Affect, practice and contingency: critical discursive psychology and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

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Abstract

This article intersperses Sedgwick's analysis of paranoid theory and critical discursive psychology, focusing in particular on tools for researching affect and emotion. It is suggested that there are some surprising convergences between Sedgwick's conclusions about reparative ways of analysing and the emphases in critical discursive psychology. Both stress contingency and craft, the uncertain trajectories of discourses, and what Sedgwick describes as 'the middle ranges of agency'. Key differences lie in the theory of affect adopted. Critical discursive psychology remains more committed to analyses of the ideological. A further aim of this article is to illustrate the main concerns of discursive research on affective practice. To this end, an extract from a focus group exchange concerning women's friendships and the experience of being rejected by a friend is explored, highlighting the patterning of everyday meaning making imbued with emotion, strategic identity work, and the ways in which participants mobilise psy techniques and vocabularies to hopeful ends.

Keywords Affect · Sedgwick · Critical discursive psychology · Psychosocial methods · The psy-complex

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to develop a conversation between two perspectives not usually seen as commensurate—Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (1997, 2003) critique of paranoid modes of critical theory and critical discursive psychology (Edley 2001; Taylor 2015; Wetherell 1998, 2007, 2008, 2015). What might be gained from such

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a pairing? We suggest that a reading of Sedgwick's work through the lens of critical discursive research can highlight crucial, but often neglected, facets of her thinking, and suggest new ways her insights can be realised in empirical research. From our standpoint as critical discursive psychologists, exploring the parallels with Sedgwick's arguments moves debate on from simplistic views of discursive research as a 'cognitive' approach, inappropriately concerned with language and the strategic actor. It is an opportunity to discuss new developments as critical discursive research moves to focus on affect and emotion and open up some fresh trajectories.

The first section of the paper offers our reading of Sedgwick's arguments. The second turns to describe some key commitments guiding affective-discursive research in critical psychology. The remaining section of the paper then develops an empirical illustration from a research project on friendships between women (Martinussen 2018a, b; Martinussen et al. in press). Our aim here is not to produce a developed analysis, but to take one extract from a focus group exchange to illustrate the everyday expertise involved in crafting sense-making resources. For instance, we spend some time exploring how the plural and shifting set of ideologies of the psy-complex are invested in and lived out, as understandings of women's friendship relations are also brought into being. We use the analytic demonstration to specify in more detail the orientations of discursive work on affective practice, highlighting the perhaps surprising connections with Sedgwick's concerns.

Sedgwick's innovations

As is well known, Sedgwick's general discontent with critical theory was anchored in the notion that too many projects are orientated to dualisms, such as self/other, active/passive, nature/culture, lack/plenitude and, most insidiously, repression/liberation. Re-purposing Paul Ricoeur's (1970) thesis concerning the hermeneutics of suspicion, she suggested that critical analysts tend to allow themselves just two options throughout the interpretive process, accepting or refusing (Sedgwick 1997, 2003). As a consequence, the bulk of critical theory routinely operates in what Sedgwick described as a paranoid mode. Scholars become overly preoccupied with knowing best, refusing to be surprised, chasing down and exposing 'bad' knowledge (Sedgwick 1997). These criticisms are levelled at a wide range of social constructionist undertakings and methodologies, but post-structuralist projects such as the analysis of power through genealogy, performativity and discourse theories are targeted specifically. Sedgwick argued that the habits of thought associated with this paradigm have become stale and circular, with a stagnating effect on the humanities and social sciences.

As a corrective to maintaining a "terrible alertness" (Sedgwick 1996, p. 278) to the dangers posed by the bad, Sedgwick challenged critical scholars to instead imagine an object of study that is more mixed. Might it be possible to move scholarship beyond identifying and pushing apart the admired from the condemned? She suggested analysts should take up the counterpart to paranoia Melanie Klein (1946) proposed in her theory of object relations: the depressive position. This position recognises complexity and ambivalence. There is loss here but also nourishment and

comfort, opening up a route to reparative scholarly practices. Reparative practices reassemble good and bad part-objects, and re-think the causes of negative effects, enabling a shift from the anticipatory practices of paranoia (Sedgwick 1997). Displacing critical attachments, however, requires a re-articulation of analysts' affective habits, and this in part explains why Sedgwick prioritised ontology and embodied experience over knowledge and epistemology (Johnson 2015).

The second innovation we note in Sedgwick's programme arises from problems she associated with knee-jerk social constructionism. She argued that much critical theory entailed an 'automatic anti-biologism'; the social becomes the privileged term, and the body becomes written out of analysis (Sedgwick and Frank 1995). Her aim instead was to find a way of thinking that would incorporate embodied feeling and lived texture as part of reparative moves. She was a forerunner, therefore, of the recent, major shift in critical theory—towards affect and emotion (Figlerowicz 2012). Sedgwick's search for a new way of thinking led in her work, with Adam Frank, to the psychologist Silvan Tomkins, and what Sedgwick and Frank describe as his "[s]ublimely alien" affect programme theories (1995, p. 502). Tomkins proposed that there are eight or nine innate affect programmes stored in the body and brain. But he also maintained that affects were created in relation to a near infinite range of phenomenon, objects, ideas, activities or people, and are therefore unpredictable. The innate programmes—shame, interest, surprise, joy, anger, fear, distress and disgust—may become attached to any object, or another affect: "one can be excited by anger, disgusted by shame, or surprised by joy" (Sedgwick 2003, p. 19). Sedgwick and Frank (1995, p. 521) admitted it would be easy to discredit Tomkins' hypotheses, but they prioritised the potential for learning over the accuracy and logic of his formulations.

The final innovation we want to note is the aspect of Sedgwick's work that we feel has received the least attention from critical researchers. As part of her call for an expanded horizon in critical scholarship, Sedgwick argued that more complex notions of agency were required. She suggested that paranoid scholarship misses subtle, local and contingent relations (Sedgwick 1997, p. 124). Moving beyond the paranoid and towards more textured reparative scholarship involves also moving beyond "all-or-nothing understandings" of human activity (Sedgwick 2007, p. 631). Sedgwick wanted to focus on:

> … a form of relationality that deals in, for example, negotiations (including win–win negotiations), the exchange of affect, and other small differentials, the middle ranges of agency—the notion that you can be relatively empowered or disempowered. (Sedgwick 2007, pp. 631-632)

Sedgwick suggested that if we scrutinise these 'middle ranges', and remain open to the ways in which agency is both present and absent, then researchers could develop a less binary conceptualisation of power. It might be possible to think more clearly about *relative* power. For Sedgwick, the kind of creativity she valued could best be found here, along with the possibilities for change (2003, p. 13). The tectonic blocks of big theory needed to be infused with studies of textures, gestures, mobilities and shape-shifting flexibilities.

Sedgwick's astute diagnosis has proved compelling to many over the years, and critical scholars have been enthusiastic in exploring reparative ways of working. Feminist critics based in literary studies and postcolonial theory have been most eager to take up Sedgwick's calls (Facundo 2016; Cvetkovich 2012; Love 2014; Wiegman 2014; Muñoz 2006; Shahani 2012). A number of recent publications have also sought to recondition psychology with reparative readings. Katherine Johnson (2015) proposes that the development of a queered psychology could learn from Sedgwick's reparative impulses, and like Rachel Jane Liebert's creative blend of philosophy, poetry and affect theory (2017), she is inspired by community psychology settings. Through reinvigorating Sedgwick's theories of shame, Wen Liu's (2017) aim is to undo the binarism of psychology and replace it with interdisciplinary curiosity. In addition to these initiatives, those more focused on affect have developed a range of new modes of investigations that speak to Sedgwick's concern with introducing embodied experience into analysis (Clough 2008, 2009; Knudsen and Carsten 2015; Blackman 2012, 2013; Blackman and Venn 2010). There have been explorations of non-conscious, habitual, rhythmic, sensual and more visceral forms of activity including phenomena such as dancing and performance (McCormack 2008; Garcia 2016; Blackman 2011; Barbour and Hitchmough 2014).

It is not our intention here, however, to review these new approaches. Our aim is to explore what the perspective critical discursive psychology offers and the ways in which it also instantiates Sedgwick's agenda. We suggest critical discursive psychology provides a mode of analysis that works across emotion and meaning making, which is particularly concerned with the middle ranges of agency, and with the texture and contingency of everyday life. Heather Love (2014, p. 236) asks in relation to Sedgwick's work: "I am enabled—but to do what?" We argue that researchers could be enabled to explore the multi-modal spaces of everyday meaning making, the ways in which people actively narrate and formulate their worlds, articulate and communicate pain and joy, and construct solidarities and divisions.

Critical discursive psychology

Discourse approaches emerged in social psychology in the UK in the 1980s along with the first intimations of critical psychology (Wetherell 2015). Both intellectual movements were a response to the sense of crisis and dead ends experienced in the 1970s in social psychology (Parker 1999). Discourse research in psychology drew creatively and generatively on larger intellectual developments in the social sciences and humanities such as post-structuralism and postmodernism, Foucault's analyses of knowledge/power, theories of ideology, Lacan's thinking, microsociology and social constructionism, conversation analysis and ethnomethodology, ancient studies of rhetoric, the sociology of science, speech act theory, and Wittgensteinian philosophy. Nearly 40 years on, discourse research in psychology has become a stream of work with many tributaries. These include, for instance, research (Walkerdine 1990, 2007; Blackman and Walkerdine 2001; Blackman 2001; Walkerdine and Lucey 1989) building on the early programme laid out by the Changing the Subject collective (Blackman et al. 2008; Henriques et al. 1984) deploying post-structuralist

and psychoanalytic perspectives to investigate subjectivities. The discourse tradition in psychology also includes the discursive psychology developed by Potter and Edwards (Potter 1996; Edwards 1997; Edwards and Potter 1992). This perspective was more influenced by ethnomethodology and conversation analysis and focused on fine-grain analysis of social interaction. Critical discursive psychology (e.g. Edley 2001; Taylor 2015; Wetherell 1998, 2007, 2008, 2015), which is the approach taken in this paper, works with some of the core premises of discursive psychology such as the attention paid to the action orientation of discourse and the ways in which people's accounts formulate 'minds and worlds', but it adds to these a sensibility derived from post-structuralist analysis, feminism and social justice movements and a particular interest in the resources people draw upon to make sense.

Key to both discursive psychology and critical discursive psychology is the emphasis on practice, and it is this that opens up lines of convergence with Sedgwick's approach. Discourse research aims to identify and theorise the patterns, regularities and forms of order in talk and texts. These patterns, however, are not assumed to be strongly predictive cause–effect laws but understood as forms of social action that follow 'the logic of practice' (Bourdieu 1990). In other words, our focus is on what are seen as flexible, normatively organised human activities, and often these have a loose, open-ended, 'could be otherwise' (Edwards 1997) quality. Discourse practices are routines but they could also be described as skills, although these are often inchoate forms of expertise. They can become 'dispositions' in the sense Bourdieu (1990) described, as practices sediment and harden in both individual and collective life, becoming seemingly non-negotiable, conventional and habitual ways of acting.

The kinds of discourse practices that particularly interest critical discursive psychologists are those organising the content and form of people's meaning making in situ, although interaction patterns and activities such as accounting, justifying, accusing, and legitimating are also relevant. We are interested in the resources available to people to make sense of events, other actors and their own positions and the ways these become combined, patterned and ordered and repeated. What routines of meaning making become pervasive or marginalised, canonical or invisible, deployed or negated, and what are the social and subjective consequences?

Critical discursive psychologists, then, share with Sedgwick an interest in people's active puzzling, and a respect for the ways in which we all wrestle with the meaning and value of events—was that event good, bad, or was it good and bad? There is a shared interest, too, in craft, in celebrating people's expertise in the making of social worlds. Close attention to interaction, accounting and practices of meaning making reveals the particular texture of everyday life, its open, yet knotty, quality. Crucially, critical discursive psychology attempts to develop a position betwixt and between the voluntarism of much fine-grain discourse analysis and the denial of agency characteristic of some post-structuralist discourse analyses (Wetherell 1998). In other words, the aim has been to pay attention to the ways people are positioned and the identities and subjectivities afforded by ideologies and discourses, but also to explore how people actively negotiate these 'cultural slots', combine them, and work across them. We do not assume the individual is a sovereign and independent agent, but we are interested in processes of self-ordering,

in preferences for one form of account over another, and in capacities as well as constraints. The focus, in other words, has been on those contingencies and middle ranges of agency Sedgwick also emphasises.

For sure, in some respects, critical discursive psychology also remains unapologetically 'paranoid' in Sedgwick's sense. Early work on racism (e.g. Wetherell and Potter 1992), for example, proceeded as an analysis of ideology, and accounts of ideology involve the assumption that we can recognise and evaluate oppressive representations and 'know better' than those whose utterances we are analysing. But the conception of ideology in critical discursive psychology has been strongly influenced by Michael Billig's (1991) unpicking of classical notions of the ideological. Wetherell and Potter (1992) thus investigated what were seen as patchworks, not as monolithic discursive formations, and focused on the work people do to persuade and communicate, often contradictory, views. Discursive formation was also seen as having uncertain trajectories. Representations are mobile, the meanings and the import depend on contexts of use, and this relational and situational quality frustrates any easy paranoid search for 'the bad'.

In recent years, critical discursive work in psychology has tried to tackle affect and emotion and pay more attention to embodied experience (Wetherell 2012; Wetherell 2015). To many this seems counter-intuitive: is affect not experience beyond reason, beyond words, beyond talking and beyond the process of trying to make sense? Is it not about ineffable intensity rather than parsing and categorisation (Massumi 2002)? Wetherell (2012) argues that these formulations of affect, which divide the making of meaning from the hit of events on bodies, obscure rather than illuminate (see also Hemmings 2005; Pile 2010). In particular, they fail to appreciate the ways in which the mobilising of meaning and the registration of turbulence are inextricably entangled.

Here, then, we disagree with Sedgwick. She suggested that the problem with post-structuralist discourse analysis was that it left no space for the body; investigations of codified knowledge had overwhelmed attention to feeling. The appeal of the 1960s psychobiology of Tomkins was precisely that it seemed to offer a way to reset scholarship. But this over-generalises the very specific problems with post-structuralist discourse analysis to all forms of discourse analysis. And, in recent years it has become clear that Tomkins' emphasis on innate affect programmes, indeed all such 'basic emotion' approaches, do not provide a strong foundation for understanding the embodied aspects of affect and emotion (Leys 2011). Confining the play of affect to eight or nine emotions also undermines the contingency, creativity and flexibility Sedgwick celebrated. One way forward then is to think again about the inter-relation of affect and discourse and to develop approaches for exploring the affective-discursive.

We have been exploring the notion that affect acts a form of social practice (Wetherell 2012, 2013, 2015; for cognate lines of thought in critical social psychology see Brown and Stenner 2009; Cromby 2015; Walkerdine 2010, in sociology Ahmed 2004; Burkitt 2014; Reckwitz 2002, 2012, in history, Reddy 2001, 2009; Scheer 2012, and in geography Everts and Wagner 2012; Laurier and Philo 2006). The notion of affective practice draws attention to affect and emotion that is regular if not always necessarily routine, to affect that is relatively predictably

ordered and patterned, socially consequential, and bound up with ongoing social relations. As Wetherell et al. (2018, p. 5) describe:

> Social researchers investigate social practices of grooming, cooking, sport, games and leisure, and explore communities of practice, in similar vein we might attend to the organisation of affective practices such as righteous indignation on Twitter, communities of practice based on banter … the affective practices which organize institutionalized emotional labour such as handling irate customers in call centres, or the ways in which those participating in a commemorative event move through the affecting possibilities set up by the music and speeches. Every social practice involves some kind of affect (even if that is just boredom and indifference, or just enough investment or fear to keep participants enacting), what marks out affective practice, however, from general social practice, is that this is human activity where emotion is a specific and principal focus of the practice.

We wonder, then, what Sedgwick might have made of critical discursive psychology and its focus on affect and discourse? We hope to illustrate that it is not just another paranoid, word-based method. Instead, we demonstrate how detailing people's non-linear, muddling through, re-figuring of affects, reveals the rich texture of social life. The ineffable remains ineffable for sure, but we can still be interested in what people do with feeling. The next section will discuss how our general emphases translate into an interest in particular patterns in talk and text. We use one woman's account of a friendship gone wrong, drawn from a dyadic research interview, to illustrate the kinds of ordering of the affective-discursive domain critical discursive research tries to put centre-stage.

Illustrating affective-discursive practice

The extract we have chosen to illustrate our themes comes from a research project conducted in Aotearoa New Zealand on women's friendships (Martinussen 2018a, 2018b; Martinussen et al. in press; for a full account of the way in which the data were produced and the conduct of the research see Martinussen 2019). As noted earlier, we work with this material not to draw any particular conclusions here about women's accounts of friendship in themselves but as a way of developing an exegesis of affective-discursive research.

The excerpt below comes from a discussion between Maree, who is the researcher, and Leeann and Harriett who are research participants (pseudonyms have been provided). Leeann is picking up on a previous part of the discussion where she and Harriett had agreed that friendships typically end amicably through a natural and easy process of drifting apart. Returning to the topic, Leeann provides a counter-example. She is describing what happened when she confronted a friend whom she felt had offended her, and where there seemed to be a lack of agreement about the future of the friendship.

Leeann: I just feel like I am on my journey and a certain pathway and I am deal-
            ing with my life and so I invest in trust and shared some issues of fear
            and anger and anxiety but instead of it being accepted like I thought it
            might be because of what our past conversations had been around trust
            issues and relationships and boys and so forth, yeah I was insulted, so for
            example with the word weirdo or 'oh god I can't even relate to feeling
            like that'. And so-

Harriett: Wow and you thought you knew this person.

Leeann: Yeah.

Harriett: You probably anticipated how they would react or hoped that they would
            be supportive.

Leeann: That's right, yeah. And so I guess it just shows that like for me I was able
            to have the courage and have the confidence and feel comfortable to con-
            front it but then once I confronted I didn't feel like I could go to the next
            step.

Maree: What's the next step?

Leeann: Well because of course from her reaction of 'weirdo' and 'I can't relate
            to you' it was like 'What do I do now? That's not what I was expecting'.
            I was expecting her to cry or give me a hug. My body just couldn't cope
            with that kind of a reaction and so I mean that is my issue and that is all
            part of what's going on with me.

Harriet: So did you choose flight?

Leeann: No I chose fight.

Harriet: You stood up.

Leeann: Yeah and I swore and I got really angry.

Harriet: And that just escalated it did it?

Leeann: For a moment yeah and then it calmed down and-

Harriet: So where is the relationship now, where is the friendship?

Leeann: Um talking and basically avoiding that issue- topic and maybe we might
            get to the point where it comes up again because I just feel like we've
            had a couple of conversations that in the past where we have shared and
            we have been able to get to what I thought was the next level and just
            hold each other for a long time and cry and so I sort of felt like we were
            moving to the next step but it's sort of gone backwards because of that
            response. Again don't over-analyse it.

Leeann is puzzling over a painful episode, one that has probably been the subject
of much previous rumination, accounting and affect as she tries to frame and place
the rupture with her friend. In Sedgwick's terminology, there is indeed both texture
and contingency here. Texture emerges as we respond to Leeann's sadness and con-
fusion, and also as she brings together different affect chronologies: communicat-
ing current mixed feelings and retrospective courage and confidence, shock, and a
ratchet up to anger. Contingency is evident in Leeann's attempt to work out what
did happen, what it might mean, who she might be in this, and the character of her
friend. There are typically multiple, potential story trajectories in social life. Fre-
quently, in the moment of accounting, we try to damp down contingency and settle

on one formulation. But as audiences, interests and purposes change, other trajectories might be brought into being. This variability, the settling process and its consequences are the familiar territory of critical discursive psychological research.

Words and bodies

The starting point for critical discursive investigations of affect and emotion is an appreciation for the intertwining of words and bodies. Particular attention is paid to people's discursive accounts and narratives and how they make sense of affect-laden situations and episodes. These formulations are seen as potentially consequential for what happens next, both in the moment, and for what can be carried into the future. Semiosis and the making of meaning are, of course, not just about language. They work through multiple modalities. But words, conversations, inner speech, talk and texts have a primacy, role and power in social life that is difficult to overlook.

Leeann's account reports on her attempts to share with her friend experiences of fear, anger and anxiety and her friend's strong reaction ('weirdo' and 'I can't relate to you'). She is articulating for Harriett and Maree what happened and communicating what she felt. 'Telling affect', however, is not a simple process of feeling, then registering and defining this embodied state, and subsequently describing it in words that exquisitely preserve, represent and complete the initial categorisation and definition. Affect is not stable in that way, and embodied feeling cannot be separated from making meaning. People live in a dynamic, often turbulent and intense, affective-discursive domain where, as noted above, the moment of feeling and the moment of articulation are entangled. Discursive accounts also have retrospective power in the sense that as we articulate our affect, for ourselves and to others, it becomes re-worked. The topic then for affective-discursive research is an ongoing, continually forming, and re-shaping bubble.

Wetherell (2012) argues that acts of feeling and acts of articulation and communication are typically strongly patterned. The focus in analysis is on how "domains of semiosis and affect become worked together in regular, ordered practices" (Wetherell et al. 2015, p. 57). Affective practices offer people familiar routes to make meaning in ways that resonate both for oneself and others, and are part of broader social and cultural currencies. Affective practices, like other social practices, vary in their flexibility and open-ended quality, sometimes highly predictable and routine and sometimes more idiosyncratic and unexpected. The concept of affective practice also draws attention to the dialogic and relational negotiation of affect and emotion where people work together to make emotional sense. As Harriett responds, she offers evaluations, as well as a range of possible subjectivities for Leeann ('you thought you knew this person', 'you probably anticipated how they would react …'). Harriett helps Leeann firm up the narrative and define the event. Much negotiation in social life seems to be of this kind. People constitute the affective-discursive domain in the moment, and for the longer-term, as they offer and inhabit recognisable affective practices, finding comfortable or uncomfortable, good enough, or not quite right, agreeable or painful affect-discursive spaces.

The middle ranges of agency

What do the 'middle ranges of agency', which Sedgwick valued, look like? In critical discursive psychology terms, the character of the agentic emerges through a double gaze (Wetherell 1998). As noted, like post-structuralist or Foucauldian discourse analysis, we are curious about the organisation of the cultural resources people draw upon to make meaning, the ways in which they are positioned and the subjectivities composed, but we also concerned with people's skilful shaping of social material. Let us take first those cultural resources and the broad discursive formations.

The extract above is a good example of the ways in which psy discourse (Rose 1996, 1999) has infiltrated everyday talk and women's accounts of their friendships (Martinussen 2019, chap. 6). Leeann's description of herself on a journey, for instance, and her presentation of herself as comfortable and confident with confronting difficult issues make sense in a culture where therapy technologies are valorised, and where there are imperatives to verbalise the stages one has got to in the journey. Her descriptions of expecting to reach the 'next level' in her friendship are also reminiscent of therapeutic discourses, where relationships are posited as, ideally, continuously improving (Illouz 2009). Note too that the version of intimacy constructed here rests on showing vulnerability, and 'investing' in trust, which are further hallmarks of the management of relationships as per psy technologies. There is a common sense quality to Leeann's constructions of intimacy, and Maree and Harriett accept these as truths in the conversational moment. Although always partial and unstable, we suggest that the hegemony of psy-influenced intimacies in contemporary times is accomplished as Leeann puts them to use.

So far in this analysis, so paranoid, one could say. But we are not suggesting that big discourse, such as those making up the psy-complex, is automatically 'bad' and oppressive. It depends on the context of use. And, we also would want to explore Leeann's active and autonomous shaping of these discursive resources, and the particular ways in which she weaves together the affected body and the knowing mind. One strategy we use to invoke the middle ranges is to frame people as active experts in the management of everyday life. We position such experts as making the discursive resources available to them relevant and productive, despite a lack of sovereignty over their history and formation. For example, when Leeann's attributes her anger to "what's going on with [her]" at this point in her "journey", she puts a recognisable narrative resource to productive use. Effectively, she positions herself as undertaking an arduous journey of self-betterment, which, it is inferred, should be honoured, thus justifying the blame she lays on her friend for jeopardising that task. She becomes a wronged victim, which comes with social sanction to be angry. The fight response she and Harriett co-construct becomes *reasonable*.

When we point out the methods Leeann uses to craft her story of shock and anger, the power of the affecting event is not lost. We are not quibbling with Leeann's account, or trying to suggest that she is not authentic, and may not have

felt anger, or acute indignation. We are also not trying to suggest that Leeann's discursive work here is unusual, or self-interested and duplicitous. Rather, we are exploring the ways in which discourse is action-oriented, including discourse about emotion and affect. Crafting is part of social life both in the episodic moment and also subsequently in the retelling and accounting. Leeann's relative empowerment becomes visible, as we bring her generative use of available, intelligible formations into view and see what she does with them.

Perhaps the main point we wish to emphasise here is that although, as subjective qualia, feelings are in a strict sense incommunicable, we do constantly communicate them in organised ways. In the extract above, Leeann provides her listeners with a context and a way of making sense of why the event affected her. Listeners hear the pain and embarrassment involved in being called a 'weirdo' by a friend and the urgent need to make sense of that. And, it is through this active sense making that people come to inhabit 'the middle ranges of agency' and potentially become empowered (see also Burkitt 2014). If we try and analyse affect without discourse— as embodied reactions and eruptions—people lose agency. We are proposing that methodologies where participants' own activities and concerns become the foci represent more compassionate and respectful ways of interpreting social life, than analyses of discursive formations and docile subjects alone. Prioritising people's negotiations and orientations is a way of instantiating Sedgwick's appeals for a wider range of readings, but is born out of a methodological history that offers a well-developed range of techniques and concepts for examining affect in discourse.

The co-construction of intimate selves and the personalising of affect

A further central theme in critical discursive psychology is to ask how people construct subjectivities and identities. Analysts might ask 'what versions of self are being made?' As self-making is seen as a process of co-construction with meanings shifting between and around social actors (Wetherell 2006, p. 67), another key question is 'how are these versions accomplished?' We are interested in what is emergent from the moments, episodes, days and years of the self-making process as affective practices become personalised, repeated and sedimented over time, and the self becomes categorised and typified (Wetherell 2008). In the extract above, Leeann brings an already figured 'intimate self' to the conversation but we can also see how this self is partially reconfigured as the interaction unfolds, so there is potential for difference and change.

In the extract above Leeann works with the difficult position of being rejected, and this generates much of the affectivity evident in her account. What discursive resources does Leeann use to negotiate her identity and her relations with others, and how can she continue on, in a hopeful way? One form of practical knowledge Leeann relies on concerns the 'proper' sequencing of events relating to both the friendship itself and the recent breakdown. Leeann constructs, for example, a kind of common sense about different steps in relationships, and a "next step" and a "next level" that a friendship might move to. She draws on currently socially authorised and validated trajectories: firstly, apologies and hugs should follow after a friend

has been offended, and secondly, self-disclosing and sharing personal information should lead to greater intimacy. In both cases, Leeann's friend is positioned as disrupting these expected trajectories, allowing Leeann to reach some conclusions about what to feel and what to do next. Leeann crafts an identity for herself as reasonable in her confusion, and as someone who understands how to do intimacy herself.

Exchanges between social actors often operate as negotiations about what can be felt and by whom. Clear demonstration of how Harriett and the Maree's responses fundamentally shape Leeann's emoting and identities can be seen in the quicker exchange through the middle of this excerpt. Maree asks Leeann: "what's the next step?". As part of her response Leeann states that her "body just couldn't cope". This makes clear the strength of her emotional response, but it is ambiguous what she was feeling. Harriet's subsequent request for clarification, which makes use of the popularised evolutionary psychological concept of 'fight or flight', shapes the feeling position that Leeann occupies. In this question, Harriet mirrors and fosters the gravity of situation that Leeann has been crafting, as well as places limits on how Leeann can respond. Leeann's affective response is guided by the possibilities of choosing (a) fight, (b) flight, or (c) something else that would not follow the options presented to her, potentially causing interactional difficulty. Echoing Leeann's indignation in choosing 'fight', Harriett then lends Leeann's anger an element of bravery with the affirming: "you stood up". Again, this feedback provides an identity possibility for Leeann to work with, and she uses it to orchestrate the peak of the narrative and affective trajectory in the exchange with confirmation that she "swore and got really angry". This unfolding is only possible because social actors interact in an already populated space of distributed social material. Bodies and subjectivities cannot be 'hit' by an affect that is unmediated by social meanings.

So far, we have focused on the back and forth of the episode itself, but longer-term figurations of identity and subjectivity are also at stake. These are carried into the interaction, re-done, and potentially re-worked in the process. We are also interested in how affective practices, accounts and narratives becomes personalised as character, and in the identity accumulations composing self. There are a couple of points in the extract where Leeann draws on more durable senses of who she is. She mentions, for example, "that is all part of what is going on with me" and at the end she concludes with what seems to be a piece of self-talk—"again, don't over-analyse it". For her listeners, there is link with a description of herself she provided earlier in the discussion.

> For me I am terrible with thinking 'what have I done wrong? Why haven't they texted? Why haven't they called? It's been a month. Why should I call them? Why should I text them? It's two-way friendship'. So for me I'm terrible at just thinking of all the negative and thinking 'there must be a problem, what did I do wrong?'

These constructions of self seem to be referenced in her self-exhortation not to over-analyse. Although this discursive 'note to self' may have multiple meanings and functions, it likely also references the kind of self-instruction Leeann may have also carried out in solitude, as she questions why friends have not been in contact more.

Although there is a self-disciplining element to it, we might also interpret it as part of a development of a newer set of psycho-discursive resources, in which she lets go the attempt to chase down a definitive analysis of a friend's actions. Perhaps, in this way, we come to a Sedgwickian interpretation (Sedgwick 1997) in which we witness and support Leeann re-assembling fragments which might form a more hopeful future.

Conclusion

Our aim in this paper was to put together in the same space Sedgwick's reparative oeuvre and the main themes of critical discursive psychology. Points of strong difference emerge, most notably around the role given to Tomkins' traditional psychobiology of affect. We also remain much more positive about the thrust of the critical interpretive modes Sedgwick dismissed as paranoid. But the convergences were surprising. We suggest that if one is interested in affect, in texture, in craft and in the middle ranges of agency then critical discursive psychology has much to offer. There is a great deal to be gained from maintaining a dual standpoint—a critical focus on ideology and on reparative creativity.

This was illustrated by the extract we chose as our example. The emotional tenor created and experienced during the encounter between Leeann, Maree and Harriett demonstrated what Rosalind Gill (2008, p. 139) describes as the 'affective dimensions of ideology'. Here the ideology is the discourses making up the 'psy-complex' and the normalisation of therapy talk as a key way of making sense in neoliberal times (Jensen 2010; McLeod and Wright 2009; Swan 2008). These discourses also play roles in the gendered affective investments sustaining postfeminism (Berlant 2008; Dobson and Kanai 2018; Gill and Kanai 2018). We tried to unpack the patterning of some of the psy themes in this extract, and show how they are done in practice. Although we explore gut-feelings and the wrench of shame, we show how they become located in the interchange of hegemonic psy discourses and experiences of friendships, along with the imperatives that come with being a 'good' self or friend. But as we explored this take-up of psy techniques and vocabularies, it was also possible to admire people's deft and creative uses of cultural narratives. We try not rush to the conclusion that there are no good uses of ideology only bad ones (McLeod and Wright 2009; Wright 2008). We can both gnaw over and worry about some of the trajectories, and witness how people work the resources available to them in enabling ways with hope in their hearts.

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