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National identity, citizenship and immigration: Putting identity in context

Abstract

In this paper we suggest that there is a need to examine what is meant by 'context' in Social Psychology and present an example of how to place identity in its social and institutional context. Taking the case of British naturalisation, the process whereby migrants become citizens, we show that the identity of naturalised citizens is defined by common-sense ideas about Britishness and by immigration policies. An analysis of policy documents on 'earned citizenship' and interviews with naturalised citizens shows that the distinction between 'elite' and 'non-elite' migrants is evident in both the 'reified' sphere of policy and the 'common sense' sphere of everyday identity construction. While social representations embedded in lay experience construct ethno-cultural similarity and difference, immigration policies engage in an institutionalised positioning process by determining migrants' rights of mobility. These spheres of knowledge and practice are not disconnected as these two levels of 'managing otherness' overlap – it is the poorer, less skilled migrants, originating outside the West who epitomise difference (within a consensual sphere) and have less freedom of mobility (within a reified sphere). We show that the context of identity should be understood as simultaneously psychological and political.

Keywords: identity, social representations, context, reified-consensual, citizenship, immigration, institutions

Introduction

Social identity, intergroup relations and social representations: these concepts have had a tremendous impact on social psychological research in the last fifty years. One thing they all point to is the importance of context: identities are contextual – they change as we move from context to context (Tajfel, 1981); intergroup relations of conflict, tolerance and cooperation are also predetermined by the social norms of the context (Minard, 1952); the ways in which social representations become salient, dominant or normative can only be understood with reference to their context (Jovchelovitch, 2007).

However, as Elcheroth, Doise and Reicher (2011) point out, we “need to be more precise about the meaning of ‘social context’” (p. 743). Is this the micro-level of discursive exchanges between a few individuals (Hepburn & Potter, 2010), the broader context of social relations (Reicher, 2004), or the expansive context of nationalism (Billig, 1995)? Or could we examine the impact of policy and political discourse on the construction of identity, the nature of intergroup interactions and the patterns of social recognition? Oddly, there are few studies on the role of institutionalised context of social psychological phenomena (although there are some important exceptions, see Haste, 2004; Scuzzarello, 2012). However, a rigorously contextual analysis would need to place this alongside everyday constructions of identity.

One of the ways to do this is to examine the connections between social identity and social recognition both from the context of everyday discourses *and* from the context of reified representations or institutions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Elcheroth, Doise and Reicher (2011) have argued that “institutionalized social structures allow narratives about collective identities and shared values to be concretely enacted and social norms to become relevant in the light of concretely experienced patterns of interdependence” (p. 742) and it is reified social representations that sustain such narratives and social norms. Within the context of national identity, we argue that recognition is not only shaped by social representations circulating in the consensual sphere of everyday debate and practice but also by the reified representations of political institutions.

Overlooking the impact of policy making and practice runs the risk de-politicising identity construction processes and rests on a rather limited analysis of context. Indeed, there have been claims to study citizenship ‘from below’ in order to understand how citizens themselves make sense of and enact their citizenship status (Jones & Gaventa, 2002; Haste, 2004). Recently, efforts to introduce a social psychology

of citizenship have been made (Condor, 2011; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011) and social psychologists have studied lay understandings and 'uses' of citizenship from a rhetorical and discursive approach (Condor & Gibson, 2007; Gibson & Hamilton, 2011; Gibson, 2011; Abell, Condor & Stevenson, 2006; Barnes, Auburn & Lea, 2004). While these studies have focused on lay understandings of institutionally defined identities (i.e. citizenship), the reified universe of the actual institution of citizenship has not received much attention.

This paper shows that recognition does not only refer to lay ways of thinking and everyday practices but also to reified representations (institutions) which formally 'manage' otherness. We discuss data on British naturalisation both from the perspectives of the everyday knowledge of the central participants and institutionalised policy discourses on immigration and citizenship. In particular, we present an analysis of interviews with naturalised British citizens and public policy documents on 'earned citizenship'. What we show is that the reified sphere of policy discourses and the common sense sphere of everyday identity production are far from disconnected; representations of Britishness and immigration from policy filter into common sense practices and vice versa. Our study shows that lay and institutional recognition overlap: new citizens are positioned by both everyday social representations and institutionalised practices and it is the poor, unskilled and 'ethnically different' migrants who are doubly otherised in this process.

Theoretical connections: Social recognition across reified and consensual contexts

In order to examine the context of identity processes, this paper draws primarily on the theory of social representations. Social representations, as "systems of values, ideas and practices" (Moscovici, 1973, p. xiii), serve as symbolic tools which allow group members to make sense of their social world and their relationship to other groups. This theory is particularly useful for our research as it "overcomes the duality between psychology and politics" (Elcherth, Doise & Reicher, 2011, p. 730).

Early in the development of the social representations theory, Moscovici (1984) made a distinction between common sense representations and other forms of knowledge, such as science, which serve different purposes. Science is produced within a reified universe where only few have legitimate voices and where certainty and rationality are the goals of communication. On the contrary, social representations are 'public' and their goal is to make the social world intelligible for people, relying in everyday rationalities (Moscovici, 1981, 1988, 1984). They are produced within a consensual universe by

lay people in everyday life and everyone has a part in the knowledge construction process. Non-ambiguity is rarely achieved as disagreement and debate form an essential part of the public sphere (Jovchelovitch, 2007). Although the strict dichotomisation between science and common sense and between the reified and consensual universe have been criticised (e.g. Purkhardt, 1993; Bauer & Gaskell, 1999), we can still view these universes as two interrelated contexts of knowledge construction. Furthermore, following Batel and Castro (2009), Lloyd and Duveen (1992) and Howarth (2009) we can extend the reified universe to include expert discourses in law, education and psychology itself. In our discussion of immigration and citizenship in Britain we will consider the consensual universe as the context of everyday discourse and practice (where lay social actors discuss and debate) and the reified universe as the institutional context of state policies and practices (from which lay people are excluded and only policy-makers have a legitimate voice). We argue that both have an impact on the construction of identity because the representations that are constructed and enacted in both these spheres advance or withhold recognition from social groups.

Processes of representation and processes of identity are intertwined because social categories (e.g. British, immigrant etc.) are social representations (Augoustinos, 2001). As Duveen (2001) notes, identity is as much about identification with certain groups as it is about recognition from those groups and from others. This echoes Mead's (1934) point about the inextricable link between social recognition and the development of the self. According to Mead, the self arises through seeing oneself through the eyes of the other: "only in so far as he takes the attitudes of the organised social group to which he belongs towards the organised, co-operative social activity or set of such activities in which that group as such is engaged, does he develop a complete self" (1934, p. 155). Prevalent representations play the role of Mead's 'generalised other', that is, the views and representations of society at large.

Several social psychological studies have empirically shown the impact of recognition on identity in the sphere of everyday interactions between individuals and groups. Philogène (2007), for example, has shown that representations of otherness have an impact on the construction of African American identities. Augoustinos and Riggs (2007) have demonstrated that essentialising representations of race influence the construction of 'us' and 'them'. In a similar vein, Wagner and colleagues (Wagner, Holtz & Kashima, 2009; Holtz & Wagner, 2009) have discussed essentialisation as a representational tool which serves to construct identities which are unalterable and inaccessible to outsiders. This representational tool is both an attempt to legitimise the existence of the ingroup as a distinct and cohesive community and justify the exclusion of outsiders (Wagner, Holtz & Kashima, 2009). The ethnic conceptualisation of

nations is such a representation, originating in the myths of origin that states have used to turn pre-modern groups into nations. Billig (1995) indeed argues that it is 'banal' to think of the world in terms of naturally divided nations. This unambiguous demarcation between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' essentialises the differences between the two and poses constraints on which positions can be taken on by individuals of different ethno-cultural backgrounds. In other words, social representations determine the degree of recognition that social groups are afforded which in turn determines people's ability to participate in the public sphere (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011).

Tajfel (1981; see also Tajfel & Turner, 1986) has discussed recognition in terms of its impact on how people evaluate their identities. Tajfel argued that when identities are devalued by others, groups engage in strategies of social creativity which aim to 'correct' misrecognition and advance positive group identities: "Rather than consisting of departures from the 'norm', these newly developing criteria reflect attempts to develop a positively valued identity for the group in which its 'separateness' is not compounded of various stigmas of assumed inferiorities" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 7). Drawing on these insights, Howarth (2002, 2004, 2007) has illustrated how stigmatising representations can incite various strategies of dealing with misrecognition and advancing alternative representations of the ingroup.

However, recognition is also bestowed and withheld at the level of institutions. We have suggested that institutions can be conceptualised as reified social representations (Elcheroth et al., 2011; Castro, 2012). Berger and Luckmann (1966) have provided a comprehensive account of how everyday social knowledge, what they call the 'social stock of knowledge', becomes shared and objectified by community members and helps to typify social relations and roles. Through objectification, social knowledge becomes a tool for sustaining and legitimising social institutions by defining appropriate conducts and roles.

An example of how institutions have an impact on identity is the well-known distinction between civic and ethnic forms of citizenship (Kohn, 1944) which refers to the types of recognition that are advanced by state institutions. The former is based on an ethnically homogenous vision of the nation, while the latter is based on political values which determine rights and obligations. Even though a strict distinction between ethnic and civic forms of nationhood does not hold empirically (Nieguth, 1999), different types of state recognition have an impact on the types of political participation that are available to citizens and non-citizens. For instance, until recently the non-native population of Germany was not allowed to acquire full political rights. This is in contrast to France where citizenship is granted on the basis of birth in national territory and not ancestry. Following minorities' claims for recognition in the public sphere, the recognition

of ethnic, cultural and religious difference has become central for the conceptualisation of citizenship in current political philosophy discussions (e.g. Benhabib, 2002; Taylor, 1992; Young, 1990). This has profound implications for the nature of political membership as the type of recognition afforded to individuals and groups determines what it means to be a legitimate political actor and a member of the national community.

When it comes to migrant identities the role of state policies is especially significant in shaping the migrant experience. As Deaux points out, legal status is “a factor that links policy to social representations, setting parameters for whom the society considers to be a member of the category” (2008, p. 929; see also Deaux, 2006); the category of the ‘illegal immigrant’ is one such example (Deaux & Wiley, 2007). State policies are important in maintaining and legitimising status inequalities. Different immigration policies may also promote different types of identity strategies among diasporic communities. In their study, Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking (2011) have shown that the level of engagement and dialogue with the ‘other’ among Muslim diasporic communities in Europe is associated with the level of formal recognition they receive from the state. Multicultural policies tend to promote intercultural dialogue and a strategy of engagement on the part of Muslim communities, while assimilationist policies tend to advance essentialist identity strategies that construct boundaries between self and other.

An analysis that connects the reified context of institutionalised debate and the consensual context of everyday discourses on citizenship and immigration resonates with work in a social representations perspective that explores the transmission of ideas from scientific discourses (for example, on biotechnology, Bauer, Durant & Gaskell, 2002, or environmental concerns, Castro, 2012) to lay knowledge. Indeed the most significant works in the social representations research has related directly to the diffusion of knowledge from reified to consensual spheres: Moscovici’s study of the dissemination of ideas on psychoanalysis (1961) and Jodelet’s (1991) study of representations of madness. Other social representations theorists have also studied the institutionalisation or reification of social knowledge (Howarth, 2004, 2006; Batel & Castro, 2009). However, these studies make implicit claims about the transmission of knowledge (and production of identity) from one sphere to another – without an analysis of the discourses in both spheres.

This paper aims to address this by considering the role of both state and society in the construction of migrant identities (Scuzzarello, 2012). The former constructs reified representations while the latter operates on the everyday consensual sphere. We argue that the two spheres of knowledge production are

not distinct. Although they can be seen as 'ideal types', reification and consensualisation may occur in both spheres (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999; Batel & Castro, 2009). In line with Scuzzarello (2012), we understand the relationship between state and society, or reified and consensual knowledge, as mutually sustainable: "While the state has material and discursive power over a society, the interaction between the two gives legitimacy to narratives which provide the normative frameworks that shapes and limit the range of possible positions defining 'the good citizen'... These frameworks are negotiated and contested in the lived experiences of people" (p. 4).

'Naturalising' outsiders: Citizenship and immigration policies in Britain

While the nation can be seen as an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983), embedded in everyday knowledge and practice (Billig, 1995), its institutionalised equivalent is citizenship. Who can become a citizen and what are his/her rights and duties are arranged by top-down policies and regulations. This however does not suggest that citizenship is a neutral set of rights and duties; rather, it is affected by constructions of nationhood. The very meaning of the term nation-state assumes that the state, as a sovereign and territorially bounded entity, is associated with an equally bounded population, i.e. the nation. The conflation of the political and cultural spheres of membership has been part of the ideal model of citizenship (Benhabib, 2002, 2004). The very concept of naturalisation alludes to the idea that becoming a citizen is a process of acquiring the natural essence of the national group. However, if the national category is essentialised, then it is both discrete and impermeable (Wagner, Holtz, & Kashima, 2009). In this sense, naturalisation is in fact a process of nationalisation. States have historically implemented a series of policies which serve to assimilate foreigners "into the national culture, to think and act like a national", which in turn ensures the nation's "cultural survival" (Kostakopoulou, 2003, p. 89). In the UK examples of such policies are the citizenship test (whereby migrants need to prove they have sufficient knowledge of life in the UK) and the citizenship ceremony (whereby migrants are expected to swear or affirm their allegiance to the Queen and pledge their loyalty to the country to become citizens). These policies were introduced in the aftermath of the 2001 racial tensions in Northern England and are demonstrative of a shift away from multiculturalism towards social cohesion (McGhee, 2005). More recently, policies of 'earned citizenship', which operate under the framework of 'managed migration', have established firmer criteria regarding who is eligible to reside, work and naturalise in the UK. Speaking the language, learning about life in the UK and demonstrating 'active citizenship' are some of the criteria put forward. Thus, only migrants who have the 'right' kinds of skills and who are assessed as having the 'potential to integrate' (Holtug & Mason, 2011) are allowed to reside, work and naturalise in the UK.

It follows that national identities are not only constructed in the consensual sphere of everyday interaction but also in the reified sphere of state institutions. The state through these types of policy making manages otherness and influences the construction of national identity. It would therefore be wrong to assume that only ethnically defined polities wish to maintain their cultural survival; the naturalisation as a 'rite of passage' is a clear example of the link between citizenship and nationhood (Kostakopoulou, 2003). From a social psychological point of view, this raises an important question regarding the changing context of identity. How do migrants negotiate their position within a 'host' country in light of these policies? This paper shows that the process of identity positioning for new British citizens takes place both at the consensual level of lay representations as well as the tangible institutional level of public policy and practice. Thirty-three interviews with naturalised citizens and four public policy documents on 'earned citizenship' will be discussed.

Analysis of public policy documents

In order to explore the public policy approach on naturalisation, we focused specifically on policies of 'earned citizenship', which characterise the current UK immigration regime. Four consultation documents published on the topic of 'earned citizenship' were analysed. Table 1 provides a description of these documents.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

For the analysis of this set of data we used the ALCESTE software package, which has been previously used in a number of social representations studies (e.g. Wagner & Kronberger, 2002; Lahlou, 1996; Hohl & Gaskell, 2008). ALCESTE was selected because it can handle the analysis of a large corpus of textual data and it can also identify the underlying themes which ground discourses on a particular topic. ALCESTE is based on the assumption that different ways of talking about a topic represent different ways of thinking about the topic (Kronberger & Wagner, 2000). Based on this principle, it conducts a statistical analysis of word co-occurrences in the data corpus and identifies classes of words that appear together in the text. ALCESTE also identifies typical words in each class by providing a chi-square value which represents each word's strength of association with the entire class. For this research, several ALCESTE analyses were conducted on the corpus in order to get both a detailed and a broader view of the themes structuring public policy discourse. We were able to do this by modifying (increasing and decreasing) the maximum number of word clusters that ALCESTE can identify.

Interviews with Naturalised Citizens

Thirty-three naturalised citizens were interviewed for this study. The participants were recruited by contacting local councils in London and acquiring permission to attend citizenship ceremonies where new British citizens acquire their naturalisation certificates. In order to capture the variety of new citizens' backgrounds, boroughs that are economically deprived and boroughs that are non-deprived, as well as boroughs that are ethnically homogeneous and boroughs that are heterogeneous, were selected, based on information drawn from the Office for National Statistics. The participants were recruited from eight local councils in total. They originated in Europe, Africa, America, Australia and Asian and had various reasons for migrating: being with family members who had already migrated (6), seeking asylum (7), studying (11), working (2) or travelling and gaining experiences by living abroad (7).

The interviews were semi-structured to allow for the free elaboration of meanings by the participants. The interview topic guide addressed four main themes: immigration experiences, naturalisation experiences, views on British citizenship and views about the participants' future life in the UK. The interviews were transcribed and thematically analysed (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Institutionalised positioning within the reified context: 'Earned citizenship' policies

The ALCESTE analysis of the four 'earned citizenship' documents revealed three broad word classes which structure the public policy discourse: 'Immigration reform', 'Immigration impact' and 'Earned citizenship process'.

The class 'Immigration reform' refers to the changes in immigration legislation introduced by the government. Highly typical words in this class are: 'border', 'change', 'clear', 'control', 'decide', 'immigration', 'permission', 'reform', 'power', 'strength', 'enforce', 'entry', 'effective', 'illegal', 'efficient' and 'abuse'.

The idea of change in immigration law is salient in this class. Change is characterised as positive and necessary. The aim is to make the immigration system clearer, more streamlined and easier to understand. Within the 'earned citizenship' framework, all immigration legislation is being replaced by a single legal framework based on the principle that citizenship is a right to be earned.

The Green Paper sets out details of our plans to simplify the law's current complexity and make it fit for the 21st century. We propose that all existing immigration laws should be replaced with a clear, consistent and coherent legal framework for the control of our borders and management of migration... (Home Office, 2008a, p.5)

There is another dimension to the simplification process. New legislation aims to make the system not only more streamlined but also more effective. Effectiveness is defined in this context as stronger border controls which would result in less 'abuse' of the system by undocumented migrants and immigration law offenders:

Our objective is to make our immigration system clearer, more streamlined and easier to understand, in the process reducing the possibilities for abuse of the system, maximising the benefits of migration and putting British values at the heart of the system. (Home Office, 2008a, p. 9)

Immigration reform is thus linked to more powers in policing the borders and preventing illegal immigration. The fact that words such as 'control', 'power', 'permission', 'strength' and 'enforce' are among the typical words of this class alludes to the idea that immigration reform is as much about simplification and transparency as it is about strengthening the British borders. There is an exclusionary undertone in this class of keeping types of migrants out of the country – unskilled migrants will not be granted visas, while immigration offenders will be more efficiently deported.

We will expand our detention capacity and implement powers to automatically deport serious offenders. To prevent illegal immigration, we will introduce the new points based system, introduce compulsory ID cards for foreign nationals who wish to stay in the UK, and introduce large on-the-spot fines for employers who do not make the right checks. (Home Office, 2008a, p. 5)

The class 'Immigration impact' is related with this class. Typical words in this class include: 'authority', 'community', 'fund', 'impact', 'labour', 'local', 'migrant', 'pressure', 'skill', 'cohesion', 'develop', 'market', 'employ', 'alleviate', 'fill in' and 'job'. Immigration is constructed both positively and negatively in this class: positively, because it can potentially benefit the economy and negatively, because it can drain the welfare system and have a negative effect on local communities. Alleviating the negative impact of immigration is a central issue. For instance, one of the proposals put forward is that migrants contribute financially to a special fund that will be established in order to help reduce the economic pressures posed by migration.

We will [...] introduce a fund to manage the transitional impacts of migration, to which we will ask newcomers to contribute, and which will be used to help alleviate the transitional pressures we know migration can bring. (Home Office, 2008c, p. 5)

On the other hand, in this class migration is also constructed as an economic benefit for Britain within a framework of skilled migration. The Migration Advisory Committee and the Migration Impacts Forum were established to identify gaps in the British economy that can be filled by migrants so that they can contribute to the economy in a more efficient and targeted way. Unskilled migrants, however, are not being granted work visas in the UK on the basis that there is no need for low skilled workers in the economy. Thus, in this class migration is predominantly seen in terms of employability and profitability. The following sentence is very typical of this class; although the positive economic benefits of migration for Britain are mentioned, they are used as a 'preamble' for emphasising the negative impact:

Migration has significant economic benefits, both for GDP and GDP per head. At the same time it produces benefits for the economy by improving the employment rate, wages, productivity, and by helping to fill skills gaps. But we know migration can have local impacts, so we are asking newcomers to pay a little extra to a fund to help. (Home Office, 2008c, p. 6)

The third class, 'Earned citizenship process', is mainly anchored in two documents: *The Path to Citizenship: Next Steps in Reforming the Immigration System: Analysis of Consultation Responses* and *The Path to Citizenship: Next Steps in Reforming the Immigration System: Government Response to Consultation*. The first is the analysis of the consultation responses of the *Path to Citizenship* green paper and the second is the government's response to the consultation. This class is not completely meaningful as it consists of words that appear together in the text but only in a descriptive, non-informative way. Part of this class has to do with responding to the consultation and contains words such as 'respondents', 'comment' and 'question'. Another part of the class is a description of the stages of the 'journey to citizenship', mainly in relation to consultation questions. Thus, the class also contains words like 'citizen', 'resident' and 'progress'. This class seems to have, therefore, no apparent interest. However, the words 'slow', 'down', 'commit', 'crime', and 'offend', are also typical of this class and suggest that a sub-theme of this class refers to the penalisation of migrants who commit crimes.

In the Ipsos MORI research, respondents were asked how migrants who commit minor offences which do not result in a prison sentence should be penalised. The majority felt that committing such an offence should impact upon citizenship applications... (Home Office, 2008b, p. 2)

This suggests that a key concern within the new citizenship legislation is making the process harder and emphasising the assessment of migrants who wish to stay and naturalise in the UK. The notion of assessment is fundamental in 'earned citizenship', as it is the very practice of assessment which defines who can earn the privilege of citizenship.

On the whole, the results of the ALCESTE analysis of 'earned citizenship' documents suggest that there are three main themes and five sub-themes in the 'earned citizenship' documents that have been analysed: immigration reform (including the subthemes 'simplification' and 'security & border control'); immigration impact (including the subthemes 'immigration as resource' and 'immigration as burden'); earned citizenship process (including the subtheme 'penalisation').

At the heart of public policy is an ambivalent construction of immigration as both a potential resource and a burden. In order to alleviate the negative aspect of immigration and maximise its positive economic impact, the new 'earned citizenship' regime emphasises the assessment and penalisation of migrants while making sure that only the right kinds of migrants are allowed into the UK. It can thus be argued that the official public policy on citizenship and immigration constitutes a type of 'institutionalised positioning' whereby different migrants are treated differently based on where they come from and what types of skills they possess. Despite its exclusionary undertone, this is a rather civic conception of citizenship as it is based on the (economic) participation of migrants in the British society. However, this institutionalised positioning operates as a bordering mechanism which creates a distinction between 'elite' (skilled migrants who usually originate in the developed world) and 'non-elite' migrants (who are unskilled workers and usually originate in the developing world). Furthermore, as the next sections will show, constructions of 'elite' migration in the reified sphere overlap with lay ethnic representations of Britishness in the consensual sphere.

Lay representations of Britishness and immigration within the consensual context

Britishness was predominantly represented in the interviews in ethno-cultural terms. Such essentialising representations create clear and fixed boundaries between native British and migrant people. However, some types of migrants are positioned as 'more similar' or prototypical in relation to Britishness than

others. Essentialisation as a representational tool (Wagner, Holtz & Kashima, 2009) does not have a uniform impact; it constructs levels of similarity and difference. Representations of race, ethnicity and cultural difference mediate this process and determine the degree of otherness or recognition afforded to non-nationals.

Most of the respondents defined themselves primarily by their country of origin. Even when they spoke about the impact that living in Britain has had on their lives and identities, they did not position themselves as British. Most of them overtly rejected this idea, while only a minority of participants (mainly those who had grown up in Britain) considered themselves British and asserted a hyphenated British identity (see also, Andreouli, Under Review). Nevertheless, essentialising ethnic representations of Britishness posed constraints on 'how much British' they could claim to be, constraining at the same time their possibilities for identity hyphenation (see also Ali & Sonn, 2010). This was even more pronounced among participants who had not spent their formative years in the UK. Thus, becoming British citizen was generally distinguished from being 'really British'. However, this also depended on where participants originated from and on how ethnically similar they were seen in relation to the British people.

This is strange, like, you're English now, you know? But you are not. You are not looking English. Your language is not English. Your accent, I mean, you speak your English, but if someone asks you, where you're from, if you say 'English', I see myself [like] I'm silly, you know? The other one will start to think, 'oh, my God, he's very stupid'. He thinks I'm stupid believing I'm English; [he will think] he's not, he's looking fucking Arabic or Spanish or Italian. (male, 25, Lebanon)

I'm comfortable [in the UK] and it's also a place that, because of my background, I am quite safe. So, I'm not Black. You know, or in France I'm not Arab, I'm safe, as I'm not in a position where I'm going to be excluded. (female, 37, USA)

As the two extracts above show, an assumption permeating the interviews was that being considered ethnically similar (white European, American or Australian, for instance) positions someone 'closer' to Britishness. The first participant above, coming from Lebanon, would not define himself as English. The ethnic representation of Britishness, equated with Englishness in this extract, functions to legitimise his exclusion from the nation (Wagner, Holtz & Kashima, 2009) by positioning him as 'naturally' different. On the other hand, the second participant above, a white naturalised citizen originating in the USA, is not excluded by dominant representations of similarity and difference. Her ethno-racial background means

that she is positioned closer to Britishness (and even Frenchness or Europeaness more generally) and allows her to be recognised compared to other types of non-nationals who are seen as more different (i.e. Blacks and Arabs).

This type of positioning draws on representations of Britishness as an ethno-cultural identity and on associated constructions of difference exemplified in representations of immigration. The distinction between different types of migrants and the viability of their claims to similarity were most evident in the ways participants talked about issues of integration. Participants, who were of higher socio-economic background and usually originated in Western countries, tended not to consider themselves as immigrants or ethnic minorities in the UK. In the interviews, the epitome of the immigrant emerged as the disadvantaged asylum seeker or economic migrant who is culturally different and has difficulty integrating.

Interviewee: I mean, I think there are two things I would say. One is who is this process [of naturalisation] directed towards? Is it directed towards people who have lived here for a long time however they first came here?

Interviewer: Such as yourself?

Interviewee: Well, not particularly myself because it's easy for me, I mean I'm very hugely integrated, I mean I'm hardly an immigrant, partly because that's just the way Americans and the English relate. I'm thinking about the Bangladeshi woman who's been living in East London for ten years, whose husband was British but she wasn't and she's here by right of his passport, not her own. And she lives here, wishes to become a UK citizen and I can't see how this process [naturalisation] is for her, but it should be. I think there's sort of lack of cultural sensitivity, if you like, from people who are coming from different cultures. Different IT levels of awareness for example. I think the cost of it is prohibiting for some groups, not short of a thousand quid, to get your nationality and a passport. I just think the process is very expensive and I think it disfranchises people for whom this process might have been designed. (female, 58, USA)

The above extract is an argument in favour of making the naturalisation process more accessible to the 'people for whom it has been designed'. The Bangladeshi woman without personal income and with poor computer skills exemplifies the objectification of this group of people. In other words, this participant uses the policy of naturalisation discursively as a means of distinguishing herself from 'real' immigrants and asserting her similarity to Britishness. Immigrants here epitomise difference on several levels: they are

underprivileged, in economic and educational terms, and are also culturally different. At the same time, the participant is positioned as 'hardly an immigrant' because, as an American, she can easily 'relate' to the English. Lay representations of immigration, therefore, contain constructions of ethno-cultural similarity and difference. These representations, as well as ethnic representations of Britishness construct degrees of recognition and pose constraints on the level of belonging that participants were able to claim in the UK.

Overlap between the reified and the consensual: The distinction between 'elite' and 'non-elite' migrants

The everyday aspect of boundary construction has to do with discourses of fitting in ethnically and culturally. On the other hand, physical borders, taking the form of immigration controls, regulate formal recognition by defining rights of mobility. As Dixon and Durrheim (2000) argue, 'who am I' is often equivalent to 'where am I'. In the interviews, rights of entry were salient markers of classification. Almost all the participants in this study referred to the passport as one, often the principal, reason for their decision to naturalise as it provides rights of free movement in the European Union and makes travelling in the West generally easier. On a superficial level, this appears to be an instrumental use of citizenship, which directly contradicts the communitarian notion of citizenship promoted by 'earned citizenship' policies and illustrates the tensions between citizenship and nationhood. Certainly, many participants made a distinction between the passport as a practical issue and as official top-down identification, and their everyday lives and identities (as shown, this was partly due to the fact that they were excluded by essentialising ethnic representations of Britishness and nationhood in general). However, although the practical advantages of naturalisation were prevalent, the passport was not just a practical matter but it also became a symbol of freedom of mobility for some interviewees. As Bauman (1998, p. 121) argues, "freedom has come to mean above all freedom of choice, and choice has acquired, conspicuously, a spatial dimension". The symbolism of the British passport was based on the distinction between West and non-West whose meanings are derived by both lay representations of what it means to be similar or different and by practices of border management which define elite and non-elite migrants.

Participants who originated in non-Western countries had in the past restricted rights of access in the West. The very practice of going through immigration controls and visa applications, which positioned them as 'others', was construed as a devaluing and exclusionary experience for many of them. The following quotation is extracted from an interview with a participant who first entered the UK as an asylum seeker and went through a lengthy process of acquiring a legal status in the UK.

If you're carrying a Syrian passport, you're a young man, and you wanna go to Europe or States or Australia, Canada, whichever Western country, they will reject you because they know most likely you go and won't come back. And obviously Western countries they don't want that. They don't want people, they have to have strict rules to keep you away from them and that's, I think that's a normal thing to do but, at the same time, it's not that fair, but understandable. The Western countries they have certain rules, because there's lots of people arriving in this country, lots of migrants and they have problems with the migrants, no integration and people come and ask for benefits. (male, 35 years old, Syria)

The extract shows how the institutionalised practice of immigration controls and the reified distinction between 'elite' (Western) and 'non-elite' (non-Western) migrants has a direct impact on how this participant makes sense of his place in the UK. In this sense, it can be argued that immigration policies function as symbolic resources (Zittoun et al., 2003) which allow migrants to position themselves within a new 'host' environment. We see here how the consensual and the reified contexts meet: lay representations of Britishness which misrecognise ethnically different migrants overlap with institutionalised practices which distinguish between 'wanted' and 'unwanted' migrants. Non-Western migrants are doubly otherised and misrecognised by both lay discourses and institutional practices. Because of this, for many non-Western participants the passport was a type of social recognition as it marked a positioning shift from an unwanted migrant to a welcomed traveller.

In the beginning I only had two wishes which were: one, to speak English fluently to the level of the native speaker and the other one was to have a British passport. For me it was like a symbol of freedom [...] I mean Russia and Belarus particularly are quite poor countries and after the Soviet Union collapsed, there was this whole Western and American way kind of penetrating the country [...] the Western values became very prominent and I guess one of the values is that, you know, you see these people who travel from one place to another, which was impossible for most of the people. Like my dad, he's never been abroad. The Soviet Union has been completely cut off, so going to Europe is such a big thing... (female, 28 years old, USSR)

Furthermore, the UK, as part of the West, was seen by these interviewees through an imagery of progress and opportunity, as well as a secure place for those fleeing prosecution. As such, holding the British passport was a matter of pride, a personal achievement owing to becoming part of an 'elite Western club' which was previously inaccessible.

You have to apply for the visa and once you apply for the visa people will do the check on you. Because, obviously it's just a routine check, but they're showing that, you know, there's no trust in it. But, if you hold the British passport, they are fine [because] the British people, they're not going to do anything bad to the country or they're not going to settle here for like whatever. So, they're free to travel, whenever they want it. So, I think it's a privilege. (male, 26 years old, Thailand)

The permeability of national borders is dependent upon various classification criteria (such as being an EU citizen and being a skilled or unskilled worker) which categorise migrants based on their (un-)desirability. The status of British citizenship in the eyes of the respondents depended on where participants came from and on how they compared their previous position to their new one. While for some participants the British citizenship and the passport were symbols of freedom and opportunity, for others they were only a matter of convenience.

Before the ceremony I completely was, like, oh my God another hassle [...] and I was joking about it to everybody and people also joked about it to me [...] And then, when I went there and I saw people from, you know, different parts of the world, for example people from Iraq, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, those people probably didn't have even a country, they were asylum seekers and for them to reach that level, was probably a long and hard journey than me who had a fairly easy journey to that level and for them probably it is quite an achievement [...] I only went along because it didn't mean anything to me, it was just another thing to do [...] It means different to different people, and I actually felt for those people actually than for me, for myself, you know, that day. (male, 43 years old, India)

This participant came to Britain from India to study and now works as a doctor. While India can be said to be positioned outside the boundaries of the West, this participant is considered as an 'elite' migrant by state authorities because he is highly skilled. He had no difficulty migrating to the UK and acquiring a permanent leave to remain in the country. Institutionalised processes of exclusion and lay representations of Britishness (which would position him as ethnically different) do not wholly overlap. Their relationship is complicated by the socio-economic status of migrants which functions as an additional marker of similarity and difference. This participant is not therefore misrecognised. While he jokes about becoming British himself, he claims that it is other types of migrants (i.e. asylum seekers) originating in countries such as Iraq, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan who would see British citizenship as a personal achievement.

Overall, Britishness acquires different meanings depending on where one comes from and under what conditions. As the previous section showed, public policy on immigration perpetuates a hierarchical system of classification based on the fundamental distinction between 'elite' and 'non-elite' migrants. The former are objectified in the image of the white, Western and skilled migrant, while the latter are objectified in the image of the poor migrant or asylum seeker who comes from a developing country. Within this hierarchical nation-state system (Castles, 2005), 'elite' migrants, mostly originating in developed countries and having advanced professional skills, are characterised by their 'spatial autonomy' (Weiss, 2005). On the other hand 'non-elite' migrants, originating in poor or unstable countries do not have access to the prosperous Western life. The extracts above show how tangible naturalisation practices (such as citizenship ceremonies and immigration controls) are not restricted to the reified sphere of state institutions but are actually employed by migrants and new citizens as resources which enable them to make sense of their position in the UK vis-à-vis other migrants and the native British population.

Discussion

One of the key contributions of Social Psychology, and of the theory social representations particularly, has been to draw attention to the particularities of the context in processes of identity construction. In multicultural societies there is an increased need to emphasise and analyse the specificities of context as this defines the dynamics of inter-ethnic and inter-cultural encounters (Jovchelovitch, 2007). It is the social context (in the form of dominant social representations and powerful outgroups, for example) that determines the type of recognition that people receive, thus having a direct impact on the construction of identities.

Adopting Moscovici's (1984) original formulation of the theory, social representations theorists have focused on the consensual context of everyday interactions, not adequately addressing the institutional arrangements that shape intergroup relations. Institutions can be understood as reified social representations (Burger & Luckmann, 1966; Elcheroth, Doise & Reicher, 2011) which operate through formal channels of public policy and practice. It has been political theorists and sociologists who have analysed the role of these institutions in political participation. Like social psychologists, they have also highlighted the importance of social recognition for the participation of minorities in multicultural public spheres. Within this field of research, the recognition of minority ethnic and cultural identities has been examined as a means for establishing multicultural equality (e.g. Benhabib, 2002; Taylor, 1992; Young, 1990).

Thus, social recognition has been a key term for both social science perspectives but there has not been a serious attempt to link the two approaches (see, however, Moghaddam, 2008, for a study on the psychological foundations of policies for managing diversity; see also Scuzzarello, 2012). However, we need to acknowledge that social recognition has two sides: on the one hand, it refers to the institutional arrangements of a society (e.g. public funding of religious schools as a means of recognising the particular needs of religious minorities) and, on the other hand, it refers to lay representations that circulate in a given society (which determine which groups have symbolic power to define norms and which groups are disempowered from participating in this knowledge construction process). As such, identity, which is based on the type of recognition we receive from others (Duveen, 2001, Howarth, 2002), is defined by both institutional practices and everyday social representations.

Immigration provides a good case for studying identity in context as it “involves leaving one domain in which identity has been enacted and supported, and coming to a new domain on which identity must be resituated and often redefined” (Deaux, 2000, p. 429). Through an analysis of interviews with naturalised British citizens and public policy documents, this study has shown that this repositioning takes place within the reified context of policy-making and the consensual context of everyday knowledge. Everyday social representations pose significant constraints on identity, insofar as the ethnic representation of Britishness positions white Anglo-Saxon or European migrants as ‘similar’, while it positions migrants originating in the non-Western world as ‘different’. The institutional level of positioning, on the other hand, takes the form of immigration controls and naturalisation legislation which define rights of entry and criteria of membership. In the UK immigration and naturalisation are part of an ‘earned citizenship’ framework which is based on the principle of selective migration. ‘Earned citizenship’ operates as an institutionalised positioning regime which creates a distinction between ‘elite’ skilled migrants and ‘non-elite’ unqualified migrants, which, to a large extent, overlaps with lay constructions of similarity and difference. Immigration control practices mostly affect non-elite migrants who are not just otherised; they are also spatially confined. As Gupta and Ferguson (1992) argue, immigration is an area where the politics of otherness and the politics of space intersect. The differential treatment of migrants has an impact on how they make sense of the position in the UK. The paper has shown that practices of immigration management are not just an external reality; they are employed by migrants and new citizens as a means of construing their place in Britain. Identity, in the case of immigration, refers to a socio-spatial location defined not only by one’s position in relation to representations of Britishness and immigration, but also in terms of one’s treatment by official state policies.

This has implications about how Social Psychology conceptualises the context of identity. We suggest that focusing only on the everyday sphere can overlook how people, especially those who are most affected by institutionalised regulations of inclusion/exclusion (such as migrants), make sense of their social position vis-à-vis others and vis-à-vis the given social context as a whole. Therefore, when we talk about the 'context' of social identity, we need to consider the interconnections between reified/institutionalised arrangements and lay/everyday representations. To put it differently, the quality of social relations, upon which identities are constructed, is not only a matter of everyday lay interactions but also a matter that is formally regulated in a top-down manner. We must also examine the institutional regulations that enable or restrict a person's or group's participation in a society. Not acknowledging the impact of institutionalised practices on identity processes can de-politicise the study of identity in a time when the recognition of identity has become a key political claim.

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Table 1. Policy documents on ‘earned citizenship’

Policy documents	Description	Date of publication	Government agency
<i>The Path to Citizenship: Next Steps in Reforming the Immigration System</i>	Green paper; outlines policies on ‘earned citizenship’	February 2008	Home Office, Border and Immigration Agency
<i>The Path to Citizenship: Next Steps in Reforming the Immigration System: Analysis of Consultation Responses</i>	Analysis of green paper responses	July 2008	Home Office, UK Border Agency
<i>The Path to Citizenship: Next Steps in Reforming the Immigration System: Government Response to Consultation</i>	Outlines new policy in light of analysis of green paper responses	July 2008	Home Office, UK Border Agency
<i>Earning the Right to Stay: A New Points Test for Citizenship</i>	Consultation document on further ‘earned citizenship’ provisions	July 2009	Home Office, UK Border Agency