CHAPTER THREE
Theoretical Framework: ‘Fear’ as Emotion and Discourse

‘The old adage that the more we study an issue the less clear it becomes is, I think, particularly apposite in the case of emotions. Emotions are indeed an emotive topic, spanning both the rational and irrational, orderly and chaotic, beneficent and virulent realms of social life and human existence.’ (Williams, 2001: vii)

3.1 Introduction
Fear has been defined as one of our basic emotions, as an evolutionary survival mechanism, universal to all humans, which helps us focus our minds and bodies on quick escapes from possible perils. Like anger, fear has largely been considered a negative sensation, unlike joy, which is commonly understood as a positive basic emotion. Neural scientists, such as Joseph LeDoux, have linked the conditioning of fear and the creation of emotional memory to the amygdala, a particularly ‘old’ part of the brain, the processing through which explains some of the automatic, ‘pre-conscious’ dimensions of fear reactions, though not (yet) their exact relationship to our conscious processing of ‘fear’ (LeDoux, 1999; see also Rolls, 2007: 149-79). While our appraisal of threats and dangers is seen by some to be partly influenced by our ‘ancestral past’, in the sense that we are evolutionarily conditioned to respond fearfully to certain events or objects (Ekman, 1999: 46), LeDoux’s findings also suggest that we can learn to be frightened through specific encounters. A person who gets bitten by a dog and thus associates dogs with pain or danger is likely to react fearfully when confronted with dogs thereafter, or so the theory suggests.1

The idea that fear can be ‘learned’ in this way indicates for some emotion theorists that the reasons we respond fearfully, as well as the ways we experience or express our emotions, are shaped by complex socio-cultural processes. Although researchers differ fundamentally in the extent to which they account for the biological or social dimensions of emotions, many would agree that ‘[e]motions are at once bodily responses and expressions of judgements, at once somatic and cognitive. They seem to have deep evolutionary roots, yet they are, among human
phenomena, notably culturally variable in many of their aspects’ (Harré and Parrott, 1996: 1).

Locating this thesis within various approaches to, and theories of, the emotions has been a treacherous endeavour, not least since there is some conceptual confusion across the disciplines of sociology, psychology, biology and anthropology in which similar theories and approaches are given different names. Making sense of the emotions has thus been an iterative and at times conflictual process. All along, the relationship between language and the mind has constituted a significant point of interest, and a stumbling block. It became clear in the course of the project that fear, though biologically and psychologically discussed as a distinct entity (or as an ‘emotional syndrome’, Averill, 1999), could not be approached as an isolated phenomenon. This was partly evident in the number of emotion words that can be linked to ‘fear’, each seemingly representing a different shade of the emotion, such as caution, panic, phobia, horror, terror, distress, anxiety, hysteria, shock, fright, worry, unease, disquiet, apprehension, agitation, paranoia, uncertainty, or ‘angst’.

While some of these emotion words have been defined in the literature as describing more or less ‘healthy’ mental states – phobia, for instance, has been defined as an irrational form of fear – these medical labels appear detached from the different meanings such words might carry for individuals and/as social beings.

This chapter serves two purposes. First, it situates the thesis within some of the prevalent approaches to emotions, their diversity and incongruities notwithstanding. Rather than claiming exhaustiveness, the following account focuses on the tensions that have dominated the field in terms of definitions and tools of investigation. Second, it discusses two particular, partly opposing, methodological approaches to the study of emotions through language – Discursive Psychology, or a strand thereof, and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis – in order to identify the theoretical framework that guides the current study.
3.2 Emotions

Emotions have been the subject of philosophical, and later psychological and sociological debate since ancient times. All along, thinkers have constructed numerous mind (and body) models in order to account for human affect. Models have differed substantially in terms of emotions’ biological or social foundations, their role or functions in human life, as well their relationship with cognition or the ‘(un)conscious’ mind. In fact, a great deal of emotion research has centred on how to classify emotions, whether, for instance, as distinct and discrete mental states or as dimensions on a spectrum of arousal, as basic (primary) versus complex emotions, hardwired versus social, or in reference to their occurrence in time (e.g. split-second versus longitudinal affective states, episodes versus dispositions). A key binary opposition in the study of emotions has been that between body (the biological, animalistic, non-rational) and mind (the rational, cognitive, socio-cultural dimension).

According to William Lyons, it was the Greek philosopher Aristotle who first suggested that ‘many bodily feelings in humans [...] are caused by the way humans view the world around them’ (Lyons, 1992: 296). Yet, despite his relatively elaborate and positive account of the emotions and their relations to human cognition, his views soon fell into oblivion and were replaced by Plato’s dualist concept of the human soul (psúche, or ‘psyche’) as inhabiting a body and constantly battling between cool reason and hot passion. While Aristotle spoke of the arts, particularly dramatic arts, as eliciting emotions in a liberating, therapeutic ‘katharsis’, Plato was concerned about the dangers of such processes. He looked upon emotions as wild and corrupting phenomena, as something ‘humans had to strive continuously to suppress’ (ibid).

In the history of Western thought, emotions thus went through a period of being ‘dismissed as “irrational” inner feelings or sensations, tied, historically, to women’s “hysterical” bodies and “dangerous” desires’ (Williams, 2001: 2). Rather than investigating such bodily ‘incongruities’, attention was paid to the rational characteristics of human agency. According to Williams, it was only in the late 1980s
that the view of emotions as universal ‘psychobiological processes that respond to cross-cultural environmental differences but retain a robust essence untouched by the social or cultural’ was revisited within cultural anthropology, sociology, and mainstream psychology (Abu-Lughod and Lutz, 1990: 2; see also Smith, G.M., 2003). In fact, it is foremost due to work within anthropology that the earlier ‘essentialising’ approach was challenged by a more relativising perspective, which aimed to set emotions into historical, socio-cultural and discursive contexts. Anthropologists began to point towards the different meanings emotions carried in different countries. Displaying anger, for instance, had long been considered ‘bad manners’ in the West, while in other cultures and societies, hiding anger was perceived to be unnatural or even insane (see, for example, Abu-Lughod and Lutz, 1990). Equally, fear had taken on a specific social function in Chewong and Ifaluk societies, in which the failure to respond fearfully to appropriate situations, including the telling of particular fables, was considered mock-worthy or wicked (see Howell, 1981, and Lutz, 1982, in Armon-Jones, 1986: 62f).

Out of this movement grew the social-constructionist approach which challenged the notion of emotions as physical reflexes, and which, in its most radical form, argued that all emotions are ultimately social (see Harré, 1986). Its more liberal position distinguished between ‘basic’ emotions, such as fear, anger or joy, and ‘social’ emotions, such as pride, shame and jealousy. Generally, however, the approach related emotions both to cognition and to language (i.e. the expression, display, and discourse of emotions), and thus innately linked them to social learning and social functions (Buckingham and Allerton, 1996: 51). An example of definitions that relate emotion to cognition in this way derives from Keith Oatley and Jennifer M. Jenkins’ still frequently referenced Understanding Emotions (1996):

An emotion is usually caused by a person consciously or unconsciously evaluating an event as relevant to a concern (a goal) that is important; the emotion is felt as positive when a concern is advanced and negative when a concern is impeded. [Secondly,] the core of an emotion is readiness to act and the prompting of plans; an emotion gives priority for one or a few kinds of action to which it gives a sense of urgency – so it can interrupt, or compete
with alternative mental processes or actions. Different types of readiness create different outline relationships with others. [Finally,] an emotion is usually experienced as a distinctive type of mental state, sometimes accompanied or followed by bodily changes, expressions, [or] actions. (Oatley and Jenkins, 1996: 96)

For many cognitive or developmental psychologists, this is an adequate description of the nature and function of emotions. It focuses on a cognitive appraisal of one’s surrounding and the intentional element of emotions as goal-oriented. For others, it begs a number of (theoretical and methodological) questions. Take, for instance, the distinction between conscious and unconscious processing of information. Psychologists differ in their views of whether the unconscious refers to a state of not being aware, in the sense that the autonomic nervous system cuts in for ‘survival’ purposes without a person having consciously activated it (see, for instance, Rolls, 2007: 400-25), or whether the unconscious is a place that deals with hidden (or repressed) desires, as would be the case with Freudian or other psychoanalytic theories. In terms of studying such processes, the former scenario requires a measurement of brain activity in relation to particular controlled stimuli, while the second is largely a matter of interpreting a person’s expressions or behaviour in relation to the social constraints that may impact on their underlying (and thus never quite ‘proven’) needs or desires. Either way, it is curious to clump conscious and unconscious evaluations of events together, as though it does not make a difference whether individuals are aware of their evaluations or not.

What is meant by the conscious or the unconscious and how they are seen to operate is significant in the light of Oatley and Jenkins’ emphasis on emotions’ action-orientation. If emotions are goal-related, then there needs to be some consent as to what these goals might be. According to the communicative theory of emotions, emotions function as signals to self and others. The signals are ‘based on simple monitoring of events relevant to our goals and plans [and] are typically triggered by something that makes a goal substantially more or less likely to be achieved’, resulting in positive or negative emotions respectively (Oatley, 1996: 313). Positive emotions are associated with the continuation of current activities (since these will
lead to one’s goals), whereas negative emotions are disruptive and lead to a change of (action) plan.

The distinction between emotions of positive or negative valence is common within sections of the sociology of emotions where social scientists have focused on the role of emotions in the forming and annihilation of social bonds and structures (see Turner and Stets, 2005: 288ff). Here, it is generally believed that human beings strive for positive emotional energy in their encounters with others. Whether this striving for unequivocal positives is consistently the case, however, is questionable if one considers the often transitory nature of emotions, as well as the difference between lived experience and emotional expression. Anger, fear and hate are commonly understood as negative emotions, but it is feasible to imagine people deriving pleasure from each one of them, at least in the short term. If this is the case, it is possible for pleasure to accompany aforementioned emotions rather than replacing them. Instead of studying distinct positive or negative mental states, it is perhaps more sensible to include mixed feelings, or to consider the experience of specific emotions as itself representing a goal.

Alternatively, we might express forms of anger towards others if we pursue a certain response or outcome, yet might not at all feel angry in ourselves. This takes us into the domain of what, building upon the work of Erving Goffman, has been described as dramaturgical theories of emotions (ibid: 296ff). These propose that individuals can manipulate the presentation of self, for instance emotion displays, in order to engage in strategic behaviour. Likewise, the sociological literature charts numerous incidents of ‘emotion work’, in which individuals have to experience or express emotions they do not feel because the cultural context requires them to do so (Arlie Hochschild’s concept of ‘emotion management’ is a key reference here, see Hochschild, 1983). The pre-categorisation of emotions into positive or negative affective states is thus questionable, and it becomes clear from the above considerations that goals and action plans are less straightforward or self-evident than Oatley and Jenkins’ quote might suggest.
An approach which defines emotions as the results of actions rather than their cause is the feeling or self-perception theory of emotions. Building on William James’ 1890 work, researchers have argued against the common-sense view that feelings are the causes of behaviour, disruptive and perhaps irresistible, and instead suggest that they form part of the consequences, and thus part of the rational self. According to Laird and Apostoleris, for instance, the conflict is not between the irrational and the rational, not between feeling and thought, passion and reason, but between ‘the automatic and the reflective’ (Laird and Apostoleris, 1996: 292). Correspondingly, feelings constitute bits of information according to which we can monitor and control our subsequent behaviour.

Laird and Apostoleris base their findings on studies in which they asked people to adopt particular facial expressions or postures under the guise of researching something else. They discovered that happy, sad, disgusted or angry facial expressions resulted in corresponding reported feelings. This led them to believe that an information-gathering process takes place ‘out of our awareness’, through an automatic interpretation of ‘cues’ from our environment, and that we ‘feel’ as and when we become aware of our physical reactions. As they argue:

My feeling of anger doesn’t make me strike out, but rather it is a result of my having struck out. My feeling of sadness doesn’t cause me to sit slumped in my chair, motionless for hours. Instead, my feeling of sadness is the consequence of my slumped posture and drooping face. (ibid: 286)

Actions thus cause feelings, but this does not mean that feelings are only epiphenomenal; it is argued that they, too, can cause us to perform or refrain from performing other actions: ‘In the flow of human life, my scowl is upstream of my feeling of anger, but a great deal of behavior lies downstream, potentially subject to the impact of this information [i.e. the feeling]’ (ibid: 292). The control over expressive behaviour, the acting as one wishes to feel, has as a result formed the basis for behaviour therapy and for techniques in the treatment of phobias. Yet it also leaves questions open, such as why physiological changes occur in the first place. Because Laird and Apostoleris’ work is bound up in a century-old debate about the
control we may have over emotions, the researchers want to account for a ‘rational’ element to feelings. Yet, this does not altogether eradicate the notion of uncontrollable urges and sensations. It simply paints another picture of emotions as mediators between inner and outer worlds, another model of emotion and cognition. Along with aforementioned developments in neuroscientific research, it however puts the body back into the emotion, that is, it acknowledges the physiological changes that accompany emotions in one way or another, whether these are based on evolutionary or social cues, in order to account for the phenomenological aspects of people’s ‘lived experiences’. In doing so, it puts emphasis on consciousness, on emotions happening as and when we feel.

Across and within the disciplines, there is still some disagreement about how emotions should be studied or measured. Behavioural psychologists largely endorse research on facial expression and other emotion displays, mostly within experimental settings. They also make use of cognitive or behavioural indices, which they associate with ‘known’ emotions in terms of presence and intensity (see Parrott and Hertel, 1999: 73). Biologists and neurologists focus on the psychophysiological measurement of musculoskeletal and brain activity (e.g. through magnetic resonance imaging machines), as well as other autonomic and endocrine responses. They assess galvanic skin responses, heart rates, blood pressures and changes in the production of saliva, all autonomic responses which signal emotional arousal but do not necessarily tell us about the different meanings or subjective feelings, i.e. the ‘qualia’ of emotions. If consciousness, that is one’s feeling of physiological changes, stands at the centre of emotions, or if it at least plays a significant role within some emotions, then it should be possible to ask individuals to report upon their feelings (see Parrott and Hertel, 1999: 72). Indeed, psychologists and some sociologists have used ‘self-report’ methods by administering a series of emotion scales, such as Likert scales or Positive and Negative Affect Scales (Watson, Clark and Tellegen, 1988), in order to measure emotions. However, all of this assumes that emotions are indeed measurable, that they are distinct mental states of varying positive or negative qualities and different
degrees of intensity. Such approaches almost imply that there is some kind of objective, non-emotional state against which they could be measured.

There is a great deal of emotion research this study cannot meaningfully engage with. For example, it is not within the scope of the thesis to assess the extent to which emotions imply evolutionary universals, such as those explored by LeDoux and colleagues. In some ways, such questions are deeply political, because they address the issue of genetic determinism (see Rose and Rose, 2000; Kurzban, 2002; and Rose, 2006, for some key oppositional readings). I am persuaded by researchers who argue against the distinction of basic (hardwired) and social emotions, while at the same time acknowledging that there are important bodily elements to the nature and functions of emotions and feelings. I want to suggest here that the concept of inner mental states is misleading for the same reason that attitudes or senses of identity do not reside in a person’s head but are more fluid and situational, subjective and relative. At the same time, the fact that we feel, that we can be surprised by our own physical reactions to specific phenomena, and that we are able to reflect on these responses, perhaps regret them, seems crucial to our understanding of emotions.

This study is thus interested in moments when people become aware of being emotional, fearful, worried, anxious, even if this realisation only happens within the aftermath of encounters and upon reflection (in this case, reflection on our encounters with the media). I argue that the process of becoming aware of an emotional ‘moment’ is bound up with a labelling of this event as emotional, and as fearful, happy, sad, or mixed (see also Goldie, 2002). As such, we draw upon available socio-cultural concepts of emotion when and as we describe and make sense of our responses. But of course language does more than that, especially when our words are intended to be heard by someone else within a social context. The difficulties of studying emotion discourse are addressed below.
3.3 Theoretical Points of Departure

The kind of discourse-analytic framework employed in this study uses language (in interaction) as means of accessing and revealing wider socio-cultural processes and meanings, whilst linking participants’ emotional expressions both to those wider relations and processes, as well as to their sense of themselves and the world around them. It is thus partly concerned with issues of ‘identity’ construction. Identities are not considered as stable entities but as simultaneously sedimented and fluctuating, in that subjects will have an idea of the kind of person they are – or would like to be – yet are equally inclined to (re)construct the self within specific interactions and circumstances, both explicitly and implicitly. So within the interview context, participants are likely to draw on ‘rehearsed’ identity resources, as well as ‘impromptu’ ones, with different degrees of articulation. They are ‘rehearsed’ in the sense that participants might have constructed their emotional selves in preceding thoughts and conversations, and they can be ‘impromptu’ in that the research interview may encourage reflection on issues the participant had not viewed from a specific angle or analysed to the same extent before.

Emotions are here deemed to function both within the personal and the socio-cultural. They are lived bodily experiences, expressed and reflected upon in talk. Importantly, I want to argue that people can use language to make sense of their emotions by choosing from a range of available words, those concepts that, to them, best describe the emotion they feel. Yet at the same time emotion discourse cannot simply be considered as descriptive, as a window on an emotion state. People also always do things with language, and emotion talk in particular. They construct their emotional selves, they account for emotions or situations, and they attach values to certain kinds of feelings, depending on whether they are welcome or unwelcome, justified or unjustified, common or out of the ordinary, socially accepted or frowned upon. As such, this study has had to tread some difficult discourse-analytic ground, situating itself between the otherwise irreconcilable camps of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and Discursive Psychology (DP), whilst not neatly fitting into either one of them.
3.3.1 Discursive Psychology and Emotion Discourse

I first came across DP when researching people’s general emotional responses to film and television as part of a small-scale study of short open-ended questionnaires in 2004. ‘Emotion discourse’, a term coined and developed by Derek Edwards in his 1999 article in *Culture & Psychology*, seemed to offer a range of useful tools to unlock the kinds of discursive work a person accomplished when drawing on emotion talk. In particular, his discussion of emotion metaphors was enlightening in drawing attention to, amongst other issues, the different levels of agency they implied (e.g. ‘biting one’s head off’ was considered more action-oriented than a ‘contained’ metaphor, such as ‘boiling with anger’, 1999: 280). Furthermore, Edwards demonstrates the indexical purpose of certain rhetorical contrasts in emotion talk, which often fulfilled a similar symbolic function (e.g. emotion vs. cognition, emotion as rational vs. irrational, emotional dispositions vs. temporary states, and so on).

The kind of discourse analysis Edwards employs in his article was introduced with the publication of Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell’s *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour*, in 1987. Five years later, Potter and Edwards supplied the term, ‘discursive psychology’, and further developed their new perspective on psychological life, challenging the assumption that ‘language provides a set of unambiguous signs with which to label internal states and with which to describe external reality’ (Willig, 2003: 159). Up until then, psychologists had supposed that as long as they ensured that participants were telling the truth, their assertions could be considered as near-representations of their ‘true’ mental states. Discursive psychologists, on the other hand, began to argue that there is a purpose to every conversation and that, depending on the nature of interaction under investigation, people have specific interests or stakes. Their expressed attitudes, experiences and beliefs are not necessarily consistent across social contexts, precisely because of such contextual determinants. Rather, they are discursive moves employed by their speakers in order to validate or account for constructed realities.
DP shares its interest in discourse as social practice with Conversation Analysis and Ethnomethodology. According to Lamerichs and te Molder, it can be epitomised by three essential notions: naturalistic materials, participants’ orientations, and talk as action-orientated (Lamerichs and te Molder, 2003: 458f). Discursive psychologists prefer to focus on ‘naturally occurring talk’, that is, on talk which is not researcher-induced. A laboratory experiment would defeat their object, for it occurs in too artificial a setting. The concessions to this rule are conversations which follow interview schedules but in the analysis of which researchers take the context of their interaction into account. DP’s emphasis on participants’ orientations has both theoretical and methodological implications. Instead of pre-imposing concepts and categories onto the research process, this kind of research begins from the perspective of the participant who is free to respond in their own words, providing discursive resources for the researcher to draw on and to make sense of. In terms of emotions, for instance, this means that discursive psychologists do not pre-conceptualise different emotions as inner mental states but approach them as social and discursive phenomena that are locally produced and managed.

The third feature Lamerichs and te Molder discuss is perhaps DP’s most significant element, namely the emphasis on talk as accomplishing social action, or interactional work: ‘Rather than regarding language as an abstract system of reference, the perspective takes as its focus what participants do with it, such as making accusations, playing down responsibility or presenting something as factual’ (Lamerichs and te Molder, 2003: 459). In Discursive Psychology, Edwards and Potter provide a model for precisely this activity (1992: 154ff). Their ‘discursive action model’ (DAM) attends to three qualities of participants’ discursive practices: action, fact and interest, and accountability.

Although the authors modelled DAM specifically in relation to texts as they can be found within the public domain, such as news, official reports, political speeches, and so on, they stress that it should be possible to apply the model to other everyday settings. In fact, they argue that the discursive manifestation of any kind of psychological subject matter, such as memory, causal attribution, attitudes,
the self, and by extension emotions, can be treated as the reporting of “what went on”, the offering of accounts, the deployment of versions, descriptions and formulations’ (ibid: 156). Emotion discourse, or any discourse for that matter, can thus be usefully described as ‘purposeful assemblies of versions of reality and cognition’ (see Edwards, 1999: 271).

According to Edwards and Potter, these reports happen within ‘activity sequences’, i.e. specific interactional contexts. As speakers have certain interests and stakes within different situations, they deploy rhetorical and other discursive devices in order to present their constructed reports as factual presentations, allowing them to manage accountability and to ensure their interests. Their discursive moves and strategies appear natural within the context of everyday reports and conversations, and it is the aim of the discursive psychologist to draw attention to the constructedness and thus to the agendas of situated psychological discourse (Edwards and Potter, 1992: 154-70).

Edwards’ 1999 article focuses on the particular uses of emotion discourse in interpersonal relations and narrative accounts, with a specific emphasis on the rhetorical employment of what he calls ‘emotion categories’, or ‘emotion concepts’ (1999: 273). As he explains:

The emotions are often defined, both in professional and in lay psychology, in contrast to cognition and rational thought. They are conceived to be natural bodily experiences and expressions, older than language, irrational and subjective, unconscious rather than deliberate, genuine rather than artificial, feelings rather than thoughts. However, rather than adopting and using such categories and contrasts, discursive psychology examines empirically how they are invoked, and what kinds of discursive work such invocations perform. (ibid: 272f)

Edwards derives his examples from transcripts of relationship counselling sessions with two couples, Connie/Jimmy and Mary/Jeff, as well as from press reports dealing with public emotional responses in the aftermath of the death of Princess Diana. His careful investigation of the gathered material prompts him to suggest that ‘rather than stemming from fixed cognitive scenarios that define what each
emotion word means, emotion discourse deploys a flexible range of oppositions and contrasts that are put to service in the situated rhetoric of description and counter-description, narrative and counter-narrative’ (ibid: 271).

An example of this is the way in which his research subjects, Connie and Jimmy, offer opposing descriptions of ‘jealousy’ when reporting the same event, that is, an evening during which Jimmy allegedly overreacted when catching Connie dancing with another man in their living room. The difference is not manifested in terms of either of the couple telling a lie about the happenings that night. Yet, whilst Connie’s account portrays Jimmy as a generally jealous and easily aggravated person (‘my Jimmy is extremely jealous. [...] Has always been, from the day we met’), Jimmy depicts his actions as re-actions to her continual provocations: ‘And next thing I hear is what he doesn’t know (doesn’t) hurt him. [...] Soon as I heard that I went straight down ‘n uh threw them out’ (ibid: 273-5).

While ‘jealousy’ is considered by Connie as a kind of disposition of her husband, or as an enduring state, Jimmy narrates his emotions as sudden and understandable responses to recurrent provocations. Edwards concludes from this and another counselling example that an emotion concept, such as jealousy, cannot be treated as a semantic template, or fixed scenario, but as flexible resource for situated discourse (ibid: 278). Similarly, emotion categories can lend themselves to labelling people or events either as rational and accountable, or as spontaneous, irrational and emotional, to the extent that behaviour can be normalised or pathologised within different interactional contexts, or within what Edwards calls ‘scripted event sequences’ (ibid: 278). Again, the suggestion is that people do not simply deploy emotion talk as reflections upon experiences but as negotiations of social accountability, in which action and reaction, thought and emotion, are likely to be sets of contrasts and perform indexical work (ibid.). Similarly, the use of emotion metaphors as conceptual resources within participants’ narrative accounts goes beyond a simply cognitive description of behaviour or events and gives a shade of causal attribution or accountability to specific feelings.
Edwards goes on to compile a tentative list of ten rhetorical contrasts, demonstrating the kind of indexical work emotive discourse can do (e.g. emotion vs. cognition, emotions as irrational vs. rational, event-driven vs. dispositional, honest vs. fake, natural vs. moral, etc.). He then illustrates some of these rhetorical-narrative concepts by examining a range of press material following the death of Princess Diana, in which the press had to manage and negotiate both the enormous public emotional response to the event, as well as the role the press itself played in potentially being to blame for the princess’s fatal accident. In his conclusion, Edwards calls for a further investigation of the meanings of emotion concepts within their indexical use, investigations which approach discourse as situated social practice rather than mental expression.7

Jonathan Potter usefully outlines the different stages of analysis employed in DP in Melissa Hardy and Alan Bryman’s edited collection, *Handbook of Data Analysis* (2004). Following the generation of material, the first principal task is a coding procedure, which involves a ‘sifting through materials for instances of a phenomenon of interest and copying them into an archive’ (Potter, 2004: 615). The process should be as inclusive as possible, and codes are best accompanied by notes describing their nature and interest. Potter then suggests the combination of a number of analytic levers that can be applied to the material. These are variation, detail, rhetoric, orientation to context identity, accountability, as well as stake and interest (ibid: 616).

Briefly summarised, variation refers to the differences in descriptions of objects and events, specific word choices or discursive shifts, which indicate the kinds of discursive work a person is performing in their talk, either in relation to their own accounts, those of other people, or even in comparison with other possible versions of what could have been said. Attention to detail is required, since DP shares with Conversation Analysis the conviction that interactional features, such as hesitations and repair8, ‘are commonly part of the performance of some act or are consequential in some way for the outcome of the interaction’ (ibid: 616). The focus on rhetoric somewhat overlaps with parts of variation in that it investigates how
descriptions relate to competing alternatives in accounting for events. It also involves scrutinising discourse for the organisation and structuring of argumentation. This, again, is closely linked to issues of accountability. Here, the researcher takes particular notice of moments in which speakers present their actions as rational, sensible and/or justifiable. It is argued that speakers have particular stakes and interests which they pursue, for instance by constructing positions of neutrality. And finally, orientation to context, in its most basic form, means that turn-taking in interaction is always oriented towards both what has been said before and what is going to be said next, and thus attention to the display of participant orientations – or the way in which they make sense of prior turns – can have powerful analytic implications as regards the kind of discursive business they perform. Any claims the researcher seeks to make about such implications need to be supported by evidence that participants are indeed orienting towards the claims.

To summarise, then, discursive psychologists make use of a number of analytic tools or levers in order to highlight participants’ construction of versions of reality in their material. Attention is paid to the discursive work participants perform, and to the kinds of action-orientations they display in order to preserve their interests/stakes, or to account for certain situations, emotions, and behaviour. Discursive psychologists do not, however, make any claims about participants’ actual experiences, which they argue are never directly accessible through language. In fact, they contest the notion of emotions as static inner mental states and instead argue that they are social and discursive phenomena, which are produced and managed locally within different contexts and settings. As such, DP shares some of the assumptions and approaches to discourse that are evident in Matt Hills’ writing on the (dis)pleasures of horror (Hills, 2005; see Chapter Two).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, on the other hand, constitutes a recent psychological approach that seeks to contest the notion that emotions and experiences can be reduced to discursive constructs alone. While it does not negate the achievements of DP in problematising earlier cognitive accounts of emotions, there is a strong belief that close investigations of people’s talk can help identify the
logics by which people make sense of themselves, their emotions and their life situations. Whilst DP and IPA appear to be largely conflicting in their approach to the relationship between language and experience, I will argue that the theoretical framework offered by the latter, combined with some DP analytic tools, produce a compromise worth attempting.

3.3.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Having found a particular focus within health psychology, IPA shares with discourse analysis an interest in the qualitative, participant-led investigation of psychological matters. As its title suggests, its theoretical underpinnings derive from both phenomenological and hermeneutic sources. It is phenomenological in that it is concerned with people’s ‘lifeworlds’ (Lebenswelten) and ‘lived experiences’, with how humans perceive and make sense of the world. And it is interpretative because it is dependent on the researcher’s interpretation of these lifeworlds and experiences in a process which Jonathan A. Smith (IPA’s founding father) and Mike Osborn have described as ‘double hermeneutic’: ‘[T]he researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world’ (Smith and Osborn, 2003: 51). This dual process is evident in the combination of an ‘empathetic’ and a ‘questioning’ hermeneutics. IPA researchers seek to situate themselves ‘on the side of’ the participant in order to develop an understanding of their lifeworld in the first instance, and in the second instance to pose questions about what a person is trying to achieve with particular statements, e.g. what other processes might be going on that the participant is not aware of. One of the premises of IPA is to make a clear distinction between these two kinds of analysis in the writing up of results, and to continuously cross-check one’s interpretations with the data, so as to ensure every segment of the analysis is grounded within participants’ accounts. Another influence on IPA is symbolic interactionism, with its emphasis on the construction of meaning within both personal and social contexts, such as happens within social interaction (see, for example, Denzin, 1995).
The differences and commonalities between IPA and discourse analysis within DP are usefully summarised by Smith and Virginia Eatough in their paper on understanding feelings of ‘anger’:

IPA is a distinctly psychological qualitative approach and can be described as experiential research in contrast to discursive research (Reicher, 2000). For IPA, the focus is more on understanding, representing and making sense of people’s ways of thinking, their motivations, actions and so on whereas for discourse analysis, the emphasis is on the ways in which language constructs people’s worlds, the performative aspects of talk. Although IPA recognizes the importance of language in influencing how individuals make sense of lived experiences and then in turn how researchers make sense of participants’ sense making, it can be described as taking a light constructionist stance in contrast to the strong constructionism of discourse analysis. Our talk may be action oriented and functions to achieve our interpersonal objectives but IPA suggests that the lived life with its vicissitudes is much more than historically situated linguistic interactions between people. (Eatough and Smith, 2006: 485, original emphasis)

In terms of the investigation of our affective realms, this means that emotions and emotionality are considered as more than mere discursive acts and constructs. While IPA acknowledges that there is no direct, unmediated access to inner mental states, it does not altogether discard issues of cognition. Instead, IPA argues:

[...] how people feel about and attach meaning to the psychologically forceful and often indefinable aspects of their emotional life has implications for their life beyond the specific local interaction. Personal accounts of emotional experience are also concerned with human potential and development, with making our lives by connecting the past with the present and future; they are ‘imaginative enterprises’ (Reissman, 1992: 2). Thus, IPA sees the person as an experiencing, meaning making, embodied and discursive agent. (ibid: 485f)

Researchers employing IPA seek to disclose ‘what something is like’ for a participant, how it ‘appears’ to them, how people make sense of their emotions, and how they experience them both physically and psychologically. This is important in the light of the current study, since it allows for the human subject to act reflectively and discursively at the same time. Methodologically, however, it begs the question
of whether such differentiations are visible within people’s talk, whether indeed we can make a clear distinction between moments at which people reflect upon their embodied experiences and moments at which they act as discursive agents.

One of the most striking features of IPA is its concern with the individual as research subject. Although some studies have in the past employed focus group interviews and other forms of data collection (e.g. diaries), the preferred method of investigation is the individual in-depth interview. Unlike the pure phenomenological interview, which encourages participant-led talk through a single question at the beginning of the interview (see, e.g., Thompson et al., 1989; Cope, 2005), the IPA interview is semi-structured and allows for the researcher to probe specific subject areas whilst still leaving it up to the participant to determine much of the conversation’s agenda. Thus, whereas DP is increasingly concerned with naturally occurring text and talk, IPA makes the conscious decision of involving the researcher at both stages of data generation and analysis.

It is the aim of the semi-structured interview to generate enough in-depth conversation to permit a detailed insight into the individual’s perceptions and understandings. Because of this attention to detail, IPA tends to work with small sample sizes and case study material. Sampling, here, is purposive rather than representative. The idea is to investigate groups of people who share particular experiences relevant to the research question (e.g. the suffering of an illness), or people who share these experiences and are further linked by similar socio-demographic variables. The interview itself follows the general guidelines of qualitative semi-structured interviewing by using relatively open-ended and general questions and occasionally posing additional, more specific prompting questions to follow up particular areas of interest. Interviews are transcribed semantically, including every utterance, significant pause and laughter or crying, but refraining from such detailed recordings as DP’s preferred Jeffersonian style.

In their illustration of the research process, Smith and Osborn broadly suggest five stages of analysis (Smith and Osborn, 2003: 64ff; see also Eatough and Smith, 2006: 487f). First, the transcript is read several times and initial notes are
made on its left margins regarding any matters the researcher deems significant in the participant’s talk. There is no clear indicator for the IPA novice as to what elements might be important here. The notes can summarise an account, paraphrase certain passages, or list a number of associations that come to the researcher’s mind. The researchers argue that, as one moves through the transcript, one is ‘likely to comment on similarities and differences, echoes, amplifications and contradictions in what a person is saying’ (2003: 67).13

The second stage of analysis in IPA should preferably be carried out after some time has elapsed. The researcher returns to the transcript afresh and transforms initial notes into more abstract themes or phrases. These are jotted down on the right margins. At this stage the researcher also begins to relate the themes to existing psychological concepts or theories.14 Then, on a separate sheet of paper, the data is further reduced to establish connections between the themes and develop clusters of higher and lower order (i.e. related subthemes are grouped under descriptive headings). In a fourth step, a table is created in which higher-order themes and subthemes feature alongside exemplary extracts from the interview. In doing so, the researcher goes some way towards ensuring that themes remain close to the original transcript. Finally, during the write-up stage, the researcher generates a narrative account of their interpretation in conjunction with the participant’s own words, moving between description and different degrees of interpretation, while making clear distinctions between the two.

As noted above, IPA has found a particular focus in health psychology, with studies emerging both on the experience of actual illnesses or discomforts (e.g. Bramley and Eatough, 2005; Howes et al., 2005) and on the perception of risk as regards the likelihood of developing a disease (e.g. Senior et al., 2002; Smith et al., 2002). Feelings such as fear, anger and shame are often described as accompanying certain complaints. They move to the centre of interest when they cause some kind of problem, such is the case with Eatough and Smith’s 2006 study on one individual’s struggle with feelings of ‘anger’.
Their idiographic case study investigates ‘what anger feels like’ for a 30-year-old woman, Marilyn, who is in the process of learning to deal with regular outbursts of anger. Having lived in a violent relationship, the birth of her son made her reconsider her situation and seek therapy. In their article, “‘I was like a wild wild person’: Understanding feelings of anger using interpretative phenomenological analysis’, Eatough and Smith outline some of the main themes detected in Marilyn’s talk, such as the description of feelings of anger as taking over her body and life, as something she does not have much control over but has had to confront because of their growing impact on interpersonal relations. This is particularly evident in Marilyn’s relationship with her young son, and the feelings of shame and guilt that accompany any angry outbursts involving the child. Marilyn’s account is characterised by a change in behaviour from expressing anger and aggression to suppressing and replacing them with frustration and acts of withdrawal. Instead of behaving aggressively and violently towards her fellow human beings, Marilyn now cries a lot.

Eatough and Smith’s analytic summary of Marilyn’s account is followed by a phenomenological theorisation of her narrative that puts the physical experience of anger at the forefront of discussion: ‘being angry is an experience lived through the body’ (ibid: 494, original emphasis). The authors thus underline the pre-reflective engagement with the world in the first instance, the bodily feeling, and the way in which Marilyn’s account confirms the emotional experience to be both transformative, apparently turning Marilyn into a different person, and relational, i.e. dependent on (interpersonal) contexts. In this way, the authors argue, ‘emotional episodes are inextricably connected to a person’s whole life, past, present and future’ (ibid: 496). Such complexities, they continue, cannot be disclosed by standard questionnaires or psychometric investigations alone.

3.3.3 Points of Incorporation

The above summaries of IPA and DP are inevitably sketchy within the constraints of this chapter. What I hope to have highlighted is that, to a large extent, the two
bodies of work differ in their approaches to the relationship between language and emotion. Discourse analysis from a DP perspective illustrates the ways in which emotion discourse creates versions of reality instead of constituting neutral accounts of experiences. Yet it does not tell us a great amount about what emotions feel like, how people come to reflect upon their emotional selves. As Lisa Cosgrove remarks with regard to discourse-analytic appropriations of ‘gender’:

[Although a social constructionist approach renders visible the fractured, fragmented subject whose gender, like any other dimension of identity, is constituted, it does not help us more fully understand the sense of coherence and constancy that we have of ourselves; it falters on being able to accept, much less explain, the experience (albeit fleeting and transitory) that one in some sense has a gender. (Cosgrove, 2000: 253)]

Although gender constitutes a phenomenon quite different from that of emotional experience, it is not altogether absurd to make connections between the two. Both are constructed, experienced and expressed within social and personal contexts. IPA seeks to fill the gap left by DP by allowing language to be treated, if not at face-value (e.g. as reliably describing a true object), then certainly as an ‘intentional object, which is a phenomenon of presence, and [...] has to be accessed through acts of reflection’ (Giorgi, 1995: 35). These, in turn, are interpreted by the researcher in order to disclose underlying processes and meanings.

In doing so, it treads more problematic ground than DP, because it seeks to analyse units of meaning that are not readily accessible to the researcher. Yet such criticism is only founded if one is indeed interested in inner mental states as something that can be measured and researched in any conventional sense. Although IPA verges on regarding language as a window onto the experience, I would argue that neither of the approaches truly maintains such a view. What IPA does more readily than DP is to see language as partly reflective, and to consider reflections as meaningful within people’s lives, in that individuals might struggle to make sense of their experiences, including emotions, and employ language (or thought, which is arguably based on some meaning system) to do so.
There are limitations to IPA, not least with regard to the soundness of its analytic procedure. At its worst, the analysis provides a mere descriptive summary of participants’ accounts. IPA’s attempt to relate participants’ narratives back to existing psychological concepts can also be problematic since it risks creating an analytic vacuum – with the personal accounts utilised to prove the validity of existing psychological concepts, and vice versa. A further limitation of the approach is its concern with the private, with the experience of individuals. Although IPA goes some way in taking account of the contexts in which individuals live and reflect upon their lives, it is not so much interested in wider social processes and dynamics. Its aim is to understand the private realm of individuals in order to be able to assist doctors, nurses and therapists in doing their job in a more informed way. As such, it sees emotional experience as a symptom rather than a part of everyday life.

However, while DP might represent the ‘safer’ approach, in that it refrains from any interpretation of lived experiences, it is strongest when it attends to already conflict-ridden talk and text, to situations in which a great deal more seems at stake than within everyday conversations or researcher-induced interviews (e.g. political speeches, courtroom discussions, counselling sessions with clashing couples). If one considers IPA’s general premise, that humans are experiencing, meaning-making, reflective and discursive agents, then it might be possible to view people’s accounts through different lenses – the discursive and the reflective one, with the aim of disclosing just what emotional experiences come to mean for particular subjects. In this way, it should be possible to approach participants as private and social beings alike.

Deborah Lupton, in her sociological exploration of everyday discourses of emotions, seems to unproblematically bridge the gap between discursive and phenomenological understandings. As she outlines her research design, she explains:

Because my primary interest was in the discursive aspects of emotions as they were articulated in [the] interviews, a discourse analysis approach
influenced by poststructural theoretical perspectives was employed. The idea was to combine the focus on exploring individuals’ lived experiences of everyday life that has been a central emphasis in traditional phenomenological research, with the interest in the constitutive role played by discourse that has emerged from poststructuralist perspectives. (Lupton, 1998: 40)

Although Lupton is partly interested in the emergence of emotion concepts in media representations and expert discourses, a substantial part of her book attends to the discourses of emotions as expressed and explained by a range of participants during semi-structured interviews. Her findings prompt her to suggest that ‘the experience of emotion involves the interpretation of physical sensations mediated through a body image that is culturally contingent’ (ibid: 167). In other words, we respond to cues from our environment because we have been socialised to do so (Lupton very much rejects the idea of ‘natural’ or ‘inherent’ emotions), and as we become aware of what seems like an inner (because embodied) feeling, we interpret it as one emotion or another, again depending on the socio-cultural milieu we find ourselves in: ‘Acculturation, therefore, both influences certain bodily responses experienced by an individual and also shapes the way in which those bodily responses are then interpreted as an emotion (or not)’ (ibid).15 The author comes to this conclusion through a discursive and phenomenological consideration of participants’ talk.

Unfortunately, Lupton neither outlines the practical implications of her approach nor reflects upon any of the difficulties it might have caused during analysis. However, central to her perspective seems to be the assumption that there is a ‘commonly shared pool of discourses to which people have access and upon which they draw when describing their experiences’ (ibid). This notion appears similar to a concept within Discursive Psychology which formed an important part of Potter and Wetherell’s aforementioned Discourse and Social Psychology, though it has since been rejected by Potter: the notion of ‘interpretative repertoires’. These were initially defined by the authors as ‘a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterize and evaluate actions and events’ (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 138). Since then, they have developed within a strand of social psychology that
has sought to incorporate or ‘synthesize’ Conversation Analysis, which studies the way social organisation is accomplished in talk, with more post-structuralist positions, such as Foucauldian genealogy, in a Critical Discursive Psychology (CDP, Wetherell, 1998).

A more recent definition sees interpretative repertoires as ‘a culturally familiar and habitual line of argument comprised of recognizable themes, common places and tropes (doxa)’ (Wetherell, 1998: 400). As Wetherell explains, they are ‘the common sense which organizes accountability and serves as a back-cloth for the realization of locally managed positions in actual interaction (which are always also indexical constructions and invocations) and from which [...] accusations and justifications can be launched’ (ibid: 400f). CDP acknowledges the significance of local turn-taking and ‘orientation to context’, but wants to move beyond this and account for the way in which participants draw upon specific discourses in order to make sense of situations and to prove points. Following Laclau and Mouffe’s poststructuralist conceptualisation of discourse and social space, they argue that society can be understood as a “vast argumentative texture through which people construct their reality” (Laclau’s words, in Wetherell, 1998: 393). CDP suggests that the way in which people construct their arguments is indicative of the social and cultural contexts surrounding conversations. As such, though differing in purpose and focal points, it is not dissimilar to IPA in allowing for a deeper level of analysis in making sense of people’s conversations, including audiences’ discussion of their emotional, fearful responses to film and television.

3.4 Conclusion
The above considerations of DP, IPA and, to a degree, CDP, form the basis for the design of this study, as will be further discussed in Chapter Four. It has been the purpose of this chapter to flag some of the dichotomies between biological and social-constructionist understandings of emotions, as well as between concepts of emotions as distinct emotional states (which can be represented through language in any ‘true’ or ‘false’ fashion) and views of emotion talk as simultaneously
reflective (though not directly representational) and constructive. Chapter Four builds upon these considerations and provides a practical account of the research process.

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2 James R. Averill distinguishes between emotional syndromes, emotional schemas, emotional states, and emotional responses within cognitive psychology (see Averill, 1999: 766-9). Syndromes are folk-theoretical understandings of individual emotions, such as fear, anger, joy, which are based on, or made sense of in relation to, existential beliefs and social rules. Schemas, within cognitive emotion theory, are mental constructs or phenomena that have an influence on how information is processes in the nervous system. Emotional states are described as ‘the temporary (episodic) disposition to respond in a manner consistent with an emotional syndrome, as that syndrome is understood by the individual’ (ibid: 767). They can last for short moments or longer periods of time. Finally, emotion responses constitute what a person does when in an emotional state, with ‘feelings’ being considered one particular response. For Averill, a degree of reflexivity or interpretation is fundamental: ‘Even responses that are relatively automatic (such as changes in visceral activity) are experienced as emotional only to the extent that they are interpreted within the framework of an emotional syndrome; it is this reflexivity that transforms mere arousal (e.g. from climbing stairs) into emotional arousal (an angry episode, say)’ (ibid: 769).
3 Angst, of course is linked to the notion of ‘anguish’ in the English language, whilst in German it is most commonly used to describe ‘fear’ itself (originally ‘Furcht’). Its plural, ‘Ângste’, is more readily translated as ‘anxieties’.
4 A similar distinction between body and soul has since become known as the Cartesian dualist model of emotions and underlies what Lyons has elsewhere described as the ‘feeling theory of emotion’ (Lyons, 1980). Descartes distinguished between body (heat and movement) and soul (thought), with emotions being “passion[s] of the soul” (Descartes cited in Lyons, 1980: 6): ‘For Descartes’, Lyons writes, ‘fear is not an awareness that something is frightening and that I am fleeing, it is the subjective concomitant feeling of my being physiologically in a certain state’ (ibid). Emotions are thus ‘just feelings’, they are felt when the body has already reacted to something and a person becomes aware of these physiological changes. In the late 1800s, William James further developed Cartesian feeling theory to suggest that emotions can be distinguished by physiological changes alone. This, of course, has since been refuted by those who observed that the same ‘visceral processes’ occurred in different emotional as well as non-emotional states (ibid: 16).
5 Increasingly, however, discursive psychologists even distance themselves from semi-structured interviews, highlighting the significance of written and spoken texts which would have occurred entirely independently of any research agenda.
6 Compare Hollway’s ‘positioning triad’ in Harré and Gillett, 1994: 156.
7 For further examples of research on emotion discourse, see Abigail Locke (2001, 2002, 2003), and Locke and Edwards (2003).
8 Discursive psychologists understand by the term ‘repair’ a form of ‘damage control’ in social interaction, that is, a rhetorical device for qualifying, retrieving or explaining former statements in order to make one’s account appear justified, truthful, rational, and so on.
For further discussion of the differences between DP, IPA and Grounded Theory, see Willig (2001).

Nor does in fact Discursive Psychology, which has been described as part of the ‘second cognitive revolution’ within mainstream psychology (see Harré, 1995: 144ff). Yet for discursive psychologists neurophysiological processes in the brain and the private experiences thereof are irrelevant since it is only the public discourses we can access and research.

Kim Schröder has of course proposed the individual in-depth interview as a key methodological approach in audience reception research for investigating audiences’ membership of different ‘interpretive communities’ without prioritising any one of these communities through the creation of specific focus groups. The difference here, as will be discussed further on in the main text of this chapter, is that Schröder is still and mainly interested ‘exploring the multiple sociocultural discourses that partake in the construction of that individual’s readings and uses television’ (Schröder, 1996: 342). The viewer is thus approached as a social subject rather than as an individual whose talk displays personal psychological processes.

Gail Jefferson’s 1984 transcript notation code is widely used in Discursive Psychology and Conversation Analysis, since it places great emphasis on interactional detail, such as intonation and the exact length of pauses.

Of course this tactic of looking at language use does not seem dissimilar from some of the analytic levers employed by discourse analysts. The difference is that IPA’s tools are not quite as prescriptive as those in DP, which indicates a higher level of analytic freedom on the side of the researcher but comes at the cost of blurring the analytic process for everyone else.

Of course, this would suggest that the researcher derives their concepts and knowledges from the discipline of psychology.

Interestingly, Lupton also suggests that the binary oppositions between culture and nature and mind and body still exist within popular discourse, and that people are constantly confronted with questions over the validity or appropriateness of their emotions. While they are envisaged as ‘bodily fluids that are seen to slosh around inside our bodies and emerge from our bodies at intervals in more or less controlled ways’, emotions are constantly managed and partly repressed as a result of conscious ‘emotion work’ (Lupton, 2001: 168f).

See also Nigel Edley’s consideration of interpretative repertoires in studies of masculinity, 2001.