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History in Action: The Construction of Historical Analogies in Televised Debates Concerning the Iraq War

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Recent work has emphasised the centrality of warfare, and particularly of World War II, to people's social representations of history. However, much of this work has treated social representations of history as relatively static abstract constructs, and even when theoretical approaches to the subject have emphasised narrative, conversation and contestation, the methodological techniques used to study social representations of history have tended to re-introduce a more static conceptualization of social representations. In the present article, I adopt a position informed by discursive and rhetorical psychologies in order to argue that social representations of history should be studied in the context of their use, with particular attention being paid to the actions people are performing when they represent history. This is illustrated using data from a series of televised debates broadcast in the UK during the build-up to the formal declaration of war in Iraq in 2003, with a focus on the ways in which historical analogies were constructed during the course of arguments concerning whether or not military action against Iraq was legal, appropriate and justified.

Keywords: analogies, anchoring, discourse, history, Iraq War, rhetoric, social representations

SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF HISTORY

The last decade or so has seen a rapid growth in the study of social representations of history. A major strand of this work has used large scale survey techniques to explore social representations of history cross-culturally (e.g. Liu, 1999; Liu et al., 2005, 2009; Madoglou, Melista & Liaris-Hochhaus, 2010; Paez et al., 2008; Pennebaker et al., 2006). Two findings in particular from this work are of interest given the concerns of the present paper: First, war and conflict are central to representations of world history; second, World War II in particular is frequently seen as the most important event in world history. For example, Liu et al. (2005, p. 175) asked the following question of over 2000 participants spread across twelve territories: 'Imagine that you were giving a seminar on world history. What 7 events would you teach as the most important in world history? How positively or negatively do you regard each event?' They found that 41% of all events selected across the sample as a whole involved warfare – far greater than any other type of event. Moreover, they found that in all twelve samples, World War II was identified as the most important event in world history, with World War I being identified as the second most important in all but one (the French sample selected the French Revolution). In addition, Liu et al. asked participants to identify the five individuals who they considered 'to have had the most impact, good or bad, on world history' (p. 175). In response to this question, Adolf Hitler was selected as most influential in all but one sample (the Hong Kong sample selected Mao Zedong). These and similar findings led Liu and Hilton (2005, p. 544) to argue 'that World War II is the closest thing the human species has to a hegemonic representation of global history'.

Alongside these large cross-cultural studies, other research has explored in greater detail the relationships between social representations of history and other relevant variables in specific cultural contexts. Of particular note is work on the functions of social representations of history carried out in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Sibley, Liu, Duckitt & Khan, 2008; Sibley & Liu, 2011). Sibley et al. (2008) found that historical negation – the tendency to deny the relevance of past injustices committed against the Maori population – predicted Pakeha opposition to restorative policies aimed at re-allocating resources to Maoris. In this respect, they suggest 'that history serves an important symbolic function in mobilising support for public policies regarding intergroup relations because temporal continuity is central to claims of legitimacy' (p. 542) and

that 'history is an important symbolic resource defining nationhood, and culture-specific formulations of lessons taken from history are intimately part of the discursive repertoires people use in justifying their political views' (p. 560). This draws on a broader narrative theory of the relationship between social representations of history and social identity (Liu & Hilton 2005; Liu & László, 2007; Liu & Sibley, 2009) which posits that 'history provides us with narratives that tell us who we are, where we came from and where we should be going. It defines a trajectory which helps construct the essence of a group's identity, how it relates to other groups, and ascertains what its options are for facing present challenges' (Liu & Hilton, 2005, p. 537). Liu and Hilton further suggest that 'while the main events and people that constitute lay representations of history tend to be uncontroversial, their meaning and relevance to current events is often highly contested' (p. 539), and they cite Reicher & Hopkins's (2001) study of political rhetoric in Scotland to illustrate this claim.

The passages cited above, with their mention of *narratives*, *discursive repertoires* and *contestation* are suggestive of a theoretical approach which places discursive and rhetorical processes centre stage. It is, therefore, somewhat surprising that this body of work largely neglects the analysis of actual historical narratives *in situ*, instead taking them more-or-less for granted. Where discursive findings are cited, they tend to be used as a point of departure for scale development (e.g. Liu & Sibley, 2009; Sibley et al., 2008), and – somewhat curiously given recent developments in discursive psychology – Liu et al. (2010) suggest that discursive work is more appropriately located in disciplines other than psychology:

> There is a place for the micro-analysis of discursive features of culture; there is a place for research on societal forces in cultural transmission; and these are predominantly located in anthropology and sociology, respectively. Our work is firmly grounded within the practices of cross-cultural psychology'
>
> (Liu et al., 2010, p. 454)

It is precisely this assertion of differing levels of analysis and disciplinary demarcation which has been challenged so trenchantly by discursive approaches (e.g. Edwards, Hepburn & Potter, 2009; Wetherell, 1996). Insulating one form of enquiry from the implications of the other

in this way effectively renders the discursive critique irrelevant as it can be seen as operating at a different 'level' to those of the sub-discipline of cross-cultural psychology. Indeed, it becomes possible for authors whose primary concern is with 'the accumulation of quantitative variables, ideally tested for structural equivalence across cultures' (Liu et al., 2010, p. 453) to dip into discourse analysis without having to confront the critical stance of the latter towards the former and the resultant incommensurability between approaches (see Kirkwood, Liu & Weatherall, 2005).

As a result, there is often a striking *under*-emphasis on processes of argumentation and contestation in work adopting this approach. For instance, Liu and Hilton (2005) consider the varying responses of France, Germany and the United Kingdom to the September 11th 2001 attacks on the USA:

> That the same challenge elicited such diverse reactions from three allies confronted with the same problem is not difficult to understand in the light of history: Britain's charter sees it as a world policeman with the US just as in 1941 when the two nations combined to defend democracy against Germany, Italy and Japan; France's charter sees it as defending human rights, but as a nation resistant to Anglo-Saxon world hegemony; finally, Germany is in quest of a new charter that will allow it to define a 'normal' role in the world without arousing historically grounded fears of German aggression both at home and abroad.
>
> (Liu & Hilton, 2005, p. 538)

As broad glosses of these three states' positions these characterisations may seem plausible enough, but problems arise when one attempts to unpack them. To use the UK as an example, Liu & Hilton point out that 'Britain' was 'America's principal military ally and dispatched troops [to Afghanistan] almost immediately' (*ibid*.). Yet it is unclear precisely what type of entity 'Britain' actually is in this formulation. The decision to send troops was taken by political actors, but to what extent does 'Britain' in this instance incorporate the UK population? There is evidence to suggest that the wider public were not generally supportive of the actions taken by the UK Government (Miller, 2002), so to suggest that the decision to go to war simply

reflects a view of 'Britain' as a 'world policeman' is rather problematic. What view of 'Britain' underscored the opposition to war, and how can this be consonant with the notion of a singular 'charter'? There is, I would suggest, an elision here between government policy and public opinion, and at a more conceptual level between 'Britain' as pertaining to a social identity and 'Britain' as a synecdoche for 'the British Government' (Condor, 2006; Gibson & Condor, 2009).

In this respect, then, research on social representations of history is vulnerable to the more general criticism of social representations theory (SRT) that discursive processes have 'the anomalous position of being at the heart of SRT as the engine for the generation and refinement of representations, and yet being a topic which has received no analytic attention' (Potter & Edwards, 1999, p. 449). It is important to qualify this criticism insofar as SRT in fact takes in a variety of approaches, from the structural (e.g. Abric, 2001) with its more firmly cognitive focus, to approaches which have engaged more centrally with discursive and dialogical processes (e.g. Howarth, 2006; Marková, 2003; Wagner & Hayes, 2005). My analysis here should, therefore, be taken to apply specifically to that tradition of empirical work, and its theoretical architecture, which has been concerned with social representations of history. If we are to take seriously the discursive elements of social representations of history, we need an approach which places actual instances of people representing history centre stage.

DISCOURSE, RHETORIC AND SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS

Since the mid-1980s, SRT has come under sustained critique from discursive and rhetorical psychologists (e.g. Billig, 1991, 1993; Gibson & Noret, 2010; Litton & Potter, 1985; McKinlay & Potter, 1987; Potter, 1996a, 1996b; Potter & Billig, 1992; Potter & Litton, 1985; Potter & Edwards, 1999; Potter & Wetherell, 1987, 1998). For discursive and rhetorical approaches, representations are studied as fundamentally action-oriented. Whereas an SRT approach might explore the ways in which representations enable people to make sense of their world, in DP this is taken a step further. Sense making is always bound up with action – it is *for a particular purpose*. So, we might use SRT to explore how social representations of peace and war allow people to make sense of new instances of conflict, but DP emphasises that we should explore how this occurs as people are engaged in some relevant activity – such as arguing for or against

military action in the new conflict. It is here – in the practices of everyday life, and not in some abstract sense – that social representations can be found.

This critique has led to a variety of responses from social representations theorists (e.g. de Rosa, 2006; Liu et al., 2010; Marková, 2000; Moscovici, 1985; Moscovici & Marková, 1998; Räty & Snellman, 1992a, 1992b; Wagner, 1998), including acknowledgement that SRT has indeed tended to underestimate the role of discursive processes (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005; see also Howarth, 2006). For example, it is notable that Voelklein and Howarth (2005, p. 447) highlight SRT's 'primary concentration on the content and structure of a social representation as opposed to its function and broader societal implications' and argue that research in SRT needs 'to examine what social representations *do* in social and political relations' (p. 448, italics in original). Nevertheless, a number of scholars have suggested that in other respects the discursive critique has been somewhat overstated. For example, Howarth (2006, p. 68) has argued that in SRT, social representations 'are not static templates that we pull out of our cognitive schemas' but should instead 'be seen as alive and dynamic – existing only in the relational encounter, in the in-between space we create in dialogue and negotiation with others'. In this respect, the concern for discursive process is not antithetical to, but is in fact compatible with, SRT.

The present article is not the place to rehearse these debates in detail, but it is my contention that a relative neglect of the importance of discursive processes is particularly apparent in research which has explored social representations of history. Indeed, to the extent that research on social representations of history has explored the function of representations, it has done so at the level of individual psychological variables conceived in relatively traditional static terms (e.g. Sibley et al., 2008). Billig's (2008a, 2011; see also Billig, 2008b) recent work on social psychological writing offers a clue as to how this may have come about. Broadly speaking, research on the social representation of history has tended to conceive of its object of study in terms of the noun *representation*, thus leading to a neglect of the active verb-form *representing*. In the present paper, I want to explore how people represent history in a particular setting which deals with one of the core political issues of the past decade – the war in Iraq. In doing so, my aim is to re-orient the study of social representations of history away from the focus on the relatively static *representations* towards questions of how people actively *represent* history in order to *do* things.

In short, whereas a key finding of work on social representations of history is that World War II is typically identified as the most important event in world history, I want to suggest that we should explore what functions are performed by such representations. Rather than asking what is the most important event in history, we should ask: important *for what*? On what occasions, and to what ends, are representations of World War II constructed? On what other occasions are they challenged, contested or indeed absent? How is World War II constructed, and what aspects of it are emphasised? In order to do this, an approach influenced by the broad traditions of discursive and rhetorical approaches to social psychology will be adopted.

Recently, several authors have drawn on some of the insights of discursive and rhetorical approaches to argue that in order to understand the way that history can be used to shape social action we need to understand the rhetorical construction of particular histories (see e.g. Augoustinos, 2001a; Burridge 2005; Condor, 1997, 2006; Condor & Abell, 2006; Leudar & Nekvapil, 2011; Lowe, 2006; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Tileagă, 2009, 2010). Although there are differences in approach between these authors, there is nevertheless a common thread running through their work, which is that popular conceptions of history should not be theorised as static 'representations', but should rather be analysed for how they are rhetorically constructed. As Tileagă (2009, pp. 350-1, italics in original) points out, an approach informed by discursive and rhetorical psychologies 'highlights the importance of studying representations of history as situated social action and social practice. A discursive approach suggests treating representations of history not as something 'pre-given', but as in need of *constitution*'.

The present paper seeks to build on this tradition of work in order to explore how representations of history can be analysed in the context of arguments concerning war. Specifically, the present analysis considers the rhetorical mobilization of historical analogies in the context of arguments concerning the Iraq War.

HISTORICAL ANALOGIES AND WAR

Previous research has pointed to the importance of historical analogies in framing understanding of the Gulf War of 1990-91 (e.g. Lakoff, 1990; Schuman & Rieger, 1992; Spellman & Holyoak, 1992; Taylor & Rourke, 1995) and the Iraq War which began in 2003 (Kruglanski et al., 2007;

Noon, 2004). It is perhaps unsurprising that World War II analogies have frequently been investigated – with a particular focus on analogies involving reference to the 1938 Munich Conference and the policy of appeasement – but in the U.S. context another analogy commonly identified is the Vietnam War. Whereas World War II analogies have tended to be correlated with support for military intervention in these conflicts, endorsement of Vietnam analogies tends to be associated with opposition. There has, however, been little empirical research directed at the ways in which historical analogies are mobilised in the course of debates concerning whether to go to war or not. An exception is Burridge's (2005) study of British newspaper and parliamentary discourse concerning the war in Iraq, which explores the ways in which historical analogies are used to achieve particular rhetorical ends, how historical analogies are constructed as objective, independently existing factual histories available for independent verification, and, conversely, how they are challenged, undermined, and made to appear less factual. Burridge's analysis highlights the power of the Munich analogy in framing debates in the UK around whether to wage war in Iraq, with alternative analogies – such as the Suez Crisis of 1956 – being much more contested.

Following Burridge, the key concerns of the present analysis are to explore what is achieved by the use of particular historical analogies, and – additionally – to highlight the ways in which they point to a perspective on how we might analyse people representing history which moves beyond some of problems identified above in extant approaches. To this end, the present study presents an analysis of data drawn from a series of televised debates broadcast in the UK in the weeks leading up to the beginning of the Iraq War in 2003. It is important to make it clear from the outset that the aim is not to suggest that the ways in which history is used in these debates will in any way be representative of other national contexts. The aim is to elucidate the theoretical issues discussed above through the consideration of a specific empirical example. A fuller working out of the uses of history in other contexts must await future analyses.

METHOD

Data

The data are drawn from episodes of the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) televised political discussion programme *Question Time* broadcast on the 13th, 20th and 27th February, and the 6th, 13th and 20th March 2003. This period of time encompasses the weeks prior to the formal declaration of hostilities in Iraq on 20th March 2003. The programmes were broadcast on the Corporation's flagship BBC1 channel, and each lasted around an hour. The format of the programmes involves the presenter, David Dimbleby, chairing a discussion in which members of the studio audience put a series of questions to a panel consisting of public figures – usually politicians, journalists and other commentators. In the episodes sampled, one of the key topics for discussion was the rights and wrongs of going to war in Iraq[1].

The discussion of the analysis which follows includes transcribed extracts from the programmes. These extracts are presented in a simplified version of Jeffersonian format (Jefferson, 2004). See the appendix for a description of the transcription conventions used, and a key to speaker identification.

Analytic Procedure

The analysis proceeded from an initial inspection of the data which highlighted the construction of historical analogies, and specifically analogies involving World War II, or the events preceding World War II. Data coding therefore involved the selection of all instances where historical analogies were mentioned in the corpus. At this stage, the aim was to be over-inclusive (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) by including any borderline cases in the materials selected for analysis. The analysis subsequently drew on the principles of discursive and rhetorical psychology, with a particular view to identifying how World War II was constructed in rhetorical context. This involved paying attention to stake and interest (Edwards & Potter, 1992), accountability (Buttny, 1993), the construction of factuality (Potter, 1996a) and the use of rhetorical commonplaces (Billig, 1996). The actual mechanics of the analysis involved a close and repeated reading and re-reading of the materials, and a method of comparison across different

[1] For other analyses based on this corpus, see Gibson (2011, 2012a, 2012b).

instances inspired by the grounded theory technique of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This was augmented with the use of deviant case analysis (Wiggins & Potter, 2008), which involves a concerted seeking out of instances of a phenomenon which appear to contradict one's emerging analytic account. In order to avoid de-contextualising extracts, they were subsequently re-read in their original context (i.e. as part of a fuller transcript), and were reviewed alongside the corresponding video material. This allowed for further inspection of visual features of the interactions which may not have been fully captured in the written transcripts.

ANALYSIS

The presentation of the analysis will focus initially on laying down some key features of the invocation of analogies using two extended examples from arguments made by the Conservative politician Tim Collins on one of the Question Time programmes, and will then explore two examples of how the analogy was opposed. To begin with, it is worth considering an example of an analogy which refers to a vaguely-formulated general historical trend, rather than a specific analogy with World War II:

Extract 1: 'if you look at history' (from programme broadcast on 27/02/03)

```
1     A1    should Tony Blair (.) respond to the
2           rebellion within the Labour Party (.) by
3           changing his policy (1.0) or should he keep
4           up the pressure (.) on Saddam Hussein
5           (1.0)
6     DD    Tim Collins
7           (1.0)
8     TC    (.hh) well the very ea:sy and no doubt rather
9           popular thing for the principal opposition
10          party to do in these circumstances ((caption
```

2: Tim Collins MP Shadow Transport Secretary))
would've been to vote against the Government
(.hh) and actually if you look at the way
that the House of Commons votes stacked up
(.hh) uh- we might even have brought the
Government down and produced a new Prime
Minister ((caption 2 fades)) if we'd done
that which in normal circumstances is what
we dream about doing (.hh) uh but actually
there are times when you have to do what's
right (.) rather than what's popular (.)
and actually I pay tribute to the Prime
Minister for doing what is right rather
than what's popular with his own party (.h)
or otherwise (.hh) if you look at history
it's quite clear that almost always (.h)
dictators believe (.) that democracies (.h)
will be too weak (.) or too divided or too
soft (.h) uh to stand up to them (.hh) and
at the moment there is one chance for peace
(.) only one chance (.hh) and that is that
Saddam Hussein comes to believe (.h) that
the United Nations was not bluffing (.) when
in resolution fourteen forty one (.h) it
said you must disarm (.) or you will be
disarmed by force (.hh) and what I would
say to those people both inside my party
outside my party of all political views and

39 of none (.hh) all of those people (.) who
40 have been quite legitimately voicing (.)
41 their protests (.) what I would say to them
42 is this (.hh) do <u>you</u> believe (.) that you
43 are actually encouraging (.h) Saddam Hussein
44 (.) to believe that the United Nations is
45 bluffing (.) or not bluffing (.) and I
46 think that question answers itself (.hh)
47 and that's why my party (.) or the vast
48 majority of my party (.) put aside partisan
49 spirit and supported the Government (.hh)
50 and if the Prime Minister continues to do
51 the <u>right</u> thing (.h) there <u>is</u> still a chance
52 for peace (.) and he deserves the support
53 of everybody
54 DD °°thank you°°

Between lines 8-25, Tim Collins works up an extended argument which positions himself (and the Conservative Party) as doing the 'right' thing, rather than doing what is 'popular', and what would 'in normal circumstances' be expected of him. As many studies of persuasive and factual discourse have shown (e.g. Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996a; Wooffitt, 1992), this strategy works by positioning the speaker as doing something that would not be expected of them and, moreover, as doing something which may be counter to his (and his party's) interests. However, whilst this is undoubtedly interesting, for present purposes I want to draw attention to the subsequent passage (ll. 25-29) in which Collins alludes to non-specific historical comparisons in order to further his argument. Of course, the advantage of being non-specific here is that he can construct a historical trend without having to give specific examples. Here, the analogy functions as part of an argument which frames the Iraq War not as directly comparable specifically with World War II, but as yet another example of an objectively identifiable

historical trend. Indeed, a specific comparison would be *less* effective in this instance as a sole example is potentially less likely to provide objective evidence of such a trend (for more on the strategic use of vagueness, see Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996a). Note also that, in the absence of specific details, the preface 'if you look at history it's quite clear that' (ll. 25-26) helps to construct his claim as based on a transparent and independently existing historical record which, insofar as it can be 'look[ed] at', is open to public scrutiny (Augoustinos, 2001a).

This then allows Collins to argue in favour of a tough line with Saddam Hussein, on the grounds that the historical record shows that anything other than this is liable to lead to failure. It is notable here too that, at the precise moment when Collins appears to be advocating military action (or at least the serious threat of military action), he frames his argument as offering the only 'chance for peace' currently available (l. 30). The framing of war as a route to peace was not uncommon amongst speakers arguing in favour of military action across the dataset (see Gibson, 2011, 2012a), and highlights how those who were potentially most likely to risk being seen as unthinking advocates of war, were often very careful to position themselves as ultimately working for a peaceful solution.

Later in the same debate, Collins constructed a more direct analogy between World War II and the situation in Iraq in order to counter the suggestion that politicians should base their decision on whether to go to war in Iraq on public opinion:

Extract 2: 'I would point you to the historical parallel' (27/02/03)

```
1     A29   one of the things I'd like to know from
2           the Members of Parliament is (.) following
3           on from this (.) just to see how far down
4           the road d- d- democracy has fallen aside
5           (.h) (1.0) would (.) the Members like to
6           allude to how (.hh) their constituents (.)
7           would like them to vote (.) and whether
8           they followed that (.) line or did they
9           represent themselves and their party (.)
```

or did they represent their constit[uents
°last night°]
DD [alright
good question] [alright good question (.)
let let let Tim Collins answer it first]
Au [((some
applause 2.0))]
DD Malcolm Bruce's answer I suspect (.) will
[(.) ((inaudible)) be in line with
((inaudible))]
TC [I sus- I- I su- I suspect in in common
with] (.) <u>all</u> the Members of
Parliament here I've had letters (.hh)
on <u>both</u> sides of this issue (.hh) but I
would point you to the historical parallel
(.h) in the nineteen thirties
overwhelmingly public opinion in this
country did not want to re-arm (.h) did
not want to stand up to Hitler (.hh) there
was a famous by-election which the
government of the day <u>lost</u> on the issue
that it was being too tough (.h) towards
the dictators (.hh) the result of that
was that Britain didn't play its proper
role in the League of Nations (.h) Hitler
and Mussolini got away with their
aggression (.hh) and we ended up with an
absolutely terrible war (.hh) <u>far</u> longer

```
38          far more devastating than we otherwise
39          would've [been (.hh) the] blunt truth is
40          (.) in]
41    DD              [but I I- I- I-]
42    Au              [          ((applause))
43                 ]
44    TC    [the role of politicians is not just to
45          stick a finger in the wind]
46    Au    [                 ((applause))
47                                    ]
48    TC    (.) and find out what is popular today
49          (.hh) it
50          is to do what we believe to be right and
51          if you don't like it come the General
52          Election then throw us out (.hh) but
53          [give us the credit for taking decisions
54          according to]
55    Au    [                 ((applause 2.0))
56                       ]
57    TC    what is right.
```

Once again, Collins crafts his response in order to position himself (and his party) as pursuing the difficult – but correct – course of action. In so doing, he constructs a version of democracy which does not require politicians to adhere to public opinion on each issue as it arises, but instead to do what they perceive to be the right thing regardless of public opinion. He thus constructs the foil for his position not in terms of obeying the democratic will of the people, but instead as a rather dubious and self-interested populism which simply involves 'stick[ing] a finger in the wind' (l. 45) and pursuing whichever course of action seems to afford the best

possibility of enabling one to curry favour with the electorate. In doing this, he uses a number of interesting rhetorical devices, including the use of 'just' (l. 44; see Lee, 1987 on the uses of *just*) which creates the impression of a populist politician who seeks to ride the wave of public opinion as being an incomplete or partial politician. In other words, politicians – even in a democracy – should not simply valorise public opinion, but should instead base their decision on wider concerns, such as their personal moral beliefs. Democracy only swings into action at the next General Election, when the public can 'throw us out' (l. 52). Similarly, Collins constructs a contrast between the vicissitudes of public opinion and the committed beliefs of politicians. The phrase 'what is popular today' (l. 48), together with the metaphor of wind direction, implies a fleeting moment in which one course of action is popular, but that this might shift as easily and suddenly as the wind changes direction. Conversely, politicians are constructed as having beliefs (l. 50: 'what we believe to be right') which correspond straightforwardly with 'what is right' (l. 57). The electorate can therefore 'throw us out' at the next election, but this will be on the basis that they 'don't like' (l. 51) the *objectively correct* decisions taken by politicians. This can be understood as managing an ideological dilemma (Billig, Condor, Gane, Middleton & Radley, 1988) between the will of the people (*demos*) as sacrosanct in a democracy, versus *demos* as fundamentally irrational, untrustworthy and dangerous.

One of the key tenets of Collins's construction of democracy in this way is a historical analogy with the public response to the rise of the fascist powers during the 1930s. In contrast to extract 1, Collins does not seek to construct a general historical trend, but instead seeks a specific analogy: note the definite article and singular 'parallel' in 'I would point you to the historical parallel' (ll. 23-4). His analogy uses extreme case formulation (ECF; Pomerantz, 1986) to highlight the extent to which public opinion was misguided during the 1930s (l. 26: '*overwhelmingly* public opinion'; ll. 37-8: '*absolutely terrible* war … *far* longer *far* more devastating'). The message of his account of the 1930s is clear: basing political decisions on public opinion can have hugely dangerous consequences, and those who criticise present day politicians for failing to heed public opinion should bear in mind this warning from history.

In extracts 1 and 2, Collins mobilises historical analogies without facing overt challenge concerning their relevance. However, at other times, World War II analogies were challenged by other speakers. Consider the following example:

Extract 3: ‘the comparison is with Suez!’ (13/02/03)

1	DD	OK and the man in the ((pointing)) second
2		row here °°you sir°°
3	A13	er: u- unfortunately not many people here
4		are of my age (.hh) do they not remember
5		Chamberlain and I bring home a letter (.)
6		of peace for ever [(.)] appeasement took
7		place
8	?	[(°°aha°°)]
9	A13	during the nineteen thirties (.h) and what
10		happened (.h) we had the most dreadful war
11		imaginable (.h) if people’d take notice of
12		[Churchill in the thirties] (.h) that would=
13	ST	[((shakes head))]
14	A13	=<u>not</u> have happened (.h) we’d have saved
15		millions of lives
16	?	you shaking your head for? ((inaudible))
17	ST	because the comparison is with <u>Suez</u> (.) not
18		with in with [the Second World War]
19	?	[((inaudible))]
20	ST	[the comparison is with Suez!]
21	?	[((inaudible))]
22	A13	I’m talking about the
23		[thirty nine forty five war!]
24	ST	[the comparison is with Suez]
25		[not the t- not the Second World War]
26	?	[((inaudible))]

```
27    A13   I'm >talking about< thirty nine forty five
28    DD    OK dy- may-
29    A13   may I continue
30    DD    yes
31    A13   ahm (.)
32    DD    and then [you can make your point] which=
33    ?              [    ((inaudible))      ]
34    DD    =I didn't [quite catch cos] there was no
35          microphone yes!
36    A13   [ ((laughs))    ]
37    A13   er we we have two er countries objecting
38          France and Germany (.h) Germany are
39          pacifists we all know why they're pacifists
40          (.h) the French are only fit to ban our
41          beef (.) there's nothing we should do now
42          but get on with the job
43          [and move Hussein out=]
44    ?     [   ((inaudible))     ]
```

In this extract, we see an analogy between World War II and the Iraq War constructed by A13. Specifically, A13 uses category entitlement (Edwards & Potter, 1992) as the basis of his claim: 'unfortunately not many people here are of my age' (ll. 3-4). He explicitly invokes memory in the question 'do they not remember Chamberlain' (ll. 4-5), which, if taken literally, is oxymoronic – in addressing others as being younger than himself, he is positioning those others as specifically *not* having relevant first hand memories. His reference to *remembering* here can thus be understood as an exhortation to pay heed to a particular collective memory that should not be forgotten. He invokes the figure of Neville Chamberlain and paraphrases his infamous 1938 speech on returning from Munich (ll. 5-6: 'I bring home a letter of peace for ever'). This active voicing (note the way in which the first person is used on line 5), coupled with the physical

action of raising his hand in imitation of Chamberlain's holding aloft the piece of paper (see Figure 1), enables A13 not simply to invoke this event verbally, but to physically recreate it in concrete terms.

Figure 1. Physical representation of Chamberlain's waving gesture by A13 (corresponding to ll. 5-6 in extract 3)[2], with Chamberlain's original gesture (30th September 1938; from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FO725Hbzfls).

This reference to the policy of appeasement is then followed by a rhetorical question (ll. 9-10: 'what happened'), which is used to construct a direct linkage between appeasement and 'the most dreadful war imaginable' (ll. 10-11). A13 continues by invoking Churchill, and suggesting that had his warnings been heeded, 'millions of lives' would have been saved. The use of ECFs here (*most dreadful*; *millions*) works up the seriousness of the fate that awaits humanity if the mistakes of the past are repeated. It is notable that, like Tim Collins in extract 2, A13 invokes the failure to recognise the graveness of the situation in the 1930s: 'if people'd take notice of Churchill in the thirties' (l1. 11-12). At this point, the screen cuts to Simon Thomas who can be seen shaking his head, and an unidentified member of the audience challenges him to explain this (l. 16). This challenge in itself highlights the difficulty of contesting the Munich analogy. Thomas's explanation involves a challenge to the relevance of World War II as a historical frame for the situation in Iraq, and he instead argues that 'the comparison is with Suez' (l. 17, l. 20 & l. 24). This is formulated as a straightforward matter of fact: no hedging or

[2] Note that although the debate was televised and thus in the public domain, A13's face has been obscured in recognition of the different status of members of the public who participate as audience members, and public figures who comprise the panel.

qualification is involved, and there is no attempt to mark the assertion as his opinion. This highlights the extent to which the audience are expected to understand what is meant by the invocation of 'Suez' – no additional information or explanation is required to explain the ways in which the present situation is analogous to the Suez Crisis, it is simply treated as a collective memory which will resonate with the audience. Here, then, we have a speaker challenging the analogy between World War II and the Iraq War by invoking a conflict in which military intervention is generally understood to have been a mistake, and which ended in humiliation and the resignation of the then Prime Minister, Anthony Eden (for a history of the Suez Crisis, see Kyle, 2011).

The role of the World War II analogy in A13's argument then becomes clear as he seeks to explain away the objections of France and Germany to military intervention in Iraq. The reference to common knowledge (l. 39: 'we all know') to explain German 'pacifism' again involves a more implicit invocation of World War II – albeit one that is perhaps made somewhat less implicit given the invocation of Chamberlain, Churchill and appeasement that preceded it. The crux of his argument is then reached, as he argues for 'get[ting] on with the job' and 'mov[ing] Hussein out' (ll. 42-43).

If the mobilization of an alternative historical analogy was one way of challenging the use of World War II analogies, another involved the contestation of the analogical relationship between the context of the 1930s and the present situation concerning Iraq without offering an alternative analogy. As an example, consider extract 4:

Extract 4: 'I resent the suggestion that … we're talking about … appeasement' (27/02/03)

```
1     DD                    [(you sir)]
2     A34   I think erm (.) a lot of people here have
3           got long hair but very short memories (.hh)
4           appeasement did not work in the nineteen
5           thirties and it won't work now
6                 (.)
7     Au    ((          [some applause 2.5         ))]
8     DD                [Malcolm Bruce you're shaking]
```

9 your head at that
10 MB w- yeah I- I- I resent the eh (.) the
11 suggestion that (.) what we're talking
12 about is appeasement the fact was that
13 when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait (.hhh)
14 we went to war with him and I and my party
15 backed that war because it was the
16 liberation ((caption 14: Malcolm Bruce MP
17 President, Scottish Liberal Democrats))
18 of a state that he'd invaded [(.hhh)]
19 ? [°°mm°°]
20 MB what we're now facing is a much more
21 confused agenda (.hh) which is about the
22 Americans wanting ((caption 14 fades)) to
23 launch pre-emptive strikes against rogue
24 states that they've previously identified
25 (.hhh) and trying to (.hh) get the United
26 the- the- the- the (.) international
27 community behind them (.hh)

Again, we see the analogy drawn with the policy of appeasement in the 1930s (ll. 4-5), which features an invocation of memory with the reference to people having 'long hair but very short memories' (l. 3). By suggesting that this applies to 'a lot of people here' (l. 2), A34 positions himself as arguing against a majority, and the reference to 'long hair' can be understood as drawing on a membership category of hippy/peacenik/pacifist which implies a tendency on the part of its members towards a generalized anti-war sentiment. Their opposition is thus constructed as arising more from their pre-existing predilections than from a dispassionate analysis of the current situation. The reference to 'short memories' implies, as with A13's reference to remembering in extract 3, not that people should have first-hand memories of the

events of the 1930s, but that people should remember the consensually agreed lessons that can be derived from that time. Moreover, in suggesting that appeasement 'did not work in the nineteen thirties and it won't work now' (ll. 4-5), A34 not only draws an analogy but explicitly labels the arguments of others as constituting appeasement.

In responding to this question, Malcolm Bruce – whose head shaking is made accountable by David Dimbleby in granting him the floor (ll. 8-9) – begins by explicitly rejecting the construction of the situation in terms of appeasement (ll. 10-12). He contrasts the 'suggestion' that his position constitutes appeasement with his own version of the situation, which he explicitly glosses as 'fact'. Yet his assertion that he 'resent[s]' the suggestion of appeasement moves beyond a straightforward attempt to undermine a position offered as fact by constructing an alternative version of the facts, and adds an emotional layer to his response. He positions himself as personally affronted by the suggestion that the stance he advocates constitutes appeasement. This highlights once again the opprobrium attached to appeasement. It is not only factually incorrect, it is an insult.

In contesting the analogy, Bruce goes on to imply not that an alternative analogy applies to the current situation, but rather that the 1930s analogy was more appropriate to a previous conflict involving Iraq – the Gulf War of 1990-91. He suggests that the events preceding the Gulf War merited military intervention insofar as 'Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait' (l. 13) and the war thus involved 'the liberation of a state that he'd invaded' (ll. 15-18). In these circumstances, 'I and my party backed that war' (ll. 14-15). The implication is clear – in a situation that was genuinely analogous to the 1930s – i.e. a dictator invading another state – the Liberal Democrats, and he personally, would most certainly not engage in appeasement. He then glosses the present situation as 'a much more confused agenda' (ll. 20-21) and imputes dubious motives to 'the Americans' with the implication that they are seeking United Nations support for 'pre-emptive strikes against rogue states that they've previously identified' (ll. 23-24). This latter phrase (*previously identified*) in particular is suggestive of current concerns being used as a pre-text to enact a policy ambition developed some time ago.

In summary, we can see from these data that when people represent World War II they do not do so in any abstract or isolated sense. Instead, they are also representing the nature of another, more pressing situation, and debating whether to go to war or not. Those who draw on

these analogies are, in one sense, performing uniform functions across the dataset – they are using the analogy to argue for military action to be taken in Iraq. However, to leave it at that would be to miss the many more subtle and nuanced functions performed. Just as World War II is represented as part of a rhetorical project to construct the nature of the Iraq situation in a certain way, so it is used – as part of that project – to construct the nature of public opinion, democracy, politics and pacifists. It is only through the study of the practice of representing – by studying *history in action* – that we can appreciate this crucial facet of the social representation of history.

DISCUSSION

The present analysis has suggested that in order to fully explore the nature of social representations of history, we need to consider them in use – that is, we need to look at how people actively construct history. When people are constructing history they are *doing* things. In the present example, we can see how speakers use World War II to construct the Iraq situation as one requiring intervention. Studying representations in isolation, abstracted from the context of their use, risks neglecting the inextricable relationship between a representation of one object (e.g. World War II) and another (e.g. Iraq). Importantly, such relationships are not to be conceived of as pre-existing – they are, instead, in need of constitution by social actors.

More specifically, speakers are not simply representing *history*, but they are also using the analogy to construct other entities (e.g. democracy, public opinion, politicians, the nature of the present situation). In extract 2, for example, Tim Collins uses the analogy as part of a broader project of arguing for military intervention in Iraq in which the analogy is used in the construction of the proper role of politicians, and to warn of the dangers of bowing to public opinion. We cannot, therefore, continue to study representations of history in the abstract, divorced from their context and contingencies of use, for it is in their use – and only in their use – that they acquire meaning (Howarth, 2006).

The present analysis also has implications for our understanding of collective memory processes (Middleton & Brown, 2005; Middleton & Edwards, 1990). The events leading up to World War II are clearly oriented to as something that *should* be ‘remembered’ by those debating the possibility of war with Iraq. Not only should we heed this warning from history, but we

should not need a reminder. In using this analogy, then, people are not positioning themselves as experts on history, offering an illuminating insight from the past that others may not be aware of. Instead, they position themselves as *reminding* others of something that they already know (or *should* already know) and that should immediately be recognised as pertinent to the present situation. For others to have 'forgotten' is therefore accountable, and to contest the relevance of the analogy is also (even more so) accountable – see, for example, the topicalizing of Simon Thomas's head-shaking in extract 3, or A34's reference to 'long hair' in extract 4 with its attendant implications of dispositional inclination to oppose war.

The use of World War II analogies can be understood as involving a process of categorization (Augoustinos, 2001b) in which the current situation is made sense of in terms of a previous and consensually understood situation – in other words, to place a new situation into the same category as a previous one. Indeed, as is well known, Moscovici (2001, p. 20) has argued that 'we create representations in order to make familiar what is strange', and the process of anchoring in particular appears to be pertinent here. Insofar as social representations function to '*anchor* strange ideas, to reduce them to ordinary categories and images, to set them in a familiar context' (Moscovici, 1984, p. 29; italics in original), it might be suggested that we see anchoring in action here, with the Iraq situation being *anchored* to World War II as part of a common set of situations requiring military intervention. It is important, however, to conceptualise this process as a rhetorical one (Billig, 1991; Lowe, 2012).

As Billig (1991, p. 74) has argued, an analysis of anchoring in action requires an appreciation that 'anchors not only can be cast, but they can be hauled up'. In the present analysis, we saw how a speaker could attempt to deploy a different anchor in extract 3 (the Suez Crisis), and how a speaker could attempt to resist anchoring completely by constructing the Iraq situation as involving a 'much more confused agenda' (extract 4). In the use of the Suez analogy, there is a clash between different political projects on how to render the strange familiar. Both analogies are offered as common knowledge – it is assumed that the audience are readily familiar with these historical episodes, and grasp their meaning. These might be said to constitute social representations in the classic sense insofar as there appears to be a level of cultural consensus around their meaning. This is not to say that the meaning of these events is somehow fixed and can never be contested. However, their use in this context can be understood as consensual in two

senses: (1) in terms of Billig's (1996) conception of rhetorical commonplaces referring to the recurrently used tropes of argumentation; and (2) in terms of Edwards and Mercer's (1987) conception of common knowledge as something which is oriented to by social actors as consensually held and understood (i.e. in the ways in A13 and A34 rhetorically invoke memory; and in the use of terms such as 'Suez' without the need for further explanation). This arguably draws on cultural assumptions which narrate World War II as – to use Terkel's (1984) phrase – 'the good war', and treat Suez as a British national humiliation and the 'end of empire' (Kyle, 2011). In contrast, in the case of resistance to anchoring, the rhetorical goal appears not to be to render an unfamiliar situation understandable in terms of a historical analogy which points the way to a specific course of action, but instead to emphasise a complexity and lack of clarity which suggests that the only appropriate course of action is military *in*action.

These examples highlight a further function of anchoring as being to render a particular course of action more or less likely. In this case, the World War II analogy not only functions to make sense of the Iraq situation in terms of the commonsense understanding of World War II, but it also renders a particular course of action – invasion and warfare – as necessary. Social representations might perform a sense-making function, but when studied in rhetorical context they can be seen to perform much more varied and specific actions. By conceptualising the *function* of social representations in terms of discursive *action*, therefore, we can begin to expand the study of social representations of history. To do this, we must replace a focus on representations in the abstract with the study of people represent*ing* in practice.

To conclude, it is worth drawing on some classic work in peace studies to speculate on some of the broader ideological implications of the social representation of World War II considered here. As noted above, the crystallization of a consensual narrative of World War II as the canonical 'good war' in the UK context provides a ready-made analogy for those who would advocate military action in a range of other contexts. In this sense, representations of World War II can be understood to be part of a cultural system which sustains violence. Galtung's (1969) classic distinction between direct and structural violence, and his later (1990) delineation of cultural violence, is relevant here. Direct violence can be characterized as the exercise of overt physical violence; structural (or indirect) violence can be understood as those many and varied features of a political system which lead to social injustice, exclusion and deprivation. Of

particular interest for analyses of social representations, cultural violence can be defined as the cultural practices which make 'direct and structural violence look, even feel, right – or at least not wrong' (Galtung, 1990, p. 291). Thus, Galtung argues, the study of violence should be concerned with two issues: 'the use of violence and the legitimation of that use' (p, 291). It is not, therefore, the social representation of World War II in itself which can be said to constitute an act of cultural violence, but instead its *use* as an anchoring analogy for other events and situations which enables the legitimation of direct and structural violence. It is for this reason that we must move beyond the study of social representations of history in the abstract, and instead seek to contextualize them and – crucially – explore how they are inextricably linked with *action*.

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APPENDIX

Transcription Conventions (adapted from Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998, pp. vi-vii)

(1.0) The number in parentheses indicates a time gap to the nearest tenth of a second.

(.) A dot enclosed in parentheses indicates a pause in the talk of less than two-tenths of a second.

[ ] Square brackets between adjacent lines of concurrent speech indicate the onset and end of a spate of overlapping talk.

.hh A dot before an 'h' indicates speaker in-breath. The more h's, the longer the in-breath

hh An 'h' indicates an out-breath. The more h's, the longer the breath.

(( )) A description enclosed in double parentheses indicates a non-verbal activity. For example, ((pointing)). Alternatively double parentheses may enclose the transcriber's comments on contextual or other features.

- A dash indicates the sharp cut-off of the prior word or sound.

: Colons indicate that the speaker has stretched the preceding sound. The more colons the greater the extent of stretching.

! Exclamation marks are used to indicate an animated or emphatic tone.

<u>that</u> Underlined fragments indicate speaker emphasis.

° ° Degree signs are used to indicate that the talk they encompass is spoken noticeably quieter than the surrounding talk.

> < 'More than' and 'less than' signs indicate that the talk they encompass was produced noticeably quicker than the surrounding talk.

Speaker identification: DD = David Dimbleby (Host); TC = Tim Collins MP (on-screen caption: Shadow Transport Secretary); ST = Simon Thomas MP (on-screen caption: Plaid Cymru); MB = Malcolm Bruce MP (on-screen caption: President, Scottish Liberal Democrats). Audience members are identified by the letter 'A' followed by a numeral which indicates the order in which they responded in the discussion of Iraq in any given programme. Collective audience responses (e.g. applause) are identified by 'Au'. Unidentified speakers are indicated with a '?'.