in syntactic structures, lexical items, and phonological or graphical expressions. In sum, context models are vital for the production and comprehension of a large number of discourse structures, and prove how important the social situation and its interpretation are for discourse and communication.

Context models are particularly relevant for an explicit analysis of political discourse genres. Indeed, few structural properties of political discourse genres (as we shall see in more detail below) are exclusive, but may be shared with other types of discourse. However, what is specific are the elements of the context of political text and talk, viz., the overall domain and definition of the situation, the setting, circumstances, participant roles, aims, opinions and emotions. In other words, the genre definition of political discourse may well be contextual rather than textual. Except from a few expressions explicitly denoting elements of the current situation, much of what Sir John says about immigration and minorities could be said in other social situations. Conversely, other genres, such as conversations, stories, poems, news reports advertisements and scholarly articles are much more defined in terms of their specific structures, and not largely by their context.

Thus, we may provisionally conclude that political discourse genres are essentially defined by their functions in the political process, as represented by the categories of the political context model. Trivially: Whatever a politician says is thus by definition a form of political discourse; and whatever anybody

says with a political aim (viz., to influence the political process, e.g. decision making, policies) is also a form of political discourse.

The cognitive processes involved in the construction, activation, uses or changes of both event models and context models are strategic (van Dijk and Kintsch 1983). That is, they are on-line, goal-oriented, hypothetical operations that process information at various levels at the same time. These strategies are fast and efficient, but fallible, and may need correction on later occasions: Language users may be wrong about the interpretation of a social situation - and such errors may lead to typical communicative conflicts, for instance when a recipient interprets a promise as a threat, tells many things a recipient already knows, uses an inappropriate style, or the wrong politeness markers. There are various types of 'pragmatic' repairs that may correct such misunderstandings of context information.

The efficiency of strategic processing may require that often only part of the relevant situational information needs to be processed. Depending on aims, tasks or special requirements, thus, language users may interpret a communicative situation more or less superficially, resulting in more or less detailed context models. In some situations, only the most important top levels of context models need to be constructed, such as the overall definition of the situation, the overall ongoing actions, only a few participants and their most relevant role, and an approximate sub-model of the knowledge and opinions of the recipient(s). In our example, for instance, more casual or distracted recipients of Sir John's speech may only have to know that this is a speech within a parliamentary debate, and that the speaker is a conservative MP. Detailed beliefs about the various roles of Sir John (for instance the district he represents) or his knowledge may not be necessary to arrive at a contextually more or less appropriate understanding of his discourse. Indeed, some may only represent Sir John in terms of his age or appearance, or his `image', instead of his political opinions (see Wyer, et al. 1991). Obviously, those appointed to criticize or comment upon his speech, may need a much more detailed mental model of this situation, including of Sir John himself.

3. Political cognition

After this discussion of the personal side of political cognition, that is, the models political actors construct in their episodic memory in order to pro-

duce or understand political discourse and action, we finally need to say some more about the socially shared dimension of political cognition. We have assumed that social memory is constituted by knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, values and norms. We have further assumed that at least some of these representations may be schematically organized, and how they are organized in the overall architecture of the social mind (Kuklinski, Luskin and Bolland 1991; see the various contributions in Lau and Sears 1986).

However, in order to understand the structures of political discourse, we also need to say more about the structures of general political representations. How, indeed, are political attitudes and ideologies represented, and what is the role of political values and norms in such representations? Also, we may want to know how such structures affect the content and structures of both event models and context models, and how finally they may appear in political discourse. Thus, Sir John claims that the birthrate of immigrants far exceeds that of the indigenous population, a general statement that might be a direct expression of his conservative ethnic attitudes about groups and their reproduction, although he claims (`as we all know') that this proposition is part of the general Common Ground. At the same time, he explicitly claims that he has a great admiration for many Muslims, but since little admiration for Muslims transpires in his speech, we may wonder whether his underlying attitudes about Muslims really are suffused by admiration, or whether this claim is essentially a strategic form of impression management and positive self-presentation, engaged in to disclaim possible prejudice or racism his audience might attribute to him. In other words, the relations between political representations and discourse are not that straightforward. So let us briefly examine some of the components of social-political memory.

3.1 Knowledge

Unlike most philosophical and psychological approaches to knowledge, I proposed above to distinguish between two types of knowledge, namely the knowledge shared by a specific group, on the one hand, and the general cultural knowledge shared, across different groups, throughout society, on the other.

The latter, Common Ground knowledge is the basis of all interaction and communication in society and is generally presupposed in discourse. This kind of knowledge is generally undisputed, uncontroversial and taken

for granted, and taught in socialization and at school in a given society. These generally shared 'factual' beliefs are accepted as (and called) 'knowledge' in society. In Sir John's speech, most of his words are based on such shared knowledge: Thus, we all know what 'parliament', 'Muslims' or 'immigration' are.

Secondly, there are factual beliefs that are only accepted as 'true' by specific social groups, such as scientists, experts, professionals, members of specific religions, members of a party, or any other kind of group. The criteria applying for knowledge mentioned above also apply here (this knowledge is also routinely undisputed, taken for granted, seen as common sense, generally presupposed, etc.), but only at the group level. This group knowledge is called `knowledge' within the group itself. Outside the group, however, such knowledge may well not be called 'knowledge' at all, but 'belief or 'opinion', that is, beliefs that are not found to be true according to the truth criteria of the general culture, or those of other groups (which does not mean that from an abstract 'universal' point of view such beliefs are false).

Much political knowledge is group knowledge and will often be seen as `mere political opinion' by opposing groups. Typically, knowledge of feminists about male dominance in society, may be rejected by many men, and the same is true for the knowledge of environmental groups about pollution, which may be challenged by polluters. The converse is equally true: Also racist groups have their group knowledge, even if many other people in society may dispute such knowledge and treat it as prejudiced beliefs.

In Sir John's speech, there is a typical example when he states that 'we all know' that the birthrate (of Muslims) far exceeds that of the indigenous population. We may assume that this is a 'fact' for Sir John, whereas members of other (e.g., anti-racist) groups may qualify this as a prejudiced opinion, or at least as an exaggeration, or as a biased statement because it is incomplete, in the sense that the birth-rate of immigrants, even when higher than that of the native population, usually quickly adapts to that of the majority. The fact that Sir John makes the statement about what 'we all know' suggests that this is precisely not general knowledge, otherwise he would have presupposed and not asserted it. He makes the statement because he knows that others in parliament precisely would see it as an opinion or a biased belief, and his presentation of this knowledge as generally shared, is thus a well-known rhetorical move to persuade the audience of the general validity of his group `knowledge.' The same is true for his 'knowledge' about the 'large numbers' of

immigrants Great Britain has absorbed, and that ordinary English people were never asked their opinion about immigration.

Socially shared knowledge of specific groups or whole cultures needs to be applicable in many situations and therefore needs to be general and abstract. It may be about immigrants in general, but is not about a specific immigrant or a specific event. We have argued that such specific knowledge is typically stored in mental (event) models in episodic memory. Hence, it makes sense to distinguish not only between cultural and group knowledge, but also between social and personal knowledge.

Finally, there is a type of knowledge that embodies characteristics of both specific (model-based) knowledge on the one hand, and socially shared knowledge, on the other hand, namely historical knowledge. Such knowledge may be about specific events, e.g., the Holocaust or the Civil War in Bosnia, but at the same time it may be more or less generally known, and therefore even presupposed (to be true) in discourse and interaction. Much political knowledge is of that kind, and also Sir John's speech presupposes such historical-political knowledge.

3.2 Opinions and attitudes

The beliefs described above as various kinds of knowledge may be called `factual' because persons, groups or whole cultures hold them to be true according to their respective truth criteria. There are, however, also sets of belief in social memory that are not dealt with in terms of truth criteria, but shared on the basis of evaluative criteria (good vs. bad, etc.), namely opinions. As we have seen, however, what may be a factual belief of one group, may be an evaluative belief or opinion for another.

Just as knowledge, such shared social opinions may be organized in larger structures, for which we reserve the traditional term attitude (for other conceptions of attitudes, see Eagly and Chaiken 1993). Thus, shared group attitudes about abortion or immigration usually consist of more than one opinion. Note that in my framework attitudes are essentially social and associated with groups. Individuals may have personal opinions, but only share (in) attitudes as members of such groups.

Because of their evaluative nature, opinions and attitudes are typically not taken for granted, uncontroversial or undisputed and are therefore seldom part of the cultural Common Ground. Yet each culture may well have a

the threat of foreigners in general, and of Muslims in particular, attitudes about what 'ordinary people' think, and more generally about immigration.

Finally, note that the text also features a number of opinions that are personal, such as his admiration of Muslims and their religion, and his liking for Douglas Hurd's letter to the Muslim community. However, even such personal opinions, when no further argued for, must be based on presupposed general opinions. Thus his positive remark about Muslims is based on the general opinion and value that other cultures are equal to ours, and his liking of the letter-writing an opinion derived from the conservative group attitude about law and order and the actions responsible politicians should take in order to keep the peace. In other words, opinions in personal mental models may be formed on the basis of shared social attitudes of groups.

Personal opinions, and the discourse expressing them, may thus be more or less in accordance with group attitudes, and more or less coherent among each other. Empirical research suggests that such attitudinal coherence is more pronounced for those who have political expertise in a specific area than for novices (Judd and Downing 1990). For the discussion of this chapter this also means that extensive and well-structured political representations facilitate comprehension of political affairs (politicians, political issues, political stories in the media, etc.) (Fiske, Lau and Smith 1990).

3.3 Ideologies

Finally, it will be assumed that the social representations (knowledge, attitudes) shared by a group may be organized by underlying ideologies. Ideologies are by definition general and abstract, because they must apply to many different attitudes in different social domains. Thus, a racist ideology may control attitudes about immigration, but also on housing, work, education or the culture of immigrants or minorities (for details, see van Dijk 1991, 1998a).

The level of abstraction and complex control of social cognition requires extensive social learning from experience (models) - or direct indoctrination. Therefore ideologies are acquired relatively late in development and not in the same detailed way by all group members. Some group experts (ideologues) will have more extensive ideologies than 'ordinary' group members (see Judd and Downing 1990; Powell 1989; Zaller 1990).

However, to be a member of an ideological group (and to identify with such a group) will probably require that one accepts a few core ideological

beliefs. Although classical work on political ideologies (Converse 1964) as well as some directions in contemporary social psychology (Billig 1991a, 1991b) deny that people have (stable) ideologies, it seems plausible that for those domains people have social attitudes, such as those that organize their everyday lives, people do have ideologies that organize these attitudes (Milburn 1987). Personal ideological variations expressed in surveys and (other) discourse, can simply be explained in terms of personal opinions as embodied by models of events (personal experiences) and context, and because individuals are members of different social groups, each with their own attitudes and ideologies (Krosnick and Milburn 1990).

It is assumed that ideologies are organized first of all by group self-schemata, with such categories as Membership Criteria, Activities, Goals, Values/Norms, Social Position and Resources. These are the categories in which the crucial information is represented that self-defines the own group, as well as its relation to other groups: Who are we, what do we do, with what aims, etc? Within the Social Position category the, possibly, conflictual relationships with other groups may be represented.

For our example the group knowledge and opinions expressed by Sir John may be organized by various ideologies, viz., those of nationalism, ethnocentrism, racism and democracy. Thus, a racist ideology will emphasize (group) knowledge about the vast number of immigrants, about birth rate and about the opposition of ordinary people against further immigration (`enough is enough'). It also controls the attitude about the criminality or aggressiveness of minorities in general, and the representation of Muslims in particular. Nationalist ideology controls shared social opinions about the positive qualities of Us, English (gentle, kind, tolerant, peace-loving), and about the homeland (beloved). Democratic ideology organizes the general attitudes about the need for ordinary people to have a voice, to be able to vote, and to be able to express their views about their everyday lives and experiences, including immigration. More specifically, Sir John defends a populist version of democracy, which claims to listen to the opinion of ordinary (working-class) people, while ignoring those of the elites (intellectuals, etc.). Obviously, Sir John's democratic credentials are strategically displayed as a form of positive self-presentation both of himself and of his party. Thus, rather typically, he ignores the democratic rights of immigrants.

3.4 Political cognition: Concluding remarks

The theoretical analysis and descriptions of a specific example given above have shown that in order to understand and explain political discourse, we also need to examine the underlying political cognition of participants in political communication. Instead of simply dealing with such cognition in terms of beliefs and belief systems, a complex framework needs to be elaborated that distinguishes between very different kinds of both personal and socially shared beliefs (see also Seliktar 1986). Such beliefs may be organized in various schematic formats, clustered and assigned a theoretical place in the overall architecture of the social mind. Thus, it was assumed that for all members of a culture we should assume a general Common Ground, largely consisting of undisputed, common sense knowledge. Similarly, for each group we may distinguish between group knowledge and group attitudes organized by fundamental group ideologies. These cultural and group cognitions serve as the basis of personal knowledge and opinions as stored in mental models. These models form the mental basis of all social practices, including discourse production and comprehension. It was finally argued that in order to describe and understand political discourse genres, especially the context, or rather a mental representation of the context (a context model) needs to be taken into account.

4. Political discourse

After having examined various aspects of political cognition and the way they control the structures of political discourse, let us now reverse the direction of the analysis of the relation between discourse and cognition. That is, we shall focus on some prototypical properties of many political discourse genres, and then try to account for them in terms of underlying political cognition, and indirectly in terms of their functions in the political context and in politics more generally.

A review of even a fraction of earlier discourse analytical studies on political text and talk is beyond the scope of this chapter (see the many references to studies of political discourse in other chapters of this book, and the introductions by Chilton and Schaffner 1997 and van Dijk 1997b). The same is true for the more specific analysis of parliamentary debates (for

parliamentary debates on minorities and immigration see CarbO 1992, 1995; Martin Rojo and van Dijk 1997).

Instead, I shall proceed more theoretically, and merely discuss some structures of political discourse and their relations to political cognition and their functions in the political process. Given the importance of contextualization for the definition of political discourse, I shall pay special attention to the (cognitive) analysis of context.

4.1 Context

Before we deal with political discourse structures per se, let us briefly deal with their context. As suggested above, contexts should be defined in terms of participants' mental models of communicative events. That is, they are subjective and evaluative representations of self and other participants, and of the other discourse-relevant categories of communicative situations, such as, e.g. (van Dijk 1997a, 1999).

- overall domain (e.g., politics)
- overall societal action (legislation)
- current setting (time, location)
  current circumstances (bill to be discussed)
- current interaction (political debate)
- current discourse genre (speech)
- the various types of role of participants (speaker, MP, member of the Conservative Party, white, male, elderly, etc.),
- the cognitions of the participants (goals, knowledge, beliefs, etc.).

It has also be suggested that the many genres of political discourse (parliamentary debates, laws, propaganda, slogans, international treaties, peace negotiations, etc.) are largely defined in contextual, rather than in textual terms. Political discourse is not primarily defined by topic or style, but rather by who speaks to whom, as what, on what occasion and with what goals. In other words, political discourse is especially 'political' because of its functions in the political process (van Dijk 1997b).

Thus, what Sir John has to say is an appropriate 'speech' in parliament only when a number of these specific contextual conditions are satisfied. The Speaker of the House of Commons is partly in control of such situational criteria. For instance, Sir John is only allowed to speak in parliament, for a

specific amount of time, and during a specific parliamentary session or debate, because he is an MP, because he represents his party, and because he has obtained the floor from the Speaker. And his speech is politically functional for the political process because he aims to defend a (Tory) Bill presented in parliament against criticism of the (Labour) Opposition.

That speakers are aware of such contextual categories is shown by their sometimes explicit indexical descriptions of them. Thus, Sir John, explicitly refers to Setting, Participant roles and aims, when he asks (rhetorically): 'Why are we English members of Parliament here today?' (line 6). And when in the next sentence he explicitly addresses the Opposition, he thus shows that the social-political role of Opponents or Opposition may be a relevant category in a political situation (for details, see e.g., Wilson 1990). Many of the deictic expressions of Sir John's speech presuppose knowledge of other relevant contextual categories such as location (`this small Island') and time ('we now have ethnic minorities') and especially participants in various roles (`as we all know,' `our country,' `we are supposed to represent', 'we in England').

Especially the use of the most typical political pronoun ('our') shows with which groups the speaker identifies himself. Note though that such group membership is not 'objective', but both part of the models and social representations of speakers as group members, and in a particular speech also socially constructed for strategic purposes (`we democrats') and excluding others (`we in England' referring to white rather than black people). The discursive polarization of Us and Them, typical for political discourse, not only reflects mental representations of people talked about (English vs. Muslims), but also the categories of participants (represented in context models) talked to in a communicative situation (We Conservatives vs. Them of the Labour Opposition).

Context models also regulate style, such as the formality of designating expressions (`indigenous population', 'influx', etc.) as a function of formal, institutional interaction in parliament, or the use of popular expressions (`enough is enough') as a function of the persuasive strategy of positive self-presentation of a populist MP who claims to take the perspective of 'ordinary people'. Note that only some of these expressions (such as the use of 'honourable' — abbreviated as 'Hon' in the Hansard transcript — or 'friend' as used to address an MP of the same party) are typical for parliamentary debates.

As we have seen, context models also regulate semantic representations by

controlling the selection of relevant information from event models. Sir John knows much more and has many more opinions about immigration and Muslims, but both time constraints, beliefs about the beliefs of the recipients, and strategies of positive self-presentation will determine that some model information is selected for expression and other remains implicit, presupposed or merely hinted at. And the conservative ideology of his party will be instantiated in a context model that favours the selection of beliefs about Our good characteristics and Their bad ones.

Context models regulate the pragmatic dimension of political discourse, e.g., the use of speech acts such as the 'rhetorical' questions being expressed in Sir John's speech. He knows that others know, or do not want to know his opinion, and hence he and his recipients know that his questions do not require answers. And indirectly, the use of derogatory terms like 'ifie about the Labour Opposition, implies the accomplishment of an accusation (that Labour is soft on immigration) if we spell out all the relevant context categories of the current situation.

Note finally, that the relations between context, context models, discourse and cognition have several directions. Thus, context models constrain text production, resulting in context-bound discourse structures. These again will be interpreted by recipients as properties of the context model of the speaker (his or her interpretation of the Setting, the Current Interaction as well as his/her the Goals, Knowledge and Opinions). That is, discourse structures may in turn influence recipient models of the context. They may accept these interpretations of the context and construe them, as suggested, in their own context models. On the other hand, they may represent and evaluate the current interaction and especially the speaker in a different way. Thus, whereas Sir John for instance represents white British, including himself, as tolerant, they may reject that opinion. Similarly, they may disagree with the rhetorically suggested problem of immigration, conveyed by him.

4.2 Political discourse structures

We have seen that many discourse structures are a function of context models. However, discourse is not only constrained by context models, but also by event models, that is, by the way the speaker interprets the events talked about, as well as by more general social representations shared by group members, as shown above. As suggested, important for the definition of

political discourse, is that such structures are relevant for political structures and processes. Thus, contextually, Sir John's speech functions as a contribution to parliamentary decision making and legislation about immigration, which in turn plays a role in the reproduction of ethnic relations and racism in the UK (Solomos and Back 1995; Reeves 1983; van Dijk 1991 1993). More locally, in parliament, his speech functions as a defence of a Bill and as an attack on the Labour opposition.

Let us now briefly consider some discourse structures, and show how they are relevant for the political process, as well as for political cognition. We shall assume these structures as such to be known and in no need for theoretical analysis, and especially focus on their political functions. Overall, as we shall see, such structures will follow the global ideological or political strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other presentation (for theoretical analysis and further examples, see van Dijk 1987a, 1993).

4.2.1 Topics

What information is defined and emphasized to be important or topical in (political and other) discourse, is a function of the event and context models of speakers. Thus, typically, negative information about Us, our own group (e.g., racism in Britain), will not be topicalized in Sir John's speech, whereas negative information about Them, the Others (e.g., their alleged aggression) tends to be topicalized. And vice versa: Our positive characteristics (tolerance, hospitality) will be topical whereas Their positive characteristics will be ignored, down-played or mentioned only in passing. Thus the main topics of Sir John's speech are an expression of his mental model of current immigration in the UK:

(T1) Massive immigration is a problem for England.
(T2) Immigrants are a threat to our country and culture.
(T3) Ordinary English people don't want more immigration.
(T4) We can exercise more control over immigration with this Bill.

The implied consequence of these topics is that the House should vote for this bill. Apart from reproducing ethnic stereotypes, and from trying to persuade the House to adopt this Bill, this speech at the same time has more direct political function, viz., to warn the Labour opposition not to ignore the 'voice of the people'. Sir John clearly implies with this warning that if we (or Labour) do not listen to ordinary white people, we won't have their support. Empirical

research shows that overall topics, issue definitions or 'frames', as provided by the elites, may have a significant effect on interpretation and public opinion (Gamson 1992; Kinder and Sanders 1990).

4.2.2 Schemata

The global schematic organization of discourse is conventional and hence not directly variable because of context constraints: Thus, a parliamentary speech has the same constituent categories whether engaged in by a Conservative or Labour MP. It is especially the order, prominence, kind and extent of the information included in these categories that may vary, and hence be high-lighted or mitigated as a function of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. Thus, if such a speech would have a global Problem-Solution structure, Sir John may dwell more on the Problem category (the problems allegedly caused by immigrants), than on the Solution category.

Parliamentary debates are typically persuasive discourses, in which MP's take political positions, express their opinions and attack those of others within the framework of argumentative structures — one of the most characteristic schematic structures of discourse. Thus, Sir John intends to support a Bill that limits immigration. His arguments that lead to the Conclusion that such a limitation is good for Britain are therefore selected in both his mental models and his conservative attitudes in such a way that they optimally support that conclusion:

(a) There are millions of immigrants
(b) They have a higher birthrate
(c) England is small and already has too many immigrants
(d) Our culture is being threatened
(e) Especially Muslims are dangerous
(f) Ordinary English people will suVer
(g) Ordinary people say it's been enough
etc.

Typical is also the rejection of possible counter-arguments, which happens when he rejects emotional arguments: feelings of guilt should not cloud our judgement; and this restriction is not racist (as some may think), because English are tolerant; and I am not a racist or anti-Muslim, because I admire Muslims.

In other words, the selection of negative propositions about immigrants

from specific events models (e.g., recent 'eruptions' of Muslims) and general prejudices (`birth rates', etc.) obeys the overall constraint of negative other-representation, which in turn organizes all premises that need to lead to the negative conclusion, viz., that immigration must be curbed. This conclusion, which applies to the current context model is thus at the same time a model of future action in the political context: Immigrants are no longer let it. In sum, also an analysis of political argumentation presupposes various strategic uses of various types of mental representations.

4.2.3 Local semantics

We have seen that political context models define what information of models of current events will be relevantly included in discourse or not. This is true both for global (topical) meanings, as well as for local meanings expressed in the actual sentences of text or talk. An important context category controlling this selection is the political ideology of the speaker and the recipients, which also may influence the complexity of local meanings. Thus, the simplicity of Sir John's argument seems to confirm the often observed lack of conceptual complexity of (especially conservative) radical politicians (Tetlock 1983, 1984, 1993). And conversely, specific semantic structures thus construed may influence the 'preferred' models of recipients who have no alternative knowledge sources (Lau, Smith and Fiske 1991).

Thus, many propositions of Sir John's speech are persuasively selected as a function of his mental model of the situation in the UK which in turn is controlled by his conservative, nationalist and racist ideologies, and typically focus on details of Their negative characteristics:

(S1) We have allowed hundreds of thousands of immigrants
(S2) We now have ethnic minorities of several million people
(S3) Their birth rate far exceeds that of the indigenous population
(S4) What will be the effect on our religion, morals, customs habits and so on?
(S5) Already there have been some dangerous eruptions from parts of the Muslim community
(S6) The fears that those dangerous eruptions engender
(S7) Large numbers of immigrants living there

Exaggeration, numbers, contrast, and metaphor (`eruption') and other rhetorical moves further enhance this ideologically biased selection of negative propositions from Sir John's event model. The overall implication of such

propositions is that They (Muslims) are a threat to Us. The only positive proposition about Muslims (line 12), might in such a dominant topology of negative meanings be read as a disclaimer that has the strategic function of positive self-presentation (van Dijk 1987a, 1993). Indeed, it is also the only part of the speech where Sir John speaks about himself.

On the other hand, the short speech does emphasize the positive qualities of (white) British people, as we have seen above, thus contrasting Us and Them, as usual, and as analyzed before. Note though that his positive reference to ordinary English people need not be an expression of his social representations of ordinary people. As an arch-conservative it is unlikely that Sir John is really fond of 'the people' and their will. Rather, then, his positive description is a 'populist' strategy of positive self-presentation (I, we are democratic, We listen to the people), and an implied critique of Labour (who does not listen to the people). That is, we see that not all meanings derive from ideologically based models of events, but may also be inspired by context models featuring images of Us (Conservatives) and Them (Labour) and the goals of political action (defend a Bill). For the same reason, critical recipients will probably hear such positive references to ordinary people not as genuine opinions but merely as moves of strategic political interaction.

More generally, then, a cognitively based political analysis of local meanings will try to relate the selection of propositions expressed in text and talk to underlying event and context models as well as socially shared (group) representations such as knowledge, attitudes and ideologies. Thus, whether or not local meaning is explicit or implicit, asserted or presupposed, detailed or global, general or specific, direct or indirect, or blatant or subdued, will typically be a function of the ideologically based event models. As is the case in our example, this will generally mean that negative meanings about the Others will tend to be selected, emphasized, explicit, detailed, specific, direct or blatant, whereas mitigations, disclaimers or denials are rather a function of positive self-presentation (or avoiding a bad impression) as regulated by context models.

4.2.4 Style and rhetoric

Finally semantic representations are expressed in variable surface structures, that is through specific lexicalization, syntactic structures and specific features of sound, printing or images, as well as by rhetorical devices that are geared towards the emphasis or de-emphasis of underlying meanings.

We have already suggested that cognitively such variation is partly a function of structures and opinions in event models. Thus, negative opinions about out-groups, as stored in event models and political attitudes, typically will be lexicalized by negative words, as we saw for the expression `dangerous eruptions' for the description of demonstrations by Muslims, or `ilk' when describing the Labour opposition. Such lexicalizations may not just be negative but also have a rhetorical function as hyperboles, for instance when Sir John refers to the birth rate of immigrants as 'far exceeding' that of the indigenous population. Conversely, positive lexicalizations (`gentle', 'tolerant', 'peace-loving') may be chosen to express positive self-images of the in-group.

The use of specific lexical variants may also have very different 'framing' effects on the activation of political attitudes and ideologies, and hence on the construction of event models. Elites may thus use specific terms in policy or media discourse in order to influence public opinion. For instance, defining affirmative action as 'unfair advantage' or as 'reverse discrimination', triggers a host of cognitive representations and strategies, and especially racist attitudes and ideologies, that result in a more negative opinion about affirmative action (Kinder and Sanders 1990).

Many properties of style and rhetoric, however, are not expressions of underlying opinions or structures of models or political representations, but monitored by the various categories of context models. Certain terms are prototypical for the domain of politics, and the choice of formal words, such as 'indigenous' and 'influx' in Sir John's speech indexes the formality of the parliamentary speech and the session of this House of Commons. Participant roles and identities, for instance in parliamentary debates, are multiply indexed by pronouns ('we'; `Us vs. Them'), forms of address (`honourable', `friend') and politeness strategies, while at the same time expressing forms of political or social inclusion or exclusion.

Similarly, speech acts and rhetorical questions may be employed in order to express or confirm political identity and relationships. For instance, Sir John's direct address of the Labour Party in lines 6-10, is monitored by the underlying political roles of the participants, viz., as government and opposition parties, and as a means to accuse the opposition not to care about the future of the country. All this is part of Sir John's definition of the current political context of his speech, and hence appears in his context model and also surfaces in his speech, strategically, by self-representing Tories as being

concerned, and the opposition as callous, if not as undemocratic (while not listening to ordinary people, who should be their main constituents).

5. Conclusion

In this brief account of the structures of political discourse, we have found that virtually all of them can be accounted for in terms of a more sophisticated cognitive theory that links different types of mental representations to text and talk. Generally, then, both meanings and forms of political discourse variously derive from event models, or from general political representations, such as knowledge, attitudes and ideologies, in both cases as a function of context models. Of course, this insight is hardly new when we realize that these mental structures represent how participants understand specific political events, the political world, as well as the situation of political communication, respectively.

For our theoretical argument, this cognitive analysis of political discourse structures is not an exercise in applying cognitive psychology to political discourse studies. Rather, the cognitive analysis is essential to truly describe and explain in detail how political discourse expresses and plays its role in the political process. That is, political text and talk is related to the immediate political context and occasioning, as was. Sir John's speech in a parliamentary debate about immigration. However, it appeared that it is not the context itself that thus relates to discourse, but the models the participants construct of the interactional or communicative context. It is through a socio-cognitively defined notion of relevance that we are able to demonstrate how exactly, and why, political situations constrain text and talk, and conversely.

Similarly, political discourse is seldom just personal, although it should not be forgotten that the converse is also true: It is not only social or political, but as individual text and talk also embodies individual characteristics. Only a cognitive theory is able to spell out this interface between the social and the personal, namely through the relations between episodic mental models and other personal representations, on the one hand, and the socially shared political representations of groups, on the other hand. Political groups or institutions are thus defined not only socio-politically in terms of sets of interacting actors or collectivities and their interactions, but also socio-cognitively in terms of their shared knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, norms and

values. In other words, political discourse can only be adequately described and explained when we spell out the socio-cognitive interface that relates it to the socially shared political representations that control political actions, processes and systems.

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