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## **Social representations of national identity in culturally diverse societies**

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**In G. Sammut, E. Andreouli, G. Gaskell and J. Valsiner, *The Cambridge Handbook of Social Representations* (2015)**

The concept of identity, although quite recent in the social sciences (it was popularised by Erikson in the 1950s – see Gleason, 1983) is one of the few concepts that has been so widely studied and theorised. Psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, even political philosophers, have used the term to shed light on a variety of socio-political phenomena, ranging from belonging to exclusion and from stability and homogeneity to social change and cultural pluralism. As such, identity has acquired an array of conflicting meanings, from essentialist notions which focus on unity and distinctiveness to conceptions which emphasise the fragmentation of the modern subject (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). The challenge in defining identity stems from the fact that it refers to both an individual's sense of self as well as an individual's relations with others. It is, in other words, a concept that resists the individual/social dichotomy which has traditionally dominated the social sciences, in general, and social psychology, in particular. In this chapter we adopt a social representations perspective to theorise identity at the social/individual interface. We focus on national identities which have been particularly problematized in the context of growing cultural diversity within nation-states and are often seen as declining or changing.

The chapter is structured as follows: we start with a brief account of social representations theory and then present our main argument of identity as a social representation embedded in strategic projects. Then, in two different sections, we discuss national identity projects in culturally diverse societies with a particular focus in Britain and Greece. We conclude with a brief discussion of the implications of these national identity projects for the integration of migrants.

### **A brief account of Social Representations Theory**

Social representations theory, introduced by Serge Moscovici in 1961, has had a major impact on social psychological research. The theory has been used to understand a series of psychological phenomena, such as minority influence (Moscovici, 1976), public understanding of science (Bauer & Gaskell, 2006), cognitive development (Psaltis & Duveen, 2006), intercultural relations and communities (Jovchelovitch, 2007; Howarth et al., 2013), and health and risk (Joffe, 2003). Other chapters of this book expand on the theory and the domains of social representations and therefore we will not discuss the theory in much detail here. However, we need to say a few words in order to be able to argue about its relation with identity.

Social representations are common sense theories about the world and one of their main functions is to domesticate the unknown and the unfamiliar. When people are faced with unfamiliar events they try to make sense of the situation by incorporating the new elements into their existing knowledge and by presenting them in familiar terms and images. According to Moscovici (1988) this domestication is done via the processes of anchoring and objectification. These processes, working at a level of a metasystem, translate social regulations into peoples' way of thinking. Thus, common sense knowledge is socially elaborated and shared. It constitutes a kind of "democratic" knowledge in whose elaboration

everybody can potentially contribute depending on the nature and dynamics of intergroup relations. Moscovici discussed social representations as lay systems of meaning that are constructed through communicative processes. As such, they inevitably involve self-other relations and vary according to the dynamics of these relations.

Social representations are considered as both the process and the product of the elaboration of social knowledge, which is not initiated either by the knowing subjects or by the objects to be known but by their interaction. What is important is how the knowing subject and the object to be known shape each other during the process of knowledge construction. Social representations express quintessentially the social psychological “regard” as proposed by Moscovici (1988). According to this view, what differentiates social psychology from the disciplines of psychology and sociology is the way it looks at the relationship between a subject (individual or collective) and an object. What social psychology suggests is that this relationship is mediated through another subject (individual or collective, real or imagined). Thus, in social psychological terms, the relationship between a subject and an object “becomes a complex triangular one in which each of the terms is fully determined by the other two” (Moscovici, 2000, p. 107). This relationship between self, other and object/representation forms the unit of analysis in social representations theory (Marková, 2003).

The triadic model of knowledge construction has been extended by Bauer and Gaskell (1999, 2008) who suggested that the subjects of the representational process are linked together in a common vision or purpose. In particular, Bauer and Gaskell argued that self-other relations are relative to a common project, a “future for us” which defines the object and people’s experience (2008, p. 343). It is within this common project that people are able to communicate, agree or disagree about an object. Social representations do not mean that everybody has the same opinion but that the organization of individual knowledge is influenced by common principles that are shared by people in the same culture or community. It is important to have common grounds in order to be able to communicate with each other even if we disagree. The ways that different social milieus interact with each other impact on the types of representations that are produced (Bauer & Gaskell, 2008). For instance, the construction of social representations of nationhood involves various actors. One can think of the lay general public (that is composed of various social groups that may have different interests), the state (which demarcates the national boundaries through immigration and citizenship legislation, for example), as well as the migrants (who may also have different projects and claims to national identity depending on where they come from, their legal status etc.), as key actors in constructions of nationhood. While each actor may construct different representations based on the projects they are pursuing, it can be said that these diverse versions of the world intersect and overlap at points constructing nationhood as a complex and multifaceted object. It should be noted however that power asymmetries influence the degree to which projects become successful as alternative projects may be silenced or ‘squashed’ by projects produced by more powerful social actors (Foster, 2003).

Overall, social representations theory is a way of studying common sense knowledge which is socially elaborated through communication and social influence. Social representations are determined by the interaction between knowing social subjects and different social objects, a relationship mediated by others in the social environment. They express peoples’ world-views that help them domesticate the unknown, give meaning to their environment and position themselves in it. These social representations guide peoples' practices.

Having discussed social representations as a theory of knowledge in general, we now move on to consider identities as a particular type of social representation. We suggest that seeing identity as a social representation allows us to understand both the content of identities (which draws on existing social representations) and the processes of identity construction and negotiation on an individual and collective level. In order to highlight the relationship between identity and action, we draw particular attention to the notion of identity projects. In the final sections of this chapter we apply these ideas to national identity projects in culturally diverse societies, focusing on Britain and Greece.

### **Identity as a social representation**

The concept of identity has attracted much attention within the field of social representations (e.g. Breakwell, 2011; Duveen & Lloyd, 1986; Moloney & Walker, 2007; Howarth, 2002). Contributing to this growing body of research, we argue here that the concept of identity has much to gain if it is conceptualised as a social representation. Although we acknowledge that identity has both individual and social aspects, we make no distinction here between personal and social identity (cf. Tajfel, 1981). The argument we make is that people construct their identity in the context of their culture in order to domesticate their environment and position themselves in it. Macro-societal norms and regulations are translated into self-knowledge with the same processes as those functioning for social representations, and, at a meso-interactive level, everyday encounters and interactions customize further these elements to produce a particular form of knowledge at an individual level, forming the overall notion of the individual self (Chrysochoou 2013). Thus, it can be said that identity is “a particular form of social representation that represents the relationship between the individual and others (real or symbolic, individuals or groups)” (Chrysochoou 2003, p. 227). Identity is intrinsically social since it is socially elaborated and enables people to participate in a given culture. A similar argument has been advanced in relation to the different representations of selfhood, for example, representations based on individualism and representations based on collectivism (Oyserman & Markus, 1998). Identity as a particular form of social representation functions like an organizing principle (Spini & Doise, 1998; Elcheroth, Doise & Reicher, 2011) that allows individuals to position themselves within the representational field and that guides action.

Like psychoanalytic concepts, studied by Moscovici in 1961, identity is not only a scientific concept that explains people’s affiliations and sense of belonging, but it is also part of common sense and public debates (Chrysochoou, 2003, 2009a). At an individual or collective level, identity refers to three main questions: ‘Who am I/who are we?’, ‘Who are they?’ and ‘What is our relationship?’ (Chrysochoou, 2003). From this perspective, we see identity as a system of knowledge about oneself, about others and about the social context which is constructed and negotiated within social relations. Identity can refer to societal projects that give meaning and content to social categories as well as to particular configurations of these categories at the individual level. It could also refer to specific position taking within a social context. We argue that all these aspects can be studied if one looks at identity as a social representation which is constructed, communicated, thematised and debated in the public sphere. As the content of social categories but also the very system of categorisation used in a particular social context can be seen as the products of a social representational process of knowledge elaboration (see also Augoustinos, 2001), we argue that identity can be viewed in terms of both its content and processes of construction and elaboration.

In terms of content, identity contains self-knowledge (Chrysochoou, 2003) within a 'common discursive space' (Wagner, 1994). Identity provides individuals both a sense of group membership and access to the group's knowledge systems (ibid.). The content of social categories become identity-projects that give people a sense of who they are, a perspective on the world and a guideline for action. For instance, representations of gender define what it means to be male or female and what type of conduct is expected of men and women. In this sense, identity provides the symbolic material that enables people to define themselves and others and orient their behaviour accordingly.

Through socialisation, identity is both a process of self-knowledge construction and a process of self-positioning. Thus, the particular configuration of different identity elements constituting the self is also the product of processes similar to those of social representations. As with the inclusion of new elements in a social representation via the anchoring process, positioning is an active process and as such, allows for variability and individual agency (Duveen, 2001; Howarth, 2006). Moreover, making claims about one's identity and resisting claims made by others are part of identity processes. In other words, like all social representations, identities can be negotiated and transformed – this is particularly evident if we take the example of the politics of identity which seek to change hegemonic social representations of minority identities in order to achieve greater public recognition (c.f. Taylor, 1992). Like other types of social knowledge, identity is constructed, affirmed or re-negotiated through communicative processes and processes of social influence (Chrysochoou, 2003).

In fact, what we argue is that although people have particular identity configurations at a phenomenological level, these are constructed through the same processes as social representations that aim to domesticate the unknown and unfamiliar. People aim to construct a knowledge about themselves that helps them domesticate new and changing environments, that is communicable to others and inserts them to a common social and symbolic space. The elaboration of this self-knowledge is done socially and involves social influence processes in order to negotiate and convince others about the meaning of self-categories and self-positioning. Thus, inevitably identity expresses, at an individual level, the way society is regulated. In that sense, we argue that it is valuable to consider it as a particular social representation that mediates social relationships.

Because of its key role in mediating social relations and enabling people to engage with their social world (based on the knowledge they have of themselves, of others and the dynamics of their relation), identity is inextricably linked to action and participation. The relationship between identity and action is not new. Early in social psychological research identity was linked to action and intergroup behaviour (Tajfel 1974; Tajfel & Turner 1986). We argued earlier that identity is a form of social representation that links individuals to their social worlds; it is the representation that provides people with both a location and a value in relation to other individuals who occupy different identity positions (Duveen & Lloyd, 1986). As such, identity has the power to provide the content of action (identity-project) and the position from which one is able to carry on this project. Identity, therefore, makes people social actors by endowing them with various positionings that enable them to participate in social life (Howarth, Andreouli & Kessi, in press).

Identities have the power to mobilize people towards action. As a social representation, identity expresses the interrelation between knowledge and practice and mobilizes towards the creation of new practices (Elcherath, Doise & Reicher, 2011). The social elaboration of

identities can function as particular calls for mobilization. Identities are strategic and future-oriented (Reicher & Hopkins 2001; Reicher 2004). The “identity battle” takes place in the arena of social influence. For instance, minority claims for public recognition of ethnic or religious identities become political claims and constitute actions to accommodate minorities’ vision of the world. On the other hand, (mis)recognition from others, especially from powerful social groups and institutions, constitutes an action towards minorities which can mobilise these groups to achieve fuller recognition.

In the following sections we focus particularly on national identity projects in culturally diverse societies. In an environment when nationhood is changing due to migration movements, people need to reconstruct who they are to incorporate these changes. We are not interested here so much at the content of social representations of nationhood in two different countries. Following the claims made earlier, we will discuss the implications of hegemonic representations promoted either by the state or by the cultural majority for people's identities. To do so we will first discuss national identities in culturally diverse societies as strategic projects.

### **National projects in culturally diverse societies**

In the previous sections, we proposed that identities can be seen as social representations that domesticate the unfamiliar, provide a position to individuals and customize societal projects at the level of the self. The question with which we are dealing here is how existing identities are influenced by a changing social environment where cultural diversity is prominent. In particular, we are interested in how national identities evolve in a culturally diverse environment.

National identities have been constructed on the founding myths of the different nations. History is crucial for the construction of nations (Hobsbawm & Kertzer, 1992). Myths of origin, national memories and histories, national cultures and symbols, are all tools that enable the construction of the nation. In the famous words of Benedict Anderson, “the nation is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited [with specific boundaries] and sovereign” (1991, p. 6), giving nationals a sense of continuity and destiny.

Nationhood emerged around the middle of nineteenth century when socio-historical factors in Europe brought into existence a socio-political organisation: the nation-state (Gellner, 1997; Hobsbawm, 1990). This political project was based on the idea of a nation, a group that assembled people around the belief that they shared common origins, a common culture and common goals. In that respect, culture became a political principle which fed the representation that a nation-state was a culturally homogeneous entity (Gellner, 1997). The cultural and the political spheres have been closely intertwined in the building of modern nations-states.

Nations were, and still are, powerful identity providers for their members. Following the social representational processes described before, the socio-political organisation of the nation-state was translated at a certain historical moment at the level of identity and provided a meaningful purpose and a sense of belonging. National identities are carriers of the project of nationhood and their content is subject to social influence by “entrepreneurs of identity” (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Very often, this project consists of creating a nation-state where a community with a common past can establish a common present and pursue a common future. Nationalism, the driving force for the development of the nation-state, is understood in

political theory as “primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (Gellner, 1983, p. 1), meaning that the borders of the state coincide with the borders of the nation.

This project is supported by relevant identities and feeds these identities. To create the identities that would carry this political project, nationalism reifies the nation and essentialises the national character (Chrysochoou 2004). Over time the identities that carry on the national project become reified, conventionalised and taken for granted. Indeed, Billig (1995) refers to the idea that the world is naturally divided in bounded and distinct nations as a banal ideology which is habitually reproduced in mundane, everyday routines and talk. Constructing the nation as a distinct and cohesive community of people with essential characteristics has important implications for the criteria for national membership. This membership is important since it determines who can be recipient of material and symbolic resources and who has decision-making power (through electing and being elected) in this community.

Thus, a political project creates national identity-projects. The notion of project points to the political and often strategic construction of national identities (see Condor, 2000; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). These are not neutral endeavours but are guided by the interests of the groups that produce them (Chrysochoou 2009a). As noted above, the primary project of representations of nationhood has been to preserve the state institution by constructing and maintaining the image of a coherent, homogeneous and continuous national collectivity whose members have common interests that are paramount.

However, the power of the nation-state has been challenged by globalisation and the global movement of people. This has an impact on people’s identities. It is quite common for people either to be dual nationals or to live in nation-states without having the same nationality with the majority. In the UK, for instance, more than two hundred thousand people become naturalised as British citizens in 2009 (Danzelman, 2010). At the same time, the loss of power of the nation-state and the movement of people challenge the national identities of receiving communities. Another project of social order is presented where cultural diversity needs to be accommodated. Research has shown that the more a nation is represented in ethnic terms by its members the more these members express anti-immigration views (Pehrson, Vignoles & Brown, 2009). Furthermore, the way ethnic minorities are categorised (as ingroup or outgroup) has an impact on how they are treated (Wakefield et al., 2011). Cultural diversity raises again the issue of conflict within nations, this time not in class terms but in ethnic terms. The efforts of ethnic minorities to be recognised as legitimate members of the nation are in fact efforts to be recognized as legitimate recipients of material and symbolic resources. Often, the response to claims for recognition is the development of ideological beliefs about the incompatibilities between national and ethnic or religious identities (Chrysochoou & Lyons, 2011).

This changing environment raises questions about how national identities evolve. What is the national project today? What is the context in which ethnic minorities and second generation immigrants build their identities? How majorities respond to the changes in what they knew was the “national project”?

In the following section we will present the hegemonic identity-projects of two different countries. The first is the United Kingdom, a country with several nations, with a colonial past in which an empire included subjects of diverse ethnicities and cultural backgrounds that

were hierarchically oriented. The second is Greece, a country whose members formed a nation-state in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century after a liberation war on the basis of common culture, a country whose cohesion was built on commonality and homogeneity and which recently, from being an immigrant-sending country, became an immigrant-receiving one. These countries present two different examples of national identity projects. As we will show, however, despite their differences, the two countries do share some commonalities in how they seek to accommodate or manage cultural change.

## **National identity projects in UK and Greece**

### *National identity projects within the UK naturalisation context*

Britishness has always been a somewhat ‘fuzzy’ concept (Cohen, 1994). This is partly because it has been constructed on the basis of different ethnic and national groups. The UK consists of four nations (English, Welsh, Scottish, and Irish) as well as other ethnic minorities who migrated to the UK mainly since the 1950s. Power asymmetries amongst the different nations of the UK (with the English being the dominant group) have often led to the construction of stronger regional identities, rather than an overarching British identity. For instance, British identity is said to be much more adopted by the white English and the ethnic minority population of England compared to the rest of the UK population (Stone & Muir, 2007). Also, while in England Britishness is seen as an inclusive identity, in Scotland it is associated with an ethnic conception of Englishness (Kiely, McCrone, & Bechhofer, 2005). Britishness is therefore defined differently in different contexts as ethnic, cultural and national groups represent this identity in different ways according to their histories and power status.

This section will discuss a particular context for the construction of national identity in the UK, the process of naturalisation, that is, the process by which migrants become citizens of the UK. While social psychological research has mainly studied national identities in terms of lay understandings, it is argued here that state institutions are very powerful actors in concretising and enacting social representations about national identity (Andreouli & Howarth, 2012). National identities are political projects which are advanced by state policies and practices. The state can act as an ‘identity entrepreneur’ (Reicher, 2004) and advance a particular representation of what it means to be a member of the nation.

The British state, in particular, has in recent years engaged in a nation building project through its citizenship and immigration policy. While the UK has traditionally adopted a rather multicultural approach compared to other European countries (Favell, 2001), multiculturalism as a policy for managing cultural diversity has recently been challenged. The terrorist attacks in New York and London and the racial tensions in the north of England in 2001 have given rise to more assimilatory public policy discourse that emphasises commonality and sharedness. For instance, David Cameron, the Prime Minister of the country, claimed in 2011 that multiculturalism encourages segregation and allows tolerance towards cultural values that are incompatible with British values.

New policies emphasising social cohesion and integration have been implemented in the past ten years. These new policies aim to manage cultural diversity and to avoid future conflicts by advancing a common vision of Britishness among all British citizens (McGhee, 2005). Most prominent among those policies are immigration and citizenship policies. For instance, migrants who wish to stay in the United Kingdom now have to pass a Life in the UK test to

show that they are familiar with British culture and with the laws and rules of the country. They also need to go through a citizenship ceremony where they swear their allegiance to the UK and the Queen. On the whole, it can be argued that the British state has initiated a top-down nation-building process seeking to construct a socially cohesive society based on shared British values. These policies have been heavily criticised for their assimilatory and patronising connotations (e.g. Alexander, 2007).

As any social identity, this vision of the British nation advanced by the state is associated with a model of social relations; it includes some people but excludes others. This is most evident in 'earned citizenship' and 'managed immigration' policies which have complemented social cohesion policies in the UK. These policies emphasise duties over the rights of migrants and aim at ensuring that only the right kinds of migrants are able to reside in the UK and naturalise as citizens. An analysis of 'earned citizenship' documents by Andreouli and Howarth (2012) showed that at the heart of these policies lies a distinction between deserving and undeserving migrants. The former are seen as an economic resource while the latter are seen as abusers of British resources, mainly of welfare benefits. This finding is in line with a general deservingness culture that seems to be widespread across Europe; in fact, the least deserving of all 'needy' social groups according to survey studies seem to be the migrants (van Oorschot, 2006). The level of recognition afforded to migrants depends on where they come from (for example from within the EU or from third countries) and the level of professional skills they possess. Andreouli and Howarth (2012) argued that this bordering mechanism results in a type of institutionalised positioning of migrants, differentiating between 'elite' and 'non elite' migrants. The former are educated migrants originating in developed Western countries, while the latter are less skilled migrants originating from developing countries. In other words, the British state's national identity project for migrants emphasises the distinction between the West and the Rest, positioning Westerners as closer to Britishness and thus more worthy of Britishness than non-Westerners. It follows therefore that representations of national identity constructed and institutionalised by the British state serve political projects. They function to exclude some 'less worthy' migrants while aiming to embrace other 'more worthy' ones. Ideas about similarity and difference and ideas about deservingness and undeservingness overlap to a great extent. Non-Western migrants are otherised by both lay representations of Britishness as an ethno-cultural identity (which is inaccessible to 'cultural others') and by reified representations produced and enacted by the British state (Andreouli & Howarth, 2012).

These findings are further corroborated by an interview study with civil servants working within the field of naturalisation in the UK. The findings of this study show that an earned citizenship discourse is also employed by many of these officers who represent Britishness as an identity that has to be earned through active contribution to the country, making again a distinction between deserving and undeserving migrants (Andreouli & Dashtipour, 2013). While embracing 'worthy' migrants serves to maintain an image of Britain as an accepting society, the symbolic exclusion of 'unworthy' migrants serves to maintain the purity of the nation against the migrant 'threat'. Again, these data show that non-deserving migrants, who are seen as abusing the welfare state, are commonly seen as culturally and ethnically different or 'other' (Andreouli & Dashtipour, 2013).

It seems overall that a key organising principle in social representations of Britishness as played out in the UK naturalisation context is the distinction between deserving and undeserving migrants (see Staerklé, 2009) which seems to overlap to an extent with the distinction between ethnically similar and different migrants. This principle is linked to a

particular vision of Britishness and orients the positioning of migrants in relation to this identity. People that conform with these criteria of deservingness ('elite', highly skilled migrant who usually originate in developed countries) are accepted or recognised, while groups that violate them ('non-elite' migrants who are less skilled and usually originate in non-developed countries) are excluded from the British nation (see also Joffe & Staerklé, 2007). It can be said therefore that (some) migrants are doubly otherised: institutional-level representations and state policies limit their formal participation in the UK while lay representations limit their informal right to claim British identity.

It is important to consider how such state-level projects relate to the identity projects of migrants and of other ethnic, cultural or religious minorities. For instance, Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking (2011) found that Muslim communities in Europe tend to adopt essentialist identity projects (that enhance intergroup boundaries) when faced with policies of assimilation, whereas they tend to adopt more dialogical identity projects (that allow engagement with other communities) in contexts of multicultural policies. In our own research we found that the recognition (of 'elite' migrants) and misrecognition of ('non-elite') migrants have an effect on how migrants construe their place in the UK and their relationship to Britishness: non-White, poorer migrants originating outside the West, tend to feel less 'entitled' to identify with the British nation compared to migrants originating in Western countries (Andreouli & Howarth, 2012). Such powerful representations of Britishness can also shape individual acculturation processes because they limit the extent to which ethnic minority identities are seen as compatible with British identity. Different migrants (depending on their personal and family histories and the specific relationships that they develop with the communities they are affiliated with) may use different strategies to solve this assumed incompatibility: they may reject one or the other identity, construct new hyphenated or super-ordinate identities, or compartmentalise the different identities into different domains of life (Andreouli, 2013).

### *National Identity-projects in contemporary Greece*

The Greek national identity was constructed at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a project that led to a "national liberation" war from the Ottoman Empire on the basis of a common religion and language and common ancestors: the Ancient Greeks. Thus, national identity in Greece is built on the myth of a cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic homogeneity of the population. Here we do not aim to present the content of Greek nationhood, however. What we aim to show is that when this founding myth is challenged by cultural diversity, people strategically will reconstruct their identity to incorporate this new element. But this is not done passively but strategically, in order to keep the social stratification intact and to favor the local populations. This reconstruction does not involve only national identity but also class identities.

Our research indicates that the myth of national cultural homogeneity is still prominent in the social representations of the nation and is shared by both "native" Greeks and ethnic Greeks from "Voreios Epiros" a region in the South of Albania with a large Greek community. In two different studies (Chryssochoou, 2009b) we asked native Greeks (N=104) and Ethnic Greeks from Voreios Epiros living in Greece (N=111) and aged 18-70 years old to give their agreement with 17 criteria that would make somebody Greek. The structure of the representation of both groups was extremely similar. The factor analysis revealed mainly two factors that concern a) the civic definition of being Greek (*ius solis* and *ius domicili*) and b) the common ethno-cultural origin (*ius sanguinis*). Both groups claim that it is right for

somebody to be considered Greek on the basis of his/her ethno-cultural origins more than on the basis of a civic definition. In addition, the Greek sample was asked what makes a Nation. The analysis revealed three factors: The first factor was based on the commonalities between the members of the group (common customs and habits, common culture, history, language, origins and religion). The second factor concerned resources and the constitution of a state (rights and socio-economic benefits, territorial power, state constitution) and the third factor concerned national independence (independent economic life, independent governance). Agreement was significantly higher with the first ethno-cultural factor. If this is the case, and the national project in Greece is built on the idea of ethno-cultural commonalities and *ius sanguinis*, how immigrants and minorities can ever pretend to be part of the national group? Is diversity however the real threat to the Greek national project?

Although the movement of populations from and to Greece is not new nor is the existence of groups with different cultural characteristics in Greek territory, public discourse emphasizes the fact that Greece started becoming multicultural in the '90s with the reception of immigrants from former East European countries and in particular with the massive entry of Albanians. Immigrants, however, did not only change the culturally homogeneous image of the country. They also changed social stratification, allowing many Greeks to become bosses (Kasimis & Papadopoulos, 2005). The fact that immigrants were constrained at low-paid jobs and literary exploited, allowed Greek society, in general, to represent them as a separate body of the working force that were destined to do "any job" from agricultural and building work to house-cleaning and taking care of the elderly. It could be said that this period was characterized by patronizing prejudice. It is when immigrants, particularly Albanians, started having horizontal or vertical mobility that Greek society became clearly hostile and displayed antagonistic behaviours. This fact was illustrated by the hostility displayed towards Albanian origin pupils who, as the best pupils in their school, were given the honour to carry the Greek flag during school parades. The phenomenon of Greek parents protesting against a non-Greek student carrying the flag during school parades became very common. It can be hypothesized that the issue at stake was not the fact that a cultural symbol was carried by non-members but the fact that non-members were able to succeed.

In two different quasi-experiments we manipulated the horizontal or vertical mobility (stable status Vs mobility) of a fictitious immigrant in Germany with different ethnic origins (Greek, Italian, Albanian or Bulgarian). When we asked participants, Greek university students, to attribute the stability or mobility of the fictitious target, we observed that for the Bulgarian and even more for the Albanian immigrant, his stability more than his mobility was attributed to his culture of origin. This was true either for the horizontal or the vertical mobility. These findings indicate that the construction of difference in terms of culture is used to justify and legitimize social stratification within the nation-state and to create a hierarchy of cultures that would obstruct mobility for newcomers when at the same time the dream for social mobility would remain alive for natives. The national project needs to change in order to accommodate the different ethnicities. To do so, another representation is used that justifies the new social stratification and gives the opportunity to majority groups to keep their prominent position (Chrysochoou, 2009b; Chrysochoou, 2010).

These representations have consequences for the acculturation patterns and the development of identities. On the one hand, immigrants receive the message that in order to be accepted as part of the national polity they need to assimilate, on the other hand, this strategy is not beneficial for all ethnic groups. Research has shown (Grigoropoulou & Chrysochoou, 2011) that Albanians, for instance, do not benefit from their religious assimilation. The origins of

the minority and the relation to the receiving population interact with the acculturation strategy. Thus, often immigrants and ethnic minorities receive contradictory messages about which type of identity strategy can be better recognized. In fact, the presumed incompatibility of identities is another representation that aims to block a representation of a nation as cohesive and multicultural at the same time (Chrysochoou & Lyons, 2011). Our research with immigrants (Chrysochoou & Dede, 2013) shows that the identification of Albanian immigrants with their ethnic ingroup is independent to their wish to assimilate or to their wish to maintain their culture in Greece. It is not immigrants' strong identification with their ethnic group that interferes with their insertion to the receiving society. In the Greek sample described above, the more participants felt Greek the more they wished ethnic repatriates from Voreios Epiros to assimilate in the Greek society and at the same time the more they wished that this group maintained their different culture in Albania in order to satisfy the politics of the Greek nation-state. These results support our claim that identities, constructed as social representations, are strategically used in order to sustain political projects.

From this discussion about national identity projects in Greece we can observe that there is hegemonic representation of the national project based on cultural homogeneity. However, when immigrants follow a strategy of assimilation in order to fit the criteria of commonality they face another barrier, produced from a social representation concerning the social stratification of society and the distribution of resources in a society that ideologically supports meritocracy. Thus, following the presumed content of nationhood, based on homogeneity and assimilation does not help migrants since in fact they are not excluded on the basis of their culture but on the basis of their social class. In that respect, looking at identity as a social representation enables us to understand the interrelations between societal regulations and their expression at the level of the self.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that identity, national identity in particular, can be seen as a social representation. This means that, as other social representations, national identity is collectively elaborated through social interaction and debate in the public sphere. Moreover, different social actors have a stake in the construction of national identity, each with their own interests and projects. The notion of project highlights the politics of identity construction: the fact, that every representation of national identity carries within it the agenda of the groups or other social actors that construct it. In this sense, there is always a strategic dimension in the social representational process of national identity construction.

We have argued that national identity projects have historically aimed to construct the nation as a homogeneous group of people, linked together by shared history and ethnic origins. This process has allowed nation-states to function as sovereign polities. In other words, the identity project of creating a sense of nationhood has served the political project of nationalism. However, increasing cultural diversity within nation-states has challenged the assumed homogeneity of distinct nations. In light of this, we have argued that new identity projects, that is, new social representations of national identity, need to be constructed in order to accommodate this growing diversity.

This chapter has specifically explored national identity projects in the UK and Greece from the perspective of the majority. In the UK, we focused on the state, a powerful actor in shaping representations of the nation. We examined state discourses and practices on immigration and naturalisation and found that these are organised around the distinction of

deserving and undeserving migrants, which functions to exclude non-Western, unskilled migrants and include Western, skilled migrants, on the basis that the former are a burden while the latter are an economic resource. These practices overlap with lay representations of Britishness which also exclude non-Western migrants due to their assumed ethnic and cultural difference. In Greece, majoritarian representations of national identity are also based on cultural homogeneity. Social representations of Greekness are associated with a hierarchical view of cultures which serves to limit the social mobility of migrants and ethnic minorities. In both cases therefore cultural diversity is not just seen as problematic in itself; rather migrants seem to threaten other valued resources of the nation, such as the distribution of state resources (such as welfare) or the existing system of social stratification.

In both cases migrants find themselves in a very difficult situation. In Greece migrants are effectively encouraged to assimilate in order to be socially mobile but this is made extremely difficult by representations of cultural incompatibility. Similarly, in the UK, under an ostensibly just immigration system, which rewards those with the right qualifications, non-Western migrants are otherised as potential abusers of the British welfare system. However, these ideas about welfare abuse are intertwined with conceptions of ethnic and cultural difference, leading eventually to a double otherisation of non-Western migrants.

In both cases therefore, social changes lead to the reconstruction of identity projects that differ between minorities and majorities and impact on how identity is elaborated. Social representations of national identities are thus constructed on the basis of political projects that serve the interests of powerful social actors and function to maintain a homogeneous or exclusionary national identity. In times of growing ethnic and cultural diversity within nation-states, this sets hurdles for the acculturation of migrants and the overall participation of ethnic minorities. Such national identity projects may have adverse effects: instead of encouraging the construction of a cohesive national identity, they can ultimately encourage intergroup segregation and limit the participation of minorities in the social and political life of a country.