1.5

Discursive Social Psychology

Jonathan Potter *and* **Derek Edwards**
Loughborough University, UK

Discursive social psychology is the application of ideas from discourse analysis to central topics in social psychology. It is not a social psychology *of* language. Instead, it is an approach to psychology that takes the action-oriented and reality-constructing features of discourse as fundamental. Whereas the dominant social cognition paradigm gives a story of behaviour produced on the basis of information processing done on perceptual input (e.g., Fiske & Taylor, 1991), discursive social psychology's narrative revolves around activities done through discourse as parts of situated practices (Edwards & Potter, 1992). While theory and method in social cognition presume an out-there reality that provides input to cognitive operations, discursive social psychology focuses on the way both "reality" and "mind" are constructed by people conceptually, in language, in the course of their execution of various practical tasks (Edwards, 1997; Potter, 1996a; Potter, Edwards & Wetherell, 1993). Discursive social psychology is a perspective that rejects experiments, surveys and most interview work in favour of rigorous empirical analysis of records of natural interaction.

In this chapter we briefly review the basic theoretical and methodological principles of discursive social psychology (henceforth, DSP). We illustrate its difference from cognitive social psychology using two examples that also focus on language – causal attribution and social representations – and we flesh out its nature by considering two further topics: counselling and racism.

The New Handbook of Language and Social Psychology.
Edited by W. Peter Robinson and Howard Giles.

WHAT IS DISCURSIVE PSYCHOLOGY?

Discursive psychology has a complex theoretical lineage drawing on ideas from discourse analysis, rhetoric, sociology of science, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, and post-structuralism. In DSP discourse is defined as talk and texts, studied as social practices. This definition combines the sense of discourse as an object and as a practice. For theoretical, methodological and empirical reasons DSP takes discourse to be central to social life. For example, most social activity involves or is directly conducted through discourse. Furthermore, even where activity is "non-verbal" (embodiment, physical actions and their settings, etc.), its sense is often best understood through participants' discourse. Discourse is the prime currency of interaction, and if we are studying persons embedded in practices then discourse will be central to that study. Further justifications for giving discourse this pre-eminent position will be developed in the course of this chapter.

The view of social psychology in DSP can be introduced most simply by considering three theoretical features of discourse: it is *situated*, *action-oriented*, and *constructed*. Let us take them in turn.

1. Discourse is situated

DSP focuses on discourse, which it regards as situated in two ways. First, it is *occasioned* in the conversation analytic sense of this term (see Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). That is, talk and texts are embedded in some kind of sequence of interaction and in some kind of context. This is not a mechanical contextual determinism; talk is *oriented to*, but not *determined by*, its sequential position. Thus, a "question", say, sets up the normative relevance of an "answer", but an answer is not forced or necessary, and things do not break down if it is not provided. Answers may be deferred or withheld altogether (Heritage, 1984). Likewise, the fact that talk appears in a school or a doctor's surgery does not mean that it must thereby be pedagogic or medical. Rather than being noted, formulated and made omni-relevant by the analyst, institutional activities and identities are made relevant by participants themselves, by being invoked and oriented to, or indeed subverted and ignored (Schegloff, 1997).

Second, DSP conceptualizes discourse as pervasively *rhetorical* (Billig, 1987, 1991). Claims and descriptions that are offered in talk are often designed to *counter* potential alternative versions and resist attempts (perhaps actual, perhaps potential) to disqualify them as false, partial or interested (Edwards & Potter, 1992). That is, they can have both a defensive and an offensive rhetoric (Potter, 1996a). Billig (1991; see also this volume, Chapter 3.12) argues that when people offer evaluations of something they are typically countering some other evaluation.

In DSP analysis has to take into account both the occasioned and rhetorical nature of discourse.

2. Discourse is action-oriented

DSP focuses on how discourse performs actions or practices of various kinds – blamings, invitations, displays of neutrality, and so on. "Action" or "practice" (the precise term is not meant to carry weight here) invokes the vast range of practical, technical and interpersonal tasks that people perform while doing their jobs, living their relationships, and participating in heterogeneous cultural domains. It is central to people's lives, and therefore central to understanding those lives. Following the convention in conversation analysis, DSP uses the notion of *action orientation* to emphasize that actions are pervasively being done even in ostensibly factual, descriptive discourse, and to distance itself from a "speech act" approach that assumes that some discrete set of words correspond to a discrete act.

The corollary of DSP's focus on discourse is its respecification of cognition. Instead of cognitive entities and processes being the principal *analytic* resource, as they are in social cognition research, they are approached empirically as participants' *ways of talking*. The focus is on the way cognitions are constructed in talk, and how their implications are oriented. For example, rather than treating attitudes as inner entities that drive behaviour, in DSP attitudes are evaluations that are studied as part of discourse practices (Potter, 1998a). Such an approach might consider the way evaluations are organized interactionally, as in Pomerantz's (1978) study of compliments; it might consider how attitudes are interactionally produced through social psychological methods (Myers, 1998; Puchta & Potter, in press); or it might consider the way negative evaluations of minority group members are turned from potentially accountable personally held attitudes into more "safely sayable" factual descriptions (e.g., Edwards, in press; Potter & Wetherell, 1988; Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

This non-cognitivist reformulation of attitudes avoids the circularity of many social cognition studies, where evaluative *discourse* (in response scales) is turned into underlying *cognitive* entities (attitudes), which are in turn used to explain *actions* (involving more discourse). It avoids the uncomfortable blurring of everyday and technical notions in the attitude and belief domain, by taking peoples' evaluative terminology (attitude, belief, opinion, position, view, etc.) as *topic* rather than as a competing but rather less adequate theory of behaviour (cf. Edwards, 1997, on psychology and common sense in general). It makes sense of the troubling variability in peoples' evaluative talk, which stems from the fact that people produce evaluations as parts of various discourse practices, rather than expressing pre-formed, all-purpose mental entities when asked to do so by a researcher. It focuses attention on life as a practical realm where evaluations are part of getting things done, rather than existing as disembedded assessments waiting to be produced in moments of reflection.

3. Discourse is constructed

DSP is constructionist in two senses. First, it studies the way discourse itself is constructed. Words, metaphors, idioms, rhetorical devices, descriptions,

accounts, stories and so on are drawn on, and built, in the course of interaction and in the performance of particular actions. For example, DSP research might ask how descriptions are assembled in ways that present some piece of conduct as orderly and required by the circumstances, as just what anybody would have done, or else as unusual, specially motivated and implicative of the actor's particular psychology (Edwards, 1994, 1997). Second, it studies the way discourse constructs versions of the world. That is, it studies how versions of inner life, of local circumstances, of history and broader social groups and structures are produced to do particular things in interaction. In DSP, then, discourse is both construct*ed* and construct*ive*.

Although DSP is a constructionist approach, its emphasis on the construction of *versions in discourse* distinguishes it from cognitive constructionisms ranging from Neisser (1967), to Moscovici (1984), to Berger and Luckmann (1966). Construction is studied in DSP as the process of assembling and stablizing versions to make them factual and independent of their producer. Whereas cognitive constructionism tends to guide the researcher away from considering people's practices, DSP's emphasis on the construction of specific versions encourages the researcher to consider the practices that those versions are part of, and the particular work that they are performing.

At the centre of DSP there is an inversion that, initially, appears counterintuitive. In traditional social cognition there is *reality* on the one hand, that is the setting – the "stimulus conditions" that enclose actors – and there is *cognition* on the other, conceived as something existing and quietly computing inside the actors. Activity is treated as something secondary, the output of this system. DSP inverts this. Activity is treated as primary, and reality and cognition are secondary. That is, DSP focuses on what people are doing, and how, in the course of their discourse practices, they produce versions of external reality and psychological states. It asks how people categorize and formulate the world, establishing certain particulars as relevant, characterizing its moral flavour, and it asks how people at the same time formulate a relevant inner world of beliefs, values, emotions and dispositions, that make their actions accountable.

These theoretical principles of DSP lead to a range of analytic principles. We will highlight seven themes in DSP which relate to the issues of empirical analysis, factors and outcomes, detail, hypothetico-deductivism, natural materials, analytic procedures and validation.

1. Empirical analysis

DSP is strongly empirical. It takes the analysis of materials to be central to making claims and developing theory. It is not attempting to replace research with theory, conceptual analysis, intuition or politics. Nevertheless, an awareness of the philosophy and sociology of scientific knowledge (Chalmers, 1992; Woolgar, 1988) leads to caution about the independence of data from theory or method, and the analytic approaches taken in DSP are very different from those commonplace in mainstream social cognition work.

2. Factors and outcomes

DSP decisively rejects the factors-and-outcomes model that underlies much social cognition research. Social life is not viewed as the consequence of an interplay of factors which have more or less regular patterns and determinate outcomes. Instead, DSP treats social life as being organized and produced in a radically different way, as basically normative and rhetorical, and this entails differences in data, theory and method. The norms of social life do not work as templates that govern interaction, but rather, they are participants' resources for action and understanding, for making life accountable (describable and sanctionable: Garfinkel, 1967). Thus, failure to return a greeting is not an occasion to abandon the norm but, rather, the basis for a potential range of inferences about the person and context: are they rude, hard of hearing, sulking, shy or whatever (Heritage, 1988)? In a similar way, rhetoric in DSP is not treated as guaranteeing persuasion; rather it is oriented to persuasion. Any rhetorical device can have a range of counters. Categorization, say, can be countered by particularization (Billig, 1985).

3. Materials

The rejection of the factors-and-outcomes model is one reason for rejecting efforts at experimentally controlling variables using invented materials. DSP prefers to analyse "naturalistic" rather than "got-up" materials. This is not a commitment to an unsustainable philosophy of a natural world free of observer influence. Rather, it is a preference, grounded in DSP's conception of how discourse works, for examining records of people living their lives, telling what happened, arguing about relationships, answering parliamentary questions, and so on, instead of answering researcher's questions, cooperating with experimenters' requirements, and responding to researcher's textual vignettes. The focus on naturalistic materials starts to become inevitable once the importance is fully recognized of discourse being occasioned, action-oriented and constructed. It is also a reflection of what has become technically and analytically possible. Given that such rich materials are increasingly tractable, and can be successfully recorded, digitized, scanned, transcribed and rigorously studied in the wake of several decades of research, why do anything else?

4. Detail

DSP requires an attention to the detail of interaction. Harvey Sacks (1992) suggested that none of the detail of interaction, whether it be pauses and repairs, the selection of particular words, or the placement of interruption and overlaps, should be assumed a priori to be irrelevant to interaction. Sometimes a sniff is just a sniff, the consequence of having a runny nose; yet a sniff, in the right place, with the right kind of in-breath, could also do something else such as displaying indirect disagreement (Roffe, 1996).

5. Analysis

Analysis works with some combination of audio and video tape, transcript and/or text. Different kinds of studies involve different procedures, sometimes working intensively with a single transcript, other times drawing on a large corpus. Analysis is a craft that can be developed with different degrees of skill. It can be thought of as the development of a sensitivity to the occasioned and action-oriented nature of discourse. This often involves attention to a range of features of discourse. As well as the *detail* of hesitations, repairs, word choice and so on, there is *variability* in and between different texts and stretches of talk which can be an important clue about action orientation, the rhetorical organization of discourse (how it is put together to counter alternatives) and its accountability.

6. Hypothetico-deductivism

The style of analysis in DSP does not lend itself to the hypothetico-deductivism that is commonplace in factors-and-outcomes work in social cognition. It has often been productive to collect and explore a set of materials without being constrained by a specific hypothesis. Close attention to a recording and transcript, or a collection of documents, often reveals phenomena that were both previously unnoticed and unexpected. *Starting* with the materials, rather than a prior hypothesis, is a way of allowing such phenomena into the analysis. Nevertheless, once interesting phenomena or patterns have been identified, the analysis is developed by searching a corpus for further relevant examples and counter-examples.

7. Validation

The notion of validity in DSP is different from that in much social cognition research. In DSP it is built more obviously into basic research design – the choice and presentation of naturalistic materials in something close to their raw form, for instance – rather than arising as a worry about extending claims and findings from a research domain into relevant arenas of everyday life. In DSP analysis is made accountable to the detail of empirical materials, and these are presented in a form that allows *readers to make their own checks* and judgements. This form of validation contrasts with much traditional experimental and content analytic work where it is rare for anything close to "raw data" to be included, or for more than one or two illustrative codings to be provided. It also permits an accumulation of empirical data and analytic studies against which new findings can be compared for their *coherence*. For example, work on fact construction builds on the insights about accountability from earlier studies, and its success provides a further confirmation of the validity of those studies (Edwards & Potter, 1993).

Two specific principles of conversation analysis are useful in validating analytic claims: *deviant case analysis* (checking claims against potential counter cases) and the *proof procedure* (basing the analysis of a turn at talk on how the

participants themselves treat it, in next turns – see Heritage, 1995; Schegloff, 1992). Both principles are illustrated in studies of television and radio news interviews, where participants routinely avoid treating interviewers as accountable for views expressed in questions. That normative pattern is supported rather than refuted by studying deviant cases in which interviewees treat their interviewer as expressing personal views, whereupon considerable interactional trouble ensues in subsequent turns (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1991; Potter, 1996a).

These points highlight some of what is distinctive about DSP. For more detailed accounts of methods and analysis in this area see Billig (1997), Coyle (1995), Gill (1996), Potter (1996b, 1997, 1998b), Potter & Wetherell (1987, 1994, 1995), Wetherell & Potter (1992), Widdicombe & Wooffitt (1995) and Wooffitt (1990, 1993).

RESPECIFYING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY THEORY

Let us further explicate the nature of DSP by comparing and contrasting it to two current alternative approaches that also focus on language: the linguistic category model of causal attribution (Brown & Fish, 1983; Semin & Fiedler, 1989) and the theory of social representations (Moscovici, 1984).

Attribution and the Linguistic Category Model

The linguistic category model (henceforth LCM) of attribution considers the way that causality is semantically presupposed by various categories of verbs. For example, when given a vignette item "John telephones Mary" people will answer the question "Why?" by specifying something about John; but when faced with a vignette item "John thanks Mary", people will answer the question "Why?" by specifying something about Mary. Such studies purport to explain many of the basic phenomena of attribution as a consequence of verb semantics.

Let us emphasize areas of agreement. Both DSP and LCM treat words and descriptions as fundamental to understanding causal attribution. That is, the use of grammatical categories is treated as an active, creative part of causal explanation, rather than being a mere reflection of the organization of events, or a consequence of some kind of non-linguistic cognitive processing.

There are also important areas of disagreement. To clarify this it is useful to distinguish between three kinds of causal responsibility:

1. Responsibility presupposed by verb semantics.
2. Responsibility assigned in a broader description of some interaction.
3. Responsibility of the current speaker in constructing a description to assign responsibility in a particular way.

So in the case of "John thanks Mary", we can distinguish between: (1) the presupposition that Mary must have done something to be "thanked" for; (2) how these words might be part of a description which assigns responsibility to *either* Mary or John or someone or something else; (3) the responsibility of the producer of the description, in assigning responsibility to Mary or John.

In DSP the recognition that discourse is situated, action-oriented and constructed highlights the need to look at all three kinds of responsibility if we are going to understand attribution in natural discourse. People use words to build their accounts, so the various semantic presuppositions that LCM identifies are an important part of understanding what particular words might be used to achieve (type 1 responsibility). However, DSP emphasizes that the sense of discourse is occasioned. The semantics do not govern what is going on; rather they are modified or even inverted as language is brought out of the pages of the dictionary or grammar book (as if that was where it began!) and made to live in practical settings (type 2 responsibility). Moreover, one of the major features of DSP is its emphasis on the way descriptions, as parts of interaction, are *themselves* performing actions, including handling the speaker's stake or interest in what is going on (type 3 responsibility). For extended analytic examples highlighting the limits of the LCM and other kinds of language-based attribution theory, in comparison to DSP, see Edwards and Potter (1993, 1999).

Descriptions and Social Representations

Social representations theory (SRT) has provided an innovative account of the nature of everyday social understanding (Moscovici, 1984). In SRT new information is assimilated to existing representations through the twin processes of anchoring and objectification. Representations circulate through conversation and via the mass media, and develop as they do so. Representations are not simply devices for perceiving social worlds – they construct the nature and value of those worlds.

Let us again emphasize important areas of agreement. DSP and SRT are both constructionist perspectives. They both emphasize the importance of representation, including the central importance of discourse in social life. DSP thus has much more in common with SRT than with many other social cognitive perspectives.

There are also important divergences. First, construction is differently understood. Whereas in SRT it is primarily a perceptual–cognitive process involving the schematic mechanisms of anchoring and objectification, in DSP construction is done in talk and texts as specific versions of the world are developed and rhetorically undermined. There are various advantages of DSP's view of construction, one of which is to make it more analytically tractable. The building, establishment and undermining of representations can be studied using recordings of interaction, and the refined tools of conversation analysis and discourse analysis.

Second, representation is conceptualized differently. In SRT representations are primarily cognitive phenomena which enable people to make sense of the world. The collective nature of this sense-making is taken to enable intra-group communication and to provide a technical definition of the boundaries of social groups. In contrast, DSP's representations are discursive objects that people construct in talk and texts. DSP focuses on how representations are *constructed as* solid and factual, and on how they are specifically fitted to, and selected for, the *occasion* of their use, for their role in *activities*. Understanding discursive actions is therefore the key to understanding representations.

Third, although both SRT and DSP emphasize discourse, SRT draws heavily on traditional metaphors of communication in which "messages" are "transferred" from speaker to speaker. This meshes with SRT's emphasis on cognitive sense-making. So, even though SRT treats conversation as *theoretically* fundamental for the generation and refinement of representations, it is a topic that has received virtually no *methodological* or analytic attention. Indeed, where SRT researchers have used qualitative approaches such as interviews and ethnography they have tended to treat these as pathways to underlying representations rather than realms of conversational interaction in their own right (see Potter, 1996a on Jodelet, 1991).

What we have briefly highlighted, then, is that SRT does not fully recognize the importance of how discourse is occasioned, action-oriented and constructed. For recent discussions of the relation between SRT and DSP see Potter and Edwards (1999), and Potter and Wetherell (1998).

DISCURSIVE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN ACTION

There is now a wide and varied literature in discursive social psychology. This has reworked traditional topics such as causal attribution (Antaki, 1994; Edwards & Potter, 1992, 1993), prejudice (Edwards, in press; Gill, 1993; Speer & Potter, 2000; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), identity (Antaki, 1998; Edwards, 1998; Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995), script theory (Edwards, 1994, 1997), and violence and aggression (Auburn, Lea & Drake, 1999; McKinlay & Dunnett, 1998; Hepburn, 2000); and it has brought to the fore new topics such as the relation between interaction and institutions (Edwards, 1995a; te Molder, 1999) and the construction and establishment of factual accounts (MacMillan & Edwards, 1999; Potter, 1996a; Wooffitt, 1992). Rather than attempt to review this and other related work, we offer two brief illustrations of these strands of DSP.

DSP and Prejudice

We have noted that people construct versions of the world that attend to their factual status, to the psychology of participants in reported events, and to the

current interaction in which versions are offered. These moves are often done simultaneously (Edwards & Potter, 1992). For example, a mental state (belief, certainty, fear, doubt) may be produced as determined by the external world, itself known through repeated experiences (Edwards, 1994). Another way of grounding factual claims is to offer them as reluctantly arrived at, or as counter to one's presumptions and biases (Edwards, in press; Potter, 1996a). These (and other) *ways of talking* counter the possibility that you believe what it suits you to believe, or what you believed before you looked, that your beliefs are a function of mental predisposition rather than external reality – that is, they attend rhetorically to a possible dismissal as prejudgement, or prejudice.

Extract 1 is taken from an interview from the early 1980s ("I" is the interviewer, "R" the interviewee) in New Zealand concerning a controversial South African rugby tour, prior to that country's abandonment of apartheid (see Edwards, in press, for an extended discussion of this and other examples).

Extract 1

→ **R:** Uhm (1.2) I would li:ke to see apartheid done away with (1.0) but can anybody come up with a- [a (.)
I: [Mm mhm
R: positive way of saying "This is how it can be done"
I: Mm mhm
R: It's all very well to turn round and say "Give 'em a vote"
I: Yes
R: I mean the majority of them (1.0) don't know what a vote is
I: Mm mhm

R's argument for apartheid occurs in the context (not reproduced here) of justifying his support of the controversial rugby tour. He offers his position as one that is forced by practical realities. The notion that the speaker might be talking out of some kind of preference or liking for apartheid – that is, because of psychological disposition (prejudice) rather than worldly reality – is further countered by locating his preferences as precisely the opposite. He would *like* it done away with, if only that were realistically possible. This counter-dispositional construction is a feature of talk about sensitive and controversial issues, but it draws on a very general device in factual discourse, which is making a version or conclusion factually robust by formulating it as reluctantly arrived at. The same device is used in Extract 2.

Extract 2

I: (. . .) d'you think there should be res- (.) restrictions on immigration?
(.)
I: How do you [feel about
→ **R:** [Oh yes.= There's got to be.
I: Ye[:h
→ **R:** [Unfortunately,
I: my[e:h
→ **R:** [I would love to see the whole wor:ld y'know,
jus' where you: (.) go where you like,

R appeals to necessity in contrast to personal preference or desire, a disposition formulated as an emphatic ("would love", "whole world") counter-preference for a world where people can "go where you like". Note the symmetric appeal to both sides of the psychological equation, to an external known world ("there's got to be") that constrains a reluctant belief or opinion ("unfortunately", "would love"). R's reluctance is not a free-floating indication of his attitude, but deals with the interviewer's specific framing of the questions (both "do you think . . ." and "how do you feel . . ."), and to the possibly unwelcome inferences about him that would be available were he simply to support apartheid.

It is important to emphasize that this kind of analysis entails no commitment to the genuineness or falsity of R's reluctance, preferences, nor any other mental state that might be conceptualized, managed by, or at issue in, the talk. DSP analyses it all as ways of talking that can be unravelled through a detailed analysis of how specific descriptions are constructed in ways that perform discursive actions within sequential, rhetorical sequences of talk.

DSP, Institutions and Interaction

One of the features of social psychology for much of the twentieth century has been its attempt to generate social-cognitive explanations that link underlying variables to outcomes. This has directed attention away from the specific structural organizations that make up any culture, such as factory production lines, doctors' surgeries, family meal times, and so on. In emphasizing the occasioned, action-oriented and constructed nature of discourse, DSP is required to pay attention to such specifics. In this emphasis on talk-at-work it picks up from the success of conversation analysis in productively explicating relations between discourse and social organization (Drew & Heritage, 1992).

Extract 3 indicates some potentially intricate relations between lexical selection and the situated activities that are being done. It comes from early in a couple's first relationship counselling session, and starts with the counsellor asking about their first separation (see also Edwards, 1997; Potter, 1996a). C is the counsellor, W the wife, and H the husband.

Extract 3

C: Was that the time that you left?=
W: =He left the:n that was- [nearl]y two years ago.
C: [°Yeh.°]
W: He walked out then.
(.)
Just (.) literally walked out.
(0.8)
C: ↑Oka↓y. So, (0.5) for me list↓enin:g, (.) you've
→ got (0.5) rich an:d, (.) complicated lives,
I nee:d to get some his[tory to put-]
W: [Yyeh. Mmmm,]
H: [Mmmm. (.) Ye:h. (.) Oh ye:h.]
H: [Yeh. (.) That's (.) exactly wha]t ih °um°

Let us focus on the counsellor's *formulation* of what W and H have been saying about themselves, that they have "rich and complicated lives". A number of analysts have observed that "formulations" play an important role in counselling talk (Buttny & Jensen, 1995; Davis, 1986). Indeed they seem to index counselling talk in much the way that initiation–response–evaluation sequences suggest classroom interaction (Mehan, 1979). So, what might such formulations be *doing* in counselling talk? Let us open up some lines of investigation to illustrate DSP's approach.

First, "rich and complicated" converts a rather painful account of trouble and conflict into something positive, or at the very least interesting. In this it may contrast with critical or anxious responses that the couple may have had from friends or relatives. The counsellor presents himself via this formulation as neither judging nor made anxious by talk about difficult relationship problems. Quite the reverse, "rich and complicated" looks forward to the exploration of these complexities.

Second, it is an impartial formulation, neither criticizing nor supporting either party. This, of course, is an issue for relationship counselling where trust might easily be broken if the counsellor is seen as aligning with one party against the other. In its particular sequential placing, following the wife's criticisms of her husband, this turn neither disagrees nor agrees with the criticisms. They are left on the table, as it were, for possible later discussion. The interactional outcome of this can be seen in the couple's simultaneous and emphasized agreement with the formulation (last two lines).

Third, and less obviously perhaps, this avoidance of taking sides, and the treatment of the events as neither bad or worrying, can be *part of* a broader emphasis on how the couple can constructively work toward repairing their relationship. One step will be to become more relaxed about discussing their problems and less fearful of its consequences. Moreover, "complicated" is a descriptive term that sets up relationship problems as a kind of puzzle that can be unravelled via counselling. That is, it provides for the counselling which is to come, as a sensible option where the technical skills will be put to enthusiastic work sorting out complications. These latter orientations of the formulation "rich and complicated lives", and of its specific location in the talk, are rather speculative on their own, and with regard to just this one extract, but could be part of a larger analysis of how the nature and business of counselling, as a discursive activity, are produced and oriented to in various ways.

In Lawrence Wieder's (1974) ethnomethodological terms, such characterizations are multiformulative and multiconsequential; they formulate the world and the identities of the participants in a range of different ways, and they have a range of practical upshots. The general point here is to show the value of treating discourse as *occasioned* (in this sequence, in counselling talk), as *action-oriented* (addressing a range of practical counselling tasks), and as both construct*ed* (from particular terms) and construct*ing* (of the clients' problems in ways that prepares them for counselling work).

THE FUTURE OF DISCURSIVE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

DSP is a relatively new perspective in the area of language and social psychology. Nevertheless it is growing fast and providing challenging new analyses of traditional social psychological topics, as well as opening up new subjects for study. In the next decade we expect to see a number of developments. There will be further productive articulation of the relation between DSP and conversation analysis (Edwards, 1995b, 1998; Frith & Kitzinger, 1998). There will be further theoretical clarification of the relation between DSP and more Foucaultian thinking in discourse analysis (Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995). There will be less reliance on interview methods and research will become increasingly focused on naturalistic materials, exploiting the technological possibilities of supplementing audio with video records (e.g., Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996). There will be further debate about the role of cognitivism in social psychology and language, and the possibility of taking cognitive notions as topic without at the same time resorting to cognitivist explanations (see, for example, Edwards, 1997, 1999; Potter, 1998c).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Charles Antaki, Alexa Hepburn, Celia Kitzinger, Claudia Puchta and Sue Speer for making helpful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

REFERENCES

Antaki, C. (1994). *Explaining and arguing: The social organization of accounts*. London: Sage.

Antaki, C. (1998). Identity ascriptions in their time and place: "Fagin" and "The Terminally Dim". In C. Antaki & S. Widdicombe (Eds), *Identities in talk* (pp. 71–86). London: Sage.

Auburn, T., Lea, S. & Drake, S. (1999). "It's your opportunity to be truthful": Disbelief, mundane reasoning and the investigation of crime. In. C. Willig (Ed.), *Applied discourse analysis: Social and psychological investigations* (pp. 44–65). Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Berger, P.L. & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality*. Garden City: Doubleday.

Billig, M. (1985). Prejudice, categorization and particularization: From a perceptual to a rhetorical approach. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, **15**, 79–103.

Billig, M. (1987). *Arguing and thinking: A rhetorical approach to social psychology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Billig, M. (1991). *Ideologies and beliefs*. London: Sage.

Billig, M. (1997) Rhetorical and discursive analysis: How families talk about the royal family. In N. Hayes (Ed.), *Doing qualitative analysis in psychology*. London: Psychology Press.

Brown, R.W. & Fish, D. (1983). The psychological causality implicit in language. *Cognition*, **14**, 237–273.

Buttny, R. & Jensen, A.D. (1995) Telling problems in an initial family therapy session: The hierarchical organization of problem-talk. In G.H. Morris & R.J. Chenail (Eds), *The Talk of the clinic: Explorations in the analysis of medical and therapeutic discourse* (pp. 19–47). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Chalmers, A. (1992). *What is this thing called science? An assessment of the nature and status of science and its methods* (2nd edn). Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press.

Coyle, A. (1995). Discourse analysis. In G.M. Breakwell, S. Hammond & C. Fife-Schaw (Eds), *Research methods in psychology* (pp. 243–258). London: Sage.

Davis, C. (1986). The process of problem (re)formulation in psychotherapy. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, **8**, 44–74.

Drew, P. & Heritage, J.C. (Eds) (1992). *Talk at work: Interaction in institutional settings.* Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge Press.

Edwards, D. (1994). Script formulations: A study of event descriptions in conversation. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, **13**, 211–247.

Edwards, D. (1995a). Two to tango: Script formulations, dispositions, and rhetorical symmetry in relationship troubles talk. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, **28**, 319–350.

Edwards, D. (1995b). Sacks and psychology, *Theory and Psychology*, **5**, 579–596.

Edwards, D. (1997). *Discourse and cognition.* London: Sage.

Edwards, D. (1998). The relevant thing about her: Social identity categories in use. In C. Antaki & S. Widdicombe (Eds), *Identities in talk* (pp. 15–33). London: Sage.

Edwards, D. (1999). Shared knowledge as a performative and rhetorical category. In J. Verschueren (Ed.), *Pragmatics in 1998: Selected papers from the 6th International Pragmatics Conference* (Vol. 2, pp. 130–141). Antwerp: International Pragmatics Association.

Edwards, D. (in press). Analysing racial discourse: A view from discursive psychology. In H. van den Berg, H. Houtcoup-Steenstra & M. Wetherell (Eds), *Analyzing interviews on racial issues: Multidisciplinary approaches to interview discourse.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Edwards, D. & Potter, J. (1992). *Discursive psychology.* London: Sage.

Edwards, D. & Potter, J. (1993). Language and causation: A discursive action model of description and attribution. *Psychological Review*, **100**, 23–41.

Edwards, D. & Potter, J. (1999). Language and causal attribution: A rejoinder to Schmid and Fiedler. *Theory & Psychology*, **9**, 849–863.

Fiske, S.T. & Taylor, S.E. (1991) *Social cognition* (2nd edn). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Frith, H. & Kitzinger, C (1998). "Emotion work" as a participant resource: A feminist analysis of young women's talk-in-interaction. *Sociology*, **32**, 299–320.

Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in ethnomethodology.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Gill, R. (1993). Justifying injustice: Broadcasters' accounts on inequality in radio. In E. Burman & I. Parker (Eds), *Discourse analytic research: Repertoires and readings of texts in action* (pp. 75–93). London: Routledge.

Gill, R. (1996). Discourse analysis: Methodological aspects. In J.E. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods for psychology and the social sciences* (pp. 141–156). Leicester: British Psychological Society.

Goodwin, C. & Goodwin, M.H. (1996). Seeing as situated activity: Formulating planes. In Y. Engeström & D. Middleton (Eds), *Cognition and communication at work* (pp. 61–95). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Hepburn, A. (2000). Power lines: Derrida, discursive psychology and the management of accusations of school bullying, *British Journal of Social Psychology*, **39**, 605–628.

Heritage, J.C. (1984). *Garfinkel and ethnomethodology.* Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Heritage, J.C. (1988). Explanations as accounts: A conversation analytic perspective. In C. Antaki (Ed.), *Analysing everyday explanation: A casebook of methods* (pp. 127–144). London: Sage.

Heritage, J.C. (1995). Conversation analysis: Methodological aspects. In U. Quasthoff (Ed.), *Aspects of oral communication* (pp. 391–418). Berlin: De Gruyter.

Heritage, J.C. & Greatbatch, D.L. (1991). On the institutional character of institutional talk: The case of news interviews. In D. Boden & D.H. Zimmerman (Eds), *Talk and social structure: Studies in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis* (pp. 93–137). Oxford: Polity.

Hutchby, I. & Wooffitt, R. (1998). *Conversation analysis: Principles, practices and applications*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Jodelet, D. (1991). *Madness and social representations*. London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf.

MacMillan, K. & Edwards, D. (1999). Who killed the princess? Description and blame in the British press. *Discourse Studies*, **1**, 151–174.

McKinlay, A. & Dunnett, A. (1998). How gun-owners accomplish being deadly average. In C. Antaki & S. Widdicombe (Eds), *Identities in talk* (pp. 34–51). London: Sage.

Mehan, H. (1979). *Learning lessons: Social organization in the classroom.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Moscovici, S. (1984). The phenomenon of social representations. In R.M. Farr & S. Moscovici (Eds), *Social representations* (pp. 3–70). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Myers, G. (1998). Displaying opinions: Topics and disagreement in focus groups. *Language in Society*, **27**, 85–111.

Neisser, U. (1967). *Cognitive psychology*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Pomerantz, A.M. (1978). Compliment responses: Notes on the co-operation of multiple constraints. In J. Schenkein (Ed.), *Studies in the organization of conversational interaction* (pp. 79–98). London: Academic Press.

Potter, J. (1996a). *Representing reality: Discourse, rhetoric and social construction.* London: Sage.

Potter, J. (1996b). Discourse anaysis and constructionist approaches: Theoretical background. In J.E. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods for psychology and the social sciences* (pp. 125–140). Leicester: British Psychological Society.

Potter, J. (1997). Discourse analysis as a way of analysing naturally occurring talk. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative analysis: Issues of theory and method.* London: Sage.

Potter, J. (1998a). Discursive social psychology: From attitudes to evaluations. *European Review of Social Psychology*, **9**, 233–266.

Potter, J. (1998b). Qualitative and discourse analysis. In A.S.Bellack & M. Hersen (Eds), *Comprehensive clinical psychology* (Vol. 3, pp. 117–144): Oxford: Pergamon.

Potter, J. (1998c). Beyond cognitivism. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, **32**, 119–128.

Potter, J. & Edwards, D. (1999). Social representations and discursive psychology. *Culture & Psychology*, **5**, 445–456.

Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour.* London: Sage.

Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. (1988). Accomplishing attitudes: Fact and evaluation in racist discourse. *Text*, **8**, 51–68.

Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. (1994). Analyzing discourse. In A. Bryman and B. Burgess (Eds), *Analyzing qualitative data* (pp. 47–56). London: Routledge.

Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. (1995). Discourse analysis. In J. Smith, R. Harré & L. van Langenhove (Eds), *Rethinking methods in psychology* (pp. 80–92). London: Sage.

Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. (1998). Social representations, discourse analysis and racism. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The psychology of the social* (pp. 138–55). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Potter, J., Edwards, D. & Wetherell, M. (1993). A model of discourse in action. *American Behavioural Scientist*, **36**, 383–401.

Puchta, C. & Potter, J. (in press). Manufacturing individual opinions: Market research focus groups and the discursive psychology of attitudes. *British Journal of Social Psychology*.

Roffe, M. (1996). The social organisation of social work. PhD dissertation, Loughborough University.

Sacks, H. (1992). *Lectures on conversation* (Vols. I & II) edited by G. Jefferson. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
Schegloff, E.A. (1992). Repair after next turn: The last structurally provided defence of intersubjectivity in conversation. *American Journal of Sociology*, **97**, 1295–1345.
Schegloff, E.A. (1997). Whose text? Whose context? *Discourse and Society*, **8**, 165–187.
Semin, G. & Fiedler, K. (1989). Relocating attributional phenomena within a language–cognition interface: The case of actors' and observers' perspectives. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, **19**, 491–508.
Speer, S. & Potter, J. (2000). The management of heterosexist talk: Conversational resources and prejudiced claims. *Discourse and Society*, **11**, 543–572.
te Molder, H. (1999). Discourse of dilemmas: An analysis of communication planners' accounts. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, **38**, 245–263.
Wetherell, M. & Potter, J. (1992). *Mapping the language of racism: Discourse and the legitimation of exploitation*. London: Harvester/New York: Columbia University Press.
Widdicombe, S. & Wooffitt, R. (1995). *The language of youth subcultures: Social identity in action*. Hemel Hempstead, UK: Harvester/Wheatsheaf.
Wieder, D.L. (1974). Telling the code. In R. Turner (Ed.), *Ethnomethnodology* (pp. 144–172). Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
Wooffitt, R.C. (1990). On the analysis of interaction: An introduction to conversation analysis. In P. Luff, D. Frohlich & G.N. Gilbert (Eds), *Computers and conversation* (pp. 7–38). New York: Academic Press.
Wooffitt, R. (1992). *Telling tales of the unexpected: The organization of factual discourse*. London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf.
Wooffitt, R. (1993). Analysing accounts. In N. Gilbert (Ed.), *Researching social life* (pp. 287–305). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
Woolgar, S. (1988). *Science: The very idea*. Chichester: Ellis Horwood/London: Tavistock.