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From ideology to feeling: discourse, emotion, and an analytic synthesis

Journal Item

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From ideology to feeling: discourse, emotion, and an analytic synthesis.

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Abstract

Recent arguments in the social sciences exhort a turn to affect and, either explicitly or by implication, a move away from or beyond the earlier turn to language. This conveys a presumption that the site and logic of discursive investigation must inevitably be different to the site and logic of affective investigation. Instead, this article suggests that a non-reductive psychosocial understanding of both discourse and affect needs a way of dissolving the dualism which inhabits and motivates much current debate around discursive and affective 'fields'. This article illustrates a route towards dismantling the apparent segregation of discourse and affect in the call to an affective turn. The data come from a project exploring women's talk of success and failure. Analysis here focuses on affective-discursive practices in discussion of 'failed attempts to control body weight', set within the context of contemporary western neoliberal ideology. Discourse and affect are both approached as semiotic, relational practice. As such, affect is made accessible to analysis via concepts already familiar in studies of discursive practice in social psychology, including the reproduction and negotiation of ideologies and the management of trouble. This analytic focus on practical deployments in interaction enables epistemological and

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ontological psychosocial arguments to be grounded in practical discursive-affective accomplishments.

Keywords: discourse, discursive psychology, affect, neoliberalism, control, weight

1. Introduction

Integral to the project of psychosocial study is an attention to the political, the embodied, and the affective practices of subjectivity, both in the constitution and maintenance of that subjectivity. However, there remains a need for developing rigorous methods which ground arguments empirically. This article illustrates one way in which a synthesised discursive-affective analysis is capable of achieving this and generating a highly effective form of analysis for psychosocial study.

While discourse analysis has sometimes been considered an inadequate means for psychosocial study in general and for the study of affectivity in particular, the synthesised analysis of discourse and emotion presented here demonstrates an analytic approach which combines a focus on discourse and emotion both in terms of the analytic lens applied but also the site and logic of practice. The starting premise is that discourse analysis, in its many and varied forms, has been a powerful force for recognising the constitutive power of language in its production of subjects, subjectivities and wider worlds. What it is to understand oneself as human is constructed through language, through interactional, relational, semiotic, meaning-making practices. The turn to language as a constitutive force, in the social sciences broadly and psychology specifically, challenged established understandings of universal, natural, unitary, bounded subjects passing through social worlds as contained individuals (for example, Henriques et al. 1984; Parker 1990; Rose 1985).

Within social psychology, analysis of language-as-action disrupted the notion of a simple bodily boundary between the individual and social world. In this sense it was immediately and wholly psycho-social, and a disruption to disciplinary boundaries as much as to ontologies of the subject and epistemologies of research. However, discourse analysis – as both theory and practice – has been criticised in psychology (and beyond) as inadequate for thinking through the lived nature of subjectivity (for example, Blackman & Cromby 2007; Sedgwick 2003). The recent turn to affect has energised an argument that discourse analysis does not, and indeed cannot attend to vital qualities of subjectivity, that is, to embodied, affective experiences. Consequently, discourse analysis has been held by some to be insufficiently 'human' and insufficiently psycho-social.

This article responds to this critique through two particular issues. One is an epistemological question as to what capacity discourse analysis has to discuss the *feeling* of emotions rather than just the *talk* of emotions. The second is an ontological question of how discourse becomes internalised in such a way that it activates feeling, that it carries visceral bite that cannot simply or reliably be 'talked out' into something else. I begin with a short outline of how discourse analysis in social psychology has been shaped so far; the critique of that field coming out of the turn to affect, and then a comment on more recent developments which see discourse analysis developing important contributions to understanding the relations between ideology and affective semiotics and the 'qualia' of subjectivity. Finally, I present an illustrative discursive-affective analysis through a discussion of the 'overweight body'. Data are taken from interviews with women discussing ideas of success and failure. The focus here is on the construction and emotion of 'failed' attempts to control body weight.

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2. Discourse analysis and the psychosocial subject

Discourse analysis emerged in psychology via the turn to language across the social sciences generally. It was underpinned in psychology by developments in social constructionist theory, feminist psychology and critical psychology (see Wetherell 2007 for an overview and also Taylor, this issue). Discourse analysis developed in a variety of different ways, often framed according to the 'scale' of the particular analytic lens. Typically this has been divided into two broad strands. One is the micro, fine-grained approach of conversation analysis exemplified by Edwards and Potter (1992), attentive to interactions, turn-taking, participant orientations etc. Such approaches are avowedly agnostic as to inner processes and the experiences, or affects of feeling. A second strand is the more macro, critically broad lens adopted by Billig (1991; et al. 1988), Wetherell (1998) and Willig (2000), for example. It too is attentive to local interaction but it also interrogates the broader context of talk, the historical situation, and the ideologies reproduced in talk. This broader, Foucauldian influenced approach allows discourse analysts to say something more about how subjects and subjectivities are formed in social processes (see Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine 2008). It is this latter macro, critical, approach which informs the analysis presented here and I will be illustrating its capacity to explore formations and practices of affect as well.

Despite various tensions what frequently unites those working with discourse analysis in psychology is a shared commitment to anti-realism and a focus on language as a situated constitutive and thoroughly social activity. This means language cannot be treated as a private (in the head) activity; or taken to provide a neutral, or straightforwardly representational pathway to some other object of study. Instead, language *is* the activity and, crucially for social psychology and psychosocial

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study, it is language activity – discourse large and small – which constitutes the psychological, and the emotional, senses of self, identity, memory, belonging, positioning, and so on.

Collectively, what has emerged from the turn to language in psychology has been a fundamentally critical project. It challenged the assumption that psychology should be approached as a natural science. It disrupted the assumption of the unitary subject. It overturned simplistic representational notions of language and the speaking subject. It recognised the contingent and situated nature of subjectivity. Consequently, it demanded new epistemologies for research and analysis, with a focus on the practices and accomplishments of language-in-action; and established new ontologies of the subject and subjectivity by conceptualising subjects constructed by and constituted in discourse. Having recognised the constitutive nature of discourse, and that discourse shifts and slips thus making space for new meanings, new practical understandings and therefore new ways of doing things (Billig 1996), discourse analysis has been a powerful tool for a critical psychology. Discourse analysis provides a means of pointing to the workings of ideologies, operations of power, inequalities and exclusions, and any implicit and explicit assumption of rights, and wrongs.

3. Making an affective turn

There have been a range of critiques of the turn to language (see Taylor this issue). However, the rejection of any straightforward neutral representational take on language, and crucially, the epistemological insistences that follow from that, have led to a particular and sustained critique focusing on the capacity or otherwise for discourse analytic inspired theories and methods to contribute to understandings of the

experience, the *feeling* of being a person (Wetherell 2012). The concept of the subject constituted in discourse *can* conjure up an image of an empty subject. Discourse analytic studies, it is said, can illustrate how people speak about emotion, and what kinds of social business are accomplished by talk of emotion, but cannot – so the critique says – contribute to an understanding of the lived experience of emotion, of feeling, of interiority. For some critics this is key to what prevents discourse analyses being accepted as an adequately psychosocial project. Emotion is reduced to discourse; and that which exceeds discourse, emoting bodies for instance, is either bracketed out or simply unrecognised (Greco & Stenner 2008). Indeed, this particular critique, always present in discourse work, has gained even more ground with the turn to affect in the social sciences. It is to this not unreasonable critique that I will be responding here.

The last decade has seen a renewed focus in the social sciences on affect (for example, Blackman & Cromby 2007; Greco & Stenner 2008; Gregg & Seigworth 2010; Leys 2011; Pedwell & Whitehead 2012; Wetherell 2012). While the study of emotion is clearly not a new project for psychology (Wetherell 2012), the kinds of questions being prompted by the current focus on affectivity do bring a new set of theoretical and empirical trajectories to pursue which are invigorating the field of psychosocial study and the contribution of discourse analysis to that field. Affect is defined and theorised in wide ranging ways across the social science literatures, so much so that it can appear to have quite disparate objects of knowledge. That is itself not necessarily a bad thing but it does make it harder to pin down what the turn to affect encompasses, what it means, how it might be taken up or what cross disciplinary theories it might usefully draw on and contribute to. The turn to affect might broadly be characterised for some as a new or reinvigorated attention to the

body and to feeling and emotions (e.g. Hemmings 2005), for others, an anti-rationalism (e.g. Connelly, cited in Leys 2011) and for others more obscurely but more encompassing, a noticing: a 'becoming', 'force' or 'intensity' (e.g. Massumi 2002). Wetherell's (2013) very helpful orientation to current affect theory is that it 'draws attention to the ways in which 'bodies' very broadly defined ... combine, assemble, articulate and shift into new formations, worked upon, as well as working on' (p. 350). It is this notion of bodies working on, and being worked on, which informs this article.

4. A move to synthesis: discursive-affective semiotics and the feeling of ideology

Advocates of the turn to affect have tended to assume that such a turn necessarily entails a turn away from language (for example, Gregg & Siegworth 2010; Sedgwick 2003). For Wetherell (2012; 2013) this constructs an implausible divide between affect and discourse. Her argument is that the two are inescapably intertwined in the tangled, relational nature of phenomena, a quality already recognised so well in critical social theory and in the move away from any simplistic reductionism. In a similar vein, Hemmings (2005) concludes her discussion of the turn to affect in cultural studies by saying that ' affect might in fact be valuable precisely to the extent that it is not autonomous', (p. 565) that it does not reside 'outside social meaning' (p. 565). In effect, the pursuit of new understandings in a welcome turn to affect ought nevertheless to engage with what has already been made known through the contributions of discourse analysis (Wetherell, 2012). Much as affect scholars may criticise the bracketing out of affect in discourse studies, it would be just as intellectually incoherent to bracket out meaning-making and discourse in affect studies.

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There is a second caveat for affect studies. Wetherell cautions against affect theory that develops carelessly of empirical grounding. In her own 'turn' to affect Wetherell calls instead for an integrated analysis of discourse and affect via attention to practice. The analytic principles worked up in discourse analysis model a way of working with affective practices which grounds analyses in the data of what people do. A lens on discourse *and* affect as inter-subjective, social practice, realigns both discourse and affect in an epistemology of subjectivity and an ontology of subjectivity that is inescapably entwined. These entwined practices of subjectification assumed in this article follow from the broadly Foucauldian argument that what people can know, do, think, and feel, are formed in and by regimes of knowledges and practices that constitute the world in particular ways, and generate particular ways of doing things (Foucault 1961; 1973). People act in and on the world, and understand the world and themselves, in relation to these regimes of knowledge and practice. Contemporary subjects of western democracies are dominated by two sets of interrelated knowledge/practice regimes; the practices of neoliberal individualism, and the constructs and practices of the psy disciplines. Neoliberalism disciplines subjects into reflexive practices of *making* a 'self', of crafting a particular kind of subjectivity that assumes a self as an autonomous agent, able to exercise choice and be responsible for that choice, and building a personal capacity for self provision. Core tools and technologies for this neoliberal project are those of the psy disciplines, those fields of mind and behaviour including psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, etc. (Rose 1985; 1996). These 'expert' fields create the tools and technologies that teach the language and manner of talking, and therefore thinking, about the self and what kind of self one is or could be; this includes understanding oneself as experiencing particular emotions in particular ways. The psy disciplines provide the means for

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both expert and self to act on the self by taking up circulating psy discourses and affective practices. They provide the tools and technologies, including language and other practices that produce an understanding of selves as psychologised subjects, experiencing life and self through particular kinds of mental capacities, personalities and emotions. Consequently, the understanding of self, and the enacting and practising of self, as a thinking, feeling, happy, sad, despairing, responsible, choosing, competent, adequate, person is not innately given; it is drafted into being through available, prevailing, ideologies. Moreover, the making of the self includes the making of, and individualised responsibility for, the body itself. This self is held psychologically and morally accountable for the control of the body and therein control of the self (Bordo, 1993; Rose, 1996; Wiggins, 2009).

However, the realisation of the idealised neoliberal self, with a 'self-made' body and a self responsible for shaping one's own affective experiences, can only ever be a partial, unfinished accomplishment. Neoliberalism, with its emphasis on the making of particular kinds of selves, and its acquisition and imposition of psy knowledges, creates the conditions for precarious, anxiety-ridden subjects understanding themselves as always on the boundaries of failure and ultimately responsible for providing their own solutions to, or repairs to that failure (Bordo 1993; Blood 2005; Swan 2008; Walkerdine 2003).

5. The study

The data drawn on here come from a larger project on constructions of success and failure amongst women in mid-life. Biographical interviews generated talk of women's constructions of success and failure in regard to their own lives and in relation to other women they identified. Photo elicitation techniques generated further

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talk of success and failure through pre-selected images of celebrities, sports people, and unknown women photographed in a range of scenes (e.g. domestic, or paid employment) chosen to invoke different generations of women in different socio-historical and classed locations (McAvoy 2009). The project assumed a social constructionist ontology, attentive to a combined macro level of analysis drawing on concepts of the ideological and co-constructed (re)production of subjects and subjectivity; and a local level, locating these processes in ongoing day-to-day moments of intersubjective interaction, moments which accomplish inter- and intrapersonal consequential discursive action (see for example Billig 1991 and Edley 2001).

The data used in this article comes from just one interview. This is not to suggest that the talk occurring between the interviewer and this one interviewee is somehow unambiguously representative of the corpus as a whole (see Taylor 2012 for a discussion of the implications of using such data). There are clear moments of regularity in the way different speakers initiate or orientate to particular topics or configurations of concepts (McAvoy 2009) and I note some of these in the analysis that follows. However, that notion of representativeness is not the intended purpose of the data used here. Rather, in this article, I am working with a small selection of data which was notable for the emotionality generated in the interview and which is used therefore to illustrate the possibilities of a combined discursive affective analysis.

6. Analysis

This analysis is located within an understanding of the ideological, discursive, neoliberal terrain outlined in the larger project summarised above, where the

discursive resources mobilised both reproduce and steer a route through that terrain, (re)constructing worlds, positioning subjects, and navigating dilemmas as the talk unfolds. This discursive lens is integrated with an attention to the affective practices which make up this dialogic, reflexive, interaction. This data will show a profoundly 'felt' exchange. I begin with a macro, critical, discursive analysis attentive to rhetoric, and positioning, and the (re)production of ideological dilemmas, and normative aesthetics/moral orders. The purpose of this first extract[1] is to set a context for what follows later. Then, analysis moves on to synthesise this contextual field with an analysis of affect.

I had begun the interview by explaining I would be asking the participant, Sally (a pseudonym), about her ideas of success and failure, both in regards to herself and to other women she might think of. Sally began with an answer typical across many of the interviews:

Extract 1

Sally   to <u>me</u> (.) erm (.) I think if you've got a happy (.) if you- (.) if you're happy within your marriage (.) and (.) your children (.) erm (.) to <u>me</u> (.) that is (.) probably (.) the main object

Jean   yeh

Sally   for me (.) I think if I can (.) be successful in in <u>that</u> (.) erm (.) that that's the main stay for me I would [think (.) it is

Jean   [yeah

Sally   I mean erm (.) as far as work and career is concerned hh (.) I would <u>love</u> I would have loved to have been (.) far more successful (.) I would erm (.) but I just absolutely hated school...

Sally's response to the task set by my question and the interview as a whole is a rhetorically rich opening. This kind of reply, immediately prioritising marriage and children as core measures of success, was remarkably common from participants across the sample, as was the privileging of happiness (McAvoy 2009 and in preparation). The domestic and psychological measures of success were invariably accompanied by considerations of career as a site of success, although career would generally be accorded lesser importance in this particular context. Here, although Sally is not claiming career as a particular success, she is acknowledging it and making space for it in her accounting. I have discussed elsewhere the complicated way speakers positioned accomplishments of family and work. Neoliberal practices of one's accountability for choices made, and one's accomplishments achieved, and the intersubjective situated moment of an interview on success, all induce a negotiated address to these markers. Speakers in the sample are remarkably consistent with Sally in what they raise and recognise as pertinent (McAvoy 2009).

Sally continued her accounting by talking about her early years of paid work as an office clerk and later working as a sales assistant in a jewellery shop, a post she had held for ten years at the time of the interview. Sally commented that she occasionally wished she had more money. She explains:

Extract 2

Sally   when I look back (.) the times where (.) I think oh y'know when when (.)

occasionally because we er (.) and we have been (.) skint and y'know you

think god where am I going to get my next (.)

Jean   mm

Sally   and then I think well (.) no I'm not really (.) I am really quite happy (.) if I'm

honest with what I've got (.)

Jean   yeah

Sally   because I've got a smashing husband (.) smashing (.) and and two fantastic

children (.) I have (.) I mean (.) so (.) for <u>me</u> (.) if I if I am <u>rea</u>lly really truly

honest (.) that is (.) what I think (.)

Jean   mm

Sally   for me (.) brings success.

This short extract presents an exquisitely complex deployment of discursive

resources. There is an intricate argumentative texture in the talk. Sally weaves

together the material (here 'being skint'), the psychological ('being happy') and the

relational (husband and children). Along with career, these were common areas

negotiated across the study. Moreover, where a claim to success might be difficult to

sustain, (being skint, for instance) a claim to happiness was frequently deployed.

Rhetorically a claim to 'happiness' has the potential to trump all else in the

consideration of what might constitute a successful life (McAvoy 2009 and in

preparation). Swan (2008) has described the emotionalisation of society and the way

emotion carries a privileged status of truth. But, Sally's is not an untroubled claim to

happiness. This is a qualified happiness: 'really quite happy'. It is further

complicated by the effortful working up of honesty: 'if I'm honest...really really truly

honest'. On the one hand, this acts to add credibility to claims then made; it

constructs an authenticity (Edwards & Fasulo 2009). On the other hand, it also makes

space for the possibility that this assessment of success is precarious, transient, and

could be very different on other days, in other moments. Nevertheless, here, in this

moment, claiming happiness is performing a contemporary form of success. In conjunction with that, settling on marriage and family as those much valued sources of happiness, also enacts an aesthetic virtue of modest ambitions. The highly gendered ideology of care for the domestic, and personal restraint, is reproduced and reinforced through this speaker.

This analysis is necessarily tentative, necessarily provisional and partial. For instance, there is much more that could be said on the way success, which was the over-arching topic of the larger project, is (discursively) performed in these moments when Sally talks about her family: this is a 'smashing husband', not just a husband; 'two fantastic children', not just children. But, this is also a moment of affective interaction: the husband and children are constructed and orientated to and entwined with Sally, in this moment, in a clearly affective way. I am reluctant to name and reify the particular kind of emotion/affect response being produced in this moment, because it might be one, or a mixture, of several things; a delight taken in those people and those relationships; or, a wistful recognition perhaps of what 'should' be valued in this reflection on a life, for example. Plumping for one would be to prematurely lock down something still elusive, but nevertheless present; nevertheless affective. The challenge is to use patterns in practice to be able to say something about what kind of affective practice is taking place. The affective practice of doing valuing of relationships, of family is indeed highly visible across the wider corpus of data from the project.

The interview conversation continued briefly around material possessions and relationships. Then, Sally introduced the topic of weight, and specifically, having felt for most of her life that she had been overweight; 'the fatter of three daughters' was

one of her self-descriptions. Weight, she explained, had been a difficult issue for her to deal with:

Extract 3

Sally   so (.) that was the thing (.) y'know because I didn't like myself that I don't

think anybody else (.)

Jean   right

Sally   necessarily (.) would like me

Jean   yeah

Sally   d'y'know what I mean I'm very conscious of being fatter (.) now and (.) it it's

an absolute (.) erm (.) I make fun of myself d'y'know what I mean and

Jean   yeah

Sally   er (.) try and laugh it off and and do an' and (.) ((*longer pause*)) I'm going

<you see> ((*gestures towards face as eyes fill with tears*)) I'm going to get

emotional now (.) because I really it's y'know it it's erm (.) for me (.) it's a

really big thing (.) it is (.) and I think that because (.) I have other things that I

am able to control (.) but I can't control my eating (.)

Jean   right

Sally   and that for me is a real disappointment (.) it is (.) erm (.) y'know I try and (.)

y'know whether it be keeping my house in order or whatever else (.) erm (.)

and that's why I feel a failure (.) because I'm I allow myself to overeat (.)

Jean   right

Sally   and I allow myself to put this weight on (.) I do (.)

While this extract begins in the past tense it is quickly brought into the present when Sally talks about being very conscious of being fatter now. Her talk here, 'I didn't like myself that I don't think anybody else ... necessarily (.) would like me' conjures up a potentially immense vulnerability; a subjectivity fraught with the threat of rejection. Sally's suggestion for how she dealt with this, making fun of herself, trying to laugh it off, reproduces a normative construction for how someone who is considered overweight might be expected to perform (see Billig 2005, for a discussion of the complex roles laughter may perform). These are temporary solutions, of limited success. There is no resistance to the implied deficiency of self in being the 'wrong' weight; instead there is a reproduction that weight is something one must somehow 'make up' for, by making fun of one self, laughing it off. Whilst what exactly is being laughed off is not quite specified, the sense of this phrase suggests painful, or at least, uncomfortable feelings.

At this mention of trying (note not necessarily succeeding) to laugh off something, there was a much longer pause in the talk. On its own, it would not make sense to make claims about what this longer pause might indicate, but seeing what follows suggests that this longer pause is indicative of some trouble. The comment 'I'm going', again in the context of what follows, suggests that at this point Sally starts to explain, to *warn* perhaps that the interview is on territory which Sally finds difficult. But, before she completes what she is about to say, the narrative turns momentarily. The symbols < > around the words 'you see' indicate much quieter speech than the surrounding talk. At this point Sally gestured towards her face as tears started to fall. She was about to warn that she was 'going to get emotional' and it is telling that this is something that might *need* to be warned against; if it is a warning, it implies that emotion is understood as a breach in the normal routine of how people

might expect this business of being in an interview together to proceed, for emotion to be contained. Sally's comment 'it's a really big thing' both defends against a possible accusation of 'unreasonable' emotion and signals again that this thing (there is some slippage about whether this indexes weight, eating, or absence of control), but this thing is to be understood as carrying consequence for her.

The warning of emotion, and the explanation that this topic of talk is momentous, both also work rhetorically (which is not to say without feeling) to mark out what is emerging in the talk as special, as particular. But, of course, there is also so much more happening in this moment. There is a confessional quality certainly, but also something that is profoundly 'felt'. Sally is signalling in her talk and in her tears - the semiotics of affect - that there is disturbance here. It would not make sense to separate these out; they are inescapably intertwined as they communicate something important and indicate something powerfully 'experienced'. To separate them out would indeed be an implausible divide. To paraphrase Wetherell (2012), it would be sense without sensibility, sensibility without sense.

What follows at this point in the interview conversation is an exquisite enactment of the psychologised, neoliberal subject. This now becomes an account of failed self-control, a lack of control apparently felt painfully for its own sake, and for that which it gives rise to: a weighted body. Sally has taken on the idea that she is thoroughly responsible for her condition: she 'allows' herself to overeat; and she 'allows' herself to put on weight. Bordo (1993) has explicated this double ideological strike – the demand for control of the psychological self, and control of the embodied, weighted, self. This is contemporary neoliberalism in action; it is the (re)production of the autonomous psychologised agent who is not only responsible for what she eats, but for what effect that has on her body. Sally is simultaneously invoking the ideal

subject here, one who does exercise self-control; and experiencing herself in relation to that ideal subject, but marking herself out as failing (painfully) against it.

7. Discussion

Rose (1996) has argued that the psychologising discourses of the psy complex are not inevitably bad but rather, he suggests, they provide the resources for action. However, as Swan (2008) has pointed out, the discourses of therapeutic culture present '... the psychological self, as opposed to the physical or social self or the wider society, [as] the source of its problems and the main resource for providing potential solutions to these problems' (p. 88). This is the discourse activated by Sally in the analysis above; she is supposed to be the source of her solution but she has proved (to herself, in this talk, and performed for me) inadequate to the task. Her inability to be her own solution is taken up by her as evidence of her inadequacy and she is living it, feelingly, as a profoundly personal failure of the self.

This account of failed self-control, allowing oneself to overeat, appears to invoke an account of a failure in moral order. This is not "just" an issue of willpower, or biology, although it could be understood as both, it is an issue of moral failure. The body, in particular what is presented here as excess weight, is understood, felt, as a site of deeply personalised failure for which Sally holds herself entirely responsible. As Sally indicates in the opening to extract 3, her sense of self, her weak will, and her body, are reasons to imagine rejection by anyone and everyone.

The discourse of uncontrolled eating drawn upon by Sally conjures up a weakness, a powerlessness of will, and simultaneously reproduces the responsibility of the self for this state. Moreover, this is not just (if at all) about Sally's relationship to herself alone, but also Sally's ongoing dialogical conversation with the world

around her, including this interview. While it is extraordinarily painful, at this moment, for Sally to live out her subjectivity in this way, it is also very effective culturally in keeping her tamed, subdued, and holding herself personally responsible (Bordo 1993; Blood 2005). Ideologies of the self-made body, and the transgression which adheres for having made an overweight body are precisely, ontologically, discursive and affective.

8. Conclusion

My argument here has been that the turn to language, synthesised with a turn to affect, and grounded in what people do, is well placed to make a particular contribution as an empirically grounded method for psychosocial study. Rather than superseding discursive approaches with others attentive to affect, this synthesised focus attends to both the political and embodied phenomena of subjectivity vital to a psychosocial project. It recognises the reproductions of macro ideologies in local, relational, intersubjective interaction; it explicates the uptake of ideology through the subjectified body, and explicates the affective practices which co-constitute that subjectivity.

In the analysis I have presented here I have illustrated some of the ideological values which women negotiate, valuing family, negotiating accountabilities for employment, producing the self through a psychologised subjectivity, taking up a position of happiness, yet one struggling with the demands of a particular morally (un)disciplined, (un)controlled, embodied self. My intention here has not been to treat signs of emotion as straightforward signs of underlying truths, of hidden psychological states. But it also seems clear, without claiming the hidden, or the

underlying, that this 'really big thing' that Sally is talking about, the tears in this moment of telling her subjectivity, was lived as an emotionally charged thing.

Discourse analysis has been eminently effective in showing the kinds of social, interpersonal business that could be accomplished in talk of those psychologised states of emotion and feeling, in reflecting the ideological imperatives in play, and the rhetorical resources for negotiating those demands. But, as has been the convention in discourse analytic approaches, it has said relatively little about the affective moments embedded in the talk, the visceral bite of affective semiotics. A response to this is now emerging and illustrated here in a synthesised analysis of discourse and affect. In the extracts presented, a body has been made deviant by ideology; and through the discursive practices which produce and reproduce autonomous, psychologised, responsibilised, subjectivities, a subject has been made responsible for that deviance. The uptake of ideology; its reproduction; the way the normative requirements of self control and responsibility are orientated to in this talk; the emotion of tears, the orientation to the 'bigness' of this thing; the intersubjective dynamic of the dialogue, the meaning-making in this conversation, these are all 'noticings' of affectivity. They are not all necessarily conscious noticings, although many may be. But, these are affective moments, situated activations of affectivity, and they are accessible to a synthesised analysis of discourse and affect, through the same kinds of tools and concepts developed and honed in discourse analysis. This is a critically astute, empirically grounded, discursive-affective psychosocial method. It is attuned to the way ideology inhabits bodies and reproduces inescapably psychosocial subjects, social worlds, and social relations.

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About the Author

Jean McAvoy is Lecturer in Psychology at the Open University. She is interested in the formation of subjectivity, and the manifestation and reproduction of ideologies in people's practices, particularly in the construction of, and viscerality of, moral orders and transgression.

Notes

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[1] The following transcription conventions are used:
(.) Short pause
[Indicates the point of overlapping speech
< quieter > Encloses talk that is quieter than the surrounding talk
Underlined Emphasis
((*comments*)) Encloses interviewer's observations
. . . Indicates talk omitted for reasons of brevity