Analysing Affective-Discursive Patterns in Identity Negotiations

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• How do we analyse emotion and the affective dimensions evident in lived experience and in qualitative data?
“At the end of the day, if you’re coming over from another country, you’ve got to understand how our country works, do you know what I mean, so you know, you should respect and understand what our law … you know what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. You can’t come into another country and get everything handed to you on a plate. I’m sorry, I just don’t agree with that.”
“There was a case about an Indian family staying in a hotel and they just kept paying for them. And I said to them, if I was black or wore a sari and had half a dozen kids, I said, you’d put me in a place right now. They said, that’s not very nice, Mrs Butler. I said, ‘no it isn’t’, but that happens to be true … And I’m not prejudiced, but we should come first, we are British, we are born here.”
“… going up to Liverpool on a stag weekend that he’s organised because he is a passionate Everton fan, he’s a second generation Asian, but you just wouldn’t know it because he is a Scouser, and he waves the flag for England for the cricket (…) That’s my kind of immigrant. If everybody was like that, there would be no problem, you know but they aren’t. They want to have, they want to import somehow too much …”
“...some census that they’re doing and it had every nationality, every denominal (sic) mixture, anything that you could possibly think of except English. And I just think, the Scots can be Scottish, the Welsh, you know, they’re Welsh, but we have to be British. [...] I had never bothered about it before, but I am bothering about it now.”
Discursive Analysis

- Subject positions
- Interpretative Repertoires (e.g. ‘when in Rome’ trope)
- Ideological dilemmas

Affective-Discursive Loops

• Familiar and everyday affective routines and practices

• People engage with the political through ‘ordinary’ affect

• The practical affective-discursive work of victimhood
Turning to Psychoanalysis?

- Melancholic formations

- Repetition compulsions, splitting, projection, projective identification, repression and the dynamic unconscious

- Problematic and archaic conceptual machinery for analysing effervescent, mobile and heterogeneous affective-discursive meaning-making
Affective Practice

• Situated, performative, a flowing but patterned articulation of the body/psyche/social

• Investigating affective positions, normative sequences, repertoires and ruts, psychosocial orders

• The very particular logic of practice
‘The Duty to Integrate’

“…[This extremism] has thrown into sharp relief, the nature of what we have called, with approval, ‘multicultural Britain’. We like our diversity. But how do we react when that ‘difference’ leads to separation and alienation from the values that define what we hold in common? For the first time in a generation there is an unease, an anxiety, even at points a resentment that our very openness, our willingness to welcome difference, our pride in being home to many cultures, is being used against us; abused, indeed, in order to harm us.

I always thought after 7/7 [the London tube bombings] our first reaction would be very British: we stick together; but that our second reaction, in time, would also be very British: we're not going to be taken for a ride.”

Tony Blair, November, 2006
Extending the Analysis

• Emotional communities (Rosenwein, 2006) and feeling regimes (Reddy, 2001)

• Emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983), affective economies (Ahmed, 2004) and emotional capital (Reay, 2004)
Some Resources


