



Abstract Discursive psychology is defined and illustrated in terms of how people describe and invoke emotions in everyday talk and text. Materials from counselling sessions and newspaper texts show how emotion descriptions are used in narrative accounts and explanations, both in building and in undermining the sensibility of a person's actions. It is suggested that, rather than stemming from fixed cognitive scenarios that define what each emotion word means, emotion discourse deploys a flexible range of oppositions and contrasts that are put to service in the situated rhetoric of description and counter-description, narrative and counter-narrative. The rich variety and situated uses of emotion words and metaphors suggest a set of rhetorical affordances in which different parts or potentials of meaning, even contrasting ones for the same word, may be worked up and deployed. The article works with a tentative list of 10 rhetorical contrasts.

Key Words conversation, discourse, discursive psychology, emotion, rhetoric

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Emotion Discourse

Discursive Psychology

Discursive psychology applies the theory and methods of discourse analysis to psychological topics. The kind of discourse analysis that is used here derives from ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, linguistic philosophy, rhetoric and the sociology of knowledge (Billig, 1987; Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). It has been applied mostly to how versions of reality and cognition are assembled in discourse of any kind, ranging from formal scientific papers to everyday conversations. This concern with cognition and reality has taken the form of critiques and reformulations, as kinds of discourse practices, of various standard psychological topics, including attitudes, memory, the self, causal attribution, script theory, personality traits, categorization, prejudice and cognitive development.

Discursive psychology takes two kinds of approach to such topics. One approach examines how people talk or write about psychological

kinds of issues. So, we examine how people report and account for events they have taken part in, heard of, or witnessed. This provides a discursive purchase upon the kinds of issues that traditional psychology studies, under topics such as event memory and causal attribution. But the overlap is partial. There is much to the psychology of memory, for example, that is not concerned with event reporting, although there is not much in the psychology of memory, given that scientific texts are also within its scope, to which discourse analysis cannot in principle be applied (Edwards, Middleton, & Potter, 1992). At the same time, the study of everyday event reporting cuts across conventional psychological categories, joining together traditionally diverse areas such as memory and causal attribution, and introducing issues not typically confronted in those fields, such as accountability, variability across versions, the action-performative nature of everyday accounts and the ways in which factual descriptions of all kinds are assembled and used, on and for the occasions of their production.

The other approach that discursive psychology takes is to examine how 'folk' psychological concepts are actually used. Ordinary language users possess a rich vocabulary of psychological concepts which are an integral part of everyday discourse. Rather than treating these concepts as inadequate, inconsistent, pre-scientific ideas that need to be replaced by proper studies of the mind or brain (Churchland, 1988; Stich, 1983), discursive psychology investigates their nature and uses. This links discursive psychology to other approaches to language-in-use, including conceptual analysis, or ordinary language philosophy (Button, Coulter, Lee, & Sharrock, 1995; Coulter, 1990; Harré & Gillett, 1994; Wittgenstein, 1958), social constructionism, including cultural ethnography (Lutz, 1988; White, 1990) and historical and contemporary cultural psychology (Gergen, 1994; Harré & Parrott, 1996; Stearns & Stearns, 1988), and conversation analysis (Edwards, 1995a; Heritage, 1984; Sacks, 1992). The approach taken to everyday psychological concepts is that these are the bases on which people, for better or worse, actually describe and account for things. They are not concepts that need to be tested to see if they are accurate representations of the real life of the mind. Their empirical basis is discursive; their uses can be recorded and transcribed, and we can analyse them. If people use them inconsistently, indexically, rhetorically, then that is precisely what we need to study. It is one of the foundational principles of discourse analysis that variations in how concepts and versions are produced, on and for particular occasions, are precisely the basis on which discourse performs actions.

The emotions are often defined, both in professional and in lay

psychology, in contrast to cognition and rational thought. They are conceived to be natural bodily experiences and expressions, older than language, irrational and subjective, unconscious rather than deliberate, genuine rather than artificial, feelings rather than thoughts. However, rather than adopting and using such categories and contrasts, discursive psychology examines empirically how they are invoked, and what kinds of discursive work such invocations perform. The discourse of mind and emotion is first of all a participants' discourse, and it is rich and various, full of contrasts and alternatives, and marvellously useful in working up descriptions of human actions, interpersonal relations, and in handling accountability. This article focuses on various uses of emotion discourse in interpersonal relations and narrative accounts.

Emotions are not only *contrasted* with cognitions (whether rational or not), both in 'folk' and in professional psychology, but there are also cognitive theories of emotions, and indeed cognitive models that virtually do away with, or explain away, emotion categories altogether. But there are also emotion-based explanations of cognition, of what people think, what they think about, and why they think one thing rather than another (because of envy, jealousy, prejudice, obsession, etc.). At stake in both lay and professional psychological discourse, therefore, are not only the distinct uses of various emotion terms, but also the status (in English at least) of 'the emotions' as a superordinate and explanatory category (Edwards, 1997). A major theme of discursive psychology is the rhetorical design and use of emotion categories.

Examples from Counselling Discourse

I want now to introduce three short conversational extracts in which emotions are invoked, in order to gauge the kinds of discourse phenomena we are dealing with, and how we might start to analyse them. Extracts 1–3 are from relationship counselling sessions, with two different married couples and their counsellors. The transcripts use the conventions established for conversation analysis by Gail Jefferson (see Atkinson & Heritage, 1984).

Extract 1 (DE-JF:C2:S1:4)¹

- 1 *Connie*: At that poi:nt, (0.6) Jimmy ha- (.) my-
- 2 Jimmy is extremely jealous. Ex- extremely
- 3 jealous per:son. Has a:lways ↓been, from
- 4 the da:y we met. Y'know? An' at that point

5 in time, there was an episo:de, with (.) a
 6 bloke, (.) in a pub, y'know? And me: having
 7 a few drinks and messin'. (0.8) That was it.
 8 (0.4) Right? And this (0.4) got all out of
 9 hand to Jimmy according to Jimmy I was
 10 a:lways doin' it and .hhh y'know a:lways
 11 aggravating him. He was a jealous person
 12 I: aggravated the situation. .h And he
 13 walked out that ti:me. To me it was (.)
 14 totally ridiculous the way he (0.8) goes o:n
 15 (0.4) through this problem that he ha:s.

In Extract 1 Jimmy's 'jealousy' is descriptively built by Connie, both directly and evidentially, in terms of his recurrent actions. This establishes it not only as a reaction that occurs on particular occasions, but as an enduring feature of him, something he 'has always been from the day we met' (lines 3–4). According to his wife, Jimmy possesses a deep-rooted personality disposition (not just jealous, but a *jealous person*), which is both extreme and enduring. It has been so 'from the day we met', which places it prior to any current marital difficulties they are having. Connie thus provides an enduring basis *inside* Jimmy ('this problem that he has') that accounts for their marital difficulties, which include his outbursts of unjustified anger, and the recurrent 'arguments' or 'fights' which both of them describe (see Edwards, 1995b, 1997, for further details and analysis).

In Extract 2 Jimmy is approaching the end of his own extended story of the same episode in the pub, and has reached a point where various people, including the 'bloke' with whom Connie was 'messing' (Extract 1, lines 6–7), have come back to their house after leaving the pub. Jimmy's version of events contrasts with Connie's (which she also develops in greater detail), by depicting his actions as understandable reactions to her (persistent) provocations.

Extract 2 (DE-JF:C2:S1:12)

1 *Jimmy*: Uh: I was (.) boiling at this stage and
 2 I was real angry with Connie (.) And
 3 uh went up to bed 'n (.) I lay on the bed.
 4 (0.7) °got into bed.° (0.6) I- uh (.) could

- 5 hear giggling ('n all that) downstairs and
 6 then (0.5) the music changed (0.5) slow
 7 records. (1.2) And um: (1.2) >and then they
 8 changed to slow records< (0.8) I could
 9 hea::r (1.0) that Connie was dancing with
 10 (0.2) this blo:ke downstairs. (1.0) And
 11 Caroline turned round and said (.) something
 12 (.) about it (it was wha-) it was oh Connie
 13 look out I'm going to tell (.) Jimmy on you.
 14 (1.0) And (.) next thing I hear is (.) °what
 15 he doesn't know (doesn't) hurt him.°
 16 (0.2)
 17 *Counsellor:* °I'm sorry?°
 18 *Jimmy:* What he: doesn't know: doesn't hurt him.
 19 (0.8) Soon as I heard that I went- (1.6)
 20 straight down the stairs. (0.8) 'n uh (0.6)
 21 threw them out. (1.2) Took Connie up the
 22 stairs and threw her on the bed. (1.6) I kept
 23 trying to ru:n to jump out the window. (1.6)
 24 But y'know: I I couldn't. (.) I couldn't (.)
 25 get myself (0.4) to go out. (.) I couldn't
 26 (.) do it.
 27 *Counsellor:* So that's what you felt like.
 28 *Jimmy:* Oh ye:h.

Jimmy narrates his emotions and actions as the understandable result of sustained provocation by Connie over the course of a long evening. Both its sequential placing in the story, and the expression 'at this stage' (line 1), identify Jimmy's 'boiling' anger as following a series of provocations. His anger builds up event by event (lines 1–2, 19–26), as a reaction to events; 'at this stage' and 'soon as I heard that'. The extremity of Jimmy's response, including an aborted leap from an upstairs window, serves as an index of the extremity of that provocation. Not only does the failed leap from the window display the

genuineness and intensity of his emotional state, but its self-destructive nature would also detract from any alternative category that might arise here, such as that of a bad-tempered wife-beater. The counsellor (Extract 2, line 27) picks up its indexical import as evidence of how Jimmy 'felt', and Jimmy confirms that (line 28). The upshot is that these are not actions that tell us about him as a person; they are *reactions* to provocations by Connie, which tell of the emotional states he gets into through having a wife who behaves badly. So Connie's depiction of Jimmy as problematically and extremely jealous *by nature* (see also Edwards, 1995b) is countered by Jimmy's detailed narrative, whose rhetorical force is to provide an alternative specification of events, as a sequence of provocation and understandable reaction. A narrative of emotional reactions can be used, therefore, not only to undermine rational accountability, but also to establish it.

Extract 3 is an item from a counselling session with a different married couple, Mary and Jeff. Mary is some way through her first telling of what brought them to seek counselling, and she has arrived at the point where (according to that story) she decided to tell her husband about a recently ended affair.

Extract 3 (DE-JF:C1:S1:4)

- 1 *Mary:* (. . .) so that's when I decided to (.)
- 2 you know to tell him. (1.0) U::m (1.0)
- 3 and then::, (.) obviously you went
- 4 through your a:ngry stage, didn't you?
- 5 (.)
- 6 Ve:ry upset obviously, .hh an:d uh,
- 7 (0.6) we: started ar:guing a lot, an:d
- 8 (0.6) just drifted awa:y.

Mary provides, as part of her story, an appropriate time and place for, and specification of, Jeff's emotions on hearing about her affair with another man. He was 'angry' (line 4) and 'very upset' (line 6). Note how these descriptions characterize Jeff's reactions *as* emotional rather than, say, as having come to a damning but rational appraisal of Mary's actions and character. Emotions are worked up descriptively rather than being simply the way things were, prior to description. But the details I want to focus on here are 'obviously' and 'stage'. The 'obviously' normalizes, and somewhat endorses, those emotional reactions as expectable, and sequentially proper within the story as told.

Mary is displaying (here) an understanding, uncritical position on Jeff's reactions (though elsewhere, and soon after, she is more condemnatory).

The phrase 'your angry stage' employs a notion of anger as a temporary state with its proper occasions and durations. It is a description that sets up various possible narrative and rhetorical trajectories. For example, while Jeff's anger is proper in its place, one would not expect it to go on forever, to endure unreasonably, beyond its 'stage'. Mary has made rhetorical room for something she goes on to develop, which is the notion that Jeff's reactions are starting to get in the way of progress, starting to become (instead of her infidelity, as Jeff insists) 'the problem' they have in their relationship. Indeed, the *next thing she says* in her narrative (and implicationally, therefore, what not only follows but follows *from* Jeff's reactions) is how 'we started arguing a lot, and just drifted away' (Extract 3, lines 7–8). Their problems are now joint ones, arguments, and a kind of non-agentive, non-blaming, 'just' drifting apart. The implication that Mary develops in her subsequent discourse is that Jeff's reactions should end at some reasonable point. His 'stage' is already past tense ('you went through your angry stage, didn't you?') and he starts to become accountable for continuing to be 'upset'.

I have glossed in a condensed way quite a lot of what is going on between Jeff and Mary, rather than producing all of that through an analysis of further extracts from their talk. This is in order to succinctly point up the kinds of interactional business that emotion talk can perform. Emotions and cognitions (and the differences between them) are not just sitting there, as events per se, or as features of Jeff's thought and action, waiting to be reported on. 'Anger' and 'upset' are *descriptions* that, first and easily missed, can be used to construct reactions *as* reactions, and *as* emotional ones, rather than, say, as something like coming to a view or an opinion. One of the uses of such talk is that emotions such as 'anger' and getting 'upset' permit talk of stages, of temporary inflammations of the passions, rather than the more enduring states of mind we might expect of things like judgements, conclusions or beliefs, or even 'the way things were'—events themselves. Similarly, emotion categories provide for rational (sequentially understandable, in Garfinkel's sense) accountability, though they can also be worked up in contrast to rational thought, to label behaviour as spontaneous and sequentially incoherent (unjustified by events), and even to pathologize it.

I have emphasized the *flexibility* of emotion discourse in providing the sense of events, of states of mind, and for managing issues of

accountability. This is one of the advantages of examining emotion discourse *in use*, rather than relying solely on conceptual analysis or idealized cognitive models (e.g. Lakoff, 1987; Wierzbicka, 1992, 1994). Consider, for example, the notion that emotions lend themselves to talking of temporary rather than enduring mental states. The point is that this is *a way of talking*, and that it can (but need not) be constructed and used on occasions. There are alternative categories of emotion that seem conceptually to lend themselves to more enduring dispositional statements, and imply that something more cognitive and analytical is going on; jealousy and resentment, for instance (Coulter, 1986). However, there appear to be no strict constraints here. We can talk of *dispositionally* angry, jealous or fearful (timid) people, and, conversely, of sudden pangs of jealousy or resentment (even if we use 'sensation' words such as *pangs* to do that (Coulter, 1986, pp. 123–124). Emotion categories provide a flexible resource for situated discourse, including the potential for rhetorical opposites and contrasts, rather than a set of semantic templates, or fixed scenarios, that will mean or imply the same things about actors and events whenever used.

Emotional Scenarios

Part of the intelligibility of the contrasting stories that are produced by couples in counselling lies in the construction of *scripted event sequences* in which the various emotion descriptions are rendered coherent as parts of normatively intelligible actions, or else stand out as deviant and unreasonable (Edwards, 1994, 1995b; cf. Smith, 1978). The link between emotions and scripted scenes or 'scenarios' is one that recurs not only in everyday talk and counselling discourse, but also in psychological and anthropological theories of emotion (Gergen, 1994; Lakoff, 1987; Lutz, 1988; Russell, 1991; White, 1990; Wierzbicka, 1994; see Edwards, 1997, for a critical review of cognitive-linguistic approaches). This is the notion that emotions can be defined and differentiated in terms of the standard kinds of event sequences (or cognitively represented event sequences), or dialogue sequences, in which they occur. Rather than focusing on standardized scenarios and their cognitive representations, discourse analysis focuses on how specific stories are constructed on and for their occasions, including the ways in which links between emotions and scenarios can be discursively worked up and made relevant.

Within any language the terms available for talking about social accountability, action and reaction, thought and emotion, and so on, are likely to be a set of contrasts and alternatives (Josephs, 1995; cf.

Saussure, 1974): this reaction rather than that, this mental state rather than that. We can expect such a patterning in terms of contrasts and discriminations from the basic 'action-performative' principles of discourse and rhetoric.

This is also a feature of anthropological studies which focus on analysing situated talk (Lutz, 1988, 1990a, 1990b; White, 1990). For example, while drawing on notions of cognitive and cultural scenarios, Lutz (1990b) notes, with regard to the Ifaluk word *song* (roughly, 'justified anger'), that 'the everyday understanding of this emotion does not simply occur as a form of reflection on experience, but emerges as people justify and negotiate both cultural values and the prerogatives of power that some members of this society currently hold' (p. 204). Rather than analysing talk in terms of a set of events prior to their description, a standard cognitive scenario that represents their sense, and an emotion word that expresses it, one of the functions of emotion discourse is to *work back upon the nature of prior events*, and constitute them as events of a certain kind (Buttney, 1993). Thus White (1990), in an ethnography of Micronesian emotions, notes that 'when Tom asserts that the banishment of his brother made him *sad*, he is implying, in this context, that the rejection is an instance of a certain kind of social action—one that damages close relations, that is, the sort of thing that evokes *sadness*' (p. 60). So a 'sad'-oriented *reporting* of events is also *itself* a kind of social action that performs indexical work on the reporter: 'he implicitly claims that his response of telling off the offending parties was an attempt at withdrawal rather than some kind of "angry" getting even' (White, 1990, p. 60).

A key feature of emotion discourse is its deployment in *narrative* and *rhetoric*. Emotion terms occur not merely as one-off descriptions of specific acts or reactions, but as parts of interrelated sets of terms that implicate each other (syntagmatically) in narrative sequences, and also (paradigmatically) in rhetorically potent contrasts between alternative descriptions. Narrative sequence and rhetorical contrast are *ways of talking* about things, ways of constructing the sense of events, and orienting to normative and moral orders, to responsibility and blame, intentionality and social evaluation. Emotion *categories* are not graspable merely as individual feelings or expressions, and nor is their discursive deployment reducible to a kind of detached, cognitive sense-making. They are discursive phenomena and can be studied as such, as part of how talk performs social actions.

Emotion discourse includes not only terms such as *anger*, *surprise*, *fear*, and so on, but also a rich set of metaphors, such as Jimmy's 'I was boiling at this stage' (Extract 2). The notion of 'boiling' belongs to a set

of anger metaphors, mainly to do with heat and internal pressure, that Lakoff (1987) and others have identified in American English, and that Lakoff traces to the emotion's bodily experience and physical manifestations. Emotion metaphors can be considered *conceptual resources* that, where they occur in any language, whatever the metaphorical base, are available for discursive deployment. The concepts of anger as bodily heat, pressure and agitation, for example, provide for a range of expressions such as (from Lakoff, 1987, pp. 381–385): 'hot under the collar', 'burst a blood vessel', 'losing his cool', 'a heated argument', 'red with rage', 'hopping mad'. Then there are associations with distorted vision: 'blind with rage', 'see red', 'so mad I couldn't see straight'. Some metaphors are based on bodies imagined as strained containers: 'filled with anger', 'brimming with rage', 'bursting with anger', 'bottled up', 'outbursts', 'exploded'.

This is only a small part of anger's metaphorical thesaurus. But as well as raising questions about their conceptual origins, as Lakoff does, it is also useful to inquire into their discursive uses. The various metaphors are not equivalent and interchangeable, even those that are closely related, such that we should consider the grounds for choosing one rather than another, and what kinds of discursive business such choices may perform. Apart from heat, pressure and container metaphors for anger, Lakoff (1987) lists madness, struggle and dangerous animal metaphors. While it is possible to devise conceptual relationships between all these, they also have their own narrative implications and rhetorical uses. 'Contained heat' metaphors such as 'boiling with rage' are unlike wild animal metaphors such as 'bit her head off'. Gibbs (1994) suggests that different anger metaphors encode different parts of a complex cognitive model, suitable for use on different discursive occasions. For example, note that 'bit her head off' is explicitly active and object-directed, while 'boiling with rage' is more passive and experiential. The choice between such alternatives is useful for constructing alternative narratives of causal attribution and accountability.

Indeed, the point of all those alternative metaphorical expressions is, surely, to enable certain things to be *said* and not just *thought* (Edwards, 1991), such that the proliferation of metaphors may be motivated not only by their conceptual sense (as suggested by Lakoff, 1987, and Gibbs, 1994), but by what they allow us to say and do. Jimmy's 'boiling' anger, for example, *formulates it as extreme*, and plays a nicely timed part in his narrative of a gradually building emotional state ('at this stage'), with its 'boiling' extremity an index, as we have noted, of the extremity of Connie's provocations. Jimmy's selection of this 'heat-

and pressure-building' metaphor performs interactionally significant narrative and rhetorical work, building his role in events as passive and induced, rather than active and culpable. Also, specifying anger in such graphic (experiential and visual) detail provides the kind of warrant, the kind of document of experiential recall, of 'being there' (Geertz, 1988), that bolsters the validity of all kinds of stories and descriptions when they are in danger of being countered (Edwards & Potter, 1992). In order to develop this notion of how emotion concepts and metaphors may be designed and selected for their deployment, we need to examine them in use, and preferably in spontaneous use ('natural discourse'), rather than in scenarios invented to illustrate our semantic intuitions.

Emotion Concepts and Their Rhetorical Uses

Emotion words provide conceptual resources that permit discursive uses, but empirical studies reveal a flexibility and rhetorical organization that semantic or conceptual analyses underestimate. Conceptual analysis is necessary in that it aims to clarify what words mean, rather than proposing theories of their referents. Thus, the difference that 'ordinary language' philosophers draw (Ryle, 1949; Wittgenstein, 1958) between 'emotions' and 'sensations' helps rid us of too close an association between emotions and subjective mental or bodily experiences (Bedford, 1962), and points us towards the moral nexus of action and accountability, and therefore towards what people are doing when they *use* emotion words. Yet the meanings and contrasts involved in everyday and professional 'emotion talk' are also matters for empirical analysis, rather than matters to be legislated in advance of it. For example, while emotions can be conceptually distinguished from sensations in how they take 'intentional objects' (we are not just afraid but afraid *of* things), one of the rhetorical uses of emotion words (e.g. Connie's discourse of Jimmy's jealousy) is to focus on inner feelings *rather than* the events in the external world that they are directed at, just as talk of emotional reactions (Jimmy's story) can also be a way of specifying the nature of the events that provoke them.

Models of word meanings, whether semantic, etymological, monolingual, universalistic, cognitively modelled or derived from conceptual analysis, tend to aim for *coherence*, as if the word's meaning was always that whole package, scenario and all, and it all gets wheeled out for use on each occasion. But the rich variety of emotion metaphors, and empirical studies of discourse, suggest something more like a set of *rhetorical affordances*, in which different parts or

potentials of meaning, even contrasting ones for the same word, may be worked up and deployed, on and for occasions. This conceptual and rhetorical flexibility (cf. Averill, 1990), although plainly a nuisance to semantic and cognitive model-making, is ideal for the action-performing, accountability-oriented, rhetorical 'witcraft' of discourse (Billig, 1987).

On the basis of a variety of empirical materials in which emotion terms are used, I have listed the following set of rhetorical contrasts (Edwards, 1997). These are not definitions of what emotion words 'mean', neither generally nor for individual words. Rather, they point to a range of things that emotion discourse can do, in narrative talk and text. They are not a definitive or discrete set. I am not proposing that there have to be ten of them, for instance, nor that they ought to lead towards some kind of formal model. Their interrelatedness and flexibility are important features of how they work.

1. *Emotion vs cognition*: as a participants' discursive resource. Actions and mental states are *described* as such, formulated as thoughts, opinions, emotions.
2. *Emotions as irrational vs rational*: emotions are not just irrational. They are an integral part of rational accountability: e.g. Jimmy's pathological jealousy, vs his understandable responses to Connie's activities; cf. the indignant anger of Ifaluk song (Lutz, 1990b).
3. *Emotion as cognitively grounded and/or cognitively consequential*: Ifaluk song, and Jimmy's 'soon as I heard that . . .' imply prior cognitive assessments. Cognitive *consequences* are insights and understandings stemming from emotional experiences.
4. *Event-driven vs dispositional*: e.g. Jimmy's justified and reactive anger vs his dispositional jealousy.
5. *Dispositions vs temporary states*: Jimmy as an enduringly 'jealous person' vs 'I was boiling at this stage' and Jeff's 'angry stage'.
6. Emotional behaviour as *controllable action or passive reaction*: the notion of emotions as 'feelings' that are 'expressed' or 'acted out' lends itself to a dichotomy between how someone felt and what they did about it, and to the notion of controlling one's passions, and so on. Having emotional reactions can usefully be split into how you unaccountably feel, and what you accountably do (Jimmy's 'I didn't hit you').
7. *Spontaneous vs externally caused*: the fact that emotions take 'intentional objects' provides for ways of assigning causes: being angry at something can imply being angry *because* of it. But there is rhetorical scope for 'internal' and other causes to be induced: 'I can

- be . . . angry *at* little things *because* I am suffering from dyspepsia, where to know its object is not thereby to understand its cause' (Coulter, 1986, p. 129).
8. *Natural vs moral*: unconscious, automatic, bodily reactions vs social judgements. Rather than these being parts of a comprehensive analysis of emotion terms, they can be selectively worked up and used.
 9. *Internal states vs external behaviour: private* ('feelings') *vs public* ('expressions', 'displays'). A person's 'true' emotions can be those avowed on the basis of personal experience, as privileged reports from the inner life of the mind (Buttny, 1993), or else ascriptions based on overt behaviour, which may be adduced to refute such avowals.
 10. *Honest* (spontaneous, reactive) *vs fake*. Emotional reactions, particularly when offered as reactive and immediate, provide for a narrative and rhetoric of honest expression, contrasted either to cognitive calculation or to a fake, insincere acting-out. The concept of emotions as basically honest and spontaneous responses relates to the popular assumption, and experimental research finding, that body signals can betray the true feelings of people who are trying to disguise them. Underlying emotions and attitudes may 'leak' past a person's more consciously controlled gestures and words (Ekman & Friesen, 1969). But the possibly contrary status of emotional displays, as artificial performances, provides scope for description and counter-description (Edwards, 1997).

These oppositions and contrasts are used discursively to construct the nature and causes of events, and (thereby) to manage accountability. They may be used in various combinations. For example, the public-private dichotomy may be used in relation to active-passive and honest-fake. Thus, 'true' emotions may be those avowed from private experience, denying any impression based on superficial appearances. But such confessions might also be treated as fake, on the grounds that they contrast with actions (which proverbially 'speak louder than words'); or again, actions may be treated as insincere when they conflict with (ascribed) inner feelings.

Grief and Sentiment for Princess Diana

As an illustration of these kinds of rhetorical-narrative concepts, I shall briefly examine some textual materials taken from a larger study of press reports following the death of Princess Diana (see also MacMillan

& Edwards, 1999). This was an event that produced a huge public reaction and interest in Britain and elsewhere, together with intense media interest in the extent of public emotion. Part of the press's concern was to handle and manage its own potential culpability in Diana's death, its role in the employment of the 'paparazzi' photographers who, it seemed, may have been directly to blame. Extract 4 is from an editorial in the *Sun*, a popular tabloid newspaper, the day after Diana's death.

Extract 4 (The *Sun*, 1 September 1997, p. 10; original headline capitals)

- 1 **DON'T BLAME THE PRESS**
- 2 **THE SUN SAYS**
- 3 In the depths of his grief, Diana's brother
- 4 is entitled to be bitter about her death
- 5 At such a harrowing time, we can
- 6 understand his emotional outburst

The *Sun* was responding to a news broadcast in which Diana's brother Earl Spencer, referring to the apparent role of the photographers pursuing her car, had said: "I always believed the press would kill her in the end."² Of interest here is the use of emotion descriptions in the *Sun*'s editorial, the way that Spencer's 'grief' is not merely something to report, nor indeed any kind of controversial statement about him, but a basis for disagreeing with his judgement. Spencer had not offered his assessment of the press as an expression of grief. Indeed, it was something he had 'always believed', where 'always' places his judgement prior to the trauma of his sister's death (cf. Connie's depiction of Jimmy's enduring jealousy, 'has always been, from the day we met'); and 'believed' defines it cognitively, as judgement rather than feeling. The notion 'always believed' projects the relevance of some kind of observational basis or grounds for that belief. In contrast, the *Sun* defines Spencer as speaking out of deep emotion.

Furthermore, the emotion he speaks from is *grief* rather than, say, *anger*. Grief's 'intentional object', of course, would be his sister's death. Anger's object would (in this example) be the press. So not only is Spencer talking out of emotion rather than perception or belief, but the specific emotion given is one that directs us back to his sister's death for its cause or explanation, rather than to the activities of the press, which were the target of Spencer's remarks. Another category offered for Spencer is 'bitter' (line 4). The word *bitter* invokes excess, and a disposition for saying harsh things. Yet even here, Spencer is depicted as 'bitter about her death' rather than about the press's role in it. The point here is not to labour an analysis of a very small segment of data, but to point to ways in which emotion words provide rhetorical options and trajectories. These are discourse

options, ways of talking and writing, ways of constructing rather than reflecting the nature of events, and of avoiding or countering alternative senses of events.

The narrative-rhetorical relevance of 'the depths of his grief' and 'at such a harrowing time' is that they provide the occasion and basis for Spencer's statement, defined now as 'his emotional outburst' (line 6). The implication is that there is no need to look to rational, observational, long-term grounds for his judgement; it was an emotion-driven reaction. Further elements in the *Sun's* treatment of Spencer are the notions of understanding (line 6) and entitlement (line 4). Whereas Spencer emotionally reacts, the *Sun* itself understands, gets things in perspective, transcending the moment in which Spencer is entrapped, in the very act of defining Spencer's reaction as *of* the moment. The notion that Spencer is 'entitled to be bitter' invokes a kind of emotional scenario or script, that his feelings and judgements are predictable, understandable in the circumstances, even proper in their place (cf. Mary's 'obviously' in Extract 3), part of his role as grieving brother. In acknowledging such an emotional legitimacy, the *Sun* manages to build Spencer's words *as* emotional, and as stemming from his sister's death (*grief* rather than *anger*), and therefore as not to be taken seriously as any kind of rational judgement about the press. Of course, the rhetorical take-home message is given explicitly in the headline: 'don't blame the press'.

The nature of public reaction to Diana's death has recently become the object of critical social comment in a publication (Anderson & Mullen, 1998) by members of the Social Affairs Unit, described in Britain's *Independent* newspaper as a 'quirkily conservative think-tank' (17 April 1998, p. 5). The key article on Diana, by philosopher Anthony O'Hear, criticizes public grief over Diana's death as overly 'sentimental' and 'fake', and has become (as I write this) the controversial subject of a further flurry of press reporting. Public reactions to Diana's death are attributed to the deplored current state of the western world, identified in terms of Tony Blair's Labour election victory in Britain, and the US presidency of Bill Clinton. My concern here is not with the article's status as an analysis of 'modern society', but with its emotion rhetoric, and the part this plays in the article's political argument. My textual sources are, again, the newspaper reports and quotations rather than the article itself.

Extract 5 (*The Express*, 17 April 1998, p. 29)

- 1 *Fake Britain's* authors, all leading academics, state that
- 2 "Today's Britain is not 'modern', let alone 'cool'. It is
- 3 a fake society with fake institutions. The society's defining

- 4 moment was Princess Diana's funeral, in which
- 5 sentimentality—mob grief—was personified and canonised,
- 6 the elevation of feelings above reason, reality and restraint."

The interest here is in how emotion categories function as rhetorical elements within a larger text. The key terms are in line 5, *sentimentality* and *mob grief*. They stand in ironic contrast, not only to 'reason, reality and constraint' (line 6), for which many other emotion categories might serve, but also to the range of non-ironic emotion descriptions that had characterized press coverage of Diana's death and funeral, such as those in Extract 4. Rather than an outpouring of genuine public grief, whose spontaneity and scale might attest to its heartfelt reality, what we have is 'mob grief', where 'mob' characterizes the public as unthinking, herd-following, irrational—reminiscent of Le Bon's (1896) classic depiction, and political critique, of crowd behaviour.

The term 'sentimentality' invokes shallowness, convention, mere display rather than genuine or deeply felt emotion. It is a concept not merely of a particular kind of emotion, but of a kind of inappropriateness or shallowness of emotion. As one of the *Fake Britain* editors glosses it, in a newspaper article: 'not deep, committed feelings, but *displays* of feelings. Sentimentality is about public demonstration of feelings. And that includes feelings that people do not, in fact, have' (Anderson, 1998). Exploited here, and in Extract 5, are the rhetorical contrasts between emotion and reason, genuine feeling and fake display, and between one category (sentiment) and various alternatives also in use (grief, compassion).³

The rhetorical context of these opposed and alternative categories is, as I have noted, a political objection to 'modern society' in the shape of the Blair and Clinton governments. This is the import of Extract 5, lines 2 and 3. The argument is that the electoral rejection of the kind of Conservative, right-wing politics favoured by the authors of the report stemmed not from any kind of well-grounded social analysis or justifiable set of values, but, rather, from an irrational and superficial sentimentality. Accordingly, a blunt refutation came from Prime Minister Blair himself (Extract 6), quoted in various newspapers as what he had 'told friends'.

Extract 6 (The *Mail on Sunday*, 19 April 1998).

- 1 The Prime Minister has told friends he is angry and
- 2 contemptuous at the latest attacks on the extraordinary
- 3 cloudburst of grief which still grips many of the
- 4 Princess's admirers.
- 5 [. . .] he considers their snobbish put-downs to be an
- 6 insult to all of the ordinary people who were genuinely

7 inspired by Diana's life and deeply moved by her death.

The categories of character, motive and emotion deployed in Extract 6 provide a rhetorical counterpoint to those cited from the *Fake Britain* report. Public reaction to Diana's death is defined not as fake sentiment, but as 'the extraordinary cloudburst of grief' (lines 2–3), whose reality as such is bolstered by the definite article *the*, by its continuing nature (line 3), and by the expressions 'genuinely inspired' and 'deeply moved' (lines 6–7). Genuine 'grief' contrasts with sentimentality, and the 'mob' of Extract 5 is now 'all of the ordinary people' (Extract 6, line 6) for whom Blair speaks, and whose demotic ordinariness contrasts with those whose 'snobbish put-downs' have insulted them. Indeed, what Blair is (quoted as) countering are merely 'put-downs' rather than, for instance, a carefully argued social critique, whose 'snobbish' nature provides an irrational, attitudinal basis for its production.

Extract 7 is from an article in *The Times* newspaper, quoting O'Hear, in which the fake–genuine dichotomy, though prominent in his argument, is explicitly rejected in favour of a possibly less offensive (to the target readership) opposition between feeling and reason (lines 1–2). Of course, this remains a dichotomy useful for dismissing public reaction as irrational.

Extract 7 (*The Times*, 17 April 1998, front page)

- 1 "I do not say that people's feelings were not genuine, but
- 2 I think that they were elevating feeling above reason."
- 3 [. . .] She indulged in "infantile" temper tantrums and
- 4 forced the rest of the Royal Family to "put up with her
- 5 childlike self-centredness", he claims.

The characterizations of Diana (lines 3–5) involve a rhetoric of script and disposition (Edwards, 1995b, 1997). What Diana was like, as a person, is grounded in the routine ways she would behave—the 'tantrums' were plural, and they stemmed from character ('her childlike self-centredness') rather than situation. The Royals apparently did not, by their actions, provoke such tantrums, but were 'forced' to 'put up with' them. And what they had to put up with was not a series of expressions of indignant, justified anger (such as Blair's, in Extract 6), but 'tantrums', whose lack of adequate situational cause (unlike 'anger', for example) is provided for by that category, these being dispositional in her, stemming from a 'childlike' and 'infantile' nature. We are back with Connie and Jimmy, and Jeff and Mary, of course, and their contrastive narratives of marital disharmony: the construction of links between routine actions and character, scripts and dispositions,

with jealousy or anger produced as built-in characteristics of actors, rather than any number of possible, and actually occurring, alternative narratives and categories of emotion, thought, character, reaction or situational cause.

Conclusion

The study of emotion categories as elements in situated discourse provides an analytic purchase both on how discourse works, in detail and in context, and also on the functionally oriented design of verbal categories (Edwards, 1991). The conceptual repertoire of emotions provides for an extraordinary flexibility in how actions, reactions, dispositions, motives and other psychological characteristics can be assembled in narratives and explanations of human conduct. Emotion categories lend themselves to an indefinite set of rhetorical oppositions, which are to be found in the indexical uses of such categories in everyday talk and text. These observations about the rhetorical and indexical uses of such categories provide a necessary correction to a prevailing emphasis (e.g. Gibbs, 1994; Lakoff, 1987) on verbal categories as reflections of how people make disinterested, perceptual sense of the world. While conceptual oppositions and inconsistencies threaten an internally consistent cognitive model of the emotions (or just of anger, or even just of one angry reaction), they are marvellously designed for the rhetoric of alternative descriptions.

Theoretical notions such as 'cognitive models' and 'folk theories' overemphasize the logical and cognitive consistency of discourse practices. The conceptual resources available for emotion discourse permit a great deal of indexical and rhetorical variation. It is because people's emotion displays (thus categorized) can be treated either as involuntary reactions, or as under agentive control or rational accountability, as internal states or public displays, reactions or dispositions, that emotion discourse can perform flexible, accountability-oriented, indexically sensitive, rhetorical work. For doing talk's business, people require conceptual resources that are inconsistent, contradictory, fuzzy and to-be-indexically-specified. The challenge of discursive psychology (e.g. Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Harré & Gillett, 1994) is to provide an analysis of emotion categories, and other kinds of psychological descriptions, that is founded in the conceptual analysis of language in use, and the empirical study of how people talk within cultural settings. That is, we need to approach discourse as social practice rather than mental expression, where mental states are talk's categories and concerns, rather than its causes.

Notes

1. These codes indicate the location of the data at page 4 of session 1 of a larger corpus.
2. In keeping with journalistic practice, double quotation marks signal not merely a quote from a news medium, but a direct quotation of somebody's words in that medium.
3. In the same newspaper article as his definition of 'sentimentality', Anderson (1998) declares that 'compassion, if it is genuine, must be grounded in reality, not just in good intentions, still less in a show of good intentions'.

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Biography

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