10th International LAB Meeting - Winter Session 2008

European Ph.D. on
Social Representations and Communication
At the Multimedia LAB & Research Center, Rome-Italy

Social Representations in Action and Construction
in Media and Society

"Developing Meta-Theoretical Approach to
Social Representations Literature:
the contribution of Italian Scholars belonging to
the International So.Re.Com THEmatic NETwork"

From 26th January - 3rd February 2008
http://www.europhd.eu/html/_onda02/07/12.00.00.00.shtml

Key Lectures

European Ph.D

on Social Representations and Communication

International Lab Meeting Series 2005-2008

"Islam, media and Social Representations.
Theoretical Issues and Cross-National Comparisons"

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Xth Lab Meeting - 2008, Feb 1th

Theoretical issues: more general

- Language, discourse and social representations; *critical* perspectives; interdisciplinarity (Billig 1991; van Dijk 1997; Moscovici 2001; Fairclough 1992; Kress 1996)

- Mass media and social construction of representations; evolution of media; a discoursive approach to mass communication (Friedman et al. 1999; Sommer 1998)

- Culture and psychological processes; the nature of culture; the nature of mind; intercultural dynamics (Geertz 1973; Cole 1996; Mantovani 1998; Mazzara 2007)

- Social identity and intergroup relations; collective memories; imagined communities; the social construction of group conflict (Tajfel 1978; 1981; Anderson 1983; Abrams, Hogg 1999 ; Roudometof 2002; Wilmer 2002.; Verkuyten 2004)

- Social processes; migration; globalisation; multicultural and intercultural society; cross-cultural adaptation; intercultural communication (King & Wood 2001; Berry, Sam 1997; Appadurai 1996; Webster 1997; Steinberg 2001; Holliday et al. 2004)

Theoretical issues: more specific

- The *Orientalist* perspective (Said 1978, 1995; Ghareeb 1983; Sayyid 1997; Sardar 1999; Ma 2000)

- *Islam* as a cultural construction; as a system of peoples, traditions, specific versions of religion; the *european* and specific *national* versions of Islam (Hourani 1991; First 2002; Gilsenan 1990; Hunter 2002)

- *Islam* and the *West* ; as seen by western society; as seen by islamic society (Hippler, Lueg 1995; Bamyeh 1999; Hafez et al. 2000; Rugh 2004)

- The *clash of civilization* thesis (Huntington 1996; McKinnon 1997; Marfleet 2003; Seib 2004)

- Terrorism, feeling of unsecurity and media; the idea of *Jhad;* an emerging *frame;* before and after 9-11 (Rabbie 1989; Schaffert 1992; Dobkin 1992; Paletz & Schmid 1992; Esposito 2002; Chermak et al 2003; Norris et al. 2003; Veer, Munshi 2004; Ben-Yeuda 2005).

Methods in media research

- methodological vs epistemological options; discourse analysis, content analysis and social constructionism
- qualitative analysis; sampling, reliability, validity; generalisation vs special cases
- lexical and textual vs rhetorical analysis; language vs images; explicit vs implicit content
- possible support from computers; advantages and risks of CAQDAS
- specificity of different media; *new media* and Internet; media discourse and interpersonal relations; mainly in new media environment
- new actors on the scene; self-presentation of *Others* and intercultural communication issues.

Islam representations and media

- Hudson M.C., Molfe R. (eds.)(1980). *The american media and the Arabs*, Centre of Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown Univ.

- Said (1981). *Covering Islam.* Vintage, London 1997

- Ghareeb E. (1983). *Split vision. The portrayal of Arabs in the american media*, American-Arab Affairs Council, Washington DC

- Hafez K. (2000). *Islam and the West in the mass media: fragmented images in a globalizing world.* Hampton Press, Cresskill NJ

- Poole E. (2002). *Reporting Islam. Media representations of British Muslims.* I.B. Tauris, London.

- Deltombe T. (2005). *L'Islam imaginaire. La construction mediatique de l'islamophobie en France, 1975-2005,* La Découverte, Paris.

- Parfitt T., Egorova Y. (Eds.) (2003). *Jews, Muslims and Mass Media: Mediating the 'Other"*, Routledge Curzon, New York.

- UNESCO (2005). *Islam, media and public opinion*, Paris

- Poole E., Richardson J.E. (eds.)(2006). *Muslims and the News Media,* I.B.Tauris, London.

Main results

- homogeneity of findings; slight differences in relation to time, circumstances, countries, media; even political orientation
- an "essentialist" vision; mass description; lack of personal and individual detalis
- increasing coverage; Islam as a salient issue; suddenly recognizable;
- anecdotal evidence vs sistematic coverage; Islam and newsmaking processes
- global Islam vs specific national Islam; Muslims in the West; in relation to immigration and multi/intercultural society
- which *voice* of Islam; good vs bad; moderate vs extremist; local vs global; personal vs institutional
- few main topics: beliefs; education and value transmission; mixed marriages; *hjiab* and gender issues; construction of mosques

Elements of Islam representation

- monolithic, undifferentiated; religious homogeneity more important than any possible cultural difference

- pre-modern if not medieval; unchangeable, in time and space; against enlightenment tradition; dominated by istincts, fanaticism, superstition, esotism; the core of *orientalist* discourse

- common psychological traits; an "islamic character"; radicalism, fundamentalism, group cohesiveness, obedience; specific and homogeneous set of values; sexism

- crucial role of religion in individual and collective life; religion as a pervasive menace

- violence as a means for maintaining society; for spreading the faith; more or less close link to international terrorism.

Conclusions

- A stable set of constitutive elements; the core of *orientalist* discourse

- Discoursive fluidity, in order to accomodate changing situations, socio-historical specificity, cultural evolution;

- The security topic and counter terrorism war as a new frame for old contents

- European and National Muslims as an emerging topic; cross-categorisation and common ingroup models

- Mass media, newsmaking processes and social representations.