

# The social construction of emotion : a study of religious discursive practices

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# The social construction of emotion: a study of religious discursive practices

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Cet article aborde la richesse et la complexité des pratiques discursives mises en oeuvre par les participants à des discussions de la chaîne de télévision chrétienne *God Channel*. L'article explore plus particulièrement la construction sociale de l'émotion dans le discours chrétien. Pour ce faire, l'auteure ancre son étude dans le cadre de la psychologie discursive (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996). Cette approche, qui critique radicalement les vues traditionnelles de la psychologie des émotions, a développé des outils d'analyse qui mettent en évidence le travail rhétorique et orienté vers l'action accompli par les formulations et les catégories émotionnelles des participants.

## **Mots-clés:**

Discours chrétien, psychologie discursive, émotion, discours institutionnel

## **1. Emotion and psychology**

A brief review of the theories and research of emotion reveals that there are two main contrasting approaches. On one hand are those, often called, 'naturalistic' approaches that describe emotions in terms of feelings, physiological changes, conscious and unconscious processes (see Niedenthal *et al.*, 2006). In contrast, are those studies that draw upon a social constructionist framework, which challenges mainstream and cognitive approaches to emotion (e.g. Edwards, 1997, 1999; Harré, 1986). Between these two different approaches, are those who take a middle approach (i.e. Clarke, 2003), and suggest that researchers should consider both frameworks and aim for a combined methodology. In this paper, I will argue for the discursive psychological perspective on emotion, that is located within the social constructionist perspective.

Stainton Rogers *et al.* (1995) provide an excellent account of how emotion theories have evolved within psychology, specifically within the area of social psychology (i.e. Le Bon, 1896, and mob behavior). They suggest that early psychological theories produced a discourse where emotions are linked to biology and control. This positivistic view of emotions reflects a general, Western cultural conception of emotions, as unreasonable and irrational. Specifically, emotions are seen as 'cognitively grounded'; 'event-driven versus dispositional', 'internal states (private feelings) versus external behaviour (expressions)', 'spontaneous', 'honest versus faked and natural versus moral' (Edwards, 1997: 193-194). This represents a Modernist reasoning, or what

Stainton Rogers *et al.*, (1995: 175) call, a 'bi-polar reasoning' within psychology and other disciplines.

From this perspective, mainstream psychology defines emotions as "internal phenomena that can, but do not always, make themselves observable through expression and behavior" (Niedenthal *et al.*, 2006: 5). Researches who adopt this mainstream view explore and explain emotions in terms of where they originate, as pre-existing, internal entities, rather than, for example, in terms of what they do (Robinson, 2005). Emotions are also being investigated in terms of their biological (neuro-physiological) aspects (e.g. LeDoux, 1996, 2002). Different to this (biological) deterministic perspective, but still embedded within the mainstream, positivistic viewpoint, is the cognitive psychological framework. This has mainly focused on the relation between emotion and 'scripts'<sup>1</sup>. This idea directs a lot of recent research, for example, the relation between emotions, facial stimuli, and scripts (Balconi & Carrera, 2007). Further cognitive psychology looks at emotions, as evaluative judgments (Solomon, 2003) and as a resource of motivation (Elster, 1994).

These 'individualistic' approaches have been criticised, and contrasted to a social constructionist framework, that challenges mainstream notions of feelings and affect, as subjective states. A number of researchers have made important contributions into this framework for the study of emotions, according to which, emotions are culturally produced phenomena. Ratner (1989), for example drawing upon various studies (e.g. Averill, 1969; Lazarus, 1984), suggested that a Constructionist approach to emotions can illuminate the study of psychological phenomena in general. Similarly, Lynch (1990) introduced a number of studies that take a social constructionist approach to demonstrate how people in India describe their emotions in terms of social situations, instead of individual feelings. However, the focus for this paper is on Discursive Psychology (occasionally DP), another approach within the social constructionist framework, that provides an alternative account looking at the discursive production of emotion and its functioning (Edwards, 1997, 1999). Edwards, by analysing talk in interaction and by looking at traditional emotion research in psychology, provides a different perspective that demonstrates how emotions are constructed concepts that are produced within interaction and talk. He looks at the work of Wierzbicka (1992, 1994) who adopts a cognitive perspective, and Ekman's (1992) account of emotion, from an evolutionary psychology perspective. Edwards (1999) points to the limitations of these, and provides an alternative analytic framework, one that accounts for the context within which emotion descriptions and displays occur.

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<sup>1</sup> "Cognitive scripts have been conceptualised as 'one form of memory structure that evolve over multiple exposure to the same set of stimuli and/or repeated enactment of a particular behaviour' (Lakshmi-Ratan & Iyer, 1988).

His analysis of extracts from counselling discourse is focused on the way emotions are invoked through interaction. He demonstrates how emotions are sometimes described as 'personality dispositions' and how that very description can account for action, problems etcetera. His central focus is to demonstrate the ways emotions are produced as descriptions that perform certain kinds of business. Illustrating the socially constructed nature of psychological categories is one of the main assumptions and analytic tasks of Discursive Psychology.

## 1.2 *Discursive Psychology*

Developed in the 1990s by Jonathan Potter and Derek Edwards, Discursive Psychology argues that language is pervasively rhetorical, that is, it focuses on the idea that versions of events can be constructed to undermine other/different versions. DP adopts a strong social constructionist (or relativist) approach, and draws upon Conversational Analysis (CA), Ethnomethodology and the 'sociology of knowledge'<sup>2</sup>, and 'non-foundational philosophy' (Hepburn, 2003). Ethnomethodology originated in the work of Harold Garfinkel (1967, 1974) and refers to "the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments or organised artful practices of everyday life" (Garfinkel, 1967: 11). Similarly, CA, that has developed out of the Ethnomethodological approach, investigates all kinds of business people manage in conversation (ten Have, 1999). The aim of CA is "to see how finely the details of actual, naturally occurring conversation can be subjected to analysis that will yield the technology of conversation" (Sacks, 1984: 411), and to investigate "competences that ordinary speakers use and rely on in participating in intelligible, socially organized interaction" (Heritage & Atkinson, 1984: 1). These approaches provide the framework that informs DP's methodology and analytical agenda.

According to Potter (2000: 31), Discursive Psychology focuses "on the production of versions of reality and cognition as parts of practices in natural settings". It adopts the idea that reality is socially constructed and contests the view that research can be objective. Edwards & Potter (2005), show how Discursive Psychology explores the situated, occasioned, rhetorical uses of language. The focus is on language, as a functional system which does more than reflect reality, rather, it creates social reality through social exchange and shared meanings. Thus, the focus here is on talk as action (Edwards, 1997). Edwards & Potter (1992) examine the very idea of describing, and the ways in which descriptions are indeed constructed as descriptions and not as claims

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<sup>2</sup> Based on Latour & Woolgar's (1986) and Mulkay's (1991) work, who produced an alternative (relativist) account for the study of science and its relation to objectivity (Hepburn, 2003: 26).

or speculations. This, and the ways descriptions account for and accomplish actions, are issues of "construction and function" (ibid, 105) in discursive psychology. In this view descriptions are reflexive (Potter, 1996), in that they both describe the world as well as constitute it. Specifically, descriptions construct the objects they refer to (Edwards & Potter, 2005), that is, "descriptions are categorizations, distinctions, contrasts; there are always relevant alternatives available" (ibid, 243).

Potter & Hepburn (in press, 161) suggest that there are three key characteristics of Discursive Psychology. Firstly, that it investigates discourse as action oriented. Secondly, that it examines discourse as situated. That is the sequential organisation of discourse, as well as that it is situated institutionally and rhetorically. Finally, a third characteristic is that discourse is both constructed and constructive. Thus, one of the main analytic goals is to reveal the ways in which descriptions and discursive practices in general, are used to perform certain actions. Specifically, the action orientation of talk, Potter (1996) suggests, refers to what the description is doing, and the epistemological orientation of talk refers to how the description attends to its own factuality. The notion of 'factuality' here, refers to *fact construction*, which demonstrates how different versions of the world are produced as factual and independent of the people who construct them discursively (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Potter (1996) has developed various features of the theory and method of Ethnomethodology<sup>3</sup>, to describe the ways in which people construct versions of reality through discourse. He examines how scientific facts are constructed, and how specific rhetorical devices give descriptions their factual status. His analysis produces a "radical reappraisal of the traditional view of scientific facts" (Potter, 1996: 13). In this view, discourse, which constructs versions of the world as solid and factual, is 'reifying'. Through fact construction people 'reify' the world as real through particular discursive practices. By reifying, Potter means practices which "turn something abstract into a material thing" (1996: 107).

One focus in Discursive Psychology has been to examine the "rhetorical design and use of emotion categories" (Edwards, 1999: 273). According to DP, emotions are not innate things that happen to people, but rather things that people do and construct in interactions. Specifically, Edwards (1997) suggests that "[e]motion discourse is an integral feature of talk about events, mental states, mind and body, personal dispositions, and social relations" (170). Thus, Discursive Psychology explores the function and operation of emotion in talk, and how emotion descriptions are deployed in order to either build or undermine actions (Edwards, 1999). This approach to emotions

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<sup>3</sup> Which focuses on the situational aspects of descriptions and specifically the Ethnomethodological uses of indexicality and reflexivity (Potter, 1996).



investigates emotion as it occurs in interaction "in its home environment" (Hepburn, 2003: 171), rather independently of the context in which it occurs. This move challenges cognitive assumptions that reinforce a "static deterministic notion of human action" (Hepburn, 2003: 174) as it focuses on what people do with emotion talk, and the function of emotion categories, rather than their presumed representation of inner states.

## **2. Methodological and analytical issues**

This paper adopts a Discursive Psychology perspective to look into religious (Christian) discursive practices in order to explore social constructions of emotions. Religious discourse provides an opportunity to look at this broad institutional setting, and to see how emotions presuppose concepts of social relationships and institutions (Lynch, 1990). It is proposed here, in line with Abu-Lughod & Lutz (1990), that locating emotions in discourse does not suggest that emotions are not embodied, rather that they are not 'natural', as "[t]o learn how, when, where, and by whom emotions ought to be enacted is to learn a set of body techniques including facial expressions, postures and gestures" (12).

This study is specifically focused on those assumptions of Discursive Psychology (DP), as described above, that argue that language is pervasively rhetorical and is used to manage a range of issues and accomplish various kinds of actions (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996). Thus, DP is employed here to provide the framework and tools to look into the different ways emotion is constructed, and what for. I note here, in line with Potter (2003), that DP is not viewed as a 'method', or a "a free-standing set of data-generating and data-analytic procedures" (ibid, 784), but as a general approach of thinking about reality, discourse and social interaction.

### *2.1 The data*

The data for this paper comprise of a corpus of Television shows obtained from a larger corpus of programmes recorded from the 'God Channel' both from the UK and the US. The system of transcription used to transcribe the video data, is the one developed by Gail Jefferson, within CA (see Appendix, Table 1). The visual aspects of the data have been taken into account to confirm certain aspects of talk (e.g. emotional expressions, and nodding during long pauses), however without a systematic exploration. Further, additional transcription symbols, from Hepburn (2004, see Appendix, Table 2) were used to account for 'emotional expressions' and elements of crying (e.g. wet sniffs, wobbly voice, aspiration and so on), in order to account for the multimodal levels that emotion displays translate into.

Media products are analysed here as 'naturalistic' data, i.e. they occur irrespective of the researcher's involvement in the research. Although interaction is constrained by its occurrence as part of a TV show, studies such as Wood (2007) have found that there was conversational interaction from the part of audience with TV programs and showed how parts of text (TV) were made relevant to self and identity. Further, Fiske (1989) explored the shift in Television Culture and suggests that text on television is a produced text and a cultural product, "an inescapable element of popular experience in a hierarchical, power-structured society" (Fiske, 1989: 104). In addition, the data used in this paper are regarded as institutional, in the sense that the people engaged in these conversations and narratives, invoke "institutional or professional identities", which "are somehow made relevant to the work activities in which they are engaged" (Drew & Heritage, 1992: 3-4). Institutional talk has been an important part of Conversation Analytic studies, for example in court settings (Atkinson & Drew, 1979) and news interviews (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1991). In line with Agar (1985: 164), institution here is considered as a "socially legitimated expertise together with those persons authorised to implement it". Part of the analytic focus is to demonstrate the ways in which this institutional talk is constituted.

## 2.2 *Analytic theory and tools*

By adopting a DP analytical perspective, emotions are viewed as descriptions themselves, instead of inner states that exist prior to description (Edwards, 1999). Further emotions are conceptualized as relative to what they are perceived as, appraised and depicted, on each particular occasion, thus emotions "are socially and historically constituted" (Edwards, 1997: 179-180). The analysis of the extracts identified two main themes, the function of emotion categories and words, and secondly, the displays of emotion in talk, within Christian, religious settings. The analytic process consisted of generating a corpus of examples for the two themes, as well as examples that displays and emotion categories appeared at the same time. A primary goal was to identify the ways in which descriptions of emotions generate attributions, agency, normativity and knowledge (Edwards & Potter, 1992). This involved an exploration of the epistemological and action orientation (Potter, 1996; Edwards, 1997) of religious discourse.

These accounts are not investigated in terms of their 'truthfulness', rather the aim is to explore the discursive construction of spiritual (Christian) experiences. Further, and in line with Wooffitt (1992), the aim is not to discover how often patterns occur, but whether they do occur and what kind of work, or social action, is accomplished by these. The framework used here suggests that emotion descriptions and specific "words provide conceptual resources that permit discursive uses" and that "[c]onceptual analysis is necessary in that it aims to clarify what words mean, rather than proposing

theories of their referents" (Edwards, 1999: 281). The analysis also focuses on issues of accountability and fact construction (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Wooffitt, 1992; Potter, 1996). This approach has developed a powerful critique of conventional and long-established psychological views, for example, evolutionary and cognitive psychology views of emotions as independent of, and prior to, language.

To investigate fact construction, Potter (1996) reviewed a number of rhetorical procedures that are used to make a statement appear factual and credible. Hepburn (2003: 181) has produced these in the form of a 'reality production kit'. These are illustrated below. These specific devices are focused on epistemics:

- *Category entitlement*: Construct your talk as coming from a category that is credible or knowledgeable in a way that is relevant to the claim.
- *Stake inoculation*: Construct your talk as coming from someone whose stake in that talk is counter to what you would expect when making the claim.
- *Corroboration and consensus*: Construct your description as corroborated by an independent witness (preferably from an appropriate category) and/or something that everyone agrees on.
- *Active voicing*: Use quotations and reports of thoughts to present the views and impressions of others as corroborating, or to show the vivid or unexpected nature of what is described.
- *Vivid description*: Make your description rich with vivid detail, careful observation, and things that 'in themselves' would not be surprising. Vivid description invokes a powerful category: witness.
- *Systematic vagueness*: You may need to be systematically vague about features of descriptions that do not add up or which draw attention to your stake and interest in the claims you are making.

In addition, further techniques that focus specifically on action have been used to investigate fact construction, such as: Categorization of persons and events, Packaging actions in descriptions, Script formulations, Extreme case formulations and Three-part lists (Edwards, 1997, 1998, 2000; Potter, 1996; Wooffitt, 1992). Finally, the analysis draws upon Edwards (1999: 282-283), who expands on his previous work (1997), to provide a list of a set of rhetorical contrasts, which reveal a variety of things that emotion discourse can do in talk and text. These rhetorical contrasts are summarised below:

1. Emotions as irrational vs rational
2. Emotion as cognitively grounded and/or cognitively consequential
3. Event-driven vs dispositional



4. Dispositions vs temporary states
5. Emotional behaviour as controllable action or passive reaction
6. Spontaneous vs externally caused
7. Natural vs moral
8. Internal states vs external behaviour: private ('feelings') vs public ('expressions', 'displays')
9. Honest (spontaneous, reactive) vs fake

### 3. 'God has changed my heart' – Emotion displays and categories in religious discourse

The analytic section focuses on displays of emotion and functions of emotion terms / categories. It specifically looks at examples where the speaker is describing a personal traumatic event. The first example below will illustrate the importance of exploring the function of emotion terms, in the context of the actions they perform in talk. Examples three and four will illustrate the importance of focusing on emotion displays, and the way they can accompany certain actions being done.

#### 3.1 *The function of emotion categories*

Extract 1 below is an excerpt from a talk show on the 'God Channel' that is called 'Life Today'. The presenters, James and Betty, are interviewing Nancy, who has recently published a book about her life. We join James who has introduced Nancy, and has described how both her husband and her daughter confessed to her that they had homosexual experiences, and that she is trying now to help people in similar situations (family members who need help to cope with the new situation). James already expressed the opinion that people with these experiences (themselves and their families) need help and that he wants to learn from Nancy how to help. The extract begins with James reiterating that homosexuality (the disclosure and what it entails for a family) is a 'reality' that is painful. The focus is in the functions these emotion categories achieve and the actions they produce.

#### **Extract 1. God Channel show: 'LIFE TODAY'. (James = interviewer, Nancy = guest)**

67 James: I I said a moment ago: (0.2) that when this (0.4)  
 68 re↑ality comes out (.) this ↓this practice (.)  
 69 this ↓lifestyle  
 70 (0.6)  
 71 >that it hits home< its p↑ainful=  
 72 Nancy: =hm::: ((nodding))  
 73 James: it's painful and I (0.2) impli:ed (.) I even said to  
 74 both sides:((pointing with his hands left & right)).hh=  
 75 Nancy: =yes [yes]  
 76 James: [↑to] the ones who are facing this is who they are=  
 77 Nancy: =it is=

78 James: =acknowledge[ing it]  
 79 Nancy: [it is ] (0.2) ↑James I think that is SO:  
 80 important and that is a big pa:rt (.) of how g↑od has  
 81 ch↑a:nged my heart (0.4) er:: a long journey to  
 82 changing my heart (.) >from fear and anger and confu:sion  
 83 around homosexuality< (0.2) to a place of (0.3) lo:ve  
 84 and resp↑ect for the homosexual (0.5) ↑and one of wa:ys  
 85 and one of wa:ys that god ch↑anged my heart (.) was  
 86 l↑earning that it was (0.2) as d↑ifficult sometimes  
 87 for a chi:ld (0.3) or a pa:rent (.) or a brother or  
 88 sister to sa:y to the family (0.4) ↓I'm ga:y (0.6)  
 89 as it is for the family to hear it (0.4) and th↑at  
 90 ↑takes a lo:t of >th↑at ↑when I heard that (all) was  
 91 another layer of forgiveness< ((raised hands-forming a  
 92 circle))↓I could give to (.)↓my husband and my daughter  
 93 (0.2)

In the above extract we see a number of emotion descriptions, (rather than overt emotion displays). In line 71, James describes Nancy's experience as painful, which he repeats in line 73. This repetition here, does not add new information, as James already said this in his introduction, just prior to the extract above. The repetition here is emphatic, and is also presented as a fact, as James is not suggesting that this is his opinion, or that he *thinks* it is painful, or even that such an experience *sometimes* might be painful. By this formulation, James is not simply describing Nancy's experience, or what he thinks she might be feeling. Rather, he describes Nancy's experience of homosexuality in a particular way, not only describes her experience, but homosexuality in general, by describing it as a 'reality', a 'practice' and a 'lifestyle' (l.67-69). Therefore, here the use of the emotion term here (painful) is doing institutional work.

The word painful, as used here, assigns negative properties to the effects of homosexuality on both the individual and the experiences of the family. By employing the emotion category 'painful' and further carefully clarifying that is painful for both parties involved, he firstly projects an image of his faith (and of the God Channel) as sympathising with the homosexual and not condemning them, whilst at the same time he is not condoning the practise of homosexuality as he has suggested already that is an experience/practice that causes pain. His gesture here (l.74), confers saliency, as it further visualises and strengthens his 'factual' statement.

Nancy's agreement (l.72) is her first turn in this conversation and line 79, is her first attempt to reply to James' statement. Nancy starts by describing her prior state towards homosexuality, one that was about fear, anger and confusion. This is prefaced by her statement of how god managed to change these to love and respect. Her descriptions suggest that initial (i.e. pre-god, before this specific communication with god) normative emotions are fear, anger confusion, and (post-god, after her contact with god) emotions are then transformed to positive ones, that of love and respect. This is a statement that

takes quite a strong line on those who might feel the former emotions, as they would not be in touch with god's position on this. This change in emotions is not done without a long journey.

Nancy's self-repair from 'changing [her] heart' to a 'long journey to changing [her] heart' (l.81-82) is important as it is a way of warranting these claims. This change in emotions, Nancy claims, was done by the influence of god. The agency here is assigned to god, which suggests she's had a lot of contact with god over this, and therefore guaranteeing the agreement of the other members on this. Nancy here could have offered a different account / justification of why she decided to stand by her family members how she changed her initial negative attitude to a supportive one, but in this case she draws upon the institutional resources available (god). This is an interesting feature of this kind of religious discourse, as no one is contesting her claims (i.e. her contact with god), nor she is providing any evidence to support these, as in this context, no one is expected to challenge her claims. She can assume that she is literally preaching to the converted! Interesting here is the fact that Nancy is producing a very long multi-unit turn. In terms of turn-taking (Sacks *et al.*, 1974), even though there are a lot of TRP (transition-relevant places, e.g. l.84 and 89) where someone else could smoothly come in, no one does. The expansion of the turn is potentially an interactional achievement here, in the sense that the interlocutors are withholding talk and thus the speaker continues with their story.

In this extract, the emotion terms are all employed within a context of Christian knowledge and tradition and attend to this institutional category. We see how emotion terms are being employed in the service of warranting claims about the appropriate orientation of 'god fearing' individuals towards homosexuality. Thus, the emotion categories here are used to make religious points, but also at the same time, the context shapes the production of these emotion categories. Nancy's experience is reproduced here to fit the institutional setting (mostly seen in James' turns), and the setting shapes the claims (and story) by providing specific discourses (i.e. Nancy's claims that God changed her emotions), to its members.

### 3.2 *Emotion displays at work*

Examples two (extracts 2a and 2b) and three below, manage a story about the death of a loved one. Example two was obtained from the 'Rory and Wendy Show' (extracts 2a and 2b), a regular show on the God Channel. Rory and Wendy are the presenters and Rodney (preacher) is their guest on the show. Rodney describes his experience of his daughter's death from a terminal disease. In extract 2a below, Rodney describes his final visit to her in the hospital and the moment when he gives her Christmas present.

**Extract 2a. 'Rory and Wendy Show', on God Channel 1 (Wendy = interviewer, Rodney = guest)**

403 Rodney: ↑I WAlked straight in and reached in a bag and I took out  
 404 her Christmas present (0.4) that I bought for her (0.2)  
 405 which was a diamond ring ↓with sapphires an >and I and  
 406 I said sweetie daddy wants you to have this n↑ow< and she  
 407 (0.6)  
 408 and >she looked at me and she said< (.)↑but I won't be  
 409 here in the morning if I'm dead (0.4) ↑I said Kelly ~I  
 410 kno:w~ .shih (0.3) ~I kn(hy)ow <but daddy wa(hh)nts you  
 411 to have this NO:w>~ .shih  
 412 (1.0) ((looking at the hosts, holding his hands-raised))  
 413 ~I want you to have this [n↑ow~ ] .shih (0.3)  
 414 Wendy: [° .skuh°]  
 415 Rodney: ↑so she closed her ↑e:yes and she began to say (0.4)  
 416 ((closed his eyes)) ↓I'll live and not di:e >and (shine)  
 417 for the glory of god< (0.3) but she's very tired (.) she  
 418 hadn't eaten (.) .hh in three weeks ((Wendy nodding))  
 419 (0.4) she was (0.4) she was erm: [she (.) she wa:s ] (.)  
 420 Wendy: [ ~ (she ) ~ .shih ]  
 421 ((wiping her eyes))  
 422 Rodney: she hadn't sl↑ept= ((raised hands))  
 423 Wendy: =~I can feel the Holy Sp↑iri[t and] the anointing right  
 424 Rodney: [yeah ]  
 425 Wendy: [now] ° ( ) °~  
 426 Rodney: [OK]

Let me focus first on Rodney's emotion display (l.409-413), we can see that it contains some of the classic features of upset as described by Hepburn (2004), notably elevated pitch, tremulous delivery, increased aspiration and sniffing (for example l.409-410, 411 and 413, and self-repair in l.419). This occurs at the point of the most traumatic part of the narrative, the father's conversation with his dying daughter (l.406-413). Hepburn (2006) looked at empathic receipts in terms of the NSPCC<sup>4</sup> helpline employees attempting to display understanding of the caller's emotional state. As Hepburn notes, there are a number of typical styles of uptake to this type of upset, such as 'empathic receipts', 'right thing descriptions' and 'take your times'. It is interesting to consider Wendy's uptake (l.423) in this context. Here, Wendy does not attend ('empathise') with Rodney's display in the expected way, not the typical verbal empathic receipt (like her earlier turn in l.420). She does an emotion display of her own, and in the process makes a claim about having some direct access to the 'holy spirit'. Wendy here, could for example refer to Rodney's experience and suggest that she is sad to hear his story. Thus, her uptake to displayed upset is different to that found in other institutional environments (Hepburn, 2006: 336; Hepburn & Potter, in press), and thus contributing to locally talking the institutional context into being here. We see here that Rodney is engaged in story-telling, thus multiple-unit turns that occur here, once the communicative project has been approved by the interlocutors,

<sup>4</sup> The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

is the expected case. Further, those displays are 'performed' according to the setting, as well as the fact that, unlike with the helpline emotion displays, there is an audience here, for which some performance-effort might be invested.

By examining Wendy's formulation (l.423) and taking into account the broader institutional context that it occurs in, we see that her statement does more than simply describe an emotion that pre-exists. It does two kinds of factual work. Firstly she does a *Category Entitlement* (Potter, 1996). Edwards & Potter (1992) suggest that the veracity of a report can be warranted by the category entitlement of the speaker. Category entitlement is the employment of categories, which are constructed in order to provide entitlement to knowledge, and a degree of accountability for the description (Potter, 1996) within a specific context. This is a show on the God channel and this claim demonstrates some 'direct access' to God, which is reinforcing her religious views. She describes her emotion experience of being affected by Rodney's story, and she attributes this to the supernatural (Holy Spirit). Further, her description is a direct and vivid one (Potter, 1996), producing the traditionally view on emotions as immediate and uncontrollable. By this display, Wendy makes Rodney's story relevant to the context it is produced in (the show), and also makes his story powerful and credible. This combination of lack of empathic receipt and category entitlement in its place is very interesting. It shows this specific religious discourse as more focused on credentials rather than empathy, and therefore on the institutional environment here, in which a direct line to god provides category entitlement.

In the following extracts (2b and 3) it will be interesting to see how typically emotion displays and emotion categories appear at the same time and work in unison. Extract 2b below is a continuation of extract 2a. Rodney here continues to describe his conversation with his daughter in the hospital.

**Extract 2b. Rory and Wendy show 1 (Rory = interviewer, Rodney = guest)**

443 Rodney: I said you< you go to Jesus no:w  
 444 (1)  
 445 you go right now (0.6) and you go t↑alk to him  
 446 (1.0)  
 477 and you get your new lungs (0.8) >and you go get your new  
 448 lungs and I'm gonna call you back< in your body  
 449 (0.8) ((looks at the hosts))  
 450 >she said we're gonna do that?< wha(h)t ↑e(h)lse ca(h)n  
 451 we d↑o, I've done everything I know to do >we prayed we  
 452 fasted we< we've we've (been up) all night (praying) we've  
 453 done E:verything we know to do (0.2) I don't know what  
 454 else to do (0.6) ↓so I said (1.2) this is all I know to  
 455 do > all I know to do but I said I don't like this idea  
 456 she said why I said< cause you're gonna ↑get ↑there (0.2)  
 457 and and you won't wanna come back  
 458 (1.8) ((looks at the hosts))  
 459 >she said what do you mean< I said is so: beau::tiful  
 460 (0.4) >and I started talking about< (0.6) ~the river of  
 461 li(hh)fe~  
 462 (1.8) ((shaking his head and raising his hand))



463 ~the throne of god (0.5) the gl↑o:ry of god ((raised  
 464 hand))  
 465 (0.8)  
 466 you know (.) ~a(hh)nd err (0.4) I'm not crying right now  
 467 out of sadness but (0.2) ~I'm overwhelm[ed by] .shih  
 468 Rory: [su:re]((nodding))  
 469 Rodney: expressions (0.2) .hhh b↑ut. (0.2) ↑because the lord  
 470 really has healed us ((his hand on his chest))of  
 471 all the all the grief it's the most amazing thing

Here, the emotion display appears towards the end of the story told by the speaker (in l.450 the (h) represents laughter). In line 463, Rodney describes his idea of 'paradise' with an emotional display, which becomes very intense with pauses, self-corrections, repetitions and aspirations. Rodney is a preacher, his emotional (physical) movement (l.462) and his descriptions are situated within a framework of preaching. Within this context, they not only make sense to his immediate audience at the studio but also conform to the broader institutional setting, an Evangelical show that aims to promote Christianity, as Rodney describes and draws upon 'common knowledge' of the idea of paradise, and he assumes that his audience have this knowledge.

In lines 466 to 471 Rodney provides an account for his emotion display. He suggests that he is not sad but he attributes his emotional display to 'expressions'. This is very interesting especially in conjunction with his next turn (l.469), where Rodney produces a repair ('b↑ut. (0.2) ↑because'). This repair shows that Rodney has trouble in his effort to produce an appropriate institutional account. Firstly we see here how Rodney distinguishes between some kind of real emotion and an 'irrational' one (feeling sad). This draws upon Edwards (1999) distinction of emotions produced as 'dispositions vs. temporary states' and rational vs irrational ones (see section 2.2). The repair here indicates a difficulty or an excuse, as the initial account could be in conflict with his 'institutional identity'. It appears at a specific point, where Rodney feels that he has to account for his crying, and what happens immediately at this point, is that god is brought in. We can see the difficulties presenting here when Rodney has to describe his pain for his loss and at the same time to conform to his Christian identity and 'perform' for the show. His emotion display could characterise him as emotional, and perhaps either unsure about his daughter's 'afterlife' experience. Yet worst, this could undermine other's perception of his belief, especially after all the work he has been doing to produce an account (l.456-464) that promotes his faith. This repair is accompanied by a visual display (l.470), where Rodney points to his 'heart' when he says that the lord has healed his pain, and this is doing extra persuasive work for the speaker. Contrasting this to Wendy's emotional display (extract 2a, l.423), we see that in the first case (Wendy, extract 2a the emotion is constructed as a rational, acceptable and perhaps the expected thing to do, Wendy does not have to account for her emotion or her claim and no further attention is given to it. In Rodney's case (extract 2b) the emotion

display is 'irrational' and needs to be *repaired*. This is in line with Edwards (1999), who suggests that emotion categories can be constructed to provide for 'rational accountability' (Wendy's emotional display), but also used to describe behaviour as "spontaneous and sequentially incoherent (unjustified by events), and even to pathologize it" (ibid, 277), as in Rodney's case (extract 2b, l.466-469).

An interesting emotional display in this extract is the laughter (interpolated particles of aspiration, Potter and Hepburn, forthcoming) that Rodney produces (l.450). This laughter here attends to Rodney's formulation 'wha(h)t ↑e(h)lse ca(h)n we d↑o.'. This is another example of emotion display as not complying with traditional views as internal reactions to stimuli independent of the context. Rodney's laughter here marks an insufficiency with the question (Potter and Hepburn, forthcoming) giving it a 'rhetorical' feel – i.e. not one that would seriously require an answer. This is done in the context of reporting his own speech (Wooffitt, 1992), a common device used persuasively in story telling. The laughter here attends to issues of justification and describes Rodney's decision as the only possible one. It is followed by the extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) 'everything', repeated in lines 451 and 453 which provides a further warrant to the action being done by the question. Thus, the laughter here is emphasising and stating the 'obvious' thing to do under the circumstances – again it is placed strategically in the ongoing interaction to do particular types of work, rather than seeing it as a 'flooding out' of 'inner' emotions.

In summary we see again that this extract demonstrates the function of the display of emotion in this specific institutional context. Firstly, is part of an interview, and is also an example of 'action-oriented talk'. It shows how the speaker constructs an emotion account of events attending to the responsibility and accountability (Potter, 1996) of his 'Christian membership', constructing a version of the world as independent from his own interests and agendas.

The extract below is a speech by Nancy Reagan in 1988. Nancy spoke to an assembly of young Christians from across the country (US). In the first few lines that are omitted, Nancy talks about her father, the time before his death and that he was not religious, until he asked to see the chaplain.

### Extract 3. 'Nancy Reagan Speech (1988)'. (Nancy = speaker)

76 Nancy: ↑two days before he died (0.5) he asked the hospital  
77 chaplain he as(h)ed to s(h)ee the hospital chaplain  
78 (0.5) and this was (0.4) for him to ask to see the  
79 chaplain (0.6) was ((nodding)) a big step ((smiling))  
80 (1.2)  
81 I never met chaplain (.) I don't know what he sai:d:  
82 or what he did (0.5) with my father (0.6) but whatever it  
83 w↑as (0.4) it was the right thing (0.4) an- an it gave my  
84 father comfort (0.2) and I d↑id notice (0.4) in the last

85 two da:ys (0.2) that he was (0.8) he was much (0.5)  
 86 mo:re: ca::lm (0.2) >and he wasn't as frightened< (0.6)  
 87 so that when he died (0.2) he was at peace (0.2) ↓finally  
 88 .hhhh  
 89 (3)  
 90 and HHhh.  
 91 (1.2)  
 92 ~I was very happy for him~  
 93 (2.2)  
 94 ~and my pra(hh)yer(hh)s w(hh)ere more answered ↑too~  
 95 (1)  
 96 .HHHHhhh (0.4) pt (0.3) the reason I tell you this  
 97 story is because (0.6) ~you here this evening~  
 98 (1.2)  
 99 are very fortunate ~that you g(hh)ot .hhh ((clearing  
 100 throat, closing eyes))  
 101 (1.8)  
 102 a::: ~a str↑ong (.) f↑aith (0.6) at an early age~  
 103 (0.8)  
 104 >I'm very proud of you and happy for you<  
 105 (1)  
 106 ~because you won't have to go through~ (0.6) ~what he  
 107 went through~  
 108 (0.5)  
 109 .hhhh  
 110 (0.6)  
 111 you've come to this conference on evangelism (0.5) >to  
 112 learn how to spread the wo:rd<  
 113 (0.8)  
 114 ↑and I've come tonight (0.5) to ask for help in  
 115 spreading an additional message (0.5) a message about  
 116 drugs

In this extract, the emotion display develops towards the end of Nancy's story (l.92-94), as in the previous extract. Here again (l.92-102) we see some of the main features of upset Hepburn (2004), tremulous delivery, increased aspiration and sniffing, and wobbly voice (e.g. l.92 and 97). Nancy's display of emotion is doing a particular kind of job. The emotion display does not appear at the beginning of the story when Nancy first mentions losing her father. Rather, the emotion display follows her claim that the meeting with the chaplain helped her father to overcome the fear of dying. Here we see, as in the extract above, that the focus is on producing an account of faith, rather than empathy or sadness for the loss.

The action that is packaged in this emotional description (Edwards, 1997, 1998; Potter, 1996; Wooffitt, 1992) is for Nancy to demonstrate her faith, and to communicate a message. What Nancy is doing with this is praising faith (l.92-94), she is describing a traumatic event, which is accompanied by the emotion display, but in the same formulation, she says that she was happy. As with the previous example, the emotion is therefore closely tied to the message she wants to convey rather than the memory of the event. This is reinforced with a further emotion display (l.99-106) where the final upshot of her story is made, which is that faith helps to combat fear of death. The fear of death is linked to lack of faith (l.87), as she suggests that her father was 'at

peace' after talking to the chaplain. Further this display, demonstrates another thing for Nancy, it produces a genuine and honest account. The emotion display here is immediate and reactive (Edwards, 1999) to her statement of faith, and what happens with this display is that faith is brought in (l.102). This story is told for a specific reason, to make religion relevant. Thus this story is fashioned here to fit the occasion. Therefore the function and display of emotion here is, again, institutional, as it attends to a specific context, to a Christian membership, and is used to justify an opinion and make her story relevant. This part is the marking of the end of the story, still overcome with upset, and the final upshot of this story (l.97-107).

#### **4. Conclusions**

In the examples above, all speakers suggest a direct contact with the supernatural. An epistemic authority (Hepburn, 2004) that is taken up without any credentials. This is shown in all examples, extract 1 (l.80-82), very overtly when Nancy claims that god directly changed her emotions. In extract 2a (l.423) Wendy is making a similar claim. In the extract 2b (l.469) Rodney is also claiming that god changed his emotions (and has healed him). In the extract 3 Nancy makes an indirect claim, that faith can help combat the fear of death. In all these examples, the speakers draw upon specific religious 'facts', which are (re)produced here, for example that god exists, and that influences people's life, behavior, and specifically here, people's emotional states. This suggests not only that the supernatural exists but that people, and specifically the speakers themselves, can have access to it. These are presented as facts without any epistemological credentials, as speakers construct their accounts as factual by drawing upon this 'shared knowledge'. This shows how these discourses become legitimised from 'within' its institutional settings, and that the reproduction of this discourse produces it as legitimate. This demonstrates how discursive practices are both constructed and constructive (Potter & Hepburn, 2007).

Further, this seems to be a particular feature of 'religious discourse'. Even though one might think that there is no need for credentials within a community of people with similar viewpoints, the way notions are reproduced in this context is different than to what one might expect when conversing about other topics (i.e. political). For example Wooffitt (1992) suggested that people who described paranormal experiences, need to produce a story that builds their description as factual and not as a product of their imagination. This is achieved by setting their descriptions in the context of normal everyday activities and suggesting that the event was perceived as an extraordinary even by themselves. In the accounts explored above this was not the case, as both the hosts and guests have drawn upon institutional knowledge to describe and even justify experiences, without prior elicitation or any kind of



explanation. This is also demonstrated by the long turns, where interviewees are not questioned or asked to explain or justify any of their statements, and even when there is an opportunity in the turn (a gap) for the host to intervene, this does not happen. The corroboration between the participants of the discussions is remarkable in the context of other media interviews.

The analysis revealed that there was a pattern in the accounts of personal stories, where emotional displays develop towards the end of the story, usually when a final point is made. In these cases the emotion display at the end was found to be in accord with the final religious remark. In addition, the end of the narrative is the most appropriate place for the emotion display to occur (one would expect in any context) in terms of the narration of the story. If the speakers, for example, were emotional at the beginning of the story that could interrupt their narrative. It was also noted that the emotion display was attending to a category entitlement, assuming a Christian membership, and not in terms of empathising/being sad because of the traumatic event (in the case of Nancy, her father's death) or in the case of Wendy, empathising with her guest's description of his experience (his daughter's death). Thus, the display here seems to follow certain rules of narration, to produce a coherent story, rather than producing an 'inner' personal display or a cognitive appraisal. This is also helped by category entitlements which demonstrate how "conceptual categories are pervasive in discourse" (Edwards, 1997: 242) and are used to do persuasive work. Nevertheless, and in line with Wooffitt (1992: 2), it is not suggested here that people always "consciously construct their accounts to be persuasive, and are therefore engaged in some form of deliberate exaggeration or deception".

This paper is an example of how emotions "may be designed and selected for their deployment" and that "we need to examine them in use, and preferably in spontaneous use ('natural discourse'), rather than in scenarios invented to illustrate our semantic intuitions" (Edwards, 1999: 280). Emotions are subjective categories and here we have seen how emotionality is revealed in interaction (Hepburn, 2006). These are all examples of descriptions that make religion a salient point. The emotion categories and displays are in keeping with the religious argument presented in the end. We have seen how the speakers construct their emotions by drawing upon the resources that are available to them, being a member of this particular group / institution. These stories are told in a particular way and the emotions displays and categories employed in these are doing specific work for the story and are constructing and reproducing a specific culture. Thus, it is shown how these emotion constructions are the discursive business of a specific culture (Harré & Gillett, 1994: 160-161). They do not exist in a vacuum but are produced within these specific, Christian, "situated interactions" (Edwards, 2007: 118). Therefore, these emotion constructions attend, as shown here, to specific institutional



business, and thus present what Drew and Heritage (1992: 26) call "a unique 'fingerprint'" of this kind of institutional talk. In terms of the institutional character of this talk, one strong feature that has emerged is the sense in which participants are required to display some kind of direct access to the supernatural or spiritual realm (i.e. God or Jesus). For example, in extract 2b, Wendy's uptake (l.423) demonstrates this, as she claims direct access to the holy spirit, as well as Nancy's claim (extract 1, l.80-81) that God has 'changed [her] heart'. Further, important here is that implicated in the conversations is the television audience, and the staging of the conversations (for the way the host introduces the subject in extract 1) plays a crucial role in the production, and the way emotion (displays and concepts) are exploited in order to fulfil certain functions in a systematic way.

A discursive analytic approach to the study of emotions does not only provide a better insight into the way people construct, reproduce and use emotion categories and displays. It also demonstrates the value of examining psychological constructs in their broader (institutional) contexts, and as part of the way people view and construct their realities. This is a completely different approach to merely investigating emotions in terms of them posing 'problems' in people's otherwise 'normal' lives, that require intervention, or as having a positive value that should be promoted (Stainton Rogers *et al.*, 1995: 183).

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## Appendix

**Table 1. The Jefferson Transcription System**

[ ]	Square brackets mark the start and end of overlapping speech. They are aligned to mark the precise position of overlap.
↑ ↓	Vertical arrows precede marked pitch movement, over and above normal rhythms of speech. They are used for notable changes in pitch beyond those represented by stops, commas and question marks.
→	Side arrows are used to draw attention to features of talk that are relevant to the current analysis.
Underlining	Indicates emphasis; the extent of underlining within individual words locates emphasis and also indicates how heavy it is.
CAPITALS	Mark speech that is hearably louder than surrounding speech. This is beyond the increase in volume that comes as a by product of emphasis.
°↑I know it,°	'Degree' signs enclose hearably quieter speech.
that's r*ight	Asterisks precede a 'squeaky' vocal delivery.
(0.4)	Numbers in round brackets measure pauses in seconds (in this case, 4 tenths of a second). If they are not part of a particular speaker's talk they should be on a new line.
(.)	A micropause, hearable but too short to measure.
((staccato))	Additional comments from the transcriber, e.g. about features of context or delivery.

she wa::nted	Colons show degrees of elongation of the prior sound; the more colons, the more elongation.
hhh	Aspiration (out-breaths); proportionally as for colons.
.hhh	Inspiration (in-breaths); proportionally as for colons.
Yeh,	'Continuation' marker, speaker has not finished; marked by fall-rise or weak rising intonation, as when delivering a list.
y'know?	Question marks signal stronger, 'questioning' intonation, irrespective of grammar.
Yeh.	Full stops mark falling, stopping intonation ('final contour'), irrespective of grammar, and not necessarily followed by a pause.
bu-u-	Hyphens mark a cut-off of the preceding sound.
>he said<	'Greater than' and 'lesser than' signs enclose speeded-up talk. Occasionally they are used the other way round for slower talk.
solid.=	
=We had	'Equals' signs mark the immediate 'latching' of successive talk, whether of one or more speakers, with no interval.
heh heh	Voiced laughter.
sto(h)p i(h)t	Laughter within speech is signalled by h's in round brackets.

**Table 2. Transcription symbols to account for 'emotional expressions' (Hepburn, 2004)**

°help°	Whispering – enclosed by double degree signs.
.shih	Wet sniff.
.skuh	Snorty sniff.
~grandson~	Wobbly voice – enclosed by tildes.
↑↑Sorry	Very high pitch – represented by one or more upward arrows.
k(hh)ay	Aspiration in speech – an 'h' represents aspiration: in parenthesis indicates a sharper more plosive sound.
hhhelp	Outside parenthesis indicates a softer more breathy sound.
Huhh .hhih	Sobbing – combinations of 'hhs', some with full stops before them to indicate inhaled rather than exhaled, many have voiced vowels.
Hhuyuhh	Some also have voiced consonants.
>hhuh<	If sharply inhaled or exhaled enclosed in the 'greater than/less than' symbols (> <).

