THE DISCURSIVE TURN IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Nikos Bozatzis & Thalia Dragonas (Eds.)

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Charles Antaki is Professor of Language and Social Psychology in the Department of Social Sciences at Loughborough University. As a social psychologist who works on the interface between language and social behaviour, his areas of research include identity, psychotherapy, learning disability and conversational interaction, and his preferred perspective is Conversation Analysis.

Michael Billig is Professor of Social Sciences at Loughborough University and was a founding member of the Discourse and Rhetoric Group at Loughborough. Originally, he studied experimental social psychology at Bristol University under the supervision of Henri Tajfel, obtaining his doctorate in 1972 with a thesis looking at intergroup relations. Since then, he has preferred to use qualitative, rather than experimental, methods, especially when examining the links between language and thought. He has published books on a number of different topics, such as rhetoric, contemporary fascism, nationalism, psychoanalysis, and humour. His book 'The Hidden Roots of Critical Psychology' (Sage, 2008) examined the history of psychological ideas. His most recent book, 'Learn to Write Badly: how to succeed in the social sciences' (Cambridge University Press, 2013) looks critically at the ways that social scientists use language and argues that social scientists tend to write in ways that are overly complicated.

Nikos Bozatzis is Assistant Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Ioannina. In the early 1990s, he was trained, at a postgraduate level, in the Psychology Department of Lancaster University, by Charles Antaki, in different methods of analyzing talk and interaction. He did his Ph.D. research in the same University, supervised by Susan Condor and Michael Billig acted as an external examiner for his thesis. His research interests focus on the mobilization of representations of culture and cultural identities in talk and texts. He is currently (2013-2014) Olympia Fellow in Comparative Cultural Studies, Center for Hellenic Studies, Harvard University.

Erica Burman is Professor of Education at the University of Manchester (Institute of Education, School of Environment, Education and Development) from where she continues to co-direct the Discourse Unit (www.discourseunit.com). As a feminist developmental psychologist and group analyst, she has written extensively on the role of psychology and education in international development policy and practice, on the politics and affects of representations of childhood (both remembered and depicted), on relationships between women and children, and on transnational issues such as violence and migration as they affect state responses to women and children. Her most recent books Deconstructing Developmental Psychology (2nd Edition, Routledge, 2008) and Developments: child, image, nation (Routledge, 2008) and Gender and Migration (edited, Zed press, 2010) reflect these themes.

Felix Diaz has a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from the Autonomous University of Madrid (Spain) and a PhD in Psychology from Lancaster University (UK). He is currently a lecturer in Psychology at the University of Castilla-La Mancha (Spain). He has done research on accounts of war; argumentation in conversation; professional-patient interaction in psychiatric, oncology, and speech therapy environments; the

history of the language sciences; the institutional ethnography of social assistance; and discourses of body image in the lives of people with eating disorders; he is currently involved in a project to assess the pragmatic features of disordered speech through the analysis of conversational transcripts.

Thalia Dragonas is Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Athens. Her research is on identities, minorities, ethnocentrism in the educational system, prevention and promotion of early psychosocial health, transition to motherhood, construction of fatherhood and masculinity. She has participated in and directed many Greek and international projects and has worked extensively for the educational reform of the Muslim Minority in Western Thrace.

Kenneth J. Gergen is Senior Research Professor at Swarthmore College, and President of the Taos Institute (www.taosinstitute.net). The latter is an educationally oriented, non-profit organization bringing social construction theory together with societal practices. Gergen's writings on social construction, technology and culture, and relational theory and practice are known throughout the world, and have yielded many honors and awards. Among his most significant writings are Realities and Relationships, The Saturated Self, An Invitation to Social Construction, and most recently, Relational Being, Beyond Self and Community.

Mary Gergen is Professor Emerita, Penn State University, Brandywine, in Psychology and Women's Studies, and a founder and board member of the Taos Institute (www.taosInstitute.net). Her interests are related to her work on feminist theory, narratives, and relational theory. She is author of many articles, chapters, and books, including Feminist Reconstructions in Psychology: Narrative, Gender and Performance, and Playing with Purpose: Adventures in Performative Social Science, with Kenneth J. Gergen. Together they edit the Positive Aging Newsletter, a bimonthly electronic journal, translated into five languages.

Rom Harré is Fellow of Linacre College, Oxford University, and Distinguished Research Professor, Georgetown University. He has been a visiting professor at numerous universities around the world and has published seminal works in a number of fields, including psychology. His most recent book is 'Pavlov's Dogs and Schrodinger's Cats: Tales from the Living Laboratory'.

Wendy Hollway is Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the Open University, UK. She is a social and qualitative psychologist whose major interest is in applying psycho-social principles to empirical research on identity and identity change. The methodological and theoretical aspects are illustrated respectively in two books: *Doing Qualitative Research Differently: Free Association, Narrative and the Interview Method* (2013, 2nd edition) (with Tony Jefferson), London: Sage and *The Capacity to Care: Gender and Ethical Subjectivity* (2006) London: Routledge. She has written on psychoanalytic epistemology, mothering, gender, sexuality and the history of work organizations. She was principal researcher on a three-year ESRC-funded project on the transition to maternal identity in first-time mothers and held an ESRC writing Fellowship entitled 'Maternal Identity, Care and Intersubjectivity: a psycho-social approach'. She is currently writing a book ' Knowing Mothers', to be published with Palgrave.

Nick Hopkins is Senior Lecturer in Social Psychology at the University of Dundee, Scotland, UK. He is interested in the construction of social identities and how such constructions organise group behaviour. In particular he is interested in how people understand national and religious identities, and how these construals of identity can come to structure their experiences and orientations to others. His research involves both qualitative methods (e.g., interview and ethnographic) and experimental methods.

Fathali M. Moghaddam is Professor, Department of Psychology, and Director, Conflict Resolution Program, Department of Government, Georgetown University. His most recent book is 'The Psychology of Dictatorship', and moreabout his researchc an be found at: fathalimoghaddam.com

Ian Parker is Honorary Professor of Education at the University of Manchester, and has visiting professorial positions with Birkbeck, University of London, with the University of Roehampton, and with the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. He was co-founder in 1991, and is currently co-director (with Erica Burman) of the Discourse Unit at MMU (www.discourseunit.com). His research and writing has been in the field of psychoanalysis, psychology and social theory, with a particular focus on discourse, critical psychology, mental health and political practice. His recent books include Revolution in Psychology: Alienation to Emancipation (Pluto Press, 2007) which will be published in Greek in 2014, and Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Revolutions in Subjectivity (Routledge, 2011).

Jonathan Potter is Professor of Discourse Analysis and Dean of the School of Social, Political and Geographical Sciences at Loughborough University. He has studied racism, argumentation, fact construction, and topics in social science theory and method. His most recent books include: Representing Reality, which attempted to provide a systematic overview, integration and critique of constructionist research in social psychology, postmodernism, rhetoric and ethnomethodology and Conversation and Cognition (with Hedwig te Molder) in which a range of different researchers consider the implication of studies of interaction for understanding cognition. He is one of
the founders of discursive psychology.

Stephen Reicher is currently Professor of social psychology at the University of St. Andrews. His interests lie in the relationship between social identity and collective action and he has researched such topics as crowd behaviour, political rhetoric and mass social influence, national identity, psychology of hatred and tyranny, and behaviour in disasters and emergencies. His latest book, with Alex Haslam and Mike Platow, is The New Psychology of Leadership.

Margaret Wetherell is Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Auckland, New Zealand and Emeritus Professor, Open University, UK. Her research has focused on developing theories and methods for discourse analysis in social psychology with a particular focus on identity issues. From 2003 to 2008 she was Director of the Economic and Social Research Council Programme on Identities and Social Action. Her monographs include Discourse and Social Psychology and Mapping the Language of Racism (with Jonathan Potter); Men

in Perspective (with Nigel Edley) and Citizens at the Centre (with Celia Davies and Elizabeth Barnett). Her most recent research is on affective practice exemplified in her latest book Affect and Emotion (2012, Sage).

Introduction

Nikos Bozatzis and Thalia Dragonas

The present volume offers a 'panoramic' overview of the discursive turn in social psychology. Novel and previously published essays and positioning papers, side by side, introduce, outline and discuss key themes and approaches. Since its early days in the mid 1980s, the turn to discourse in social psychology has managed to enrich and re-orient, to a non-negligible extent, the outlook of the discipline. This re-orientation pertains to the type of socio-psychological questions raised and empirically researched; it pertains, therefore, to the explicit and implicit theoretical and epistemological assumptions underpinning socio-psychological research. Consequently, this re-orientation pertains also to the methodological and analytic practices adopted. The discursive turn is part of the broader, theoretical and analytic re-orientations in the discipline that often come to be designated as *critical social psychology* (Gough & Mcfadden 2001; Hepburn 2003; Ibáñez & Íñiguez 1997; Tuffin 2005).

The variety of contributions appearing in this volume makes it clear that the discursive turn in social psychology has diversified into many different paths. Often, the approaches that comprise it appear to differ significantly; and, indeed they differ. However, there is a common denominator, binding together all such approaches, a common denominator that constitutes them as a distinctive paradigm: the emphasis on the performativity of language. Of course, within the approaches that comprise the discursive turn in social psychology, the performativity of language or its action orientation is conceptualized in many and importantly different ways. In the following chapters, the contributing authors retort to different social theoretical and philosophical starting points: analytic philosophy of language, ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, late Wittgenstein, semiotics, post-structuralism, psychoanalysis and Marxism. All authors though seem to agree that language does not merely represent, in a simplistic realist sense, entities or essences either of the outer / social or of the inner / mental world. The emphasis on the constitutive nature of discourse and discursive practices inevitably assigns the discursive turn in social psychology to the wider context of social constructionism (cf. Burr 1995; Gergen 1985; Lock & Strong 2010). A corollary of this epistemological subscription is the conviction that social psychology, in order to be *social* psychology, cannot adopt, in a facile way, a representational conception of language, trying to locate universal cognitive processes and assuming that they are the instigators of action. The field of discourse is (part of) the field of social action and as such it must be approached analytically.

As already mentioned, the turn to discourse in social psychology is the synthesis of various approaches. These approaches often adopt different positions as to what constitutes or should constitute a proper discourse analytic take on socio-psychological phenomena or on the very discipline of social psychology. Owing to this diversity, a 'simple description' of the context within which it has emerged is almost impossible. It is clear that any description of such a context involves, inevitably, taking a position within ongoing theoretical debates. Indeed, if the approaches that comprise the discursive turn in social psychology are distinctive, part of their distinctiveness results from the different origin narratives that they reflexively articulate about the context of their emergence. One can identify such a diversity, already back in the 1980s, in the fundamental and classical texts of the pioneers in the

discursive turn (e.g. Billig 1987; Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton & Radley 1988; Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine 1984; Hollway 1989; Parker 1989; Potter & Wetherell 1987). It is no surprise that such a heterogeneity is also evident in the texts comprising the present volume (see, for example Chapters 5, 6, 7, 9, 12 and, most vividly, the end-discussion by Kenneth Gergen).

Despite differences in opinions, though, most of the pioneers in the field would probably agree that the academic conditions of possibility for the emergence of the discursive turn in social psychology relate both to broader developments in the social sciences and humanities as well as to 'internal' developments in the history of social psychology (cf. Potter & Wetherell, 2009). The former include the gradual dissemination, during the 1970s and early 1980s, within British academia in general and psychology departments in particular, of continental intellectual trends, like structuralism, semiotics and post-structuralism, which challenged the representational view on the relation between language and "external reality". Such changing intellectual priorities informed the publication of the collective volume *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity* (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1984), an early landmark in the field.

As far as the developments within social psychology are concerned, what should be pointed out here is the extensive, reflexive debate that was going on within the discipline from the late 1960s to the early 1980s concerning the theoretical assumptions, methodological choices, research practices and political dimensions and consequences of social psychology as a scientific discipline. Hepburn (2001) sums up nicely the topics of this 'internal' debate, better known as *the crisis in social psychology*[2], into three key themes: (a) critical views on the *individualism* characterizing the social psychology of the time; (b) criticisms of the methodology of socio-psychological research on the grounds that it is excessively narrow and technical and unable to account for the complexity of social action, and (3) theoretical critiques of social psychology's inability to account for wider social structures. Probably it does not come as a surprise that within the turn to discourse in social psychology these themes of the early *crisis* literature constitute major topics of theoretical development.

Nowadays, the main *loci* where discursive, social psychological research is produced remain in British universities. They are not, however, by any means restricted there. Discursive social psychologists teach and do research in many European universities, as well as in universities in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and South America. The social psychology academic scene in North America seems to be an exception to the rule. The impact the discursive turn in social psychology has had in Europe and elsewhere is much weaker there. American scientific journals seem to be quite reluctant to publish discursive papers. There are, however, exceptions to this trend (see for example Edwards 1994a, 1994b; Edwards & Potter 1993; Potter 2002; Potter, Edwards and Wetherell 1993; Widdicombe & Wooffitt 1990), and, there are at least, two important theoretical and methodological research traditions (cf. Chapters 7 & 8, this volume) within the discursive turn in social sciences and psychology that have gained academic acclaim in the U.S.A.

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[2] The body of this literature is extensive; a selection of some key contributions would include: Armistead 1974; Brewster Smith 1972; Cartwright 1979; Elms 1975; Gergen 1973; 1978; 1979; Harré 1979; Harré & Secord 1972; Israel & Tajfel 1972; Larsen 1980; Ring 1967; Sampson 1977; Shotter 1975; Steiner 1974; Strickland, Aboud & Gergen 1976.

Concerning the overall organization of the volume, the following themes are taken up in the individual Chapters:

Nikos Bozatzis in **Chapter 1** outlines four classic and, in varying degrees, still ongoing debates within the discursive turn in social psychology. As he argues, these debates may better be seen as the main, *though not exclusive*, nodal points around which theoretical and research traditions within the discursive turn in social psychology come to be assembled. The first of these debates concerns the very definition and conceptualization of discourse, as different scholars and researchers draw their inspiration from different traditions in philosophy and social theory. The second debate, concerns the political dimensions and consequences of discursive analysis, in relation to the adoption of epistemological stands informed either by critical realism or relativism. The third debate focuses on rival views concerning the conceptualization of the context of action of discourse. Finally, the last debate reviewed relates to the question whether discourse analysis in social psychology is in need of a complementing psychodynamic conceptualization of the subject and on which that conceptualization might be. While the theoretical issues that have been debated by discursive social psychologists are, obviously, much more, these four nodes of argumentation reviewed here have a particular importance for the 'internal' history of developments within the turn to discourse in social psychology. Their outlining in this first chapter of the volume sets, hopefully, a convenient frame for the appreciation of chapters that follow thereafter.

In **Chapter 2 Nick Hopkins** and **Steve Reicher** outline their views for a social psychology of category construction. Hopkins's and Reicher's approach maintains strong links to theoretical and methodological traditions within social psychology. Indeed, their work is an integral part of the contemporary research literature re-working and developing Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (e.g.Tajfel 1982) within the frame of self-categorization theory (e.g. Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell 1987). Thus, their turn to discourse constitutes a project of enriching a well-established social psychological approach, mainly through the theoretical influence of Billig's rhetorical / ideological approach (e.g. Billig 1991). As the authors make clear, they still have an interest for persons' 'internal world' and behaviour; identity, for them, is still an exceptionally useful analytic concept; and they do not discern any, in principle, incompatibility between experimentation and the analysis of text and talk. Still, their approach incorporates maybe the most fundamental theoretical assumption around which the turn to discourse in social psychology comes to be constituted: the view that language 'does things'. Most importantly, the conceptualization of performativity of language mobilized by Hopkins and Reicher is political through and through. As they argue, social/identity categories do not constitute, in terms of their representational and value content, mere reflections of consolidated entities outside discourse; rather, they should better be treated as argumentative stakes, as local instantiations of wider, ongoing, political debates.

The variation and the clear differences between approaches that comprise the discursive turn in social psychology are amply highlighted if one counter-poses Hopkins' and Reicher's rationale with the one introduced by **Félix Díaz** in **Chapter 3**. A common denominator is the focus of both perspectives on (social) categories and their use in discourse. However, their theoretical starting points are clearly distinctive and, to a large extent, contradictory. In contrast to Hopkins and Reicher, whose methodological trajectory draws upon and aims at enriching traditional social

psychology, Díaz frames the approach he introduces by counter-posing it to the theoretical starting-point of Hopkins and Reicher, i.e. social identity theory and self-categorisation theory. For Díaz, both these approaches might be seen as embodying what Harvey Sacks (1963) described as 'convential' social science ethos in the research of identity. In his text, Díaz introduces Membership Categorisation Analysis, Sacks' ethnomethodological approach to identity. As Díaz notices, the ethnomethodological perspective takes off from the realization that conventional approaches to identity draw upon a series of unexamined assumptions as to what "people usually do". In the case of traditional social psychology, Díaz argues, such assumptions inform the theoretical hypotheses and the ensuing experimental design and, in a circular way, are confirmed in the experimental results insofar as there is a tacit alliance between researcher and participants to perform 'what we all know people would do in such situation as this'. The ethnomethodological solution proposed is the radical commitment of research to observation and to the analysis of events as they happen. In that respect, the ethnomethodological perspective presented by Díaz treats identity not as an analyst's category but as an analytically manifested concern and accomplishment of active social agents or, rather, of 'members'.

While Membership Categorisation Analysis is part of the ethnomethodological legacy of Harvey Sacks to the turn to discourse in social psychology, Conversation Analysis (cf. Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974) is the better-known and most popular part of this legacy. As **Charles Antaki** explains in **Chapter 4**, this is so because Discursive Psychology (cf. Edwards & Potter 1992; and Chapter 5, this volume) has been very much influenced by it. For Antaki, conversation analysis, as the study of social action as realized within talk in interaction, has its own distinctive place in the turn to discourse in (social) psychology but is not identical to discourse analysis. Maybe the most distinctive point of differentiation from, most, discourse analytic perspectives comes in its strong conviction that the performativity of language is to be analytically sought and illuminated in the ways in which conversational talk is *organized* and less in its content. In order to substantiate, in an introductory manner, this conceptualization of performativity, Antaki re-visits the conversation analytic literature (e.g. Levinson 1983) and previously published analyses of his. In doing so, he draws and analyses excerpts from naturalistic conversations showing how a series of 'local' interactional acts are performed by means of exploiting normative expectations that order the organization of talk in interaction. Antaki's argument is that conversation analysis reconstructs, for a social scientific audience, the sophisticated ways in which, conversation, the fundamental tissue of human sociality, is woven. Thus, it offers for inspection the raw material of the large-scale social phenomena that usually pre-occupy social sciences, including social psychology.

Jonathan Potter's account of discursive psychology in **Chapter 5** involves, on the one hand, an explication of the treatment that discursive psychology reserves for psychological phenomena, that is pointing to their 'practical', 'accountable', 'situated', 'embodied' and 'displayed' character. Nevertheless, Potter's aim in this text goes beyond the mere explication of the radically different way in which discursive psychology approaches 'entities' that are traditionally thought of as inhabiting some, or other, inner realm. The author, also, aims at explicating what are the distinctive features of discursive psychology when compared to 'neighbouring' perspectives, within the broader interdisciplinary domain of discourse studies, such as critical discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. Finally, in the last part of his text, Potter explicates the contribution that

discursive psychology has made on the front of social critique, highlighting its application in research projects on category construction and prejudice; in critical works targeting cognitivism; and within ongoing projects focusing on institutions and institutional practices.

Margaret Wetherell in **Chapter 6** outlines the perspective of critical discursive social psychology. In doing so, she revisits the main 'parental' influences on the theoretical and methodological perspective outlined in the early classic *Discourse and Social Psychology* (Potter & Wetherell 1987), i.e. conversation analysis and post-structuralism, advancing the argument that an eclectic synthesis of the two –still- provides the most productive basis for critical discursive research in social psychology. Such a synthesis entails, according to Wetherell, reading conversation analytic insights in post-structuralist light and vice versa. As an example, Wetherell focuses analytically upon an extended sequence of research-elicited, group discussion talk with three young white middle-class men concerning an episode in one of the participant's recent sexual history. Her analysis draws selectively, both on the methodological prescriptions of conversation analysis (e.g. Schegloff, 1997) and to post-structuralist discourse theory, as exemplified in Laclau and Mouffe (1985; 1987) and sketches out the contours of a critical take on discursive psychology built around the core notions of positioning, interpretative repertoires and ideological dilemmas (cf. Billig, et al., 1988).

Kenneth and Mary Gergen, in **Chapter 7,** shift somewhat the focus of attention from typical discursive psychology themes to narrative inquiry. In so doing, they flesh out its potential in constructing our realities and its explanatory power in rendering the self and the world intelligible. Gergen and Gergen relate narrative to social issues and highlight the interdisciplinary nature of narrative inquiry as well as its prospects for new methodological approaches. They underline three aspects of narrative inquiry that have special relevance to social and personality psychology: (a) the importance of the cultural context and the narrative structures made available for use; (b) the move from structures to daily processes of interchange, i.e. narratives as conversational achievements; and (c) individual life stories. The authors draw attention and discuss how the turn to narration and social construction has led to qualitative research approaches that adopt a critical agenda and how it has spread to the fields of psychotherapy, education, organizational change and conflict resolution.

Rom Harré and **Fathali Moghaddam**, in **Chapter 8**, introduce Positioning Theory, locating its origins in Speech Act Theory (Austin 1962) and in Vygotsky's thought. As Harré and Moghaddam explain, positioning theory, by adopting and presenting a normative account of human thought and action, distinguishes itself from the traditional model of laboratory research in psychology which involves and presents a causal account. As the authors argue, this theoretical choice is warranted insofar as social behaviour, i.e. the object of study for social psychology, has very little to do with 'performance capacity' and very much so with 'performance style', i.e. the meaning of behaviour, events and phenomena. And, as Harré and Moghaddam argue, the systems of meaning more regulate than cause human behaviour. For Harré and Moghaddam, the true domain of thinking is not so much located within the 'individual' and 'private' cognitive realm but, mainly, in the 'collective' and 'public' realm of *activity*. Focusing their attention on the topic of remembering, the authors highlight its collective and public aspects arguing that even interpersonal relations pertain to collective forms of remembering, decision making, problem solving etc. According to the authors, two nodal dimensions of such relations are the 'rights' and the 'duties' that relate to what is appropriate to be said and done as well as to the way

these rights and duties are distributed to the persons involved. For Harré and Moghaddam, positioning theory offers a principled and flexible way to study 'the nature, formation, influence and ways of change of local systems of rights and duties as shared assumptions about them influence social interactions'.

In the following two chapters, Wendy Hollway and Michael Billig examine the relation of discursive psychology to psychoanalysis (cf., also, Chapter 1). The relevant discussion has some history within the discursive turn in social psychology and its intellectual tension increases gradually. Do the analysis of discourse and psychoanalysis constitute diametrically opposite intellectual and research trends? Can there be a convergence between the two? If the starting point is psychoanalysis, has discursive psychology an added value for the understanding of the person? Or, on the contrary, is the analysis of speech, if isolated from the internal psychic world, sufficient for a theoretical understanding of subjectivity? In **Chapter 9**, **Wendy Holloway** discusses such questions with references to theorists such as, Frosh, Baraitser, Chodorow but also Billig and Wetherell who have expressed concerns, either as to what lies beyond discourse, or as to the sufficient theoretical understanding of subjectivity in the traditions of conversation analysis and discursive psychology. Hollway regards discourse analysis and psychoanalysis as being complementary. People are not positioned in discourse as a result only of outer, social forces but also of inner psychic states that have a life of their own independent from socio-cultural communication. It is thus required that the psychic, unconscious processes that are part of speech and verbal exchange get deciphered. These processes are relational and dynamic and involve defensive individuals in a psychoanalytic sense, i.e. individuals that are being motivated by unconscious defenses against anxiety. Hollway is very interested in methods that can capture the move beyond a discursive approach to subjectivity towards a psychosocial one. Thus she provides at the end of her Chapter a research example on transition to motherhood as a site for studying identity change. She makes clear that a psycho-social approach to empirical research is not psychoanalysis and she states that her aim is to use psychoanalytic ideas critically, both ontologically and epistemologically to 'fill' the empty subject of discursive psychology in a productive way.

The potential relation between psychoanalysis and discursive psychology also intrigues **Michael Billig** in **Chapter 10**. Billig warns the reader, right from the start, that the encounter of these two trends of thought is not an easy task and that simply combining the two approaches does not constitute a psychoanalytic discursive psychology. Billig, however, does not conceive of the unconscious defenses as an internal psychic force, the way described by Freud. He postulates that if we are to understand the contribution of psychoanalysis to discursive psychology, it is important to re-conceptualize the unconscious on the basis of repression. He argues that the psychoanalytic concept of repression and the unconscious, more generally, can be explained by examining the way they are produced dialogically, in interaction and talk. In psychoanalysis, repression is one of several defense mechanisms that protect against anxiety. Billig views repression as an activity: we all do 'things' in order to prevent some ideas and desires from disturbing our conscious awareness. It is at this point that he sees a *lacuna* in Freud's work: he neither specifies nor focuses upon what people normatively do in order to repress. Since Billig sees skills of repression being integrally related to the skills of dialogue, it is through parents' normative organization of conversation that children learn what is or what is not appropriate to be said or be done, and hence what is prohibited is what becomes repressed. In attempting a discursive reinterpretation of Freud, Billig believes that it is

possible to resolve the seeming contradiction between translating internal cognitive processes into outward discursive activity, while still retaining a critical view that accords importance to unconscious factors. The solution, according to Billig, is recasting the unconscious: instead of treating it as a hidden mental entity, it can be seen, as the activity of repression that is itself seen as discursive. Thus, while Hollway and Billig are both interested in the psychoanalytic aspect of discourse there is a significant divergence between the two.

While femininity is a topic that features in Hollway's Chapter, as she turns to motherhood as a site for studying identity change, in **Chapter 11 Erica Burman** focuses *exclusively* on a discursive analysis of gender and the relation of various discursive approaches with feminist theory and psychological practices. Burman tries to show how, within contemporary multinational discourse, psychologisation mobilizes what she calls 'feminisation'. The latter denotes the reproduction and naturalization of domestication and of gender typical representations and the appropriation of women's voices, usurping feminist and anti-racist critiques. In the prevailing relations of exploitation, occupation and oppression, 'feminisation' mobilizes imagined and imaginary tropes that secure practices of power. Applying the politics of 'feminisation' to the theme of women and war Burman produces a captivating analysis of a text and imagery advertizing a piece of military equipment to be used by male fighter pilots, built around a woman's voice. The appropriation of this voice is, for Burman, an example for illustrating how discursive approaches can ascribe 'feminisation' as an identification, and how and why claims to and about femininity, gender and gender relations are also about more than these, involving power relations in the social, political, economic and inter-national spheres.

Ian Parker, in **Chapter 12**, unfolds his arguments as to what constitutes critical discursive practice in social psychology. His overall argument is that discourse analysis still provides a fertile ground for the study of ideology in social psychology. However, as he notices, such a perspective has as a prerequisite the explicit political conceptualization of discourse and the linking of discourse analysis with strands of thought and research outside psychology that have an expertise in political analysis. The starting point for the rationale developed by Parker is the realization that in capitalist societies a range of discursive patterns work towards the reiteration of diminishing representations of people on the basis of their categorization in terms of class, race and so on. These representation, the author argues, require specific types of human relations or social bonds that either confirm or prescribe the reality of such distinctions and discriminations. For Parker, therefore, the nodal political and analytic question for critical social psychologists ought to be the question of how to change the organization of language in order to be able to deconstruct particular types of social bonds and create other.

The present volume concludes with a discussion by **Kenneth Gergen**. Gergen assess critically the turn to discourse in social psychology, treating it as movement in motion. From his distinctive point of view, Gergen frames the turn to discourse in social psychology in its intellectual context, which is in the context of wider discussions in philosophy and social theory concerning the nature of knowledge and the assumptions of social research. Discussing its prospects, as he discerns them, Gergen converses with the essays included in the present volume, highlighting critical points but also concluding that the intellectual vitality and the professional passion manifested in the Chapter of this volume makes him highly optimistic.

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The Discursive Turn in Social Psychology: Four Nodal Debates[3]

Nikos Bozatzis

Without disregarding the formative influence of other critical social psychological works published in the early and mid 1980s, within the relevant literature, it is often assumed that the discursive turn in social psychology was initiated by Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell's (1987) *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond attitudes and behavior*. This book, which has been re-published many times and has been translated in many languages, managed not only to inspire representatives of the younger generation of social psychologists who matured academically by the end of the '80s but also to radically influence the views of many social psychologists of earlier generations. In any case, it managed, gradually, to bring within the orbit of discourse analysis an initial 'critical mass' of research works and theoretical positions, establishing the conditions for what seems to be in retrospect, two and a half decades later, a paradigm shift in the field of social psychology.

However, even if Potter and Wetherell's book got to set the agenda for a discourse analytic social psychology and to contribute to the development of a wave of relevant empirical research, its theoretical premises but also its specific methodological choices were not immune to 'internal' challenging. Quite the contrary: the body of discourse analytic literature which is being produced since the late 80's within social psychology is a field of evolving controversies over nodal theoretical questions (for a recent example, see Abell & Walton 2010; Corcoran 2010a,b; Potter 2010). Several of these controversies are based on, revolve around or stem from theoretical positions and choices made by Potter and Wetherell in the fore-mentioned work. Or, additionally, from the development of the positions formulated in the foregoing book that was pursued in the later project of *discursive psychology* by Edwards and Potter (1992; and chapter 5 in the present volume; see also, among others, Edwards 1997; Potter 1996). The controversies that will preoccupy me here bear (a) on the question of which conceptualisation of discourse is the most pertinent to social psychology; (b) on the political dimensions and implications of (the version of) relativism that informs discourse analysis; (c) on the conceptualisation of the context (of action) of discourse; and (d) on the question whether discourse analytic research in social psychology requires, as a supplement, a psychodynamic theory of subjectivity.

Conceptualization of Discourse

Most commentators of the developments within the discursive turn in social psychology (see, e.g., Antaki 1994; Burr 1995; Willig 2008) seem to agree that there is a crucial, internal differentiation in this current. It is argued that there are two 'camps' with radically[4] different views on how discourse should be defined and, accordingly, how discourse analysis should be conducted. In such treatments, more often than not, an *ethnomethodologically* inspired approach (whose main proponents are deemed to be Jonathan Potter and Derek Edwards) is counterpoised, to a Foucauldian approach (with Ian Parker described as its main proponent). No doubt, the extent to which the distinction between these two approaches is as 'radical' as it is made out to be is itself a topic for discussion (see, e.g., Bozatzis 1999; Burman & Parker 1993; Potter 1996; Wetherell 1998; Wetherell & Potter 1992). What is beyond doubt, however, is that indeed, from very early on, different views have been formulated about the conceptualization of 'discourse' in the context of the discursive turn in the field of social psychology. The early stage of the discussion took place in two seminal works: Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Parker (1992) and on the pages of the journal *Philosophical Psychology* (Parker 1990a·b, Potter, Wetherell, Gill & Edwards 1990).[5]

Potter & Wetherell (1987) use the term 'discourse' in its most open sense […] to cover all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds' and, hence, the term 'discourse analysis' implies for them the 'analysis of any of these forms of discourse' (Potter & Wetherell 1987: 7). For Potter and Wetherell, discourse constitutes a topic of analysis in and of itself, rather than an analytic resource which enables the researchers to formulate or to confirm hypotheses about 'entities' which lie beyond it. In its use, then, discourse, according to Potter and Wetherell, performs functions, it 'does things' in its local context (e.g. excuses, justifications, categorizations, reproaches, praise etc.);[6] and the 'things' which discourse 'does' locally (may) have unintended ideological consequences (Wetherell & Potter 1988). To the extent that any extensive stretch of talk or written text contains, inevitably, orientations to multiple functions, a considerable *variation* is bound to follow: i.e. formulations of different versions of the same 'object' at different junctures of conversations or texts. The argument of Potter and Wetherell is that, in any type of speech and written text, *occasioned* versions of the world, of its 'objects' and its 'subjects' are constructed. Versions that fit in and deploy the activity sequence in which they are formulated. The *construction* metaphor is important here as it evokes, on the one hand, the social and cultural availability of the linguistic resources which are mobilized in every instance, and, on the other, because it turns the attention of analysis to the question of *active choice*: only some of the available resources are mobilized, while others are silenced. The authors warn us that the notion of 'active choice' should not be understood in a way that evokes an image of the person as a Machiavellian, strategic manipulator of language, engaged in impression

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[4] For a less 'polarized' introduction see Wetherell (2001); see, also, Burman & Parker (1993) for an early collection of research papers which features, side-by-side, contributions from both approaches.

[5] For two further, early critical assessments of the discursive turn in social psychology on the pages of the same journal, but from very different perspectives, see also Abrams & Hogg (1990) and Burman (1991).

[6] Potter and Wetherell borrow this conceptualization of the performativity of language from speech acts theory (Austin 1962) but also, and primarily, from conversation analysis (see Atkinson & Heritage (1984); Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974); Chapter 4 of the present volume; and Wooffitt (2005) for a comparative account of conversation analysis and discourse analysis).

management. Their argument is that speakers simply 'do' normatively whatever is appropriate for the occasion at hand. What should be noted here is the twin emphasis of Potter and Wetherell's approach on both the performative potential of language in its use and on its 'always already' constructed dimension, to the extent that the 'material' mobilized is conceptualized as historically, socially and culturally available. Potter and Wetherell (1987: 138), drawing on the work of Gilbert and Mulkay (1984), introduce the concept of 'interpretative repertoires', which they define as 'a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterize and evaluate actions and events.' Interpretative repertoires are the unit of analysis proposed by the authors to designate the analytically distinct forms in which –on occasion- comes the semantic material mobilized in discourse.

In contrast to Potter and Wetherell's -ethnomethodologically inspired- focus on the things done by language in its 'local' use, the starting point of Ian Parker's approach is different. It takes its bearings from the work of Michel Foucault and the Althusserian approach to Marxism. According to Parker (1992), discourse analysis is, or should be, a politically informed, radical enterprise. Although, as he argues, there is nothing inherently radical in discourse analysis in political terms, its radical potential emerges as a function of the 'conceptual work' which must precede and criss-cross with its practical application. It is up to social psychologists, then, who adopt a discourse analytic perspective, to engage in analyses which will stand critically towards psychology as a scientific discipline, which will bring out the workings of power –conceptualized both in Foucauldian terms as a *productive* power and in Marxist terms as an *oppressive* power- and to offer a coherent ideological critique in its field of application.

The conceptualization of 'discourse' mobilized by Parker is exclusively post-structuralist. Drawing on the work of Foucault, the operational definition that he gives (Parker 1990a: 191) to 'discourse' reads: 'a system of statements which constructs an object.' Hence, the task of the analyst is laid down in the following way: 'Discourse analysis deliberately systematizes different ways of talking so we can understand them better. A study of discourse dynamics takes off from this to look at the tensions within discourses and the way they reproduce and transform the world' (Parker 1992: 5). For Parker (1990a, b; 1992), then, 'discourse' or, rather, 'discourses' do 'things':

> Discourses do not simply describe the social world, but categorize it, they bring phenomena into sight. A strong form of the argument would be that discourses allow us to focus on things that are not "really" there, and that once an object has be circumscribed by discourses it is difficult *not* to refer to it as if it were real (Parker 1990a: 191).

In contrast to Potter and Wetherell's approach, which sets out from the micro-analytic documentation of the 'things' that are done in the context of conversation, Parker's approach sets out from the 'conceptual work' (of the analyst), which precedes the practice of analysis. The analyst is called upon, then, to recognize the active discourses by applying seven basic (and three supplementary) criteria.

The criteria (see Parker 1992) are as follows: (1) A Discourse is realized in texts. The argument here is that the analyst does not encounter 'discourses' in themselves, but fragments of them which are embodied in texts of various sorts. The task of the analyst is to interpret the connotations and the implications of the texts. (2) With the second criterion Parker calls on the aspiring discourse analysts to appreciate Foucault's (1972) pronouncement that discourses are practices which systematically

configure the objects of which they speak. The task of the analyst, thus, is not only to describe but also to critically interrogate the objects referred to in the texts. (3) With the third criterion Parker (1992: 9) turns the attention of analysis to the 'subjects' contained in discourses: 'A discourse makes available a space for particular types of self to step in.' Parker draws here on the Althusserian conception of *ideological interpellation* to argue that the discourses which inhabit texts address us and place us in particular subject positions. The job of the analysts is to clarify what kind of persons are 'spoken' in a discourse and to formulate hypotheses about what can be intelligibly said within this discourse. (4) With the fourth criterion Parker calls on analysts to approach Discourse as 'a coherent system of meanings.' His argument is that the metaphors, analogies and pictures invoked by a certain discourse in order to represent an 'object' can be 'distilled' in the form of statements. It is the analyst's task to configure these statements in coherent formations, based on her culturally available understandings as to what constitutes an object. (5) and (6) With these criteria Parker underlines the reflexive texture of language, which he attributes to contradictions that can be found in the context of a discourse. As he argues, discourses imply and presuppose other discourses. The task of the analyst is to juxtapose the different objects which are constituted by different discourses and to identify the points where they overlap. This reflexive labour on the level of discourses results often in reflexive gestures within speech and the texts themselves.

The work of the analyst consists in identifying and contrasting these reflexive moments. (7) With the last of his basic criteria Parker underlines the historicity of Discourses. The objects to which discourses refer have been constituted in the past by a particular discourse or other discourses: 'A discourse refers to past references to those objects' (Parker 1992: 16). The task of the analyst, then, is to consider *how* and *when* a Discourse emerged and the historical changes which contributed to its emergence. According to Parker, these seven criteria are necessary and sufficient in the analytical labour of identifying a discourse. However, as he argues, there are three further criteria, which reflect further dimensions of discourse(s) and which the analyst *ought* to take into account, on moral and political grounds. The first one bears on the relation between discourses and institutions. The second criterion bears on the part that discourses play in the reproduction of power relations. And the last one shifts the attention of analysis to the ideological implications of discourses.

It is evident that the starting points and the working definitions of 'discourse' and the performativity of language in these two approaches are considerably different. At first glance, at least, it looks as if the socio-psychological offshoots of ethnomethodology clash in this context with the socio-psychological offshoots of a Foucauldian, post-structuralist approach. Indeed, these are the terms deployed in the early debate that took place in the pages of the journal *Philosophical Psychology* (Parker 1990a, b; Potter, Wetherell, Gill, & Edwards 1990). Parker takes Potter and Wetherell (1987) to task for their undue attachment to ethnomethodolgy and their decision to foreground the notion of *interpretive repertoires* as the basic unit of analysis. As he argues, the notion of interpretive repertoires, which evokes a limited range of grammatical terms, images and metaphors, entails the risk of formalism, nourishing the (false) hope that analysis can outline a specific closed discursive system, and the term 'repertoire', in particular, gives rise to 'inconvenient' connotations as it evokes behaviourism. On the other hand, Potter et al. (1990), criticize Parker's approach, accusing it, first, of *reifying* discourses by vesting them with agency. Moreover, they characterize Parker's approach to analytic practice as inadequately elaborated insofar as it prompts a direct analytic 'apprehension' of

discourses without explicating how 'statements' derive from discourses. And, finally, they trace in Parker's approach a vulnerability to assumptions of common sense. As they argue, it looks as if every 'object' of common-sense corresponds to a 'discourse' and, moreover, analysts are encouraged to 'distil' the system of statements which constitutes an object in the terms of their common sense.

In the course of the 1990s, ethnomethodology and post-structuralism continued to be invoked as 'ancestral' influences with the discursive turn in social psychology. Two particular developments should be noticed here. On the one hand, in an important sense, it could be argued that the polarization between them was exacerbated after 1992. On that year, Edwards and Potter's *Discursive Psychology* was published, consolidating and expanding the theoretical links with ethnomethodology. In the project of discursive psychology, as condensed in the *Discursive Action Model* (Edwards & Potter 1992; 1993), there is no provision for what I called above the 'always already' constructed dimension of discourse. The notion of interpretive repertoires does not find a place within the *Discursive Action Model* and, consequently, there are no references to the potential ideological functions and implications of 'local' discursive practices. Discursive psychology focuses on the ways in which the traditional 'objects' –traditional 'entities'- of psychology are constituted, in texts and conversations, through reflexive, 'local' processes as rhetorical and, hence, *social* phenomena (see Chapter 5, this volume). On the other hand, though, 1992 is also the year of the publication of another book, *Mapping the Language of Racism: Discourse and the legitimation of exploitation*, co-authored by Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter. The theoretical framework laid out in this book, as well as its empirical analysis, capitalizes upon the *symmetricity* (Μποζατζής 2003) of the analytic focus which characterised the approach outlined in *Discourse and Social Psychology*. Discourse is considered both in its 'always already' structured dimension and in its active, constitutive quality. The authors turn, thus, to the theoretical tradition of post-structuralism (mainly in the work of Foucault) but also to Althusser in order to analyse the 'choreography' of the rhetorical playing out of interpretive repertoires which reproduce, in everyday discourse, the ideological assumptions of racism.

These developments offer an early indication that the often made vertical distinction between ethnomethodological and post-structuralist 'camps' in the discursive turn in social psychology is -if not misleading- then overstressed and, perhaps, un-productive. Despite the fact that from the mid-90s onwards one can discern differences in emphasis within large segments of the relevant research literature, it might be preferable to treat ethnomethodology and poststructuralism as available resources within a theoretical, epistemological and methodological debate and questioning, as to how to do social psychology differently. The real challenge, perhaps, lies in the theoretical refinement and the ongoing empirical substantiation of the terms in which they may be co-articulated within research practices (Edley & Wetherell 1997; 2001; Wetherell, this volume; 1999; 2007; cf. Bozatzis 2009).

Realism, Relativism and the Politics of Discourse Analysis

It would not be an overstatement to claim that the most 'dramatic' of the debates which configure the field of the discursive turn in social psychology is the one which focuses upon the epistemological grounds of discourse analytic theory and research and, more specifically, the debate between positions informed by critical realism

(Bhaskar 1986; 1989) and relativism (Smith 1988). The dramatic character of this debate should not come as a surprise; not, simply, because the issues at stake are important in theoretical terms. What is also at stake is the moral and political profile of the approaches and the persons involved in this dialogue, and this accounts for the frequent acidity relevant exchanges. As this discussion is, on the one hand, very extensive,[7] and, on the other, the arguments complicated and conceptually sophisticated, their full rendition is beyond the scope of the present essay. However, the main positions that have been put forward will be outlined.

From very early on (e.g. Parker 1992; cf. Burman 1991), a concern was voiced that the anti-realist epistemology that informs Potter and Wetherell's (1987) approach to discourse and discursive action gives rise to moral and political questions. Their key anti-realist, social constructionist assumption that *every* instance of discourse, *every* descriptive activity constructs *versions* of the world and of reality and, hence, it can be discourse-analysed with respect to the constructive work it accomplishes, came in for criticism insofar as it was thought to open the 'gates' of discourse analysis to a relativism leading to moral and political paralysis: in a situation where '*anything goes.*' The charge against the relativists is that their epistemology does not allow them to take a stand, that they have no ground, no *ontological reason*, for upholding values or goals (cf. Gill 1995). The following quotes from Parker are quite telling (1992: 22, 40-41):

> The point we need to bear in mind, though, is that in order to analyze institutions, power and ideology, we need to stop the slide into relativism …. We need some sense of the real to anchor our understanding of the dynamics of discourse (pp. 22).
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> [T]hose fascinated by the power of discourse cut loose from any connection with a real outside texts are becoming the vehicles for the 'radical' expression of a purely pragmatic 'new realism' which has lost any desire to take underlying structures of oppression and resistance seriously (pp. 40-41).

The addressees of this accusation responded with a classical *cum* controversial, essay (Edwards et al. 1995), deconstructing the rhetoric, politics and 'theology', as they put it, of 'bottom line arguments' against relativism. For them, relativism should not be conceived as a fully-fleshed social theory, rival to realism or to theoretical versions of it. Relativism, is treated as the *quintessence* of the academic perspective, the field in which all truths are *to be established.* Hence, relativism is put forward and conceptualized by Edwards et al. as a fundamental critique, as a type of scepticism, as the negation of realism, rather than as a *positive* theory which points to and suggests an alternative reality. Relativism, it is argued, represents a meta-epistemology which can take on board and analyse both realism and relativism by treating them as rhetorical practices.

Edwards et al. use, in an obviously ironic sense, the words 'Death' and 'Furniture' as metaphorical, emblematic references to two common strands of argumentation against relativism: to the reality *it is not possible* for one to deny (e.g. tables, rocks,

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[7] For a particularly useful and extensive review of this discussion see Wetherell and Still (1998). In any case, the interested reader would be adviced to consult the original texts. For the most characteristic 'moments' of this debate see Burman (1991); Edwards, Ashmore & Potter (1995); Gill (1995); Hepburn (2000); Hibberd (2001); McLennan (2001); O'Neil (1995); Parker (1998); Parker (1999a,b); Potter (1998a); Potter, Edwards, Ashmore (1999); Still (2001) and Widdicombe (1995).

stones) and to the reality one *must not* deny (e.g. misery, genocides, poverty, power). As they argue,

> When relativists' talk about the social construction of reality, truth, cognition, scientific knowledge, technical capacity, social structure and so on, their realist' opponents sooner or later start hitting the furniture, invoking the Holocaust, talking about rocks, guns, killings, human misery, tables and chairs. The force of these objections is to introduce a bottom line, a bedrock of reality that places limits on what may be treated as epistemologically constructed or deconstructible. (Edwards et al., 1995: 26)

Aim of the essay, then, was to show how these two types of argumentation operate and their non-persuasiveness as refutation of relativism. According to Edwards et al., thus, the bottom line argument 'Furniture' can be countered in two different ways. First, by demonstrating the inevitably representational and rhetorical status of the act 'I hit my hand on the table'. As they claim, 'furniture' and 'stones' do not stand, 'always already', as refutations of relativism. They become such at the moment and in the context of the appeal made to them, usually within a debate with allegedly 'naive' relativists who seem not to acknowledge their material status. For Edwards et al., then, the very act of the 'production' of a non-represented, non-constructed external reality is, inevitably, a rhetorical/representational act. The second set of (counter-) arguments of Edwards et al. against the argument 'Furniture' suggests, among other things, that the reality brought to the fore by hitting the hand on the furniture, the sense of 'solidity' and 'stability', is a human perceptual category, since we know from physics that at a certain level of molar analysis of any furniture, there is nothing stable to it. As the authors argue, citing Lakoff (1987), 'Reality takes on an intrinsically human dimension, and the most that can be claimed for it is an ''experiential realism''.'[8]

In relation, now, to the argument that relativism leads to a moral and political paralysis, to 'anything goes', Potter (1998a) answers that 'anything goes' is an act of stigmatization on the part of realism; it is a *highly realist* claim which no relativist has any reason to endorse. This is so because it constitutes:

> a fundamental, timeless, contextless statement about the nature of causal relations, not all that dissimilar from the laws of physics or psychology. For the relativist, what "goes" is at stake for people; it is what is constructed and argued over. Different positions, cultures and theories have different (any)things which go, or don't go, or go a bit (Potter 1998a: 34).

And, as it is argued in Edwards et al. (1995),

> There is no contradiction between being a relativist and being somebody, a member of a particular culture, having commitments, beliefs, and a common-sense notion of reality. These are the very things to be argued for, questioned, defended, decided, without the comfort of just being, already and before thought, real and true. The idea that letting go of realism entails that all these commitments must fall, is no more convincing than the idea that life without God is devoid of meaning and value. Indeed the argument is remarkably similar (cf. Smith, 1988:

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[8] This, however, as Still (2001) points out, fits rather 'inconveniently' into the perspective of 'realism.'

162), as is the refutation: the death of God has not made the rest of the world disappear, but has left it for us to make. What we are left with is not a world devoid of meaning and value (or a world of absolute amorality where 'everything is permitted', as in the Nietzschian-Dostoyevskian conclusion) but precisely the reverse. It is a foregrounding of meanings and values, to be argued, altered, defended and invented; including even the metavalue that some of these meanings and values may profitably be declared universal and even self-evident ('We hold these truths to be self-evident...'). Self-evidence here is the outcome rather than the denial of argumentation (Edwards et al., 1995, 35-36).

Parker (1999a), in his extensive counter-argument against Edwards et al. (1995), starts by acknowledging that over the last decades relativism has played a positive, progressive role in psychology as it has inspired many approaches which fall within the ambit of critical psychology (cf. Fox & Prilleltensky 1997). Parker recognises that, within critical psychology, relativism has enabled a focus on the truth claims of traditional psychology and on the ways in which the theory and practice of psychology reduce social phenomena to individual. Hence, as it is argued, relativism, in this critical current of research, has facilitated the study of ideology and power and the role of psychology in processes which maintain and reproduce oppressive relations. However, as Parker argues, relativism in itself does not suffice as a stepping-stone for critical psychology. The theoretical apparatus of critical realism is required for the analysis of the historical conditions underlying the emergence of psychology and the psy-complex (cf. Rose 1985).

Critical realists themselves insist that the knowledge that we have about the world is provisional and that we do indeed need to subscribe to 'epistemic relativism' to be scientific. The crucial difference here is that critical realism allows us to comprehend the historical, institutional context within which the human sciences operate, the ideological apparatus which provides the conditions of possibility for psychology and the moral-political interests that are served by those who pursue only relativism. (Parker 1999a: 75).

According to Parker, an undertaking adopting the perspective of critical realism, by illuminating how the science of psychology reproduces notions such as 'cognitive system' and 'human nature', would enable the transformation of psychology and its social construction into something else, perhaps, better. This process involves, partly, the dialectical understanding of relativism as both a useful tool in undertakings which aim at the critique of ideology and an ideological form which blunts the critical edge of alternative approaches to the field of psychology. Parker argues that:

Critical realism acknowledges the 'social construction' of reality, the reality described by discourse analysts, but embeds these descriptions of relatively enduring structures of talk, conceived of as the interlacing of power and ideology, in a Marxist account of relatively enduring structures of economic exploitation (Bhaskar, 1989) amenable to analysis, explanation and change (Parker 1999a: 64).

This debate, both between its particular protagonists (cf. Parker 1999b; Potter et al. 1999) and in its more extensive form (cf. Hibberd 2001; McLennan 2001; O'Neil 1995) is, evidently, not fully covered here. However, it is perhaps important to note Gill's contribution (1995) to this discussion. Gill, in a highly important and critical essay which turns against the extreme relativism she diagnoses in the thesis of Edwards et al. (1995), suggests alternatively a 'passionately interested inquiry' or a

'politically informed relativism.' Such a position, or such a type of relativism, inquires into 'who gets to set the agenda in different cultural and social communities. Whose version of reality and whose notions of truth are most often accepted?' (Wetherell & Still 1998: 110). As argued by Wetherell and Still (1998), in this way clear political commitments, e.g. to antiracism or social justice, occupy centre stage in the unfolding of the argument about meaning and value put forward by Edwards et al. (1995). Gill's position seems to reconcile, even if provisionally and paradoxically, the controversy, as Parker (1999a) refers approvingly to her essay, implying that her perspective, as a feminist fighting against the 'science' of psychology based on a political agenda, falls within the ambit of critical realism. Wetherell and Still, on their part, situate Gill's outlook alongside the approaches which 'explore' the possibilities of relativism, in contradistinction to the approach of critical realism and they draw a parallel between her and the epistemological position which informs the work of Wetherell and Potter (1992). While Potter (1998a) reminds us that, despite her assault on relativism, Gill, in her own essay, cites approvingly Butler's view (1992) that a durable *will* to question should lie at the heart of every radical political enterprise, which is very close to the aspiration of relativists, as he argues.

Conceptualizing the Context (of action) of Discourse

I mentioned above the objections voiced by post-structuralist / Foucauldian discourse analysts, like Ian Parker (1992), against Potter and Wetherell's (1987) approach on the grounds of what is treated as an unduly ethnomethodological conceptualization of the (action of) discourse. Moreover, as I noticed, in the project of *discursive psychology* (see Edwards & Potter 1992 and chapter 5 in the present volume) the theoretical bonds with ethnomethodology have become even tighter, if not exclusive. A key element of this theoretical bonding is the adoption on the part of discursive psychology of the theoretical thesis of conversation analysis that, in terms of their analytical practice, analysts should conceptualize the context of discourse exclusively in terms of the categories and the dimensions which become evident in the practical 'orientation' of participants themselves. The emphasis placed on this thesis within the project of discursive psychology distinguishes it sharply from the post-structuralist / political approach of Ian Parker. However, this absolute theoretical and analytical thesis has not remained unchallenged, either, by authors whose approaches adopt a more 'symmetrical' conceptualization of discourse, conceptualizing it both in terms of a performative 'freedom' and in terms of a 'structural slavery' (cf. Barthes 1982). The most illustrative relevant debate took place, mainly, in the pages of the journal *Discourse & Society* between Emmanuel Schegloff, Margaret Wetherell and Michael Billig (Billig 1999a,b; Schegloff 1997; 1998; 1999a,b; Wetherell 1998, reproduced as Chapter 6 in the present volume; see also Billig 1996; Potter 1998b; van Dijk 1999; Wetherell 2007).

Schegloff's (1997) essay is a remarkably concise and useful introduction to the theoretical problematic of discourse analysis. It is, however, an introductory account configured by its context as a *polemic* against (generally speaking) critical discourse analysis. In this essay, Schegloff develops both theoretically and in terms of empirical examples three arguments: a) speech events have meaning for the conversants. This meaning becomes evident, partly at least, in the next conversation turn, and, thus, it becomes subject to interactional control. Consequently, Schegloff argues that the academic analyses of the meaning of conversational texts can (and should) be grounded *endogenously*, in terms of the normative unfolding of the conversation. b)

To pursue this analytical goal it is necessary to highlight relevant dimensions of the context; dimensions, that is, which the analyses should empirically prove to be relevant for the participants and which are not necessarily relevant for the analysts in terms of their own concerns. c) This analytical attitude represents a useful exercise of analysts in 'discipline' as it drives them to 'attune' themselves to the endogenous concerns of the everyday life they study. Hence, as Schegloff argues, this analytical attitude functions as a 'security zone' against academic and theoretical *imperialism*, which often foists the concerns of intellectuals on the world of everyday life without taking any care to ground them in terms of local, endogenous relevancies. The following quote illustrates well the latter thesis:

> However well-intentioned and well-disposed toward the participants –indeed, often enough the whole rationale of the critical stance is the championing of what are taken to be authentic, indigenous perspectives- there is a kind of theoretical imperialism involved here, a kind of hegemony of the intellectuals, of the literati, of the academics, of the critics whose theoretical apparatus gets to stipulate the terms by reference to which the world is to be understood –when there has already *been* a set of terms by reference to which the world was understood- by those endogenously involved in its very coming to pass (Schegloff 1997: 167, emphasis in the original).

This emphasis on the endogenous conceptualization of the meaning and the context of (conversational) discourse, and the 'warning' against the 'imperialist' imposition of analysts' terms on the terms in which the (conversational) events of everyday life have occurred has direct implications for the (theoretical) response to the question whether this type of *formal* analysis is compatible with political analysis. Schegloff's reply (1997: 168) is 'who knows?' As he argues, in order to be in a position to answer such a question we must first understand the 'object' of our analysis, the conversational event, in terms of its endogenous composition. Only then can we start exploring the form which a critical approach to it can assume, but also the political issues which it enables us to address.

An important, critical response to Schegloff (1997) came from Wetherell (1998), in an essay which is reproduced within the present volume (see Chapter 6) and, therefore, shall not be reviewed here. I shall restrict myself to reviewing a critical rejoinder to Schegloff (1997) which has been formulated by Billig (1999a),[9] in an essay which, as the author acknowledges, comes to complement Wetherell's (1998) critical position. Billig, to begin with, and in tune with Wetherell, challenges Schegloff's claim that conversation analysis examines the participants' talk on their own terms. He notes that the terminology used by conversation analysis and its focus on the organizational structure of conversation is very distant from both the language and the concerns of speakers. This point carries Billig's critique a step beyond the analogous argument voiced by Wetherell. He argues that the focus of conversation analysis on highlighting common, structural patterns of sequential organization, irrespective of the content which these configure, leads analysts to a systematic disregard for the *topics* which preoccupy speakers, insofar as they, evidently, discuss *about them*. Consequently, Billig argues, this implies that to a certain extent, at least, the analysts' concerns are privileged in the practice of conversation analysis over the

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[9] For the entire 'conversation' between Michael Billig and Emmanuel Schegloff see, also, Billig (1999b) and Schegloff (1999a;b).

concerns of participants. Moreover, as he also notes, this dogmatic exclusive focus on the sequential organization of conversation bears the following paradoxical implication: if a (critical) analyst attempts to analyse a conversational incidence in terms of the thematic content to which speakers *explicitly* refer, s/he is accused of forcing his/her own theoretical terms on the 'participants' world.'

Billig's second critical remark concerns what he calls 'foundational rhetoric of conversation analysis.' As he argues, the empirical argument of conversation analysis contains, in addition to terms related to the analytic foregrounding of the activities of participants (e.g. 'preference organisation' etc.), a series of conceptual terms such as 'conversation', 'mundane conversation', 'everyday conversation', 'participants', 'members', 'orientation' etc., which are uncritically endorsed as 'neutral' descriptive terms. The question raised by Billig is the following: 'what does CA takes for granted in its own discourse, as it examines the taken-for-granted habits of 'ordinary' speakers?' (Billig 1999a: 548). This question, he argues, does not seem innocent at all if one upholds the theoretical position that the field in which the ideology to be (analytically) foregrounded is implicit, is the field of everyday habits which pass unnoticed. Hence, the putatively self-evident and taken-for-granted assumptions of social research could be analysed in respect of the ideological positions they fold in. Moreover, this is even truer for the type of social research which proclaims explicitly that is merely 'empirical' and devoid of any ideological overdeterminations. Billig's argument is then that the 'foundational rhetoric' of conversation analysis encompasses an overly 'participatory' depiction of the everyday social world and its events:

> 'Ordinary conversations' have 'participants' [...] who share the same organizational principles of talk, such as turn-taking systems. As such, the participants are 'members.' Schegloff uses the term 'members' without specifying what the members are members of. Perhaps it is a 'culture' or a 'society' (Garfinkel 1967). But it is left unelaborated. To elaborate exactly what the 'members' are members of and what the criteria of membership are, would take this short of conversation analysis towards the sort of sociology that it disavows. 'Member' is, of course, an analyst's term: it can be used whether or not the speakers orientate to any common 'membership' (Billig 1999a: 551).

This 'participatory' rhetorical assumption, Billig argues, conveys a picture of commonality and equality. Moreover, he notes, this picture is reinforced by the fact that, in the context of conversation analysis, a distinction is drawn between ordinary conversation and 'institutional talk.' The former is conceptualised as possessing 'bedrock status', while the latter is construed as a deviant case which is subject to many constraints. This distinction, too, is problematic, as Billig argues.

> What needs to be stressed is that the bedrock status given to conversation is not merely contestable; it carries wider rhetorical and sociological presumptions. Above all, it conveys an essentially non-critical view of the social world. The bedrock situation −or the default option- is implicitly depicted as a world of equality and participation, in which 'members' share systems of social order. Inequality is to be found in the exceptions −in institutional talk, interviews etc. Thus, traditional conversation analysis, far from being free from social presuppositions, carries them in the regular deployment of its foundational rhetoric. The warnings against being theoretical and against using conventional sociological analyses, together with the prescription to keep to the date, can serve

to protect these assumptions from analysis. If Schegloff claims that critical discourse analysts explicitly bring socially critical concepts to their study of conversation, so it can be argued that his form of conversation analysis is not ideologically neutral: it implicitly uses socially uncritical concepts in the regular conduct of its analyses (Billig 1999a: 552).

The debate concerning the context of action of discourse has a prominent place in the field of theoretical developments in the discursive turn of social psychology. This is because scholars like Wetherell and Billig do not reject conversation analysis *tout court*, but they outline, each one in their own way, the conditions for a supplementary, symmetrical approach to conversational circumstances both in terms of endogenous grounding and in more broadly hermeneutic and critical terms. This, as we argued above, constituted both the theoretical point of departure and the analytical trajectory outlined in *Discourse and Social Psychology* (Potter & Wetherell 1987), and in other seminal texts of the 1980s and the 1990s (e.g. Billig 1991; Billig et al. 1988; Potter 1996; Wetherell & Potter 1992). The fact that the debate took place between two representatives of the discursive turn in *social psychology* and an 'external', -in terms of academic affiliation-, scholar should not mislead. It would be rather safe to assume that Billig's and Wetherell's argument did not take issue with the tradition of conversation analysis in and of itself: the shafts of their critique were directed, in large part at least, against the approach to discourse analysis in social psychology which relies on terms almost exclusive to it (cf. Billig 1996; Edley & Wetherell 2001; Wetherell 2007), that is to the project of *discursive psychology*.

Subjectivity and / or Identity Practices in Discourse

The last debate that will concern us here is, on the one hand, highly important in theoretical terms, and very timely, on the other. It turns on the different discourse-analytic positions with regard to the conceptualization of the self, of subjectivity, or, otherwise, the identity-work that is performed 'practically' in discourse. These terms are, obviously, not identical: they derive from different theoretical traditions and comprise distinct, even if frequently implicit, assumptions with regard to the work and the perspective of discourse analysis. Early theoretical positioning on such issues can be found well back at the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s (e.g. Edwards & Potter 1992; Hollway 1989; Madill & Doherty 1994; Parker 1992; Potter & Wetherell 1987; Wetherell & Potter 1989; Wetherell 1994; Widdicombe 1992). However, this debate *remains* timely as the intellectual intensity of the relevant discussions increased dramatically in the late 1990s (e.g. Billig 1997; 1998; 1999c,d; Edwards 1997; Parker 1997a,b), it was carried out systematically during the 2000s (e.g. Billig 2000; 2002; 2005; 2006; Edwards 2006; 2007; Frosh & Baraitser 2008; Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman 2003; Georgaca 2005; Hollway & Jefferson 2005; Hook 2008; McHoul & Rapley 2003; Parker 2008; Rapley, McCarthy & McHoul 2003; Roy-Chowdhury 2010; Stavrakakis 2007; Wetherell 2003; 2005; 2007; 2008) and it is expected to continue unabated in the current decade, further stirred –perhaps- by Margaret Wetherell's (2012) recent publication of *Affect and Emotion*. It is characteristic, after all, that in the papers they contributed to the present volume, two of the protagonists of the discursive turn in social psychology address these issues precisely (Wendy Hollway Chapter 9 and Michael Billig Chapter 10). Jonathan Potter (Chapter 5), also, outlining the approach of discursive psychology, effectively sketches the outline of the theoretical and analytic premises of discursive psychology with regard to the question

of selfhood, identity or subjectivity. Insofar as the views of, Billig, Hollway and Potter are, adequately, set out in the chapters authored by them they will not be discussed in the present essay.

Discursive Practices

The question of the self has been an object of theoretical and, to a lesser degree, analytic concern for Potter and Wetherell (1987) in the chapter of their book with the ambiguous title «Speaking subjects». The ambiguity of the title consists in the fact that it allows for or invites two parallel readings: it refers, on the one hand, to 'subjects' who speak and, on the other hand, to 'subjects' as 'objects' of descriptive (or otherwise) practices, constructed within discourse. This ambiguity informs their entire approach to the question of the 'subject' insofar as this invests, programmatically at least, in what we have described as a 'symmetrical' treatment of discourse: as 'always already' constructed and as an object of active construction. Potter and Wetherell's starting point is their critical focus on three important theoretical approaches or 'models' of the self in the field of psychology and beyond it: (1) on trait theory, which implies, as they argue, a conceptualisation of the self as 'honest soul', (2) in role theory, with the corollary 'theatrical' or dramaturgical picture of the self it conveys and, (3) on humanistic perspectives which, according to Potter and Wetherell, involve a romantic picture of the self. Despite the fact that these three approaches outline largely conflicting 'models of the self', Potter and Wetherell argue that, nonetheless, they share a common, basic assumption: the *principle of realism.* The (narrative) discourse of these theories

> "is not present as discourse –as articulation […] the real is not articulated –it is" (Potter & Wetherell 1987: 101, quoting McCabe (1974: 12)). Likewise, all three pictures of the self-implicit in these distinct approaches do not draw our theoretical and analytic attention 'as constructions or discursive articulations but present themselves as representations of the *real* object' (Potter & Wetherell 1987: 101; emphasis in the original).

Against the realism that they diagnose in these traditional models of the self, Potter and Wetherell outline programmatically their own approach, drawing on alternative, constructionist, perspectives on the self (Gergen 1985; 1989; Harré 1983; 1985; 1989; Henriques et al. 1984; Sampson 1983; Shotter 1984). As they point out, in these alternative outlooks, the focus is no longer on the question of the true nature of the self but on how the self is spoken, how it is configured theoretically in discourse. This displacement, the authors argue, is in line with the discourse analytic approach which they programmatically outline.

> It is suggested that methods of making sense are the key to any kind of explanation of the self, as people's sense of themselves is in fact a conglomerate of these methods, produced through talk and theorizing. There is not "one" self waiting to be discovered or uncovered, but a multitude of selves found in the different kinds of linguistic practices articulated now, in the past, historically and cross-culturally (Potter & Wetherell 1987: 102).

According to the programmatic reasoning developed by Potter and Wetherell, the displacement from the realistic depiction of the nature of the self to the processes of a

discursive construction of the self requires the deployment, in terms of analytic 'weaving', of three strands, which the authors discern in recent, at the time, developments in the fields of social theory and social sciences. The first strand concerns the cultural variability of the self, as evidenced in ethnographic studies focussing on 'indigenous psychologies' (see Heelas & Lock 1981). The second strand derives from the studies in critical social psychology pursued by Rom Harré and John Shotter, which draw out the importance of the grammatical structure of language as a means for the construction of the self. The third strand, finally, the 'ideological self' as it is called, lays emphasis on the social and cultural background, but also on the implications that follow from the prevalence of particular types of selfhood in particular historical periods and on the ways in which such forms of self are implicated in the legitimation and reproduction of particular types of society. The relevant references of Potter and Wetherell on this point are to Marxist (see Althusser 1971) but also Foucauldian analyses of subjectivity (see Parker 1989b). In the indicative analyses which Potter and Wetherell cite 'programmatically,' there is an emphasis on the element of the 'function' of versions of selfhood/identity which are mobilized in circumstances of conversational discourse. 'Function' in this context, as in the entire book of Potter and Wetherell, is conceptualized in a dual way: on the one hand, in 'local' terms, bearing on what is accomplished by the particular versions of selfhood and identity mobilized in conversation and, on the other hand, in macro-social terms, regarding the ideological, legitimating role they perform.

As mentioned above, the symmetry in the conceptualization of discursive performativity, as outlined in Potter and Wetherell's *Discourse and Social Psychology*, was abandoned within Edwards and Potter's (1992) project of Discursive Psychology. In the exclusively ethnomethodological perspective of discursive psychology, there is no concern with and no analytic focus on the functions of discourse beyond those unfolding in the local context and recognised as such by participants themselves. In this work, the critical target of the authors was the (dominant) social cognition perspective on social psychology and its explicit assumption which takes the individual to be a possessor of a cognitive system with whose mental functions one strives to comprehend the complexity of the surrounding social world. In the Discursive Action Model, developed by Edwards and Potter (1992), the emphasis is displaced from the individual to interaction. The self is no longer conceptualized as a delimited entity in possession of a cognitive 'software' which tries to make sense of social events around it. The self is conceptualized as a relational and dispersed 'phenomenon' and its 'locus' is not the psychological interior (cf. Gergen 1991), but the field of social interaction. Hence, the emphasis of discursive psychology falls on the *normative reflexive discursive practices* which constitute, *at the same time,* versions of the 'world out there' as well as versions of 'subjectivity', that is 'mental' phenomena and 'cognitive' states, in pursuit of particular rhetorical ends, such as the accountability management of the speaker regarding the version of the 'facts' that she formulates. As Edwards (2007) makes it clear, the different accounts are to be analytically considered with respect to the constitutive work they carry out both on the 'object side' (of talk) as well as on the '*subject* side' (of talk).

For example, the classical question on which Edwards and Potter (1992) focus is the question of motives. From their perspective, motives are not broached as 'inner qualities' of individuals, but as rhetorical, explicit or implicit, stakes. As Edwards and Potter show in detail, participants in a conversation usually either ascribe motives to each other in order to undermine rival arguments or they pre-empt motives in order to

ground rhetorically the facticity of their own descriptions or arguments. Motives, however, are only one dimension of what Edwards (2007) calls 'subject side' of discursive practices. As Edwards and Potter (2005) argue, more recent discursive psychology analyses bring out *multiple* ways in which 'mental states' are managed in conversations. Relevant empirical studies, for instance, focus on how conversants manage the accountability of what they say in terms of direct or indirect references to *disposition*s, while the empirical documentation of the 'subject side' in ongoing practices of accountability management entails by now also a growing analytical attention to the modalities of phonetic articulation of speech, which include intonation, laughter and other non-verbal features of speech (Edwards 2007). It is important to note here that the strand of discursive psychology established by Edwards and Potter (1992) is not *just one* among the various other versions into which the discursive turn in social psychology has diversified. It would be no overstatement to claim that, in terms of the body of research literature produced, it ended up being the dominant approach to discourse analysis in social psychology -and beyond (see, among others, contributions to Antaki & Widdicombe 1998; Hepburn & Wiggins 2007; McHoul & Rapley 2001; Molder & Potter 2005).

Subjectivity[10]

The ethnomethodological conceptualization of identity as an object constituted within discursive practices, which is endorsed, in however distinct ways, both by Potter and Wetherell (1987) and by Edwards and Potter (1992) has come in for criticism from very early on by scholars and researchers who disagree with the diminution of subjectivity as an inner psychic process that they diagnose in these approaches (e.g. Hollway 1989; Madill & Doherty 1994; Parker 1992; 1994). As it is argued, the notion of the subject as a 'user of discourse', as a product 'of the grammar of language' and of narrative resources is contentious to the extent that it reduces individual experience to what Parker (1997a;b) calls 'blank subjectivity'. Parker (1997b) notes that 'blankness' is often coupled with another version of subjectivity, which he calls 'uncomplicated subjectivity.' This version derives from the humanist tradition. Even if humanism is an important current which opposed the positivist conception of science, the individual risks being conceptualised in a simplistic manner, detached from its social context. Then, according to Parker, inner processes are either disregarded or considered in a univocal, 'naive', decontextualized manner. Parker puts forward a third approach to subjectivity which, as he argues, eschews essentialist and individualist reductions –'complex subjectivity.' This perspective on subjectivity combines the intentions and the desires of the subject with the functions of social structures and their particular cultural elements, as well as with discursive practices.

'Complex subjectivity' draws on psychoanalytic thought to make sense of the subject and to disentangle texts. Psychoanalysis, the 'repressed other' of psychology, as Burman (1994) calls it, introduces a version of subjectivity which traditional psychology systematically avoids. The psychoanalytic perspective helps to read a subject which is multiple, contradictory and irrational, which is characterised by predictability over time, attached as it is to particular positions iterated in discourse, and which can withstand change although it is capable of transformation. The notion

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[10] The contribution of Thalia Dragonas to the literature review of the psychodynamically oriented approaches presented in this section is quantitatively immeasurable and qualitatively invaluable.

of *investment* has been used as explanatory term for such a subject (see Hollway, this volume). Human beings invest in particular positions which are produced through discourse (particularly those which entail some form of power) and underpin their sense of identity and continuity (Georgaca, 2005). Discourse analysts, as Parker (1997b) notes, doubt the contribution of psychoanalysis to their field as they are afraid of reductionist tendencies. Discourse analysis, however, should not, as the argument goes, disregard the need to understand how and why the speaker and the listener or the author and the reader are mobilized through language, and what are their desires and their motives. There are two ways of using psychoanalysis to connect subjectivity with discourse: one uses the theory of object-relations and the other uses the Lacanian thesis on the unconscious.

Georgaca (2005) sums up nicely these two ways. As she argues, the first focuses on how the positioning of the subject in discourse and the investment in verbal practices feed on defensive strategies which seek to keep the self immune to unconscious assaults. Wendy Hollway (e.g. Chapter 9 in the present volume) has pursued this route to discourse analysis. Anxiety and defensive strategies are not purely inner psychic processes. They are influenced by and they influence discourse, and they are an effect of intersubjectivity. The subject is always a 'psychosocial' subject. However, the critique against reading the self-defending psychosocial subject through the lenses of object-relations argues that, even if analysis takes the social environment on board, explanations are sought at the level of individual psychological process and they risk pathologizing the subject.

According to object-relations theory, inner reality exists before language, and it is distinct from external reality even if language and external reality affect inner reality. The unconscious is not located in language but in the subjects who communicate. Hence, discursive exchange is analysed with a view to enabling the researcher or the therapist to understand the unconscious anxiety and the defensive mechanisms to which speakers resort. The inconsistencies of discourse, negations, silences, associations and the 'bridges' from one topic to another are of particular interest. The interest is focussed basically on the content, on *what* is said or not said, rather than on the form, on how discourse is articulated.

According to Georgaca, the second way of analysing subjectivity passes through Lacanian theory. Rereading Freud, Lacan introduced an unconscious constituted and structured through language, laying thus a much heavier emphasis on its social production and regulation. The unconscious is symbolic. The unconscious and language are made up of the same material and they are subject to the same processes. Insofar as social life is permeated by language, which is inescapably symbolic, the unconscious and the social are co-extensive. Lacan's thesis carries implications for textual analysis. The unconscious is grounded in the text and not in the human mind. The unconscious is language which speaks through the speaker, saying something more or something less or even something different from what is intended by the speaker. In contrast, then, to the version of object-relations, Lacanian discourse analysis is focussed on what the text articulates and implies beyond and regardless of the subject's intention. What the text reveals about the subject does not concern the interests and the intentions which pre-exist and determine what is being said, but the versions of subjectivity which are shaped through the text itself and which are somehow offered to the speaker. Finally, desire is what is most intimate and personal for the subject, as symbolically articulated and always referring to the other. The investment in particular discourses and subject positions is the insistence of desire in

addressing the other from particular signifying positions, producing preferred versions of subjectivity.

In sum, the theorists of object-relations assume the existence of a pre-social inner reality, which is subsequently shaped through interpersonal and social process. The psychic does not consist of social experiences. It is mediated by them. The commonly produced discourse is an effect of the relation of the speakers but this relation is the product of the early experiences of the parties. By contrast, the Lacanian approach argues for a thoroughly socially constituted nature of subjectivity. If subjectivity and the social are co-extensive, the question about how one influences the other makes no sense.

Psycho-discursive Practices

The distance that separates the ethnomethodologically inspired approach of Edwards and Potter's discursive psychology from the psychodynamic, discourse-analytical approaches to the question of subjectivity is evident. For discursive psychology, the sole legitimate field of analysis of subjectivity is the '*rich surface* of language and interaction' (cf. Edwards 2006). Psychodynamically oriented discourse-analytical approaches, on the other hand, assume (and, perhaps, largely) *prescribe* an inner psychic world. However, the relevant theoretical (and empirical) positions in the discursive turn of social psychology are not reducible to these two diametrically opposite positions. In Chapter 10 of the present volume, Michael Billig summarizes his re-reading of Freud by 'reading' the nodal psychodynamic notion of repression not as an intra-psychic mechanism but as a discursive process. Billig's gesture is inscribed in his broader project to bring out the conversational activities that make up what psychoanalytic thought defines as unconscious (e.g. Billig 1999c). However, the dialogue of Billig with psychoanalysis is not the only relevant dialogue here. Margaret Wetherell, too, from the early '90's already, converses with the psychodynamically oriented positions in the field of discourse analysis (e.g. Wetherell 1994; 1995; 2003; 2005; 2007; 2008; Wetherell & Edley 1999). Her positions in this dialogue bear a particular *theoretical* importance as they shed light on the points of a (potential) convergence and a (certain) divergence between psychoanalysis and discursive psychology (see especially Wetherell 2003). However, the thrust of these positions is not reducible to their theoretical importance. With these positions Wetherell sketches out an innovative direction of empirical research in the field of the discursive turn to social psychology, pursued further in her recent account on affect and emotion (Wetherell 2012).

The point of departure for Wetherell's critical position towards the psychodynamic discourse-analytical approaches is her conviction that these approaches recourse to traditional and familiar antinomies of psychology (individual/society, free will/determinism) and that this move constitutes a problematic foundation for discourse analytic research. As argued by Wetherell (1994), the dichotomy individual/society, which becomes theoretically questionable in the light of post-structuralist theories, has been undermined *empirically* since the '60s, through the work of micro-sociologists such as Goffman. Goffman's work, Wetherell argues, effected a rupture, as, within its frame, agency is broached not in traditionally psychological terms, but as an *achievement* in the context of social interaction. In Goffman (1961) the analytical interest of the author focuses on what the inmates of total institutions should do so as to be *recognised* as agents by others. This displacement, from the conceptualisation of mental states as *explanatory resources* to

their treatment as a *topic of analysis* has borne fruit, and turned out to be extremely productive, in terms of empirical documentation, in the field of discourse analysis in social psychology. The approach of discursive psychology has demonstrated empirically ways in which a series of mental states such as motives, intentions, dispositions, convictions and desires are constituted interactionally. According to Wetherell (1994), the rationale of discursive psychology should be pushed to its radical extremes without any regressions to the convenient but theoretically problematic antinomies of traditional psychology. Rebutting Parker's (1994) critique that the picture of subjectivity implicit in the approach of discursive psychology is 'blank' rather than 'complex', Wetherell objects that the studies of discursive psychology shed light on the highly *complex* processes through which 'personality', 'character', 'intentionality' and the 'self' emerge as 'products' of social negotiation within analytically charted interactions.

Although Wetherell endorses in principle the analytical project of discursive psychology, she recognises that in existing inquiries within its field there is a theoretical and empirical deficit, which, in her view, opens up exiting horizons for the further expansion of discourse analysis. What is at stake here is the theoretical conceptualization and the empirical documentation of ways in which identity is sustained in the long run, through the iteration of narrative patterns bearing on the relation and the connection between 'self/other'. The deficit, then, which Wetherell (1994) diagnoses in discursive psychology had to do with the question of 'personal continuity', which in the field of psychodynamically oriented approaches is covered by the notion of 'investment,' as mentioned above. The discourse-analytic solution put forward by Wetherell (2003; 2007) is to paraphrase the wider issues, which are traditionally conceptualized as identity or subjectivity issues, as questions bearing on what she calls 'personal order' (Wetherell 2003; 2007).

> Personal order is derived from social order but is not isomorphic with it. A person [...] is a site, like institutions or social interaction, where flows of meaning-making practices or semiosis (Hodge and Kress 1988) become organised. Over time particular routines, repetitions, procedures and modes of practice build up to form personal style, psycho-biography and life history and become a guide for how to go on in the present [...] (Wetherell 2007: 668).

According to Wetherell (2003; 2007; 2008· see also Wetherell & Edley 1998), in the case of the personal order, the practices which make it up could be called 'psycho-discursive practices.' Let us see how Wetherell defines psycho-discursive practices:

> Psychodiscursive practices are those which among the sum of social practices constitute a psychology, formulate a mental life and have consequences for the formation and representation of the person (Wetherell 2007: 668).

> Psycho-discursive practices are recognizable, conventional, collective and social procedures through which character, self, identity, the psychological, the emotional, motives, intentions and beliefs are performed, formulated and constituted (Wetherell 2008: 80)

In her paper 'Paranoia, ambivalence and discursive practices' Wetherell (2003) offers empirical examples of the 'paraphrasing' she proposes. Examples, that is, of the way, in which questions that are traditionally analysed psycho-dynamically under the

notion of 'subjectivity' can be analytically treated in terms of 'personal order' and and psycho-discursive practices. In this paper, Wetherell identifies, in a body of research interviews, 'relational scenarios' which are articulated in the discourse of the interviewees and which, in psychodynamic terms, would be easily categorized as indices of a personal psychic disposition, constituted either in terms of 'ambivalence and complexity' or in terms of 'manic omnipotence.' In the discourse-analytic perspective upheld by Wetherell, however, these relational scenarios could be usefully conceptualised as 'discursive styles' or 'routines.' Drawing on Bourdieu's (1992) sociology of lived practices, Wetherell argues that such 'discursive styles'

> are part of the discursive "habitus" or "cultural capital" available to the child […]. In a sense, they are part of what we have called elsewhere the psycho-discursive practices (Wetherell & Edley 1999), which make up what could be described as "psychological capital". Children learn how to model and become expert in reproducing as appropriate certain psychological languages for representing self and other (Wetherell 2003: 115-116).

Respectively, in another paper entitled 'Unconscious conflict or everyday accountability?', Wetherell (2005), criticizing the psychodynamic discourse analysis of interviews presented by Hollway and Jefferson (2005), questions the reduction of the words of the interviewee to indications of an implicit, unconscious conflict. For Wetherell, the specific discursive practices of the speaker can be conceptualized more easily and more tenably from an empirical perspective as interactive 'products': as psycho-discursive practices fully co-ordinated and analytically explicable in terms of orientation and management of the personal accountability of the speaker, in the frame set to him by his recurrent participation in and exposition to processes of research interview.

What is perhaps interesting to note here is the theoretical scope of Wetherell's argument which unfolds in her essays on the problematic of subjectivity. In the nearly twenty five years of the discursive turn to social psychology, the most amply documented approaches to the self or identity are located at the two ends of the continuum: on the one side, meticulous *micro*-analyses of interactional negotiation and constitution of the self in conversation, on the other, theoretically exciting *macro*-analyses of the historical and cultural variation of the self and its implication in power/knowledge complexes; or, admittedly, analyses which combine these two orientations. Wetherell (see, particularly, Wetherell 2007: 668) suggests and explores the possibility of a *meso*- level discourse analysis in the field of selfhood and identity. This 'meso' level of analysis is located in the regularities and reiterations of the relational p*osition-takings* towards others, which can be analytically highlighted in narratives (and beyond). Such an analysis, of course, combines inevitably the trajectory of *epistemic constructionism* (Edwards 1997; see also Ch. 5 in the present volume) with the trajectory of *ontological constructionism* which informs much critical work in different quarters of the social sciences, from developmental psychology to socio-cultural anthropological analyses. As Wetherell (2007: 672) argues,

> This kind of discursive psychology attempts to describe the configurations of identity and subjectivity which result at particular moments and which might be maintained for shorter and longer durations. It also attempts to describe the cultural resources, struggles, interactions and relations that the person is working

with and how these have been mobilised, temporarily stabilised and turned into their own personal order.

According to Wetherell, the coalescence of epistemic and ontological constructionism in the analysis of discursive psychology gives rise to analytical projects which are focused not only on how *selves* are made but also on what kind of *person* is made. This type of composite, theoretical and analytical, discourse-analytic perspective opens up groundbreaking vistas for empirical research within the discursive turn in social psychology.

Epilogue

The debates outlined in the present chapter reveal the discursive turn to be a live, vibrant and far from stillborn (cf. Wetherell, McGhee & Stivens 2006) field of theory and research production in social psychology. It is not only that the discursive turn has managed to transform the traditionally positivist discipline of social psychology, to the degree and the extent it has managed to do so. The debates that we outlined disclose, we believe, the picture of an intellectual current which through its creative, although frequently 'hot', controversies reflects systematically on the conditions of its existence. What should be also underscored, perhaps, is that these intellectual debates do not exhaust the foregoing current, nor do they exhaust themselves on the level of theory. They do not impede the development of distinct, at least, traditions of empirical research in its field. In any case, the far from negligible –qualitatively and quantitatively- body of research literature which accompanies these debates provides the most telling demonstration. I believe that the debates outlined here constitute theoretical 'matrices' of the hitherto existing relevant research output, and also 'nodes' around which the outlook of expected, future developments of the discursive turn in social psychology will be structured.

Translation from Greek: Alexandros Kioupkiolis

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2

A Social Psychology of Category Construction

Nick Hopkins & Steve Reicher

In this chapter we will be concerned with how people speak about their identities – especially their social identities (i.e., those based upon their group memberships). This may lead the reader to suspect that we wish to access and map the contours of an individual's interior world. Moreover, readers of this volume would doubtless be suspicious of such a project. To conceptualise talk about identity in such a way can be deeply problematic. As so many contributors to this volume have argued, talk has an action-orientation. That is, people do things with words: they do not simply describe themselves and their actions, they construct them and such constructions are organised and consequential in all manner of ways (e.g., in allocating blame or responsibility).

Yet, at the same time, there is a sense in which we are interested in people's interior worlds. Moreover, we are not only interested in people's talk about themselves and others. We are also interested in whether they will help others or remain indifferent to these others' predicament, whether they will act against others or not, who they view as leaders, and more besides. At first sight it might seem difficult to integrate, on the one hand, an interest in language and construction, and the other, an interest in the cognitive and behavioural realm. So too, it may seem difficult to resolve our adopting a research strategy that demands attention to language and social construction alongside the pursuit of laboratory-based social psychological experimentation. However, we believe that there is much to be gained through bringing these apparently different topics and research strategies together. In order to pursue this argument we must first address a central concept in social psychological research – identity.

The term identity is widely employed in the social sciences and beyond. However, across the social sciences usage of this concept as an analytic tool has attracted much criticism (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Too often the concept is weighed down with essentialist baggage that neglects social actors' own understandings of themselves. Discursive social psychologists influenced by ethnomethodology have been particularly critical of the use of the term as an analytic tool (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). However, we believe that the concept of social identity has some value as an analytic construct. Specifically, we believe that it is important to explore people's subjective self-definitions and how these shape behaviour. However, in adopting this position we also argue that these self-definitions are constructed and contested, and that research must address (amongst other things) the argumentative construction of identities. Indeed, as will become apparent, we hold that it is precisely because identity definitions are consequential for thought and action that arguments about these identities are worth entering into and therefore exist. Before progressing too far with this line of thinking we start with the consequences of social identification for cognition and behaviour. This will allow some sense of the stakes involved in the definition of social identities and prepare the ground for our argument that category construction should be seen as central to the making and re-making of the social world.

A Social Psychology of Social Identity

The concept of social identity developed in Europe out of a sense of dissatisfaction with attempts to explain intergroup phenomena in terms of personal and interpersonal processes. Tajfel (1978) drew a distinction between individual-level and group-level processes which was developed by Turner (1982) and elaborated in what became known as *self-categorisation theory* (SCT: Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987). This tradition emphasises the role of social categories in self and other construal. It argues that the self may be defined at different levels of abstraction. Sometimes this may be in terms of individual uniqueness. At other times it may be in terms of specific group memberships. This shift in the subjective salience of individual-level *personal* and group-based *social* identities is important. According to SCT it underlies the behavioural shift from inter-individual to inter-group behaviour and this latter involves processes that cannot be reduced to those involving individuals' personality characteristics. This approach therefore recognises that group identities are fundamentally social and irreducible to the properties of the individuals constituting the group. Rather, what it means to be an academic, a Greek, a Muslim, or whatever, is a product of wider social processes such that when we act in terms of a social identity we act as socially constituted beings.

Such an approach has much merit. In the broader social scientific critique of much established theorising on identity, researchers have increasingly come to question whether identities can be conceived of as having an existence independent of human cognition and have come to emphasise the importance of the group-making activities that support such self-categories (and without which they would not exist). Thus, speaking of national and ethnic identities, Macdonald (1993) argues that they do not exist apart from or beneath their social representation or the conditions of their own making. It therefore follows that much may be gained through exploring the human social practices that make thinking about oneself in terms of particular group memberships possible. In similar vein, Brubaker, Loveman & Stamatov (2004) argue the promise of a more cognitive approach to ethnicity and nationality is that it 'may help connect our analyses of what goes on in people's heads with our analysis of what goes on in public' (p. 46). This is well evinced in recent critical analyses of national identity. For example, Billig (1995) explores how in even the most established of nations, the category of 'nation' is daily 'flagged' in everyday life. In this 'banal nationalism' the nation is presupposed as the frame for everything - from what counts as 'the news' to what we understand as 'the weather'.

The concept of social identity as developed by Tajfel and Turner offers a social psychological framework that articulates well with this emphasis on everyday social practice. The theory makes no assumptions about which categories are used in self-definition. Nor does it imply that social identities are in any way superficial. Rather they are deeply personal and profoundly felt. Moreover, Tajfel and Turner do not seek to specify the behavioural outcomes of social identification. Rather they explored the dynamics to identity processes and recognised the implications of these processes would be contingent upon context. Although originally theorised to address inter-group relations and their transformation (Tajfel, 1978, 1982; Tajfel and Turner, 1979) the concept has been developed through being applied to a larger range of phenomena (e.g., self and other stereotyping, social influence, etc: see Turner, et al., 1987, Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). As a model of process, the theory holds that group behaviour arises from our knowledge of our membership of social groups and

the meaning that such memberships have for us. Group members' behaviour is shaped by their cognitive representation of who they are in relation to others and the psychological processes involved in this are captured by the concept of 'depersonalised' self-perception. Simply put, this means that when a group membership is salient, rather than thinking of oneself in terms of one's unique individuality, one thinks of oneself as a category exemplar and conforms to one's representation of the beliefs, values and norms stereotypically associated with ingroup identity.

Evidence of the impact of collective identities on judgement and behaviour may be found in a diverse literature based on the logic of laboratory experimentation. It has been shown that shared identification with a group (or a common social identification) leads people to seek agreement (Haslam, Turner, Oakes, McGarty & Reynolds, 1998), to cooperate (Tyler & Blader, 2000), to respect each other (Kramer, Brewer & Hanna, 1996) and to help each other (Levine, Prosser, Evans and Reicher, 2005). Such research conveys something of the role of shared group identity for cognition and behaviour. Yet, the identity-behaviour relationship is not simple. Whilst some have tried to uncover generic relationships between collective identities and particular behavioural outcomes –e.g., group identity and out-group derogation, group identity and ethnocentricism, group identity and violence– such attempts have been problematic. Rather than seeking generality in terms of the actions that flow from collective identities, it is better to seek generality in terms of the generic processes that allow group behaviour of any sort and so explore how these same processes may, in different contexts, support and sustain quite different behaviours.

For example, the theory argues that an important social identity process involves the making of inter-group comparisons and the establishment of the group's positive distinctiveness in relation to other group identities. Whereas some have interpreted this as implying a motivation to derogate others and indulge in acts of out-group discrimination, this is misleading (Reicher, 2004; Turner, 1999). Inter-group differentiation is a process and not a specific behaviour, and behavioural outcomes depend upon the norms and values of the relevant identity. Turner argues that '(p)rocess theories such as social identity and self-categorization require the incorporation of specific content into their analyses before they can make predictions either in the laboratory or the field and are designed to require such an incorporation' (Turner, 1999, p. 34). Or, to put it another way, the behavioural consequence of the process depends on the social processes shaping the definition of in-group identity. That is, questions as to which category is relevant in self-definition, the scope of the boundaries to that category (who does or doesn't count as ingroup), and the values and behaviours associated with this collective, are all social products and we are therefore directed to attend to the social processes involved in their definition. The issue then becomes the conceptualisation of these social processes and the products they give rise to.

In relation to the first issue (the social processes involved in identity construction) we wish to emphasise the role of dispute and argument. Identities are constructed, and because of their behavioural significance, this process attracts contestation with those wishing to organise different forms of collective action advancing different images of ingroup identity. In relation to the second issue (the conceptualisation of the product resulting from such processes) it follows that identities should not be seen as simply involving perceptions of the world as it is now. Rather, constructions of identity may be conceptualised as being oriented to organising group members' action. Indeed, they can be viewed as constructions designed to mobilise the action that makes and

remake the social world (Reicher & Hopkins, 1996 a, b, 2001). In other words, people's talk of identity should be understood as having a performative and constitutive dimension, and as organised to encourage the forms of action that would realise a particular vision of how the social world should be. That is, identity constructions may be conceptualised as 'projects' to be realised in the future (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

Lest this sound overly abstract, let us now consider some examples that illustrate these themes in various ways.

Who Counts as Belonging?

Questions as to who belongs to a group are rarely abstract affairs. Indeed, in some context they can even be matters of life and death. For example, at a time when Jewish communities across Europe were murdered in the Nazi Holocaust many Jews in Bulgaria survived because large numbers of their fellow Bulgarians were mobilised to demonstrate on their behalf (Todorov, 2001). This does not mean that there were no Bulgarian anti-semites. Rather it reveals something of the extent to which the criteria for national inclusion were contested. Whereas some articulated exclusionary definitions of Bulgarian national identity that demanded the deportation of Bulgaria's Jews, others offered inclusionary definitions. Indeed, analyses of the key texts (especially speeches and letters) mobilising support for Bulgaria's Jews shows that constructions of national identity that depicted Jews as 'community aliens' were countered with arguments that them as members of the national in-group and as sharing in-group values (Reicher, Cassidy, Wolpert, Hopkins & Levine, 2006). Moreover, these counter-arguments did not merely define Jews as ingroup but also held that for Bulgarians to collude with the Nazis would be a stain upon Bulgaria's reputation. In other words, whereas others depicted Jews as a threat to national identity their opponents construed collusion with the Nazis as identity threatening.

The wider point is that ingroup pride is not to be equated with discrimination and violence against minorities. Here it was mobilised in their defence with the key issue being how the boundaries of belonging are defined and ingroup values and interests constructed. In the next section we discuss the issue of values in more detail.

The Contents to Group Identity

The logic to the social identity tradition is that individuals act in terms of the social identity that is psychologically prominent or 'salient'. In the language of the theory, group members perceive themselves as interchangeable category examplars rather than as unique individuals, and following this depersonalisation of self-construal conform to a representation of the values and norms associated with their group's culture. Much lay and academic theorising on identity assumes this representation to be singular and fixed. However, the reality is that it is a site of ongoing dispute and contestation, and this requires an alternative conception of a group's culture.

Consider for example, the two extracts below in which two activists from different poles of the political spectrum characterise the Scots' national identity. In doing so, both invoke the same popular Scottish saying – "we're a' Jock Tamson's bairns" (literally, "we are all the children of Jock Tamson"). Although this saying's origins are a little unclear, the saying itself conveys the idea that beneath the surface of socially created difference all share a basic common humanity. Yet, if this saying is

popular throughout Scotland and is widely regarded as revealing some deep truths about Scottish values, we actually find that its meaning is far from fixed or given. For example, in the voice of one activist (on the left) it was used to advance a radical communitarian politics:

Error! Cannot open file.

However, this saying and the sentiments behind it were not the exclusive property of those on the left, and could as easily be employed by an activist of the right. Thus, when an activist from the right faced the interviewer's suggestion that the Scots were 'inherently egalitarian and left of centre', he immediately denied the claim ('Well they're certainly not inherently egalitarian') and proceeded to argue that there were actually significant social class divisions within the Scottish nation but that these were quietly accepted and not experienced as problematic. Moreover, this quiet acceptance of the status quo reflected the Scots' disregard for social status:

> [Scotland] is a very small country and everyone knows everyone else. It's only in the larger countries that the Duc de Normandie is not known by the burghers of Calais that you get an aristocratic structure. There is a perfectly good aristocratic structure in Scotland but the ...it's rather like a big pub, Scotland, you know, everyone talks to everyone else and nobody minds who you are particularly; "we're all Jock Tamson's bairns".

Here "we're all Jock Tamson's bairns" is used to promote hierarchy rather than democratic community. It is used to endorse acceptance of inequality rather than action to overcome inequality. Indeed, the Scots' sense of common humanity features as a consolation for our different stations in life rather than a platform from which to challenge them. The distinction between the two usages of the same saying is very close to McCrone's distinction between an 'idealist' and an 'activist' interpretation of the notion that all humans have equal worth in an unequal society. In the idealist reading: 'if man is primordially equal, social structural inequalities do not matter, so nothing needs to be done' (McCrone, 1992, p. 90). However, the activist reading requires the active pursuit of strategies that resolve the anomaly between primordial equality and humanly constructed inequality.

Such variation in the understandings of Scottishness – or any other national identity - is quite typical (Reicher and Hopkins, 2001). It is also typical of those identities that have written codes of conduct – e.g., religious identities. Take for example Muslim's Islamic identity. All too often, this has typically been viewed from 'an uncritically essentialist standpoint' that obscures a 'heterogeneous, dynamic and complex human reality' (Said, 1995: p. 333). Indeed, it is not uncommon to find the meaning of Muslims' Islamic identity being approached through an examination of Islamic texts. Such an approach assumes the religious origins of words determines identity (for a critical analysis see Halliday, 1996). Contesting such assumptions, Eickelman and Piscatori (1990) caution against presuming the significance of any text and emphasise the importance of the political, social and economic context in which texts are interpreted. For example, they observe that the understanding of the Qur'anic terms 'mustad'afun' ('the oppressed') and 'mustakbarun' ('the oppressors') in the construction of identity in revolutionary Iran was shaped by the earlier publication of Fanon's anti-colonial classic *Wretched of the Earth*. Yet, once again, it is not simply the case that the same identity can be understood differently in differently contexts:

even within the same context, the meaning of texts is a site of dispute as different people articulate different visions of the future. For example, as British Muslims have debated how they should relate to non-Muslims in Britain and to non-British Muslims across the globe, so their conceptualisations of their Islamic identity has been contested (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2004; Hopkins, Reicher, & Kahani-Hopkins, 2003; Kahani-Hopkins and Hopkins, 2002). More concretely, as British Muslims deliberated upon whether and how to participate in UK elections they elaborated different understandings of their Islamic identity. For some, this identity was defined such that participation expressed identity. For others, it was defined such that participation subverted it. Again, depending on the particular projects being advanced we find different characterisations of group identity.

Yet, whilst there is diversity there is also a striking commonality. Regardless of the specific projects advanced, these different characterizations of Islamic identity all referred to earlier periods when Muslims lived as social and political minorities. Often these concerned the period when the Prophet and his companions lived as a minority in Makkah (where they were outnumbered by a non-Muslim tribe called the Quraysh) before the foundation of the First Islamic State in Madinah. The key point is that the meaning and significance of Prophetic example depended on the future that the activists wished to bring into being. Referring to the same Prophetic example, quite different versions of identity were articulated as the basis for participation and non-participation.

Three aspects to these various debates are noteworthy. The first is the relationship between intra-group diversity and the commonality of identity. In much lay and academic theorising such a diversity of opinion would suggest talk of a common identification to be a fiction. However, we would argue that such diversity does not necessarily obviate any commonality. Diversity can also signal debate, and unless there is a commitment to and investment in the concept of a common identity, debate and contestation have little logic (Hopkins, Reicher and Kahani-Hopkins, 2003). Or to put it another way, it is because of a common identification that debate exists, has value and is worth entering into as those with different views on how the community should develop advance different definitions of collective identity.

The second point concerns the scope to such debate. Assumptions about the immutability of identity suggest contestation to be limited to topics at the margins of group identity. Yet, the saying "we're all Jock Tamson's bairns" is commonplace in Scotland and is oriented to by all as revealing something of Scots' national identity. So too, Prophetic example is central to Islam. However, it is precisely because certain figures, histories, traditions and cultural products are familiar to all that they attract contestation as group members seek to ground their preferred course of action in collective identity.

The third issue concerns the conceptualisation of a group's culture. Rather than being fixed, culture may better be viewed as constituting a 'reserve' (Reszler, 1992) of symbols and meanings to be appropriated and deployed in the activity of identity definition. The advantage of such an alternative is that our attention is necessarily drawn to the issue of human agency and how the meanings of cultural products undergo constant reconstruction according to the rhetorical context of their use. This point is echoed in Tudor's (1972) analysis of political myths - the stories that community members tell about themselves. He maintains that 'a myth has no determinate existence apart from the versions of it put forward in argument by various interested individuals' (p. 47). Indeed, he continues, that 'to proffer a myth is to

perform a deliberate act' such that 'an individual stamp will be left upon it no matter how orthodox the narrator tries to be' (p. 48).

The broader methodological implication of this insight is that studies of identity content need to exercise caution. Our methods should not be premised on the popular (yet erroneous) assumption that identities have a singular 'true' meaning or content. Rather, our methods must be attuned to issues of contestation and strategy. For example, when exploring identity content it might be tempting to aggregate the many different versions of the group's cultural reserve in the hope of distilling from them insights concerning an underlying commonality. However, such a strategy strips these resources from the context of their use and so is likely to result in an account of identity content which is so empty as to be meaningless (Tudor, 1972). Moreover, it is important to interrogate each and every identity definition for the strategic work that it achieves in relation to the alternatives with which it is in contention. Even where a particular version achieves some purchase upon the popular consciousness, it is appropriate to attend to the alternatives that haunt it (Billig, 1987). Only then will we appreciate the strategic significance of any construction and resist the temptation to reify that which is contingent and strategically organised as a given (Kahani-Hopkins and Hopkins, 2002).

Yet, whereas reifying identity constructions as 'givens' is an analytic problem it should also be clear that this is exactly what the participants in arguments over identity must do for their preferred vision to win out over its rivals. Thus when we come to investigating the construction of identity, it is important that our analyses explore how identity constructions are naturalised and their constructed quality concealed. Again, this returns us to the point that whereas essentialised images of social identities are analytically weak, they are politically potent.

Perhaps the most striking example of this can be found in talk of group identity that makes reference to the concept of 'character'. For example, after the Spanish Civil War, General Franco's regime construed Spanish national character so as to depict the fascist political project as identity-expressive and the liberalism of their Republican foes as alien. Central to this ideological and economic remaking of Spain was a construction of national character based on a eulogisation of the small-holding peasantry (Richards, 1996). Much was made of the peasantry's connection to the land and how the peasantry's values arose from their interaction with the Spanish environment. For example, fascist propaganda used the writings of Miguel de Unamuno who had described how: "in the interior lives a race of dry complexion, hard and wiry, toasted by the sun and cut down by the cold, a race of sober men, the product of a long selection by the frosts of the cruellest winters and a series of periodic penuries, suited to the inclemencies of the climate and the poverty of life" (Miguel de Unamuno, 1895, cited in Richards, 1996, p. 154). Such constructions were employed to suggest that 'soft' liberalism was an alien import quite literally 'out of place' in Spain. They were also used to extract sacrifices from the working population: the nation could be addressed and exhorted in terms of its hard-working, thrifty and selfless stoicism to fulfil the Fascists' project of economic self-sufficiency (Richards, 1996). Again, the point is simple. If talk of national character is analytically weak, politically it is immensely potent: here it allowed fascist values to be construed and disseminated as genuinely indigenous and the basis for identity-expressive behaviour. That is, because the concept of character (here national character) implies a fixed immutable essence to identity it is an ideal vehicle with which to naturalise one's preferred version of identity and obscure the degree to which it is contingent upon rhetorical construction and imbued with strategic purpose.

Identity and Leadership

Thus far we have considered how identities are constructed so as to organise identity-related action in a particular direction. Whatever the particular course of action proposed, identity is defined so as to imply that one's own preferred course of action is that which embodies group identity. However, attention sometimes shifts from the construction of identity in general to the construction of a particular individual as embodying group identity, and this takes us to the issue of how leadership is claimed and performed.

An interesting example of this can be found in the headwear of Yasser Arafat. Throughout the long years of conflict in Palestine, Arafat was famous for wearing a scarf - the kufiya. The symbolism of this is complex. As Swedenburg (1990) explains, the kufiya is actually specific to peasants and the Bedouin who constitute only a small proportion of the Palestinian population (which over time has been spread across the region and beyond). Thus what is really striking about the headwear is the way in which it was nationalised to produce (amongst a geographically-scattered population) a sense of national identity with roots in a specific place. So the choice of the peasant to personify the nation was not simply because this group was numerically predominant or was itself the to-be-mobilised constituency. Rather it was the symbolism of the peasantry – especially their intimate relationship with the land - that is so important. It helped imagine a reintegrated nation, and asserted a relationship between that nation and the land.

In this context, Arafat's wearing of the kuifiya was doubly symbolic. Not only did it reproduce and disseminate an image of the Palestinian nation based on an intimate association with a particular land and territory, it also worked to construct Arafat's personal embodiment of that nation. Given the barriers of geographical distance brought about by the PLO's long years of exile and the barriers of class and lifestyle that separated this leadership from its constituency, this is no minor achievement. Arafat's adoption of the kufiya linked him with the masses and asserted his ability to represent the imagined national community. It worked to construe himself as embodying group identity and thus having authority to speak on behalf of the collective.

Inevitably such claims are always controversial and attract counter-responses. Sometimes such arguments may be prosecuted through opponents constructing incongruencies between the group's identity and the qualities of those claiming authority to speak on behalf of the group. However, there are other ways in which the prototypicality of one's opponents may be undermined. Take for example an occasion documented in the official report of the proceedings from the British House of Commons when one Scottish Member of Parliament, seeking to speak on Scotland's behalf, adopted Scottish national dress and wore a kilt. Introducing a Bill before Parliament that would shape Scotland's constitutional future he declared to the legislative chamber that *'I stand before you, Madam Speaker, wearing the dress of Highland Scotland'*. However, although he may have hoped that his kilt would work to represent himself, and hence his measure, as speaking for Scotland, his claiming of Scottish credentials was not received in silence. Contesting the claim, another MP responded with the suggestion his Scottish credentials were not all that they seemed. Catching the Speaker's eye, and making reference to the viewpoint that 'real' Scotsmen wear the kilt without any underwear, he intervened: *'On a point of order Madam Speaker. My hon Friend the Member for Tayside North suggested that he was*

in highland dress.   He is in nothing of the kind. He misled the House and I have reason to believe that he is wearing little red pants under his kilt' (Sir Nicholas Fairbairn, Hansard 9.2.93: 825, cited in Reicher and Hopkins, 2001, p. 172).

Identity and Social Change

Thus far we have explored how identities are constructed, communicated and contested. Moreover, we have argued that such constructions and performances are imbued with strategic considerations. Inevitably, such an analysis draws our attention to people's potential for agency and active self-definition. In turn this opens up the issue of social change: if identities are not fixed but constructed then it becomes clear that with new identity definitions, new ways of being become possible. Or to put it another way, the capacity for argument means that people can and do offer alternative constructions of themselves and how they can act.

However, to emphasise such agency can be problematic if it slips into a voluntarism in which anything is possible and the oppressed are blamed for the limits to their political imagination and collective action (Hopkins, Reicher and Kahani-Hopkins, 2006). What is needed is a contextualisation of this agency in terms of the social dynamic to argument (Billig, 1987) in which argument is met with counter-argument and so on. This social dynamic and how it can shape identity definition can be illustrated with the example of a Muslim women's group active in the 1990's in the UK (see Werbner, 2000). Women are typically expected to take a prominent role in the maintenance and transmission of tradition and this often entails the tight policing of women's behaviour (Yuval-Davis, 1997). The women's group that Werbner investigated is interesting because its members gradually came to develop alternative conceptions of their identities as women, as Muslims and as British citizens. The group was not secularist in outlook, nor were its activities informed by feminist literature. Rather, it was initially a philanthropic group comprising middle-class Punjabi women engaged in fund-raising for projects in Kashmir and Palestine. However, over time the women's understandings of their Muslim identification underwent considerable change. Repeatedly, their plans met opposition from local male community leaders, and the women came to use their group meetings to explore these frustrations. Through their small-scale struggles with the local male leadership the women became increasingly aware of a mismatch between their understandings of how they could behave and what the local male leadership envisaged for them, and this prompted an exploration of their collective identification as Muslim women. More specifically, they began to reconstruct hitherto taken-for-granted traditions and customs as not genuinely 'Islamic' but rather as 'merely' cultural practices that they associated with ignorance and cultural backwardness. Moreover, their re-imagining of their Muslim identification was organised around their re-appropriation of Ayesha – the Prophet Muhammad's wife – who was known for her boldness and wisdom.

The changes in the women's understanding of themselves and their social relations did not take place overnight. Nor was the trajectory to their development obvious from the outset. Rather it was contingent upon the social dynamic of intergroup dispute. Responding to the male opposition, the women produced identity definitions that invited response and which in turn prompted counter-response, and it was through this gradually evolving dynamic of inter-group dispute that the women engaged with particular discourses of Islam and gender to develop new appreciations of their Muslim identification that empowered them as Muslims and as women. Indeed, from Werbner's account there is a sense in which the identity definitions

emerging through the group's collective deliberations with the male leadership did not only surprise the latter, but also surprised the women themselves. Furthermore, the unforeseen consequences of these deliberations were extensive. If the women's emergent identification gave them the confidence to expand their activities and adopt new social practices, the success of these practices (manifested in their fund-raising achievements, for example) increased their right to speak in the diasporic public sphere with important consequences for their imaginings of themselves and their potentialities. Furthermore, it brought them into dialogue with non-Muslim councillors, Members of Parliament and a number of social institutions, and so had the unforeseen consequence of empowering them as active British citizens (Werbner, 2000).

The wider point here is that reconstructions of identity are not achieved through acts of navel-gazing. Nor are they products of an isolated individual's imagination. Rather they arose here in the context of group argument as group members engaged with alternatives. The women's identity constructions arose to counter alternative definitions and these, in turn, prompted further contestation, and so on. In this process, ideas and positions that had once seemed irrelevant or inappropriate became more meaningful as the mismatch between how the women saw themselves and how the traditional male leadership saw them became clearer and more painful. It therefore follows that the analysis of identity-related argument requires attention to the temporal dimension to argument. It also requires attention to the various actors' social resources that allow particular versions of identity to be articulated and made consequential.

Conclusion

Much talk of identity is so weighed down by essentialist baggage that some have suggested the concept no longer serves any analytic purpose in capturing a psychological reality that is complex and dynamic (see Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). Certainly there are many dangers in uncritical readings of the term that presume identities to be fixed 'things' with an existence apart from or beneath their social representation or the social practices surrounding their construction. However, this does not mean that the concept of identity is analytically irrelevant – only that certain understandings of this term are problematic. As we have seen, the social identity tradition avoids many of the pitfalls associated with taking identities as givens and is well-suited to addressing the processes involved in the psychological representation of the social field. The tradition emphasises the importance of exploring people's self-categorisations and how these are consequential. It recognises that these are variable and provides a conceptualisation of identity that is quite compatible with, and indeed orients us towards, an emphasis on the contingency of self and other definitions on social practices.

Yet, as we have been at pains to emphasise, these group-making social practices are not simple or straightforward. How could they be? If identities are continually produced and reproduced through such social practice then it should come as little surprise to find the construction of identity a site of dispute. Precisely because social identities are not fixed givens there is always potential for very different understandings of how social relations could be structured in the future and we can expect these to be played out in the here and now in struggles over identity definition. Because social self-categorisations shape individuals' understandings of how they should act, questions relating to which identities are relevant, their boundaries, their

contents, etc., are inevitably the focus of human social activity with important consequences for the making and re-making of the social order. Indeed, it is for this reason that the analysis of identity construction and the resulting identity-related collective action is crucial for the social scientific analysis of our world-making and world-changing social practice.

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3

Category Sets and Category Bound Activities: Identity from the standpoint of members

Félix Díaz

In this chapter[11], I aim to introduce Membership Categorization Analysis, the analytical approach to identity taken up by Harvey Sacks, which constitutes a central element of his genuine and foundational approach to sociology (Sacks, 1972, 1992; see Silverman, 1998). Given the placement of the chapter in a compilation on social psychology, I start with a quick description of what I call the "conventional" approach to identity in social psychology. This will serve as a pretext to introduce Sacks' unease with conventional social science, and thereafter introduce his alternative approach to the investigation of social order. In this new context, I will expose and illustrate the basic tenets of Membership Categorization Analysis.

Identity for Conventional Social Psychology

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and social categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) are concerned with how individuals relate to one another by virtue of their belonging to "groups". In reviewing this approach, Widdicombe (1998) highlights its assumption that the structuration of society into social groups is reflected in the structure of individual selves. Individuals are born into or ascribed particular social categories; through time, they develop an awareness of that membership, a preference for their 'ingroup' over 'outgroups' and an emotional attachment to the former. Thus, social identity becomes internalized as a fundamental aspect of a person's self concept which affects their relation to others on the basis of their belonging to certain social categories.

Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) claims for the relevance of social identity in the production of social or antisocial behavior. Their proponents admit that intergroup conflict arises in the context of social and historical processes, but they are mainly concerned with how it is powered and regulated by psychological processes of categorization, identification and comparison. Social categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) proposes that the relevance of an identity depends on the perceived match between members of categories and their fit with standard stereotypes. In other words, if and when individuals self-categorize themselves in terms of standard stereotypes and behave accordingly, they become depersonalized and the group acquires relevance for their reasoning and behaviour.

Comparison between the ingroup and the outgroup, with the outcome of preferring the features of the ingroup, is seen in these theories as a key element in conflict involving prejudice and discrimination. Individual action is seen as the outcome of cognitive processes which are triggered by the social ascription or belonging to groups.

Widdicombe (1998) also highlights how conventional social psychology commonly treats its subjects' identity ascription for granted by definition, assuming that being 'a woman', 'Scottish' or 'registered as a social science student' will affect the outcome of a subject's activity in front of an experiment or a survey. In some research designs (e.g., Brown et al., 1986), subjects are asked to make self-identity ascriptions in survey questions (what Antaki et al., 1996, would call 'identity as description'), and their replies are taken as factors in the prediction of the subjects' categorization processes and attitudes.

How the Social Psychology of Identity is Conventionally Constructed

One thing that used to puzzle Harvey Sacks about the construction of the social sciences was that they start their accounts with statements of assumptions about 'what people normally do', without previous observation or sampling of what people do. In conventional social science research, only the outcome of experiments or surveys are treated as serious data; but the experiments and surveys need to be constructed upon a structured collection of assumptions about what people normally do and how they normally think (what is commonly called 'a theory').

So, for example, a research procedure will start with the theoretical statement that people will favour differently members of the ingroup and of the outgroup, and then go on to construct an experimental situation where participants are given the task of assigning credit to members of ingroups and outgroups (as in the social identity 'minimal group' experiment; see Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

This research apparatus is somewhat circular: the fact that people assign different amounts of credit to different people under the instruction to do it by an experimental social psychology researcher brings relevance to those choices. Participants in such an experiment are basically obeying instructions (and that could show interesting features of how institutional obedience works), but the researcher is actually interested in the participants' favoritism for the ingroup or the outgroup. In any case, in experiments a certain tacit alliance is constructed between researcher and participants to perform 'What we all know people would do in such situation as this'. The whole procedure comes to confirm the researcher's assumptions with the collaboration of participants in complying with them.

The choice to focus on those particular issues (e.g., how people compare their 'ingroup' to an 'outgroup') is made by an ordinary intuition of 'interestingness' or of what could be a social problem. This ordinary intuition is then formulated in a formal language (which is borrowed and adapted from common language). Within such a theoretical formulation, a research procedure can then be applied to test some questions. This is the standard way in which knowledge is organized and presented as cumulative.

The worrying matter for Sacks is that this procedure does not inform about what people do and how they do it; it simply engages some people in the confirmation or refinement of an abstraction made up by the researchers, taking advantage of the interpretative tools they share with all members of the culture. In this sense, conventional social science is not analytical (Sacks, 1963). It does not engage in a project to describe and understand what people actually do; instead, it constructs and sustains a theory that fits with some experimental or survey results. In Sacks' view, the abstraction and indirection of this procedure keeps the research enterprise away from actual analysis.

Part of this abstraction and indirection is sustained in psychology's concern with stable internal cognitions and intentions, under the ruling assumption that these govern human action. So people's social action is described in terms of how they perceive and understand social groups, how they make comparisons between different people, etc., and that is deemed crucial for their behavior. Still, cognition and intention are located in a black box that needs to be speculated about and then tested.

Another ruling concern of conventional social psychology which Harvey Sacks found problematic was the interest in locating 'bias'. 'Bias' is treated by researchers in an asymmetric way: as a contaminating feature of human action that only and always affects research participants, while it would never affect researchers – if research is done properly. When reading mainstream social psychology, we are tacitly driven to think that it is impossible to live social life without failing to be accurate in our judgments (e.g., our opinion of somebody will systematically depend on our impression of their similarity to us).

The problem is not the discovery that, say, judgment depends on the similarity between evaluator and evaluated (which makes common sense), but the rhetorical treatment of such a feature of everyday life as a structure above the evaluator which condemns her or him to a certain kind of failure, as it is expressed in the location and denunciation of bias. If it is the case that people use 'similarity to me' as a criterion for judging other people's actions, analytical efforts should be geared at understanding how that criterion is used, rather than simply denouncing it.

In social cognition theories, 'bias' is treated as a universal feature of the human information process system. It is often presented as crucially interesting, in the context of a social science that cares for spotting truth from falsity and takes truth as a paradigm to locate falsity. An outcome is that people are presented as held by structures and processes, rather than actively producing them. This can only be done by forgetting or ignoring the meaningful context in which people do things, where choices make practical sense.

Indeed, experimental and survey research is designed to discover 'pure processes', cleansed of content. Tajfel and Turner's "minimal group experiment", for example, keeps with the methodological imperative to construct random groups and make them perform formal tasks. Such procedures are aimed at making sure that the results are correct everywhere always, regardless of the cultural content inherent to social identity.

In this way, identity processes are disconnected from the peculiarities of relations between, say, Greeks and Turks, men and women, or psychologists and psychiatrists. Thus the accounts are a-social, a-historical and a-cultural; they simply refer to universal human nature. Conventional social science values such accounts for grasping a deeper essence, while the complex historical cultural processes involved in patriarchy, capitalism or nationalism are considered circumstancial and accessory.

Harvey Sacks' Approach to Social Science

Sacks' unease with the social science he was trained into was commensurate with the originality of the program he envisaged (see Sacks, 1963). A basic standpoint is that social science should be observational, i.e., it should take as its grounding evidence events of face-to-face interaction which actually occurred, and analyze them in detail. Observation is therefore the starting point, and no assumption should be pre-empted as to what people would normally do, what is interesting, or what is problematic.

A second feature of Harvey Sacks' social science is its interest in vernacular accounts, vernacular uses of categories and generally the way in which people describe the social world. This involves a recognition of the role played by people's descriptive language in social organization. Most notably when it comes to identity categories, the roles played by those categories in our lives are inextricably linked to our ways of talking about people and what they do.

The new understanding of social order envisaged by Sacks sees it as actively constructed by its participants moment by moment, orienting to norms in creative and skillful ways. So we are not victims of structures that subject us, but participants in interaction who use the available structures as resources for specific genuine occasions (such are all occasions). Interaction incorporates and uses descriptive language, and the analysis of interaction aims at finding out how participants use it in their routine practices to organize social life. This view of language in interaction is very different from the traditional use of lay language by the social sciences, where researchers use common terminology to distill theories which are then tested experimentally; thus ignoring the workings of everyday practice alongside common descriptions of practice.

A guiding assumption in the analysis of interaction promoted by Harvey Sacks is that everything said and done makes sense, and it is the analyst's aim to understand how what is said and done is used meaningfully. Therefore, there is no systematic or incidental distinction between 'proper' and 'improper' kinds of participant action or description. Participants may show contradictions or tendencies; they may use ambivalence, ambiguity or take options to accomplish social activities. Such nuisances are part and parcel with the organization of social life. 'Bias' becomes invisible for the analysis, and it is not in principle a focus of interest, unless participants invoke it.

Given the radical affiliation of this perspective to the observation and analysis of events as they happen, it is obviously not concerned with whatever might be in people's minds (cognition or intention), does not speculate about it, and does not consider it relevant for a good account of social order. The analysis gives relevance to the context of human interaction, including all available and possibly relevant aspects of the situation and the talk, to consider how those aspects are attended-to by participants.

I understand that this quick review of such an original and marginal approach to social science may result somewhat dense. I hope, though, that when we immerse into some analysis of actual occasions of language use in context many aspects of Harvey Sacks' undertaking will be clarified. If I manage to engage the reader with the idea that identity processes can be interestingly different than the way we were taught, and seduce you into reading more about this perspective and playing with it, it will have been worth the effort.

Identity

Through the remaining section of this chapter, I will illustrate some basic tenets of Membership Categorization Analysis by reference to my own research and observations, but trying to keep faithful to the foundational definition of this framework by Harvey Sacks (1992). I will make ten points:
(1) Categories of people are bound to activities they do.
(2) Identity categories are inference-rich.
(3) The choice for person formulation is relevant to the occasioned reference.

(4) Identity categories are organized in collections or sets which work to categorize any member of the population.

(5) The recurrent and normative use of a category set is a constitutive part of the social organization of relations in a society; and changes in the use of category sets are part of social change.

(6) Some category sets have features that make them particularly useful and manageable for acquaintance, and thus they are used recurrently in patterned ways.

(7) Identity categories are flexible, open to renewal and reconstruction.

(8) The incumbent of an identity category can be treated as representative of the collective they belong to.

(9) Two-class category sets allow for comparison to stress failure or success in one of the classes.

(10) Presumptively correct descriptions of incumbents of categories do not only apply to the standard categories, also to the exceptional ones.

The following sequence of talk is extracted from an interview I held with a leader of a local association in a Spanish medium-sized town. About two hours way through the conversation, he is telling me about the problems faced by users of a local refuge for battered women:

292 Ernesto: (…) . The women themselves . I have heard them some gipsy woman saying this (1) "When they mistreat us- A proof that they love us so much is that they mistreat us"
293 Félix: Oh I see . hhhhh
294 Ernesto: "Because otherwise- they wouldn't- . They wouldn't uh- beat us or let them- let us go wherever we wanted"
295 Félix: I see because- . Jealusy is is- is a proof of love, isn't it?
296 Ernesto: That's it It is a proof of love that they mistreat her

In this extract, Ernesto offers a report of somebody saying something to illustrate how some battered women perceive and interpret their problematic experience, and how that interpretation can be part of the problem. Reporting speech works here as a rhetorical device to aid the veracity and vividness of Ernesto's account: he heard it in such a formulation, said by a particular person (see Wooffitt, 1992).

My analytical focus now is in the selection of a formulation to identify the speaker of the reported speech: "some gipsy woman". For the reporting to work as a resource to bring vividness to the account, Ernesto needs to refer to the reported speaker with some degree of specificity. But there are an undetermined number of possible formulations for referring to this person (e.g., "María", "María Heredia", "a user of the refuge", "a young dark-haired woman", "a 25-year old housewife"). The choice of "some gipsy woman" links two features of the person to the statement she makes; we infer that something like this would be said by a gipsy woman.

With this example we come to one of the basic observations of Membership Categorization Analysis: that (1) *categories* of people are *bound to activities*; kinds-of-people do kinds-of-things. In this case, a gipsy woman makes a conciliatory justification of her spouse's violence against her. Or, in more general terms, gipsy women are attributed a certain (problematic) approach to spousal or partnership

relations[12]. Another key observation (2) is the *inference-rich* character of the device: What does Ernesto's interlocutor know about "gipsy women" that will help him understand why a gipsy woman would say something like this? That knowledge is invoked.

Reference to persons always involves choosing a formulation among an indefinite number of possibilities. And (3) *the choice for person formulation is relevant to the occasioned reference*. Consider, for example, different situations in which you were asked the question "Who are you?", and the answers you gave. If I am asked by a student in the first minutes of a course, I might reply "the lecturer"; if I am asked by the doorkeeper at the gates of my children's school, I could say "the father of Celia and Miguel Díaz".

After the student revolts of December 2008, activists renamed a street in Athens as "Οδός Αλέξανδρου Γρηγορόπουλου[13]"□ The renaming pays homage to a person formulated through the standard most specific procedure: name and surname. The same person was referred-to on the walls of the library of the University of Ioannina (and many other walls in Greece) as "16- χρονών νεκρός[14]".

This form of reference evokes a person (the dead 16-year old boy) to invoke an event (his murder). But the reference to age, again, is a choice among many possibilities, and the choice is rhetorically linked to the invocation of rage against the unacceptability of the event. This instance invites us to think how and why in our society getting killed at the age of 16 is especially outrageous and, more generally, how age can be relevant with respect to our expectations of what could reasonably and morally happen to persons.

In the framework of Membership Categorization Analysis, age is a (4) *"category set"*: *A collection of categories which can work to categorize any member of the population*. So is sex, which divides the population between women and men. Age is often formulated with a number which states the amount of years gone since a person was born; but it can also be structured with names such as "child", "youngster", etc., or with thresholds such as "minor" (indicating that somebody has not yet reached the age upon which, according to the law, certain rights and obligations will be imposed on her or him).

Age and sex have historically been the key universal category sets for sociology. Beyond them, there is an indeterminate number of possible ways of assigning people to categories and structuring those categories in sets. We know, for instance, about 'nationality', which can refer to the country of origin, country of residence, or official documentation of somebody. 'Nationality' is not necessarily the same thing as 'ethnic origin' (e.g., a Bosnian national can be categorized as Slavic, and a Greek national can be of Turkish ethnicity), and both can be different than 'religion' (the Bosnian Slav can be Muslim and the Greek of Turkish ethnicity can be an atheist).

These examples look exceptional because they defy standard assumptions about people (e.g., a typical Greek would be of Orthodox religion; but does not need to be). I am precisely bringing them up to suggest the complexity and versatility of identity category sets as well as the richness of meaning involved in their use. The category 'gypsy' is particularly interesting in defying the traditional assumptions that imagine a

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[12] Note also how the reference to "us" in line 294 makes the reported speech representative of what gipsy women would normally experience. It may look weird in an original account of somebody's personal experience with violence, but it fits well with Ernesto's rhetorical purpose of using this report as illustration of a general phenomenon.

[13] "Alexandros Grigoropoulos Street"

[14] "16 years old –dead"

nationalist territorial vindication for each ethnic community, which gypsies do not have. To what category set does 'gypsy' belong? Among gypsies and among people working or relating with them in Spain, the category '*payo*' is used to refer to 'those who are not gypsies', such that a complete category set can be applied to any member of the population.

Introduction rituals (occasions of interaction in which two persons are introduced to one another for the first time) can illustrate a great deal about how identity categories are organized and used in a society. Also, introduction and acquaintance are understood to be basic domains of conversational competence, or so we would gather from the relevance given to these activities in second language textbooks. For example, the following dialogue opens the first unit of a beginner's textbook on Greek as a foreign language (Σιόντης□□□□□□□:

1 Kostas: My name is Kostas Soldatos
2 Maria: A pleasure to meet you. My name is Maria
3 Kostas: Where are do you come from miss?
4 Maria: I come from Athens? You?
5 Kostas: I come from Giannena
6 Maria: What is your job?
7 Kostas: I am a journalist. You?
8 Maria: I am a secondary school teacher[15]

Even though this conversation never happened, its design by the author as a 'typical introduction/acquaintance exchange' for a Greek language textbook tells a lot about the arrangement of identity categories which is used and reproduced. First of all, the selection of the two participants represents sex in a balanced way: "Kostas" and "Maria" are typical Greek names, for a man and a woman.

The model introduction ritual starts with the name and surname (considered the genuine identity of the singular individual) and then follows by locating the individual in two Inference Rich category sets: city of origin and profession (for both of which there is always a category). The cities are not chosen at random: Athens is the capital of Greece, and Giannena is the town where the textbook was edited and is used for teaching. The professions are not selected innocently either: "journalist" and "teacher" are middle-class and modern jobs, which Greek language students may recognize and feel identified with (more typically than 'farmer' or 'cleaner').

Incidentally, in line 3 Kostas addresses Maria as "miss", which involves a choice between "miss" and "mrs" and refers to an old category set that classifies people into three possibilities: "Miss" (for an unmarried woman), "mrs" (for a married woman) and "Mr" (for any man). This category set is gradually dropping the category "miss" to give an end to the outward discrimination involved in the fact that women are identified by their marital status and men are not. Why was marital status traditionally

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[15] 1 Κώστας: Λέγομαι Κώστας Σολδάτος
2 Μαρία: Χαίρω πολύ. Με λένε Μαρία
3 Κώστας: Από που είστε δεσποινίς;
4 Μαρία: Είμαι από την Αθήνα. Εσείς;
5 Κώστας: Εγώ είμαι από τα Γιάννινα.
6 Μαρία: Τι δουλειά κάνετε;
7 Κώστας: Είμαι δημοσιογράφος. Εσείς;
8 Μαρία: Είμαι καθηγήτρια

relevant particularly for women? How and why is this changing? (5) The *recurrent use of a category set* in the common practice of introducing and addressing one another *tells* a lot *about the social organization* of gender *relations in a society*; and *changes in the use of the category set are part of change in* gender *relations* in everyday life.

What makes category-sets such as 'profession' or 'city of origin' particularly amenable for meeting and acquainting with people? And why are they used in such standardized ways? A further example: In a community of international students, introduction rituals typically cover the person's name, country of origin and degree the person is studying (plus sometimes a much feared question: thesis topic). Sex needs not be specified; age may be inferred, and it is sometimes impolite to ask (although there are indirect ways of getting round it).

(6) *These category sets have features that make them useful and manageable for acquaintance*. First, they are *inference-rich*, i.e., they can be used to infer many things about somebody, and that inferred knowledge can be used thereafter in the relation. Second, and closely related to the first, they *provide appropriate ways of starting and developing conversational topics* where interest is shown for the other person. As conversationalists we may be interested in other category sets about which we do not normally ask so straightforwardly (e.g., 'Do you have a partner?'; 'Do you like men or women?'). We may follow indirect procedures for finding out this information, which often include talking about activities and interests which are bound to those categories.

I started talking about very conventionalized category sets: marital status, town of origin, profession (so conventionalized that it is easy to find them in questionnaires and tick the right box). It is important to keep attention, though, to (7) the *flexible, undetermined and constructive character of categories* as they are commonly used in everyday life. The following statement was found written in several walls, again in the University of Ioannina:

"We are gypsies, Muslims, Turks, (agents) provocateurs and pro-Albanian"[16]

Do these categories belong to the set "ethnicity", "religion", "nationality", "political attitude", or "political group"? What they have in common is a more or less explicit alignment with some social and political identities, and a playful and provocative alignment with others. There is surely a basic shared frame of reference for the distribution of categories in sets that allows for this ironic game; but the statement gains its rhetorical force and manages to make sense by using the flexible character of categories. In other words, the composition of category sets is a participants' issue, and it is suited to the occasions in which things are said.

A further feature of identity categories is that (8) *the incumbent of some category can be treated as representative of the collective they belong to*. For example, being recognizable as a Spaniard when I am abroad, I often get asked my opinion about bullfighting; being recognizable as a man, I get questioned by women about men's behavior in heterosexual intimacy. And, while neither bullfighting nor heterosexual intimacy are my fields of expertise, I am positioned as somebody who could inform about that to somebody who is not Spanish or not a man.

Being recognized and treated as a member of some category is inescapable. More than that, the arrangement, development and management of social relations and social life works permanently, persistently and normally through the ascription of identity categories and the binding of those categories to types of activities. These

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[16] Είμαστε τσιγγάνοι, μωαμεθανοί, Τούρκοι, προβοκάτορες και φιλοαλβανοί

ascriptions and assumptions may be unfair and pernicious when their consequences are (e.g., the assumption that migrants are criminals is harmful to them and plays a role in the management of international borders and exclusion). The potential damage is not done by the principles of membership categorization, but by the ways in which they are used in context.

Among category sets, we find that sets with only two categories are especially common. (9) *Two-class sets allow for comparison to stress failure or success in one of the classes*. It so happens with sex, young/old, rich/poor, gipsy/payo, white/black. Notice that, although we have a strong sense of the obviousness of sex as being clearly differentiated and evidently assignable, for other two-part sets more interpretation has to be in work. I discussed above the emergence of 'payo' to refer to whoever-is-not-gypsy. In the USA, a long tradition of discourse about race and ethnicity in historical context led to the possibility of assigning the category 'black' to whoever-is-not-white, far beyond the simple criterion of skin color.

And sets which are graded (e.g., age, intelligence, income level) allow for the establishment of a threshold, to divide the lot in two. So we have "minors" (as discussed above), the "mentally retarded", the "poor", and such categories emerge from the operation of institutions and technical services on populations (see Miller and Rose, 2008). In that sense, identity categories are progressively designed to adapt to the work institutions perform on people, and change historically with the functions played by those institutions.

The construction and elaboration of two-part sets is closely linked to the work of institutions which operate by selecting a portion of the population as target of their work. In Western societies at least, much of the work of institutions relies on varieties of the distinction 'normal'-'abnormal': health institutions locate pathological persons or persons at risk; the police locates criminals; the educational system locates children in need for special education.

And through the work of locating the abnormal, (10) *presumptively correct descriptions of incumbents of categories do not only apply to the standard categories, also to the exceptional ones*. For example, people have a notion of 'the lawful citizen' and also a notion of 'the reasonable wrongdoer', and we use those notions when, for professional or incidental reasons, we have to identify somebody as something. This principle was originally observed by Goffman (1964) and Sacks (1972) in order to describe the work of police officers.

In my analysis of the use of categories by workers in the provision of social services in a Spanish medium-sized town, a key category is "marginal". The word "marginal" suggests that somebody does not belong to the overall currency of people, but is rather positioned aside, out of the parameters or on the border. Nevertheless, for technical workers in social services, "marginal" people can be recognized, described and characterized with respect to features they have and things they do. The following extract comes from an interview with a psychologist from the local social services. She is discussing the difficulty of working with certain kinds of people:

185 Antonia: If the person moves around in an environment mmmmmmmm- of very marginal people,

186 Félix: mhmh,

187 Antonia: then for us it turns much more- We already know- I mean- We already have to count with that, because any intervention on them is going to turn out very difficult

188 Félix: uhuh,

189 Antonia: because, . well uh . The values in which they already move, . have nothing to do with ours
190 Félix: of course
191 Antonia: So then-
192 Félix: They adapt badly . to an intervention,
193 Antonia: They adapt so badly . you know?

"Very marginal people" is a kind of people, and such people are recognizable through the professional relation in their 'manageability' by the institution. This is expressed with general formulations such as "intervention is going to turn out very difficult", "the values in which they already move have nothing to do with ours", or "they adapt badly".

Note also that to be "marginal" a collective does not need to be small. Similarly, we have postcolonial countries where most people may belong to the indigenous 'minority'; "women" are also often treated as 'marginal'; and 'the poor', increasingly in European countries, are no longer fewer than the rich, but can still be treated as 'marginal'. The size of the collective can be flexibly regulated by arranging the thresholds that define the class (for example, by lowering the income level upon which somebody will be considered 'poor'). In short, it is the political agendas of institutions and the technical arrangements done to develop them that come to establish the definition of the categories which they use, and which by and large are used in society.

Another noticeable feature in the extract above is the speaker's construction of the features of "the marginal" as opposed to "us", where "us" is obviously the service, but can also be seen to represent 'mainstream society'. The divergence from mainstream values is precisely what makes 'them' marginal. In this way, the two-category set, which was originally made up to manage a technical service, comes to reify a distinction between a general mainstream on the side of the organization and the peculiarities of some problematized people.

Concluding Comments

The social landscape which emerges from the application of an observational and ethnomethodological perspective to everyday life is radically different from that we were shown by mainstream social identity theories. The disjuncture sends us to the original path followed by social scientists who, back in the 1960s, offered new foundations for the investigation of social order (Garfinkel, 1967; Sacks, 1992); and walking on their footsteps, a sustained body of work is growing from the work of contemporary social psychologists and sociologists analyzing identity (Eglin & Hester, 2003; Hester & Housley, 2002; Lepper, 2000).

As respects Harvey Sacks' heritage, it tends to treat separately the study of conversational sequencing, institutionalized as Conversation Analysis, from the foundations of Membership Categorization Analysis. Rich discussions of the historical relevance and compatibility between the two enterprises can be found in Silverman (1998), Schegloff (1992) and Hester and Eglin (1997). Membership Categorization Analysis still constitutes a prominent reference for the development of discursive psychology and generally for the linguistic turn in British social psychology, strong current trends which are illustrated in several chapters in this volume (see also Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998)

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4

Conversation Analysis and the discursive turn in Social Psychology

Charles Antaki

Conversation Analysis is, to put it rather formally, the study of social action as achieved through the medium of talk in interaction. A moment's reflection will show that this is a far less abstract business than it might at first sight seem. As competent speakers and members of a culture, each of us is quite aware, consciously or not, that the way we talk - how we choose our words, how we time them, how we deliver them - makes things happen in our world. Conversation Analysis seizes on that intuition and explores the astonishing complexity of just how intricately the threads of talk weave the fabric of our lives.

Here is a very simple example of a social action being performed by the timing of talk. It is a slice of ordinary life which will make sense to all of us, without any need for sophisticated analysis. Look at what B does (or doesn't do).

Extract 1: From Levinson (1983), p 320[17]
1 A: So I was wondering would you be
2 in your office on Monday (.) by any chance
3 →(2.0)
4 A: Probably not.

All the action is at line 3. In lines 1 and 2, A effectively invites themselves round to B's office - but does B concur? B is in the scene - but keeps silent. After A issues their request, B should reply, but doesn't. The next person to speak is not B - it is A again, after 2 seconds of silence. Why do we all understand, straight off, what B has done here - that B has made it quite clear that A's projected visit is, for whatever reason, unwelcome? Because B has done the unexpected thing of not answering, and thus allowed the implication that the answer is 'no'. Speaker B has very simply and eloquently turned A down, without saying a word - in fact *by* not saying a word. The 'action' has been achieved simply and economically, purely by exploiting of the regularities of how talk is organised. Not to say "yes" - to leave a gaping hole where the "yes" should be - is to say "no". There's social action for you.

We shall of course see more of CA later, and more complex practices of talk. But let us turn for a moment to CA's history. Its "origin story" is well-known in the social sciences: it emerged from the dissatisfaction that some sociologists in the late 1960s felt with the then dominant quantitative methodologies of their discipline. Sociology - and indeed much of the social sciences, including Psychology - was silent about how people actively realised the social world, in real time. In the forty years since the pioneering work of the group around Harvey Sacks (whose lectures were published posthumously as Sacks, 1992), Conversation Analysis (henceforth, CA) has attracted a good deal of attention within sociology and outside it. CA has passed from sociology into the social sciences more broadly, and accumulated an enviable store of generalisable insights into the structure of human action as mediated in talk.

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[17] Transcription conventions are given at the end of this text.

CA work has mostly been in American and British English, but CA has had significant and successful application to other languages and cultures, notably Japanese and Finnish, and has extended from 'ordinary conversation' to all kinds of business, medical, educational and other institutional interactions. From very obscure and unsupported beginnings, and against a surprising amount of early hostility, CA has developed into a world-wide, multidisciplinary enterprise (for an account of the history of Conversation Analysis, see Heritage 1984; for a more recent overview of its methods and style, see Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998; and for an account of its relation to other modes of discourse analysis, see Wooffitt, 2005). It is one of social science's more remarkable success stories.

What has this to do with social psychology? Its most direct influence has been on the school of Discursive Psychology established by Derek Edwards and Jonathan Potter (e.g. Edwards & Potter 1992; Potter, this volume). What Edwards and Potter want to do is to rework the traditional problems of psychology as problems, essentially, of discourse: to see how much can be gained by treating things like memory, attitudes, emotions and mental states in general as matters of interested communication between speakers. They allow, of course, for some non-communicative residue to be left over (there will always be room for the neuron); but they suggest we look there only after talk has been exhausted. That, of course, is a top-to-bottom reversal of psychology's traditional order of business.

So far, so good, and on the programme so far, DP shares a great deal with other approaches which would want to call themselves discursive - some, indeed, represented in this volume. But Edwards and Potter insist on there being something very systematic about talk, and not just in its content, but in its very organisation. If, then, talk is to be looked at first and not last, and it is to its actual empirical organisation that we must turn, what shall we see? Here Edwards and Potter have recourse to Conversation Analysis, and the choice is instructive. Let us start by saying what CA is *not*. That will clarify matters, and disperse some of the clouds that often surround qualitative methodologies and theories. CA is not discourse analysis; or rather, it is very different fro the broad range of interpretative activities that march along under the flag of Discourse Analysis (DA). To be sure, CA abides by the generic DA criteria of looking for natural data, setting it in its co-text, watching for its non-literal meaning, and identifying the social actions that the text performs. But after marching along happily to those beats, CA makes a sudden turn off the road.

The Organisation of Talk

CA's most obvious departure from DA's basic research route is its insistence on seeing social actions done though the very close organisation, as well as the content, of talk. In describing those actions, CA - again unlike generic DA - wants to stay as close as possible to the speakers' own understandings of the actions without imposing interpretation from above or speculation about motives from below. Its 'added value' is teasing out the what and the how, while shying away from the why, and leaving off anything not made 'live' by the participants in the scene.

The currency that CA trades in might be structures on a tiny scale (for example, the relation between two adjacent turns at talk, which might be separated by a mere fraction of a second) or extensive (the overall shape of a story delivered over many turns), but they are all *normative*. That is to say, speakers are expected to follow them, or risk (or invite) listeners to draw implications when they do not. We can see an

example of such a normative structure in the simple example below, where the second utterance meets the expectation of a prompt acceptance of the first:

Extract 2: Holt:1988 Undated: Side 2: Call 1 (original transcription much simplified; for full list, see appendix)

1Les: […] <u>now</u> we're feeling a bit fr<u>ee</u>r.
2 (.)
3Arn: [<u>Ye</u>:s.
4Les: [.hhhhhh So we w<u>onde</u>red if you'd like to m<u>ee</u>t us.hh
5→Arn: <u>Ye</u>s c<u>er</u>tainly.

That is how most things work out - requests are agreed to, invitations accepted, questions answered and so on, promptly and clearly. To show how strong the normative expectation is that the response be positive and prompt, consider again the talk we saw as Extract 1. Now we can see that it is a variant of the normal rule. Here it is again, and by comparing it to Extract 2 above, you will see that it is the speaker's non-normative silence in line 3 that invites the listener to draw a significant implication.

Extract 3: From Levinson (1983), p 320 (repeat of Extract 1)
1 A: So I was wondering would you be
2 in your office on Monday (.) by any chance
3 →(2.0)
4 A: Probably not.

That is the example we saw at the start of the chapter, as Extract 1. Note again that it is A who is responsible for both turns - and that there is a gap of 2 seconds between them. That gap is an open, flagrant display that B has done the unexpected thing of not answering. The pattern is normally what you see in Extract 2: affirmatives are delivered as clearly and promptly as possible. So any deviation is meaningful. That is a very powerful conversational rule to exploit. Here , it allows both parties to understand that B is not co-operating with the drift of A's question. The implication is that B isn't going to be in their office, or doesn't care for A to know one way or another - and, by implication, isn't keen on A's implied request to drop in. A is no fool. And for the sake of the public record, A makes plain that this has been understood. The interaction can proceed, with both parties now having disposed of the possibility that A visit B's office on Monday, without A having had explicitly to say no. The 'action' has been achieved by exploiting of the regularities of how talk is organised.

If talk is organised, and if the great swathe of ordinary life is mediated by talk, then it makes sense to start to look at the organisation of talk in any and every social scene. That will mean life at work, life at home, in the school, doctor's clinic, the shops, the courts, and so on. CA has been applied productively to a variety of activities otherwise accessible only in retrospect (by interviews with participants) or in simulation, or through comparatively coarse contemporary observation. The great disadvantage of retrospective interviews is that they give only the most imperfect capture of what actually happened; eve contemporaneous notes are a poor substitute for a decent audio or, preferably, video recording. With modern technology, recordings can - with appropriate ethical safeguards - be made almost anywhere. All

of psychology's targets come into view. Leaving aside CA's obvious application to the mundane realities of everyday talk - and all the psychology that goes on there, CA has been used in clearly 'applied'' research - for example, on how talk in interaction achieves business meetings (Boden, 1994), educational testing (Maynard and Marlaire, 1992) and survey interviewing (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2000), to take a few notable examples.

The Organisation of Professional Practice

What can CA reveal about such working interactions?[18] Peräkylä and Vehviläinen (2003) put it neatly. Members of a trade or profession (they were talking about psychotherapists, but it's true of anyone who routinely has dealings with clients) may have "stocks of interactional knowledge" - fairly clear ideas of what they do with the people they work with. CA can check these accounts, correct them, or go beyond them. In going beyond lay accounts, CA can discover things about the interaction that the practitioners didn't suspect, or which have effects or functions which don't figure in (or may indeed may be counter to) the official aims of the encounter.

As an example of CA's illumination of professional practice, consider Maynard's work on clinicians' delivery of a medical diagnosis. This is a social-psychological matter of some importance, dealing as it does with the communication of sensitive and important information that can change people's lives. Maynard doesn't rely on interviews and reports - he videotapes the actual interactions. That gives him enough data to ground the analysis firnly in what does actually happen. He inductively finds a pattern in which the clinician prefaces the actual diagnosis (*you have X*) by evidence (from test results, and so on). The typical sequence is like this, in which a doctor in a Developmental Difficulties clinic is talking to a mother about her five year-old son:

Extract 4: From Maynard (2004, p 63)
1   Dr Y: From the:: <u>test</u> results (0.3) he seems to function (0.6)
2
     com<u>for</u>tably (0.2) you know and (achieve) some kind of you
3
     know happy and responsive
4
     (0.2)
5   Mrs R: Ye   [e:s   ]
6   Dr Y:
     [.h]hh <u>ON THE LEVEL</u> of about you know three (0.1) and
7
     a <u>half</u> year old child
8   Mrs   R: mm

The doctor is describing evidence: the boy *seems to function comfortably at the level of a three and a half year old*. She is not (yet) giving a diagnosis of what's wrong with him, if anything. The next extract follows the first (though some intervening talk has been omitted). But notice how the doctor manages to avoid actually stating the child's condition even as she makes her recommendation.

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[18] A version of some material in this section of this chapter also appears in Antaki (2008).

Extract 5: From Maynard (2004, p 63)

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1            Dr Y: I feel very strongly that, you know, because he (0.4) tests
2
             some kind you know, functions between mildly retarded and
3
             borderline level[.hhhhh]he needs special class placement.
4            Mrs R:
             [Mm hmm]
5            Dr Y:(Yeah) the (.) class for (0.2) .hh educable mentally retardet
6
             (0.2) will be the best (.) for his (0.8) you know?
7
             functioning and emotional, he's still not ready you know
8
             enough[to be more-                                    ]
9       →    Mrs R:
             [Are y- are you tr]yin' ta tell me that you feel he
10
             is: s:lightly mentally re[tard]ed?
                Dr Y:[Yes.]
```

What the doctor has done is to glide from a statement of the evidence (on the tests) to a recommendation for treatment, skipping over actually naming the child's condition. That is the point to emphasize: the doctor has used a conversational practice to sidestep the bad news. It falls to the mother (at line 9) to make explicit what has so far been implicit: "are you trying to tell me", she asks, "that you feel that he is slightly mentally retarded?".

Maynard has noted this pattern of news delivery not just in the doctor's clinic but also in mundane conversation more generally (Maynard 2003). The news deliverer organises their hints at bad news in such a way that it is the recipient who is prompted actually to pronounce it. In ordinary social life that hinting has a set of implications which we might interpret as being to do with the complexities surrounding death and other taboo issues; in the clinic, it has all those, but also has more prosaic consequences as well. If the patient (or their representative, as in the case above) is the one who comes out with the news, it shows that he or she has been attending to what the doctor said, at least enough to work things out for themselves; it puts patient and doctor on something of an equal footing. Certainly it is more equal (or more equal-*looking*) than would be the case if the doctor simply pronounces the condition straight off.

Interviews about People's Mental States

Let us move further into psychological territory. The interview is (still) one of the most popular research methods in the social sciences, and of course is a crucial part of clinical psychology. Interviews are used to question informants about that they know, and to assess and treat clients and patients. What has Conversation Analysis to add to psychologists' understanding of what their clients say? Surely psychologists are trained to ask questions and deal with answers without having to pore over the detailed transcription of what their clients say?

Perhaps. But consider this example[19], taken from a therapeutic session in which a patient with a diagnosis of schizophrenia is talking to a psychologist about sexual abuse in her family. She has just reported having asked her sister whether their father had ever abused her (the sister). The therapist now asks:

Extract 6 SH&JR, 7th July (Int= therapist, C=client)

```
1    Int    did you get the feeling that she wasn't very suprised
2           by your question.
3           (1.6)
4    C      w'um::: (.7) I- I- I- (.) I miss- I din't
5           ((blip)) °I gave her a quick look, s- °
6           (1.4)
7    C      er:::::
8           (1.7)
9    C      'n sh'seemed a bit ang-(-ay) ((possible tape glitch))
10          (1.1)
11   C      er:: n- w- ner >I d'kno=a bi'< kind of er (1.7) er
12          up(.)set (an' an:gry)
13          (1.5)
14   C      but:=erm (.) >no I d'n know< she sound' the same,
15          b't she jus' looked (.3) a bit an:gry
```

There are many such reports of others' beliefs and feelings in clinical interviews. On the face of it, it seems like this one is the sort of report one could use as evidence about the client's appreciation of her sister's state of mind. One might gloss it as:

Interviewer: Was your sister surprised at your question?
    Client: I gave her a quick look and she seemed a bit upset and angry; she
    sounded the same but looked a bit angry

If that was a reasonable gloss of what was said, then the researcher might conclude a number of things. Perhaps C has 'avoided the question' (she does not in fact say whether she thought her sister might have been surprised), which might be because her cognitive deficits made her unable to answer. Or the conclusion might be that C's reference to external appearance (her sister 'sounded the same' but 'looked angry') was an indication of her trouble with drawing inferences about internal states of mind.

Reflection and close inspection suggests that the glossed report of Int.'s and C's words is misleadingly inadequate, and that neither of the conclusions is sustainable. CA's contribution to the study of human affairs is to invite us to look very closely at the fine weave of how people talk, and not to coarsen what they say. Moreover CA reminds us that what a speaker says is to be understood at least in part by reference to the dimensions of the space the previous speaker has left open. So a consideration both of what it is that the therapist asks, and of exactly how C designs her answer, might shed light on how whether her report is meant to be a matter of accuracy (as a psychologist might assume) or not.

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[19] The material in this section comes form Antaki (2004)

Firstly, consider the question that the therapist asks. It is cast as being about C's 'having the feeling' that her sister was surprised.

Extract 7 SH&JR, part-repeat from above
```
1       Int     did you get the feeling that she wasn't very surprised
2               by your question.
```

The therapist's choice of the formulation 'did you get the feeling that...' (possibly a formulation consistent with the therapeutic idiom, but we need not follow that up) might account for the apparent 'uncertainty' in C's response: it might be attributable not to doubt about what her sister felt, but to her sensitivity to the way the therapist posed the question as being about feelings rather than facts. But suppose we ignored the design of the therapist's question, and just treated it as being equivalent to some gloss like "What did your sister think?". What then would we make of C's failure to reply immediately, and the disfluencies, pauses and false starts in her response:

Extract 8 SH&JR, part-repeat from above
```
4       C       w'um::: (.7) I- I- I- (.) I miss- I din't
5               ((blip)) °I gave her a quick look, s- °
6               (1.4)
7       C       er:::::
```

Might the disfluencies (well um, I- I- I-; and so on) , at least, be indications of uncertainty about her sister's state of mind? Not necessarily. These features of a turn can signal that an answer is, in CA jargon, 'dispreferred'. Preference here is merely what is normative in the circumstances, in the sense of what would excite no special implication (thus a delayed 'well..' in answer to an invitation signals a rejection, just by not being the default-case prompt answer which accepts). One basic feature of an normative answer is that it be certain and clear; so, by all this hesitancy, C is 'going along' with the therapist's question, that she report what she felt, rather than anything more publicly certain like the facts of the matter. Her answer, when it does come, is punctuated by more disfluency, pausing and two inserted 'I dunnos' (lines 11 and 15).

Extract 9 SH&JR, part-repeat from above
```
8               (1.7)
9       C       'n sh'seemed a bit ang-(-ay) ((possible tape glitch))
10              (1.1)
11      C       er:: n- w- ner >I d'kno=a bi'< kind of er (1.7) er
12              up(.)set (an' an:gry)
13              (1.5)
14      C       but:=erm (.) >no I d'n know< she sound' the same,
15                      b't she jus' looked (.3) a bit an:gry
```

Certainly these are hedges, but do they mean that C, due to a deficit in cognitive powers, has nothing to go on, and is having to think up something plausible here and now? Possibly. But it is equally possible, and more economical, to see these hedges as thoroughly conventional displays of tentativeness and provisionality. They might accomplish a range of things. By not mentioning it immediately, C is very strongly implying that the very best evidence for a reply - namely, what her sister actually said - is missing. Had the sister replied, C would have reported it - unless, again, we have

already written C off as not abiding by elementary rules of conversation (here, a Gricean principle of co-operation; specifically, the maxim to be as informative as possible). So not reporting it implies the sister didn't reply, allowing a range of inferences to be drawn.

These inferences are coloured by the way C uses a 'repair' (see, for example, Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998 on the CA notion of 'repair', esp. pages 57-69) in her response. C changes "n sh'seemed a bit ang-(-ay)' (line 9) to ' >I d'kno=a bi'< kind of er (1.7) er up(.)set (an' an:gry)'. It's the insertion of 'upset' that's interesting. Being upset is arguably a state of mind that would explain and justify her sister's anger. This looks like evidence that C is able and willing to design her answer so that she builds in a state of mind which explains and justifies her sister's anger; and so, in turn, explains her sister's lack of immediate response to C's question. The whole thing paints a picture of C's sister withholding a response, and giving C 'black looks' on account of being upset, causing her to be angry with C for raising such a sensitive question in the first place. All this is accomplished by the design of the talk as much as by its content, and all the details make up a plausible scenario; certainly as plausible as the psychological scenario that C has no idea what her sister thought, and is merely struggling to make up a story on the spot.

In sum, rather than understand it as a failed guess, we can see the long stretch of extract 1 as something more positive: an illustration of what a speaker can do to display a sensitivity to the apparent requirements of the question asked, and offering evidence for socially-accountable claims about another person. We could dig away further, but we have done enough with this extract to offer an illustration of a 'report' doing some interactional work.. C's words demonstrate not a neutral (but deficient) report of another's actual state of mind but a conversational move.

CA and "Membership Categories"

My account of Conversation Analysis so far has focussed on the analysis of the sequence of turns in talk. There is another strand of CA, traceable back to Sacks' work in the early seventies, which, although it is alive to sequence and placement of utterances, is concerned with them insofar as they sustain the speaker's version of events; and specifically, the speaker's choice of *identity* or *person categories*. This is sometimes called Membership Category Analysis (though many in CA prefer to see it as merely a part of the broader CA project); and, though it doesn't depend quite so crucially on the details of the delivery of talk, is still a powerful example of the way that the choice of words - and their deployment in talk - can perform social action.

A full account of MCA work is taken up elsewhere I this volume by Félix Díaz, but it is worth giving a sense of it here. A generic discourse analysis of identities would look at material which explicitly names a given identity category (say, "asylum seeker"), and chart the ways in which that category is constructed. The aim of that sort of analysis would be to draw up a picture of "asylum seeker" as it appears, explicitly and subtly, in the materials. Then a further stage of analysis takes over, and speculation is made about what interests such a picture serves in a general way in society. For CA, there is no need to go to such an abstract level and separate the use of the category from its consequences. The speaker or writer's use of (or hint at) an identity category is locally effective. If you call someone an asylum seeker (or hint that she or is one) then you are doing it for local consumption, and the consequences will be interactionally visible. And this is true for mundane categories (like, say, "daughter") as much as it is for more politically-charged ones

In the case of politically-charged identities, consider what is happening here, in this extract from Dennis Day (Day 1998)'s account of 'ethnification'. Here, some workers in a factory in Sweden are in a coffee break and planning an upcoming works party.

Extract 10: Day, 1998 p 163 (English translation from the Swedish)
1 L:that one has wine and normal drinks too,
2 right, of course like a party
3((writing))
4 → L:that's what we have at least here in
5 → Sweden one drinks wine, that's of course
6 what   [one wants
7 R:[of course, it's like different that
8 [to drink
9 L:[what does one drink in what does one
10 drink
11 L:((points))
12 X: [don't drink wine but light beer or just (soda)

Speaker "X", Day tells us, is categorisable on sight as not ethnically white-Swedish; she is (or looks) Chinese. But notice that we hardly need even this minimal piece of ethnography (and the reader might compare it with the thick description and inference required by interactional sociolinguistics; see above). See how, in line s 4 and 5, it is one of the participants himself (L) who introduces the notion that Otherness is a live issue. *That's what (drink) we have*, he says; *at least here in Sweden one drinks wine*. It is the 'we' and the 'here in Sweden' that do the work of setting national or ethnic identities on the table. From the CA point of view, the minimal observation is that L has 'ethnified' X to the extent that he has called into question what drinks should be made available at the staff party. But there is more. He has explicitly excluded X from "we ... here in Sweden". The effect is to exclude her not only from the fellow-national category but the locally operative category of fellow member of the current social group.

Concluding Comments

Both Day's work, and that of Maynard that I described earlier, are examples of CA's claim to deliver the substance of large-scale social phenomena. If we want to say that, for example, agreement between patient and clinician is at a premium in US consulting-rooms; or that people can exclude fellow-workers from joint ventures by subtly casting them into ethnic categories; then CA will provide the evidence - uncontaminated, its adherents say, by prior theorising about context or social forces. My account of how to read the talk of the patient with schizophrenia was different - it was not an attempt to read large-scale social issues, but rather to explore the competencies of someone whose cognitive powers had been dismissed as abnormal and deficient by a psychology which ignored the fine weave of talk. So we have seen, in this brief chapter, a sketch of CA's applicability to both ends of the psychological spectrum: to how psychological issues play out on a societal level (how doctors communicate with patients, how ethnic categories are used in daily life) and at the allegedly mental level (how a person with mental troubles explains themselves to their therapist).

Conversation Analysis's contribution to the discursive turn in Psychology, then, is to show that psychological matters - up and down the scale, from societal to mental - are mediated by the fine detail of interaction. Social life, embodied as it is, and hedged around by political and cultural boundaries as it is, is mediated by talk. Indeed that embodiment, that social and cultural realm are themselves matters of discourse, as other chapters in this volume testify. But the talk is the active ingredient. Our human contract is that we must pay attetion to each other's words, and silences. As Conversation Analysts are fond of saying, there is no "time out" in everyday communication; it all matters. And by recording it and analysing it as closely as we can, we shall end up with a psychology that allows us to begin to say something about the expertise with which people set the scenes for, and decide the the direction of, their own lives.

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Transcription Symbols

(.) Just noticeable pause

(.3), (2.6)   Examples of timed pauses, in seconds

word [word

   [word   The start of overlapping talk.

.hh, hh   In-breath (note the preceding full stop) and out-breath respectively.

wo(h)rd   (h) shows that the word has "laughter" bubbling within it

wor-   A dash shows a sharp cut-off

wo:rd   Colons show that the speaker has stretched the preceding sound.

(words)   A guess at what might have been said if unclear

(   )   Very unclear talk.

word=

=word   No discernible pause between two sounds or turns at talk

w<u>o</u>rd, WORD Underlined sounds are louder, capitals louder still

°word°   Material between "degree signs" is quiet

>word word< Faster speech

<word word> Slower speech

→

Analyst's signal of a significant line

((*coughs*)) Attempt at representing something hard, or impossible, to write phonetically

5

Making Psychology Relevant[20]

Jonathan Potter

In this chapter I will try briefly to set out what is distinctive about discursive psychology in relation to the broader interdisciplary field of discourse studies and some of the ways it contributes to critical social analysis. It describes some key features of a discursive psychological approach. In particular, discursive psychology is analytically focused on the way psychological phenomena are practical, accountable, situated, embodied and displayed. It describes its particular version of constructionism and its distinctive approach to cognition as points of contrast with a range of other perspectives, including critical discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. Finally, it describes three areas where discursive psychology is involved with social critique: work on categories and prejudice; issues to do with cognitivism and its problems; and work developing a discursive psychology of institutions.

What is Discursive Psychology?

One way of characterising discursive psychology is as an approach that that treats psychology as an object *in and for interaction*. It is specifically called *discursive* psychology, then, as psychology is understood as part of discourse, as a feature of practices in a range of settings. The difference from traditional psychological perspectives is stark. Traditional psychological perspectives focus on giving a technical account of the actual psychological states, processes and entities that underpin (and thereby partly explain) action. Discursive psychology (DP) focuses on psychology from the position of participants – it considers *their* practical and situated constructions, terms, orientations, and displays. Using the classic linguistic distinction, DP considers psychology in fundamentally emic terms, eschewing the etic perspective that is standard in cognitivist and social cognitivist psychology. From its perspective the traditional objects and distinctions of cognitivist psychology start to lose sense and a radically different terrain of psychology comes into view. What sustains the coherence of the enterprise of discursive psychology is not the idea of a mental space to be populated by expert research but the massive significance of psychological constructions and notions in human affairs.

Insofar as psychology is an object in discursive psychology it is *practical*, *accountable*, *situated*, *embodied* and *displayed*. Let me take these elements in turn. In DP psychology is…

…PRACTICAL

Psychology in DP is first and foremost something practical. Psychology in this sense is bound up with peoples' practices. Descriptions (of psychological, material or social objects) can be studied for the way they are invoked in activities such as blaming, complementing, inviting and so on (Potter, 1996). The psychological

categories that make up the mental thesaurus can be studied as a kitbag of resources for doing things. For example, not remembering can be a resource for building or resisting an accusation (Lynch & Bogen, 2005); a construction of 'boiling anger' can be used to establish the extremity and inappropriate nature of provocation (Edwards, 1997); the moderators use of a 'belief' construction in a focus group questions can encourage quick answers and discourage accounts and 'don't know' responses (Puchta & Potter, 2004). This practical focus is a contrast to the more traditional psychological focus on perception, information processing and understanding. This practical focus is one major reason for DP research to have moved away from the analysis of open-ended interviews and on to the analysis of situated interaction recorded in natural settings.

…ACCOUNTABLE

A major element of the way psychology is woven into everyday practices is through the focus on accountability. How are individuals (or collectivities, organizations, or intra-individual entities) constructed as sites of responsibility? The focus on accountability typically works on two levels at once. First, there is speaker's construction of agency and accountability in the reported events (who or what should be blamed, complimented, and so on). Second, there is the speaker's construction of their own agency and accountability, including what they are doing through speaking. Often these two levels of accountability are closely bound together such that speakers can construct their *own* accountability via the construction of others' and vice versa (Edwards & Potter, 1992). For example, Locke and Edwards (2003) studied the way President Clinton's constructions of Monica Lewinsky's actions, emotions and motivations were reflexively and constructively linked to his own accountability.

…SITUATED

In DP psychology is situated in three senses. First, psychological concerns, orientations and categories are studied as embedded in interaction. Such an analysis draws on the methods and findings of conversation analysis. For example, take the traditional social psychological category of 'attitude' – a relatively enduring mentally encoded construct. DP radically reworks the notion of attitudes by focusing on situated evaluations (Potter, 1998; Wiggins & Potter, 2003), drawing on Pomerantz' (1984) foundational work on assessments in talk. Second, psychological concerns, orientations and categories can be rhetorically oriented. For example, the construction of a particular evaluation (of the British royal family, in an argument, say) may be built to counter an alternative (Billig, 1996). Third, psychological concerns, orientations and categories are situated institutionally, in the practices of relationship counselling talk, family chat, courtroom summaries and so on. The primary analytic focus for analysing this third sense of situation is how psychological matters are introduced, constructed and made relevant to the setting's business (Edwards & Potter, 2001).

…EMBODIED

DP focuses on discourse. As a perspective it holds back from what might superficially appear to be the direct study of embodiment (as seen in parts of experimental social cognition, for example, or in some traditions of the sociology of the body, or in some ethnographies). The reason for this is that such an approach dislocates embodiment from participants' own constructions and orientations. Instead in DP embodiment comes in through analysis of situated constructions of the body (as in Hepburn & Wiggins, 2005), through the procedural unfolding of talk (as in Wiggins, 2002), or through video analysis of embodied interaction that, crucially,

treats orientations and constructions as a primary analytic resources (as in Heath et al., 1999).

…DISPLAYED

For a range of conceptual, theoretical and analytic reasons DP rejects the John Locke picture of an inner, private psychology for which language serves as the conduit for transporting thoughts between minds. This is what Harris (1988) calls the telementation view of language. In its place DP focuses on psychology as something displayed in talk and interaction. DP here is building on Wittgenstein's (1953) critique of the idea of a private language, Coulter's (1990) sociology of mind and, most fundamentally, Sacks'(1992) project for understanding interaction that emphasised that language must be understandable and learnable. From Sacks' perspective mind, intentions, understanding and so on are part of interaction through their current hearability in the interaction itself. Rather than seeing such things as lying behind the talk they are seen as features visible in the talk itself. It radically counters the traditional psychological dualism of inner and outer. For example, the important cognitive psychological idea of shared understanding has been understood in terms of displays involving collaborative sentence production (Sacks, 1992), in terms of the procedural role of the turn and repair organization of talk (Schegloff, 1992), and in terms of how the basis for ongoing interaction is constructed in talk (Edwards, 1999). These traditions are discussed in detail in Potter and te Molder (2005).

DP is not an alternative analytic approach to the topic of cognition. It is a thoroughgoing respecification of cognition in particular and psychology more generally. The centrepiece of this respecification is DP's emphasis on psychology's practical and interactional role and the associated methodological move to focusing on the analysis of naturalistic discourse in everyday and institutional settings.

Discursive Psychology and the field of Discourse Studies

The thoroughgoing respecification of the psychological in DP puts it at odds analytically with alternative perspectives in discourse studies (some strands of sociolinguistics, some kinds of discourse process work, some styles of critical discourse analysis) that link studies of interaction to psychological processes or representations. See, for example, Edwards & Potter (1993) on discourse processes work; Potter (1996) on critical discourse analysis, and Potter & Edwards (2001) on sociolinguistics. An important part of the contrast with these approaches comes from the aim in DP to work with a consistent constructionist perspective that recognizes the contingency of descriptions and their involvement with practices. It is this consistent constructionism that provides part of the distinctive take on issues of 'psychology' as well as a range of topics such as 'context', 'material objects', 'embodiment'.

Constructionism is one of the things that sets DP apart from some strands of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. However, the contrast is a complex one. There are, of course, differences between 'classic' ethnomethodology and Garfinkel's more recent programme, and between Sacks' earlier interest in membership categorization and the broader conversation analytic tradition he founded. This makes any simple comparison with DP difficult. Moreover, the constructionism in DP is itself a rather specific tradition. It developed out of problematics in sociology of scientific knowledge (Ashmore, 1989) focused on the constructive role of descriptions and versions. This sets it apart from the phenomenological social constructionism of Berger and Luckmann (1966). Indeed,

Berger and Luckmann offer more of a cognitivist position in their focus is on the construction of an individual's experience. They do not consider how constructions (in talk and texts, in settings) of that 'experience' are used to do things, which would be a more DP project. Within ethnomethodology there is a long tradition of considering fact construction (most notably in the studies collected in Smith, 1990) and Sacks' earliest work was focused on the topic of description (Sacks, 1963). Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998) provide an account what a conversation analytic approach to fact construction might look like. Nevertheless, some ethnomethodologists argue strongly against constructionist positions (Button & Sharrock, 1993).

Another potential difference arises in the theorizing of cognition. DP is not a cognitivist perspective. That is, it is not an attempt to explain actions by reference to underlying cognitive states or processes. However, the concepts, entities and distinctions of cognition are a major *topic* on two levels. First, studies consider the wide range of ways that cognitive language is used in settings such as neighbour disputes or child protection calls (Stokoe & Hepburn, 2005; Hepburn & Wiggins, 2005). Second, studies consider ways in which psychological methods and instruments reproduce cognitivism by failing to analytically encompass the way cognitive talk is oriented to action (see, for example, Antaki, 2004, and Auburn, 2005). Discourse workers have also developed different ways of engaging with, and reconsidering issues of psychodynamics and the unconscious (Billig, 1999; Wetherell, 2003).

This focus on cognitive concepts and distinctions in practice is distinct from some approaches from ethnomethodology and conceptual analysis. For example, Coulter (1999) has criticized DP for taking an empirical and discourse analytic rather than an apriori approach, and for not offering a corrective to mistaken cognitive constructions whether in academic, institutional or everyday settings. DP researchers have argued that the indexical and rhetorically oriented features of cognitive constructions means that conceptual analysis, while important, is not *sufficient* for analytic work (Edwards & Potter, 2005; Potter & Edwards, 2003). When people talk on the proposed and oriented-to basis that their words express inner thoughts and feelings, in counselling say, this is an analytic topic for DP rather than something to be corrected. Nevertheless, DP is much closer to some other strands in ethnomethodological work addressed to, and respecifying, cognition such as Lynch & Bogen (2005).

The relationship with conversation analysis is equally complex. One way of understanding conversation analysis is as providing a consistently non-cognitive analytic perspective that is concerned with the mind in terms of formulations and displays embedded in the turn and sequence organization of conversation. Sacks' very first published lecture advocates the analysis of interaction independently of any concerns about the cognitive basis of what might be going on (1992, p. 11). For the most part conversation analysts have not been focused on issues of mind cognition. Yet where they have addressed such issues there has been some ambivalence over the role of cognitive processes. For example, in recent discussions Drew (2005), Heritage (2005) and Pomerantz (2005) in different ways attempt to link interactional phenomena to underlying cognitive states rather than following a DP approach of understanding putatively cognitive phenomena in interactional terms.

Discursive Psychology and Critique

This short chapter will end with some brief observations about the status of critique in discursive psychology, highlighting its enduring interest in a cluster of issues to do with categories and prejudice, its debates with traditional cognitivist approaches to psychology, and its interest in psychology and institutions.

CATEGORIES AND PREJUDICE

One of the first critical themes in the style of discourse analysis that evolved into discursive psychology was focused on issues to do with racism, prejudice and minority groups (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Wetherell, et al., 1987). Much of this early work used open-ended interviews with the aim of identifying interpretative repertoires and practices. The current collection shows two kinds of evolution in this work. First, Tileagă (2005) has worked primarily with open-ended interviews in his analysis of the management of producing extreme accounts against Romanies. A feature of his study is its careful, conversation analytically informed, analysis of the interview talk (cf. Edwards, 2003). It avoids a number of the difficulties that have been highlighted in recent qualitative work using open-ended interviews (Potter & Hepburn, 2005). Second, Eriksson and Aronsson (2005) and Sneijder and te Molder (2005) illustrate the way that categories and issues to do with prejudice can be studied through studying natural settings where such things come up and are managed.

CRITIQUES OF COGNITIVISM

All of the papers in this volume show the continuing development of a non-cognitivist approach to psychological matters. They do this in different ways. For example, Stokoe and Hepburn (2005) consider material where noise is reported. However, their analysis is worlds apart from the traditional cognitive psychology of noise that is focused on perception, thresholds and so on. Instead, they analyse the way noise is worked up in descriptions to provide legitimate concern for complaint. Auburn (2005) takes as its topic the way that semi-technical cognitive notions become bound up with the practices of participants.

PSYCHOLOGY AND INSTITUTIONS

Most of the papers here show the value of working with materials collected from institutional settings. This allows researchers to address the way particular psychological (or 'psychological') terms and orientations have institutional roles in particular settings. This is a rather different approach to social organization than most late C20th social psychology, which aimed to identify the operation of generic social processes, independently of institutions or historical settings (Gergen, 1982). One of the aims of DP is to show the way institutions such as therapy, education, focus groups, court cases are characterised by specific 'psychological business'. Moreover, analyses of this kind can explicate both the specifics of the psychological business and the nature of the institution. For example, Stokoe and Hepburn's (2005) article on noise reports in NSPCC and neighbour mediation provides a way of explicating subtle differences in the considerations underlying interaction in these different institutions.

These are only some of the critical themes that can be illuminated by DP; Hepburn (2003) and Speer (2005) review further strands of work.

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6

Positioning and interpretative repertoires: Conversation Analysis and Post-structuralism in Dialogue[21]

Margaret Wetherell

As Teun van Dijk (1997) noted in an editorial for *Discourse & Society*, it is no simple matter to differentiate 'good' from 'bad' discourse analysis. Although it is not the case that 'anything goes' in discourse work, it seems unlikely that any single set of evaluative criteria will prove sufficient. This, however, does not preclude discourse analysts from attempting to advocate or legislate their own 'gold standard' for analysis (or editors from making evaluative judgements). And, indeed, in an article also published in *Discourse & Society*, the conversation analyst Emanuel Schegloff (1997) has tried to formulate just this kind of standard.

Schegloff takes to task various forms of (unspecified) critical discourse analysis and argues that such analyses should be grounded in what he describes as the 'technical' discipline of conversation analysis. Schegloff suggests that as a result of this technical exercise critical discourse analysts may find that the discursive phenomena of interest are quite other than they assumed. Conversation analysis is also offered as a corrective to what Schegloff presents as the grandiosity of critical discourse analysts. This grandiosity is evident, according to Schegloff, when analysts impose, in an act of intellectual hegemony, their own frames of reference on a world already interpreted and endogenously constructed by participants. Finally, Schegloff suggests that conversation analysis provides a principled method for reaching some form of closure in the face of the infinite regress of possible interpretations stressed by deconstructionist and postmodern perspectives.

The aim of this article is to comment on and explore Schegloff's proposals in relation to some data and in this way to contribute to the wider debate about the criteria for the evaluation of discourse analysis. I argue that conversation analysis does indeed offer a useful discipline for discourse analyses conducted under a broadly 'critical' aegis but this discipline needs to be two way. Conversation analysis alone does not offer an adequate answer to its own classic question about some piece of discourse—why this utterance here? Rather, a complete or scholarly analysis (as opposed to a technical analysis) must range further than the limits Schegloff proposes.

This discussion is also relevant to and emerges from a particular disciplinary context—discourse analysis as it has been developing in social psychology. It has become common-place in social psychology in recent years to distinguish between two or more styles of discourse analysis (see Antaki, 1994; Burman and Parker, 1993; Parker, 1990; Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995). Typically, the boundary lines are drawn between styles of workwhich affiliate with ethnomethodological and conversation analytic traditions and analyses which follow post-structuralist or

Foucauldian lines. Thus Widdicombe and Wooffitt distinguish between a discursive psychology offering a fine grain analysis of the action orientation of talk (e.g. Edwards, 1997; Edwards and Potter, 1992) and investigations concerned with the imbrication of discourse, power and subjectification which take their lead from the work of Foucault (e.g. Hollway, 1984; Marks, 1993).

In contrast to this division into 'molecular' and more 'molar' styles of analysis, or 'critical' versus 'non-critical' discourse analysis, this paper argues for a more synthetic approach in line with earlier attempts to weave a range of influences into a viable approach to discourse analysis for social psychological projects and topics (see Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Potter et al., 1990; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). I suggest that although the terms of engagement between post-structuralism and ethnomethodology/conversation analysis need revisiting, a stance which reads one in terms of the other continues to provide the most productive basis for discourse work in social psychology, in much the same way, for example, as cultural anthropologists and ethnographers of communication (see Duranti, 1992; Lindstrom, 1992; Maybin, 1997; Ochs, 1992) have found an eclectic approach to be the most effective. I first introduce the data at issue in this article, then review Schegloff's take on conversation analysis and some post-structuralist writings as two contrasting potential analytic frames, before returning to the data and an evaluation of the adequacy of what each offers.

'FOUR IN ONE NIGHT'

The stretch of discourse presented in the Appendix comes from a relatively large-scale project on the construction of masculine identities (Edley and Wetherell, 1995, 1996, 1997; Wetherell, 1994; Wetherell and Edley, 1998). Part of this project involved an intensive reflexive ethnography (Atkinson, 1989) conducted in and around the sixth form common room of a single sex boys' independent school in the United Kingdom and included interviews with small groups of white, 17-18-year-old male students. Each group of three was interviewed around eight times, meeting for an hour each week with the interviewer (Nigel Edley), for a period of approximately two to three months. The aim of this ethnography was to examine the construction of middle class masculine identities in one institutional site and the interviews covered aspects of the young men's daily lives, social relations within the common room, their anticipations of their future working and domestic lives, relationships with women and with male friends, sexuality, popular culture, feminism, homophobia, masculine stereotypes, and so on.

The material in the Appendix comes from the fifth session of one of these small group interviews (with Group C) around half-way into the session. The participants (Phil, Aaron and Paul) and the young women referred to in the conversation, but not the interviewer, have been given pseudonyms. This extract begins with the interviewer introducing a new topic of conversation, picking up on a previous but unexplicated allusion to some events involving Aaron during the weekend.

Extract One

1   Nigel: Okay yeah tell me about going with four people in one
2   night=

This formulation is heard as a request to Aaron for a description of the events which Phil eventually supplies with and on behalf of Aaron (lines 10-74). The description concerns Aaron's behaviour at a pub on the Friday night and at a party on the Saturday night and the nature of his involvement with four different young women. The discussion of this topic prompted by Nigel Edley (which in fact continues for many more turns than reproduced in Appendix One) moves on to consider the evaluation of the event (lines 76-93).

Extract Two

```
73   Phil:    So that like took me aback somewhat (0.3) so that was
74            a good weekend for you
75            (.)
76   Nigel:   Is that good?
```

After some discussion of the 'stick' or criticism Aaron received from his friends, Nigel intervenes once more to re-focus the discussion on the morality of Aaron's actions.

Extract Three

```
94   Nigel:   Yeah I mean I wasn't sort of saying is four in two
95            days good I mean   it's impressive [you know]
96   Aaron:                              [hh [hhh    ] hh
97   Phil:                                  [hhhhh] hhhh
98   Nigel:   But I me::an like (.) it presumes that erm that's:: a
99            creditable thing (.) yeah? Is it?
```

After Phil and Aaron discuss Aaron's position on 'the moral low ground' the fourth participant in the discussion (Paul) is invited into the conversation and asked for his views.

Extract Four

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116   Nigel:   Right (.) okay (0.2) what do you think Paul?
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Paul defers giving an immediate response and establishes his views instead through a kind of Socratic dialogue which prompts Aaron and Phil to reformulate again the nature and status of what happened (lines 116-76).

The interviewer's questions key into two very pervasive and inter-related discursive activities—describing events (formulating their nature) and accounting for and evaluating those events. There is, of course, an enormous amount of interest in these data for the discourse analyst, including, for instance, the delicate business of telling a story on behalf of someone else, the large amount of ventriloquizing and reported speech, its use and discursive functions in Aaron's accounts particularly, the role of laughter, Phil's double position as Aaron's supporter and 'tormentor' and the organization of the discourse within the frame of interview. The aspects I wish to select for further discussion include the construction of multiple versions of 'what happened', and the related construction of what I call 'troubled' and 'untroubled' identities.

Before examining these features, however, I first set up conversation analysis as a potential analytic frame for this material, focusing in particular on Schegloff's (1991,1992,1997) writings on method and context, and then some post-structuralist writings (Laclau, 1993; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, 1987; Mouffe, 1992; Shapiro, 1992) as an alternative frame. How might each perspective understand discourse of this kind? What concepts are offered for analysing this talk?

Conversation Analysis

In traditional sociology, or in traditional social psychology for that matter, a satisfactory analysis of the kind of material found in the Appendix would relate the patterns found to some external social cause or some internal psychological motivation. The interest would be in Aaron's *actual* actions as these can be deduced from descriptions. In explanation it might be sufficient, for example, to say that Aaron's behaviour ('four in one night') is caused by his attitudes towards women and his internalization of gender ideologies or perhaps could be caused by his developmental stage as an adolescent experimenting with sexuality.

What distinguishes the analytic frame of ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts, of course, is their disinterest in this question of external social or natural causes, and their rejection of the side-step which takes the analyst immediately from the conversation to something seen as real and determining behind the conversation (Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 1984). For Schegloff, talk-in-interaction of the kind exemplified in the Appendix represents 'a' or even 'the' prime socio-cultural site. It is the place where culture and 'the social' happen. And, what is of interest is what the conversation means for the participants as they inter subjectively build a social order.

Conversation analysts study the way in which social organization is accomplished in talk. According to Duranti and Goodwin (1992: 192), the study of conversation 'permits detailed analysis of how participants employ general, abstract procedures to build the local particulars of the events they are engaged in'. Such procedures, however, are seen as flexibly applied situated social practices rather than prescriptive, all-or-nothing, rules. Procedures might include, for instance, competence at turn-taking, recognition of sequential organization and conditional relevance such as that a question, for example, typically demands an answer (Schegloff, 1968).

Analysis proceeds from the general observation that in talk participants display to each other, as they perform their own contributions, their understanding of the setting and context, and their grasp of the emergent activities. Members of society display what they know—their practical reasoning skills and competencies. It is possible to see, for example, how utterances are designed to do tasks while the replies or turns of other participants demonstrate how those utterances are intersubjectively understood and are taken up (Sacks, 1992). The focus of conversation analysis is thus on the reflexive accomplishment of conversation. Conversation analysis attempts to provide a good description of conversational activities but is also an explanation of those activities in the limited sense that description depends on a particular view of the nature of social organization and social order.

Schegloff's (1991, 1992, 1997) writings on methodological principles are based on his analytic experience but also on this view of what conversation is and the relevance of this discovery for understanding social life. In his 1997 article, as noted earlier, his particular target is forms of critical discourse analysis which in developing accounts of topics such as gender and power relations become, as Schegloff sees it, loose and ungrounded and risk mistaking their object. Schegloff argues that although

as members of society we (scholars and analysts) might know who is oppressed, who count as the 'good guys' (sic) and the 'bad guys' (sic), it is self-indulgent to import this knowledge a priori into analysis. Similarly, we should not impose our more scholarly and theoretical concerns, our preoccupations with topics such as the organization of ideological discourse, for example, upon lay members of society. He suggests that, paradoxically, a more satisfactory kind of critical/political analysis might result if critical analysts focused instead solely on the endogenous concerns and orientations of participants.

This plea for the foregrounding of participant orientations and the back-grounding of analysts' concerns and categories is linked to a further requirement that all analytic claims should be empirically grounded. It should be possible to 'point' to the data and make visible the moments when things happen. The analyst must be able to show that participants had the orientation claimed for them and should be able to demonstrate how participants' subsequent behaviour in the turn-by-turn organization of talk *displays* this understanding.

Schegloff (1992) argues that talk has many potentially relevant contexts including what he calls distal or external contexts (such as the class, ethnic, gender composition of an interaction, the institutions and ecological, regional and cultural settings in which they occur) and proximate contextual variables (such as the sort of occasion participants take an interaction to be, the speaker/listener slots or roles available, and so on). The crucial thing, however, in the face of this omni-relevance and the infinitude of possible perspectives on what happened is what is relevant for the participants. Analysis, then, in this view, must be compatible with what Schegloff calls the internal sense of an interaction. It must take seriously the object of inquiry in its own terms and must recognize the hugely advantageous feature of studying talk-in-interaction that this is one socio-cultural site furnished internally with its own constitutive sense, with, as Schegloff (1997) states, a defeasible sense of its own reality.

Social Postmodernism

In many respects the analytic frame provided by Laclau and Mouffe and by Shapiro could not be more different. Laclau and Mouffe's work has been aligned with what Nicholson and Seidman (1995) call 'social postmodernism'. This designation reflects their aim of mobilizing post-structuralist perspectives on discourse, signification and the decentred subject to develop more effective socialist and radical democratic political projects. Whereas Schegloff focuses on talk-in-interaction, Laclau and Mouffe make 'discourse' their topic. Whereas Schegloff takes members' methods as the organizing principle for the material he studies, Laclau and Mouffe focus instead on the structuring effects of 'discursive articulations' and 'nodal points'. While Shapiro recommends a genealogical eye towards the 'proto- conversations' which constitute institutionalized forms of intelligibility.

Laclau and Mouffe's understanding of discourse is an inclusive one. Discourse is equated with the social or with human meaning making processes in general. Their definition of discourse includes both linguistic and non-linguistic elements. As an example of this combination, Laclau and Mouffe (1987) ask their readers to consider the activity of building a brick wall. The entire activity of building is made up of speech acts ('pass me that brick') and physical acts (placing brick on top of brick) yet both kinds of acts acquire their meaning in relation to each other and to the socially constructed and stabilized system of relations we recognize as 'building a brick wall'.

They point out that not only is the 'being' of objects (such as bricks) established in this way, and therefore what these objects are for humans, but also the character, identity and the 'being' of social agents. Thus, again to use one of their examples, the 'discourse of football' establishes that a certain spherical object is a 'ball' while some bits of metal and netting become 'the goal'. Equally, any person who takes up a defined stance in relation to the spherical object and bits of wood becomes a 'player', or a 'goal-keeper'.

In other words, Laclau and Mouffe conceive the social space as a whole as discursive. Or, as Laclau (1993: 341) puts it, '(s)ociety can ... be understood as a vast argumentative texture through which people construct their reality'. In line with his inclusive concept of discourse and the quoted examples, Laclau is at pains to stress that the 'argumentative fabric' from which social realities are constructed is both verbal and nonverbal. For Laclau and Mouffe it makes no sense to distinguish between the discursive and the extra-discursive or talk and the world—there is rather an unceasing human activity of making meanings (the horizon of discourse) from which social agents and objects, social institutions and social structures emerge configured in ever-changing patterns of relations.

As good post-structuralists, Laclau and Mouffe argue that signification (and thus the social) is an infinite play of differences. Meaning can never be finally fixed; it is always in flux, unstable and precarious. The being of objects and people can never be encapsulated, once and for all, in a closed system of differences. Laclau and Mouffe balance, however, this emphasis on openness and non-finalizability, the 'radical relationalism' of the social, with claims about a process of organization rather vaguely described as 'discursive articulation' or the forming of 'nodal points', 'discursive clumps' or 'ensembles'. Things recognized as people and objects and the relations between these entities are pulled together or emerge in stable forms which may last for quite long historical periods. Power is recognizable in the formation of these articulations and nodal points. Indeed power seems to be the capacity to 'articulate' and to make those articulations not only 'stick' but become hegemonic and pervasive. The influence of both Foucault and Gramsci on Laclau and Mouffe's formulations is evident here.

For Laclau and Mouffe, people or social agents are both passive and active. On the one hand, people seem to provide the energy required for meaning-making and articulation. On the other hand, as Mouffe argues, the individual subject becomes de-centred, not the author of his/her own discursive activity and not the origin point of discourse:

> We can ... conceive the social agent as constituted by an ensemble of 'subject positions' that can never be totally fixed in a closed system of differences, constructed by a diversity of discourses, among which there is no necessary relation, but a constant movement of over-determination and displacement. The 'identity' of such a multiple and contradictory subject is therefore always contingent and precarious, temporarily fixed at the intersection of those subject positions and dependent on specific forms of identification. It is therefore impossible to speak of the social agent as if we were dealing with a unified, homogeneous entity. We have rather to approach it as a plurality, dependent on the various subject positions through which it is constituted within various discursive formations. (Mouffe, 1992: 372)

This position has important implications for traditional notions of ideology, false consciousness and objective group interests. The concept of false consciousness

assumes that social agents have real or true identities (as members of the proletariat, for example) and real or true interests which go with those social identities which they may misperceive, simply not recognize or which can be obscured and invisible. Instead, Laclau and Mouffe (1987) argue that identity and interests do not operate in this way, in advance of social and discursive construction. Rather,' "interests" ... are a social product and do not exist independently of the consciousness of the agents who are their bearers', (p. 118). Interests emerge from discursive configurations and must be mobilized and made discursively available.

In Shapiro's writings it is possible to find an explication of Foucault's notion of genealogy which helps articulate the kind of analytic activity which might emerge from these formulations. Shapiro argues that '(i)ntelligible exchanges are always situated ... the context-meaning relation subsumes a complex history of struggle in which one or more ways of establishing contexts and their related utterances has vanquished other competing possibilities' (1992: 38). The task of genealogy, then, and analysis, is to render strange usual or habitual ways of making sense, to locate these sense-making methods historically and to interrogate their relation to power.

I return now to the material in the Appendix. There are two claims I wish to make in relation to these data which bear on the analytic frames presented here. First, in contrast to post-structuralist accounts of the decentred subject, but commensurate with conversation analysis and ethnomethodology, I want to emphasize the highly occasioned and situated nature of subject positions and the importance of accountability rather than 'discourse' *per se* in fueling the take up of positions in talk. Detailed analysis of conversation allows a different view of 'constituted identities'.

Second, I argue that for a complete rather than merely 'technical' analysis of this material it is necessary to consider the forms of institutionalized intelligibility, to use Shapiro's term, which comprise members' methods. I will suggest that the way in which Schegloff marks the boundaries around conversation is unhelpful and unproductive. The more inclusive notion of discourse found in post-structuralist writing and exemplified in Laclau's notion of the argumentative texture of social life provides a better grounding for analysis. In developing both these points I draw on analytic concepts from social psychological discourse analyses such as variability (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), ideological dilemmas (Billig et al., 1988) and interpretative repertoires (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell and Potter, 1988) which take a more integrated stance towards traditions such as conversation analysis and post-structuralism.

Troubled and Untroubled Subject Positions

Post-structuralist theorists, with their more global view, rarely have their noses pressed up against the exigencies of talk-in-interaction. Rarely, are they called on to explain how their perspective might apply to what is happening right now, on the ground, in this very conversation. Theoretical concepts emerge in abstract on the basis of often implicit assumptions about the nature of interaction, language or social life. The notion of subject position explicated by Mouffe (1992) is a good example, and its paucity becomes apparent if we consider in detail just some of the many positionings of Aaron in the material in the Appendix in relation to formulations of the nature of the event ('four in one night') and the way in which these positions and formulations are made troubled or remain untroubled.

One useful way into such analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) is to look for variability in accounts and formulations—tracking the emergence of different and

often contradictory or inconsistent versions of people, their characters, motives, states of mind and events in the world—and asking why this (different) formulation at this point in the strip of talk? One early formulation or positioning for Aaron comes in line 9:

Extract Five

```
 1  Nigel:   Okay yeah tell me about going with four people in one
 2           night=
 3  Phil:    [=All::right ((bangs table)) ]
 4  Aaron:   [hhhhhhh hhhhhh hhhhhh h ] hh no::=
 5  Phil:    =Go on=
 6  Paul:    On the record=
 7  Phil:    =Was it was it this f .hh
 8           (.)
 9  Aaron:   I don't know I was a bit drunk=
10  Phil:    =I I'll tell he was drunk I'll tell you what I know
11           [because ] I am never drunk
12  Nigel:   [Hm mm ]
13  Phil:    Because I'm dead smug [erm::: ]
14  Aaron:                         [He's never] drunk it's true=
```

As conversation analysis reminds us, Aaron's positioning of himself as drunk is highly occasioned and needs to be seen in the context of the surrounding conversational activities. Nigel's request in line 1 for an account ('tell me') makes a description conditionally relevant as an appropriate next turn (Schegloff, 1968). Aaron, however, after registering what sounds like dismay at the emerging topic (line 4), and after some interventions from Phil and Paul, demurs ('I don't know I was a bit drunk'). Such 'dispreferred responses' (see Pomerantz, 1984) usually come supplied with an account for 'non-compliance' and in this case the drunkenness provides the grounds. Phil's next utterance (line 10) indicates that he also hears Aaron in this way since he uses his own sobriety as a credential (legitimated by Aaron) for why it might be appropriate for him to tell the story instead as a qualified witness. Indeed it turns out that this is one of those stories of prowess that may be better left to others to tell on one's behalf.

By now, however, several positions are already in play. Aaron's drunkenness has been laid on the table, while his laughter and '<u>no::</u>' in line 4, Phil's urging ('go on') and Paul's insistence on the importance of being 'on the record' also establish a context and a range of positions for Aaron as well as an audience in relation to the as yet enigmatic event.

As Antaki et al. (1996) note in relation to the identity work in some data they analyse:

> Such bringings-to-bear are briefly over and done, of course, but their accumulated record is what gives a person their (portfolio of) identities. Ephemeral as they might be, they become available for future invocation as instances of times when the person was (understood to be) a linguist, a Kennel Club member and so on. The speakers are doing three things at once: invoking social identities, negotiating what the features or boundaries of those identities are and accumulating a record of having those identities. They will be able in

the next round of their interactional history, to draw on having all been exposed to this conversational display of identities. (p. 488)

Further examples of these activities of invoking social identities, negotiating their features and accumulating a record are evident in the following extracts, beginning with Extract Six. These examples illustrate the highly indexical nature of subject positions or the importance of the exact circumstances of the invoking for understanding what is invoked, just as it was necessary to look at the conversational circumstances surrounding Aaron's invocation of his drunkenness in Extract Five to fully comprehend this self-positioning. Extract Six begins with the conclusion of Phil's often interrupted narrative of Aaron's weekend:

Extract Six

```
67   Aaron:   =We were very lucky that day
68   Phil:    We were erm and we were walking back and he says
69            oh I went with Janesy on Friday and I went yeah you
70            went with three birds last night you went with one on
71            Friday this was in his good month
72   Nigel:   Hm mm
73   Phil:    So that like took me aback somewhat (0.3) so that was
74            a good weekend for you
```

The context for what happened now becomes formulated as being part of or illustrative of a 'good month' or a 'good weekend'. Such 'fortune' could, of course, either be presented as agentic and internally attributed (seen as a personal achievement) or externally attributed as 'luck'. As is typical in talk (Edwards and Potter, 1992), both these possible, and potentially inconsistent, positionings emerge in the following discussion with Aaron later returning to the 'lucky' theme (see line 160 in Extract Nine) having raised it initially in line 67 (Extract Six) and more directly owning his 'good fortune' in the conversation which follows Nigel's next intervention.

Extract Seven

```
76 Nigel:   Is that good?
77 Phil:    Well in his books yes you know=
78 Aaron:   =hhhh.h [yeah        ]
79 Phil:            [The thing] is you got so much stick for it
80 Aaron:   Well yeah I could take the stick because it was
81          almost like (0.2) a good ego trip when everyone was
82          taking the stick oh you got off with her ah ha ha
83          yep I did so what's your problem? [Oh, er, errr]
84 Nigel:                                     [Hm mm    ]
```

Aaron re-frames the criticism he received ('stick') as 'a good ego trip' and to demonstrate how he handled it he constructs a piece of hypothetical dialogue with an imagined interlocutor where the interlocutor challenges him ('Oh you got off with her'), Aaron responds in a forthright way ('Yep, I did, so what's your problem'), leaving the imagined challenger confused and at a loss ('oh er errr'). The context for the event as something Aaron can be personally proud of becomes more firmly

established invoking an as yet untroubled identity. In Extract Eight, Nigel as interviewer then attempts, in a complex discursive act, to repair a potential misreading of his earlier question in line 76: 'is that good?' His question leads to further formulations of Aaron's position:

Extract Eight

```
94    Nigel:   =Yeah I mean I wasn't sort of saying is four in two
95             days good I mean it's impressive [you know ]
96    Aaron:                                   [hh [hhh   ] hh
97    Phil:                                      [hhhhh] hhhh
98    Nigel:   But I me::an like (.) it presumes that erm that's:: a
99             creditable thing (.) yeah? Is it?
100            (0.2)
101   Phil:    No because you're on the moral low ground
102   Aaron:   But I don't mind being on the moral [low ground      ]
103   Phil:                                        [Oh no you don't]
104            mind I I it didn't fuss me at all you know and I wasn't I
105            thought it was quite (.) it was quite impressive you
106            know you're sort of thinking that's shocking because it
107            never happens to me um:: .h hhh
108   Aaron:   Hhhh
109            (0.3)
110   Phil:    But he was (.) by some people in the group he was li
111            (.) they were just taking the piss it wasn't serious no-
112            one it didn't really bother anyone at [all        ]
113   Nigel:                                         [Hm mm]
114   Phil:    It was like Aaron was on the moral low ground because
115            he was like (.) gigolo Casanova whatever
```

In lines 94-5 Nigel first distances himself from Aaron and Phil's formulation of 'good'. He then notes, however, that the possible description 'impressive' might apply. Aaron and Phil's laughter may suggest that this is heard as a joke, as ironic or as problematic in some way. This reading seems likely because 'impressive' as a description follows Nigel's repair of his own possible positioning as someone who might concur with the definition of 'good' emerging in previous turns. 'Good' framed as 'impressive prowess' has become a more troubled position especially when it is now put in line 99 in conjunction with 'creditable'.

In line 101 Phil (temporarily, as it turns out) concurs with Nigel's troubling of Aaron's position. He formulates Aaron's conduct as not creditable because he is 'on the moral low ground'. At this point Aaron has a number of choices—he could accept Phil's assessment in entirety, he could disagree with his description 'moral low ground', or he could reject the relevance of any of this description and evaluation of his behaviour. Interestingly, he accepts Phil's description but presents himself as someone who doesn't mind occupying that cultural slot. In the process, of course, the indexical nature of that social space 'the moral low ground' becomes evident. Aaron moves to untrouble or normalize this position. And Phil re-adjusts his own position accordingly (see lines 103-15), distancing himself from the identity of someone who might be 'fussed' by Aaron's behaviour. Having been initially disapproving and with a hearably strong moral line, Phil's criticism of Aaron becomes re-characterized as not

serious. While the position of Aaron in combination with 'the moral low ground' become reworked to be in line with other recognizable characters in stories of male sexual performance: 'like gigolo, Casanova, whatever'.

The final part of the discussion where Paul enters more fully as a participant adds some new positionings for Aaron and reworks two positions already available.

Extract Nine

116 Nigel: Right (.) okay (0.2) what do you think Paul?

117   (0.3)

118 Paul: Did you=

119 Phil: =Are you ap[<u>pall</u>ed?   ]

120 Paul: [When you] .hh no (.) s [when you went
         out]

121 Nigel: [Not appalled?
         ]

122 Paul: I jus I'll tell you in a minute when you went out

123 Nigel: hh[hhh   ]

124 Unknow   [hhhh]
    n:

125 Paul: When you went out on that Friday (.) evening you were

126   out on the pull yeah?=

127 Aaron: =<u>No</u>

128 Paul: This (.) you were not?=

129 Aaron: =Just out [as a group]

130 Phil: [Just out   ] as a group of friends

131 Paul: On the Saturday you were out on the pull?

132 Phil: No

133 Aaron: .hh [not really]

134 Phil: [He was   ] drunk=

135 Aaron: = I <u>wasn't</u> drunk [unconscious] (.) I was <u>very</u> merry I

136 Phil: [((inaudible))]

137		was like (.) all erm (.) all like social guards were down
138	Paul:	Yeah (0.2) and (0.3) whe::n (.) so and (0.4) when you
139		got off with the first one [did you]
140	Aaron:	[hhhhhhh hhh]
141	Phil:	Who was first? Can you remember?
142	Paul:	On the Friday
143	Aaron:	Er::::m on the Friday that that was Janesy
144	Paul:	Did you have any sort of like intonation ((sic)) of
145		carrying the relationship further?
146	Aaron:	No
147	Phil:	((inaudible - sounds like one nighter))
148	Paul:	So so you basically went for as many pullings off as
149		you could get in a weekend?
150	Phil:	No
151	Aaron:	I didn't go for it it just
152		(·)
153	Paul:	It just happened?
154	Aaron:	Well yeah (.) it's not so much I thought right ((hits
155		the desk)) this weekend (.) keep your pecker up lad
156		you're away [it's] not like that it's just that I
157	Phil:	[hhh]
158		(.)
159	Paul:	With any of them [did you feel]
160	Aaron:	[I get lucky very ((inaudible))]
161	Paul:	that they'd be like a follow on?

162	Phil:	He didn't know who <u>half</u> of them <u>were</u> do you .hh hh
163	Aaron:	Ah er I didn't (.) I mean it wasn't (.) I mean it wasn't
164		like a right gitty thing to do it was like the other
165		half knew as well that it wasn't gonna be
166		(0.4)
167	Phil:	Mm
168	Aaron:	Erm (0.2) no it's it's you're getting it all wrong it's
169		it's (0.2) it wasn't (0.4) errr Aaron come up with the
170		phrase you want to say (.) it wasn't alright this kid's
171		gonna get off with me then we're gonna go out oh no
172		we're not gonna go out what a git it was (0.2) I'm
173		gonna get off with this lad and that's alright
174	Phil:	Fancied a bit of rough you know
175	Aaron:	Fancied a bit of rough
176	Phil:	As and it was mutual I imagine

This is an enormous amount happening here which cannot be analysed in detail. What I wish to note is Paul's new description of Aaron's activities as 'out on the pull' (in line 126). This account seems to be heard as an uncalled for accusation in relation to the events of Friday night and Aaron and Phil issue denials and collaborate as a duet in attempting to reformulate and minimize the actions so described—'just out as a group of friends'. Interestingly, when Paul moves the conversation to the events of Saturday night Aaron's denial at this point becomes weak ('not really', line 133). In line 134 Phil offers another re-characterization for Saturday night. He summons up and recalls another available identity in Aaron's 'portfolio'— Aaron was drunk. In lines 135-7 Aaron modifies and qualifies this potentially damaging identity to lay the stress on drunkenness and loss of inhibition.

In lines 144-5 Paul goes on to develop more of his accusation—he suggests that Aaron had no intention of carrying on the relationship and this helps instantiate what it means to be 'out on the pull'. The crux of the argument as Aaron subsequently interprets it seems to be about intention and responsibility. The pattern of responses suggests that Paul's rhetoric is persuasive and he has successfully created what seems to be a troubled identity for Aaron—the identity of being intentionally or callously promiscuous—going from one woman to another with no thought of a longer-term

relationship. This formulation leads Aaron to first disavow the identity of a lad who deliberately goes out planning sexual conquests (someone who thinks 'keep your pecker up', line 155), then to try and reinstate the identity of 'being lucky' (line 160). Finally, he produces his longest description so far (lines 168-73) as he attempts to resist Paul's characterization through a formulation of his own mental state, his own talk to himself and the mental state and self-talk of the young women involved. He characterizes himself as not intentionally 'going for it', and posits the young women as similarly motivated by a casual sexuality so that his motives and state of mind were mirrored by the motives and state of mind of 'the other half'. Phil then collaborates with this account suggesting the young women 'fancied a bit of rough' and thus the encounter was mutual.

To summarize, multiple and potentially inconsistent subject positions are in play in this stretch of discourse for Aaron: he is drunk, lucky, on the pull, having a good month, on the moral low ground, engaged in consensual sexual play with young women who fancied a bit of rough, not intentionally going for it, his conduct is impressive and so on—indeed, this list does not exhaust all the positions evident in the complete discussion in the interview. The flow of interaction variously troubles and untroubles these positions. As we have seen, one formulation leads to a counter-formulation which is in turn resisted. In fact the question of how to evaluate Aaron's actions, as often happens in social life, remains unresolved and ambiguous, and these various threads and Aaron's 'portfolio' of positions remain available to be carried forward to the other contexts and conversations making up the 'long conversation' (Maybin, 1994) which is the sixth form common room culture.

To evoke a further analytic concept from social psychology, some order can be placed on these various positions by noting that they fit within several recognizable broader interpretative repertoires available to the young men. The term interpretative repertoire is an attempt to capture the 'doxic' (Barthes, 1977) nature of discourse. An interpretative repertoire is a culturally familiar and habitual line of argument comprised of recognizable themes, common places and tropes (doxa) (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell and Potter, 1988, 1992; Wetherell et al., 1987). The repertoires in the quoted extracts include male sexuality as performance and achievement, a repertoire around alcohol and disinhibition, and an ethics of sexuality as legitimated by relationships and reciprocity (Hollway, 1984, calls this the 'have and hold' discourse). These interpretative repertoires comprise members' methods for making sense in this context—they are the common sense which organizes accountability and serves as a back-cloth for the realization of locally managed positions in actual interaction (which are always also indexical constructions and invocations) and from which, as we have seen, accusations and justifications can be launched. The whole argument does not need to be spelt out in detail. Rather, one fragment or phrase (e.g. 'on the pull', 'social guards were down') evokes for listeners the relevant context of argumentation—premises, claims and counter-claims.

Re-evaluating Subject Positions

What, then, is the significance of this analysis (carried out in line with the spirit of Schegloff's methodological principles if not with his concern for detail) for Mouffe's post-structuralist account of subject positions? Mouffe (1992) presents subject positions as constructed in discourse, and the tenor of her account makes discourse the constituting agent. She argues that 'we can ... conceive the social agent as constituted by an ensemble of "subject positions" that can never be totally fixed in a closed

system of differences, constructed by a diversity of discourses, among which there is no necessary relation, but a constant movement of over-determination and displacement' (p. 372). Subject positions, and thus the identities of participants in social life, are determined by discourses and in this sense are prior, already constituted, and could be read off or predicted from knowledge of the relevant discourse.

Mapped on to the material in the Appendix, this view has some cogency in the sense that Aaron and Phil's choice to position Aaron within a repertoire of male sexuality as performance and proud achievement constructs for him and for others a context which may have ramifications beyond his control or intention. Aaron is certainly positioned; but it also seems a mis-description to make discourse the active agent here. What more clearly fuels positioning is accountability or participants' orientations to their setting and the emergent conversational activities. It is also very clearly the case that what a subject position comes to be is only partly the consequence of which discourse it can be assigned to. We saw, for instance, that the invocation of positions and thus their significance and connotation is indeed local, highly situated, and occasioned. In effect, as Schegloff argues, the sense of an interaction depends on what kind of thing it is for participants.

Such a perspective gives a more grounded view on what Mouffe (1992) goes on to describe as the contingent and precarious nature of identity, and on Laclau's (1993) notion of the 'radical relationalism' or openness of social discursive practices. It is not so much that these features arise due to the nature of signification per se but because of the reflexivity built into social interaction and the emergent and transformative properties of that interaction. Contingency, precariousness and openness arise in part because utterances are designed to do interactional tasks and do not thereby entail descriptive closure and cognitive consistency. The replies or turns of other participants demonstrate how those utterances have been intersubjectively understood as well as performing further actions. And all of this is contingent on the interactional moment.

I do not wish to suggest, however, that critical discourse analysis should thus become Schegloff's 'technical' analysis or that I see 'technical' analysis as an initial necessary discipline which should be carried out before any other statement about a piece of discourse could apply. As noted earlier, I see the 'discipline' as two-sided. A post-structuralist approach allows a perspective on talk which helps more thoroughly account for 'why this utterance here'.

Argumentative Threads

If the problem with post-structuralist analysts is that they rarely focus on actual social interaction, then the problem with conversational analysts is that they rarely raise their eyes from the next turn in the conversation, and, further, this is not an entire conversation or sizeable slice of social life but usually a tiny fragment. Schegloff's methodological principles are fitted for the analysis of small pieces of conversation in detail. His recommendation that critical analysts first perform a 'technical analysis' is impractical— there may well be, for instance, thousands of interruptions which could be analysed in any social psychological or ethnographic study of discourse such as our work on masculinity. But, more crucially, Schegloff's suggestion rests on an unnecessarily restricted notion of analytic description and participants' orientation.

Schegloff argues that analysts should not import their own categories into participants' discourse but should focus instead on participant orientations. Further, analytic claims should be demonstrable. Schegloff's notion of analytic description

uncontaminated by theorists' categories does not entail, however, that no analytic concepts whatsoever will be applied, as the example of his own analyses demonstrates. Rather, concepts such as conditional relevance, for example, or the notion of accountability, or preferred and dispreferred responses are used to identify patterns in talk and to create an ordered sense of what is going on. Presumably Schegloff would argue that this does not count as imposing theorists' categories on participants' orientations since such concepts are intensely empirical, grounded in analysis and built up from previous descriptive studies of talk. As already noted, the advantage for Schegloff of such an approach is that it gives scholarly criteria for correctness and grounds academic disputes, allowing appeals to the data, and it closes down the infinity of contexts which could be potentially relevant to something demonstrable—what the participants take as relevant.

It is not clear, however, when the concepts of more critical discourse analysts should be seen as crossing Schegloff's invisible boundary line from the acceptable deployment of concepts for the description of discursive materials to importing analyst's own preoccupations. Would a descriptive analysis, for example, guided by Foucault's concept of genealogy, of the 'institutionalized forms of intelligibility' organizing social relations in the sixth form common room of a boys' independent school and the interpretative repertoires and forms of common sense these make available to Aaron, Phil and Paul count as importing theorists' preoccupations? Would Schegloff's boundary line be breached if, as part of such an analysis of the available interpretative resources, we attempted to develop a feminist commentary on the social and cultural significance of the patterning and the tensions and contradictions in the use of these resources not to mention their crass and highly offensive nature?

The crucial issue here, for Schegloff, is the point at which analysis departs from evident participant orientations and one problem from a critical perspective is that Schegloff's sense of participant orientation may be unacceptably narrow. We have seen already that in practice for Schegloff participant orientation seems to mean only what is relevant for the participants in this particular conversational moment. Ironically, of course, it is the conversation analyst in selecting for analysis part of a conversation or continuing interaction who defines this relevance for the participant. In restricting the analyst's gaze to this fragment, previous conversations, even previous turns in the same continuing conversation become irrelevant for the analyst but also, by dictat, for the participants. We do not seem to have escaped, therefore, from the imposition of theorists' categories and concerns.

Any piece of discourse analysis, of course, will involve restrictions on what is studied. Conversation analysis is not alone in this. If we adopt, however, Laclau and Mouffe's more inclusive notion of the 'argumentative texture' of the social and definition of discourse as the unceasing human activity of making meaning, a more productive sense of participant orientation and relevance is possible. Analysis works by carving out a piece of the argumentative social fabric for closer examination—a set of similar seeming conversational activities, say. Schegloff's approach demands that analysts then lose interest in the argumentative threads which run through this set as warp and woof connecting it in again with the broader cloth. The genealogical approach in contrast suggests that in analysing our always partial piece of the argumentative texture we look also to the broader forms of intelligibility running through the texture more generally. This is what Shapiro (1992) means by the concept of 'proto conversations'—the conversational or discursive history which makes this particular conversation possible.

With this tack, of course, we haven't solved Schegloff's problem of infinite relevance but in practice, participants' orientations understood in this more inclusive way turn out to be manageable. As good ethnography of communication demonstrates (e.g. Cicourel, 1992; Lindstrom, 1992; Ochs, 1992) it is not necessary to say everything about the argumentative fabric of a society to say something, and something furthermore which is scholarly, complete, and insightful concerning participant orientations, and which takes those orientations as constructed by more than what is immediately relevant or set by the previous few turns in the conversation.

This point can be developed in another way. In effect, there are two approaches at stake to what counts as an adequate answer to the question—why this utterance here? For Schegloff, for example, the material in the Appendix is adequately analysed when we have described the principal conversational activities and shown how participants' utterances contribute to and are occasioned by those activities. From my perspective, however, this is not an adequate account. An adequate analysis would also trace through the argumentative threads displayed in participants' orientations and would interrogate the content or the nature of members' methods for sense-making in more depth.

Why, for instance, does Aaron respond to Paul's accusation that he is 'on the pull' with an argument which formulates the young women involved as also wanting casual sex (lines 163-73), thus attempting to make his own actions no longer 'a right gitty thing to do'? Why, in this community, among these members, might this possibly work as an adequate justification? Why is this assumed to be a possible 'good defence'? It is important and interesting from a feminist perspective that these young men only appeal to some notion of autonomous female sexuality at this point in their conversation. Indeed, why is Paul's intervention heard in the first place as a critique which deserves an answer? Why in this community does it seem to trouble identity to 'be on the pull' but multiple sexual encounters can be also successfully framed as 'good'?

We should also be interested in the 'heteronormativity' (Kitzinger, personal communication) evident throughout this discussion which supplies a further taken for granted discursive back-cloth organizing these young men's participant orientations and their members' methods for making sense. A more adequate analysis of 'why this utterance here' would also explore the silences and the absences in this material—the argumentative threads which are hearably not part of these participants' orientations and everyday sense-making. Crucially, it would be concerned with the ideological dilemmas (Billig et al., 1988; see also Billig, 1987, 1991) evident in the struggle and collaboration over how to formulate Aaron and his actions. The movement of contextualization and the troubling of positions gives some insight into the contradictory and inconsistent organization of the broader interpretative resources these young men are actively working over as they try to negotiate both 'good' and 'gitty'. Surely a complete or scholarly analysis would try to clarify, interpret and discuss these resources.

Conclusion

In this article, I have tried to develop a critique of both post-structuralist writers on discourse and Schegloff's methodological prescriptions for analysts. I have argued that a focus on participants' orientations can be extremely revealing about the formation of subject positions. Such a perspective substantially changes our view of

the subject constituted by discourse and his or her 'ensemble' of subject positions. I have also tried to suggest, however, that in accusing critical discourse analysts of intellectual hegemony, Schegloff is performing his own act of colonization in seeking to impose one narrow understanding of participants' orientations and relevance on the field as a whole. A further central aim was to intervene in the construction within social psychology of contrasting camps of discourse analysts and to suggest further reasons for preferring a more eclectic approach.

What role, then, do I see for Schegloff's technical analysis? Is it, as he proposes, a first step in the long process of genealogical analysis or other kinds of critical discourse analyses focused on socio-political issues? My aim was not to endorse this division of labour—conversation analysis then ethnomethodology then post-structuralist analysis or ethnography of communication or critical discourse analysis—but to suggest that for social psychological discursive projects a more synthetic approach is required focused on the development of analytic concepts which work across some of these domains such as, for instance, the notion of positioning, interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas, and so on.

More specifically, critical discursive social psychology is that discipline which focuses on the situated flow of discourse, which looks at the formation and negotiation of psychological states, identities and interactional and intersubjective events. It is concerned with members' methods and the logic of accountability while describing also the collective and social patterning of background normative conceptions (their forms of articulation and the social and psychological consequences). It is a discipline concerned with the practices which produce persons, notably discursive practices, but seeks to put these in a genealogical context. It could be evaluated using Schegloff's 'gold standard'—empirical demonstrability—but other conventional criteria for evaluating scholarship are also relevant such as coherence, plausibility, validity, and insight—especially when analysts include, as I believe they should, investigation of the social and political consequences of discursive patterning.

Appendix: Transcript and Transcription Notes

1	Nigel:	Okay yeah tell me about going with four people in one
2		night=
3	Phil:	[=All::right ((bangs table))]
4	Aaron:	[hhhhhhh hhhhhh hhhhhh h] hh no::=
5	Phil:	=Go on=
6	Paul:	On the record=
7	Phil:	=Was it was it this f .hh
8		(.)
9	Aaron:	I don't know I was a bit drunk=
10	Phil:	=1 I'll tell he was drunk I'll tell you what I know
11		[because] I am never drunk
12	Nigel:	[Hm mm]
13	Phil:	Because I'm dead smug [erm:::]
14	Aaron:	[He's never] drunk it's true=
15	Phil:	=Friday you went with Janesy on Friday?
16	Aaron:	I did yes:::
17	Phil:	Out down the pub I I missed this completely a
18		complete shock to me=

19	Aaron:	=.hhhh
20	Phil:	Erm (.) went out down the pub one night as we do (.)
21		erm I went home because I like live out of town er
22		these stopped later (0.2) I was not aware of anything
23		following night <u>big</u> party I mean there was like
24		200 people there I would have thought big field (.) you
25		know disco and all that shit (.) erm Aaron got
26		absolutely out of his face (.) I was going out with
27		someone she didn't turn up sh she rang me [and told me]
28	Nigel:	[Hm mm]
29	Phil:	She might not be going
30	Nigel:	Hm mm
31	Phil:	Um:::
32	Aaron:	It was Karen
33	Phil:	It was Ka Karen erm something wrong [with her] mum
34	Aaron:	[hhhhh hh]
35	Phil:	wasn't it or something I can't remember what it was=
36	Aaron:	=Ah that's a good excuse
37	Phil:	Anyway [(0.2) sorry <u>yes</u> Aaron]
38	Aaron:	[hhhhh hhh hhhh]
39	Phil:	Erm so Aaron got <u>rea</u>lly drunk and he went with
40	Aaron:	hhhhhhhhhhh[hhhh hhhh]
41	Phil:	[Jenny Baxter] (.) <u>nice</u> girl <u>our</u> year (.)
42		Cathy Br<u>ewin</u>=
43	Aaron:	=No it wasn't Cathy Brewin it was another Cathy=
44	Phil:	=Cathy Cathy someone
45	Aaron:	It wasn't Cathy Brewin=
46	Phil:	=And you don't know who the other one was do you?
47	Aaron:	No
48	Phil:	You forgot her name=
49	Aaron:	=Yeah=
50	Phil:	=Or didn't even find out=
51	Aaron:	=Right=
52	Phil:	=It was just you could see him at various points of the
53		evening with this girl like on the floor in this field (.)
54		and I knew it was Aaron but I didn't know who the girl
55		was because she kept changing
56	Nigel:	Hm mm

57	Phil:	And you lost someone's <u>purse</u> didn't you?
58	Aaron:	Yeah (0.2) .hh hh
59	Phil:	And um (0.2) then we walked
60	Aaron:	hhhh
61	Phil:	we decided to walk back from this party it was like
62		out past ((small village)) so we had to walk back to
63		((local town))
64	Nigel:	Hm mm
65	Aaron:	hh good idea Aaron .hh=
66	Phil:	=Yeah=
67	Aaron:	=We were very lucky that day
68	Phil:	We were erm and we were walking back and he says
69		oh I went with Janesy on Friday and I went yeah you
70		went with three birds last night you went with one on
71		Friday this was in his good month
72	Nigel:	Hm mm
73	Phil:	So that like took me aback somewhat (0.3) so that was
74		a good weekend for you
75		(·)
76	Nigel:	Is that <u>good</u>?
77	Phil:	Well in his books <u>yes</u> you know=
78	Aaron:	=hhhh.h [yeah]
79	Phil:	[The thing] is you got so much stick for it
80	Aaron:	Well yeah I could take the stick because it was
81		almost like (0.2) a good ego trip when everyone was
82		taking the stick oh you got off with her ah ha ha
83		yep I did so what's your problem? [Oh, er, errr]
84	Nigel:	[Hm mm]
85	Aaron:	[Errr]
86	Phil:	[None of them] were particularly pikey so you were
87		alright really
88	Aaron:	No (.) they weren't .hh none of them were like majorly
89		pikey .hh (.) one or two perhaps could have like
90		(.)
91	Phil:	I don't know I don't know I think I know this Cathy
92		bird I know Jenny I know Cathy thing I don't know who
93		the other one was and neither do you so can't tell=
94	Nigel:	=Yeah I mean I wasn't sort of saying is four in two
95		days good I mean it's <u>impressive</u> [you know]
96	Aaron:	[hh [hhh] hh
97	Phil:	[hhhhh] hhhh
98	Nigel:	But I me::an like (.) it presumes that erm that's:: a
99		creditable thing (.) yeah? Is it?

100		(0.2)
101	Phil:	No because you're on the moral low ground
102	Aaron:	But I don't mind being on the moral [low ground]
103	Phil:	[Oh no you don't]
104		mind I I it didn't fuss me at all you know and I wasn't I
105		thought it was quite (.) it was quite impressive you
106		know you're sort of thinking that's shocking because it
107		never happens to me um::.h hhh
108	Aaron:	Hhhh
109		(0.3)
110	Phil:	But he was (.) by some people in the group he was li
111		(.) they were just taking the piss it wasn't serious no-
112		one it didn't really bother anyone at [all]
113	Nigel:	[Hm mm]
114	Phil:	It was like Aaron was on the moral low ground because
115		he was like (.) gigolo Casanova whatever
116	Nigel:	Right (.) okay (0.2) what do you think Paul?
117		(0.3)
118	Paul:	Did you=
119	Phil:	=Are you ap[palled?]
120	Paul:	[When you] .hh no (.) s [when you went out]
121	Nigel:	[Not appalled?]
122	Paul:	I jus I'll tell you in a minute when you went out
123	Nigel:	hh[hhh]
124	Unknown:	[hhhh]
125	Paul:	When you went out on that Friday (.) evening you were
126		out on the pull yeah? =
127	Aaron:	=No
128	Paul:	This (.) you were not? =
129	Aaron:	Just out [as a group]
130	Phil:	[Just out] as a group of friends
131	Paul:	On the Saturday you were out on the pull?
132	Phil:	No
133	Aaron:	.hh [not really]
134	Phil:	[He was] drunk=
135	Aaron:	=I wasn't drunk [unconscious] (.) I was very merry I
136	Phil:	[((inaudible))]
137	Aaron:	was like (.) all erm (.) all like social guards were

		down
138	Paul:	Yeah (0.2) and (0.3) whe::n (.) so and (0.4) when you got
139		off with the first one [did you]
140	Aaron:	[hhhhhhh hhh]
141	Phil:	Who was first? Can you remember?
142	Paul:	On the Friday
143	Aaron:	Er::::m on the Friday that that was Janesy
144	Paul:	Did you have any sort of like intonation ((sic)) of
145		carrying the relationship further?
146	Aaron:	No
147	Phil:	((inaudible - sounds like one nighter))
148	Paul:	So so you basically went for as many pullings off as
149		you could get in a weekend?
150	Phil:	No
151	Aaron:	I didn't go for it it just
152		(.)
153	Paul:	It just happened?
154	Aaron:	Well yeah (.) it's not so much I thought <u>right</u> ((hits
155		the desk)) this weekend (.) keep your pecker up lad
156		you're away [it's] not like that it's just that I
157	Phil:	[hhh]
158		(.)
159	Paul:	With any of them [did you feel]
160	Aaron:	[I get lucky very ((inaudible))]
161	Paul:	that they'd be like a follow on?
162	Phil:	He didn't know who <u>half</u> of them <u>were</u> do you .hh hh
163	Aaron:	Ah er I didn't (.) I mean it wasn't (.) I mean it wasn't
164		like a right gitty thing to do it was like the other
165		half knew as well that it wasn't gonna be
166		(0.4)
167	Phil:	Mm
168	Aaron:	Erm (0.2) no it's it's you're getting it all wrong it's
169		it's (0.2) it wasn't (0.4) errr Aaron come up with the
170		phrase you want to say (.) it wasn't alright this kid's
171		gonna get off with me then we're gonna go out oh no
172		we're not gonna go out what a git it was (0.2) I'm
173		gonna get off with this lad and that's alright
174	Phil:	Fancied a bit of rough you know
175	Aaron:	Fancied a bit of rough
176	Phil:	As and it was mutual I imagine

Transcription Notation

The form of transcription notation used was modified from the system developed by Gail Jefferson.

One or more colons indicate the extension of the previous sound, e.g.: Tha::t

Laughter is marked by hh the number of hh is a rough marker of duration of laughter while .hh indicates an audible intake of breath.

A ? is used to mark upward intonation characteristic of a question.

Underlining indicates stress placed on a word or part of a word.

Extended brackets mark overlap between speakers. The left bracket indicates the beginning of the overlap while the right bracket indicates the end,
e.g.: hh[hhh]
       [hhhh]
Double parentheses indicate transcriber's descriptions.

Numbers in parentheses, e.g. (0.2), indicate pauses in tenths of a second while (.) indicates a micropause.

An equals sign = indicates the absence of a discernible gap between the end of one speaker's utterance and the beginning of another speaker's utterance.

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Narrative Inquiry: Dialogue beyond Disciplines

Kenneth J. Gergen and Mary Gergen

We commonly ask how was it that something came into being? This search for an origin story is also apparent when we attempt to understand what is commonly called the "discursive turn" in the scholarly world. One may readily point to the key roles played by ordinary language philosophy, post-structuralist literary theory, critical theory, Lacanian theory, and the sociology of knowledge. There are many stories to be told about the emergence of "the turn." For our purposes, one of the most important is rooted in semiotic theory. Its focus on narrative structure and its limits and potentials in constructing our realities is compelling and far-reaching. This concern with narrative now spreads across the disciplines, and indeed has become a vital means of breaking disciplinary boundaries across the humanities and social sciences. Although there is no univocal definition of narrative, central to these various endeavors is a concern with stories as vehicles for rendering the self and world intelligible. Narratives bring events across time into coherent and interdependent relationships. Thus, in contrast to chronicles or archives, which simply list events occurring across time, a narrative links a series of events in such a way that a sense of explanation is achieved. As commonly put, the statement that "the king died, and then the queen died" is not a narrative. If instead one says, "The king died, and then the queen died in grief, a story or narrative has been produced.

While relatively new to contemporary psychology, narrative inquiry is now a vital center of activity for large numbers of psychologists. Researchers involved in studying individuals, social relationships, organizations, and communities are deeply invested in collecting, interpreting and evaluating narratives. Others, including therapists and counselors, explore narrative means as an avenue of personal and social transformation (cf. White & Epston, 1990). It is the purpose of the present chapter to provide a brief overview of some of the major lines of inquiry of special relevance to social and personality psychology.

There are important reasons for exploring the nature of narratives. For the past thirty years, the center of gravity in social and personality psychology has moved steadily toward a biological basis for explaining human behavior. The strong tendency is to view human behavior as a product of psychological processes that can ultimately be linked to brain function and evolution. Concerns with the individual within relationships, patterns of social activity, socio-cultural context, and social change are thus muted and marginalized. In contrast to the biologically-based approach, which emphasizes more traditional mechanistic formulations, narratives are social conventions. They are largely linguistic, and their form and functions may change across culture and history. Thus, inquiry into narratives offers a fresh return to matters of social life. Further, for many psychologists, narrative inquiry offers an opening to an enormously rich array of interdisciplinary dialogues. New lines of theory, new approaches to method, and renewed sensitivity to the political and social value of research are all invited. In what follows, we focus first on three major lines of narrative inquiry related to social and personality psychology. We then turn to several significant repercussions of narrative inquiry in psychology.

Narratives, Society and Self

Although inquiry into narrative is diverse in both content and method, one may discern three major concerns. The first represents the importance of the cultural context and the narrative structures made available for use. The second moves from structures to daily processes of interchange, and the third focuses on individual life stories.

Narratives and the Cultural Structuring of Reality

One of the most significant intellectual dramas surrounding inquiry into narrative is the challenge posed to realist accounts of events across time. As commonly reasoned, observations of the world do not in themselves demand any particular form of account. However, given a convention of story telling, one may interpret events in its terms. In effect, narrative conventions are ways of organizing observations to give them coherence. The common error is to presume that narratives are accurate reflections of the real. In psychology, such views initially came into focus with the writings of Gergen and Gergen (1983, 1984), on the narrative construction of the self. Using notions of progressive and regressive changes in the hedonic value of narratives, they identified such common narratives as "happily ever after," "heroic," "tragic," and so on. By 1986 Theodore Sarbin had organized a sufficient number of psychologists that he could publish his edited classic, *Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct*. The subsequent work of Polkinghorne (1988) and Bruner (1990) added important theoretical dimension to the study of narrative in psychology. Since that time, largely owing to the stimulation of interdisciplinary study, the domain has burgeoned.

A full review of this literature is beyond the scope of this article. However, one of the primary concentrations has linked sociological and psychological concerns. As commonly reasoned, one may locate within any culture common, or prototypical forms of narrative such as those discussed above. These narrative forms function as a cultural repository from which people draw in their attempts to understand or identify themselves (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992). In effect, one may build a life around such common stories; they become the scaffolding for the structure of personality. For example, in her research on popular autobiographies, Mary Gergen (2001) documented highly distinctive gender differences. In telling about their lives, male "heroes" relied on the monomythic tale of heroic quest. In contrast, "heroines" were more diversified in their autobiographies. Elements of the quest narrative were mingled with stories of their loves and their families. Every life story made reference to concerns with their bodies, a topic that men rarely mentioned at all (Gergen & Gergen, 1993). Dan McAdams, a major contributor to narrative psychology, has recently focused on the prevalence of the "redemption story" in people's lives (McAdams, 2006). This research suggests that people often build their lives around narratives of being lost or deviant or unsuccessful, but then, through various means, they are "saved" from their calamitous fate. More recent work (McAdams et al., 2008) indicates that political liberals and conservatives harbor quite different narratives of their lives. For McAdams (2007), "Life stories guide behavior and decision making, and they speak to how people create meaning in their lives." (p. 25). At the same time, Holstein and Gubrium (1999) propose that with the advent of postmodern culture, the relevance of the conventional narratives of the past is beginning to deteriorate.

Narratives as Conversational Achievements

Inquiry into societal narratives and their structuring of reality stands in significant contrast to research oriented toward micro-social process. In this form of analysis, narratives are not fixed structures that control one's sense of identity and life events. Rather, in the ongoing interchange among people, narratives are formed and dissolved over time. Thus, for example, in conversation there is a continuous fashioning and refashioning of self-definition. One's identity and the story justifying this identity are co-constructed through subtle conversational turns (Bamberg, De Fina, and Schiffrin, 2007; Stokoe, 2006). In their experimental work, Bavelas, Coates, and Johnson (2000) have demonstrated ways in which the listener's responses subtly altered the teller's story. Of methodological importance, this negotiation may also include that of the researcher and those who are relating stories of their lives (Ceballo, 1999) Connecting micro-social process with cultural context, Noy (2005) has documented the use of narrative among Israeli backpackers in both establishing one's identity and in building community.

One of the most important lines of inquiry into narrative production is into social or communal memory. When we recount events of the past, it is often in a story form. And too, such stories are often related in ongoing conversation. As Middleton and Edwards (1990) have demonstrated, as the interlocutors share their views on "what happened," there is a collective shaping and reshaping of the past. Further lines of inquiry point to the ways in which various artifacts, photographs, monuments, and cultural symbols enter into the common views of history (see Middleton and Brown, 2005, for an integrated review.) In effect, history is not "there" as an object to be studied, but is subject to continuous reshaping.

Narratives and the Study of Lives

In contrast to both the more sociological and micro-social orientations, a lively form of analysis has been devoted to the lives of individuals. Within this framework, narratives are regarded as unique, and personalized stories, which are reflective of special life conditions. As Schiff (2007) remarks, "Narrative research promises to bring us closer to the real subject matter of psychology investigation, that of human intention and meaning, in its appropriate interpretive context." (p.27) Within this analytical framework, the uniqueness and "truthfulness" of the particular story is at the heart of the inquiry, and the central obligation of the researcher is to honor the stories as told, and to resist parsing them into analytical categories or stripping them of their personal significance. Many feminist researchers, as well as members of other minority groups, have supported the view that narrative analysis should resist interpretations that diminish the integrity of a single person's voice. In effect, it is not the communally shared narrative that counts, nor the narrative in the making. Rather, the researcher should honor the unique qualities of an individual's lived experience (Collins, 1990).

Predecessors to this form of inquiry include phenomenology, ideographic, and autobiographical orientations to personality theory. However, in the case of narrative, perhaps the most enduring and significant contributions to this line of inquiry is represented in the series, *The narrative study of lives*, edited by Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Lieblich (and later joined by Dan McAdams), which offered a place for the presentation of rich and diverse forms of qualitative research and reflection. Starting

with Volume one, (Josselson & Lieblich, 1993), the series has extended through ten volumes, concluding with the recent publication of, *The meaning of others: Narrative studies of relationships* (Josselson, Lieblich, & McAdams, 2007). Contributions to the series have included a range of topics, including the experience of being an immigrant, a criminal, a holocaust survivor, a soldier, a minority group member, and a father of a teenage daughter.

New Narrative Departures

These three major lines of inquiry have been especially relevant to social and personality psychologists. However, there are three more ways in which the narrative focus is shaping current developments in psychology. These all represent relatively new forms of departure, which deserve discussion.

Narrative and Critical Social Psychology

As noted, many researchers in the narrative domain embrace a social constructionist view of scientific knowledge (Gergen, 2009a). Thus, as reasoned, one's descriptions and explanations of the world are not derived from observation, but within relationships people construct the meaning or sense of what is observed. As we have seen, this view invites particular interest in the discursive conventions – including narrative - employed in making sense of the world. Especially important, however, is the way in which truth claims often accompany various narrative formulations. In science, courts of law, and news reporting, for example, some narratives are claimed to be true, and others false. It is the case that once community conventions are established for connecting story with observation, such claims can be legitimated. However, there is no ultimate legitimation for any particular convention. For example what counts as "murder" in one tradition may count as "execution" in another. Among social psychologists who view social critique as one of the key functions of the discipline, this line of thinking is of major importance (see, for example, Fox, Prilleltensky, and Austin, 2009; Hepburn, 2003). To illuminate the narrative structure of claims to truth is to remove the thrall of authority, and to reveal the lodgment of the claims in particular cultural traditions. As such traditions are suffused with values, attention is thus drawn to the political, moral, and social implications of the narrative. Deliberation may thus be fostered on potential alternatives.

One of the first psychologists to employ narrative analysis in this way was Donald Spence (1984). As he demonstrated, the interchange between the psychoanalyst and patient is one in which the patient's narrative of self is slowly replaced by the Freudian story of psychosexual development. In effect, the psychoanalytic process establishes a form of "narrative truth." As Freeman (1993) went on to propose, if unencumbered by authoritative accounts of individual development, people could otherwise locate rich possibilities for "rewriting the self."

The critical posture has been further employed to unsettle the Darwinian story of species development (Landau, 1984). As Gergen and Gergen (1986) have also demonstrated, theories of human development in psychology are based on long-standing story forms. Theories such as those of Jean Piaget or Carl Rogers represent variations on a traditional, progressive narrative (i.e. movements forward toward a goal). Suzanne Kirschner (1993) has extended this argument by demonstrating early religious roots for the psychoanalytic narrative of development. Various African-American feminists in the social sciences have been critical of "insider" narratives

framed by white, middle-class, heterosexual feminists, which followed exclusionary narrative lines (Collins, 1990; Etter-Lewis, 1991). And, Hook et al. (2004) have written extensively on the challenge of psychologists to examine the injustices invited by dominant narratives of the culture.

Narrative and the Development of Qualitative Methods

For narrative researchers who take a social constructionist stance, empirical methods do not validate any particular account of the world. Empirical evidence is less as a truth warrant than it is as an invitation to see the world in a particular way. Indeed, demands for rigorous methodology are viewed with suspicion. They seem to replace an openness to multiple realities with claims to a single reality. As surmised from the above review, constructionist researchers tend to be concerned with prominent social issues, so that the primary concern is with conveying a point of view as opposed to proving it to be true. Message takes precedence over method. In this context, the challenge for the researcher is to locate or develop forms of inquiry that are best suited to conveying the message.

The result of this line of reasoning has been a virtual renaissance in what is typically characterized as qualitative methodology. And in the present case, this means creative exploration into forms of narrative inquiry and exposition. To be sure, this does not mean foreclosing on systematic, quantitative measures of narrative discourse. However, the more exciting invitation is to explore various means of studying and writing about narrative. For many researchers, this means simply selecting themes from one's data that illustrate a particular narrative. Others have woven together various quotations to make their case (Austin, 1996). In "portraiture" work, various sources are combined from biography, historical events, and personal writings to create a narrative portrait of a particular person (Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Davis, 2003). With films and photography, Mary Gergen has treated the diversity of human-nature narratives available in western culture (Gergen, 2008). For a broad review of these methodological developments, the reader may consult Riessman (2008), Holstein and Gubrium (2008), and Clandinin (2006).

Narratives in Action

Interest in narratives has also spread throughout various forms of professional practice – psychotherapy, education, organizational change, and conflict resolution among them. In many of these cases social and personality psychologists have become active collaborators – both in carrying out research and building relevant theory. In the case of therapy, for example, one of the most significant movements of recent decades has focused on narrative transformation. As reasoned, people understand themselves through life-stories. "Problems" are only intelligible as problems within a given story. Thus, to work discursively to "re-story" one's life is both to dissolve the problem as initially defined and to open new life trajectories (see Angus and McLeod, 2004). In this context, researchers have been especially interested in the particular conversational means through which therapeutic change is achieved (see, for example, Gale, Lawless, and Rouston, 2004; Muntigle 2004). Further, attention has been directed to the ways in which therapeutic interchange is used to suppress or eliminate various issues from exploration (Wodak and Chilton, 2005) Of special concern to personality psychologists, for example, is the issue of narrative coherence. On the one side many believe therapy should enable the client to move toward greater narrative

coherence (Salvatore et al, 2006) - thus favoring a stabilized or anchored sense of being. For example, psychologists see the bereavement process as means of building a new life trajectory after a loved one has passed away (Neimeyer, 2001) As proposed, a narrative approach helps clients to locate self-defining memories for use in building an integrated identity (Singer and Blagov, 2004). In contrast, other theorists view the individual as embedded in complex social relationship requiring multiple narratives in varied context (Gergen, 2009b). For more richly detailed arguments, see the *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, v. 19, 2006, the Special Issue on Narrative Coherence).

In other practice domains, it is found that narratives play a valuable role in non-violent conflict resolution (Beck, 1996). Daniel Bar-on (2002), for example, has brought holocaust survivors and descendants of Nazi perpetrators together to share stories of their lives, and to bring about reconciliation among them. Mediation practitioners also turn to narratives as a means of bringing alienated parties into synchrony. A first step in narrative mediation involves deconstructing the usual conflict-saturated story that narrows the antagonists' perspectives to the problematic issue (Winslade & Monk, 2001). In the area of law, practitioners are becoming increasingly aware of the extent to which the outcome of trials is dependent upon the narrative properties of the cases being made (Amsterdam and Bruner, 2001). In medicine, most provocative at this point is the potential use of narratives in practices of pain management. As proposed by Arthur Frank (1997) the way in one configures the story of his or her pain, has important implications for the degree of suffering. Also far reaching in its implications is the work of Pennebacker (2000) and his colleagues on the uses of narrative writing in restoring the mental and physical health of those suffering from trauma and other life difficulties.

In Conclusion

As we have attempted to demonstrate, the burgeoning field of narrative inquiry has opened a rich range of inquiry for social and personality psychologists. Most important, such inquiry has brought back into focus the significance of the broad social context, ongoing social process, and individual experience in understanding human action. Further, we have seen how such inquiry has sparked developments in critical social psychology, qualitative methods of research, and the potentials of the field to speak to societal practices. To be sure, the various lines of inquiry differ in many ways. In the forms of inquiry outlined here, quite different assumptions are often at play from one line of research to another. These include assumptions about the object of knowledge (or its lack), preferred methods of inquiry, and the very aims of research. However, to the extent that one takes a pluralist or pragmatic view of scientific activity, these differences can be viewed as enriching. As we see it, the fact that such differences have not bred antagonism across these diverse approaches, indeed suggests a more liberal view of science. It must also be underscored that the present account has been both cursory and selective. For further exploration the reader is directed to Crossley (2000) and Bamberg (2007). The interested reader may also wish to visit Vincent Hevern's richly packed internet resource: http://web.lemoyne.edu/%7Ehevern/narpsych/narpsych.html. Many psychologists publish narrative work in the journal, *Narrative Inquiry*. However, interdisciplinary work is also featured in the journal of the International Society for the Study of Narrative (http://narrative.georgetown.edu/, entitled simply, *Narrative*.

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8

Positioning Theory

Rom Harré and Fathali M. Moghaddam

Positioning theory has its roots in linguistics and is best understood as part of a broader movement toward more fully realized multidisciplinary, multimethod research. In addition to crossing disciplinary boundaries, positioning theory crosses national boundaries and is gaining a broad international following (as reflected in Harré & Moghaddam, 2003; Moghaddam & Harré, 2008, 2010). Studies guided by positioning theory have explored the narratives people use to position themselves and others, and particularly the ascription to themselves and others of *rights*, what a person is owed by others, and *duties*, what a person owes to others (Harré, Moghaddam, Pilkerton-Carnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009). This focus on the dynamic process of social interactions, and the normative systems through which they are regulated, stands in sharp contrast to the causal model in traditional social psychology and cross-cultural psychology.

Positioning theory presents a normative rather than causal account of human thinking and doing. The causal account integral to traditional psychology attempts to discover connections between assumed causes (independent variables) and assumed effects (dependent variables). The laboratory method is used in the vast majority of studies in traditional research, because this method is assumed to best identify cause-effect relations. In traditional cross-cultural research, culture is introduced as an independent variable and the research question becomes: how does culture cause differences in behaviour between the members of group 'X' and group 'Y'?

Of course, some types of human behaviour are best explained using a causal account. For example, when John falls from a tree and suffers a blow to his head, he experiences *retrograde amnesia*, loss of memory for events that occurred before the brain damage. In this case, we can validly say that the blow to his head caused John's memory loss. This is an example of *performance capacity*. However, social behaviour involves *performance style*, which has to do with the meaning of things. Systems of meanings regulate rather than cause human behaviour, with the implication that individuals have some measure of choice as to which rules and norms they follow in relation to the projects they have in hand and what they *take* the social and physical environment to be. This is well understood in law, where individuals are held responsible for their actions, except in the rare case when they successfully plead insanity, or better, skilled counsel with the help of psychiatrists make the plea for them.

The True Domain of Thinking

To appreciate the significance of positioning analyses one must first reflect on some main features of the relations between language and thought and language and action. Thinking has many forms, but the form that is of paramount importance for most people is thinking as the use of cognitive tools to carry out the tasks of everyday life. The most important cognitive tools are symbols, usually words and other language

like devices, and models and other forms of iconic representation. Only recently has it been realised by psychologists that thinking can be communal as well as individual, public as well as private.

That insight leads to reflections on the question of where and when people are thinking. The domain of thinking is intrapersonal, as well as interpersonal and intergroup. Thinking is not only an Individual - Personal activity but also a Social – Public one. For example, the process of remembering includes conversational as well as introspective activities. Members of a family group, or a committee, or the golf club reminisce, each contributing something to the construction of a version of the past. It is communally constructed, and each member takes away with him or herself some personal version of that public version on which further action is often based. It follows that there are *exterograms*, records of the past outside the brain of a person, as well as *engrams* or *long-term potentialtion*, traces of the past incorporated in the long-term memory. There are legible material things, such as diaries, photos and monuments. There are the relevant sayings and doings of other people. These are all resources for acts of remembering, often over riding personal recollections.

Increasingly, both individual and collective remembering is being influenced by electronic communication systems and repositories, the world wide web (www) being the most important, The ability of individuals to be continually connected to the www, through ever-smaller and increasingly powerful hand-held electronic devices, means that 'remembering' is now routinely a collective activity. The availability of billions of verbal and image based memories through the www means that individuals never have to 'remember' as isolated entities, they can always link themselves to the vast memory banks of the web (of course, formal university examinations force the individual back to remembering in isolation again).

There are plenty of examples of thinking spanning both the Individual – Personal and Social – Public domains. In deciding what to do a person will spend time on private reflections of the consequences of a plan of action, perhaps attempting to imagine the future in some concrete way. However, often there are public discussions; people go about seeking advice on the best course of action. There are influences from the unstated opinions of others which may show up indirectly in what they do and say. There are informal varieties of the formal decision procedures involving agendas, resolutions, amendments, votes and so on. There is what one reads and what one sees on television.

In the last few decades a number of societies have undertaken major exercises in collective memory work and re-positioning in order to heal the wounds of conflict. For example, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) brought perpetrators and victims of violence face-to-face so that they would recount their experiences as part of a national remembering, and in doing so re-frame what happened and re-position themselves and the nation as 'changed' in some important ways. This re-positioning of 'who we are' is intended to result in new ways of thinking and doing. As pointed out by Charles Villa-Vicencio (2009), national research director of the South African TRC, "For generative conversations in post conflict situations to be effective, they must result in new horizons of thought and action…" (p.111). Although individual perpetrators and victims spoke at the TRC, the goal has been communal transformation in South Africa.

Clearly interpersonal relations must enter into communal forms of remembering, deciding, problem solving and so on. Among the most important are rights and duties with respect to what it is proper to say and do, and their distribution among the people involved.

Vygotsky's Principle

According to Vygotsky all higher order mental processes exist twice; once in the relevant group, influenced by culture and history, and then in the mind of the individual. The development of a human being is dependent as much on interpersonal relations as it is on individual maturation. Here is the famous passage from Vygotsky (1978: 57):

> Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals (Vygotsky, 1978: 57).

The appropriation of public-social practices as personal-individual skills comes about by a kind of psychological symbiosis. When an activity for an individual is the Zone of Proximal Development in Vygotsky's rather clumsy phrase, the actor has some rudimentary competence in the task in hand but does not know enough to bring it off successfully, or even, sometimes, to have a clear idea what the task actually is in the setting at hand. When the less skilled or junior member of a dyad tries to accomplish some task (which may be recognizing the task required in the first place) and that person is unable to carry through the performance correctly, the senior or more skilled member of a dyad, such as mother and child, teacher and pupil, and so on, supplements the efforts of the less competent in such a way as to bring the task to a successful conclusion. The junior member copies as well as possible the contributions of the senior next time the opportunity arises. Thus individual - personal skills are transferred in social - public performances which may run on for some time until the junior member is a competent thinker, actor, swimmer, and debater and so on.

Sometimes the contribution of the more skilled member of a group is hands-on showing and guiding, sometimes it is accomplished by words and other signs. Whatever device is employed one thing is of paramount importance in the unfolding of such an episode – the distribution and acknowledgement of rights and duties among the members. In both communal thought processes and in Vygotskian development the distribution of power in the group is closely tied in with the assignments and appropriations of rights and duties. Who has the right to teach and who has the duty to learn?

Temporality

Not only do the tools of thought and action change with time, but so too do the distributions of rights and duties among a group of people. The individuals involved in communal cognitive activities are the bearers of a complex and labile psychology, some of which can be captured in a discussion of `selves'. Though the English word `self' does not translate easily into most other languages, for instance into Spanish, nevertheless the concept can be appropriated as a term of art for scientific purposes. We must take account of how the mutability and multiplicity of self ties in with rights and duties in thought and action.

Persons `have' selves. There seem to be three main items in personhood that the word is currently used to pick out. There is the *embodied self*, which comes down to the unity and continuity of a person's point of view and of action in the material world, a trajectory in space and time. The embodied self is singular, continuous and self-identical. Then there is the *autobiographical self*, the hero or heroine of all kinds of stories. Research has shown how widely the autobiographical selves of real people can differ from story to story. Then there is the *social self* or selves, the personal qualities that a person displays in their encounters with others. This `self' too is multiple. Psychologists use the phrase `self-concept' to refer to the beliefs that people have about themselves, their skills, their moral qualities, their fears and their life courses.

What can change? Clearly the embodied self is invariant under the kind of transformations that occur in everyday life. Changing jobs or partners, the birth and death of family members, even moving into a new linguistic community, does not disrupt the continuity of the trajectory of life through space and time. When memories fade and anticipation of the future dims the continuity of self fades with it, and though a living human body is before us sometimes we are forced to acknowledge it is no longer an embodied self. However, the repertoire of social selves and the stories with which one marshals one's life may and do change and sometimes in radical ways.

Persons have rights and duties which are also distributed in a variety of ways, depending on many factors, some of which involve the selves comprising the personhood of an individual. Here we encounter the province of `positioning theory', the study of the way rights and duties are taken up and laid down, ascribed and appropriated, refused and defended in the fine grain of the encounters of daily lives.

The Language Angle

Language is the prime instrument of thought and social action. In following up the line of argument of the discussion so far, we must abandon a widely held presupposition of much psychological research, namely the stability and transpersonal intelligibility of language. In so far as there are psychologically significant varieties of language, so there are other dimensions of multiplicity of selves.

Cultural Variety
Since there are many languages the senses of self as unique, independent individuals are likely to vary from culture to culture. For example, there are differences in patterns of self-reflection between users of languages in which pronouns index individuals independently of their social affiliations, and those in which pronouns index the group or category to which a person belongs. Feminists have drawn attention to the role played by the preference for the third person masculine singular in English in inclining the culture towards marginalizing women. In Japanese there are many first person pronominal expressions, the use of which displays the speaker's and the hearer's sense of relative social position. `Watakushi' is used to display higher status than the use of `watushi'. There is even a form, `ore', which can be used for self-reference but which exempts the speaker from the moral commitments of what he might say. (`He' is needed in this account since pronoun use differs between men and women.) Modern urban Japanese speakers largely omit pronouns, reflecting

differences in the modern Japanese sense of self from the socially dominated sense of personhood of the past.

Context
Languages are unstable, in the sense that *significance of utterances* is likely to vary from time to time and situation to situation. For example, there are subtle changes of the word `captain' from its use in ships, teams and planes. Technically context includes indexicality, the contribution to the meaning of an expression from knowledge of the place, time and person of utterance. The way a word like `here' indexes the content of an utterance with the place of the speaker. This is one of the functions of the first person singular. `Now' works in the same way with respect to the moment of utterance of the statement in which it occurs. Then there is historicity, the way a word's current use is loaded with its past history. No one can use the words `twin towers' now in the kind of generic descriptive way it was used before `9/11'.

   For the purposes of this discussion the way that social relations partly determine the *moment-by-moment significance* of utterances will be of paramount importance. For example, take such a simple utterance as `I am going out; I might be some time'. Think of the way being married sets up social relations between a man and a woman and so informs the significance of utterances such as `I am going out; I might be some time'. And then think of these words as uttered by Captain Oates on Scott's ill-fated Antarctic expedition. This third aspect of the meanings of speaking and acting is the field of `positioning theory'.

Positioning Theory

Positioning Theory is the study of the nature, formation, influence and ways of change of local systems of rights and duties as shared assumptions about them influence social interactions. Positioning Theory is to be seen in contrast to the older framework of Role Theory. Roles are relatively fixed, often formally defined and long lasting. Even such phenomena as `role distance' and `role strain' presuppose the stability of the roles to which they are related. Positioning Theory concerns conventions of speech and action that are labile, contestable and ephemeral.

Conditions of meaningfulness
There are three relevant background conditions for the meaningfulness of a flow of symbolic interactions. The media of such interactions include linguistic performances, but also other symbolic systems. People make use of religious icons, road signs, gestures and so on in the maintenance of the flow of actions constitutive of a social episode.

   a. The local repertoire of *admissible social acts* and meanings, in particular the illocutionary force of what is said and done. Illocutionary force is the effective, then and there social significance of what is said or done (Austin, 1959). The same verbal formula, gesture, flag or whatever, may have a variety of meanings depending on who is using it, where and for what. Uttering `I'm sorry', may, in certain circumstances, be the performance of an apology. It may also, in the UK, be a way of asking someone to repeat what has just been said. It may be a way of expressing incredulity. There are no doubt other uses for the phrase. Think of the variety of meanings that a national flag can have depending on who is displaying it and in what context.

   b. The implicit pattern of the *distribution of rights and duties* to make use of items from the local repertoires of the illocutionary forces of various signs and

utterances. Each distribution is a position. A mother has the right to discipline her child in whatever way law and custom allow, but a visiting neighbour does not. `Nice little girls say "Thank you"' is only available, properly, to the parent. Catholics have a duty to confess their sins individually, while Protestants do not. Positions have this in common with roles, that they pre-exist the people who occupy them, as part of the common knowledge of a community, family, sports team and so on.

c. Every episode of human interaction is shaped by one or more *story lines* which are usually taken for granted by those taking part in the episode. The study of origins and plots of the story lines of a culture is the work of narratology. There are strong connections too to autobiographical psychology, the study of how, why and when people `tell their lives' and to whom. A train journey may be told as a `heroic quest', and what would have been complaints about lateness according to one story line become obstacles to be bravely overcome in another displaying the fortitude of the traveller,. A solicitous remark can be construed as caring according to one story line, but as an act of condescension according to another (Davies & Harré, 1990).

Structural sequences of meanings in unfolding episodes:
1. Story lines.
   a. Folk tales
   b. Histories
   c. Soap operas and the like.
2. Ceremonies
   Managed by an existing script, rule book or manual
   a. In the actors' native language
   b. In a formal language, the literal meanings of which are not known to the users of the ceremonial phrases, e.g. Latin
3. Customs.
   a. Never explicitly formulated
   b. Passed on one to another informally, e. g. who, when and how much to give as a tip.

The Positioning `Triangle'

This diagram displays the way that the three background conditions, rights and duties, social meanings and story lines mutually determine one another. Presumptions about rights and duties are involved in fixing the moment-by-moment meanings of speaking and acting, while both are influenced by and influence of the taken-for-granted story line. Challenges to the way an episode is unfolding can be directed to any one of the three aspects. Some might deny that a certain person has right or duty because he or she is incompetent. Someone might deny that the action or speech-act in question has the significance that some of the actors attribute to it, and someone might introduce an alternative story line to the one with which an episode begins. We can represent this mutuality schematically as follows:

Position (s)

Illocutionary force(s)   Story line(s)
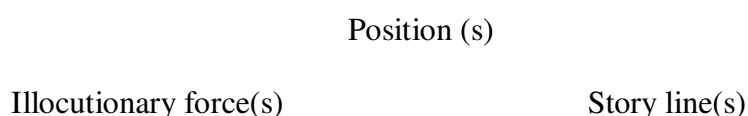
Each such triangle is accompanied by shadowy alternatives, into which it can modulate, or which can sometimes exist as competing and simultaneous readings of events. The same words can be the basis of different positioning analyses, depending on the hypotheses as to the dominant story line, the meanings of the speeches and

actions of the actors and the positions they occupy with respect to their own and the actions of others.

Positioning Analysis

Some examples will illustrate the value of using Positioning Theory to analyze the underlying structure of presuppositions that influence the unfolding of an episode. The majority of studies undertaken through positioning theory have involved inter-personal positioning, but some attention has been also given to intra-personal positioning (Harré and Moghaddam, 2008; Tan & Moghaddam, 1995), and increasingly researchers are attending to inter-group positioning (see chapters 9-15 in Moghaddam, Harré & Lee, 2008).

Interpersonal Positioning

Taking Charge
Marga Kreckel's (1981) studies of life in a working class family revealed the positioning structure of episodes of collective remembering. The family consisted of middle-aged parents and three sons each of whom had a partner. Discussions frequently involved creating a version or story of events of the past, in the process of deciding some future course of action. The fiancée of the youngest son tried to make contributions to the remembering project but her suggestions were *never* taken into account. She was positioned as lacking any right to conduct memory work. Power and the right to adjudicate disputes as to `what really happened' was taken by the mother. She positioned herself as the authority on the events of the previous weekend, and so appropriated both the right and the duty to admit or refuse contributions to the agreed family history.

   After the Osaka earthquake the newspapers reported how a person with no official standing had taken charge of rescue operations. He began to issue orders to people which were obeyed without question. The community positioned him as `the person in charge', thus ascribing certain rights to him, supporting his own taking on of duties.

Character Assassination in Scientific Controversies
In giving an account of a scientific controversy Gilbert & Mulkay (1982: 390) show how a damaging character description ascribing certain faults to a the leader of a rival research team served to weaken the standing of the team, disputing the right of the leader to be taken to be authoritative on the structure of a certain compound. The effect of this repositioning echoed round the positioning triangle, to change the illocutionary force of the publications of the rival team. The story line changed from `sober scientific research' to a `mad scramble for fame', involving not dishonesty, but self-deception. Paraphrasing a quotation we have a rival declaring `She is so competitive that her results are suspect', that is she has lost the right to be believed. Declaring that a scientist's results are `self-deception' is to transform their overt illocutionary force from fact stating to mere speculation. Latour and Woolgar (1979: 119) report a conversation in which a rival's character was described as `he never dared putting in what was required, brute force'. In this phrase he is positioned as

lacking the right to be heard in the scientific community, and the evidence is a character defect.

Character Enhancement in Political Negotiations

On the other hand, ascriptions of good character strengthen the rights inherent in a position and again change the illocutionary force of what has been said. `You are a very honest person, so we can trust you to keep promises' is a paraphrase of an exchange between Dr. Kissinger and Secretary Brezhnev reported in the Kissinger transcripts of his conversations with foreign statesmen. Shortly afterwards Kissinger repositions himself with respect to Brezhnev in a conversation with the Chinese, when he seems to approve a remark by Ambassador Huang apropos the Russians: `… first they will bully the weak and are afraid of the strong. And that their words are not usually trustworthy'. Kissinger's repositioning is confirmed by a remark to a British diplomat that the Soviet leaders `capacity to lie on matters of common knowledge is stupendous' (Moghaddam & Harré, 2003: 150 - 153). In the last remark we have an explicit re-interpreting of the illocutionary force of Russian speech acts, so that the positioning and the story line of the Kissinger-Brezhnev conversations are retrospectively revised.

Malignant Positioning

Tom Kitwood (1990) introduced the term `malignant psychology' to highlight the catastrophic effects of a priori psychological categorising of people with declining powers in old age. Sabat (2003) introduced a development of this idea in his expression `malignant positioning'. This reflected a stance from which the ways that sufferers from Alzheimer's Disease were positioned in such a way that a demeaning and destructive story line was set in motion.

Two brief illustrations of malignant positioning should make the concept clear. Speaking of sufferers from Alzheimer's a caretaker says `They don't know anything anymore'. In this remark a description of the apparent loss of cognitive capacities by the elderly is used as a positioning move, deleting certain rights, for example to be heard. Thus the utterances of A's are not listened to, and the story line is of non-humanity. More startling still is the remark of a physician who introduces his story line when he says` Treating an Alzheimer's patient is like doing veterinary medicine' (Sabat , 2003: 87).

The result of malignant positioning is more complex. Sabat (2001) describes in detail the lives of several sufferers from Alzheimer's disease. Positioned as having no right to be heard, on the presumption that such people have nothing to say worth listening to, the sufferer is cut off from communal cognition, the thinking together that is such a feature of language using beings like ourselves. The strain of waiting for the person with word finding problems to complete the expression of a thought quickly gives way to impatient dismissal of the other as any sort of conversationalist.

Sabat reports the striking effect on the willingness with which a regular visitor to the day care centre continued to struggle to express his thoughts by officially appointing him to the Georgetown University research team, studying the condition. This man re-entered the communal conversation. In this and like ways the effects of malignant positioning can be reversed by the restoration of rights (and sometimes the taking on of duties) that is by repositioning the person. At the same time the dynamics of Positioning Theory transforms the story line of daily episodes equally dramatically. From seeing the days events as `mere filling', Sabat's retired professor came to see it, and so to live it, as ongoing research.

Intergroup Positioning

Simultaneous but Incompatible Positionings Possible with the Same Words.

A recent study of the documents produced by and interviews with the protagonists of the two sides in a dispute between the Georgetown community and Georgetown University over the University's development plans yields nicely to positioning theory. Each party to the dispute read the very same sentences, uttered by the protestors and by the University authorities as having quite different illocutionary force. Each side constructed a story line in which the opposition was cast as villainous and dishonest. Statements by activists against development of University housing, such as `They should not build any more dormitories' were interpreted by their authors as examples of a brave stand against the bullying tactics of a privileged institution. The story line was roughly this: `The University is encroaching on the city without a right', that is the activities of the community spokespersons were a legitimate protest. The very same utterances were interpreted by some on the side of the University authorities as typical expressions of jealous resentment (Harré & Slocum, 2003: 130 - 135).

Mutual Radicalization and 'Nuclear' Positioning
A series of studies has explored the relationship between the United States and Iran, through positioning analysis using Farsi and English spoken and written narratives (Moghaddam & Kavulich, 2007, 2008; Konaev & Moghaddam, 2010). A first theme in these studies has been the spiral of mutual radicalization that can bind two groups, with each positioning by one group pushing the other group to take on a more radical position. The illustrative example is mutual radicalization involving President George W. Bush and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. What makes this inter-group rather than inter-personal positioning is that the positioning taken by each president was in large part shaped by their internal supporters and opposition, as well as by external supporters and opposition. A second theme in these studies is that the rights and duties a group manages to ascribe to itself and to out-groups depend in large part on the larger social context (and in this case, the larger international context). For example, false claims by the George W. Bush administration about 'weapons of mass destruction in Iraq', the mis-management of Iraq following the US-led invasion in 2003, the Abu Ghraib torture scandal, among other things, diminished the 'right' of the US to position itself as the 'policeman of the world'. On the other hand, the election of Barack Obama, an African American, as the U.S. president in 2008, the blatantly fraudulent 'election' of Ahmadinejad as president of Iran in 2009, and continued repression of dissidents in Iran, have dramatically shifted perceived rights and duties of Iran and the US in the international context.

Conclusion

The advent of Positioning Theory as a development of Vygotsky's conception of the person in an ocean of language, in intimate interaction with others in the construction of a flow of public and social cognition, opens up all sorts of insights and research opportunities. Moving beyond the overly restrictive frame of Role Theory it offers a conceptual system within which to follow the unfolding of episodes of everyday life in new and illuminating ways.

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9

Through Discursive Psychology to a Psycho-Social Approach

Wendy Hollway

I begin this chapter by tracing the discursive turn's emergence in social psychology with reference to my personal trajectory. I identify two characteristic themes: critique of the unitary rational subject of traditional (cognitive) psychology with its sealed off view of mind, and the enduring question about the relative effectivity of inner and outer influences in forming subjectivity. I then focus on the widespread criticism of discursive psychology for failing to theorise subjectivity, therefore falling into a reductionist external account. I keep a dual perspective on theory of subjectivity and empirical methodology, aiming to show how these are inextricable and how methods can hide (and reveal) important facets of subjectivity. This leads to an account of how some discursive psychologists have used psychoanalysis to make good their 'empty subject' and I give a brief account of the rationale for my development of psychoanalytically informed interviewing and observation methods. This is illustrated by detailing the principles underpinning the design of an empirical research project on identity change, after which I return to the key notion of positioning as a lens through which to discuss some differences between a discursive and psycho-social approach.

Introduction

Psychology as a discipline is definitionally about the person, but what makes people what we are? An argument about the relative strength of 'inner' and 'outer' factors informing identity goes back a long way and takes many forms. Social psychology is the sub discipline that should keep in mind both of these (the psychological and the social) and find a way of explaining the person that does not reduce to one or the other. I now label this focus of my work a 'psycho-social' approach to identity (or subjectivity). I want to take up that story in the 1970's (which is about as far as my personal memory and experience stretch back) with the 'turn to language' in social sciences and the 'discursive turn' (a version of the same trend) in social psychology. These 'turns' involved a new emphasis on language as a leading force in the construction of subjectivity (also referred to as identity or self). They drew on intellectual developments from other European and Western countries, but I shall be focusing on the British situation. Poststructuralism was the intellectual fashion, which for my purposes meant taking in the structuralist influence on linguistics of Ferdinand Saussure and then the critique of this, broadening out from linguistics to social theory. Michel Foucault was the towering influence. The word discourse came into common use and the idea of power-knowledge-practice relations was important in linking discourse to wider social forces. Another significant label for this emerging tradition was social constructionism, which referred to approaches that placed their primary emphasis on how external, social forces 'constructed' the person through systems of meaning.

How was a psychologist to use these developments? I was formed in a psychological tradition that took method very seriously but I was already critical of the deadening effects of experimentation and quantification on psychology's understanding of the person. I had an abiding interest in people – in their specificity – that was not served by the abstract macro-social themes that seemed to me to characterise poststructuralist theory. More generally, feminism was a dominant influence in my early adult formation, a feminism that included practices like consciousness raising which encouraged insight about personal change and its vicissitudes. Feminism's influence on social science also involved trying to do away with disciplinary boundaries that obstructed our understanding of real lives and giving a voice to women through qualitative research methods.

Out of this creative ferment came my PhD thesis about gender differences and power relations[22]. In it, I analysed text derived from interviews, group discussions and notebooks. I identified what I called three 'discourses' concerning heterosexual couple relations (male sexual drive, have and hold, permissive) and showed how men and women were positioned in these discourses in gendered ways that had implications for the power relations in couples. This approach is exemplified in chapter 6 of '*Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity*', co-authored with Julian Henriques, Cathy Urwin, Couze Venn and Valerie Walkerdine (1984). This book and Potter and Wetherell's classic '*Social Psychology and Discourse*' (1987) are regarded as influential early examples of critical psychology. Both provide illustrations of a discursive approach, although *Changing the Subject* drew more from critical social theory and *Social Psychology and Discourse* more from linguistics and micro-sociology. Parker (1997) describes these rather different discursive traditions under the headings 'Foucauldian approach to discourse' and 'interpretative repertoires' (286-288).

Two key themes characterised this early critical social psychology. First, it provided a serious critique of the dominant traditions of psychology. Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell's book, for example, took attitude research as its object of critique and questioned the way that attitudes were located 'inside the mind' in cognitive psychology. Informed by the 'turn to language', they located attitudes outside the person – in discourses. In the case of *Changing the Subject*, we wanted to spell out the implications for psychology of Michel Foucault's poststructuralist theory, with its emphasis on the regulation of subjects. Primarily this involved being alert to the power relations that are inextricable from positions in discourses. The notion of 'the psy-complex' was particularly useful for turning this analysis onto psychology itself. It is 'the network of theories and practices that comprise academic, professional and popular psychology, and it covers the different ways in which people in modern western culture are categorised, observed and regulated by psychology, as well as the ways in which they live out psychological models in their own talk' (Parker, 1997: 287). In *Changing the Subject* we also criticised the dualism in social sciences which meant that psychology was reduced to what went on inside the person, as if this was sealed off from the social world. Correlatively, sociology treated the social world in such a way that people were reduced to mere ciphers, and therefore had great difficulty explaining agency. This is known variously as individual-society and agency-structure dualism.

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[22] This evolved into a book: 'Subjectivity and Method in Psychology: Gender, Meaning and Science'. 1989. London: Sage.

The second key theme of early critical psychology is an expression of individual-society dualism: what forces – inner and outer – are mainly responsible for forming the person. Should our social psychological explanations emphasise inner or outer factors? Can we and should we find a conceptual language that dissolves this dualistic distinction altogether? For example, Stephen Frosh and Lisa Baraitser suggest Lacan's image of the moebius strip for this dissolution: 'underside and topside, inside and outside flow together as one, and the choice of how to see them is purely tactical, just like the decision as to whether to look at the subject from a "social" or a "psychological" perspective' (Frosh and Baraitser 2008: 349).

Social constructionism – as its name suggests – emphasises outer forces. Discursive psychology did so too, specifically following the idea that people's identities were formed through their positioning in discourses. The founders of discursive psychology, Potter and Wetherell, and those who followed their lead, established the inadequacy of cognitive accounts of mental life, making a convincing case for the importance of language and discourse in forming identity. Discourses positioned subjects and provided the meanings that people used to make sense of their experience and inform action. What account of the inner workings of the person would be acceptable in this new paradigm?

Theoretical and Methodological Challenges for Discursive Psychology

Discourse analysis[23] had effects on how the person was theorised and also on research method. Regarding theory, once a cognitive account of mental life was rejected, what, if any, account of inner life could furnish an understanding of how the external world gets transformed into identity. How should we theorise subjectivity? What forms a person's identity? In particular, what understanding of the subject positioned in discourse (the person) would also recognise a person's agency? Regarding method, what should researchers look at? Discourse analysis, in many of its forms explicitly rejected taking the person as the object of inquiry. Derek Edwards, for example, states of discursive psychology: 'This is not a pursuit of deep underlying significances, but rather, of how specific words, descriptions and accounts are assembled and put to work' (Edwards 2005: 546, Potter, this volume). Texts (either created or found) were analysed and the author of the text was seen to be largely irrelevant. Ian Parker summed up the problem: 'but discourse analysis surely does need some account of how it is that a speaker or writer, or a listener or reader, is moved by language' (1997: 484).

The emphasis on text was consistent with development of qualitative methodologies in social science where the semi-structured interview became a dominant method (quick and easy) and transcribed data thus derived became the main source of information in qualitative empirical research. Ethnographic methods were time consuming and difficult and observation gave way to interviewing. The methodological and theoretical developments were, of course, strongly interlinked, with discourse analytic methods being informed by, and also (re)producing, theoretical accounts in which discourses determined subjectivity.

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[23] Discourse analysis refers to a wider approach than discursive psychology, being used across the social sciences (also beyond) and tending to draw primarily on poststructuralism, whereas the term discursive psychology referred more narrowly to a form of textual analysis whose rules were closely allied to conversation analysis. Margaret Wetherell straddles these approaches. Discourse analysis tends to connote a method rather than a theoretical approach, although there are no hard and fast distinctions, nor should there be.

An example of this circular effect can be seen in the way that the idea of positioning emerged as central in the discursive turn (see Wetherell, this volume). There is no a priori reason for positioning to refer to positions in discourses (why not people or objects?). Foucauldian discourse analysis placed central emphasis on the power relations involved in the psy-complex, for example educational psychology (Walkerdine, 1991) and developmental psychology (Burman, 2008). The tendency to limit the idea of positioning can be seen in Davies and Harré's classic statement of positioning as 'the discursive production of selves'. Positioning was useful in moving from the idea of role, enabling 'attention on dynamic aspects of encounters' (1990: 43). The idea of positioning in discourse opened up the possibility of a multiple, fluid, shifting subjectivity. However Davies and Harré demonstrate the commonly shared tendency to reduce the complexity of experience to discourse in their claim that 'once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position' (op cit: 46). This ignores not only the complexity and agency of subjectivity but also the contradictions involved. They also claim that ' "positioning" is largely a conversational phenomenon' (op cit: 45), which legitimates a methodological focus on the (transcribed) texts of conversation. In practice most analyses in discursive psychology have been derived from small extracts of samples of text, with little consideration for who was the speaker. Wetherell points out that 'discourse analysts rarely sample the discourse of one individual', with the consequence that 'we need to do more to examine the person as yet a further site where meaning gets organized, displaying specific and recurring devices, procedures, and modes of practice' (2003:114). The production of data that refers to life history would enable looking at the formation of subjectivity across time[24]. While Davies and Harré make reference to how past experience would affect current meaning, the account is strikingly cognitive, with no reference to the part played by affect and the way experience can be embodied, thus contributing to the formation of selves, without being rendered into language. These are newer developments to which I return below.

Debating the Use of Psychoanalysis for Discursive Psychology

What could replace the discredited cognitive account of mental life as a way of theorising inner life? The question, from a discursive perspective, had to be about how people arrive at the positions they take up. In the narrower phraseology of conversation analysis, the question was 'why this utterance here?' (Wetherell 1998: 388), the answer to which divided 'technical' conversation analysts like Schlegoff and those like Wetherell with a broader interest in 'interrogating particular sense making in more depth' (Wetherell 1998: 404). For me the answer was already featuring in my PhD thesis work in the 1970's: psychoanalysis.

There is a profound tension, however, between two ways of bringing together discourse analysis and psychoanalysis. Foucauldian discourse analysis invites us to step back and look at the way that power relations are implicated in psychoanalysis as a discourse and set of discursive practices. By using psychoanalysis, are we, as academics, in danger of reproducing forms of social regulation by the way 'we tell stories about people and so participate in certain discourses' (Parker 1997: 287)? In the other discourse analysis, closer to conversation analysis, often discourse analysis

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[24] The Biographical Narrative Interview Method (Wengraf, 2001) produces such data, as its name suggests.

and psychoanalysis are regarded as diametrically opposed. As Michael Billig put it, 'Discursive psychologists turn the person inside out, converting inner mental life into outward social activity, while psychoanalysts move in the opposite theoretical direction by turning social life outside in' (1997: 140).

Investment and other motivational processes
I regarded discourse analysis and psychoanalysis as being complementary and still do. From a critical realist perspective, I have argued that, just because psychoanalysis – like any other influential discourse and set of practices – is implicated in power relations does not mean that its view of the world is 'wrong' as opposed to 'right', or damaging as opposed to helpful. Power relations are always entailed in meaning making and practices and they are not negative by definition (for Foucault, they were productive). I have looked at the emergence of objects relations psychoanalysis in post-war Britain through the lens of the psy complex and argued that the radical conceptualisation of intersubjectivity initiated there was not only productive in going beyond assumptions of the autonomous individual and the related dualism of social constructionism but worked better to explain the realities of hospitalised and otherwise distressed children at the time (Hollway 2006b&c).

In the context of interpreting empirical research data, I argued that people are not just positioned in discourses as a result of social forces (for example the ideological pressure to be a man and take up certain 'masculine' positions afforded in discourses, see Edley, 2001). Rather, they are 'invested' in certain positions and these investments inform their provisional, fluid and potentially conflicting positional take up: 'by claiming that people have investments … in taking up certain positions in discourses, and consequently in relation to each other, I mean that there will be some satisfaction or pay-off or reward … for that person' (Hollway 1984: 238)[25]. In other words, discursive psychology, to be a psychology, rather than a linguistics, needed an account of the motivational processes involved in speaking and conversation. These, I argued, were emphatically relational, not simply internal, as I illustrated through the idea of unconscious splitting of characteristics that reproduced (and could creatively change) gender differences in discourses and identities (ibid: 252-4). My approach to discourse analysis used interpretation to detect the vulnerability inherent in the desire for things one could not control, the consequent anxiety and the use of unconscious defences against anxiety such as splitting off anxiety-provoking parts, imaginatively lodging these in others through projection. These processes leave a mark on the subjects involved. They become patterned and to some extent predictable (as is recognised, albeit inadequately, in the old concepts of personality or character). I summed up the implications for discursive social psychology of what was my first use of a psychoanalytic perspective[26] as follows:

> What makes this analysis different from one that sees a mechanical circulation of discourses through practices is that there is an investment which, for reasons of an individual's history of positioning in discourses and consequent production of subjectivity, is relatively independent of contemporary positions available. (Hollway 1984: 251)

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[25] Freud used the term Besetzung (investment in English) to refer to what in English has been translated as cathexis, so it is a central idea in psychoanalysis, one that fundamentally accounts for the motivational processes driving action.

[26] Note how the 'social' side of the equation is reduced to discourse – something else that I seek to complexify in later work.

The place of psychoanalysis in helping discursive social psychology to theorise the person has been a lively thread running through debates since the 1980's right up to the present[27]. Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman used data from interviews with schoolboys and set themselves the task of explaining boys' homophobia psychosocially. They use the psychoanalytic concept of unconscious conflict to help explain the 'inscription' of individual subjects through subjects' positioning in discourses while yet remaining consistent with a line that 'the arena of personal subjectivity … does not exist other than as already inscribed in the socio-cultural domain' (2003: 39). Their 'additional move … goes "beyond" or "beneath" discourse to explore the needs which are being met, the "enjoyment" created, by the position which is taken up' (2003: 52). In this analysis they do refer to psychological processes (although largely stripped of specifically psychoanalytic concepts like desire and anxiety), emphasising their dynamic and motivational quality, while insisting that the resultant subjectivity is always formed socially. Margaret Wetherell (1998: 392-3, and in this volume) cites the influential poststructuralists Laclau and Mouffe who understand 'the social agent as constituted by an ensemble of "subject positions" – never fixed'. Their concession to a psychological element is the "interests" (perhaps similar to my notion of investments) are a social product and do not exist independently of the consciousness of the agents who are their bearers' (op cit: 394). There is a broad arena of agreement about such a claim, but my own account of investments included negative motivational forces too, namely anxiety.

Relational repression
Michael Billig argues that the psychoanalytic concept of repression and the unconscious more generally can be explained by examining the way they are produced dialogically, in interaction and talk (1997,1999, this volume). In psychoanalysis, repression is one of several defence mechanisms that protect against anxiety. Whereas splitting (see below) is an intersubjective defence, repression works intrapsychically. The idea of dialogic repression is therefore a radical reformulation of a key aspect of the inner world (according to psychoanalysis) to show how it is a product of a social world from which a person learns through relationships with others. Billig used Freud's case example of Little Hans to illustrate his argument that children learn from their parents 'to dismiss topics rhetorically', parents who are 'thus providing the means of repression' (1998: 41). Billig's contribution to the discursive turn is summed up in his claim that 'probably the biggest difference between the present notion of dialogic repression and Freud's original concept concerns the relations between psychology and biology' (1999:253). In other words, he sees (Freudian) psychoanalysis as too biological and therefore asocial. He makes no use of post-Freudian developments in psychoanalysis which, from the 1940s on, are not biologically reductionist but increasingly relational in their central paradigm. His claim that the unconscious should be 'reconceptualised in terms of discursive activity' (this volume, [p2]) contradicts the definitional feature of the unconscious

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[27] More recently these debates have been conducted under the aegis of a new non-disciplinary label, namely psychosocial studies[27]. The term psychosocial represents our attempt to study phenomena without reducing them to either social or psychological causes (Frosh 2003, Hollway 2004). According to Ian Parker: 'the "model" of the "person" for which social psychology has been searching – but has so far been unable to find – is one which conceives of subjectivity as the point of contact between the individual and the social (rather than opting for one or the other)' (1997: 540).

conceptualised by psychoanalysis, namely as a non-discursive experience of significance.

Stephen Frosh and Lisa Baraitser (2008), citing Billig on the differences between psychoanalysis and discursive analysis, do focus their critique on object relations psychoanalysis, an approach inspired by Melanie Klein's departures from Freud that I regard as fundamentally relational. Their critique concerns its focus on 'viewing adult relationships as structured by (…) developmental processes' (2008: 354) tending towards a deterministic viewpoint. They too are rigorously suspicious of distinctions between inner and outer, but – unlike discourse analysts – find the notion of psychic reality useful because it is 'never totally internal' (ibid). They prefer a Lacanian to a relational psychoanalysis.

Relational perspectives need not be deterministically focussed on the structures laid down in childhood (while still acknowledging these). For example, Nancy Chodorow, a feminist, relational psychoanalyst, sees her perspective as characterised by:

> The radically uncommonsensical and anxiety-provoking understandings underpinning psychoanalysis – that projective and introjective fantasies are ever-changing, that motives are unconscious, that humans interpret and construct the world and our lives in terms of unconscious, emotionally-laden wishes, fears and fantasies, that anxiety generates major aspects of human functioning (including the analyst's). (Chodorow, 1999 p103)

This perspective is psychoanalytic but it is not the one that Billig and Frosh and Baraitser variously reject. For my purposes, Billig is also too limited in his focus on conversation. In my attempts to use a psychoanalysis that goes beyond the drive-based version, I include unconscious intersubjectivity, dynamic conflict, embodiment and habitual practices; all features of subjectivity that exceed what discursive psychology pays attention to. It is often argued that discursive psychology can embrace phenomena that are not articulated in talk and text. Ian Parker, for example, states that 'the term "discourse" comprises the many ways that meaning is conveyed through culture, and so it includes speech and writing, nonverbal and pictorial communication, and artistic and poetic imagery' (Parker, 1997:285-6).

It has been left largely to psychologists to work out how discourse analysis can be used in empirical research. This is where the focus on language as text (including transcribed speech) has been so convenient and yet so restrictive, led by a refusal to posit internal states that have any life of their own separate from socio-cultural communication. Billig adopts an important aspect of psychoanalytic method, however, when he focuses on the absences in Freud's text of Little Hans. He contrasts this to conversation analysis (which as he points out has informed discursive psychology) whose rules 'militate against psychoanalytic concerns with absences' by privileging what participants say and the normative organisation of conversation. 'By assuming knowledgeability at the outset, the analyst cannot easily investigate how the repression of knowledgeability might be accomplished' (1997:145). This observation has important consequences for discursive psychology's working assumptions about the subjects who engage in conversation; assumptions that not only ignore the core features of a psychoanalytic paradigm – the centrality of unconscious conflictual dynamics in forming subjectivity – but will tend to reproduce that image of the person by virtue of its methodology. I have made central to my method an interest in the significance of absences in participants' accounts. The psychoanalytically-informed

concept of the 'defended (research) subject' led to the development of a narrative-style interview method based on the aim of eliciting free associations (Hollway and Jefferson 2013, Hollway and Jefferson 2008). It is my view that any approach that assumes knowledgeable agents will reproduce this image of subjectivity in its findings, analyses and theory building. While there is of course some truth in this assumption, both psychoanalytic theory and forms of data that do not force participants' accounts into researchers' structures reveal areas where participants are not transparent to themselves, notably areas where they have an investment in not knowing and not telling (for example Hollway and Jefferson 2005).

Reflexivity

Ian Parker, recognising discursive psychology's limitations in theorising subjectivity, itemises 'eight points of transformation' that would rework psychoanalysis 'to make it sensitive to social constructionist accounts of the subject' (1997:493) which can be used to 'elaborate an alternative to "blank" and "uncomplicated" subjectivity'. Again we see here the advocacy of psychoanalysis to help address an absence or inadequacy in theorising subjectivity that plagues the conversation analytic and discourse analytic traditions that dominate discursive psychology. With Parker too we see an emphasis on what psychoanalysis can offer methodologically. He argues that the utility of psychoanalysis in discourse analysis centres on what it can contribute to 'the vexed question of when and where a reflexive analysis is appropriate or useful' (1994:533). He cites Potter and Wetherell to point out the necessity of reflexivity because "talk has the property of being both *about* actions, events and situation, and at the same time *part* of those things" (Parker 1994: 539). This reminds us about academic participation in the psy-complex and the need to stand back from psychoanalytic discourse in order to be reflexive about our effects on a regime of truth. Reflexivity has also been taken up in a very different way within discourse analytic method. Qualitative social science has gone a long way in making a case for the necessity of researcher reflexivity, but the usual practice has been to reflect on the social positions that researchers occupy vis-à-vis participants (positions relating to class, ethnicity, gender and so on) with their consequences for power relations and the production of knowledge.

Parker discusses the long tradition of reflexivity in clinical psychoanalytic practice that requires the analyst to observe their own emotional responses to the patient, based on the idea that affect-laden meanings are being communicated between analyst and patient and can be used in the service of understanding. In psychoanalysis, this is referred to as countertransference and Parker suggests that 'an exploration of countertransference would provide some of the elements of what social psychologists attempt to understand when they are reflexive about their research' (1994: 545). My exploration of countertransference in research interview relationships (Hollway and Jefferson 2013: 47-49; Hollway 2008; Hollway 2010) has proved contentious, raising as it does broad questions about the wider use of concepts that have developed within clinical psychoanalysis (Frosh and Baraitser 2008; Hollway and Jefferson, 2013: 158-165). There is nonetheless agreement that psychoanalysis needs to be used critically and warily when transferred from the clinical to the research situation (Parker 1997, Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman, 2003). There are many sound reasons for not adopting psychoanalysis as it is practised in the consulting room as a research tool and so it is a matter of adapting this paradigm for research, finding a 'psychoanalytic "sensibility", a way of working with human participants that instigates a constant reworking of the knowledge bases that we come with' (Baraitser

2008:426). This is why I refer to 'psychoanalytically informed' rather than psychoanalytic methods.

Building bridges
Margaret Wetherell's discursive psychology spans an impressive theoretical range, using and critiquing linguistics, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, poststructuralist theory and psychoanalysis. She systematically tests the utility of these approaches on empirical data (usually derived from research interviews), while not confining herself to conversation analysis with its microscopic focus on textual analysis, but blending this with a broad reaching poststructuralist treatment of discursive phenomena[28] (Wetherell and Potter 1992, Edley and Wetherell 1995) and placing these traditions in dialogue, preferring an eclectic approach. While she retains a primary focus on the study of discursive practices, in the 'situated flow of discourses' (1998: 405), she considers it important to look at 'the formation and negotiation of psychological states, identities and interactional and intersubjective events' (ibid). She introduces the notions of 'psychodiscursive practices' and 'imaginary positioning'[29] and uses the concept of investment to provide more analytical space for these states and events (Wetherell and Edley 1999). A space is opened for a psychology and suggestions are made for the processes through which this might be accomplished (identification, investment)[30].

Wetherell (2003) went on to examine one school of psychoanalytic thought more thoroughly at the same time as expanding the possibilities of the concept of positioning which, as we have seen, has been discursive psychology's primary way of theorising subjects. She brings this discursive concept into play alongside Melanie Klein's use of 'position' in psychoanalytic theory using some empirically derived discursive data to show the utility of both these. In this way Wetherell shows how discursive psychology can expand the notion of positioning to apply to other modes of relationship than talk and makes it clear that a psychology (a theory of subjectivity) is required for this. She is still sceptical about psychoanalysis' potential for this purpose, however, based on the suspicion of any notion of an 'inner' world, or psyche that is somehow not a reflection of 'outer' (discursive) events. Underlying this suspicion lurks the ghost of the cognitive 'processes' that early discursive psychology killed off, based on an idea of minds that were sealed off from the external world. The question is posed, is it possible to theorise inner psychic processes through a psychoanalytic lens and still retain the benefits that discursive psychology provides, namely a view of subjectivity irreducible to individualist, asocial, unitary assumptions about the person?

While recognising the need to go beyond the 'empty' subject of discourse analysis, Wetherell holds on to the discursive caveat, wanting 'to question just how "personal" or "purely psychological" this ordering of meaning making is' and also question 'the apparatus psychoanalysis provides for making sense of personal

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[28] See Potter, Wetherell, Gill and Edwards (1990) and Parker (1997) for clarifying accounts of these two traditions in discursive psychology and their differences.

[29] 'Psycho-discursive practices occur in talk and also implicate a psychology … in the sense that through the momentary and more sustained use of these procedures men acquire a vocabulary of motives and a character with particular emotions, desires, goals and ambitions' (Wetherell and Edley 1999: 353). Imaginary positioning is seen as: 'one way in which identification with the masculine is achieved' (Wetherell and Edley 1999: 343).

[30] Wetherell (2007) continues opening up this space for a psychology and a related methodological critique when she addresses the need for a dialogue between discursive psychology and linguistic ethnography.

meaning making' (2003:114). For me these inner processes are not 'purely psychological', if that means sealed off from the external world. I want to emphasise the *movement* – the constant flow – between outer and inner (and also within)[31] and take the processes through which this is accomplished as a prime focus of my analysis. In contrast, Wetherell dislikes the content-process distinction because she sees it as reproducing the old dualism of social and psychological (the outer world providing the content and the inner world the processes). Then she equates it with a content-form distinction, thereby rendering internal dynamics static again. Concerning the Kleinian concept of positioning, Wetherell concludes – inaccurately in my view - that 'we are left with autonomous and deep psychological properties [… such as repression and splitting] posited as properties of human minds and used as explanatory principles. These processes stand outside social relations and social action and in some unspecified way act on social and cultural material to add a psychological twist to our utterances and accounts' (2003:115).

Klein's introduction of paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions helped to initiate a revolution in psychoanalytic theory away from drive theory and towards an emphasis on intersubjective dynamics. The idea of relatively static 'positions', laid down by developmental processes, soon shifted to an emphasis on positions as dynamic modes of organisation (a concept quite compatible with Wetherell's preference for thinking in terms of 'personal order'). The Kleinian concept of 'position' has been taken up by object relations and relational theorists to a point where oscillation between positions is seen as continual and part of the flux of experience. The analytic emphasis can be on the movement (and therefore also the partial freezing of movement), that is a patterned response to the kaleidoscopic realities of the external world, while nonetheless drawing on life historical patterns of defence and meaning making to make sense of the 'pattern and order' (Wetherell 2003) involved in a person's organisation of experience. In this perspective, the boundaries between inner and outer are as 'porous' as Wetherell would like (ibid,115) neither autonomous nor static. Psychoanalytic theory specifies the way processes like splitting and identification act on social and cultural material (through meaning making and the expression of agency in practices). It does provide accounts of 'how internal mental contents might be transformed' (ibid, 115).

Discursive psychology's best hope of finding aspects of personal experience that require some notion of an inner world (albeit in constant exchange with an outer one) and thus of 'filling' an empty subjectivity is to transform its methods, so that they no longer render individuality and change over time invisible. Wetherell points out that discursive method requires adaptation and analyses biographically relevant data in order to discuss order and pattern. She points to a new terrain for discursive psychology in her conclusion that calls for attention to the 'earlier positioning work' of individuals and to 'settlement processes'. These imply to me an inner (psycho-social) world:

> Personality, in my view, represents an ongoing process of discursive settlement, ossification, and transformation in relation to the provisional and ever-changing settlements of culture and the linked settlements of those

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[31] Ultimately, inner and outer are defined by the skin as a (porous) boundary. Bruno Latour's treatment of bodies provokes a radical shift away from body-mind dualism with his proposition that 'to have a body *is to learn to be affected*, meaning 'effectuated', move, put into motion by other entities, humans or non-humans' (2004: 205). I find this usefully complementary with a psycho-social use of relational/object relational psychoanalysis.

influential "voices" with whom we are engaged in earlier positioning work. And this is where I hope the engagement between psychoanalytic and discursive approaches to positioning, which I have tried to foster in this chapter, might prove most stimulating and thought-provoking for future work. In the end the goal is the same, to try and study further this "settlement process" and to become more sophisticated in the concepts we mobilize as social psychologists for explaining pattern and order (Wetherell 2003:117).

Psychoanalytically informed methods in psycho-social research

Psychoanalytic methods historically are based on working through the subjective, affective experience of the psychoanalyst in order to understand the patient and this approach is based on an understanding of subjectivity that sees people as engaged continuously in dynamic exchange of parts (feelings, ideas) of which we are not necessarily aware. It thus provides an epistemology that is outside the objectivism of positivist science. In two ways I have sought to apply this paradigm to qualitative empirical psychosocial research. The first, with Tony Jefferson (Hollway and Jefferson 2013), was the Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI) method, based on Freud's idea of free association as a means of tapping into unconscious wishes. Our method aimed to access latent meaning through eliciting and focusing on the associations between ideas, as opposed to exclusively on words and word clusters. This was based on the psychoanalytic premise of defended research subjects, 'defended' in the sense that, following psychoanalytic principles, it is assumed that research subjects are not necessarily transparent to themselves. The same is true in principle of researchers, but there is an asymmetry, based on the fact that the research relation is focused on the participant and it is their investment in that topic (their own life, identity and relations) that may well occasion defensive self-accounting. For the researcher, defensiveness will be related to the extent and type of their identifications with the participant.

However, I began to feel that interviewing was insufficient, even though the FANI method is capable of eliciting accounts that remain close to experience and embedded in their settings, because this method depends on narratives based in language. Despite its capacity to elicit free associations, the method must share some of the weaknesses of any talk-based method: by eliciting a mode of communication that is to a great extent under conscious control, perhaps there is a tendency to rationalise, smooth out inconsistency and conflict, thus reproducing images of a rational, unitary, discursive subject. The second method, psychoanalytically informed observation, therefore aimed to go beyond an exclusive methodological focus on text towards a focus on practices and embodied, affective expressions of states of mind and relationship as they are enacted and change through time. I thought that together the two methods had the potential to complement each other with their different perspectives on subjectivity.

In summary, there are two grounds for believing that a psychoanalytically informed paradigm can enrich research methods; epistemological and ontological. Epistemologically the paradigm can help the use of researcher subjectivity as an instrument of knowing. Ontologically it can inform an understanding of participant (and researcher) subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Of course these two reasons are intimately linked because a psychoanalytic emphasis on unconscious dynamic intersubjectivity ensures that the focus of both epistemology and ontology is on the affective traffic within relationships, be it the relationship between researcher and researched or those of participants in their life world, past, present and anticipated

future. As with any approach, and as I have argued for discursive psychology, methods and theory are inextricable in producing empirically-based knowledge.

Designing a psycho-social research project

In what follows, I shall give the example of a recent empirical research project to show how I used and developed these principles. The project was based within the 'Identities and Social Action' ESRC-funded programme[32]. The transition to motherhood was chosen as a prime site for studying identity change. Our overarching research question was '*how do women make the (first-time) transition into their identities as mothers, embedded as they are, both biographically and in their current lives and relationships, in a series of other identities, such as ethnic group membership, 'race', age, daughter, sister and wife, and class location?'*. It is a psycho-social, not a psychological, question, as is clear from the way we grounded the idea of identities firmly in the women's multiple locatedness. Our focus on experience opened up a psycho-social terrain for identity research. Informed by phenomenological, relational psycho-analytic, and Bourdieusian paradigms, we operationalised the concept of identity to include embodied and taken-for granted, identificatory and biographical, relational and practical dynamic processes. Clearly the approach and design extends beyond a discursive approach, but it does not abandon the idea of discursive positioning (see Elliott, Gunaratnam, Hollway and Phoenix 2009).

Nineteen first-time mothers were recruited in Tower Hamlets, a Borough in the East End of London containing a high level of deprivation and disadvantage, a history of accommodating waves of immigrants and a recent surge of policy initiatives concerning children and families. A new population of young professionals, many working in the rapidly expanding financial sector also situated within the borough, has increased the Borough's diversity. Our sample reflected these ethnic and class diversities and also differences in partner, employment and accommodation status, as well as relation to family of origin.

Three interviews based on the principles of the FANI method (Hollway and Jefferson 2000) were conducted over the course of a year: in the last trimester of pregnancy (or early weeks of motherhood if we missed), at four months and at 12 months after the birth. For me one new challenge of this study was to develop experience-near field notes; notes that were capable of conveying the alive quality of the event even long after it had happened and of taking the researchers imaginatively into the scene whether they had been there or not (Hollway, 2009). We adopted a version of 'reflexive field notes', 'in which researchers are encouraged to document the emotional dynamics of research encounters and their personal reactions to fieldwork situations' (Thomson, 2009: 8). For example, we included in the field note after each interview answers to the question 'What are my hopes and fears for this mother'? Our field notes were also influenced by the psychoanalytically informed observation, which was proceeding alongside, drawing on six of the same mothers.

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[32] Our three-year project "Identities in Process: Becoming African, Caribbean, Bangladeshi and white mothers in Tower Hamlets" was funded by The Economic and Social Research Council (grant number148-25-0058), the government funder of social science research in the UK. The research team consisted of Wendy Hollway, Ann Phoenix, Heather Elliott, Cathy Urwin and Yasmin Gunaratnam. Dr Cathy Urwin led the observation side of the project and conducted the weekly observation seminars attended by members of the research team. She edited a special journal issue on the observations cases (Urwin, 2007).

Psychoanalytically informed observation derives from the infant observation tradition developed at the Tavistock clinic (Bick, 1964, Miller et al, 1989). Six trained 'infant observers' (not members of the research team) each observed one of the larger sample of mothers, once per week over the course of the first year of her baby's life. For six of the mothers in our sample (two Bangladeshi, one white English, one African-Caribbean, one West African and one white South African) we therefore have all types of data: three interviews (recordings and transcripts[33]), field notes, observation notes and seminar notes.

Observers make notes only after the session has ended, at the time paying detailed attention to the baby and mother. The principle behind the note-writing style of representing the observer's experience is that

> 'knowledge, theory etc are set aside during the acts of observing and recording in favour of allowing the experience to make its impact … a new concept of the observer is being employed … here the truths which interest us are emotional truths. The observer cannot register them without being stirred … correctly grasped, the emotional factor is an indispensable tool to be used in the service of greater understanding' (Miller et al, 1989:2).

Because this method evolved as a training in infant and young child development, observers become very good at noticing non-verbal, embodied aspects of communication and mental states. It was therefore consistent with our aim to go beyond the consciously aware, talk-based methods of finding out about identity, wishing to pick up a range of other levels, from the unsaid to the unsayable; that is those that reside in and are expressed through the body (often theorised as the psychoanalytic unconscious). Two practitioners who have applied psychoanalytic observation in organisations characterise the following five characteristics as defining the method:

o Evenly hovering attention without premature judgement
o Use of subjective experience
o Capacity to think and reflect about the experience as a whole
o Recognition of the unconscious dimension
o Informed interpretation (Hinshelwood and Skogstadt, 2000: 17).

In the psychoanalytic training tradition, the observation method is combined with a weekly observation seminar, in which the group of observers meets throughout the observation period, led by an experienced psychoanalytically-trained observer, to process together the impact of the developing observation. Likewise, ours were not seminars in the sense of being convened for the purposes of applying theory to the data: 'The weekly observation seminars were deliberately devoid of theoretical discussion, both to avoid the tendency for theory to lead or blind observation and because of the assumption that new theory may be required' (Urwin, 2007: 249).

The group's task is to use members' subjective responses to the case, which the group can then reflect upon together. This helps observers process their experiences. Identifications with any or all of the participants who have been observed will be

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[33] Transcribing need not always follow conversation analytic conventions. Ours tried to preserve the flow and rhythm of everyday talk while noting obvious changes in emotional tone, gesture and expression, such as long pauses, changes in pitch, laughter and hesitation and changes in the pace of speech.

present in this material and the different identifications in the group provide different perspectives to think about and contribute to the analysis of the material. An example of group reflection is when one observer was wondering what the significance of the mother's home culture in West Africa was for Martina when her mother visited and wanted to take the baby back with her (while Martina and her husband remained working in London). In this case group members could contribute their varying knowledges of that culture and together think about what the maternal grandmother's offer might signify in that context. We could reflect on our varying feelings of shock at this proposal and explore the extent to which they also belonged to Martina and her husband. This example highlights the desirability of not being a mono-cultural group. An example of the group's help in metabolising a difficult experience is when one observer, who was treated in inconsistent and careless ways by the mother she was observing, 'through the support of the group … was able to process my hurt and angry feelings and to think about them as belonging to Azra and as reflecting her way of communicating them' (Layton, 2007: 260).

When applied to the observations in our research project, the principle of using observers', group's and researchers' subjectivities as instruments of knowing has radical implications for the ways that researchers arrive at understanding participants, especially because the principle goes against centuries of scientific modernist tradition about methods of knowing that are based on 'objectivity'. At an epistemological level, this involves re-theorising terms like subjectivity and objectivity, reliability and validity as part of a debate that is new to many social scientists and contentious. We need to ensure that this use of subjectivity safeguards both research ethics and what conventionally was called 'objectivity', which I prefer to characterise as treatment that is accurate, fair, disinterested and impartial, but needs also to preserve meaningfulness (Hollway, 2008; 2011; 2014). For example, it is recognised that identifications with family members can act as powerful vehicles for transferring an observer's feelings and ideas on to a participant in ways that could compromise objectivity. At an epistemological level, the idea of objectivity requires retheorising, outside of the tradition of positivist science. Psychoanalysis has had a largely independent tradition of theorising objective knowing which is useful here. For example Donald Winnicott's developmental psychoanalysis traced the baby's crucial move from creating 'subjective objects' dictated by the desire for omnipotent control, to an ability to acknowledge 'objects, objectively perceived' (Hollway, 2006a: 37).

In our research design, three mechanisms of support were drawn upon to help the objective thinking of those involved. I have described the observation seminar above. We also used a plethora of group configurations for data analytic purposes (the research team, joint meetings with the team from our sister project, special workshops drawing in others), 'privileging collective forms of working in recognition that collectively we are more than the sum of our parts' (Thomson, 2009: 9). Thirdly, we had budgeted for a consultant whom the researcher could contact when she felt in danger of being besieged by experiences that touched too closely on her own situation, which was similar to the women she was interviewing in some respects (location, being a mother of young children) (Elliott, in preparation). A psychotherapeutically trained person can help provide perspective that enables complex difficult emotions connected to research material to be contained and thought about, so that the impact can be productive rather than unhelpful. This support had an ethical dimension (in relation to a duty of care for the researcher) in

that it involved processing and separating the mothers' experiences from those of the researcher to prevent these interfering unduly with her life.[34]

Positioning in data analysis

I still find it useful to deploy the idea of people being positioned and taking up positions in discourses, relations and practices. It works, in my view, to conceptualise how meaningful features of the external world impinge on people in ways that, over time, form and reform who they are. We operationalised the more Foucauldian idea of the social regulatory functions of expert discourses by paying attention to first-time mothers' accounts of how they prepared themselves for their new situation. In pregnancy many turned to TV, internet, books and classes, while others preferred to follow their mothers' advice and their own previous experience as older children growing up amongst new babies in their families. When their babies were young, they turned to health visitors and General Practitioners and followed popular baby books to get advice on sleeping, feeding regimes and weaning. Some felt pressures for their babies to be gaining weight fast and reach their developmental milestones early. The advice available to them was diverse and often contradictory, for example, in relation to weight gain and bottle or breast feeding (bottle-fed babies gain weight faster, but this does not equate with better health or faster development). Because their stories of this advice-seeking were contextualised, situated in accounts of their particular dilemmas and prior life experiences, along with the anxieties, support (and lack of it), it was clear to us that they were exercising choice and discrimination in the resources they drew upon and that such choices were replete with desires and anxieties, entrenched, inconsistent and fluid positions, all of which fed into the learning and change that a new mother requires to keep up with her baby's rapid transformations. In summary, positioning in expert discourses is a rich and complex topic that requires a complex account of subjectivity, which in its turn is made possible by a methodology that permits changing, emotional, conflicted and complex subjectivities to be expressed and noted.

Experts and positioning: three examples
The following examples are used to point out how particular, varied and unique each mother's relationship to a specific expert discourse is and how this can be understood in a more complex way if our methods afford us access to emotional experience and the way a person's history informs current meaning-making. The effects of a person's prior history is often evident - method and design permitting. Sylvia, for example, had set her heart on breast feeding her baby, in the context of a many health problems which made her worried that she had not been able to nurture her baby properly while still in the womb. Despite her definite preference for breastfeeding, it 'didn't – just didn't work at all' and at first, the baby didn't even have the energy to suck on the bottle so was fed through a tube down her nose for the first thirty six hours. Then Sylvia bottle-fed her every three hours, whether she woke or not. The initial worry over whether she was getting enough meant that 'every little feed, John [the baby's father] and I used to write down exactly what she took and end up doing a running total (…) for the day'. In hospital for ten days, she was visited by a 'nightmare' breast-feeding counsellor who she experienced as putting pressure on her. The

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[34] This is parallel to clinical supervision, which is securely established in psychoanalytic practice. A variant of it used to be a common feature of social work practice.

counsellor's claim that breast-feeding would give her a strong bond with her daughter upset her and she was 'so close to snapping'. In the interview she elaborated at length what she felt like replying, which was about how a strong bond was not exclusively dependent on breastfeeding. Later on she commented: 'I beat myself up about that [not breastfeeding] for a long time' and cites John as telling her 'you really did try to do it and it just didn't work'.

Other mothers in our sample, similarly visited by breast feeding counsellors in the same hospital, either welcomed the help or, having decided to bottle feed, rejected the advice, but with neutral feelings about it, for example in one case because her mother had bottle fed all her four children and she was happy to do likewise.

We also were presented with data that showed new mothers learning from experience (Bion, 1962) in a way that went beyond expert discourse. Becky is describing to the interviewer how she gets her baby to sleep for the night.

> So at the night time he'll fall asleep on the sofa, and I'll leave him there for a little while, just so as I know he's settled, 'cos (.) sometimes he'll go down quite early, like he'll go down at half eight or something, and stay asleep. So I'll leave him there for an hour or so, and then I'll take him to bed, 'cos I know that's him sleeping now, and he doesn't wake up. (Int: Yeah.) So sometimes he goes to sleep and wakes up.
> (Int: Hmm.) But it's hard, because obviously if he goes to sleep in your arms like this, you've gotta turn him to lay him on his belly. (Int: Yeah because that's the way he wants to sleep.) He doesn't go down on his back. I mean he'll sleep like this fine on his back. (Int: Uhuh.) I mean I've gonna try him soon on his back again, 'cos in the daytime he's starting to sleep a bit longer on his back. (Int: Right.) But when he was younger, and we used to lay him on his back, he would throw his arms out and jump. (Int: Yeah.) I dunno, like as if he was falling or something. (Int: Right.) So I thought – then the *only* way he'd get to sleep is if he's on his belly, 'cos he'll settle on his belly. (Int: Yeah.) 'Cos in the daytime, if he was laying on the settee or sitting on the settee, he would lay – lay on his belly on our chest. So I thought – he sleeps like that for hours – let me lie him on his belly, see how he is. And he was fine that way. The first time I done it, the first few times I laid him on his belly, he didn't sleep very well anyway. So I was a bit (.) scared, 'cos they say, "Don't lie them on their belly 'cos they can suffocate themselves." But he's – he's fine, he turned his head about and everything. And a few times he's put his face flat down, and he's left it there for a little while, but then he moves it. (Int: Yeah.) So I mean all these doctors, and all these people, say all these different things about what you should and shouldn't do, but personally, at the end of the day (.) it's your kid, you know what they're gonna like. (Int: Yeah, yeah.) So I don't listen to what they say. They always think they know best, but they don't really.

Becky is positioning herself in relation to (though not 'in') expert discourses here, but the extract demonstrates an agency that draws on a complex mix of experience and insight as she learns form experience and along the way considers, but rejects an expert view that it is unsafe to lay an infant on its front.

A further example derives from observation data on an occasion when the observer accompanied a mother, Zelda, and her baby to a swimming class. From the

notes I got a striking picture of a mother who is experiencing painful conflict because on the one hand, her baby is hating every minute in the water and on the other, the swimming teacher is telling her to stick with it and he will overcome his dislike. Much of the meaning that I summarise here was conveyed in the observer's description of bodily expressions, in a situation where not many words were exchanged. The descriptive data are so evocative that, reading the notes, I could feel the baby's and mother's distress, experienced in me as a dislike of the teacher and a wish that Zelda would stand up to her and get out of the water with her suffering child. Noticing such reactions is a useful way to understand the emotional aspects of the scene. My puzzlement at why this sensitive, tolerant, caring mother continued to put her baby through such discomfort led me to notice, elsewhere in the text, a reference to the fact that Zelda had been good at swimming, and briefly a swimming teacher herself. She commented frequently on her husband' wish, as a keen sportsman, for their baby to become good at sport. Perhaps this was her attempt to introduce her son to her sport; one that she was loath to give up. We see Zelda positioned through an expert discourse, subjected to a power relation that imposed upon her from outside. But we also see how it connected to an aspect of her past history that was infused with meanings that informed her current situation and relationships. Taking a case study approach to data analysis encourages the researcher to make links between bits of information gathered in different situations, at different times and about different events and relationships. It is through holding together the whole ('gestalt') of the case that a richer and more complex picture of subjectivity is garnered, in its situated, practical, life historical, relational, and dynamic as well its discursive/conversational aspects.

Concluding Comment

It is outside the scope of this chapter to evaluate fully how well these methods fulfilled their potential in moving beyond a discursive approach to subjectivity towards a psycho-social one. However, I can summarise by saying that they have transformed my research practice and my way of understanding what research into subjectivity can encompass. Briefly, the use of such methods has made me aware of the many dimensions of time that need to feature in understanding and researching identities and how my own pace of work was shaping and constraining my methods; of how changes in location and the use of different spaces affect identity and how different methods render these more or less visible; of how talk-based methods can conceal what bodies reveal of a person's affective, lived experience. And finally I have learned how useful my own subjective responses (and those of others in a group) are in telling me about the experiences of participants, if I can learn how to pay attention to their nuances.

A psycho-social approach to empirical research is not psychoanalysis, rather it means, in my practice, critically using psychoanalytic ideas, both ontologically and epistemologically to 'fill' the empty subject of discursive psychology in productive, if inevitably provisional, ways.

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Towards a Psychoanalytic Discursive Psychology: Moving from Consciousness to Unconsciousness [35]

Michael Billig

All social scientists will no doubt agree that, in principle, the study of language should be allied to psychological considerations. To treat language purely as an abstract system of signs is to ignore the very stuff of language: namely that people constantly use it in diverse ways for diverse purposes. Even if that much is easy to agree upon, nevertheless there is a conceptual problem. How do we connect the use of language to the lives and purposes of its users? Or to put the question somewhat differently, what is the status of psychological concepts that one might use to describe the mentality of individual language-users?

This paper recommends the use of two seemingly opposing psychological approaches: discursive psychology and psychoanalytic theory. Discursive psychology links language to social action. This is particularly so in the work of discursive psychologists such as Charles Antaki, Derek Edwards, Jonathan Potter and Elizabeth Stokoe, who use the insights and techniques of conversation analysis in order to study what people are doing when they interact. In so doing, such discursive psychologists have not only revealed the intricate details of ordinary conversational interactions, but they have demonstrated how traditional psychological concepts should be reconceptualised in terms of language-based activities. Whereas discursive psychologists examine how people speak, psychoanalytic ideas stress the importance of what is left unsaid and what psychologically cannot be spoken. As such, psychoanalytic theorists search for factors that apparently lie behind outward social actions. This is one reason why social theorists from the Frankfurt School onwards have found psychoanalytic ideas fundamentally important for examining critically the operations of ideology – for ideology is often presumed to operate beyond the level of conscious awareness.

So, it might be thought that if we want to expand a discursive psychological approach, which concentrates upon the details of interpersonal interaction, to incorporate ideological critique, then we need merely add a psychoanalytic component. However, it will be suggested that a psychoanalytic discursive psychology cannot be achieved simply by combining the two approaches, as if Freudian ideas can easily be stirred into the discursive psychological pot. Unconscious factors need to be understood, not as an inner psychic force as Freud envisaged, but in relation to the activity of repressing thoughts and feelings. The notion of repression also needs to be reconceptualised as something that is based in language rather than being the product of mysterious machinery within the psyche. Only when the unconscious is reconceptualised in terms of the discursive activity of repressing can Freudian elements be added to spice up the somewhat bland vision of the human being that discursive psychologists sometimes convey.

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[35] A slightly different version of this text was published in 2006 in the journal Discourse Studies 8 (1): 17-24, under the title: "A psychoanalytic discursive psychology: From consciousness to unconsciousness".

Action Not Experience

Philosophically, many of the principles of discursive psychology have been derived from the later writings of Wittgenstein and from John Austin's philosophy of language (Potter, 2001). Actually, the ideas can be said to have a much longer history, and today's discursive psychology can be seen to belong to an intellectual tradition dating from the reaction against John Locke and his psychological study of the mind in the eighteenth century (Billig, 2008). The third earl of Shaftesbury and Thomas Reid criticised Locke's theory of ideas, with Reid in particular questioning whether our minds are only acquainted with their ideas of things. Today, cognitive psychologists prefer to talk about 'cognitions' and 'representations', rather than 'ideas' and 'impressions'. Nevertheless, they are continuing the basic position of Locke - namely that our knowledge of the world derives from the ways that our minds extract information from perception. As such, modern cognitive psychologists, just as Locke did, advocate that the mind is to be studied by hypothesising the internal cognitive processes that characterise thinking.

In *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein (1967) argued against the assumptions of cognitive psychology and the theory of mind that can be dated back to Locke. In particular, Wittgenstein contested that inner processes of mind lie behind outward action and that these inner entities constitute psychology's proper objects of study. Psychologists, for example, might seek to study 'attitudes', 'beliefs', or 'memories' and they assume these are real psychological entities which cannot be observed directly, just as Locke had assumed that the mind was comprised of 'mental ideas' – an assumption that Reid mocked mercilessly, claiming that no ideas had ever been discovered in the brain and it is hard to know how they ever could be. Reid's arguments apply just as forcefully to modern concepts of 'mental representations' and 'cognitions'.

Wittgenstein produced two arguments that are particularly relevant to any critique of cognitive psychology. First, he argued against the possibility of a private language. We have a range of psychological words that seem to refer to inner, psychological states – words such as 'belief', 'memory', 'thought' etc. Because language is a shared public activity, there must be agreed, public criteria for the use of words. This applies equally to psychological words and to words that name physical objects. If psychological words were merely labels for private mental states, we could never have a public language of psychological states. We would not be able to learn psychological concepts nor talk publicly about our feelings, hopes, memories and thoughts, for there would be no way of knowing whether speakers are talking about the same sort of thing when they use psychological concepts. The fact that we can use such words without difficulty indicates that psychological concepts must have shared public criteria and, in this regard, cannot differ from words that denote physical objects. Wittgenstein's second argument was that words are always more than words. We do things with words –and this was a point that Austin also stressed. As Wittgenstein wrote, "words are deeds" (1980, p. 46). If one examines what people are doing when they use psychological words, they are not merely or even principally labelling some private, inner state. They are engaging in interactional activity. Thus, the statement 'I think it is going to rain' is not a reporting of an internal cognitive state of thinking, but the 'I think' is indicating less than certainty.

Wittgenstein illustrated his arguments with hypothetical examples. Discursive psychology takes his position seriously by reformulating his philosophy of ordinary language as an empirical research project. Instead of using hypothetical examples,

discursive psychologists have examined in detail how speakers actually use psychological concepts in interactional conversation.   Above all, discursive psychologists have investigated exactly what speakers are doing when they use psychological terminology – particularly examining what actions speakers are performing and how they are attending to their fellow conversational participants (Antaki, 1994 and 2006; Billig, 1991; Edwards, 1997; Edwards and Potter, 1993; Potter, 1996 and 2006; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Te Molder and Potter, 2005). For example, it is by no means simple what speakers might be doing when they claim not to know something. The claim may be seeking to accomplish all sorts of conversational business, depending on the context. The claim cannot be taken merely as a privileged report that there is a gap in an inner memory store. The analyst must examine the claim in relation to the sequence of interaction in order to discover what exactly is being claimed. For example, Edwards (2006) does this when he analyses exactly what a suspect is doing when he uses the phrase 'I dunno' in the course of a police interview: the intonation and exact placement of the phrase in the interaction indicate the richness and complexity of meaning that is being conveyed.

In seeking to understand what actions are being performed by claims to know or not know - to remember or to forget - discursive psychologists are not seeking to study internal mental states. The methodological opposition to cognitivism is often misunderstood as suggesting that people have no internal lives. However, discursive psychologists are not denying that people have inner experiences or thoughts. As Edwards (2006) writes, clearly discourse is not all there and language is not the same as experience. It is just that experiences are methodologically always just out of reach. Typically when psychologists claim to be studying inner experiences they are, in fact, examining further discourse that, properly speaking, should be analysed discursively (Edwards, 1997). Thus, psychologists might interview participants about their feelings. The participants will give answers. These answers themselves are responses within a conversation – namely the research interview – they are not unproblematic, direct reflections of an earlier 'experience'. In consequence, these responses must be understood in their discursive context. This is something that cognitive psychologists often fail to appreciate.

The point that discursive psychologists are making is not of itself entirely new. They are not merely suggesting that the methodological tools of cognitive psychology are unsuited for their purposes, but they are also claiming that the conventional theoretical language of cognitive psychology is also inadequate for the task of exploring consciousness. As Henri Bergson (1946) argued, the conventional categories of psychologists are unsuitable vehicles for describing the fleeting, fragmentary and deeply personal qualities of inner experience: the skills of novelists or poets are better equipped for such a task. What discursive psychologists stress (as did Wittgenstein, and, before him, Thomas Reid in the eighteenth century) is that we should not confuse what people say, when they use a psychological vocabulary, with so-called internal mental entities which are postulated by philosophers and psychologists but which must remain necessarily unobservable.

This does not mean that thinking cannot be directly studied. We are always condemned merely to study the effects or correlates of thinking – which is precisely what cognitive psychologists do when they infer the mental processing of information from different reaction times to the presentation of different stimulus material. Thinking, however, is not necessarily an individual, silent activity. It can be outwardly conducted. In the to-and-fro of conversation, people are engaged in the activity of thinking, as they formulate and react to novel utterances. Given the speed

of conversation, it makes little sense to assume that the 'real' thinking is always happening silently within the individual mind of the speaker, just before words are uttered. Instead, it makes sense to say that the thinking is occurring noisily in the social activity of talk. Methodologically, therefore, thinking is outwardly observable. It is directly available to the analyst who studies conversational interaction. As such, discursive psychologists, who study discursive interaction, especially argumentative interaction, are studying the dynamics of social thinking (Billig, 1996).

Experience and Social Life: An Example

The assumptions of discursive psychology have a direct bearing upon cognitive linguistics. Frequently cognitive linguists use psychological concepts but they do so without detailed psychological analysis. They will presume that a cognitive state or process lies behind the use of a particular linguistic construction and that such a state of mind can be easily described. Since, as linguists, they are more interested in the linguistic construction, they do not tend to say how the existence of the presumed underlying cognitive state might be determined.

Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) can serve as an example. This was a genuinely innovative work whose insights have contributed greatly to a critical understanding of contemporary ideology. Lakoff and Johnson were analysing how metaphors permeate the ideology of common sense. They argued that the nature of our thinking is often determined by the sorts of metaphors that we use routinely to understand the world around us. In discussing the nature of metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson continually used the concept of 'experience'. They claim "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (1980, p. 5). They stipulate that "no metaphor can ever be comprehended or even adequately represented independently of its experiential basis" (p. 19).

In a general sense, such claims seem unexceptional for Lakoff and Johnson are arguing that dominant patterns of discourse affect the way people think about the world. However, Lakoff and Johnson write as if the concept of 'experience' is unproblematic. One might distinguish between a loose, even metaphorical, use of 'experience' and a more precise meaning as might be used by psychologists, including cognitive psychologists. The loose sense would suggest that Lakoff and Johnson are using 'experience' as a synonym for understanding – as if they are saying little more than that to understand a metaphor one needs to understand, or have experience, of the concepts that are being said to resemble each other. Thus, to understand the metaphor that love is like a fever, one must understand the meaning of both the concept of 'love' and 'fever' – that is, unless one has experience of both concepts, then the meaning of the metaphor will be incomprehensible. That is not to say that one must have been in love or suffered from a fever to understand the metaphor, but one must have had experience of the concepts, rather than the things that the concepts denote.

Cognitive psychologists, however, do not use 'experience' in such a loose sense. They would suggest that concepts can suggest precise mental representations or cognitive experiences. The precise meaning of 'experience', then would refer to a state of mind, whose distinguishing qualities can, in theory, be specified. It seems implausible to expect the use of metaphors to be linked to precisely defined inner experiences. That would imply that each time someone uses a particular metaphor, they experience an inner state associated with that metaphor. This can be illustrated by a metaphor what Lakoff and Johnson discussed at length – the metaphor of

argument as 'warfare'. When people claim to be 'attacking' an opponent's argument, they would be presumed to have an 'attacking-state-of-mind'; or if they claim to be defending their own position, they might be presumed to experiencing a defensive cognitive state. The problem, quite apart from the implausibility of the idea, is that there is no evidence for the existence of such an internal state of mind, apart from the use of the linguistic phrase itself. Wittgenstein's critique of psychologism suggests that it is better to dispense with the notion of such an inner state, in order to concentrate on examining speakers' use of language.

In the case of Lakoff and Johnson's thesis, there is an additional reason for scepticism. They discuss how metaphors can become idiomatic expressions. When this occurs, the speakers and auditors cease to attend to the original metaphorical meaning. The metaphor has been used to fill a semantic gap and then it comes to be accepted as a literal description of the concept in question (Glucksberg, 1999). For example, 'smoking gun' has come to mean 'incriminating evidence', especially in relation to bureaucratic and political misdemeanours (Billig and Macmillan, 2005). When speakers talk about the presence or absence of a 'smoking gun', in relation to a case of political dishonesty, their listeners do not need to imagine smoking curling out of the barrel of a gun, in order to understand what is being claimed. They do not even need to have ever personally experienced the firing of a gun. They can still understand this clichéd metaphor without such personal experience. If the phrase need not evoke the image of a gun, speakers and auditors will need to have experienced (in a general sense) the previous cultural uses of the phrase when it has been used to indicate 'incriminating evidence', otherwise they might not understand the present usage.

There are, therefore, good grounds for supposing that the idiomatic clichés of argument-as-warfare do not systematically evoke internal war-images or war-like states-of-mind as they are used in ordinary talk. In short, a metaphor, which might have originally conveyed a particular vivid image when it was used in a deliberately metaphorical manner, no longer does so for it becomes a culturally stock phrase. In this respect, it has become a 'dead' metaphor. This particularly occurs with what the nineteenth century American linguist, William Whitney, called 'figurative transfer'. This happens as a physical concept becomes used to indicate an abstract one – as, for example, *perplexed* historically passed from meaning 'intertwined' to its present meaning of *worried*. It has been argued that most of our commonplace psychological concepts have made this figurative transfer from physical description to psychological one (Richards, 1989).

Of course, Lakoff and Johnson in practice are not using the concept of 'experience' in a technical, psychological sense to denote a definable state of mind. They are using it in a general way, almost as a synonym for 'understand'. They are suggesting, for instance, that the argument-as-warfare metaphor leads people to 'understand' arguments in the same ways that they 'understand' warfare. Again, Wittgenstein's insights are relevant for specifying what such 'understanding' means. What would count as evidence that arguments are understood as wars? It is not the existence of inner states of experience: how could we possibly know what is in the mind of someone who talks of 'defending their position' in debate? We can understand their utterance regardless of what we might presume to be the image in their minds as they speak. The evidence that people understand arguments as wars is that they talk about the two topics similarly (namely that the argument-as-war metaphor is widespread), and that they regularly debate matters of contention in aggressive ways. In short, the example bears out the general contention that generally

the search for evidence about states of mind presumed to underlie the use of particular forms of language leads to further uses of language, not to experiences themselves.

Lakoff and Johnson are suggesting that the widespread use of the metaphor contributes to aggressive debating behaviour and a general coarsening of argument. Deborah Tannen (1999) advances precisely such a view in her book *The Argument Culture*. Her evidence relates to outward behaviour, especially discursive habits, not the presumed inner states of mind of those who engage in argument. Thus, evidence for an ideological effect on 'experience' requires an examination of what Wittgenstein called 'forms of life'. We might say that the widespread use of the metaphor of debate-as-warfare has contributed to our experiencing debate in a warlike manner. In this context, the notion of 'experience' does not denote an inner, unobservable experience but it refers to outward social activity – to a shared, cultural pattern of 'experience', which is a shared pattern of discursive activity, a form of life.

Studying Ideology

These criticisms of Lakoff and Johnson are technical arguments concerning the use and meaning of psychological concepts such as 'experience'. Lakoff and Johnson's loose use of 'experience' could easily be removed, or at least clarified, while leaving the main body of their ideological analyses untouched. Certainly, the argument against their use of psychological concepts is not an argument against the sort of critical discursive study of ideology, which they are making. Above all, Lakoff and Johnson are writing of the systematic biases in the metaphorical (or clichéd) discourses of contemporary life. The importance of their work is that it seeks to reveal shared ideological biases in common patterns of talk (see particularly Lakoff, 2002 and 2009).

Nevertheless, it might be thought that the techniques of discursive psychology tend to direct attention away from the study of ideology. Discursive psychologists have profitably adapted conversation analysis to study turn-by-turn interaction in order to show the interactional meaning of psychological concepts. In doing so, they have been able to make telling criticisms against researchers who ignore the interactional nature of interview material and focus group data (Puchta and Potter, 2003). For such purposes the insights of conversation analysis have been crucial. On the other hand, classic conversation analysis has shown a reluctance to study the wider patterns of ideology. In its classic forms, conversation analysis is committed to analysing the details of interaction from the perspectives of the participants, rather than imposing analytic categories on the participants' actions. Accordingly, a concern with ideology is seen as an analyst's concern, not a participant's concern and, thus, has little place in conversation analysis. Schegloff (1997 and 1999) might claim that conversation analysis is a critical pursuit, but social critique is typically deferred. There always seems to be more data to analyse in order to see how participants 'orientate' to each other. The result is, according to critics, that conversation analysts do not get round to linking the details of the micro processes of social interaction with the broader movements of ideology (Billig, 1999b; Wetherell, 1998 and 2007; but see Kitzinger, 2006, and also Stokoe and Smithson, 2001; Stokoe and Weatherall, 2002). To do so, requires the addition of other theoretical and empirical elements that cannot be read from what classic conversation analysis describes as the 'orientations' of participants.

One reason why classic conversation analysis is limited as a means of studying ideology is that it focuses on what is said, rather than what is not said. Arguably a

critical approach needs to uncover patterns of action and discourse that are habitually not occurring. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) emphasised, conventional metaphors, by stressing what is similar between two topics, tend to gloss over what is different. The more that such metaphors are used as common sense, the more that the differences tend to be overlooked. In consequence, ideological analysis can involve recovering hidden meanings, showing why beliefs about what seems to be 'natural' may not be quite so natural. In this respect, much ideological analysis involves revealing cultural assumptions which members of the culture take for granted.

This typically means going beyond what is said in interaction in order to examine significant absences. A critical analysis might aim to discover how shared patterns of action might be preventing other patterns from occurring. What participants do not systematically 'orientate' to may be as significant as those they do 'orientate' to. Power is typically reproduced within interaction without the participants explicitly discussing it. Indeed, when participants bring up the topic they are likely to be challenging patterns of power, rather than routinely reproducing them. If power is reproduced 'behind the backs' of social actors, then a critical analysis involves more than detailing patterns of social awareness: it should also seek to uncover patterns of unawareness or socially produced unconsciousness.

Reinterpreting the Freudian Unconscious

There is an obvious problem with raising the notion of unconsciousness while advocating a sceptical position towards 'consciousness'. The Freudian unconscious is typically conceived as a mental entity that is even more ghostly and hidden than consciousness. The whole Freudian framework of 'ego', 'id' and 'superego' seems to refer to entities that are even more hidden and mysterious than those that cognitive psychologists claim to study. When the unconscious is linked to the study of discourse, the results can be vague in the extreme; this can be seen, for instance, in the work of Lacan who employs an imprecise and often misleading psychology, using concepts that are hard to tie down (Billig, 2006). Certainly, there has been reluctance on the part of most discursive psychologists to combine conversation analytic methods with psychoanalytic ideas (Edley, 2006). Nevertheless, there are ways of reinterpreting Freudian ideas to make them compatible with a critical and detailed analysis of language, avoiding the speculation of a Lacanian approach.

The key lies in recognizing that what Freud called 'the unconscious' is not a thing; it refers to thoughts, desires, hopes etc that have been repressed. 'Repression', too, should not be seen as a mysterious mental process but it is an activity that is accomplished by people (Billig, 1999a). The question is what people have to do in order to repress thoughts and desires from conscious awareness. If we see repressing as an activity – rather than 'repression' as a mental mechanism - then we may be able to changes the emphasis of much psychoanalytic theorising. At the minimum, there should be a discursive shift from using the language of mechanisms and forces to what Roy Schafer (1976), a psychoanalyst much influenced by Wittgenstein, called an 'action language'.

Freud distinguished between two forms of unconscious thought: the preconscious and the unconscious proper. Preconscious thoughts are those that could be consciously entertained but which at a particular moment happen not to be. When we are concentrating on one thing, we are not attending to others that might become the focus of attention at another moment. In conversation there is always too much occurring so that participants cannot attend to everything. Linguistically, any

utterance contains extra meanings that users do not specifically 'orientate' to. Speakers, in seeking to direct their auditors' attention to a particular topic, must use words to point to that topic. If these pointing words themselves become the objects of focus, then they cannot achieve their function of pointing, for in pointing to the topic they are pointing away from themselves. All this indicates the realm that Freud described as the 'preconscious' – for nothing is specifically being repressed from conscious awareness.

On a social level, it is possible to identity features of ideology that resemble the Freudian preconscious. These refer to aspects of the social world that are so familiar that we daily pay them little attention. Many aspects of what has been called 'banal nationalism' operate in this way (Billig, 1995; Law, 2001; Fuller, 2008; Higgins, 2004). Reminders of nationhood are constantly present in the lives of nationals living in established nation-states, but these reminders frequently constitute the ground, not the figures, of awareness. They are the unwaved flags, hanging outside public building or on filling-station forecourts. They are routinely not the objects of conscious awareness – but they are not repressed in the Freudian sense. Nationhood is reproduced by the deictic use of small words – such as 'we', 'here' and even 'the' – that are daily used in the media but which are unnoticed for they are not the discursive focus of attention. In this way, small deictic words can function to create the nation-state as the 'natural' place in which ordinary life is enacted (Billig, 1995).

To use Freudian terminology, these words function preconsciously. There is no force to stop them becoming the discursive objects of focus. The taken-for-granted, but unspecified, 'we', that underwrites so many daily utterances in the mass media, can become an elaborated 'we'. The unwaved flags, as it were, can become deliberately waved flags in moments of self-conscious nationalist activity. Indeed, the unnoticed reminders of nationhood make possible the moments of flag-waving, self-conscious, 'hot' nationalism. What the constant repetition of the deictic words of nationhood and the unwaved flags achieve is the ideological reproduction of nationhood. They make the world of nations appear 'natural'. To say this is not to say that everyone within a nation entertains the same conception of the nation (see Skey, 2009, for such an interpretation), but that nationhood is deeply engrained in unnoticed way within life in the contemporary world (Billig, 2009).

In Freud's terms, the distinguishing feature of the 'unconscious' proper was that its contents had been repressed. Thus, the so-called unconscious is not a given thing or entity, but is the consequence of repression. Freud often seemed to talk about repression as if it were a psychic mechanism that operated mysteriously within the unconscious mind. However, there is another way of characterising repression, using the 'action language' of psychoanalysis. Repression can be understood as an activity: people have to do something in order to prevent some ideas and desires from disturbing their conscious awareness. There is a gap in Freud's work. He never specified exactly what an individual has to do in order to repress. In particular, his developmental account concentrated on the sorts of desires that a young child might seek to repress or push from conscious awareness. However, he did not say how the child acquires the skills that are necessary to engage in the actions of repression; nor did he specify what these skills might be and how they might be deployed habitually to prevent disturbing thoughts from returning to conscious awareness.

In order to rectify this gap, which lies at the very heart of psychoanalytic theorising, it has been suggested that the skills of repression are integrally related to the skills of dialogue (Billig, 1997 and 1999a). It is not possible to elaborate the argument here, but the outlines can be sketched. Language is not just expressive but it

is repressive. The young child has to learn that certain ways of speaking are considered inappropriate. In learning to speak appropriately or politely, the child learns what is rude. Indeed, every time that an adult seeks to prevent a child from saying something inappropriately rude, they must indicate what should be left unsaid. In saying 'Don't say that, it's rude', the parent may have the intention of teaching the child politeness, but in so doing the parent necessarily teaches the child what rudeness is. In this way, the pleasures of rudeness are created as forbidden objects. As Freud so insightfully stressed, what is forbidden is likely to become an object of desire simply because it is forbidden. Thus, young children can derive pleasure from uttering forbidden words – the pleasure comes from the fact that the words are forbidden, not from any intrinsic quality of the words.

It is significant that Freud located the childish need to repress at around the time that the child begins to be able to engage in conversation. However, Freud did not make a connection between the development of speech and the resolution of the so-called Oedipal stage. It is not difficult to connect the two developmental events. In order to engage in routine conversations, the child must learn to repress – or push from conscious awareness - the temptations of rudeness. The codes of politeness need to become routine and habitual; they demand that speakers demonstrate constant self-constraint and awareness of others. But what is repressed does not disappear. It can return in slips of the tongue and, most importantly, in humour (Billig, 2001 and 2005). So much humour derives from the pleasure of saying what should not be said, or of witnessing, its utterance (see, Stokoe, 2008, for an analysis of the way that professional scriptwriters use this to create laughter in comedy entertainment). In this respect, humour represents a brief release from the constraints of social restrictions – for humour represents a pleasure in seeing the routine codes of social life being transgressed. Paradoxically, the humour of ridicule and embarrassment can be used to maintain those constraints, as observers laugh at, and thereby discipline, those who infringe social norms. In this regard, constraint and the momentary pleasures of freedom can be tightly intermixed in humour (Billig, 2005).

If language creates the necessity for repression, then it also provides the means for accomplishing the act of repressing. In acquiring the skills of conversation, the child witnesses adults changing topics of conversation, using rhetorical skills to do so: the adult distracts the attention of the child. If inner thought is a dialogic process, modelled upon outer conversation, then one can see something analogous with one's own internal dialogues (Billig, 1996). We can use the skills of changing topics as a means of accomplishing routine internal repression. As the topic of internal dialogue drifts towards thoughts that might be uncomfortable to entertain, so the thinker might habitually, without conscious deliberation, re-direct the topic in another direction. In fact, there is evidence that Freud's patient, the Rat Man, used such techniques of self-distraction to stop himself thinking compulsively murderous thoughts. What this means is that thinking is itself dialogical – an outward activity that is internalised. Moreover, this outward dialogic activity, not some unseen and thereby unteachable psychic process, provides the basis of repression, which too is primarily a discursive activity. For repression to occur inwardly in the thoughts of the solitary thinker, it must primarily have been a social, observable activity, witnessed when adults use language to distract the attention of youngsters.

The consequence is that repression, or rather the activity of repressing, can be studied as an outward, ideological and discursive activity that is habitually practised. Analysts can note how speakers might routinely repress, or push aside, ideologically delicate topics from conversation (Billig, 1999a). The well-known defence

mechanisms of psychoanalytic theory are patterns of discourse. All, according to Freudian theory, involve elements of denial and denial that are characteristically accomplished by acts of language. Projection is a type of explanation by which the self seems to attribute blame and criticism to others, while denying that such blame and criticism attaches to itself. Patterns of projection can be ideologically shared, rather than being an individual reaction to particular circumstances of life. Such a pattern, for instance, appears in the so-called 'third person effect', whereby people claim that they are able to resist the persuasive messages of the media by 'reading between the lines', while claiming that others, including their own friends, are easily persuaded (e.g., Billig, 1992; Duck and Mullin, 1995; Hoorens and Ruiter, 1996). This common pattern of attribution constitutes a defensive solution to a major ideological dilemma of mass society: people are dependent for their information about the social world upon media but they know from the media themselves that the media are not to be trusted (for ideological dilemmas, see Billig et al, 1988). The 'solution' is not merely defensive but is part of an ideological view that constantly identifies others as 'inferior', (because they are supposedly fooled by the media routinely) as well as creating the conditions for continual personal self-doubt, insecurity and denial. In this regard, a pattern of denial and projection is a shared pattern of reaction in the contemporary world.

By such a discursive reinterpretation of Freud, it is possible to resolve the seeming contradiction that was mentioned earlier: namely, the contradiction between translating internal cognitive processes into outward discursive activity, while still retaining a critical view that accords importance to unconscious factors. The solution involves recasting 'the unconscious'. Instead of being seen as a hidden mental entity, it is seen as an activity – that of repressing – and this activity is itself seen as discursive. As such, the habitual business of repressing is part of the activity of language. Moreover, within the routines of language can be glimpsed the habitual workings of ideological power and dialogical repression.

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Taking Women's Voices: The Psychological Politics of Feminisation[36]

Erica Burman

This chapter explores the role, contribution and relevance of recent engagements between feminist and discursive approaches. It includes a brief review of how and why feminists should resist the appeal to feminisation. However feminists are not alone in being interpellated to support this, and the recent history of discourse analysis has its own history of gender that figures here. The chapter therefore maintains in part a specific address to and about psychology in terms of illuminating contemporary political tropes structured around a key current mode of psychologisation which mobilises discourses of feminisation under neo-liberalism. Critical evaluation and discursive analysis of feminisation necessitates reviewing past feminist debates within and outwith psychology. This analysis is offered as a resource to address the urgent task of critiquing current modes of psychological politics figuring within processes of cultural and economic imperialism and the acceleration of multinational capital accumulation in which, as I will argue, representations of gender figure in vital ways.

The key argument put forward here is that gender, and in particular representations of women, function within contemporary discourses of war and peace to distract from practise of power so obscure their presence and function. What I call here 'feminisation' (to distance these gendered representations from actual, embodied, thinking and practicing women) works to domesticate and render cosy, normal and natural what are prevailing relations of exploitation, occupation and oppression on an unprecedented scale. A key task for feminist and critical psychologists, as people with a particular attunement to the intersections and effects of such psychological politics, is to refuse the lure of interpellation to these spurious feminisations and, by such political and methodological analysis, show how such feminisations work to obscure other – perhaps even more sinister – political agendas.

The chapter title therefore highlights how this appropriation of women's voices should be contested. If its address appears to be primarily to feminists – and especially feminists in psychology, this is because my arguments go beyond even asking the now longstanding question posed from feminist theory about 'which women?' are being 'given voice' to instead problematise both the status and function of such gendered representations. Hence inquiry takes the analysis of the politics of discourse into a discursive analysis of gender. It goes beyond the activities and proclivities of actually sexed and gendered bodies, to the imagined and imaginary

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[36] This chapter is an updated version of a paper of the same title previously presented as a keynote talk to the British Psychological Society Psychology of Women Section Conference in 2003, subsequently published in *Psychology of Women Section Review, 2004, 6, 1*: 3-21.

tropes that secure (in more ways than one, see Shepard, 2008) politically ill-formed sentences[37].

The State We're In

The past ten years have seen an extraordinary period of war conducted via both deeds and words (as other 'facts on the ground'), in which massive inversions of ordinary language meanings and practices have become commonplace: claims to Democracy[38] warranted neo-colonial invasion, and the slogan of a 'war against evil' threatened any country that failed to comply with US business-military interests. Fundamentalism – through its mobile association with Islamophobia – became a property of a secular albeit authoritarian state, rather than of (say) Christian crusaders. As the feminist movement RAWA (the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan) predicted right at the beginning of the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq – calls for women's emancipation were cynically deployed as rhetorical tactics to mobilise support and be forgotten as soon as the politico-military target had moved on (see also Thobani, 2008; Bhattacharyya, 2008). Terror itself has become a mobile term, reflexively reproducing its own effects[39] by disconnecting its Western subjects from collective discussion and action; thereby rendering almost impossible analysis of causal relationships (such as, who the terrorists are, who started the war…) and of political evaluation and action.

Without under-estimating the significance of the world-wide resistance movements that have emerged, and the revival of political engagement this indicates amongst constituencies (such as school students) whose apathy and disengagement we have become accustomed to bemoaning, the second Gulf War, occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq and Middle East Crisis (including the second Intifada and siege and bombardment of Gaza) caught feminisms at an introspective moment. The shift from time to space in social theory (Bondi, 1993; Haraway, 1988) imported a localism and specificity that was strong on subjectivity, with corresponding claims for subjective, passionate and situated engagement. But it was weak on collectivity – with both good and bad effects: good in prompting some critical reflection on the divided positions and interests of women, and limiting the unwarrantable claims to be acting 'on behalf of' some abstract (covertly middle class, Euro/US-centric heterosexual) conception of women; bad in offering few tangible strategies for renegotiating coalitions and alliances between the more and less privileged groups, and so threatening to leave feminists politically isolated in their (albeit shifting and multiple) social interest ghettos - which nevertheless was 'given' greater 'voice' via methodological tropes of reflexivity and autobiography.

In the light of these problems, black, post-colonial and lesbian critiques helped break the monolith of femini*sm* into diverse, plural and interconnecting feminist movements. Indeed (and this has some bearing for my focus on the ontological status of representations of women discussed later), along with feminism the category 'woman' and its associated psychological repertoire (including notions of role,

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[37] Butler (1997) both discusses and develops an analysis of the notion of 'trope', highlighting its status as marking a paradoxical point of turning that both repeats but also institutes the conditions for change, that precisely reflects her argument for the relations between power, subjectivity and agency (see especially her Introduction, and footnote 1 pp201-2).

[38] My capitalisation of Democracy follows the analysis provided by Alexander and Mohanty (1997).

[39] Kovel (1983)'s analysis connecting the intrapsychic with the political remains relevant to the current state of terror.

identity…) was subjected to a series of displacements: from feminism to feminisms; from identity to performance; from woman to gender, with a further twist instituted from gender to sexuality (including institutionally the widespread move from women's studies to gender/sexuality studies). All in all such displacements highlighted the multiple and intersecting forms of gendered positionings produced by structures of class, sexuality and racialisation. There appears to be little sign, however, that along with this, psychology and its role in regulating gender – among other significant differences – has been displaced. Certainly feminism(s)' historically complicated relationship(s) with institutional psychology through the ways 'the personal as political' has provided grist to psychology's depoliticising mill (Bondi and Burman, 2001; Burman, 1995; 1998; 2001/2).

In this reflective moment a politics of acquiescence - sometimes in the form of postmodern irony - threatened to hold sway: the visionary motif of the cyborg (Haraway, 1985) gave way to the (generally) liberal consumer-politics of 'queer'; and the shift of methodological focus from other to self has heralded – along with the legitimation of the emotional as a resource for methodological-political analysis – the return of a therapeutic agenda that always threatened to ever-so-softly pathologise or at least moderate political critiques. Moreover, alongside the shift from (historical) depth to (multiple and distributed) surfaces, the supposedly postmodern shift from grand narratives to little stories has been accompanied by a rather different kind of retrospection. Memorial processes, individual and collective, preoccupy the academic scene worldwide, along with specifically, perhaps post-millenial, feminist discussions of 'generations' (Haaken and Reavey, 2009). As well as (especially in relation to a British post-colonial context) mapping colonial complicities, resistances and legacies, where 'home and away' amplify the constitutive politics of 'self and other'[40], the other memorial focus concerns the conjunction of both the construction and the dis-ordering of social and individual memory through notions of trauma, mourning and (political-economic as well as psychoanalytic) reparation. Here social constructionism (in its multiple forms) competes with, and sometimes coexists with, psychoanalysis as the dominant model. Indeed amid all other deconstructions of official orthodoxies, including feminist authority, the privileged status psychoanalysis continues to retain with feminisms (and now also increasingly in feminist psychology) should give pause for thought (c.f. how in Belsey and Moore's well-known 1989 text the history of feminist theory is treated as equivalent to that of theoretical psychoanalysis, and the current debates over the status of psychoanalysis within the nascent discipline of 'psychosocial studies', Frosh and Baraitser, 2008). At the very least, it indicates how the return of the body and the emotions, as a site for feminist and psychological inquiry, is reflected in and prefigured by other developments.

Voices, Bodies, Discourses

Methodologically speaking (after Foucauldian analyses of the profession), psychologists have been trained to be technically minded, c.f. Ingleby, 1985; Rose, 1985). So wider shifts or developments in feminist theory and practice have had some key effects. Firstly, the early aim of qualitative researchers to 'give voice' and 'empower' women and other subordinated groups underwent major transformation into an acute attention to the power relations structured within knowledge generation

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[40] See for example, Chauduri and Strobel (1992); Ware (1993); McClintock (1995).

and interpretational practices. Far from authentic and stable 'voices' or 'experience', researchers are now concerned with provisional, situationally-determined accounts Alldred and Burman, 2005; Youngblood Jackson and Mazzei, 2008. The 'voices' of experience produced through research have been recognised as constructions and, rather than assuming their status, the task for researchers was to interrogate what we were doing with them, and why (Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1996). To take this a little further, and anticipate my argument later, feminists perhaps became so shy of claims to making or taking women's voices that the space was left open for other parties to appropriate the rhetorical position opened up by 'second wave' feminism (and challenged by 'third wave feminists'), for other purposes. Recent claims of a crisis in representation not only problematised the authority of the speaking positions of privileged researchers, but also identified the inadequacies and exclusionary characteristics of prevailing institutional practices that *make claims to* represent.

In terms of the career of feminist research in psychology, there has been an interesting turnaround of events. Discursive research emerged on the back of debates in social theory. Indeed in Britain in 1990 discourse was a feminised arena in psychology[41]. Rather unhelpfully, and perhaps as a move by mainstream psychologists to contain and smear both, feminist research was assumed to be discursive and vice versa. Since then there has been a parting of the ways – in part signalled by the rise of critical and social constructionist psychologies (which themselves owe a vast and generally unacknowledged debt to feminist work, c.f. Burman 1997). But two other features are at play here: firstly, narrative research has seemed to outflank discourse work (both inside and outside psychology) from the left (e.g. Andrews et al., 2000), providing a new lexicon to discuss the – socially constructed – character of lived experience, but still retaining some ambiguities over models of the precise power relations governing the intersection between individual and social narration. Narrative seemed to offer a way back to embodiment, emotions, and the little stories of history that postmodernity will admit. Discourse work, by contrast, elicited criticism from feminists and others (e.g. Nightingale and Cromby, 1998) for its abstraction from subjective experience and its antihumanist querying of notions of agency, and for its apparent relativist inclinations (Gill, 1995). But secondly, irrespective of the truth or otherwise of those claims (since such debates continue), and precisely by virtue of its popularity – to which a new generation of feminist psychologists have contributed (e.g. Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1995) – discourse work has been mainstreamed as a technology into dominant psychology.

An ancillary part of my argument here is to make the case for a feminist tactical re-engagement with discourse work. This is not because discourse work is particularly worth rescuing from its technicist appropriations; nor that it is inherently superior to any other approach (c.f. Burman, 1991), but rather because feminists and other critical researchers in psychology stand to lose a useful set of conceptual tools for the analysis of dominant cultural practices if discourse work in psychology is allowed to become focused only on such technical and dogmatically demarcated features as syntactical or conversational relations elaborated within a transcript. For while such devices are indeed useful (and I have used them myself, c.f. Burman 1992), (notwithstanding their sometimes vehement denial of this) they can only tell their story by subscribing to the same discursive and narrative understandings of

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[41] As I have noted elsewhere (Burman, 1998), at the 1990 Discourse and Gender workshop held at UCL, London, the presumed equation between feminist and discursive research was an explicit topic of discussion.

power and authority that, they claim, lie outside their overly delimited texts. As with feminist intervention, practical-political dilemmas are posed by mainstreaming (see e.g. Cornwall et al, 2007): recognition brings resources and opportunities for influence/intervention – and discourse work is now an important interpretative methodology in psychology. But it also carries risks of recuperation. So my analysis of a text, presented shortly, should be seen as a performative claim to recognise and restore feminist authority within discourse work, drawing on a model of discourse analysis that does not confine itself to a specific discursive approach, but rather works by linking the little texts to their bigger power narratives (Butler, 1997; Parker, 2007; Spivak, 1993). Equally, my subscription to discursive work here sits alongside narrative approaches as a necessary and complementary structural analysis to ward off any incipient tendencies within narrative approaches towards recuperation within individualist understandings.

The Politics of Feminisation

Talk of individualism connects to the theme of feminisation, and the role of psychology within both notions. This term 'feminisation' perhaps appears wilfully awkward; a nominalization, that is, a noun referring to a *process of making* 'feminine', without specifying who or what is so made[42]. These 'process' words (like racialisation and minoritisation), which have emerged as a useful reflection of the general attention to performativity, give some leverage back into structural analyses, whilst attending to the lively and unstable interplay of the conditions in which these occur. Indeed the 'psychological politics of feminisation' of my title names a set of conundra: a 'discursive complex' of sorts (Parker, 2002). Four problems/puzzles (at least) surround 'feminisation'.

The first concerns the link between individual and collectivity, for feminisation appears to designate a social trend rather than an individual career or intention; hence its subject appears collective. Yet the notion of feminisation is typically invoked as an *effect* of some other set of processes (as in the discussions about the feminisation of psychology, for example[43]). Irrespective of whether anyone would actually want to *claim* a feminised subject position (rather than have it *applied* to them as a social descriptor), the very term, through the cultural associations of 'femininity' - that invoke the primate domain, and thus the public/private divide - produces a displacement from the social to the personal, as the place of home, care, invisible labour, intimacy and so on. Paradoxically then, even as they identify a social process, discussions of feminisation threaten to resolve a collective subjectivity into an individual one. This is the first site of psychological politics of feminisation in need of contest.

Secondly, alongside this, at the very time that feminisation names a set of economic and cultural processes (as in the feminisation or labour, or the feminisation of poverty), the *subject* of such processes has (in true postmodern spirit) become detached from *actually* female gendered bodies to refer to wider constituencies so structurally positioned. As the rise of the 'emotional literacy' industry indicates, now men, as well as women, who are employed on low pay, insecure contracts, and

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[42] Interestingly, notwithstanding its wide circulation I have been unable to find entries for 'feminisation' within recent feminist dictionaries, encyclopaedia or anthologies – except in terms of discussions of the feminisation of poverty (see e.g. Code, 2000).

[43] For example concerns articulated across a range of national psychological organisations that the preponderance of women in the (until recently) lower ranks of the discipline devalues its status.

flexible (disposable) hours, are said to be feminised (Burman, 2006; 2009b). The crisis of labour relations in a post-industrial period has been put forward as heralding a feminisation of the workforce. As discussed later, new technology can also produce a feminisation of war.

A third concern is that the notion of feminisation, in the very effort to draw attention to certain processes of exclusion and oppression, re-inscribes normalised engenderings of those processes. What about new, as well as longstanding subaltern, responses that transform dominant gendered practice? It is important to ask, therefore, *which* feminisations are so termed, and what these indicate. Feminist and critical psychologists have considerable experience at detecting how contingent, but presumed, forms of gendered relations become normalised and naturalised through theories whose epistemological status is as flimsy as the tests they are based on[44].

Both developing this last point, but by way of contrast, there is also a fourth reading of feminisation that highlights the gendered character of the process but queries the attendant devalued status it supposedly accrues. Hence the feminisation of education supposedly names girls' current educational advantage or success within the British schooling scene. We may know both that girls' current supposed educational success is at a greater emotional and personal cost than this debate would admit (see e.g. Walkerdine et al, 2002), and (here using the methodological device of displacing gender) that 'race' and class privilege (rather than gender) account for the educational success of *some* white middle class girls (Dillabough, 2001), but this impinges little on the wider cultural perception of the shift from feminisation as a category of victimisation to one of beneficiary, if not victor.

So drawing on some of these strands, and now applying them more directly to the theme of women and war, it seems that part of what is in question, via the notion of feminisation, is claims to victim-status, as the representation of a structure of subjectivity that warrants indulgence or exoneration. While the position of victim is by definition individualised, its political inadequacies have been roundly criticised by feminists on various counts (c.f. Haaken, 1998; Reavey and Warner, 2003). Yet the cultural association between passivity and femininity is at play here, while the incipient individualisation that this ushers in bolsters widespread discourses of 'risk' that no longer lie within social relations and resource allocations but now attach to specific bodies (and specific categories of bodies) that are then invested as the site of danger[45].

This is what Susannah Radstone (2002) and Amal Treacher (2002) identified as part of the post '9/11' culture of victimisation that swept through the US and, via the discourse of 'terror', across the 'allied' world. Indeed as Sara Ahmed (2004) highlighted in her explicitly anti-psychological analysis of contemporary emotional economies, the coping strategy to ward off traumatic individualisation/victimisation prompted by the Bush government was not only an identification with the nation-state (as the link back into the social), but also consumption. Democratic process thereby equalled business as usual; the market goes on (and, 'credit-crunch' and Obama in power notwithstanding, this model still prevails). This is where 'freemarket

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[44] At a more material level Cameron and Gibson-Graham (2003) have offered some useful reflections on the rhetorics of feminisation within discourses of the economy.

[45] Butler (1997) levels a similar charge to the arguments I develop here against identity politics, making explicit its links to state structures: 'what we call identity politics is produced by a state which can only allocate recognition and rights to subjects totalised by the particularity that constitutes their plaintiff status.' (p.100)

feminism' (in the sense of the discretionary and tactical deployment of discourses of women's emancipation within national and transnational neo-colonial projects of development, Alexander and Mohanty, 1997) meets the feminisations wrought by the dubious political agencies mobilised by consumer participation. The psychological politics of feminisation therefore names a contested and politically charged terrain for feminist antiracist and anticapitalist analysis.

Tuning to the Text: Nagging Nora

In line with feminist calls to account for the process of production of an analysis and its historico-cultural location, including accounting for the position of the analyst, I start by narrating my first encounter with this text. On a trip to London made in late January 2003,[46] when travelling on the underground, I noticed the following image and text.[47]

WHO PROVIDES FEMALE COMPANY FOR FIGHTER PILOTS?

'TARGET IN RANGE', 'INCOMING MISSILE','PULL UP, PULL UP'. NAG. NAG. NAG. NAG. NAG. SPEAKERS HOUSED IN THE FIGHTER PILOT'S HELMET GIVE ADVICE AND INFORMATION IN A CALMING, AUTHORITATIVE FEMALE VOICE. THE PILOTS' NICKNAME FOR IT IS 'NAGGING NORA'. JUST ONE OF THE INNOVATIVE IDEAS FROM BAE SYSTEMS THAT HELP TO MAKE THE WORLD A SAFER PLACE.

The text (all in capitals) occupied only a small part of a page, the bulk of which was shrouded in darkness, with the only figurative matter being the large but dim silhouette of a woman's face bearing a headset. The sole bright colour in the image was the red lipstick, echoed also in the colour of the typeface at the bottom: 'BAE SYSTEMS', underneath which was the by-line 'INNOVATING FOR A SAFER WORLD'.

1. First Impressions

My first response was one of outrage and offence, mixed with fascination. At a moment when the US media were far along the 'countdown' to war in Iraq, this representation of military technology was 'help[ing] to make the world a safer place'. It seemed consistent with the pro-war propaganda that this was a just war, and that making war makes 'us' safer. But this invited the further question of how this representation of femininity was functioning – especially within the constitution of polarised parties of 'us' vs. 'them'. In terms of substitutions, this advertisement was one of a series that I saw on other journeys made on that trip using similar colours and form, which mainly juxtaposed images of nature (a bird with a satellite system, a

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[46] Telephone conversation with the advertisers, Marten Gibbon Associates (MGA), indicated that this was the second time this advertisement series had been run, the first time was in September/October 2002, and the second spanned December and January 2003. The campaign was commissioned in spring 2002 (pers. comm., 8.5.03).

[47] I reproduce this text (and in the oral presentation of the paper, the image) with the permission of BAE systems, secured via Doug Ayers of Marten Gibbon Associates (the advertising agency responsible for this specific campaign). I am very grateful to Doug Ayers for his help in this.

whale with a submarine)[48] with those of (military) technology; and all with the same by-line 'Just one of the innovative ideas from BAE systems that help to make the world a safer place'. But why were London underground users being addressed as though they were the purchasers of a piece of military hardware whose unit cost was scarcely something regular commuters could buy – even if they wanted to?[49]

Before moving into some more detailed analysis, it is important to recall one key point that (significantly) threatens to slip away. 'Nagging Nora' was *not* a woman. Nor was she 'natural' in any shape or form. 'She' was a 'voice-command system'[50]. This 'woman' (as versions of Lacan would put it) does not exist. Like the seductive voice announcing train cancellations at train stations, and the voice of the computer in all four *Star Trek* series, 'she' is a piece of technology   So what does this tell us about the future of feminisation, and our stake in this?

2. A Little Research Later

The analysis presented below first discusses the semiotics of the text, i.e. the meanings mobilised by its textual forms, structure and relations, including the resonances between image and words; and then moves to present some supplementary analysis, situating it within further relevant commentary and including some (culturally privileged) reader receptions, alongside available accounts of authorial intentionality.

2.1: SEMIOTICS OF THE TEXT
The text can be characterised as having visual as well as lexical aspects; while the written text predominates, there is variation in typeface and layout that marks the development of the structure of the 'message'. *Pace* conversation analysis, there is indeed some semblance of turn-taking, with a rhythm of 'call and response' marking the resolution of the question posed at the top ('Who provides female company for fighter pilots?'). The text is structured didactically; posing a question that it provides the answer to and then underscores with a conclusion or 'moral' ('Just one of the innovative ideas from…'). A set of narrative conventions reminiscent of a documentary (with authoritative voiceover) makes a direct address to 'us', the Reader/Viewer, but this then shifts to an action movie scene whereby 'we' are positioned as observers. However (through the absence of attribution of the direct speech) an identificatory shift from third party (observer) status to the utterer of the 'direct speech' is mobilised. While who exactly the speaker is has yet to be determined at this point, by default this resolves upon the 'fighter pilot'.

The absence of quotation marks around 'NAG. NAG. NAG. NAG. NAG' which immediately follow invites a facticity around this attribution. (One person's 'nag' is another's advice or suggestion…).[51] The fact that 'she' is 'nickname[d]' invokes the convention of a collective response of a subordinated group to an unpopular or

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[48] Clearly in this brief description I am not doing justice to the range of associations these other texts mobilised including, for example, how the 'white feather' functions polysemically as both (British) symbol of cowardice and (in the US) as part of the insignia of the US Civil War.
[49] Each one costs between $45-50 million, see *National Defense*, later.
[50] This is unlike (at least in appeal) the woman owner of the large pair of breasts of the *Easijet* advertisement in circulation around Britain during June and July 2003, accompanied by the slogan 'Weapons of Mass Distraction'.
[51] In discussing this text in different national contexts I have also discovered that 'nagging' is a particularly tricky English term to translate adequately. What this says about the specifically British configurations of gender relations is clearly a matter meriting further analysis.

contested authority. Indeed 'NAGGING NORA' is counterposed to the unnamed 'fighter pilots'. But the character of the gendered relations has now changed mode. For contrary to the attraction/comfort/(hetero)sexual attention of 'female company', 'nagging' designates unsolicited and unwelcome communication arising from and/or generating reluctance to comply or engage on the part of the recipient; stereotypically it is the tactic used by girlfriends, wives and mothers to get their menfolk to do something. At stake is the status of the moral imperative; for, on the part of the 'nagger', their 'nagging' arises from a sense of commitment or urgency. Indeed the legitimacy of the 'nag' is confirmed by the 'authoritative' (as opposed to 'subjective') non-'speech' narrative that follows: 'SPEAKERS HOUSED IN THE FIGHTER PILOT'S HELMET GIVE ADVICE AND INFORMATION IN A CALMING, AUTHORITATIVE FEMALE VOICE'. So what is 'nagging' to the pilot is rendered as 'really' 'giv[ing] advice and information'[52]. A discourse of female affirmativeness is at play here, or even female superiority. 'Nagging Nora' tells the fighter pilots what they need to know but don't necessarily want to hear. Her 'voice' is 'calming' and 'authoritative'; she has the moral highground, managerial skills and technical accuracy to identify bad news and convey it without engendering panic. Far from only being the traditionally passive and supportive partner, 'she' is the new woman who is both caring *and* powerful. Thus discourses of female ethical and moral sensitivity, female intuition and women's emancipation become recuperated into military tactical technology.

But alongside this, another set of effects is produced through the discourse of 'nagging'. For the heroic melodramatic genre of fighter-plane combat scenarios ('TARGET IN RANGE', 'INCOMING MISSILE', 'PULL UP, PULL UP') with all its World War II aura of tragedy and grandiosity is abruptly displaced by its juxtaposition with and implied designation as 'NAG. NAG. NAG. NAG. NAG'. The dangers and anxieties of combat have become as routine and mundane as the tiresome chores that one can be 'nagged' to do. In contrast with the 1970s genre of disaster movies, in these postmodern times such scenarios prompt ridicule rather than panic or awe, with the masculinist heroic sacrificial narrative given a sceptical ('come off it'-type) prod in the belly[53]. From trivialising the status of the speaker, the inclusion of the 'advice and information' within the gendered and affective designation of 'nagging' undermines the credibility of its urgency and importance.

Indeed what is at play here is a domestication of war such that the key relationship becomes the tongue-in-cheek gendered power games of ('our') 'home' side, rather than serious antagonistic engagement[54]. The *effects* of the pilot's actions are thus displaced to focus instead on the nagging/gendered relationships within which they are produced. This marks an important move, for the central relationship portrayed is no longer between warring antagonists (those who constitute the targets) – and we should note that there is no mention of orders to *drop* the missiles (since the missiles are 'incoming'), thus maintaining the moral highground of 'defensive operations'. Rather, the war being waged has become commuted into that 'longest war' of men vs. women (a site of conflict that is thereby also trivialised), such that the

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[52] Apparently there is a US version known as 'Bitching Betty'.

[53] The prog rock band of the 1980s, *Queen*, of course, anticipated my arguments here in *Flash Gordon,* by portraying the heroic melodramatic project as constituted and confirmed by heteronormativity, as in 'Flash, Flash I love you! But we only have fourteen hours to save the Earth' - and equally interestingly it is interpellated by the 'woman's' voice.

[54] Note the references to 'light-hearted' in the ASA adjudication discussed later.

outside enemy has all but turned into a foil for more intimate and everyday gendered struggle.

So the feminised imagery works in manifold ways, both connecting personal and political but thereby subverting the focus on the political. The words 'company', 'calm', 'safer' (used twice in relation to BAE), along with implied notions of care and nature, all stand in contrastive relations with the more familiar language of war and combat: isolation, brutality, chaos, terror, (and perhaps 'man'-made) danger. Their assertion in this context offsets[55] the mobilisation of their opposites.

The pilot has 'company', which makes 'him' (or so I interpellate the gendered position of the pilot[56]) 'safer'[57]. The female company not only reassures but also prevents (stereotypically masculine) recklessness and danger. (Ironic shades here of the gendered associations of environmental protection – 'BAE ...for a safer world'.) Alongside all the obvious sexualised imagery[58], one key effect of the heterosexualisation of this pilot/command system relationship is that war is (literally) familiarised, normalised and rendered into work. Mobilised here are the traditional gendered relations of men and women at work, and women in the workplace, as well as women at home supporting their menfolk in work[59]. However, through such engendering, the pilot occupies the infantilised position of the henpecked man that sits well with contemporary discourses of vulnerable (rather than hegemonic) masculinity, and such 'power-sharing' brings women into (what we might call) the war/work game as more active and equal partners. Rather than being oppositional, the traditional position of women as protectors and peacemakers (Enloe, 1988; 2007) now combines with that of protagonist in war. Alongside, or perhaps contrary to, associations to the docility and youth of the shadowy profile with the headset NORA is not a secretary receiving information and orders; 'she' gives them. Does this suggest that women have 'come of age' as equal players in war? At the very least, this allows no easy division between victims and perpetrators. Missions and missiles are no longer only culturally masculine. In a *Matrix*-like reversal, the girlish figure in the headset reminiscent of a telesales assistant or a 1940s film noir heroine is offering more than recreational or banking (or sexual) services. The feminisation of therapeutic culture bolstered by such 'communication technology', with its 'It's good to talk'[60] ethics, displaces its military purpose.

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[55] More on the discourse of off-setting later.

[56] More on this question later too.

[57] There are shades of the discourse of 'safe sex' perhaps in play here – accompanying the crude sexual interpretation of the target/missile talk as erection/ejaculation. For along with the obvious equation between 'female company' and escort/prostitution in the context of war comes a long history of trying to protect the 'home side' soldiers from venereal diseases (and now of course HIV), that positions the 'foreign' women as carriers of disease rather than the soldiers – see e.g. Ware (1989).

[58] Interestingly, discussion of the paper at the POWS conference, at which this paper was first presented, which focused on and considerably extended my appreciation of this, also thereby unwittingly reiterated the main focus of my argument here – concerning how the imagery of feminisation (with associated gendered and presumed heterosexed relations) functions as a distractor from other key material-political relations at play.

[59] Pringle's (1989) Weberian analysis of secretaries applies here.

[60] This is not to underestimate the actual role of British Telecom (BT) within military defence strategy – see e.g. the BT video at 'The Secret Bunker', the now open-to-the-public underground communications and administrative centre kept in preparation throughout the 'cold war' for nuclear war at Hack Green, Cheshire in Northern England.

So war has become work, and business is as usual via the substitution of the central relationship from deadly external enemy to tongue-in-cheek 'affectionate'[61] /'light-hearted'[62] banter with a disparaged colleague. (This perhaps reflects a new buddy movie genre emerging here between man and feminised machine[63]) This analysis extends both in material and conceptual directions. Haraway's (1985) figure of the cyborg explicitly (if also ironically, to counter feminist technophobia) addressed the adaptive androgyny ushered in by contemporary warfare. Further, as Alexander and Mohanty (1997) note: 'new kinds of racial and sexual reconfigurations occur in this era of demilitarisation and Cold War politics, when white masculinity can no longer configure itself around particular definitions of soldiering' (p.xxvi). Thus the racialisation of class inequalities not only brought more black people into the police and armed forces but, as the debates of the early 2000s in the US on 'gays' in the military momentarily disclosed (before being silenced), heteromasculinity in the army could be articulated as in question.

Such readings around the need to secure ambiguities of gender and sexuality mobilised by new military technologies are supported by the text's imagery, where the intimacy of the scene (dark, secret = interior, night?) also personalises the relationships. The soft focus and alluring shape of the youthful, but definitely feminine, face bearing the headset offers the only link (for us/the pilot) across the otherwise dark empty space (that demarcates the plane/frame), with the light/dark contrast also ushering in themes of racialisation. To develop the spatial metaphor some more, the non-place (Augé, 1995) of transit and mission in the cockpit becomes filled as a space of critical relationship and connection, while–correlatively–the 'outside' relationship (of combatants) fades into insignificance.[64]

Crucially, prevailing gender and (hetero)sexed relationships become finally secured only through the reiteration of a nationalist/paternalist narrative.[65] For the only splashes of colour connect the lips of the woman with the BAE logo. Lipstick, especially bright red lipstick, of course signifies sexuality, a conscious (lascivious?) racialised feminine sexuality that confirms white women's freedom and emancipation.[66] Here the intimate place of 'home' stands in relation to an 'away', an 'other' way of life against which war is (thereby justly) waged. The discourse of women's emancipation as a longstanding key imperialist theme is mobilised here: 'Our' women are free; 'theirs' are oppressed. The trope of the veil articulates both the fascination of orientalism and the ugly righteous indignation and incomprehension of Islamophobia (Donnell, 2003). Women in war are like women at peace: in their

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[61] From the Advertisers response to the complaints made to the ASA discussed later: 'The advertisers said that the product was known affectionately as 'Nagging Nora' by male and female fighter pilots'.

[62] Adjudicators' description: 'light-hearted reference to users' perceptions of the advertisers' product' (see below).

[63] As in the films *Screamers, Star Wars, Star Trek, Hitchhikers Guide* and *Blade Runner (Director's Cut)*.

[64] Affiliations to the subjectivity of tube-users that serve the purported effectivity of the ad could be developed here.

[65] Developing Butler's (1997) arguments further (and collapsing the individual-social somewhat!), we might even see war covertly being portrayed as an outlet for the aggression produced through the melancholic foreclosure of homosexual desire: '…the irresolution of melancholia is precisely the routing against the ego of aggression toward the other which is prohibited from being expressed directly.' (p161)

[66] Indeed a more subterranean association I have been able to retrieve is to a Kotex booklet introducing menstruation and 'feminine hygiene' (use of sanitary towels)which – if my memory serves me right – includes a women's shadowy face with red lipstick against a dark background. All of which in this context adds a new twist to the 1970s feminist adage 'war is menstrual envy'…

place. Troubling this imaginary binary were the images of unveiled faces and cropped hair of the Kurdish women soldiers fighting to reclaim Northern Iraq that figured in the western media briefly during 2003-4. African, Asian and Latin American women have always played an active combat role, as Third World feminists have noted (Lazreg, 2001). But while women's participation in national liberation struggles has collapsed the traditional/modern (and indeed public/private) opposition, this has nevertheless reinstated the focus on national identity. By contrast, in the West the imaginary of war itself has become so distanced from a scene of agentic engagement (c.f. Baudrillard's, 1995, comments that the Gulf war did not happen…) that it becomes possible to render invasion, occupation and devastation into a commercial, consumer-related activity as familiar (in both senses) as a telesales transaction.[67]

2.2: CONTEXTUALISING THE TEXT
A little background research offers some further relevant information for the evaluation of the status of this 'product', in its niche as well as its official reception.

A. *Metonymy or Membership Evaluation (as Market Research)*
A rather horrifyingly mercantile feature article on the website of the magazine *National Defense*, dated November 2002 specifically discussing the troubled state of the Eurofighter programme furnished further insights, as follows:

1. Nagging Nora is a feature of the Eurofighter program, composed of a consortium of British, German, Italian and Spanish partners, of which the British partner is BAE systems, and whose largest customer is the (British) Royal Airforce (RAF).

2. This program was subject to difficulties on the grounds of high costs which was threatened its financial viability, and precipitating 'downsizing' orders, with even the Ministry of Defence withholding part of its payments on the grounds of these problems.

3. Sales depend on 'economic incentives, or offsets, to the buying countries'. As Erwin Obermeier, senior vice president was reported as saying to *National Defence*: '"It is all part of negotiation", he said. "What does the country where we sell the Eurofighter really want?' Apart from the old number about military technology creating jobs, what might be new to those of us less attuned to military policy these days is that the 'offsets' extend far beyond explicitly military forms to supporting national economic and intellectual institutions. For the article continues: 'Western countries usually seek to strike a balance between broadening their technological base and giving small to medium-sized businesses and universities a chance to expand their skills, he explained. Offset associated with defence sales does not always involve aerospace technology, Obermeier noted. "It could be automative, even forestry."

(Note how this discourse of 'offsetting' precedes its use in climate change/carbon emission discussions, which perhaps offers a sobering perspective on the relations between war and environmental conservation.) Moreover two other key features emerge from this article:

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[67] This is not to essentialise or romanticise call centre culture and relations. Indeed the very fact that current 'outsourcing' of so much telesales is accompanied by intensive cultural training to enable the even lower paid workers outside Euro-US countries to pepper their conversations with references to the latter's weather and TV programmes (and thereby supposedly become culturally-proficient) precisely reiterates my argument about the fabrication of the space of 'home'.

4. Nagging Nora has nationality (and by implication therefore class) as well as gender: '"She's got a very strong English accent that is very good"' and,

5. Nagging Nora has a(n unnamed) male counterpart who plays a more mundane role: '"There is also a male voice for easy things like non-flight safety critical aspects, but Nagging Nora kicks in when there is something really important"'. ('Eurofighter Battling for Foreign Sales', Feature article, November 2002, http//www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/article.cfm?Id=953)

In brief: defence sales are not military but rather boost economic growth to benefit all civil society. International consortia overlap, but are not coterminous, with national military, and operate within the discourse of the market. Finally, Nagging Nora is the voice command system reserved for 'really important' functions.

B. *Authorial Intention, Reader Reception and Some Production History*

Moreover in terms of questions of authorial intention, reader reception and details of material production history[68], it is relevant to note that the (UK) Advertising Standards Authority received seven complaints about 'Nagging Nora', which they adjudicated upon in January 2003, as follows.

The complainants objected that the advertisement was offensive, because it implied that the only role of women in the field was to nag and that all fighter pilots were men.

Although this complaint was scarcely of the form that mine would be, its treatment is instructive in revealing how feminist arguments are deflected. For it was cast within an equal rights framework that protests women's abilities to be and do like men 'in the field', in which the standard for competence and professionalism is set by that of men and by the terms of such fieldwork. Contesting the form and function of that 'field' is much more difficult to do within prevailing discourses of the law (as a key bastion of liberal individualism) – hence it is easy to understand why the complaint was posed like this. Indeed the adjudication reflected this[69], as well as the usual way that discourses of gender neutrality typically reinscribe dominant gender relations - alongside the old joke about humourless feminists:

> The advertisers said that the advertisement was based on a sophisticated voice-recognition product that interacted with pilots to provide advice and information when in flight. *They explained that a woman's voice was selected for the product because, in tests across a cross-section of pilots, a woman's voice proved the most effective in gaining the pilots' attention. The advertisers … maintained that they had taken care to make no reference to the pilot's gender. The advertisers pointed out that the advertisement did not state that all fighter pilots were men. They maintained that the headline could apply equally to make and female pilots. The advertisers said they believed the advertisement was not sexist. They explained that red lipstick was used because it was the advertisers' corporate colour…* The Authority considered that the advertisement represented merely a light-hearted reference to users' perception of the advertised product. The Authority concluded that the advertisement was unlikely to cause serious or widespread offence'.

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[68] A key methodological precept that cultural analysts, such as Barker (1993), have pointed out.

[69] Which is probably why BAE and Marten Gibbon were keen for me to read this, and indeed specifically faxed me over a copy (which I had already seen anyway).

http://www.asa.org.uk/adjudications/show_adjudication.asp?adjudication_id=
35167&dat…, my emphasis)

Notwithstanding this judgement, it is clear that the absence of explicit gender specification does not mean that this was not read as implied. Female fighter pilots can, presumably, provide their own 'female' company, such that it would be redundant to specify further 'company' according to gender. Indeed the text works in precisely the opposite way: the gendered specification of 'Nagging Nora' as 'female company' works rather to secure the masculine positioning of the pilots who are constituted, through subscription to this appellation, as heteronormatively lecherous and out for 'pick up' material.

Yet to stop here would crucially foreclose the analysis, and to fall prey to precisely the conflation between representation and reality that is in contest. The issue is not whether women 'nag' or not, nor (within a discourse of gender neutrality *or* gender equality) whether women 'nag' other women as well as men; but rather that a voice-command system – in fact even lesser than this designation implies, a voice-recognition product[70] - that is, *not* a woman - has been attributed with the quality of 'nagging'. Such literally gendered identifications cannot only be refused but, further, their constructed and fictive character highlighted. This 'taking' of women's 'voice' is a fabrication that should be exposed as such, rather than merely contesting the form of its femininity.

There was a further sleight of hand at work here, for (apart from 'the [Advertising Standards] Authority') the parties named in this adjudication are 'the advertisers' and 'the publishers' – both descriptors referring to the marketing agency devising the advertising campaign (the London-based Marten Gibbon Associates). The actual company and product at issue somehow managed to escape evaluation, i.e. BAE plc, so that the complaint had to assume a formulation that presupposes the very wedge between signifier (Nagging Nora and the Eurofighter) and signified (advertisement for this) that performative (including discursive) approaches throw into question[71]. As a further twist to this instability of origin points and responsibility, when I contacted Marten Gibbon Associates to seek permission to reproduce this text, they friendly but said they would have to seek permission from BAE[72]. So although it was the 'advertisers' who were constituted as the subject of the complaint, the 'producers' (as the commissioners of the advertisements?) nevertheless were cited as the gatekeepers to their display – an interesting move that defers responsibility for permission-giving elsewhere.

The term 'users' performs a vital slippage in the adjudication discussion, from its current everyday meaning (of consumer or service user); for the 'users' here are fighter pilots or (since at this time this was a programme still in development) 'test fighter pilots'. They were employees of the company, or participants situated *inside* the business (i.e. inside the war machine) rather than discerning, choosing, 'independent' purchasers. Hence the disingenuousness of the phrase 'in tests among a

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[70] C.f. The Advertisers' description reported in the ASA adjudication.

[71] Interestingly, local coverage of this story (first published on 9/01/03) in Lancashire where BAE is developing this system) maintained no such distinction: 'Nagging doubts dispelled. AEROSPACE bosses have been accused of sexual discrimination over an advert depicting their fighter pilots being nagged by a woman… Bosses at BAE are delighted that Nora has been cleared… The company explained…BAE is adamant that the advert was not sexist and explained that the red lipstick had been chosen because it reflected the company's corporate colours'… (http:/www.thisislancashire.co.uk/Lancashire/archive/2003/01/09/LETBUS10ZM.html)

[72] See my note 11 above.

cross-section of pilots' (ASA adjudication, op.cit.). The discourse of 'user as consumer' used within the frame of marketing is as misleading or ambiguous here as to actual agencies involved as within contemporary discussions of the National Health Service (to take another particularly significant example): are we the *market for* the product, the *users of* the product, or (as citizens and tax papers) the *owners of* it?

Similarly, except at the early stages of 'product development', it would seem unlikely that pilots would have a role in moulding or 'choosing' the technology they use. Indeed although the name 'Nagging Nora' is said to originate ('affectionately') from the 'male and female fighter pilots', this convergence of (if not transposition of) subject positioning is what binds the commuters/viewers (as targeted audience), whose labour oils very small cogs within the machinery of the nation state, to its broader project. Thus such campaigns work by virtue of a discourse of participatory democracy that is predicated on personal involvement in the particular characteristics of the (defence) technology we pay for (and that we would be paying for anyway).

Indeed in this last war, perhaps more than any other before, fiction has more truth than home-'spun' fact [73]. By at the end of February 2003 the British broadsheet newspaper, *The Guardian* noted that British taxpayers paid for helping arm Iraq before the last Gulf War to the tune of over £1billion, because Thatcher provided government guarantees to the arms companies[74], a few months later reports of the launching of the Eurofighter programme (which fails to mention 'Nagging Nora') were already heralding it as obsolete in both design and rationale, unreliable, and as having cost more than five Channel Tunnels ('The Russians aren't coming', *G2* Leader, 22/7/03).

It seems, in this cosy flexi-work world of western hetero-professionalisation, that the new mode of public ownership is really consumption (alongside the ways 'transparency', 'consultation' and 'social inclusion' substitute for accountability), and making war becomes market regeneration. Indeed in the UK under the Blair and now Brown premiership, investigations of BAE's shady deals and functioning continue to be suppressed, so indicating significant government involvement in its deals.

Beyond Consuming/Appropriating Women's Voices?

This chapter has come a long way from discussion of discursive approaches and their relations with feminist theory and psychological practices. However a focus on the psychological politics of feminisation, has provided the political and methodological thread of continuity. Through this focus on an admittedly rather extreme (if in some ways rather minor) text ('Nagging Nora'), I hope I have illustrated how discursive approaches can illuminate the problems with ascribing feminisation as an identification, and moreover how and why claims to and about femininity, gender nad gender relations are always also about more than these (involving national and transnational relations).

The rather circular argument that women are succeeding within (thereby) feminised professions, and that their individual success corresponds to, or arises from, some more collective status devaluation, does not prevent those men and women who

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[73] I originally drafted this text even before the revelations (9/05/03) that Donald Rumsfeld was executive director of the company that sold the nuclear capacity to North Korea in 2000.

[74] Racal, Thorn-EMI and Marconi secretly supplied President Saddam Hussein's army with artillery control, anti-mortor radar and secure radio systems, much of which it is believed still to possess. The firms are now subsidiaries of defence giants BAE and Thales. ('UK taxpayers forced to pay millions for Iraq arms', David Leigh and Rob Evans, *Guardian* 28/02/03)

are in structurally inferior positions to those few privileged women from seeing them as 'femocrats'. It would be bizarrely deterministic (and patently inadequate) to suggest that women in powerful positions either have got there as a result of, or else that their presence incites, feminisation. Hence the task is not simply to define and then refuse, but also to explore, how such gendered representations necessarily engage other analyses (of patriarchy, capitalism, heteronormativity, racialisation etc). It is not only all too clear that some women do occupy positions of power in ways that bolster, rather than challenge, prevailing power relations but, here again, the focus on gender may be less relevant than class interests (for example). It is equally important to analyse how women do, and should, wield power.

Power, as Foucault and Butler (1997) and others indicate, is both a precondition for and constraint of subjectivity[75]. Aided by discursive analysis, a critical, feminist politics of psychology refuses the homogenising and abstracting impulse driving notions of feminisation as a particular variant of psychologisation, This repudiation not only highlights specific critical analyses of the role of psychology within the contemporary politics of spurious feminisations, but also destabilises the privilege of professionalised positions to produce an anti-psychological critique that can be deployed by all.

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[75] Indeed Butler (1997) frames some of her argument around Foucault's analysis of the links between individualisation and the state: 'Maybe the target is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political "double-bind" which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures.' (quoted on p. 101)

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12

Critical Discursive Practice In Social Psychology

Ian Parker

Discourse analysis in social psychology was, from the start, a contest over language and definitions of language. It seemed at one point as if the stakes of the argument over discourse in psychology were over the very existence of psychology as a separate discipline (Parker, 2002, 2004). Looking back, it possible to see now that those of us who made a turn to discourse in psychology made a necessary mistake – that is, we argued on grounds that we could not choose, and now we must find a different place for discourse analysis that connects with political practice. If we do not do that, then discourse analysis will have no positive role in some of the new debates about 'critical social psychology' that are appearing inside the discipline. Discourse analysis still provides an ideal opportunity for studying ideology in social psychology, but in order to do that we need to embed the way we understand discourse in an explicitly political theoretical framework, and to find ways of drawing on the political expertise that already exists outside psychology.

Patterns of discourse in capitalist society hold in place chains of demeaning images of human beings divided from each other on the basis of different categories (of class and race, for example). These images are repeated across the many kinds of text we encounter each day – in advertising, television news and mainstream psychology reports – so that we live them out and come to believe them to be true, of others and ourselves (Burman et al. 1996). These images also require certain kinds of relationships between people, the social bonds that confirm to participants that this is the way the world is (and that perhaps it is the way it should be). Discourse working in this kind of way is the stuff of ideology, and 'discourse' is the organisation of language into certain kinds of social bond (Parker, 2005). The question then is how we undo the organisation of language so that certain kinds of social bond are deconstructed and other kinds of social bond can be created.

I will elaborate an argument in this chapter that begins by focusing on the context for the development of discursive research, and then turns to practice. Concerning context, I will first outline key elements of discourse analysis, reframing these elements theoretically so that discourse may be understood as a social bond. I will then move on, second to a more explicit discussion of the 'conditions of possibility' for the emergence of discourse analysis that draws on the work of Michel Foucault, and then, third, examine the effects of empiricist discourse on methodological strategies in psychology. The fourth section of this first part of the chapter is on notions from semiotics that are congruent with a shift of focus from 'discourse' to 'discursive practice'. Then we move on to the second part of the chapter which is concerned with practice, and here first I discuss methodological lines of enquiry that connect discursive research with action research by engaging with ideas from narrative therapies influenced by Foucault's writing. Second, I discuss our responsibility as social psychologists to attend to the role of psychology as a discipline and argue that critical discursive practice as a form of action research must entail action against psychology. The conclusions itemise ten points which draw upon the arguments elaborated in the chapter.

1. Context

I need to explain what I mean by discourse analysis, and then we will be in a better position to follow through the argument in the rest of the paper.

Key elements

I will start by rehearsing four key ideas in discourse analysis that are useful for radical research in social psychology, reframing the way these issues are usually presented in sanitised form for a social psychological audience (Parker, 2005).

First, we attend to the *multivoicedness* of language instead of searching for underlying psychological processes or themes. This attention to the contradictoriness of our experience of speaking and being spoken of runs counter to most standard psychological research. In studies of 'attitudes', for example, the statements in a questionnaire that produce contradictory responses are usually dropped so that there is a clearer discrimination of the sole belief being targeted. For discourse researchers, however, this variability marks points of contradiction that need to be taken seriously. This is where the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) is useful (e.g., Collins 2003). Instead of looking for how one particular word is the same as another, we look at how it is *different*. There is a difference, for example, between the description of someone as 'homosexual' or as 'lesbian', and both descriptions position the self and others as different in specific ways (Kitzinger 1987). We attend to how we are made to fit into certain categories and how are we marked out as different, and how the contradictions in and within the categories work.

Second, discourse analysis focuses on *semiotics*, by which I mean the way we put language together in discussions and other kinds of text (in advertising images, journal articles or student essays) and how we are put together in a certain shape by the language as already organised into discourse. At the same time as we actively form sentences and turns in a conversation, we also have to use words and phrases that carry meanings we cannot entirely control. This is where the work of Ferdinand de Saussure (1974) has been so useful, and where there is an opportunity to study visual images as well as the spoken or written word (e.g., Barthes 1973). The description of oneself or someone else as suffering from 'mental illness', for example, may not only construct an image of the self as a medical object but also construct a certain kind of career through the mental health system. Alternative terms like 'mental distress' might be used to try and avoid this construction (Parker et al. 1995).

The third idea is that of *resistance*. Language does not only describe the world, it does things. Innocent comments may carry a force of blame or complaint or indirect request, for example, but these often deliberate uses of language as 'speech acts' are the very least of the problem for discourse analysts, for the speaker may actually be quite innocent of what discourse is doing. To look at power and resistance in discourse is a way of illuminating how language keeps certain power relations in place or challenges them. This idea picks up ideas directly from Marx (1845) and uses them to reveal how oppression is legitimised or challenged (e.g., Drury 2003). To speak of some small islands near Argentina as the 'Malvinas' or as the 'Falklands', for example, is to disturb or to keep intact taken-for-granted understandings of how the world is. Dominant forms of cultural identity are kept in place precisely by the banal ways the categories are repeated in everyday discourse (Billig 1995).

The fourth idea that is useful for linking the study of multivoicedness, semiotic construction and resistance to power is that of 'discourse' as a chain of words and images. Here we treat 'discourse' as the organisation of language into certain kinds of *social bond*, and each bond includes certain kinds of people and excludes others.

There is something close to this idea in the description of 'interpretative repertoires' as patterns that capture how certain 'social practices' work. Some of the best early work on discourse in social psychology was developed as an analysis of racist interpretative repertoires (Potter and Wetherell 1987, Wetherell and Potter 1992). This then brings us closer to an examination of how discourse functions ideologically, how it presents an oppressive version of the world that may feel suffocating to speakers and listeners, and which shows no way out. For example, a discourse of heterosexuality defines what is deviant, a medical discourse defines what is sick and a dominant patriotic discourse defines what is alien. Within each discourse there are, of course, contradictions, and the way the discourse is constructed in specific texts will mean that it functions in favour of certain power relations, or perhaps against them (see Parker, 2002, 2004, 2005).

Although researchers in the field of discourse analysis often warn against systematizing their approach, because it should be thought of more correctly as a sensitivity to language rather than as a 'method' (e.g., Wetherell and Potter, 1992; Willig, 1999), it is possible to indicate stages that might usefully be passed through in order to identify contradictions, construction and functions of language. We can thus outline a number of 'steps', for example, of which seven will be mentioned here. The researcher is encouraged to (i) turn the text into written form, if it is not already, (ii) free associate to varieties of meaning as a way of accessing cultural networks, and note these down, (iii) systematically itemize the objects, usually marked by nouns, in the text or selected portion of text, (iv) maintain a distance from the text by treating the text itself as the object of the study rather than what it seems to 'refer' to, (v) systematically itemize the 'subjects' - characters, persona, role positions - specified in the text, (vi) reconstruct presupposed rights and responsibilities of 'subjects' specified in the text, and (vii) map the networks of relationships into patterns (Parker, 1992, 2002).

These patterns in language are 'discourses', and they can then be located in relations of ideology, power and institutions. In this way it is possible to appreciate that discourse operates as a social bond, and our task is then to disentangle the different social bonds that are organised by different discourses (Parker, 2005). This concern with social bonds also leads us to see 'discourse' not merely as a matter of language but as a material practice, what we now prefer to term 'discursive practice'. Discursive practice takes us through the 'turn to language' and 'turn to discourse' to a conception of language as materially effective. I want to show how this is possible by reviewing in a little more detail where discourse analysis came from and by giving a brief history of the development of its methodological and theoretical background so that we may understand, to borrow a phrase from Foucault (1980), its 'conditions of possibility'.

Conditions of possibility

Foucault's (1977, 1981) writing is very valuable for the work of critical discursive research, and his analysis of practices of discipline and confession in modern Western society give us some guidelines for how we may understand the realm of the 'psychological' in capitalist culture. It should be said that Foucault (1980) was actually suspicious of the term 'ideology' because it may prompt people to find an essential underlying 'truth' that could be counterposed to its 'false' picture of the world, but foucauldian discourse analysis in psychology now is generally more sympathetic to the ways in which Marxist literary theorists have struggled with the

term 'ideology' and have tried to save it for a reading of texts (Eagleton, 1991; cf. Kendall and Wickham, 1999). Foucauldians would then look at how the organization of language in a culture provides places for the phenomenon to make sense, and at the 'surfaces of emergence' for certain representations and practices of the self (Hook, 2001; cf. Mather, 2000).

If we connect our work with the foucauldian tradition in this way, the approach can function as a bridge to a critical understanding of contradiction, the constitution of the modern psychological subject and its place in regimes of knowledge and power. It is then possible for the researcher to break more completely from mainstream psychology and to view it as a series of practices that can be 'de-constructed', de-constructed in process of 'practical deconstruction' closer to the foucauldian and Marxist projects than to the more liberal forms warranted by much writing inside literary theory and philosophy (e.g., Parker et al., 1995). The conditions of possibility for the emergence of discourse analysis are as fragmented and complex as discourse analysis itself. Discourse analysis reflects (because it did not pop out of nowhere) and, in this broader foucauldian frame, may help us to reflect upon (because it attends to contradiction, construction and functions of theory) the multiple material conditions that made it possible.

Attending to conditions of possibility can help us to capture better the interweaving network of discursive practices in which academic notions come to make sense. It is better than the notion of '*Zeitgeist*', which is often used in US American introductory textbooks to characterise 'the spirit of the age' and the development of fitting forms of psychological theory, because that notion leads us into idealist conceptions of the cultural setting for the emergence of ideas. Foucault's (1980) analysis of 'conditions of possibility' for new discursive practices is more useful for critical psychologists precisely because it does not 'psychologise' culture in the way that notions of shared homogeneous collective mentality in descriptions of '*Zeitgeist*' seem to do. This is important here because the way we tell the story of the development of discourse analysis will frame the way we understand what it is, what it does and what we can make it do. To simply recount a history of ideas can be tempting because it seems immediately accessible.

The conditions of possibility for an event are the interplay of semantic resources and lines of force that render it thinkable and understandable. They are thinkable in the sense that forms of language already render it into a particular shape, already fold it into meanings so that we can hold onto our sense of what it is without being driven into isolation and madness. Madness, as Foucault (1971) argued, is precisely an example in extremis of thought driven out of language, with 'reason' operating as a discourse upon madness which frames it and interprets it, makes it susceptible to what may be reasonably spoken about. Certain conditions of possibility render it understandable in the sense that others are able to employ the same notions, to wield the same words with something approximating to the same effect, but with those effects structured by positions of speaking inside and outside certain institutions. Different forms of reason distribute rights to speak to mad doctors in one institution (a psychiatric hospital for example) and to mental health system survivors in another kind of institution (such as a radical self-help group). System survivors have had to resist mainstream definitions of what it is understandable to say about madness and to physically carve out a space, counter-institutions where counter-discourse may be thinkable (Parker et al., 1995). Counter-discourse, in which new forms of social bond are made possible, is also a function of a broader 'crisis of representation' in Western academic research in the social sciences.

Crises of representation

Discourse analysis was part of a wider movement in different disciplines concerned with crises of representation. There are academic-symbolic aspects of these crises and material-institutional aspects. We can notice that just as discussions of continental European philosophy emerged in the old 'polytechnic' sector, so discursive and critical work in psychology in Britain has taken faster in that sector. To talk of 'conditions of possibility', then, is to include an attention to certain institutional practices and spaces, in which there was greater flexibility in terms of academic boundaries and greater permeability in terms of class boundaries, and this is something which is also refracted through gender and culture. We can reflect on these a little further, and note the way in which discourse analysis emerged as a practice that was 'interdisciplinary' (that is, they question psychology as a discrete discipline) and interested (that is, they are driven by political concerns).

It was *interdisciplinary* in the sense that many different kinds of studies of discourse flowered, cross-cutting and overlapping, so that it was possible now to draw on 'philosophical' and 'literary' ideas while we were supposed to be doing science. An example would be the transdisciplinary play of the Beryl Curt group (e.g., Curt, 1994). It was *interested* in the sense that the study of discourse emerged not for its own sake but as part of political projects of those in different constituencies in higher education who found a place to speak differently and to build on their perception that speaking mattered. An example would be the work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Hall et al., 1980). In recent years feminist psychology has provided a base inside the discipline which has best represented these interdisciplinary and interested aspects of discourse analysis (e.g., Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1995).

The crisis of representation is marked in the shift from speaking of 'representation' to 'signification' (e.g., Henriques et al. 1984). This shift is, at least, one of refusing to accept that the descriptions that psychologists or other social scientists give of the world do actually represent it and of studying instead the way that the descriptions signify by way of their connections to other forms of language, ideological forms of language. However, the depth of the crisis can be seen in the way that this tactical refusal of representation quickly folded into the refusal to believe that any account can more adequately represents the world. This is a position that does present, if not represent, political problems for Marxists and many feminists who want to use discourse analysis for ideology critique (cf. Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). It is here that we need to locate the emergence of the early critical projects in psychology that drew on structuralist and post-structuralist ideas (e.g., Adlam et al., 1977; Henriques et al., 1984) in the context of debates over empiricism and experience in English Marxism (Anderson, 1980). I want to sidestep this particular problem, however, so that I can move to broader cultural conditions of possibility for the way discourse analysis has emerged.

Looking at those broader cultural conditions of possibility does itself raise questions about ideology. I will now describe one crucial aspect of cultural context for uptake of discourse analysis in order to reflect on the specific forms of discourse that construct 'discourse analysis' for us. Now we also see how parochial British debates in discourse analysis have become, and how the 'us' is constituted as one voice which often pretends to be all voices. Here we turn to the role of 'empiricism' in English culture and psychology.

Empiricist discourse

I have referred already to the empiricism of mainstream psychology. Empiricism is the stance that psychologists take against theoretical arguments they do not like, and it underpins the idea they have about the possibility of finding out about the world by examining it and measuring it without any presuppositions. The problem is that anyone who observes the world or other human beings or themselves has to make use of presuppositions that are laced together in some witting or unwitting way in a *theory* of some kind. Empiricism itself, of course, is a theoretical position; it is 'the philosophical pretension to nonphilosophy' (Derrida, 1978, p. 152). One study, which we could actually see as a discourse analysis or study of discursive practice, which throws light on the role empiricism plays, is Antony Easthope's (1999) *Englishness and National Culture*. Here we can see the deployment once again of the notion of 'practice' from the 1980s debates over the role of 'experience' inside English Marxism. What Easthope does is to study the way empiricism operates as a cultural dominant in English culture as a form of discourse.

Discourse analysis has taken root in British social psychology, to the dismay of experimental social psychologists in other countries. But although we might take this hostility to discourse analysis as a sign that we are doing something right, discourse analysis itself does still seem uncannily close to the way Easthope (1999) describes empiricist discourse. You only have to look at discourse analysis studies in psychology journals to see that their transcripts are precisely taken as 'pregiven' and as if they were open to objective study. There are appeals to 'rigour' of analysis which adopt the same claims about validity as mainstream psychology, that is claims about the possibility of direct unmediated analysis that can be shown to be correct.

Easthope pursues the question of what the 'conditions of possibility' might be for this state of affairs, and he accounts for the way that empiricism has survived for centuries as an ideological form in England by locating empiricist discourse in its political economic context: 'One might expect that a culture which has not experienced traumatic disruption since 1660 would retain the structure of its signifying chains unaltered into the present' (Easthope, 1999, p. 28). What this means is that we have to account for the way that the 'crises of representation' that I described earlier were able to operate and what the structural *limits* to the crises were. Easthope's account raises questions not only about forms of discourse analysis that do seem to play into empiricism by obsessively studying turn-taking in transcripts but also about our own studies of discursive practice that we like to think of as escaping empiricism.

This warning draws attention to the dangers of using discourse analysis to 'expose' ideology in capitalist society or patriarchy and of appealing to a 'real' account which we assume is true discourse, and as a consequence producing an account of subjectivity uncannily similar to the subject of bourgeois ideology. This subject is thus thoroughly 'deconstructed' but it is still expected to be an agent of change. This question of cultural context for the reception of discourse analysis is also very important in the case of the translation of European ideas for a US American audience, who like to read Foucault as if he is describing how some individuals intentionally exercise power over others (Parker, 2004).

Discourse analysis as an academic activity would not be possible unless words and images were constantly being reworked and reinterpreted. There are three lines of work on language that are useful to ground the way discourse analysis as a form of critical discursive practice has been described in this chapter. Each of them concerns the way signs circulate in society, and the way people make use of them to create certain kinds of image of what society is (Parker, 2005).

The first is the study of 'verbal hygiene' in which people reflect on language and try to keep it neat and tidy (Cameron 1995). Discourse analysis is a process of reading, which discovers each time, in relation to each text, how it is possible to move from being a passive reader into an active reader. What Cameron's (1995) analysis of 'verbal hygiene' draws attention to is the way that ideology works nowadays to give a further twist to one of its oldest tricks. The simple argument that language is terribly important, and that if we learnt how to analyse it correctly and reshape it all would be well is already old news for many people. Campaigns for clear language on forms, letters to the editor about grammatical mistakes, the correction of accents, scripts for assertiveness, and attempts to formulate politically correct policies are testimony to the success of the message that discourse is important. The old ideological trick is to make people feel as if they are speaking independently just as they wish, and now, as a variant of this ideological trick, 'verbal hygiene is an interesting case of people acting as if they did in fact have total control' (Cameron 1995: 18). This means that discourse analysis needs to include the study of how people police language, and how they become active participants in ideology.

The second line of work concerns how people are called into a position by discourse and how an analysis of images can be useful in showing how that happens. Williamson's (1978) attempt to 'decode' advertisements has lessons for how we might decode all forms of ideological representation (in television, newspapers and films) that ask us to solve a puzzle in such a way that the answer includes the thought that this was meant for you. The positioning of people as members of a category so that they genuinely feel as if they are addressed and able to speak as an active 'subject' is also how ideology works. This is 'interpellation' – defined as a call to a reader of a certain type – and is most perfectly illustrated by the advertisements for lovely kitchens with a white cut-out space in the shape of a slender young woman. If you are such a woman, or would like to be one, or would like to have one in your house, how can you resist answering the puzzle of the advertisement with the reply 'Yes, that is meant for me': in this way 'we are constituted as active receivers by the ad.' (Williamson 1978: 41).

The third line of work concerns the broadening out of analysis to include cultural images that circulate between advertisements, films and newspapers, and which sell to us an idea of what it is to be a good knowledgeable member of a society (Barthes 1973). When we use the term 'ideology' in connection with discourse analysis we do not at all mean by it that there are people who are led into false ways of seeing the world and thinking about it (as those suffering from 'false consciousness') and others who are able to perceive it accurately (as those who have access to the truth). If that were the case there would be no need for discourse analysis, for we could simply tell people what the truth was (maybe repeating it over and over again until they got it right). The problem lies in the organisation of discourse which structures certain forms of social bond, and these are the forms of ideology that we speak and live out in ways that may cause misery to others and ourselves. Barthes's (1973) analysis of

'myth' shows how certain forms of 'speech', in images as well as in written form, drum home the message that 'this is the way the world is'. It provides one theoretical resource for taking discourse analysis further and connected with rhetorical strategies. These semiotic elements indicate how richly textured ideology which maintains contemporary power relations under capitalism is.

Now, with questions of ideology and power on the agenda we come to the question of how we can interpret the world in such a way as to also change it. This is the question of how all our talk about critical discursive practice may really be put into practice.

2. Practice

The two aspects of practice I want to discuss here are first, the connections that we might make between discursive research in psychology and 'action research', and then the way we might turn this action into action against the discipline of psychology.

Action research

Discourse analysis is part of a distinct practice of method that now needs to stretch back to the process of 'data-gathering' and stretch forward to the process of 'data-representation'. In this way we start to connect with some of the concerns of action research (Goodley and Parker, 2000). We need to take care, however, to ensure that 'action' here is drawn conceptually closer to 'practice', and away from appeals to 'experience' and 'empowerment' that are mobilised in much Latin American 'liberation psychology' and 'participant action research' (Jiménez-Domínguez, 1996). One way discourse analysis is 'frozen' is through it operating as a procedure of 'analysis', as if a text could be selected and discourse analysis 'applied' to it independently of specific questions, and as if the process of 're-presentation' of the text could proceed independently of specific answers. This is not only a question of what we put into a text as an actual or supposed author but also what a reader gets out of a text.

This does not mean that discourse analysts should take up the position of 'reader reception theorists' in literary theory however (e.g., Iser, 1978). The notion of 'reader reception' invites us back into a cognitivist notion of the individual as having some sort of interpretative paraphernalia inside their heads that helps them to decode what was happening around them. It also presupposes that there could be a position for a reader that was free of discourse, and that this independent reader would be able to analyse what was going on in the text from an objective standpoint (Eagleton, 1983). Discourse analysts looking to literary theory will find other descriptions in Barthes (1977) work of 'readerly' and 'writerly' texts, of different kinds of discourse that either seem closed and only able to be read or seem open to be *written* as well as read, open to be *changed*. Readerly texts - psychology textbooks, for example - only allow the reader to reproduce them. Writerly texts are open to the reader to participate and transform the meanings that are offered. Some of the ideas from the tradition of 'narrative therapy' may be useful in this respect (Monk et al., 1997; Parker, 1999a).

First, what if we worked discursively right from the *beginning* of the research? Would it be possible, for example, to ask questions which opened up contradictions and possibilities rather than closed things into collections of themes. The 'questioning' procedure of Michael White (1988) is one way of 'deconstructing' the

categories employed in a conversation, in his case a therapeutic conversation. Would it be possible to take that process of questioning up, though not necessarily with therapeutic intent, in order to work with people as participants rather than subjects? Here there is also a question about how 'deconstruction' can be useful. White's work is part of a movement of radical questioning of the way therapy too often locates pathology inside individuals and then turns to individual 'experience' of that pathology as the locus of the treatment. Narrative, or 'discursive' therapy, thus treats the language of pathology as precisely what must be attended to, and the questioning procedure aims to 'externalise' the problem, to locate the pathology as a property of discourse (Monk et al., 1997).

Second, what if we worked discursively right to the *end* of the research? Would it be possible, for example, to bring participants into the analysis of discourse rather than treating texts as abstracted systems of meaning, a procedure warranted by the so-called 'death of the author' in literary theory? How can we produce 'writerly' texts, texts that are accessible and useful to people as part of a process of changing rather than simply representing the world? Would it be possible to work with people who speak to us and help them to 're-author' their own texts? The challenge here is to work the White (1988) questioning procedure into something that takes that 're-authoring' to the point where our research participants are able to develop their own forms of theoretical repositioning in relation to the text (Parker, 2005). The task is precisely to elaborate new forms of discursive practice instead of retreating once again into the dead-end of individual experience.

Discursive practice would then need to comprise the following four aspects. First, discourse analysis should be considered as movement rather than a fixed method, a 'sensitivity to language' that is betrayed if it is reduced to a series of steps. This is something that Potter and Wetherell (1987) have always argued and something that still needs to be taken seriously by those who think they are more 'radical' than them. Second, discourse needs to be considered as part of the problem rather than as automatically a solution to the problems of traditional psychology. To take account of this we need to see representational practices as embedded in other practices such that analysis of one bit of text entails analysis of the texts that provide its conditions of possibility. The analysis offered by Easthope (1999) is one attempt to do this in a way that is relevant to the problems we face in psychology today. Third, the study of discursive practice is always itself historically embedded, something that can be captured in the notion that capitalism is 'textual', trapped in a tension between change, evoked in the phrase 'all that is solid melts into air' (Marx and Engels, 1965, p. 37), and the fixity of commodification and reification. This, of course, opens up possibilities for movement as well as closes down the free play of meaning. Here recent work on the nature of language in contemporary capitalism needs to be taken up and elaborated (e.g., Chouliarki and Fairclough, 1999). Fourth, discourse analysis is always already also something that is carried out *outside* academic institutions, and it reflects, refracts, and replaces modes of reading that already take place in culture. Here we learn from some of the forms of action research that has looked to political action as the key site of psychological processes. Our task then is to reframe and rework discourse analysis so that it is also the analysis of action and change (Burman et al., 1996; Goodley and Parker, 2000).

What we then learn from the debates about 'discursive practice', and the way the notion has operated as a critique of direct appeals to individual experience, is that it is not enough to engage in 'action' without a good deal of theoretical analysis of what

the conditions of possibility are for any form of action to take place. Let us now turn back to the context in which we are elaborating these arguments, social psychology.

Action against psychology

We are using these ideas about practice as critical social psychologists in the context of the discipline of psychology, and so we have a responsibility now turn our attention to the role this discipline plays in the contemporary capitalist world (Parker, 2007a). We should briefly remind ourselves about some key characteristics of the discipline of psychology that social psychologists face, and I am concerned here with the type of mainstream Anglo-American psychology which is currently hegemonic. It is possible to see that contemporary discourse analysis falls straight into the trap of reproducing rather than questioning this psychology.

Psychology itself operates as a kind of 'myth' in commonsense, and it runs alongside a range of exclusionary and pathologizing practices that commonsense justifies as being natural and unquestionable, as semiotic studies of myth make clear (Barthes, 1973). Commonsense cannot be combated with a simple account of what 'reality' is, because our seemingly direct perception of reality is always framed by discourse. Psychology pretends that it is 'realist', but it is actually only so in its own limited empiricist sense of what 'reality' is. Discourse analysts, on the other hand, challenge the way the discipline claims to study 'the real' through focusing on the way that psychological realities are constructed in psychological texts. These texts may be inside the discipline or 'outside' in popular culture. It is possible to analyse the particular qualities of a 'realist' text as something that constructs a sense of the world outside as taken-for-granted without concluding that claims about the world can never be explored and assessed (Parker, 2002). Some of the analyses of visual texts in film theory, for example, have been useful in showing how ideology works through re-presenting something on the screen as if it were a transparent window onto the world (McCabe, 1974; cf. Durmaz, 1999). Psychological reports play the same type of trick when they pretend to provide a transparent window onto the mind, and a critical discourse approach links analyses of these written forms with the visual texts that surround us and which make the reports seem reasonable and commonsensical.

This is why an analysis of psychological phenomena needs to be undertaken alongside an analysis of practices of psychology in Western culture, and then that analysis must extend its scope to the way psychology relays discursively-organised representations of the 'self' through its own practices as part of the 'psy-complex' (Rose, 1985, 1996). It is unwise, then, to appeal to commonsense as an always trustworthy resource to challenge psychology. The stuff of mental life lies in discourse, and it then makes sense to say that we are elaborating an alternative 'discursive psychology'. However, this needs to be argued through theoretically more than methodologically if discourse analysis is to become more than just another method and if it is to contribute to the development of critical psychology (Parker, 1999b; Parker, 2007b).

There is still a good deal of resistance to discourse analysis in the discipline, but it has succeeded in establishing itself in undergraduate courses in some countries and in academic journals and introductory textbooks. Sometimes it even defines what researchers Britain understand qualitative research in psychology to be. This newly acquired status for discourse analysis is a mixed blessing though, and we need to take a few steps further, beyond method, to 'discursive practice' in order to understand what it offers and what it occludes.

First, it rarely includes itself in the phenomena it studies, keeping its gaze directed at those outside the discipline who are assumed to be non-psychologists who are routinely deceived and misrepresented. In the case of much contemporary discourse analysis there is an increasing tendency to focus on everyday conversation. A false opposition is often set up between interviews on the one hand and 'naturally-occurring' conversation on the other to warrant research on what is then supposed to be ordinary talk (e.g., Edwards and Potter, 1992). In a research interview we still, at least, have the option of attending to how the psychologist structures the interaction (and there have been some very good conversation analysis studies devoted to this structuring), including them in the phenomenon being studied. The focus on everyday conversation, in contrast, is complicit with the gaze of mainstream psychology on the activity of others supposed to be non-psychologists.

Secondly, it reduces phenomena to the level of the individual, and this reduction proceeds both downwards from the level of social processes and upwards from the level of physiological functions. There is an increasing focus nowadays on interpersonal interaction. Even though there is often an explicit attention to the interaction as such rather than a search for cognitive processes inside the heads of participating individuals, this focus on interpersonal interaction is still at the expense of analysis of broader power relations (e.g., Edwards, 1997). Rare attempts to embed interpersonal interaction in systems of patriarchal authority, for example, then also necessarily have to break from psychology and from the forms of discourse analysis tolerated by psychology. The focus on interpersonal interaction is actually of a piece with the broader project of psychology, which is to reduce description and explanation to small-scale interaction, if possible to the mental operations of the individuals involved.

Thirdly, it reproduces an abstracted model of behavioural sequences and cognitive mechanisms in which each individual is assumed to operate as a miniature version of the operational forms that define positivist investigation. Again, discourse analysis is unfortunately often complicit with this perspective. There is a focus in discourse analysis now on formal sequences of interaction. These formal sequences proceed regardless of any particular content, and this also means that meaningful context is usually wiped out of the analysis as part of an attempt to avoid an appeal to the real meaning intended by social actors (e.g., Antaki, 2008). This is also the rationale for avoiding ethical complications that might arise if interpretations are given to participants who may disagree with what is said by the discourse analyst about what they have said. This focus on form at the expense of content repeats the endeavour of so-called scientific psychology to replace meaning given to situations by people with mechanistic and often dehumanising re-descriptions of their behaviour and hidden cognitive mechanisms.

Fourthly, it often pretends to merely describe human activity, but this description requires a degree of declared or surreptitious interpretation that prescribes a correct version of events. And, if we turn to discourse analysis, we find there as well a focus on the correct explication of talk. Despite the repeated invocation of ethnomethodological principles concerning members' own sense-making, conversation analysis proceeds by way of a detailed re-description of talk using a specialist vocabulary that translates a complicated transcription of interaction (e.g., Atkinson and Heritage, 1984). Other forms of discourse analysis that aim to discover 'discourses' or 'repertoires' proceed in much the same way, replacing the actual text with a theoretical re-description which also functions as an interpretation. This is very

much in keeping with psychology's reinterpretation of behaviour in terms of cognitive mechanisms or paraphernalia in some other particular vocabulary.

Fifth, it subscribes to a form of objectivity, fake neutrality which obscures the enduring role of personal, institutional and political stakes in the formulation of research questions (Parker, 2007a). This also brings us to the fifth problem with discourse analysis, which is that there is a studious avoidance of politics. This avoidance ranges from the claim that a researcher should not talk about power in their analysis of a text if the issue of power is not actually topicalised there, to the rhetorical strategy of warding off political questions by insisting that these are not part of the research and might be dealt with in another academic department (e.g., Hepburn and Wiggins, 2007). This sub-disciplinary specialisation in discourse which seals off that domain of work from other areas of work fits all too neatly in the confines of disciplinary segregation that psychologists want to keep in place, and it is the ground for the pretend 'neutrality' of psychological research.

Critical social psychologists, including many colleagues in discourse analysis, do aim to address the problems that we face in mainstream psychology by asking the following questions: How is 'psychology' produced as a commonsensical resource for individuals to make sense of themselves and others and of possibilities for changing social conditions? How are social processes reproduced and maintained at the level of interpersonal interaction and individual experience, at the level of 'psychology'? How are patterns of activity structured to replicate power relations regardless of and even despite the immediate intentions of an individual 'psychology'? How can theoretical articulation of the place of individual 'psychology' and social structure be developed to provide some critical distance from ideology? How can research into the political functions of 'psychology' operate in such a way as to maintain a degree of autonomy of activity and experience from political interference (Parker, 2007b)?

Conclusions

I suggest that, in the light of the foregoing arguments about the development of discourse analysis and its place in relation to psychology we reformulate the task of critical discursive practice in social psychology as follows.

Instead of focusing on the 'everyday conversation' of others, we should focus on the way psychology itself is reproduced, and so we need to (i) focus on the use made of psychology in the public domain, and (ii) focus on the reproduction of the conditions in which psychological explanations come to assume importance. That is, we need to reflexively question dominant forms of knowledge and our own inclusion in those dominant forms. Against discourse analysis that focuses on everyday conversation, then, we turn the gaze back onto psychology and the ideological forces that give rise to it. Instead of focusing on interpersonal interaction, and still less delving into people's heads to discover their intentions, we need to (iii) show how power relations are reiterated in the interpersonal realm and (iv) show how ostensibly individual processes are mobilised by wider networks of power. That is, we question notions of motivation or stake as explanatory devices, turning instead to how performances maintain the positions of those who speak, listen and interpret. Instead of explicating formal sequences in conversation, we need to (v) show how formal devices are injected with particular content and (vi) show how formal devices are resignified in different social contexts. In this way, we show how symbolic forms operate as part of a historical process, and how formal devices carry the weight of history, repeating and transforming social conditions. Instead of providing an

ostensibly correct explication of discourse, we need to (vii) learn from the way actually-existing interpretations and re-interpretations contest versions of reality and (viii) attend to contested spaces in which there is struggle over the nature of correct explication. This means working with antagonistic and open forms of discursive practice that question any closed consensual ideological systems of meaning. Instead of fitting in with the disciplinary segregation that psychology usually reinforces, we need to (ix) show how politics frames psychological work and (x) show the ways in which the process of psychologisation in contemporary society is profoundly political. This means connecting apparently individual affective responses to symbolic material with political processes.

These proposals raise the political stakes of discursive work in critical social psychology to create antagonistic discursive spaces, to resignify existing ideological forms to show how power relations are reiterated at every level of the social bonds that structure relationships and experience, and so contest the conditions that make disciplinary apparatuses like psychology and forms of modern subjectivity possible (Parker, 2005, 2007a). Then it might be possible to elaborate an alternative way of working with discursive practice which is also, necessarily critical of discourse analysis in social psychology today. This kind of analysis does open up points of connection with radical studies of ideology, and a way of connecting academic research with already existing action research, with the activity of people who are already challenging the way they are positioned by language, how they are subject to discourse.

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EPILOGUE

Discourse Study: A Movement in the Making

Kenneth J. Gergen

For traditional social psychologists, a rapid scanning of discourse studies might yield little of interest. With the lack of hypothesis testing, experimental methods, and statistics, they might ask, how is this science? In fact, however, discourse study harbors assumptions that, when fully unfolded, pose a radical challenge to this very tradition and revitalize science in important ways. The study of discourse, as represented by the participants in this volume, is scarcely a tepid extension of traditional social psychology to a new arena of behavior. Rather, there is either articulated or implied here a major critique of hypothesis testing, experimental research, and statistical analysis, and an opening to a rich array of alternative forms of inquiry. Indeed, at fundamental issue in these chapters may be the basic conception of the person and of social knowledge. In this closing chapter I first wish to elaborate on the vital significance of discursive inquiry, both in psychology and cultural life more generally. There is much at stake here, and continuing reflection is essential. I then wish to reflect on critical challenges now confronting the discourse movement. I consider a number of issues that must now be addressed in order to approach a full maturing of inquiry.

Discursive Inquiry and the Social Construction of Knowledge

As widely recognized, the practices of contemporary social psychology are largely grounded in early 20th century philosophy of science. However, during the latter third of the century, new and highly confrontational lines of scholarship emerged, in not one, but simultaneously in many quarters of the academic world. As they began to amalgamate and multiply, a major intellectual movement could be discerned. This movement - variously identified as postmodern, post-empiricist, post-foundational, post-structural, and social constructionist - desiccated the rational foundations for scientific inquiry, redefined the concepts of knowledge, truth, and reason, and by implication invited a major refiguring of social science inquiry. This is not the place for a detailed recounting of these various lines of scholarship, their growth, and their interpenetrations.[76] However, such scholarship does give rise to three lines of argument that deserve brief recounting. In effect, they grant to discursive inquiry a prominent place in the emergence of a new social science.

The Democratization of Truth

A pivotal presumption within empiricist philosophy of science is that theoretical propositions (typically in the form of research hypotheses) can be affirmed, corrected, or disconfirmed through unbiased observation. In effect, through empirical research, it is believed, one can abandon specious or fanciful accounts of reality, and approach a condition in which scientific language corresponds with the true state of affairs. Scientific research thus leads ineluctably toward transcendental truth, that is, truth beyond culture and history. While a promising presumption on the surface, it is

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[76] For further explication, see Gergen (1994).

noteworthy that the problem of determining how the two registers – world and words – could actually correspond with each other was never solved. For example, should each item making up "the real world" correspond with a different word? And if this were the case, in what manner were the items in the world to be divided? By individual atoms, classes, configurations? Would we require then a separate world for every atom making up the material world? And are we to understand the world in terms of single words, or in terms of phrases or propositions? What are we to make, as well, of non-observables, such as "gravity," "energy," or "acceleration?"

The correspondence view began to unravel with the publication of Quine's (1960) trenchant work, *Word and Object*. As Quine demonstrated, among other things, the meaning of any word is dependent on its context of usage (i.e. a "bat" means one thing in a baseball game and another on a camping expedition). Thus, the relationship between words and objects is fundamentally indeterminant. And, while the possibility of an objectively accurate account of the world – beyond culture and history – was thus in jeopardy, an alternative to correspondence theory was taking shape. This alternative was articulated most persuasively in Wittgenstein's (1953) groundbreaking work, *Philosophical Investigations*. For Wittgenstein, words do not function as maps or pictures of the world – as suggested by correspondence theory. Rather, they acquire their meaning through the way in which they are used in social interchange. For Wittgenstein such usages are embedded in conventional or rule-governed practices, or "language games." Language games, in turn, are embedded in more general "forms of life." Thus, the language of physics reflects the particular conventions of speaking and writing within this community, and these conventions are, in turn, constituted within the research practices of the science. On this view, there are no words that transcend social tradition in their account of the world. We can only describe the world within the games of language in which we participate. (See also Parker, Chapter 12, on the "crisis in representation.")

Now, on the one side, Wittgenstein's account does allow one to make limited claims of descriptive accuracy. Accuracy in description can be achieved so long as there is community agreement about the "rules of the game." In the tradition of psychology, one can be very accurate in assessing IQ level; in the game of tennis, one can be equally as accurate in assessing whether a ball is "in" or "out." But accuracy in all such cases depends on whether agreements can forged within particular communities of practice. Thus, psychologists may carry out extended research on aggression, for example, but without public agreement that what psychologists term aggression in their laboratory experiments is what they mean by aggression on the street or battlefield, then psychologists views are largely irrelevant. There is no rational means by which any group can claim truth, beyond the agreements that they share among themselves. For many social psychologists, the traditional truth-making pursuits thus lose significance.

From Observation to Construction

Removing all claims to a privileged link between truth claims and their referents generates an acute sensitivity about such claims. Who is making them, for what audiences, and with what intent? And, very importantly, what is the relationship of such claims to what is the case? On the traditional empiricist account, scientific knowledge depends on astute observation of the world as it is, uncluttered by biases of any kind. Or ideally, the world should dictate our accounts of it. Yet, we have already seen that whatever exists makes no necessary demands on how it is

represented. What then is the function of direct observation of the world? In what sense, if any, can observation function as an unbiased ground for knowledge claims? It is against this backdrop that we can appreciate the significance of late 20th century history of science and sociology of knowledge. Most prominent here is the impact of Thomas Kuhn's (1962) famous work, *The structure of scientific revolutions*. As Kuhn persuasively argued, scientific research inevitably proceeds on the basis of shared "paradigms." That is, scientists work within communities that agree on an array of premises- about the nature of the subject matter, how it should be studied, the character of various measuring devices, and so on. In this sense, research findings are generated within a community, and sustain its own particular traditions. This argument was used by Kuhn to criticize the presumption of linear progress in scientific investigation. When science sheds a given theory of the world – for example, moving from an Aristotelian, to a Newtonian, and then a quantum theory of physics – we are not moving steadily toward the Truth of physics. Rather, we are shifting from one paradigm of understanding to another. Each paradigm can create support within its premises. Each may be evaluated in terms of what it achieves. We may learn more as we move across the centuries, but it is not a movement toward Truth so much as an increment in our options for action. Progress becomes a matter of pragmatics, and what is useful for one community may not be for another.

What can be said, then, about the presumption of unbiased observation as a basis of knowledge? If we follow the implications of the Kuhnian proposals, we find the individual scientist is no longer a neutral observer, impersonally scanning the world as it is. Rather, the scientist cannot ask a question of nature outside his or her existence within a communally shared paradigm. The point is not unlike the earlier argument for one's inability to intelligibly represent the world outside the confines of a language game. However, in this case the emphasis is not on the naming of the world, but on observation: the belief that experience can directly reflect the nature of the "thing in itself." As we approach the world from within one paradigm or another, it means that our practice of scanning will be affected. We will not approach with an "evenly hovering gaze," as Freud would have it, but with what Popper (1981) characterized as a "searchlight." One will be looking for something. Believing is seeing.

Consider, for example, the observations of psychologists attempting to understand human behavior. If I am a behaviorist, I focus on cause-effect contingencies. Thus, observation of an individual's behavior in itself is insufficient; behavior is simply an effect for which independent causes must be isolated. My gaze thus falls on the systematic relations between environmental events and subsequent behavior. If I am a humanist, who believes in the experiencing agent, these concerns will be replaced by a focus on the individual's explanations of his actions, and particularly his accounts of motives, feelings, and himself. Yet, as a cognitive psychologist, neither context nor content will be demand my attention, and I will be drawn perhaps to the category structure embedded in the individual's language. In effect, what we observe is never unbiased; experience is deeply colored by the assumptions we bring to the situation. Each language constructs the world of observation in its own terms.

Now, let us expand the domain of "what we bring." As argued by Foucault (1980) among others, all forms of discourse are saturated with the values of those traditions from which they spring. To embrace a discourse is to invite participation in a way of life, and potentially to seal off a community from alternative voices. Discourse and social power are intimately linked. From this standpoint, critique of the

dominant discourses of society are essential. The same may be said of the discursive conventions making up the field of psychology. These too are saturated with particular values, lending themselves - as many believe - to an individualist ideology, capitalist economics, and top-down control of the social order. With the empiricist assumptions of "one truth," there are also strong tendencies toward a narrowing of perspectives. The shift from behaviorism to cognitivism - with the simultaneous exclusion of psychoanalytics, hermeneutics, phenomenology, and humanism - provides but one example. From a pragmatic perspective, such tendencies are counter-productive. If scientific progress is not a march toward truth, but a matter of increasing potentials for action, then maximizing our "ways of seeing" is imperative. In effect, by illuminating   discursive conventions, the researcher liberates us from mindless recapitulation of existing traditions, and opens a space for generating and expanding alternatives.

From "What Is" to "What Could Be"

A third intellectual development concerns the cultural function of the sciences, and most particularly the social sciences. Consider: the natural sciences have traditionally been devoted to understanding the fundamental nature of the natural world. It is further presumed that there is an underlying order to nature. Or in Einstein's terms, "God does not throw dice." Thus, scientific understanding will enable human beings to predict and possibly control the outcomes of the natural order. The concept of *research* bears out these assumptions: one searches and returns to search again, with the presumption that each return can increase our understanding of the fundamental order. The social sciences have fallen heir to such assumptions, with vast efforts thus devoted to exploring what are often characterized as fundamental psychological and social processes. Yet, as we have seen, all research is born within some tradition of intelligibility, and will inevitably reflect the assumptions and values of its participants. Or, in effect, the sciences do not map the order so much as construct the world in their terms. And, as discussed, the critical questions to be asked of the sciences concern the consequences of such constructions.

There is no doubt that a major consequence of much scientific research is an increment in the human capacity for prediction and control. Advances in Western medicine and the generation of atomic energy are only two illustrations. As noted, these increments are pragmatic in nature, and have nothing to do with "fundamental truth." However, unlike the natural sciences, the interpretive constructions generated within the social sciences can be and often are communicated into the larger society. Scientific intelligibilities enter into the constructions by which people live their daily lives. For example, constructions of "social class," "IQ," and "mental illness" are commonly accepted realities, thus influencing the existing forms of life – for good or ill. Such concerns have long been central to critical theory scholars. However, more generally it may be said that the search for fundamental nature of cultural life is chimerical; the very attempt to characterize human action can alter the subject matter. The attempt to chart "what is the case" about cultural life should be supplemented with a robust investment in creating viable futures. In effect, we move from science as a charting of "what is," to its role in creating "what could be."

As may be surmised from this brief account, discourse study takes on a position of prominent importance. If human action depends on the shared constructions of reality, rationality, and value, then these constructions demand major attention. Patterns of social action in themselves become secondary, as they depend on the

primary process of social sense-making. Or, one might say, attention shifts from documenting social "objects in themselves" (e.g. aggression, altruism, prejudice) to the ways in which we collectively construct the reality and value of these "objects." Further, to illuminate the discursive constructions of the social world, is to lay the groundwork for social change. Interest shifts from documenting contemporary social life, to liberating society from socially oppressive and divisive assumptions. The misleading mantel of scientific neutrality can be cast away, in favor of passionate investments in creating the future. Social critique comes to play a pivotal role in social science inquiry. It is thus, in the preceding chapters, that authors illuminate existing forms of discourse, develop critiques of existing traditions, and lay the groundwork for social change. In brief, discourse study represents a vanguard movement in the social sciences, one that undermines existing ontologies, alters the conception of knowledge and the aims of research, while inviting creative cultural transformation.

The Maturing of Discourse Study

This is, of course, a highly idealized vision of the potentials of discourse study. And to be sure, the chapters making up this volume do show great promise in these directions. This is indeed a lively collection, replete with scholarly passion, interpretive sophistication, and creativity. At the same time, while enormously promising, I feel that the domain of discourse study is far from reaching its full potential. Such work has surely opened new doors, but the palace remains largely unexplored. This comment does not stand as a critique. When laboring at the edge of understanding, progress is necessarily tentative and faltering. In this context, however, I now wish to consider a range of challenges that, in my view, stand between us and the full maturation of discourse study. As a precis to this discussion, I do wish to acknowledge Bozatis' excellent introduction to the discursive terrain (Chapter 1). In this chapter, he outlines a range of currently existing schisms within the domain. I bring this chapter to light at this point, because it might suggest that the existence of such schisms is an indicator of the immaturity of the field. On the contrary, however, most of these clashes are not only signs of active scholarly inquiry, but a healthy pluralism. For example, that discourse can be viewed both as an outcome of micro-social process and as an outcome of history and institutional power dynamics, is not a contention that a mature discipline must resolve. These are differing perspectives (or discursive traditions), each with its own insights and implications. The field would be bereft if either were abandoned. The same may be said for the difference between those who hold to a psychological (e.g. psychoanalytic) as opposed to a micro-social view of communication. Although each view renders the other irrelevant, both orientations have their own advantages (and shortcomings). In what follows, however, I point to six challenges to what may be viewed as the full maturity of the field.

In the Throes of Realism

As outlined above, as we come to understand knowledge as socially constructed, the study of these constructions becomes a compelling topic for research. Such study brings our commonly shared conceptions of reality into question, gives us pause for reflection, liberates us from the taken for granted, and opens up options for alternative forms of life. However, in my view a coherent constructionism also recognizes the limits of its own accounts, not only the limits of its arguments for the social construction of knowledge, but of the constructed character of its own research

endeavors. In this sense, the constructionist roots of discourse study invite a certain humility and self-reflection. Of course, not all authors in this volume might wish to ally themselves so closely with a constructionist metatheory. This is reasonable enough, but if a discourse researcher wishes to cling to some form of realism, there are significant challenges to be confronted. If an investigator attempts to demonstrate that a particular set of reality posits are essentially reflections of a discursive conventions (thus undermining their legitimacy), on what grounds can the investigator exclude his or her own research revelations from this charge? Discourse study is no less limited by an "interpretive repertoire" (Wetherell, Chapter 6) than experimental social psychology. Ultimately, discourse analysis has no way of eliminating its own discourse as a subject of analysis. As Wetherell admonishes Schlegoff, internalist critiques within the discursive community are illegitimately oppressive.

In my view, the humility and openness that are invited by this self-reflexive move are too little demonstrated in the chapters making up this volume. Parker's (Chapter 12) critique of the empirical claims so often found in discourse and conversation analysis is a welcome exception. Wetherell's (Chapter 6) attempt to bring otherwise conflicting accounts of discourse analysis into an eclectic synchrony is another. To be sure, the analyses themselves must employ realist discourse to make their point. Virtually all attempts to make oneself intelligible will "make real" a world of some kind. However, it seems to me that in a mature field of discourse study, the analyst would not terminate discussion with the empirical account itself. Rather, there would be included a "moment of self-reflection," in which the contingent character of the analysis would be made clear. More importantly, such a moment might give rise to considering other perspectives and the possibilities for mutually shared concerns. Such a shift in orientation would be particularly relevant to the critical penchant of many of the chapters (especially Parker and Burman, and Wetherell). While their critiques are highly compelling, critique in itself generally functions as a distancing device. By implication, the targets are vilified, and if they bother to pay attention at all, will typically respond with enmity. The ultimate result of such analyses, untempered by self-reflection, can be the undoing of dialogue. In my view, with the maturing of discourse study, more self-reflexivity and dialogic inclusivity would become manifest.

Positioning the Subject: Fools, Villains, Connivers, and Lemmings

Closely related to the preceding, self-reflective attention should also directed to the ideological or political shortcomings of discourse analysis itself. A critic might well ask, for example, whether such analyses are not elitist; are they articulated in such a way that anyone outside a privileged circle of scholars can understand, reflect, reply, or take action? There is also the question of whether these analyses may, in the end, be politically conservative. As one might argue, the energy and sophistication that might be used more directly in the service of social change are siphoned off by a form of research that will be read by few and rapidly disappear into the archives. Yet, there is a more commanding issue that concerns me here, related to the way in which discourse research so often treats the subjects of study. On the one hand, most discourse work destroys the authenticity and content of communication among interlocutors. Rather than taking seriously the content of what people say to each other (e.g. "my love, "my political opinion," "my explanations for my actions"), discourse study often converts the content to a series of pragmatic, and ideologically problematic maneuvers. The specific content is dismissed as unimportant. Further,

while many critics (see Diaz, Chapter 3) have faulted experimental social psychologists for defining their subjects as foolish automatons, pawns of heredity and environment (while themselves remaining autonomous thinkers), discourse study often functions as well to position the subjects of their research as:

Fools: They do not realize that their utterances are mere constructions, that they do not carry truth, that they are cobbled together from disparate traditions, and that their confident rationalities are merely rhetorical.

Villains: Through their utterances, they are subtly seeking power, seeking ascendance over others, and exploiting the less privileged.

Connivers: They are cunningly using language, planning, plotting, and selecting just the right words to achieve their ends in the conversation.

Lemmings: They are aimlessly repeating longstanding ways of talk, adapting to whatever the other is saying, without critical reflection or creativity.

In part, such problems in constructing the subject emerge from the empiricist tradition of research from which discourse study continues to borrow. From this tradition, one presumes a subject/object binary, with the observer-scientist on the one side and the object of observation (the speaking or writing subject) on the other. This kind of presumed distance in the social sciences (wherein *I as scientist* describe what *you as subject* are doing) invites the kinds of diminishment just described. Essentially the scientist is positioned on the favored or privileged side of the binary. Here I find an affinity with Parker's (Chapter 12) discussion of collaborative inquiry; in our view a fully mature domain of discourse study would be expanded to include the subject in the process of inquiry. Rather than studying the way *others* speak and write, they might be brought into dialogue about their actions. What do they mean, what are they trying to accomplish, what are they avoiding, and so on? Some discourse analysis – particularly in the narrative tradition – does indeed attempt to give voice to marginal or oppressed people in society. With more in the way of a good faith or empathic hermeneutic, research might become increasingly collaborative. In this way it might open the possibility for multiple interpretations, expanded illumination, and generative dialogue.

Beyond Discourse: Bodies in Context

Although pivotal in the construction of meaning, a focus on spoken and written language is quite is limited. As Potter (Chapter 5) makes clear, it is ultimately essential to expand such study to include the broader context in which such exchanges occur, along with the full bodily actions of the interlocutors. To be sure, most discourse researchers draw importantly from Wittgenstein's metaphor of the language game. However, the broader *forms of life,* in which Wittgenstein placed such games, is generally obscured in contemporary analysis. As any seasoned actor will attest, the implications of any spoken phrase (i.e. its potential meaning or illocutionary force) are seldom given in the phrase itself. It is the tone of voice, the facial expressions, and the bodily movements of the actor that will send them in one direction or another. It is not *that* something is said, but *how* it is said that matters. Nor should the focus on bodily movements be limited to these "non-verbal expressions." One must consider the full array of actions associated with the linguistic exchange. College cheers at a football game may often urge their team to "vanquish," "bury" or "destroy" their opponents; yet, do such cheers have the same implications (meaning) as of an Islamist crowd shouting "death to the Western dogs?"

Similarly, what we draw from a given utterance will depend significantly on the context in which it occurs. Words uttered in private, for example, may have entirely different implications than those spoken in public, if for no other reason than the fact they are publicly observed. Nor should the concept of context be limited to the here and now in which utterances or writings occur. As Bakhtin (1981) makes clear, the implications of any utterance depend upon what has preceded within a dialogue. By the same token, we may extend the temporal horizon into the distant past. The phrase, "we shall overcome" draws its meaning not simply from the immediately preceding dialogue, but from historical conditions far removed. To be sure, the use of filmed recordings may enrich the analysis of a given discursive exchange. Although impossible to carry in the pages of a printed book, some conversation studies do rely on film. However, even film is limited by its truncated visual focus and the necessity of segmenting the present exchange from its temporal past. How much can be taken into account, and for what purposes remains an open question, and one about which discussion should continue. In the meantime, these limitations provide all the more reason for a humility in interpretation, and for broadening the participation in interpretation to include those in question.

The Challenge of Theory

For most discourse researchers, there is reluctance to link one's inquiry to a particular theoretical perspective. Even in the one chapter that attempts to link discourse study with an overarching theory (Hollway, on psychoanalytic theory, Chapter 9) the resistance is noted. Such reluctance should not be surprising. Recall that traditional social psychology, committed to "testing theories" through research, is lodged in the empiricist view of reseaerch as a progress toward truth – in the form of generalizable theory. However, if such theories are social constructions, and the data used in their support are essentially constructed in their terms, then testing theories is a futile practice. Thus, there is a tendency in the discursive domain to remain focused on what people say or write, using minimal analytic tools for description, and a minimalist pragmatics for explanation (See, for example, Potter, Diaz, Antaki, and Wetherell). While reasonable in these respects, this alienation from theory is not without its costs. For one, there is little way of linking together various projects of inquiry. Researchers can successfully sustain segmented lines of research without ever taking into account the work of others, or seeing how various endeavors might be related. At this point, for example, there is all too little communication among scholars carrying out narrative inquiry, critical discourse analysis, and conversation analysis. And, in avoiding broad theoretical conjectures, it becomes difficult to communicate with social scientists outside the discourse realm. This is not to say that the particular concepts within discourse studies have been constrained in this way. Indeed, the concept of narrative (Gergen and Gergen, Chapter 7) has united the efforts of researchers across the social sciences and humanities. However broad explanatory theories, even if socially constructed, can often be used to link various academic fields, as well as the academy to realms of practice.

There is also a substantial need for extending and exploring the implications of various conceptions already pervading discourse work. All such work, for example is concerned with human communication. And yet, there is little attempt to articulate a theory of communication, especially of the kind that would justify the research practices themselves. As noted in these chapters, there are also significant tensions in how such a theory might be molded. On the one side, chapters by Hopkins and

Reicher, Harre and Mohagaddam, and Hollway, would wish to hold on to a world of individual subjectivity; chapters by Billig, Potter, and Antaki could see little value in a dualist account. Yet, as Hollway (Chapter 9) observes, such monist theories have little way of accounting how interlocutors are "moved by language." The discursive psychology orientation developed by Potter (Chapter 5) and his colleagues, does represent a positive move toward a full-blown theory of language use. Along similar lines, I have elsewhere attempted to outline a relational account of communication (Gergen, 2009), one that locates meaning within the coordinated actions (verbal or otherwise) of persons in relationship. From this standpoint, meaning is not to be found in individual utterances, but depends on the coordination with supplementary utterances of the interlocutor. In effect, meaning is co-constituted within the coordination of the speaker and listener. Whether such a theory can unify discursive pursuits remains to be seen.

From Representation to Reconstruction: Language in Action

Many of the present chapters are deeply invested in social change. They are concerned with issues of gender representation (Burman), the psi-complex (Parker), human understanding and respect (Hollway, Harré and Moghaddam), and more. In this sense, much of this work may be described as idealistic: there is vision of a future that exceeds or transcends our current condition. From a constructionist perspective, such investments are indeed welcomed. The aim of research is not, in traditional terms, to represent the Truth, but to provide "truths for some purpose." And such purposes are invariably linked to realizations of future goods. Yet, one must ask, are the forms of research represented in this volume realizing the full potential in terms of social change? If they are concerned with social betterment, are they effective means of achieving it?

Here I am not entirely sanguine. For the most part, discourse research is published in scholarly books and journals. Of course, this is a long-esteemed tradition, borrowing significantly from the empiricist tradition in psychology. Yet, the outcome of this process is of questionable significance in terms of social change. Papers continue to be published, visibility is minimal, scholars may or may not read, and the chief result is the publication of more papers. In my view, the social potential of discursively oriented activities can only be achieved if scholars are willing to move beyond this deeply entrenched pattern. And, I do believe that within the logics of the discursive orientation can be found good reason for such exploration. Parker (Chapter 12) makes this clear in his attempt to link discourse study to action research, and particularly forms of social resistance.

However, avoiding the risk of becoming "language police," attention should also be given to developing new and more "actionable" forms of discourse. For example, in the area of conflict reduction, there is great need for creative forms of discourse and dialogue that can bring otherwise hostile parties into some form of mutual understanding. Inroads have been made in this direction (discussed in Gergen and Gergen, Chapter 7). But the field is very much open for development. Likewise, dialogic practices are needed for purposes of communal and organizational change. There are beginnings (see, for example, Cooperrider and Whitney, 1999), but the creative attention of discursively oriented scholars would add significantly. In sum, to reach maturity in terms of social efficacy, it would be useful for scholars to shift their attention from reporting on existing patterns – possibly in decay - to creating new forms of relational life.

Social Psychology: Separation vs. Integration

Finally I wish to consider the challenge of relating discursive inquiry to traditional, empiricist social psychology. In my view the viability of the discursive movement hinges on how this issue is addressed. As the chapters of this volume attest, much of the drama of discursive psychology lies within its oppositional stance to what most regard as mainstream social psychology (if not, psychology as a discipline more generally). This opposition is not only conceptual -as in the chapters by Potter, Gergen and Gergen, and Billig, all of which tend to deconstruct mental predicates - but ideological as well (as represented most strongly in the chapter by Parker (Chapter. 12). Further, as discussed in the chapters of Hopkins and Reicher (Chapter 2) and especially Hollway (Chapter 9) there is active resistance to integrating traditional social psychology and discursive study. Yet, in my view it is a mistake to create a small enclave of discourse researchers, with their fires stoked through self-righteous critique of the Other. The study of discourse is itself too limited a goal for the field; it has insufficient grounds on which to build an independent field of study. And if the history of ethnomethodology can furnish a lesson, there is the ultimate danger of growing irrelevance. Further, if one takes into account the constructionist roots from which much discourse study emerges, there is no reason for strong separation. After all, discourse study is itself a discourse-dependent activity, one that constructs a world in certain ways, for good or ill according to one's tradition of values. In spite of its well-taken critiques of empiricist social psychology, there is nothing that renders discourse study inherently superior to any other form of inquiry in the social sciences.

In saying this, I am not making a case for integrating orientations. The chapters by Hollway (Chapter 9) and Hopkins and Reicher (Chapter 2) do illustrate how mutual enrichment may occur. However, the search for a unified science is chimerical, and artificial homogenization obscures what should be recognized as significant tensions. At the same time, if we view psychology primarily in terms of its potential offerings to society – that is, as pragmatic as opposed to truth seeking in its aims – we open the door to dialogue. In spite of its shortcomings, it is not that empiricist social psychology has nothing to offer the society either in terms of its empirical offerings or its ideology. And while such dialogue should explore the pragmatic potentials of various methods, theories, and research foci, matters of value and politics should surely be included. The aim in this case should not be that of fixing the parameters or aims of "the field," so much as surveying the resources, and creating new amalgams.

Conclusion

In my view, discourse study in social psychology represents a radical departure from the traditional investments of the science. Emerging from powerful challenges to traditional empiricism, and congenial with a constructionist orientation to knowledge, this is indeed a bold, refreshing, catalytic, and enormously rich movement, with profound implications for the future. Concepts of positioning, narrative, liberatory analysis, constructions of identity, gender representation, interpretive repertoires, and the like, have swept across the social sciences, and spawned an enormous body of literature. This is a young and robust movement, but whether its full potentials are realized depends importantly on how we understand the current investments – their

strengths and their limits. As I have proposed, there are significant challenges ahead for the discursive movement. However, given the intellectual vitality and professional passion manifest in the chapters of this volume, I am highly optimistic.

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