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POLITICS & THE RHETORIC OF IDENTITIES: A DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE BSE DEBATE

BY

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A DOCTORAL THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY OF LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

2000

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Acknowledgements

For fear of missing anyone out of these acknowledgements, I must first thank everyone who has helped me during my postgraduate career. Without your support and constructive criticism I certainly would not be sat here writing the acknowledgements to a completed thesis. I remain indebted to people across all areas of the Department of Social Sciences at Loughborough University. My time at Loughborough has been an enjoyable experience thanks to the staff and postgraduates in the department, and I feel honoured to have worked within such an inspiring academic environment. Thanks to all those, from different areas of the department, who have provided me with relevant literature and food for thought, often without being asked, and have generally made me feel at home at Loughborough.

I must also pay a debt of gratitude to DARG for the support and intellectual stimulation I have received from its members over the past few years. It is a privilege to not only be a member, but to work within such a supportive network, so that the experience of being a postgraduate has never been a lonely or an isolated one. There are members of DARG and the department who I would particularly like to thank. Firstly I must pay my biggest debt of gratitude to Mick Billig. As a trusted supervisor and friend I have appreciated your wisdom, patience and confidence in my abilities even when I was beginning to doubt myself. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time working with you. Secondly, would like to acknowledge the help, supervision and friendship offered to me by Charles Antaki. I have valued your pragmatism, humour and plain good sense! To both Mick and Charles I thank you for providing me with two excellent examples of academic professionalism, intellectual inspiration and good humour!

I would also like to thank 'The Girls' – Rosemary Chapman, Abi Locke, Nikki Parker and Sally Wiggins, for providing me with a mutual network of friendship and trust during my time at Loughborough. Although I have enjoyed my time as a post-graduate, no-one could ever mistake the process for being an easy one. Thus, I am especially grateful to you for such wonderful friendship. I would also like to thank Liz Stokoe, with whom I have enjoyed thrashing out ideas and sharpening arguments (and the never-ending search for yet another new 'hook'!). Working as a team has proved to be a rich learning curve for me, and I thank you for the influences and challenges you have presented me with and for being trusted co-writer and good friend.

Last, but certainly not least, I owe a huge debt (financial and emotional!) to Andrew for keeping me sane, and having complete faith in my 'discursive nonsense' (bless you!). One day I will get a 'real job' I promise! Also, to my father and Chris, who know little of what I do at university ('read people's minds' apparently. If only I could!) but understand so much of who I am, Love to you all.

ABSTRACT

This thesis considers how politicians' constructions of identity change in the context of the EU ban, imposed upon the import and export of British beef in 1996. This ban was introduced on the basis of reports of BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encepathalopathy) in cattle and its possible links with occurrences of CJD (Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease) in humans. The data is taken from two sources. The first concerns 3 debates that occurred within the House of Commons on 20 March, 25 March and 20 June 1996. The second is an article written by Malcolm Rifkind (Foreign Secretary, Conservative) for the *Sun* newspaper (31 May 1996) about the EU ban. Previous social scientific research has noted the shift in emphasis from health to national identity in media reporting about BSE in the context of the ban. However, little attention has been paid to how and why such shifts occur in discourse and if these trends are apparent in political debates at this time. Adopting a discursive psychological approach to analysis, this present work examines the rhetorical functions of these shifts from health to national identity. However, rather than regarding identity as a fixed mentalist notion, it is argued that identity can be understood as a communicative resource in the accomplishment of social actions in talk. Billig et al (1988) have noted how the construction of national identity concerns the management of ideological dilemmas of prejudice and reasonableness. Thus, if politicians construct the national identities of Britain and Europe in negotiating blame for BSE, they should attend to the dilemmatic elements of their talk. How can politicians convincingly allocate blame to Europe for the BSE crisis and at the same time manage his/her own 'reasonable' identity? Alternatively, how can a politician from one side of the House assign blame to members of the opposition for BSE, and at the same time avoid presenting oneself as a

biased party predictably blaming the other? This thesis considers how issues of accountability and identity construction are inextricably linked in political discourse about BSE.

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1.

Introduction

Mad Cows & British Politicians: Introducing the BSE Debates

BSE in Britain

Between March and June 1996 the issue of BSE (bovine spongiform encepathalopathy) became headline news in Britain. Unlike never before, the topic of BSE and the implications it had for human health were the primary focus of debates in the British House of Commons. Although BSE had been present in British herds for many years previously, its dramatic hold on political debates and media headlines from March 1996 marked the impact it would have on matters of health and national identity. This increasing focus on BSE paralleled a scientific claim that the disease might be linked with a brain disease in humans, Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD). In the context of such claims on the 25 March 1996, the European Union imposed a worldwide ban on the import and export of British beef. As Hugo Young (1999) writes:

> Britain exported beef and its products to Europe, and the European Union, as the controlling agency of both trade and public health rules, imposed an immediate British beef ban not only in Europe but worldwide. Farming was put on the rack. A great British industry which was a traditional bulwark of the Conservative Party, found itself a prisoner of Brussels. (p. 461)

Media theorists have noted that this European action sparked a change in focus for the BSE issue. What should have been an issue about public health rapidly turned into a debate about Britain's relationship to Europe. The legitimacy of the ban was challenged in Britain by Conservative politicians, as was the suspected sinister reasons behind it. From a political standpoint, Young attributes this change in emphasis to the actions of the Prime Minister (John Major). He claims:

> But he (Major) took an abrasive line, attacking the beef ban as an exercise in 'collective hysteria', and already preparing the ground for what became the most surreal, yet strangely persistent, feature of the British position: that 'Europe', rather than Britain, was responsible for the BSE catastrophe"
> (p. 461)

Within other areas of the social sciences the emphasis has been placed upon the media's representation of the BSE debate. For example, Brookes (1999) has noted how the media, prior to the ban, featured BSE in terms of scientific debates and cases of human deaths from CJD. However, he notes that after 25 March 1996, these reports shifted to consider Britain's ambivalent relationship to Europe. In particular, he notes how Germany was singled out from the rest of Europe and subsequently blamed for imposing an illegitimate and unnecessary ban upon Britain. Themes of the Second World War and xenophobic stereotypes accompanied claims that Germany is acting in its own economic and political interests rather than in Britain's.

Thus, at first glance it may appear as though all the necessary research has been done on this issue. The political theorists have considered the impact BSE had upon the Conservative Government, whilst the scientists have continued to investigate the link between BSE and CJD. Also, the media theorists have noted how this debate was filtered into the public's consciousness via representations in the newspapers, television and the radio. However, this thesis claims that an important area appears to have been missed out from this body of work. Although most social scientists are happy with the claim that the debate shifted from one about health to one about national identity, none have actually studied how this was achieved in the political debates themselves. Moreover, there is at present no work that considers the implications 'identity' may have in how the 'reality' of BSE was constructed and how the problematic relationship between Britain and Europe was both produced and reproduced in politics and the media. Furthermore, the issue of BSE was, and still is,

deeply controversial. Who is to be blamed and held accountable for BSE is a contentious issue. During 1996, the Conservative Government was blamed for the existence of BSE in Britain. In particular, the disease was considered to be a consequence of the deregulatory anti-inspection prejudices of Thatcherism. Being held accountable for a potentially life-threatening disease positioned the Conservative Party in a delicate position. Somehow they had to both accept the possible link between BSE and CJD whilst at the same time deny responsibility. With the introduction of the European Union ban, the Conservatives assigned blame to Europe for imposing an unnecessary and politically motivated restriction upon Britain. However, such accusations are dilemmatic. How does a politician blame Europe and its member countries, such as Germany, for being prejudiced against Britain, whilst at the same time avoiding appearing prejudiced also? Moreover, how can a politician credibly reproduce xenophobia towards Europe and an ambivalent relationship with Britain, whilst at the same time maintaining a 'tolerant' identity? These are the issues that are, as yet, omitted from the research. This thesis claims that these questions can be addressed from an examination of the function that identity construction can play in political discourse.

Identity in Psychology

The main concern of this thesis is to consider the construction of identity in discourse, and its function as a rhetorical resource in assigning and avoiding blame. In particular this work examines mainstream social psychological approaches to identity, and considers the limitations of cognitive essentialism to comprehend *how* and *why* identities are constructed in talk. This research rejects the notion that identities are fixed stable cognitive states. Instead, it is argued from a discursive social constructionist perspective that identities are produced flexibly in discourse to

promote a particular version of reality. Moreover, in the parliamentary debates about BSE, identity construction is understood to be the central tenet for managing and negotiating delicate matters of political accountability. Adopting a discursive psychological approach to analysis, this thesis considers how identity ascription, warranted through the rhetorically loaded descriptions of events, objects, places and people, plays a fundamental role in locating blame for BSE. This work also considers how identity construction is an important resource for managing ideological dilemmas of prejudice and tolerance, as politicians assign blame to Europe for the 'beef war'.

Social psychological accounts of identity are outlined in chapter 2. Emphasis is placed upon the recent shift in identity work from treating the concept as a mentalist notion to a discursive/communicative phenomenon. Particular attention is paid to the dominant identity paradigms within social psychology, Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Self-Categorization Theory (SCT), and how these perspectives theorise identity as a fixed cognitive entity that organises human action and experience. Across social science the interest in identity has stemmed from a concern with analysing the link between individual and society. Such work examines how matters of inclusion and exclusion from society result from identity ascription. However, the shift away from cognition and towards discourse has resulted in the exposition of limitations of SIT and SCT to comprehend fully the rhetorical dimensions of identity. Those theorists working within a discursive/rhetorical framework have hotly disputed the definition of 'identity' and 'context' within these two theories. Thus, a 'middle-ground' approach has emerged that tries to integrate cognition and discourse in the understanding of what identity are and how it organises collective action. However, chapter 2 considers how this middle-ground approach to identity research, as proposed by Steve Reicher and Nick Hopkins, which remains rooted in cognitive

traditions, is still limited in its explications of individual identity construction and the functions fulfilled in performing particular rhetorical business. At present, this middle ground approach remains focussed on examining mass collective political action. It does not address how identities may be dynamically constructed and deployed by individuals at the micro-level of discourse. Thus, attention is paid to the discursive and conversation analytic perspectives that fully reject identity as a cognitive concept. It is noted how these strands of research analyse the local situatedness of identity construction, oriented to the surrounding discursive and rhetorical context.

Chapter 3 reviews some of the prominent discourse approaches. The similarities and conflicts between the differing approaches of Discourse Analysis (DA), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Foucauldian Discourse Analysis and Conversation Analysis (CA) are noted. Shared theoretical and methodological aims are noted, as are the points of departure. The eclectic approach of Discursive Psychology (DP) as theorised by Edwards and Potter (1992) is outlined. Discursive psychology's work on identity is noted, as is its claim that identity is inextricably linked to accountability. With its emphasis upon argumentation, accountability and the construction of 'facts', the fundamental principles underlying DP aim to address common-sense notions of identity, mind and reality. Concepts developed and transformed by DP, such as footing, dilemmas of stake and interest, consensus and conspiracy, and category entitlements are central to this work on accountability and are examined in detail.

As this thesis is based on a study of parliamentary data, chapter 4 discusses previous research on political discourse. However, this thesis marks a departure from dominant political studies within discursive research. The qualities and limitations of

linguistic and Marxist/Foucauldian approaches to political data are noted. However, their apriori political assumptions are identified and dismissed in favour of a more apolitical approach. Rather than imposing the analysts' political assumptions upon the data, this thesis aims to consider the speakers *in their own words*. Thus, certain issues become relevant to the analysis to the extent that the speakers themselves invoke them. Moreover, because this thesis is interested in how politicians negotiate blame for the BSE crisis, the appropriateness of DP, with its stress on accountability, is promoted as a suitable analytic framework for this thesis.

The chapter also reviews previous social scientific work on BSE, which identifies the change in emphasis from health to national identity in the media. However, the failure of this earlier work to examine this shift within the political debates, and at a detailed micro-level of discourse is discussed. Thus, the scene is set for this current thesis. The data sources for this thesis are explained as the sixth series of Hansard, and also an article written about BSE by Malcolm Rifkind (Foreign Secretary, Conservative) for the *Sun* newspaper. The debate concerning the shared features of political discourse and mundane conversation is also outlined and discussed in the context of this current work.

Chapter 5 provides an analysis of a parliamentary debate that occurred in the British House of Commons on 20 March 1996. This debate is notable as the first public speech given by the Secretary of State for Health (Stephen Dorrell) about the Spongiform Encepathalopathy Advisory Committee's (SEAC) findings on the link between BSE and the human brain disease CJD. Focussing upon the opening exchange between Stephen Dorrell and the Shadow Health Minister, Harriet Harman (Labour), the role of identity construction is noted as they assign and avoid blame for

the BSE crisis in Britain. The variable construction, deployment and entitlements of the identity categories of 'scientist', 'committee' and a 'worried unscientific British public' are examined in detail in this negotiation of accountability. The rhetoric of scientific discourse is considered as the speakers work up the facticity of their accounts. Moreover, the dilemmatic relationship between Government and SEAC is noted as the speakers warrant and undermine the scientific findings. This emphasis upon health and science to define the 'reality' of BSE is regarded as an interesting feature of this data.

Chapter 6 focuses upon the following parliamentary debate that occurred on 25 March 1996. This date is important as it coincides with the European Union's announcement to impose a worldwide ban on the import and export of British beef. The construction and relevance of this ban to the debate has serious ramifications for identity construction and matters of blame. As the legitimacy of the ban is contested between politicians, matters of national identity are made relevant. In particular, the construction of a scientifically informed British public is implicitly contrasted against an irrational, unscientific and politically motivated Europe. However, such claims are problematic, and the delicate management of ideological dilemmas of prejudice and tolerance is required. The analysis examines in detail two separate exchanges. The first is between Paul Marland (Conservative) and Douglas Hogg (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Conservative). The second is taken from a discussion between William Cash (Conservative), Douglas Hogg and George Foulkes (Labour). This chapter notes how these politicians position self and 'others' within particular national categories to produce certain comparisons and contrasts. Also, the deployment of terms such as 'Our partners' is examined for the rhetorical functions

they fulfil in constructing and reifying the dilemmatic relationship between Britain and Europe.

Chapter 7 concerns a parliamentary debate that occurred on 20 June 1996. Here the focus shifts slightly to examine how the topic of BSE was mobilised as a resource for legitimising xenophobic claims about Europe and producing national dichotomies with Britain. The analysis considers a discussion between Robin Cook (Shadow Foreign Minister, Labour) and Malcolm Rifkind (Foreign Secretary, Conservative). Whilst Conservative politicians blame Europe for BSE, and Labour speakers accuse the Government of xenophobia, all politicians strive to maintain a tolerant self-identity. Thus whilst excluding others from the bounds of legitimate discourse, political speakers draw upon rhetoric and discursive devices to position themselves as tolerant, and therefore credible, speakers. Moreover, this chapter notes the invocation of the *Sun* newspaper to political debates as a rhetorical tool for managing ideological dilemmas. As Robin Cook invokes an article written by Malcolm Rifkind for the tabloid newspaper, the analysis investigates how he is able to produce explicitly xenophobic statements about Europe (in particular Germany) whilst at the same time positioning himself within the boundaries of tolerant discourse.

Chapter 8 pays attention to the newspaper article itself. This analysis throws up some interesting questions concerning the applicability of discursive psychology to textual data. Indeed, more textual approaches to discourse analysis, such as CDA appear better suited for such enterprises. Here, it is considered how linguistic based approaches to discourse analysis can be used together with discursive psychology to produce a coherent framework for studying newspaper texts. Whereas linguistic approaches tend to dismiss matters of accountability within discourse but consider

textual form, discursive psychology routinely promotes talk over text. Thus, this chapter considers how the two differing strands of enquiry may be integrated. The chapter considers how the surrounding rhetorical context of Malcolm Rifkind's article for the *Sun* newspaper, as well as form and content, informs the analysis.

Finally, chapter 9 aims to summarise the main points of the thesis and link the work to a growing body of research on identity within discursive research. It is noted that cognitive social psychological approaches to identity are simply not equipped to investigate the dynamics of identity construction, its variability, its local situatedness in talk, and its link with accountability. Also, it is suggested that the 'BSE narrative', can be better understood from a discursive psychological analysis of identity construction within the political debates at this time. Moreover, recent matters concerning BSE are mentioned, as are possible lines of future research.

2.

Literature Review

Theorising Identity in Social Psychology

Aims of the Review

Within mainstream psychology, identity has been largely theorised at the intra-individual level of explanation. However, in the last decade increasing criticism has been levelled at the two main psychological frameworks for studying identity: social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), self-categorisation theory (Turner, 1982) and the subsequent body of research within these traditions. Across social psychology a shift in focus has occurred, moving away from a heavy emphasis upon social identity as a private, mental and cognitive process to an understanding that it is rooted in a discursive theory of language. Here, language is treated as the site of analytic interest rather than as a simple 'window on the mind'. As Carbaugh (1996) notes, the study of identity has been relocated from its treatment as a 'mentalist notion' – something that underpins human action – to its constitution in 'communication practice'. From this perspective a different 'take' on the issue of identity is provided. Rather than asking 'what' identities' people have and how they may be distinguished from one another, the turn to discourse allows for an analysis of 'when' and 'how' identities are invoked and constructed in conversation. It is the implications this shift to discourse has for the study of identity that is the focus of this thesis.

It is the aim of this chapter to briefly consider how 'identity' has been conceptualised within the social sciences, in particular the discipline of psychology. Firstly, the shift in interest from studying self to that of identity will be briefly noted. Secondly, the two prominent theories of 'identity' within psychology, these being self identity theory (SIT) and self-categorisation theory (SCT), will be outlined in terms of their

fundamental principles and the kind of research they have generated within social psychology. Thirdly, this chapter will move on to consider those approaches to identity that find their foundations within the traditions of SIT and SCT, but have also adopted a rhetorical approach to its study. In particular, the 'middle ground' approach to identity as developed by Stephen Reicher and Nick Hopkins will be examined in terms of how such a perspective reflects a partial shift in identity research from 'mentalist' to 'discursive' notions. Finally, the discursive psychological approach to identity will be considered in some detail. These perspectives on identity are to be distinguished from the 'middle ground' approach insofar as they claim identity is a wholly discursive and rhetorical accomplishment, and signal a complete, not partial, departure from the 'mentalist' notions. Particular attention will be paid to those approaches that locate their bases in discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis and conversation analysis. It is argued that by means of outlining previous identity work and conflicting approaches to the conceptualisation of identity, this present thesis can then be located appropriately within the social scientific field in terms of how 'identity' is defined and understood.

The Social Scientific Turn from 'Self' to 'Identity'

The study of 'identity' within the social sciences has become an established area of research widely theorised and conceptualised. Indeed, identity research has characterised much of the current work within social psychology. Brief glance at the leading journals in the field reveals the importance identity research has amongst the social psychological community. However, this concern with 'identity' is to be clearly and carefully distinguished from other psychological matters of investigation concerned with personality. It is important not to confuse the two concepts. Briefly,

the study of personality, as it is theorised by personality theorists and psychoanalytic approaches, involves an investigation of traits and personality characteristics. These theories rest upon the assumption that personality is made up of individual traits and characteristics that are to a greater or lesser extent embedded within the determinism of biology (see Allport, 1937; Eysenck, 1953), and/or the processes of socialisation (see Kelly, 1955). These are not the concerns of identity theorists. Instead, those studies that aim to explicate identity focus upon the relation between individual and society, and consider where one's sense of identity comes from and what it means to have a particular identity. Thus, identity is inherently social in its meaning. Therefore, it is important to note that aspects of personality theory will not be considered here. It is perhaps then appropriate to begin with a brief and condensed account of the more prominent theories of 'identity'. However, before one can properly examine identity, Sarbin (1997), notes that the study of identity arose from a previous focus upon the study of 'self'. Thus, it is equally appropriate that a review of identity research should begin with, albeit brief, a consideration of how the study of identity arose from a prior concern with 'self'. To this end, the theoretical foundations of researching 'self' as laid down by Cooley (1902), Mead (1934) and Goffman (1959) are examined.

Unsurprisingly, the wealth of literature in the social sciences reflects diversity in definitions and approaches to a study of 'self'. One of the earliest theorists of 'self' was Cooley (1902), who speculated on its origins using the notion of a 'looking-glass self' to claim that a person's understanding of his/her own self represents a reflection of how s/he is regarded by others. The notion that defining 'self' is a dynamic two-way process between observer and observed was developed further in the writings of

G.H. Mead. Mead (1934) focussed upon the relationship between self and society. Rather than producing a theory of 'self' as separate from society it was suggested that the 'self' could be more comprehensively understood in terms of a division into 'I' and 'Me'. Hence, Mead proposed a theory in which the 'self' is both socially determined (Me) because of how it is perceived by others, but also agentic (I) as it can manipulate the impression projected onto observing others. Mead emphasised the fundamental importance of 'role' in understanding how the 'self' related to society. This simply means that the self performs a series of 'roles' within society, such as wife, mother, and policewoman, and these roles likewise shape the self. This became an important principle underlying symbolic interactionism and role theories. These theories perceive 'self' as a product of society to the extent that individuals perform social roles. It is argued that the role an individual fulfils incorporates social identities, which serve to guide socially appropriate behaviour, but are also shaped by society. Widdicombe (1995: 35) neatly sums this position up as:

> Identity produces particular kinds of action, or role performances which, in turn, are situated within a social milieu and presumably alter or shape the dynamic context. The image of self within role theory is a fluid, dynamic agentic one in which negotiation and 'mutual shaping' between self and others who make up society are central.

Perhaps most famously, this approach provided the basis for Goffman's dramaturgical model (1959), in which the earlier influences of Cooley and Mead are apparent.

Drawing heavily upon the earlier work of Robert Ezra Park, who argued that 'We come into the world as individuals, achieve character, and become persons' (1950, p. 250), Goffman maintained that the self is realised in the presentation of a mask. Moreover, the performance of social roles requires the individual to adopt many different 'masks'. This concept of 'mask' has wider theatrical implications for how Goffman defines what the 'self' is. Put simply, he distinguished between three

separate aspects of 'the self', referring to them as 'performer', 'audience', and 'character performed'. The self as 'performer' and 'audience' correspond quite clearly to Mead's 'I' and 'Me'. Thus, the 'self' is both agentic in its performance of roles, but is also a passive observer of the performance of other roles. However, the incorporation of a third 'character performed' self allows dramaturgical theorists to emphasise the importance of taking account of the character or mask he or she is seeking to sustain. Hence, in taking the role of the other towards ourselves (similar to Cooley's 'looking glass self'), we strive to create an appropriate impression and perform our role properly. Therefore the self, in the performance of a role, is aware of an observing audience and the impression s/he projects upon them. However, as Goffman was keen to add, individuals have more control over certain aspects of the impression they project, such as verbal assertions, than others such as expressive behaviour. He further claims that audiences often check the validity of the more controllable aspects of behaviour by means of the less controllable ones. However, this is not to state that the individual is not able to exploit this knowledge and manipulate these expressions of behaviour. Hence, Goffman's theory focussed upon the theatre-like nature of social behaviour, emphasising the appropriate concepts of roles, scripts and performance. He summarises his theory as follows:

> …on the stage one player presents himself in the guise of a character to characters projected by other players; the audience constitutes a third party to the interaction – one that is essential and yet, if the stage performance were real, one that would not be there. In real life, the three parties are compressed into two; the part one individual plays is tailored to the parts played by the others present, and yet these others also constitute the audience. (1959, p. 9).

Furthermore, Goffman theorises the nature of the interaction between performer and audience. He states that how the performer and audience interpret any interaction is based on a single definition, which has a 'distinctive moral character' (p. 24). He argues that because society is organised around a moral principle that 'any individual

who possesses certain social characteristics has a moral right to expect that others will value and treat him in an appropriate way' (p. 24), performer and audience strive for an agreement based on a 'working consensus' of the reality of the interaction. In this way conflicts about the definition of the situation are avoided. Of course, for Goffman part of how this definition of the 'reality' of the interaction is realised is through both verbal and non-verbal impressions. Goffman also provides a theoretical understanding of how public displays of ritual and ceremony function in the presentation of a particular 'self'. These notions of non-verbal impressions and displays of ritual have some implications for this current work, which focuses upon the production of identities within the British House of Commons. However, the intention is to sideline such matters for the moment and return to a discussion of the significance they may have for the thesis in chapter 4.

Hence, in these theories of 'self' as produced by Cooley, Mead and Goffman, we begin to see a shift from a focus on 'self' to one on 'identity'. That is, the 'self' becomes inextricably linked to society in terms of the roles one performs and also 'others' who provide the basis for self-monitoring and evaluation. It is this inclusion of society and significant others that underlies many social scientific theories of 'identity'. Therefore, it is now appropriate to turn to consider one such social scientific theory, this being Social Identity Theory (SIT). This theory as proposed by Henri Tajfel focuses the social scientific gaze away from notions of the 'self' and wholly onto a definition and understanding of 'identity' and the implications it has for social action.

Social Identity Theory

As the theory proposed by Erving Goffman began to enjoy increasing attention within the field of sociology, social psychology widened its focus to include theoretical work on the relationship the individual forms with society. Theorists began to suggest that the link between individual and society was worthy of serious analytical attention. Most prominently, the work of Henri Tajfel caught the social psychology community's attention through his research on intergroup behaviour and the implications the link between individual and society has for collective action. Tajfel's 'Social Identity Theory' arguably continues to exert the most influence upon current social psychological approaches to identity. Perhaps one of the most widely used quotes within social psychological literature is Tajfel's definition of what he means by the term 'social identity'. However, as it is so succinctly written and captures exactly the basis upon which Tajfel built his theory, it is likewise quoted below. He defined 'social identity' as:

> ...that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership. (1978, p. 63)

In response to earlier traditional psychological models that promoted theories of Man (sic) as a 'rule-following animal', Tajfel produced a theory of identity which examined the sense of 'appropriateness' that surrounded such conformity to rules. Hence, the idea of Man as a rule-follower was not rejected in its entirety but was reformulated by Tajfel into a study of Man as a being which acted in accordance with 'notions of appropriateness' (p. 36). He maintained that the society's norms and values in which the individual lived determine these 'notions of appropriateness' and consequently shape how the rules are followed.

Whilst Tajfel maintained that experimental psychology could reveal basic inner cognitive processes, he also argued that it likewise ignored the social context in which individuals behaved. This of course is an issue that remains very much alive in current social psychological research. Arguments continue to rage over the value and validity of placing individuals in laboratory conditions and thus stripping them of a historical, cultural and social context. Tajfel wrote:

> Experimental social psychology as we know it today is 'irrelevant' only to the extent that it is a social science practised in a social vacuum…social psychology is a scientific study of human behaviour; that the kind of behaviour it is concerned with is social behaviour (i.e. interaction between individuals, singly or in groups); and that this social behaviour is 'a function of' or is 'determined by' or is 'related to' the social context in which it takes place. (1981, p. 18-19)

In response to such concerns Tajfel proposed a more 'social' theory of identity, claiming that social identity is achieved as a function of group membership. Thus, the individual became understood within a particular social context, that of the group. However, this context of 'the group' was not regarded as a single instance of individual behaviour but was extended to the whole of social life. Tajfel suggested that *all* individuals belong to social groups and furthermore, these social groups are inherent features of *all* societies. Thus, society comprises of real social categories that stand in relation to one another (e.g. race, class, gender). Tajfel claimed that individuals would remain members of particular social groups so long as it contributed towards a positive social identity. Moreover, he suggested that 'social identity' was also a product of group relations. Thus it was not only the groups to which the individual belongs that constitutes social identity, but also an acute awareness of the groups to which he/she does not belong. To explain the point further, a person's identity becomes fully understood in the social context of the group to which s/he belongs, and also those groups to which s/he is excluded from.

However, despite this emphasis upon social context Tajfel stressed that identities are to be understood as mentalist notions. Social Identity Theory maintains the notion that real social groups are internalised as psychological and cognitive structures and form the self-concept. Hence, the 'self' is characterised by the internalisation of the groups to which one belongs. Although Tajfel was highly critical of Festinger's theory of social comparison (1954), he adhered to the idea that individuals undergo a process of social comparison in order to evaluate 'self'. He argued that when making social group comparisons, ingroup members tended to minimise the differences between ingroup members whilst simultaneously maximising the differences between ingroup and outgroup members. Moreover, this comparison process is a psychological one. This notion was upheld in evidence found from the minimal group experiments (Tajfel, Flament, Billig, and Bundy, 1971), as they demonstrated that individuals would still identify themselves as group members and discriminate in favour of their ingroup even when there was no real reason or value for belonging to a particular group. Tajfel (1981) writes:

> Social categorisation can therefore be considered as a system of orientation which helps to create and define the individual's place in society. (p. 255)

As Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) note, Social Identity Theory takes the concept of 'identity' to represent society within the individual. What is interesting from this perspective is the formation of self-identity partly from one's own membership to a particular group, but also from a sense of who the 'self' is not. For Tajfel, this process is not only a cognitive and psychological process but also a linguistic one. For example, in Tajfel's experiment that required participants to estimate the length of lines drawn on a piece of card such judgements were made linguistically. In this study Tajfel noted how a superimposed system of classification, which was consistent

with the line length, resulted in inter-group judgements of increased difference between the two classes. Moreover, such classification systems also led to judgements of increased similarity of lines belonging to the same class. Tajfel claimed that such experiments had wide implications for studies into stereotyping. However, how a particular group identity is selected and how group members evaluate themselves in comparison to some relevant 'other' (and how this 'relevance' is established) is given a cognitive rationale in Self Categorisation Theory (SCT). Whilst SIT maintains that identity is derived from a process of categorisation and comparison, SCT provides a detailed explanation as to how a relevant comparative group is selected and how the process itself can be theorised in terms of a more recent cognitive psychology.

As cognitive psychology is currently the dominant paradigm within psychology, it is perhaps worthwhile to examine how cognitive theorists have continued the tradition of identity research. Moreover, it is interesting to consider how these more contemporary theories have located their foundations in SIT, but at the same time differed from Tajfel in their conceptualisation of what identity is and how it can be studied.

Self-Categorisation Theory

This approach finds its basis in Social Identity Theory but at the same time develops some of the principles into the more contemporary cognitive approach. In particular, Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT) focuses upon the process of identification of self with a particular group and the comparison process between groups in forming the self-identity of the group and its members. To explain how SCT defines identity,

Turner writes:

> One aspect of the self is the cognitive aspect, the system of concepts of self a person uses to define him-or her self. Self-concepts can be thought of as self-categories or self-categorisations: cognitive groupings of the self as identical, similar or equivalent to some class of stimuli in contrast to some other class.
>
> (1991, p. 78)

The replacement of Tajfel's 'groups' with 'categories' marks the cognitive emphasis that drives SCT. In brief, cognitive psychology maintains a 'cognitive miser' metaphor to explain how the individual functions. That is to say that cognitive psychology rests upon the claim that individuals *have* to categorise the social world in order to be able to process it effectively. Hence, the assumption is that because the social world is so rich and complex the individual must simplify it into manageable 'chunks'. These 'chunks' can be termed 'categories' and therefore, the tendency to categorise reflects the individual's need to simplify but also distort. It is claimed that a process of simplification is inevitably also a process of distortion and such cognitive claims have been used to explain how stereotyping and prejudicial attitudes originate and function. Some of the challenges that have been mounted with respect to such claims are discussed in chapter 3. However, for the moment it is worth noting that according to SCT, as individuals categorise the world, they also categorise self in terms of what other class of things s/he is dis/similar too, for example in terms of gender, race, class and education.

SCT rests on the claim that individuals have two types of identity. The first is a personal identity and the second a social identity. Turner briefly describes a personal identity as that concept that guides individual action when s/he is operating in the absence of a social context of other groups.. However, it is the social identity that SCT theorises about. In common with Social Identity Theory, Turner claims that

social identity is a function of ingroup membership and perceived differences from other groups. Moreover, both SIT and SCT see identity as a prerequisite for action. However, SCT argues that individuals are members of many varying social groups and which 'social identity' will be salient at any one time is a function of the social context. It therefore follows that, how an individual acts also depends upon this identity selection. The 'meta-contrast ratio' has been developed (Oakes, 1987; Wetherell, 1987; Turner, 1991) to explain how an individual identifies him or her 'self' with a particular group at a particular time and has received increasing attention within the social psychological literature. In brief, this concept embraces the principle that any 'group of stimuli is more likely to be categorised as a single entity to the degree that the differences within that group (on relevant dimensions) are smaller than the differences between that group and some other stimuli' (Turner, 1991:156).

SCT further claims that individuals have to be 'ready' to use a specific category (accessibility), which is achieved through past experiences, goals, aspirations and so on. Furthermore, the 'fit' of the category must also be appropriate. SCT suggests that the notion of 'fit' can be divided into two interrelated aspects. 'Comparative fit' refers to the meta-contrast ratio principle that differences within a group of stimuli must be smaller than the differences between that group and other groups. 'Normative fit' maintains that a category will be adopted if the social context is appropriate. This is perhaps better understood through reference to an example from the appropriate literature.

Oakes, Turner and Haslam (1991) enrolled ninety science students to watch a tape-and-slide presentation of a 6-person discussion group. The group was made up of

three arts and three science students. The topic for discussion was attitudes to university life. However, one 'target' member of this group was identified as being either 'consistent', such that as an arts student they gave stereotypically arts-type arguments, or alternatively was 'inconsistent' and gave untypical arguments of an arts student. Oakes et al, found that if the participants watched the group in what they termed a 'consistent conflict' situation categorisation of the group occurred along arts/science category boundaries. This means that when the 3 arts students consensually disagreed with the 3 science students the participants explained this disagreement in terms of perceived differences between arts and science students. However, if participants watched the discussion group and only one member of the group disagreed with the other five members then this was explained in terms of some perceived personality characteristics of the individual. So for Oakes et al, the meta-contrast ratio explains how a particular identity, in this case that of 'arts student' and 'science student', is made salient. These identities are readily available and they 'fit' the social context.

Furthermore, Turner suggests that as a social identity becomes salient, the individual's perception of 'self' become depersonalised. This means that the individual identity takes on the shared characteristics of the group at the expense of personal characteristics. This takes the form of shared stereotypes that define social category membership. It is suggested that group members stereotype 'self' in terms of the group characteristics. It is argued that group members conform to the prototypical position of the group and in doing so represent the group's shared views. As many SCT theorists have since noted, the value of this approach is that it can explain why group members are able to behave as a group even when alone.

However, it is important to note that this prototype is not static but 'varies as a function of the comparative context within which the group defines itself' (Turner, 1991, p. 169).

Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorisation Theory share some fundamental similarities. Within both approaches the 'self' is understood in terms of a shared social identity. Moreover this social identity is understood as a function of group membership in the context of a particular society and in comparison with relevant others. These 'groups' (SIT) or 'categories' (SCT) are assumed to be a universal phenomenon. However, it should be pointed out that Tajfel stressed that these groups, whether they be religious, political or societal are dependent upon the historical and cultural positioning of that particular society and individual. On the contrary, for Turner the categories are considered to be universal and beyond the specifics of culture and history. Nevertheless, for both theories 'social identity' is considered to be a cognitive psychological reality. It is suggested that when we act as group members there is a change in internal psychological functioning. By a process of social comparison, the individual achieves a sense of 'social identity' in terms of what categories and/or groups s/he perceives him/her self to belong to and those that s/he does not belong to. In this sense then, both SIT and SCT promote mentalist notions of identity.

However, where these theories depart is in their respective definitions of 'social norms'. Tajfel's 'notions of appropriateness' that he claimed guided social behaviour, were not regarded as reflecting actual social similarities but perceived social similarities. These constitute a psychological reality and are open to reinterpretation

and adjustment. This notion of reinterpretation enabled Tajfel to incorporate a theory of social change into his theory. Hence, it was suggested that an individual could leave a group or seek to redefine a group if a positive social identity was not achieved. However as Reicher notes, in SCT this flexibility is absent:

> Thus, even if recent studies of stereotyping in the self-categorisation tradition insist that the group definition depends upon and varies with the social relations obtaining in context, they continue to operationalize (if not conceptualise) identity as a set of traits. (1996, p. 329)

The capacity for reinterpretation and readjustment is removed from SCT. Instead, for Turner categories and groups are not simply a psychological reality but a cognitive social reality. Through a process of active selection categorisation occurs and the 'self' is realised. It is therefore more difficult to theorise how such cognitive structures may be altered to facilitate social change.

This shift signalled by SCT, towards a more cognitive approach to self and identity, can be recognised in other modern theories of self (Bandura, 1982; Fiske and Taylor, 1984). For example, Markus (1977) considers the notion of 'self-schemas' as cognitive representations of the self derived from past experience that guide the processing of present and future self-related information. Also, Markus and Nurius (1986) focus upon 3 notions of 'possible selves', these being what we could become, what we would like to become, and what we are afraid of becoming. It is argued that much of our present day behaviour is guided by who we think we might become in the future. Admittedly, in these theories the focus has been shifted back towards 'self' rather than identity. However, the link between self and society is maintained through the theorising of past experience as a constraint upon who we are and how this has implications for how we act. However, considerably less attention is afforded to these studies in this chapter as it is maintained that these cognitive studies derived

from the early work of Tajfel and Turner. Their approach is not too dissimilar from that adopted by Turner, based on the assumption that 'self' can be understood from an investigation of inner cognitive mechanisms that shape identity and guide behaviour.

So far the going has been smooth. It appears that cognitive psychology is able to provide a comprehensive theory coupled with empirical evidence of what identity is and how it is acquired. However, in recent years this reliance upon cognitive explanations has been problematised and addressed by more discursive-based approaches to the study of 'identity'. More forcefully, discursive approaches have been responsible for some of the most comprehensive and devastating blows to cognitive explanations of identity. However, this is not to claim that all of these critiques of SIT and SCT rest in consensual counter-agreement about what identity is or how it should be studied. On the contrary, there exists a division between those who locate their approach to identity mid-way between 'mentalist' and 'communicative' notions of identity and those who firmly plant their theoretical foot in an understanding of identity as solely a communicative practice. The critiques made by such perspectives to the study of identity will be considered here, as will the implications they have for psychological research. First, this chapter will focus itself upon those challenges to cognitive explanations that are situated mid-way between an understanding of identity as a mentalist and communicative notion.

Searching For the Middle Ground: Cognition Meets Discourse

As has already been suggested more recent studies of 'identity' within psychology have developed as a result of these earlier approaches of Tajfel and Turner. Hopkins and Reicher justly claim that 'The concept of social identity is central to current social

psychological theory' (1996, p. 71). However, as stated above, how social identity is to be understood is a debate that remains very much alive in present day research. A separate strand of work is becoming prevalent within the literature, which aims to integrate the cognitive aspects of self-categorisation theory with the discursive and rhetorical emphasis outlined in discursive psychology. Hence, this is what has been termed in this chapter a 'middle ground' or 'mid-way' approach to identity as it straddles both mentalist and communicative notions. Most prominently, Stephen Reicher and Nick Hopkins have developed a theory of identity that is both supportive and critical of these traditional approaches. As always, examples of previous research are often the best method for illustrating theoretical and methodological principles. These examples are typically grounded in analyses of political and national identity.

Predominantly, Reicher and Hopkins criticise SCT on the grounds of its limited view of context, or 'frame of reference' as it is more correctly termed. Perhaps as has already been extracted from a cursory glance at the theoretical foundations upon which SCT stands, context tends to be treated as an unproblematic given. Thus, who is included and who is excluded from the 'frame of relevance' is regarded as self-evident to the perceiver. This means that in any given social context, SCT assumes that it will automatically become apparent to the perceiver who the relevant ingroup and outgroup are, and who the members of those groups are. Whilst conceding that people's actions are dependent upon their interpretation of how they relate to others, (as clearly explained by both SIT and SCT) Reicher and Hopkins take issue with the definition of context. Adopting a rhetorical stance to their work, they argue that this context is not simply 'there' as a scene ready for inspection, but is a matter for argumentation (1997a). Moreover, they suggest that as the available categories are

inextricably linked to a 'frame of reference' (or context), then these also must be subject to contention and dispute. Drawing upon Billig's (1996) argument that categories, in terms of membership, meaning and relevance, are open to debate, as is the context in which they are to be applied, Reicher and Hopkins write:

> …if categories are to be viewed as intimately related to context, then our ability to argue about the nature of that context entails an ability to argue over the relevance, inclusiveness, and content of social categories. Thus, while accepting self-categorisation theory's analysis of collective behaviour as action in accordance with the norms, values and "knowledge" associated with categories, we wish to emphasise that the nature of these categories is a site of argument and is constructed in and through language. (p. 265)

So here we have the middle ground. The theoretical foot that is planted within SCT and mentalist notions of identity maintains that categories are the basis for collective action and form internal structures. However, the other foot that positions itself within rhetoric, claims that these categories are not taken-for-granted facts but are rhetorical resources disputed in everyday communication. To illustrate the point Reicher and Hopkins have largely focused upon the analysis of political data. In one particular study, the speeches given by Margaret Thatcher and Neil Kinnock during the 1984-85 miners' strike are considered for this 'rhetorical' dimension of context. The authors' note how Margaret Thatcher, in her speeches addressed to the British national public, constructs the categories 'relevant' to the miners strike. However, this 'relevance' is a rhetorical achievement on the part of Margaret Thatcher and is not some passive reading of the social context. In particular, she constructs herself and her audience as 'British' and describes them as courageous, determined, strong and so on. In SCT terms, this could be described as the 'ingroup'. However, in order to compare and evaluate the ingroup, Thatcher also constructs a relevant 'outgroup', this being the striking miners with whom they can be compared to positively. The striking miners are excluded from the national category and are described in terms of

negative attributes.

So, what is the difference between this approach and that adopted by SCT? Well, this contrasts sharply with self-categorisation studies that have stressed the cognitive 'switching on' of salient categories. For example, Oakes (1987) has noted how the categories of 'male' and 'female' become salient in discussion groups when participants see consensus amongst all the members of one sex category in a collective opposition towards members of another sex category. Oakes argues that this salience of relevant self categories is a function of perception of the social context. In this case, 'female' becomes relevant in a social context of oppositional 'male'. However, as writers like Steve Reicher and Nick Hopkins have suggested, this social context is not simply a perceptual matter but a rhetorical issue. Moreover, the individual is not simply a passive observer of the scene but an active constructor. How these 'outgroups' and 'ingroups' are constructed in terms of their meaning and definition is an accomplishment of the speaker. Hopkins and Reicher suggest that:

> …the issue of which categories are to be used as a basis for action cannot be read off from the social context for this context is itself in need of definition and constitutes a site of contestation with different protagonists arguing over the significance and meaning of the social world. Nor can the definition of context be separated from the definition of categories and their contents; while defining the context may support the usage of particular categories rather than others, so too the meaning of these categories (and hence their contextual relevance) is a matter for argument. (1996, p. 89)

Reicher and Hopkins further illustrate the point through an analysis of how Margaret Thatcher's oppositional equivalent in parliament, the Labour leader Neil Kinnock, constructs the social context of the miners strike. He constructs an opposite scenario to Margaret Thatcher insofar as his audience, himself and the striking miner's are defined as 'the people'. Hence, this alternative in terms of who the 'ingroup' are is a rhetorical achievement. Moreover, Kinnock also constructs his relevant 'outgroup',

defining Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Government as irrational and uncaring. This study therefore, illustrates the point that social context cannot simply be 'read off' unproblematically. If this were the case then surely Margaret Thatcher and Neil Kinnock would have the same understanding of the context in terms of who the 'ingroup' and who the 'outgroup' are and the members that constitute these groups. Hence, in this work Reicher and Hopkins note how the categories one applies to self and others are not a contextual 'given' but are a site of rhetorical argumentation. Furthermore, as Hopkins and Reicher (1997b) maintain that category identification can explain collective action they suggest that this flexible construction of context enable speakers to mobilise such mass action. This view also extends to their analysis of pro and anti-abortion rhetoric, and the ability of speakers to mobilise opinion and collective action. Thus, they claim that social categories have *real* consequences for cognition and action insofar as they shape, form and make possible collective behaviour.

Prior to this work by Reicher and Hopkins other theorists searching for this middle ground have tried to reconcile quantitative and qualitative methodologies in explicating the definition and meaning of particular national and political identities. One such example is Gallagher (1989) who, in his study of political and religious categorisations in the Northern Ireland conflict, combined the quantitative methods of SIT with the qualitative approach of rhetoric to investigate the meaning of opposing identities. Carrying out sixteen interviews with political activists he noted that people are able to construct competing identities, and the meaning of these identities is highly contentious. Thus, although political and religious groups displayed the classic ingroup and outgroup favouritism, as identified by Tajfel, Flament, Billig and Bundy

(1971) in the minimal group paradigms, Gallagher found that how the identities of Protestant, Catholic and various political allegiances were characterised, differed between members. Thus he concluded that both experimental and rhetorical qualitative approaches are required to fully comprehend the social identities and categorisations involved in the negotiation of national conflict.

More recently in a similar vein, Condor (1996a) has also recognised the need for both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine national identity. She begins with the claim that social psychological research has tended to unproblematically reach the assumption that English people equate the national identity of 'English' with 'British'. However, as these research findings derive mainly from quantitative methods, Condor suggests that the incorporation of more qualitative methods with a rhetorical analysis should serve to problematise this apparently unproblematic notion. Although she quite rightly recognises that a full analysis of national identity must take account of how such identities are symbolised, both verbally and non-verbally, she applies an eclectic mix of methods including interviews, photograph-sorting and adjective rating-scales to address if and how such equation occurs. Whilst adjective rating-scales revealed a distinction between British and English stereotypes (the former appearing more aggressive than the latter), Condor warns against passively 'reading off' evaluations of these adjective ascriptions. Instead, she notes that these scales offer little understanding of the meaning associated with the stereotypes. People do not just pluck stereotypes from thin air (as required by the adjective rating scales) but produce them within a particular rhetorical context. Perhaps, it should be mentioned that many studies involving such rating-scales do provide a context in which their participants are to ascribe adjectives to a particular national group. For example,

Hopkins, Regan and Abell (1997) noted how Scottish participants differed in their categorisations of a Scottish national identity depending on whether they were being compared to the English or the Greeks. However, the problem remains that the experimenter imposes the context upon the participant and the ecological validity of such studies is deeply problematic. Likewise, in Condor's study she noted how the problem of obtaining characteristics of the 'British' and 'English' from these scales is borne out in their difference from those stereotypes produced in response to open-ended questions. Unlike the scales, which tend to produce a single 'type' of national stereotypes, qualitative methods reveal that interviewees construct different 'types' of a particular national category, and its meaning becomes understood within a particular rhetorical context.

Hence, how one constructs a national identity depends firstly on whether the individual aligns him/herself with the identity (and indeed arguments are mounted as to why the individual is [not] typical of the national category), and secondly what the national category is compared to. Like Reicher and Hopkins, Condor argues that this is not a perceptual process explained by the switching on of a relevant outgroup within a relevant context, but is a rhetorical position, oriented to what the individual wishes to accomplish by means of the identity ascription.

These ideas have been expanded to the study of racism, with particular emphasis upon the production of particular 'race' identities. As Barker (1981) notes there is a 'new racism', which means that people no longer explicitly espouse racist and prejudicial sentiments, but express them more subtly in terms of common cultural and societal values. There has been much research into the existence and consequent implications

of 'new racism'. Of interest here is those studies that have noted the rhetorical dimensions of constructing race identities. Hopkins, Reicher and Levine (1997) have focused upon the rhetoric of this 'new racism' to accomplish and legitimise certain social actions. With regard to identity they note how self-categorisation theory assumes 'race' categories to be natural and normal. That is to say, they are readily and visibly available to people for distinguishing between themselves and others in terms of perceived similarities and differences. Hopkins et al claim that SCT assumes race categories are used purely on the basis of perception and not power or social relations. However, they argue on the contrary that race is not a natural category, and, in accordance with Barker's 'new racism', is not used explicitly in talk. Instead, they suggest that the 'new racism' of implicit racialized categorisations is socially constructed to produce and reproduce certain social practices. In particular, they note how speakers deploy 'new racism' in their language to account for the basis of certain social problems in terms of limited access to valued resources such as health and education.

This 'middle ground' approach, as defined by Steve Reicher and Nick Hopkins, has grown considerably in terms of research and supporters. Evidence of this is seen in recent journal publications and a forthcoming book dedicated to outlining the approach. As a result many theorists have adopted these initial studies by Reicher and Hopkins to explicate both the cognitive and the rhetorical dimensions surrounding national, political and racial identities. For example, more recently, Augoustinos, Tuffin and Rapley (1999) have noted how racialized categories are used by university students in Australia to account for social problems within the country. These categories implicitly identify the speaker as Australian positively compared to an

Aboriginal 'other'. They also suggest that the language of 'new racism' is used to enable the speaker to both assign blame to a particular racial group for problems such as lack of education, whilst at the same time presenting him/herself as racially tolerant and even-handed. Hence, they have extended the argument from a claim that identities have rhetorical dimensions, to a broader assertion that these identities perform particular social actions in talk. In this case, the argument is made that the rhetorical construction and relevance of race categories enables speakers to assign blame for certain social problems whilst at the same time managing their own accountability as a racially tolerant speaker. However, it is important to note that for these authors identification with a particular social category has *real* consequences for the individual, which guide action.

Some writers have also extended this approach to identity research across the fields of cognition, rhetoric and conversation analysis. Most notably Mark Rapley (1998) has recently emerged as a writer aiming to locate traditional identity research within the domain of conversation analysis. Following the example set by Reicher and Hopkins in terms of studying political rhetoric, he has considered the discursive defining of social categories and their effects upon mass mobilization. However, because Rapley positions his own work within the field of conversation analysis, he provides a more micro-level detailed study of the social actions these categories accomplish in talk. Thus, rather than suggesting identity categories can be mobilised to achieve collective action, Rapley considers in detail how these categories are constructed at the micro-level of talk such that collective action may become possible.

Specifically, he considers the maiden speech made by MP Pauline Hanson upon entry

to Parliament in Australia. From a detailed analysis of this transcript, Rapley notes how she constructs shared ingroup memberships between herself and her intended audience. Moreover, her chosen category membership of 'ordinary Australian' ensures that she includes as many people as possible within the ingroup. Whilst this does not distinguish Rapley from the earlier writings of Reicher and Hopkins, the inclusion of a conversation analytic perspective enables him to incorporate Sacks' notion of category entitlements into his analysis[1]. In brief, Rapley considers how Hanson simultaneously constructs herself as 'the same' as the audience, but also 'different' in terms of her entitlements to speak on behalf of the rest of the group. Indeed, if she were just the same as her audience there would be no justification for her entry into Parliament and her rights to speak on behalf of other Australians. So instead, she positions herself both inside and outside the ingroup of 'ordinary Australian', whilst also working-up her category entitlements as a Member of Parliament to speak on their behalf. This discursive work serves to warrant Hanson's authority for entry to Parliament and provides a distinction between herself and the audience. However, she is careful not to make this distinction too wide. For the present purposes it is important to note how such leanings towards conversation analysis can broaden the discursive study of identity even further. As Rapley explicates the function of identity work in accomplishing social actions such as working up one's entitlements to speak on behalf of a particular category of people, he moves this research further towards a concern with identity as a local communicative practice. Thus, unlike SCT, Rapley claims that salient categories are not determined cognitively but are constructed in talk and used flexibly to develop a discourse of political mobilization.

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[1] This concept will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, and more fully in chapter 3.

As has already been mentioned this challenge to SCT, concerning how context and categories are conceptualised, is one that has been developed over recent years. Contrary to the separation of individual from social context by SCT, Wetherell (1996) claims that Tajfel himself noted the blurred boundaries between individual and social context. Likewise, other theorists have challenged SCT's 'misinterpretation of Tajfel in their attempts to produce a generalised theory of group behaviour, that draws clear boundaries between the individual and the social context (see Billig, 1996). Furthermore, Wetherell claims that Tajfel argued people's actions both constitute and transform social situations. Thus, context was not regarded as strictly external and independent from the individual, but as something that is actively constructed and shaped by human activity. To produce a theory that claims the boundaries between individual and society become blurred and furthermore, to claim that individuals actively construct both the identities and the context in which they are to be understood, does appear to fundamentally disagree with the principles underlying cognitive psychology. As Wetherell states, 'this shift does represent the beginning of the end for experimental method' (p. 277). Thus in short, the rigid boundary between individual and context proposed by SCT is not one that was shared by Tajfel, and has been more recently challenged by contemporary theorists such as Susan Condor, Nick Hopkins, Mark Rapley, Stephen Reicher and Mark Levine.

However, these approaches are further distinguished from both SIT and SCT in their emphasis upon language and the role it is considered to play in constructing identities. Even of SIT, Wetherell writes:

> For Tajfel, it is probably fair to say, language was not an issue…Language was presented as a good example of those "general processes" which made

> social life possible just as the anatomy of the human hand produces an art of a certain kind. But these processes were seen as ultimately belonging to the psychological level of analysis rather than the sociopsychological.
>
> (1996, p. 280)

Therefore, for Tajfel language was secondary to the psychological processes of social identification. However, the emphasis upon cognition and language is also the basis of a division of opinion between Wetherell and writers such as Reicher, Hopkins and Levine. As stated earlier, Reicher and Hopkins represent a 'middle ground' position in their conceptualisation of identity as a mentalist *and* communicative notion. However, for Wetherell the focus upon language means that all mentalist notions of identity have to be surrendered. She notes that the emphasis upon discourse has illustrated how self and world are inextricably linked to each other, and as such, any return to a notion of internal psychological or cognitive processes is redundant. Although Hopkins, Reicher and Levine, likewise argue that the distinction between individual and context is problematic they maintain that cognition exists independently of discourse. Hence, category identification signals a separate internal cognitive process. However, for Wetherell, cognition is also inextricably linked to self, and context, and is constructed in language. She sums up her position as follows:

> …this approach to language breaks down the idea that there are certain classes of utterances which refer to some set of events in the world, for instance, and other classes of utterance (perhaps confessional or revelatory) which are interesting for what they tell us about self, motivation and cognition. Versions of the self and the world are mutually dependent. (1996, p. 282)

So, rather than treating the mind and cognition as a private and inaccessible 'black-box', the turn to language can illustrate how cognition, self and context are socially constructed in talk and are mutually interdependent. This is the point of departure between those middle ground theorists who aim to integrate SCT with a rhetorical emphasis upon language, from those theorists who plant both feet in the notion of identity as a communication practice and term themselves as discursive theorists.

Having outlined the middle ground approach to identity research, and in doing so having begun to consider resistance within psychology to maintain a theory that straddles both cognitive and rhetorical explanations, this chapter will now turn to those wholly discursive psychological theories that share Wetherell's view of language. More specifically, it will be noted how this discursive approach conceptualises identity and rejects the notion of mentalism completely.

A Discursive Turn to Identity

Discursive approaches to identity clearly have issues with notions of social context when it is theorised as something that remains independent from the individual. However, before this chapter turns to consider this in more detail it is appropriate to first examine how discursive theorists have taken issue with the basic SCT notion of categorisation. In general, discursive theorists have challenged the cognitive assumption that categorisation is a fundamental cognitive phenomenon and an example of such an attack will be examined shortly. However, with respect to identity research Edwards (1991,1998) claims that SCT's emphasis upon identity as a categorisation process, or a perceptual and cognitive judgement, becomes problematic when it is conceptualised as an inner private psychological entity. Furthermore, he notes how cognitive approaches routinely ignore language, considering it only insofar as a reflection of these underlying cognitive processes. As has been claimed so far, both SIT and SCT assume that social identities have a psychological and cognitive reality, and moreover, that identity and society become internalised to form the 'self'. However, in their pioneering work Potter and Wetherell (1987), argued that mainstream understandings of identity treat the process of categorisation as rigid and

mechanistic. This mechanistic view of categorisation is reflected in the research practices of identity theorists.

For example, Widdicombe (1998b) notes how the identification of people into particular categories becomes an experimental tool in research that studies differences in educational standards, career patterns and employment. The assumption that these groups and categories are 'real' in society positions them in relation to one another in terms of power and status. Hence, traditional social science focuses upon 'what identities people have, what criteria distinguishes identities from each other, and what part identity plays in the maintenance of society and in enabling the functioning of social structure and institutions' (p. 194).

Moreover as Antaki, Condor and Levine (1996) suggest, much of this traditional work on identity is based within the laboratory and the data is obtained in the form of self-report questionnaires. Hence 'The research setting, and the various actions which take place within it, is usually treated and described as if it were a single definable 'context', a 'moment' within which time can be assumed to have stood still…' (p. 477). As was noted earlier, Condor (1996) claimed that these approaches do not attend to the rhetorical functions that may be accomplished by the construction of *identities-in-interaction*. Edwards (1991) suggests that an analytical emphasis upon language in the discursive construction of identity mean that the conceptualisation of categorisation as a private cognitive process can be reconceptualised as a social practice. He writes:

> By examining categorisation as a social practice, the explanatory significance of individual cognition and perception is recognised but diminished, becoming part of a range of topics, devices and resources that participants can use in the performance of communicative acts. (p. 516)

Thus, cognition and perception, which are considered by SIT and SCT to be crucial to the process of categorisation, can be understood as *resources* for communicating and constructing identities.

Discursive theorists have challenged cognitive psychology's insistence that individuals need to categorise in order to process the social world. From a rhetorical perspective, Billig (1996) addresses the process of categorisation itself. He suggests that cognitive approaches to identity, which stress the categorisation capacities of the individual, are too pessimistic. He claims that such studies tend to view people as 'cognitive misers'. The argument for cognitive psychologists is that as the social world is so rich and complex human beings are unable to process it all therefore, they must 'categorise' it into manageable chunks, such as race, gender, class and so on. However as Billig notes, such a view implies that individuals only have available to them one way of perceiving the world and thus, one way of talking about it. Yet on the contrary, he suggests that people have an infinite number of options open to them with regard to how an object, event, action or person can be talked about. Following the 'two-sidedness' approach of rhetoric, Billig claims that there may be occasions where an argument is developed for the inclusion of an object to a category. However, the occasion may also arise when an argument is developed for the object's exception to the category and hence, it becomes 'particularised' in some way. Thus, Billig maintains that to be able to categorise the individual must also particularise. Moreover, these categorisations and particularisation's are rhetorical accomplishments achieved in talk. This recognition that categorisations accomplish social actions in talk points towards a discursive approach in considering the organised construction of categories as achieved in discourse. This turn to language

and rhetoric has some fundamental implications for traditional perspectives in the social sciences and more importantly for this thesis it has wide implications for how identity can be studied.

Much of this discursive research has focused upon the function of identity as an interactional resource in the accomplishment of social action. The shift in focus from the inner cognitions of the mind to language enables the analyst to approach the issue of identity from a different angle. Rather than asking 'what' identities people have and how they are distinguished from one another, which is the aim of SIT and SCT, the turn to discourse allows for an analysis of *when* and *how* identities are invoked and constructed. To reiterate the point, in contrast to the cognitive approach, Edwards (1991) argues that 'Categorisation is *something we do,* in talk, to accomplish social actions' (p. 517). Thus, it is not regarded as a cognitive process. More specifically, whilst upholding the notion that one's own identity is in part formed through a comparison with 'others', this process will not be examined as a cognitive or perceptual phenomena but as a discursive accomplishment. Moreover, the identification of a 'relevant' other is not conceived of as a passive consequence of a particular social context, but is considered to be a resource that speakers can draw upon to define who they are and likewise, who they are not.

Discursive and Conversation Analytic Studies of Identity

So far, the discussion of discursive approaches to identity has been very general and provided some points of departure from the theories of SIT and SCT. However, it would be misleading to assume that these discursive approaches are consensual in their theorising of identity. Indeed, there are many debates concerning identity

research. Whilst there exists a wealth of discursive literature on identity, which remain beyond the scope of this thesis, the current focus is upon those studies that locate themselves to a greater or lesser extent in conversation analysis. The implication conversation analysis and its foundations in ethnomethodology have for carrying out analytical research is discussed more generally in chapter 3. However, for the present chapter the interest is in how identity has been theorised by those approaches that follow this methodology and what they contribute to this current work.

These discursive approaches to identity are heavily influenced by Sacks' (1992) conversation analytic project (see Edwards, 1997, 1998, 1999a, 1999b; Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998; Potter, 1996, 1998a, 1998b, 1999; Puchta and Potter, 1999). In their summary of this kind of work Wooffitt and Clarke (1998) suggest that conversational analytic studies of identity share three central tenets. First, the data arises from naturally occurring conversation rather than from contrived sources. Second, 'the analysis focuses upon the socially organised inferential processes through which people themselves orient to the relevance of categorisations of self and others' (p. 107). Third, researchers in this tradition do not start with experimental hypotheses. They remain unmotivated by a priori assumptions of what might be found in the data. Hence it is the data rather than the theory which drive the analysis.

An immediate problem arises concerning data that is not naturally occurring conversation. Can this method of analysis still be applied and what has it to offer such 'contrived sources' of data? These concerns are examined in more detail in chapters 3 and 4. However, for the moment the interest remains in how conversation analysis (CA) and CA-informed approaches have contributed to the study of identity

within social psychology.

It is important to state immediately that discursive psychological approaches to identity that are informed by the field of conversation analysis, necessarily adopt an ethnomethodological stance to their research. Although both SCT and ethnomethodology use the concept of 'category', there is a distinction to be made between the two interpretations. Antaki, Condor and Levine (1996) neatly sum up the distinction between cognitive psychologists and ethnomethodologists as: 'The difference is that the cognitivist believes this (category) membership to be a mental state (fixed, or perhaps, transient, but nevertheless mental), while the ethnomethodologist takes it to be a device for contrast against rival memberships for local transactions.' (p. 478). Influenced by the ethnomethodological work of Harold Garfinkel (1963), one of the central legacies of Sacks' work was a shift from analysts' categories to those made relevant in, and constructed by participants in interaction. Sacks argued that when attending to particular conversational business speakers invoke categories and his interest was in how they are produced and mobilised in conversation. He remained unimpressed by more orthodox social scientific approaches that claimed to analyse people's use of categories. Sacks argued that the tendency of sociologists to simply explain an individual's actions by means of selecting and imposing a common-sense category identified the sociologist as simply another member of a shared culture and did not distinguish between the analyst and the layperson. Instead, Sacks` suggested that the skill of the analyst lay in her/his ability to examine the categories the speakers' themselves use and investigate the `machinery` that explains how they are produced. However, this 'machinery' is not made up of cognitive components but is the orderly sequential organisation of

conversation. He writes:

> Suppose you're an anthropologist or sociologist standing somewhere. You see somebody do some action, and you see it to be some activity. How can you go about formulating who is it that did it, for the purposes of your report? Can you use at least what you might take to be the most conservative formulation – his name? Knowing, of course, that any category you choose would have the[se] kinds of systematic problems: how would you go about selecting a given category from the set that would equally well characterise or identify that person at hand? (LC1: 467-8)

Sacks' solution was to analyse the categories the speakers themselves invoked in talk. His analytic aim was to describe the 'machinery' through which the Member's themselves produce descriptions. This 'machinery' became termed *membership categorization* apparatus. Within this membership categorisation apparatus, Sacks introduced the concept of Membership Categorisation Device (MCD) to explain how such categories may be hearably linked together by native speakers of a culture. For example, the MCD of 'family' allows the categories of 'mommy' and 'baby' to be linked together in the following sentences: 'The baby cried. The mommy picked it up'. Furthermore, through the application of certain conversational rules, hearers of these two utterances can make certain inferences. Firstly, the *economy* informs the hearer that the baby and mommy belong to the same unit of family. Secondly, whilst 'baby' could be applied to several other categories such as a term of endearment towards a loved one, the *consistency rule* means that it is heard as a baby from the 'stage of life'. Finally, *duplicative organization* makes available the knowledge that this isn't any mommy, but is the baby's mommy.

In addition to this, Sacks argued that categories are 'inference-rich'. This means that they are conventionally linked to particular activities ('category-bound activities') such that there are expectations about what constitutes a 'mommy's' or a 'baby's' normative behaviour. Hence, we expect babies to cry and their mothers to pick them

up. It would appear decidedly strange if the mommy cried and the baby picked it up.

Whilst it appears that Sacks makes some interesting observations about conversation and how interactions are sequentially organised between speakers and hearers, what implications does this have for a study of identity? Widdicombe (1998a) answers this question suggesting that this notion of 'members categories' is inextricably linked to identities. She notes that ' a reference to a person's social identity is also a reference to their membership of a specific category' (p. 52-3). This link between identity and categories is explicitly spelled out in the theories of SIT and SCT. However, within discursive psychology it is noted that when one is claiming an identity for oneself or an 'other', categories can be deployed as a 'cultural resource for warranting, explaining and justifying behaviour' (ibid.). This point is more clearly illustrated in the conversation analytic work of Carol Baker.

Baker (1997), in her conversation analytic work on parent-teacher interviews notes the role of MCD's as resources for producing identities, social relationships and institutions. She suggests that the relevance of categories such as parent and teacher function within these interviews to establish cultural connections between them in terms of what are the entitlements and normative activities for members of each category. For example, the teacher invokes her own category membership in a request for the parent to provide information about the conditions under which the child produces homework. Baker writes: 'The interview itself is a site for displaying the cultural knowledge that can be used to account for oneself as a competent parent or teacher. These cultural knowledges turn on the making of or sometimes merely alluding to category, category-relations, or category-bound activities' (p. 135). For

discursive psychologists then, identity is a locally managed participant' concern, a dynamic and flexible resource. People ascribe and resist identities to themselves and others during everyday conversation. Antaki, Condor and Levine (1996) argue that 'close attention to the sequencing of talk suggests that speakers identities are much more subtle than simple pre-given category labels suggest, and that they change rapidly as a function of the ephemeral (but socially consequential) demands of the situation' (p. 473). In other words, people invoke identities or ascribe identities to others during the course of everyday conversation.

Quite clearly then, this approach contrasts sharply with that adopted by both Tajfel and Turner. From a CA-informed perspective Edwards (1998) notes how SIT and SCT do not attend to the situational flexibility found in category use. That is, they cannot explain how categories are flexibly deployed and constructed in different social contexts. Instead, he suggests that identity is better conceived of as a locally managed participant concern. The point is made that:

> …categories such as gender, age, parental and marital status, nationality, etc., are not merely factual, or even value-laden observations that have an automatic relevance to people's conversational activities. The analytic task is to find out if, when, and for what, they may have such relevance.
> (1998:20)

Hence, the 'relevance' of invoking categories, as well as the discursive construction of the categories themselves, can be explained in discursive terms rather than having to resort to speculative claims about inner mental processes. To exemplify the point, Edwards (1998) notes the deployment of categories within a counselling session between a counsellor, and two married disputants Connie and Jimmy. From a discursive analyses of this counselling interaction he claims that the speakers invoked, constructed and used categories in the counselling session to accomplish particular

rhetorical business such as excusing, justifying, assigning and avoiding blame and so on. For example, he notes how Connie invokes the term 'girl' to accuse Jimmy of walking out on a good marriage for a 'fling with a girl'. Edwards notes how the category of 'girl' serves to downgrade the status of Jimmy's reasons for leaving and makes available a contrast between Connie's self ascribed 'woman-ness' and the 'girl'. Edwards further notes how such challenges can be defended, as Jimmy's response to Connie upgrades the status of 'the girl' to 'a woman' and in doing so makes the argument that their marriage was on shaky ground and his reasons for leaving for another 'woman' are justifiable. Hence in this brief example, the point is made that identity work is grounded within the use of categories, which can be used flexibly to accomplish social actions in talk.

From a purely CA perspective, in their now classic study of youth subcultures, Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) note how speakers produce 'authentic selves' through the mobilisation of the categories 'goths', 'punks' and 'rockers'. Their analysis suggests that 'Goths', in their claims for an authentic self, distinguish themselves from the other members of the category of 'Goths'. Thus, such categories are constructed in ways that resist the potential accusation that the speaker has simply imitated other members of the subculture. Such a formulation differs radically from the notion that identity categorisations are fixed reflections of cognitive processes. Indeed, if this categorisation did occur as a result of perception there would be no argument concerning who is a member of the category of 'Goth' and what it means to be a member. Instead, conversation analysts have suggested that the construction of categories is a flexible outcome of accounting practices.

The distinction between CA and CA-informed approaches is clearly outlined in chapter 3. However, the point to be taken on board at this point is that identity work can be investigated in terms of categories. However, rather than examining these categories as a product of cognitive processes, these CA studies suggest that category construction and identification can be comfortably explained through an analysis of talk, and without recourse to making claims about mental life.

Such account-generated constructions of identity are clearly contradictory to the claims that categorisations are fixed and external phenomena. As Edwards and Potter (1992) suggest, descriptive categories are often used in talk to be consequential and implicative. However, what is equally important in this thesis is the notion that speakers treat these categories as accountable for particular actions and implications in talk. Thus, when speakers produce identities for self and others they treat themselves and each other as accountable for their production in talk. This notion of accountability together with a detailed discussion of discursive methods is point of interest in chapter 3.

For the moment, as has perhaps already become clear in the earlier outlining of discursive approaches to identity, a fundamental principle underlying this work is the notion of variability. These approaches to identity claim that discourse is highly variable and is oriented towards function (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). This notion of 'variability' has serious implications for how identity is theorised. Crucially, it contrasts with cognitive approaches that emphasise the 'consistency' of individuals, and self. Certainly the image of a consistent individual who strives to maintain harmony in all aspects of self, identity and action is a common theme of cognitive

psychology. Cognitive psychologists suggest that much of this consistency is achieved through the sharing of categories and categorisations between people, socially, culturally or universally. Therefore, when variability does occur cognitive methodologies are required to explain it. On the contrary, as discursive theorists maintain that categorisation is something we do in talk, variability can be understood as oriented to the situational usage within interaction. As Edwards (1991) notes, 'it is only through examining the pragmatics of situated talk that we can discover what those categorical implications are, their scope and flexibility, and the principles of their deployment' (p. 534). Hence, the reverse side of the coin is argued for, such that identity is not characterised by consistency but by variability and the flexible ways in which it can be constructed and deployed in talk.

Concluding Comments

In this chapter it has been suggested that following Carbaugh's recognition of a shift in identity research within social psychology, from a mentalist to a communicative notion, the theories of Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorisation Theory can be positioned firmly at the 'mentalist' pole of the continuum. However, as this chapter has tried to show, the turn to discourse has resulted in identity research that has departed from this mentalist pole and instead has travelled to a greater or lesser degree towards a more communicative notion of identity.

Fundamentally, it has been claimed that those theories that conceive of identity as a mentalist concept have drawn rigid boundaries that separate the individual from the social context in which such identities are produced. However, more discursive theories have questioned this apparent boundary between individual and context and

have instead claimed that it is, at the very least blurred, if not completely absent. Rather than rendering the individual as a passive observer of social reality, discursive theorists have argued that s/he is the active constructor of social context. Such a view has wide implications for how identity is to be researched within the social sciences. Previously, notions of self and identity have looked towards cognitive explanations of how individuals process social context such that s/he identifies with a particular group or category and action is affected as a consequence. However, more recent discursive theories have suggested that the 'black box' explanation for category identification can be made fully redundant. Instead, it is claimed that individuals actively construct such category identifications and deploy them in talk to accomplish social actions. Moreover, the social context from which these identities are 'plucked' can be examined as a rhetorical accomplishment rather than a cognitive process.

In chapter 3 the gaze will shift slightly away from a concern with identity to a more detailed examination of discursive methodologies. There has been much talk in this present chapter about discursive approaches and conversation analysis. However, so far there has been little explanation about the theoretical principles upon which these theories stand, and the differences that exist between them. Moreover, in this present chapter it has been briefly suggested that identity is linked to a notion of accountability. Again, this has been examined in very sparse detail here, so this is a theme that will be picked up in more detail in the next chapter in relation to discursive methodologies.

3.

Theoretical Background

A Discursive Psychological Method: The Rhetorical Management of Accountability

Theoretical Aims

In chapter 2 it was noted how the study of identity has been reinvented within social psychology. It was argued that discursive psychology marked a shift in the conceptualisation of 'identity' from a mentalist to a communicative notion. So, in this sense identity can be understood as a resource speakers draw upon to accomplish social actions such as assigning and avoiding blame, justifying, warranting or defending a point of view, and so on. Furthermore, it was suggested that as discursive psychologists turn their attention towards the study of identity they also address matters of accountability. Hence it was claimed that when speakers do construct and attribute identities to themselves and others, they treat themselves and each other as accountable for what is produced. As Abell and Stokoe (1999) argue, 'A dominant theoretical aspect of identity research is a concern with how speakers convincingly allocate and avoid blame whilst avoiding the risk of being treated as a biased party predictably blaming the other' (p. 299).

Here, the intention is to outline the theoretical and analytical assumptions surrounding discursive research generally. Previously in chapter 2, discursive approaches to the study of identity were mentioned however, the theoretical and methodological assumptions surrounding this field were not expanded upon. Thus, chapter 3 aims to position this present study of political discourse about BSE within such discursive work. However, because the term 'discursive research' covers a confusing array of complementary and contradictory approaches to data analysis, as well as preferences

for different data sources, this chapter considers some of the prominent (but by no means exhaustive) strands of discursive research. In doing so the aim is to locate those trends that best describe the approach adopted in this current thesis.

Discursive Research: Commonalties and Conflicts

The field of discursive research has enjoyed a burgeoning development of its applications to social and psychological topics of interest. Whilst the different strands that constitute this research remains diverse in terms of its approach to data, there are some fundamental similarities which characterise all of this work. Firstly, all discursive research stresses the constructive functions of language and considers how discourse guides our understandings of our social worlds. Secondly, all approaches make discourse the central point of analysis and aim to provide an interpretation of how people use it to construct social reality and meaning. Thirdly, as Nikander (1995) notes, all discursive analytical approaches promote qualitative and interpretative methods of analysis. It is generally agreed that such methods are the most appropriate for providing a rich analysis of meaning construction, and the dynamics of discursive interaction within talk and text. As Potter (1997) claims, this is not because of a dislike with quantitative methods per se, but is based upon the view that quantitative analyses obscure the rich and subtle complexities of talk and text. Fourthly, all discursive research signals a distinctive break away from traditional psychology, which busies itself with the study of internal mental states such as personality, attributions and so on (although some forms of Critical Discourse Analysis is a notable exception). Finally, all discursive research is reflexive. That is to say that analysts do not claim to present 'facts' or 'truths' in their interpretations of data, but instead acknowledge their analysis as culturally and socially located within a

continual process of meaning construction.

However, there is at best an uneasy tension between the various strands of discursive analysis. Recent academic debates are grounded upon the conflicting, and often taken-for-granted, ideological and political assumptions underlying each discursive approach (see Billig, 1999; Schegloff, 1999 for some recent examples). Moreover the preference some approaches have for analysing certain sources of data, such as text or conversation, at the expense of others has also proved a contentious issue. The intention here is not to engage heavily within these disputes (although the relevant limitations and criticisms made of certain discursive approaches will be noted), but to consider the value these different strands have for analysing discourse.

For the sake of relevance, those commonalties and conflicts that exist between the different threads of 'Discursive Psychology', as defined by Derek Edwards and Jonathan Potter (1992), will be considered. Broadly speaking this discursive psychological perspective is the analytical framework adopted for this thesis. As such it is an eclectic approach to discourse that incorporates discourse analysis, conversation analysis, ethnomethodology and rhetorical analysis. These separate strands of analysis are united in their analysis of talk and texts as practices for constructing, rather than reflecting, realities. However, their differences lie in the approach to discourse. It is therefore worth briefly considering in turn each of these analytical methodologies before examining how these threads are woven together to form 'discursive psychology'.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis (DA) can be identified as the original discursive analytical approach that obtained a serious hold upon psychological topics of investigation. Taking its foundations from an eclectic mix of fields including linguistics, semiology, and speech act theory it treats language as the topic for study rather than as a neutral means for accessing subjective mental life. However, DA is not a unified method or theory. In fact Potter and Wetherell (1987) claim that DA is not a method or theory at all. Therefore, it should be possible to identify conflicting approaches and applications within DA. This is indeed the case as DA has been used as a basis for developing a diverse range of influential approaches, which disagree on the basis of their epistemological foundations. Thus, it is appropriate to consider how DA has been conceptualised in terms of its approach to language and the implications it has for social psychology. Arguably, the original application of DA to social psychology was exemplified in the work of Potter and Wetherell. Hence, their work will be considered first.

Discourse Analysis: Early Beginnings

Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell developed this discursive approach to social psychology in resistance to cognitive psychology, which tended to take the fundamental role of language within social activities for granted. Contrary to orthodox psychological approaches, which attempt to study the role of mental cognitions in processing information. Potter and Wetherell studied how cognition could function as a resource in talk. In other words, rather than looking for what lies underneath talk, these discourse analysts' treated the talk itself as the site of social action (a claim that would sit comfortably with all discursive theorists). Basing their

work upon speech act theory, ethnomethodology, and semiology, Potter and Wetherell stressed the performative functions of language. It was argued that people 'do' things with language. Basing their work upon the study of interpretative repertoires, Potter and Wetherell considered how the content of talk was constructed and organised in accounts.

In their criticism of mainstream social psychology's emphasis upon 'consistent individuals' (such as Festinger's 'cognitive dissonance theory', 1954), Potter and Wetherell draw upon the rhetorical work of Billig (1985, 1988, 1996) to suggest that individuals (and their discourse) are highly variable. The rhetorical perspective emphasises the contradictory nature of everyday language. Thus, the individual's construction of self, others or events as 'consistent' or 'inconsistent' is a rhetorical strategy. As Potter and Wetherell claim, people are not consistent in the way that attitude theorists assume. During the course of one or several conversations individuals may 'produce' a conflicting array of opinions, descriptions of events, attitudes, and so on. For example, Potter and Wetherell consider how New Zealanders account for controversial police intervention during conflicts that broke out amongst the spectators of the Springbok rugby tour. Applying discourse analysis they note how speakers have available to them a number of different ways of describing and accounting for police action. Whilst some speakers accounted for violent police action in terms of being a natural human reaction, others claimed it reflected a desire for indulgence into violence and a shift away from natural civilised human behaviour. They argue that the job of the discourse analyst then, is not to treat such matters as 'real', or to decide which one is the 'correct' one, but to consider them as rhetorical positions located within a wider argumentative context. Thus, the

research question becomes one concerned with 'why that version now', and not an investigation of inner mental states.

This stress upon rhetoric has implications for the study of ideology within DA. As will be mentioned later in this chapter, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) operates from the assumption that an ideology of inequality exists, and seeks to expose and dismantle such oppression through the application of discourse analysis. However, for DA theorists, such ideological assumptions are problematic. Billig (1995) suggests that rather than conceiving of ideologies as existing independently of individuals, they should be viewed as 'lived ideologies', which are negotiated in everyday mundane talk. He notes how the ideology of nationalism is embedded and reproduced in mundane social practices. Moreover, Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton and Radley (1988) also claim that these 'ideologies' provide speakers with contradictory ways of talking. For example, they note how the ideology of prejudice is routinely avoided in polite conversation. It is regarded as a social taboo to appear prejudiced. However, through the deployment of disclaimers, speakers can voice prejudiced sentiments whilst at the same time protecting their own credibility as a tolerant and even-handed person. The term 'ideological dilemmas' has been coined to define speakers' orientations to common-sense in attending to, and solving, these contradictory issues. Thus, common-sense arises as a consequence of people's abilities to cope with the contrary themes of dilemmatic situations. Billig et al (1988:16) write:

> Many words are not mere labels which neutrally package up the world. They also express moral evaluations, and such terms frequently come in antithetical opposites which enable opposing moral judgements to be made.

Research that studies ideological dilemmas suggests that thinking is typically in the

form of a dialogue. Moreover, the content of this dialogue has historical and ideological roots. This focus upon history and ideology shifts the focus of analysis onto the social nature and content of thought. Rather than regarding ideology as something that inhibits thought DA theorists have suggested it provides the dilemmatic elements of common-sense that speakers puzzle and argue over in their everyday language. If this is the case, then orientations to these dilemmatic elements should be prevalent in the talk itself.

Although this discourse analytic work has developed since the writings of Potter and Wetherell, it continues to emphasise the performative qualities of discourse, and attempts to ground its analysis within the situated and varied discursive practices of individuals. Unlike CDA (which will be considered next) that emphasises the role of power in talk, discursive psychologists focus on what people *do* with their talk, and what *resources* people draw on in the course of attending to accomplishing social actions in talk. Also unlike CDA, discursive psychologists do not concern themselves with the grammatical rules upon which language is based, but instead base their analysis upon language as an interactional practice between speakers. However, they claim that DA is not theory or method-driven, but involves a practised analytic approach to the study of language.

Whilst it is this form of DA that is adopted by discursive psychologists, it is not without its critics. Most prominently those analysts working within CDA and more textual based approaches to discourse analysis, accuse it of being apolitical, individualistic, and guilty of ignoring the wider political implications of discourse (for example, Parker, 1998; Crombie and Nightingale, 1999; van Dijk, 1993). However, a

good defence of this work comes from Potter and Wetherell themselves, who note the early status of this discipline within social psychology. They suggest the different routes DA might take, and amongst them they include the examination of written texts, rhetoric, and the study of ideology. It is therefore appropriate to consider some of the routes this DA work has taken. The intention is to briefly consider one of these alternative routes, this being CDA. Although this approach is not located within social psychology, it provides an informative development and contrast with the social psychological work of Potter and Wetherell.

Critical Discourse Analysis: Politics, Power and Ideology

Writers working within the framework of CDA ground their understandings of discourse in linguistics and literary theory. One of the founders of CDA, Fairclough (1989), suggests that analyses should be based upon text, discourse practices, and sociocultural practices. CDA emphasises the linguistic structures that underlie language and considers how these can be manipulated in the construction and reproduction of power and ideology. The work of Fowler (1991) is exemplary in his discourse analysis of newspaper texts in the reproduction of elitist ideologies. Combining literary theory with linguistic techniques of analysis, Fowler notes how newspaper discourse is manipulated such that dominant discourses are prioritised within the media and become filtered down to the ordinary person on the street. More recently, Santa Ana (1999) has examined how the use of racist metaphors in American media texts functions to dehumanise immigrant workers and support an anti-immigrant referendum. As Sotillo and Starace-Nastasi (1999) claim, 'Engaging in media discourse is thus a means of linking textual analysis to discourse practices and sociocultural practices' p. 250). Hence, at its most basic, CDA remains primarily

concerned with how individuals and discourses are shaped and influenced by ideology. Van Dijk (1993) describes the theoretical position of CDA as follows:

> ...critical discourse analysts want to know what structures, strategies or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction or communicative events play a role in these modes of reproduction...we pay more attention to 'top-down' relations of dominance than to 'bottom-up' relations of resistance, compliance and resistance. This does not mean that we see power and dominance merely as unilaterally 'imposed' on others. On the contrary, in many situations, and sometimes paradoxically, power and even power abuse may seem to be 'jointly produced', e.g. when dominated groups are persuaded, by whatever means, that dominance is 'natural' or otherwise legitimate...our critical approach prefers to focus on the elites and their discursive strategies for the maintenance of equality. (p. 250)

This social power is defined as privileged access to those resources which society places a high value upon, e.g. education, social status, and wealth. Furthermore, this 'power' involves the dominance of one group over another. However, as van Dijk suggests, this dominance may be 'jointly produced' through discourse as power is communicated between individuals, groups and institutions. For example, Sotillo and Starace-Nastasi (1999) have noted how letters to the editor in weekly newspapers function to provide a political platform for the working-class to air their grievances about their lack of access to resources, but in themselves are ineffective in operationalising social change.

As CDA maps the micro-level processes of discourse onto the macro-level processes of power and ideology some theorists argue that social cognition forms the link (for example van Dijk, 1999). Thus it is claimed that the individual's social cognitions mediate between micro- and macro-levels of society. As mentioned earlier, Santa Ana (1999) notes how the metaphors in the American media function to oppress immigrant workers. Adopting a cognitive framework Santa Ana suggests that a process of metaphorical mapping occurs which reinforces the strength of the

discourse. Furthermore, the notion that these social cognitions are shared across members of a society reinforces its role as the connection between power and discourse.

Unsurprisingly as Nikander (1995) claims, CDA is criticised by writers working within less politically charged forms of DA for regarding discourses as independent of the people who use them. Hence, issue is taken with the objectified notion of 'power' and 'dominance' as existing independently of those speakers who invoke them. Moreover, the added claim by some CDA theorists, that individual social cognition underlies the processing and interpretation of discourses, is also problematised by other discursive researchers. As suggested in chapter 2, much discursive psychology stresses the discursive functions of cognitive claims rather than regarding them as a private inaccessible black box.

Although this thesis does apply the methods and assumptions of DA it does not locate its analytical approach within CDA. Primarily it is argued in this present research that an a priori theory of power and dominance is not required to analyse social interaction between political speakers. To understand how politicians deploy rhetorical devices and draw upon discursive resources in order to construct themselves, each other and social reality (in this case, BSE and its implications for Britain and Europe) in a particular way, does not require a theory of inequality (although this work would not want to make the claim that inequality, dominance and power are not political concerns.). Instead, for the purposes of this present work it is argued that power and dominance are *relevant* to the analysis to the extent that they become *issues* for the speakers. Thus the analysis does not begin from the assumption that politicians

discourses are constrained and influenced by their powerful positions in society (although this is an arguable point). Moreover, this thesis does not attempt to investigate or theorise about individual cognitions as if they were fixed mental states. Instead, references to mental states, such as personality characteristics, emotions and so on only become of interest as discursive resources, invoked by the speakers themselves, for accomplishing social actions in the talk itself.

However, it is acknowledged that CDA often provides useful tools and concepts for the study of media text (a largely ignored and unpreferred source of data for more ethnomethodological approaches to discursive analysis). The application of critical discursive approaches, together with the usefulness of conversation analytic concepts, are considered in more detail in chapter 8 when the analysis turns to consider a piece of political writing (by the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind at this time) for the *Sun* newspaper (31 May 1996).

Another example of an approach to discourse analysis, which has developed from the writings of Potter and Wetherell, is exemplified in the feminist, Marxist and psychoanalytic based 'discursive psychology', proposed by Ian Parker (1992). On the basis of its influence and the questions it raises for other forms of discourse analysis this chapter will now turn to briefly consider the theoretical basis of this approach.

Discursive Psychology: Foucault, Marxism, Feminism and Psychoanalysis

Writers working within this discursive psychological framework ground their understandings of discourse within post-structuralism, Michel Foucault, Marxism, feminist theory and psychoanalytic theories of language and subjectivity as proposed

by Jacques Lacan. The analytical focus of this form of discursive psychology is upon how meanings and subjectivities are reproduced transformed, facilitated and constrained by discourses. In particular the emphasis upon Foucault's work (1972). that knowledge is power is elaborated upon in these analyses of discourse. Foucault sought to demonstrate how discourse is rooted in power. 'Power' in this sense is understood in terms of an unequal relationship between the powerful and the powerless. It is a misreading of this work to suggest that power is the 'property' or possession of the elite. Rather it is the relationship itself that is the site of 'power'. It would also be a misunderstanding of this work to assume that power is always negative. Indeed, Foucault stressed the productive nature of power.

Parker (1998) has developed this notion to further to integrate Marxist, feminist, and psychoanalytic theory within the approach to discourse. Adopting a Marxist perspective, Parker notes how individuals engage in economic relationships that reproduce unequal relationships between employers and workers. In particular, he stresses the application of discursive analyses to elitist and lay discourses to expose the discursive practices of exploitation and disempowerment. He claims discourses of dominance reproduce the existing order, and as such appear natural and unquestionable, and 'they conceal patterns of power or render accounts of those patterns unreasonable or more dangerous to those trapped within them' (p. 7). Hence, for Parker the analytical enterprise should be in examining the ideological properties of language and empowering the oppressed.

Extending the claims of Engels (1884), that power is diffused unequally on the basis of gender, feminist researchers such as Erica Burman (1990) and Sue Wilkinson

(1988) have examined how patriarchy and male oppression functions to reproduce unequal social relations between men and women. The reconciling of Marxist and feminist theory has enabled discursive researchers to analyse the role of discourse in producing subject position, which are assumed to be normative and universal. Furthermore, this political approach to discourse analysis also emphasises the psychoanalytic work of Lacan (1977) and his theory of the unconscious. Rather than regarding the unconscious as a mental black box, that is shut off from the 'real world', Lacan suggested that it could be examined as an 'other' site of discourse. Hence, in this way it becomes understood as a site of discourse that is actively repressed and separate from society. Discursive psychologists have adopted this notion of the unconscious 'other' to examine how certain categories of 'other', such as gender and race, are repressed from explicit discourse and pushed out of Western society. Thus, the discursive project becomes one concerned with examining how individuals are embedded within a web of discourses that position them in relationships of power within society. Wetherell (1998), provides a clear synopsis of such post-structuralist accounts of discourse, claiming:

> Subject positions, and thus the identities of participants in social life, are determined by discourses and in this sense are prior, already constituted, and could be read off or predicted from knowledge of the relevant discourse.
> (p. 401)

It should come as no surprise that such a radical political approach to discourse analysis should be both challenging to other discursive analytical projects, and in turn be challenged by them. As discursive researchers acknowledge that discourse constitutes social practices, upon what grounds are the political claims of this type (or any other type) of discursive psychology to be promoted? Moreover, these discursive writers remain largely unconcerned with the detailed micro-level analysis of social interaction. Wetherell suggests that such theorists 'rarely have their noses pressed up

against the exigencies of talk-in-interaction. Rarely, are they called on to explain how their perspective might apply to what is happening right now, on the ground, in this conversation' (1998: 395). However, this form of discursive analysis throws up an important challenge to other psychologists and academic researchers in terms of a consideration of their own role in the reproduction of power and knowledge relations within their own research.

Having considered discourse analysis, albeit briefly, this chapter will now shift slightly to consider another strand of discursive psychology (as defined by Edwards and Potter, 1992), this being conversation analysis (CA).

Conversation Analysis

As was mentioned in chapter 2, the central legacy of Sacks's (1992), work on conversation analysis and on the explication of identity was a shift in attention from analyst's categories to those made relevant in, and constructed by participants in interaction. Previously it was noted how Sacks' work has contributed to a discursive turn to the study of identity, insofar as the categories invoked by the speaker become the focus for analytic attention, rather than those imposed by the analyst. These conversation analytic techniques have revolutionised its definition and meaning within social psychology. Here the aim is to consider the theoretical and methodological assumptions upon which CA rests.

Essentially conversation analysis (CA) is an empirical and ethnomethodological approach to talk-in-interaction. Without doubt, the founder of CA, Harvey Sacks, is indebted to the prior work of Erving Goffman on impression management, and the

ethnomethodological approach of Harold Garfinkel. From Goffman, Sacks adopted the notion that social order is based upon a collective definition and understanding of a situation. Moreover, Goffman's emphasis on the need to study naturally occurring behaviour is clearly evident in Sacks' CA method. However, despite such similarities, Goffman and Sacks disagree on the role of non-verbal behaviour in defining situations. For Goffman, non-verbal behaviour is crucial for individuals to understand ritualistic ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, as well as the definition of mundane everyday life. However, Sacks argues that as the defining of a situation can be clearly seen in speakers' verbal displays to one another in talk, then the need to consider non-verbal behaviour becomes redundant. He suggested that the sequentiality of talk-in-interaction displays a common understanding of a social order. As such he stressed the need to produce a method of analysis that focussed upon the structure of conversations and how speakers displayed their understandings of social structure to one another. The method of analysis that resulted for investigating such matters became known as CA.

This method of analysis was also greatly influenced by the ethnomethodological work of Harold Garfinkel (1967). Garfinkel termed his approach as "the documentary method of interpretation". Put simply, ethnomethodology involves a study of people's common-sense methods for understanding their lives. For Garfinkel, this method denoted the mean by which social actors, or 'members' make sense of their lived worlds. He claimed that this method had two important aspects. The first was to treat the appearance of an individual as the 'document of' an underlying pattern. The second is an assertion that these individual appearances are interpreted by members on the basis of what is known about the underlying pattern. Thus, the world

of members is socially constructed through the expansion of appearances by the members themselves. This approach emphasises the role of discourse as people construct and orient to social phenomena.

As Garfinkel accounts for societal members' demonstrations of context-bound activities (or 'indexical) as 'normative' or 'obvious' phenomenon, Sacks considers how such 'obvious' phenomena are assembled in conversation. Hence, in this way everyday reality is situated and displayed in mundane conversation. The two fundamental notions of ethnomethodology, 'indexicality' and 'reflexivity', underline the principle that speaking members must engage in interpretative business to accomplish meaning. 'Indexicality' refers to the notion that indexical expressions, such as pronouns and locations only become meaningful in the context of their use. The second principle of 'reflexivity' denotes the ethnomethodological claim that all discourse constructs and reproduces contexts. Silverman (1998) writes:

> ...this kind of reflexivity is unavailable for conventional social science, including sociology. Garfinkel (1967) argues that this is because such social science confuses the distinction between what he calls 'topic' and 'resource'. Because it treats its members' knowledge of the everyday world as a tacit 'resource', it cannot, even if it would want to, make the accomplishment of that world a research 'topic'. (p. 39)

However, it is claimed that ethnomethodology and CA are distinct from 'conventional social science' insofar as they analyse speakers' own accounts of the world, rather than those imposed by the social scientist.

Thus, fundamentally conversation analysis has adopted an empirical approach to discourse based upon these principles proposed by Garfinkel. CA is an examination of talk. Harvey Sacks' aim was to identify speakers shared understandings via a detailed and structured analysis of talk. Conversation analysis' prime concern lies in

the way social organisation is achieved in talk. Focusing upon the turn-by-turn sequentiality of talk, conversation analysts' study how such devices as 'preference structures', 'occasioned utterances' and 'conditional relevance' function in talk to create patterns in talk (or social organisation), which are understandable to culturally competent members. In her critique of Schegloff's pragmatic application of CA Wetherell (1998), provides a clear summary of its aims.

> Analysis proceeds from the general observation that in talk participants' display to each other, as they perform their own contributions, their understandings of the setting and context, and their grasp of the emergent activities. Members of society display what they know – their practical reasoning skills and competencies...The focus of conversation analysis is thus on the reflexive accomplishment of conversation. (p. 391)

Hence, the preference in CA is to study naturally occurring mundane interaction, although a separate strand of 'applied' conversation analytic research has been devoted to the study of talk in institutional settings (see Greatbatch, 1998). Many CA studies have been concerned with how institutionally specific properties of a setting such as the news interview (Drew and Heritage, 1992) are constituted in the talk. So for CA theorists, social structure becomes part of the interaction, as it is worked-up in the talk. Furthermore, CA stresses that analysts need never look beyond the data. The context in which speakers' utterances are to be understood is worked-up and attended to in the turn-by-turn sequence of conversation.

Derek Edwards and Jonathan Potter's 'discursive psychology' follows the CA assumption that the order of detail in talk and text is consequential for interaction. Moreover, such analysis avoids using analysts assumptions about what is going on within a stretch of data, and instead prefers to see the things that are worked-up, attended to, and made relevant by the speakers themselves. Writing from a conversation analytic perspective Antaki (1994), argues that discourse analysts'

should base their interpretations of talk within CA. He warns against the failure to do so, claiming:

> Discourse analysts face the persuasive task of any interpretative commentator: unless their claims are grounded in structural properties of the talk, a certain fraction of the analytic impact of what they will say will be delivered by mobilising the cultural, social and perhaps political assumptions they share with their audience. (p. 138)

However, the field of conversation analysis, as it becomes increasingly attractive to discourse analysts, has come under increasing attack. Billig (1999) and Wetherell (1998) have taken issue with conversation analysis for imposing its own categories upon speakers, and hence being no different from those discursive approaches taken by post-structuralists. That is to say, the terms 'preference structures', 'occasioned utterances' and so on are not members categories, but are specific to the conversation analyst. Furthermore, Wetherell argues that often a wider interpretative context is required to understand how and why speakers position themselves within talk.

Disputing Schegloff's proposed conversation analytical framework, she writes:

> ...the problem with conversation analysts is that they rarely raise their eyes from the next turn in the conversation, and, further, this is not an entire conversation or sizeable slice of social life but usually a tiny fragment...it gives scholarly criteria for correctness and grounds for academic disputes, allowing appeals to the data, and it closes down the infinity of contexts which could be potentially relevant to something demonstrable – what the participants take as relevant. (p. 402)

Hence, CA becomes guilty of providing a yardstick against which the competency and meaning of speakers can be measured. Billig also claims that CA's insistence upon 'preference structures' and 'agreements' assumes that the 'norm' for people and society is one of agreement and consensus. On the contrary, he argues that debates, disputes and arguments are the 'norm'. From a dialogic perspective Billig (1997), argues that CA is unable to account for repressed self-knowledge, and what is routinely *not* said. Furthermore, he notes that CA promotes an idealistic world in

which equality exists in conversation, and has nothing to say about those circumstances in which inequality is the 'norm'. In a similar vein Abell and Stokoe (forthcoming) claim that CA circumvents a study of culture through an emphasis upon an empirical investigation of 'rules of applicability' (Sacks, 1992). In its analysis of culturally competent members, CA provides little theory about what this 'culture' is.

However, whilst these criticisms are acknowledged (and not disagreed with here), conversation analysis is defended here to the extent that it provides many useful tools for analysis, and its incorporation into discursive psychology has benefitted the theoretical enterprise considerably. CA provides a rigorous method of investigation for examining and understanding speakers *in their own terms*. Moreover, its insistence upon social organisation within talk is a useful analytical framework for examining how speakers' construct and display their understandings of social reality.

Whilst DA and CA remain distinct approaches to the analysis of discourse (or 'talk'), it is their integration to form 'discursive psychology', which is of prime interest in this present work. Therefore, this chapter will now turn to consider what discursive psychology is and how it is applied to the analysis of discourse.

A Change of Direction? Discursive Psychology

Founded by Edwards and Potter (1992), discursive psychology (DP) embraces the differing tensions of discourse analysis, conversation analysis, ethnomethodology and rhetorical analysis. At its most basic, DP defines a social constructionist approach to language aimed at analysing common-sense constructions of reality, mind and identity. Combining conversation analysis and discourse analysis Edwards and Potter

note how descriptions of events, people and objects perform conversational work. Rather than treating descriptions as neutral reflections of reality, Edwards and Potter suggest that descriptions make available certain implications and inferences concerning matters of blame and accountability. Everyday descriptions make inferentially available the dispositions of speakers in terms of their morals, their mental states, feelings, emotions, and so on. Furthermore, incorporating rhetorical analysis, discursive psychology notes how these descriptions embrace an argumentative dimension as they are positioned to attend to, or dispute actual or potential counter-claims. Rhetorical analysis focuses on how talk and text are structured argumentatively to be persuasive and to resist and undermine alternative positions. Thus, engaging in this kind of analysis helps the analyst to understand how particular versions of reality are designed and located within a wider argumentative context. The main aim of discursive psychology is to study the action orientation of talk and text. It is this fore-grounding of argumentation and accountability that becomes the main focus for this thesis.

Accountability, Argumentation and the Discursive Construction of 'Facts'

As stated earlier, discursive psychology places a great deal of emphasis upon description as a resource for constructing particular versions of events, people objects and places. Descriptions can be understood as situated in talk as they attend to particular rhetorical business, such as assigning and avoiding blame or to work up the credibility of a particular account. Moreover, Edwards and Potter (1992) claim that when speakers offer reports or descriptions of events, people, objects or places, they routinely deal with matters of agency and responsibility. That is to say, people treat

each other as having a stake or interest in their accounts and actions. Hence, speakers treat themselves as accountable for producing a particular version or description of reality. Thus, according to discursive psychologists speakers structure their talk to attend to these accountable matters. Therefore, it is suggested that the analytical task of discursive psychology then, is to consider the way in which this accountability is constructed, challenged and defended in particular interactions, and examine the social actions accomplished through its management. Edwards (1997) clarifies the discursive psychological position as follows:

> When people describe events, they attend to accountability. That is to say, they attend to events in terms of what is normal, expectable, and proper: they attend to their own responsibility in events and in the reporting of events.
> (p. 7)

Accountability therefore, quite clearly involves descriptions. However, unlike more orthodox approaches in psychology, these descriptions are not treated as reflections of inner cognitive states or relaying 'facts' but as rhetorical resources, mobilised to accomplish social actions. Furthermore, discursive psychologists note how attributions can also be constructed and mobilised in accounts to provide a particular 'version' of their own, or some 'other's' character. However, again unlike cognitive psychology that regards these attributions as requiring cognitive methods for investigation, discursive psychology treats the attributions as topics for analysis in their own right. In this sense, attributions are understood as descriptions oriented to the situated demands of the talk. References made to mental states and accounts of the outside world become available as situated descriptions. Thus, the concern is not with whether such attributions are 'true' or 'correct'. Instead the task becomes one of analysing how, when and why certain attributions are made in their orientations to the dynamic situatedness of the talk. In the now well documented study by Gilbert and Mulkay (1984), the analysis focused upon the use of empiricist and contingent

repertoires used by scientists in attending to issues of accountability for their work. Although this study is located within discourse analysis, one of the prime interests concerned an interest in why and how scientists used certain categories to define themselves and others. They suggested that the empiricist repertoire was deployed to attend to the credible and factual status of their certain scientific work. (for example, that their work reflected complete adherence to scientific principles and an absence of human interference) whilst the contingent repertoire accounted for mistakes and discredited certain findings (for example, that other scientific work was distorted on the basis of human decisions obscuring scientific procedure).

From the work of Gilbert and Mulkay, it becomes clear that the 'factual' status of talk becomes a participant's concern when accounting for certain actions and events such as working up or undermining the credibility of a scientific discovery. Discursive psychologists have become increasingly concerned with how speakers work up and undermine the facticity of their discourse to attend to accountable matters. Most prominently, Potter (1996) notes how speakers can deploy certain devices within their talk to attend to the factual status of particular 'versions' of reality. He suggests that these devices include footing, dilemmas of stake and interest, category entitlements and the construction of consensus or conspiracy. As the deployment of these devices is an important concern in examining how speakers attend to accountable matters they will be discussed in some detail here.

Watch Your 'Footing'

Potter (1996) claims that 'footing' is a central part of accountability. He writes:

> ...footing is often bound up with issues of fact construction and accountability: a display of footing can be an attempt to show who should be

blamed and whose version of the world is at stake.

(p. 38)

However, this notion of 'footing' must be attributed to the earlier work of Erving Goffman. Although there is some distinction between Goffman's understanding of footing and discursive psychologists use of it in analysis, it is perhaps important to briefly consider what the concept was intended to examine. Previously, Goffman (1979) considered how people manage face-to-face encounters in ways that maintain a positive self-presentation of themselves. He suggested that to fully investigate how such 'performances' are managed in interaction, researchers need to identify the five levels of interactional relationships (or 'footings) that a speaker can adopt with what is uttered. These levels of 'footing' indicate the speakers' 'distance' from what is spoken. The first of these he identified as 'animator'. This refers to the person who voices an utterance but is not its originator. Instead the originator is identified in the second level of footing, this being 'author'. The author indicates the person who scripts what is said. The third footing of 'principal' indicates whose position is represented in the talk, which may or may not be the speaker. The 'strategist' is the fourth footing, which denotes the person who decides how the interaction will proceed. The fifth and final level of footing is simply defined as the 'figures performed by the speaker'. This simply refers to those 'roles' or identities displayed and performed by the speaker. These different levels of footing are understood by Goffman to be an interactional phenomenon through which identity and role are presented and managed. Speakers or 'performers' can switch from one level of footing to another during the course of verbal interaction. For example, he notes that footing shifts often occur from author to animator when a stretch of talk becomes controversial. Such shifts indicate the speaker's increasing rhetorical distance from the controversial statement being uttered.

As mentioned earlier, this concept of footing has been adopted by discursive psychologists and is based on the work of conversation analysts'. Malone (1997) notes a similarity between the notion of 'footing' between Goffman and conversation analysts'. He writes: 'both Goffman and conversation analysts claim that interaction must satisfy self-presentational demands, while being constrained by, but not ordered by institutional frameworks' (p. 6). So, whilst Goffman suggests that 'footing' displays the presentation of identity and role in interactions, Sacks claimed that it displays sensitivity to and an understanding of the interaction. The difference between the two approaches can be found in the explications of language and talk that form the basis for understanding the links between interactions and identity constructions. For Sacks, footings imply categorical memberships and create organisational references. However, for Goffman, footings are simply a means for displaying socially managed impressions. These socially managed impressions are understood to be 'identities' by Goffman. He claims:

> To *be* a given kind of person, then, is not merely to possess the required attributes, but also to sustain the standards of conduct and appearance that one's social grouping attaches thereto...A status, a position, a social place is not a material thing, to be possessed and then displayed; it is a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent, embellished, and well articulated. Performed with ease or clumsiness, awareness or not, guile or good faith, it is none the less something that must be realised. (1959, p. 81, emphasis in original)

So for Goffman, 'footing' is a device which speakers can use to display a socially appropriate identity. Many discursive theorists have challenged these 'levels' of footing, claiming that what is regarded as 'appropriate socially managed displays of identity' are accomplishments of the interaction itself and are not prescribed by the norms and values of society. However, the implications of 'footing' for the study of accountability have been widely theorised within the discursive literature.

Within discursive psychology 'footing' has become better understood as an analysis of pronoun use. For example, Gastil (1992) notes how the deployment of pronouns such as 'I', 'we' and 'you' can be used in political talk to indicate levels of responsibility in talk. He notes how politicians may switch from using the pronoun 'I' to the more generic 'we' when referring to potentially controversial political proposals. Furthermore, Clayman (1992) has studied the use of footing shifts in achieving neutrality in interviews, arguing interviewers often confront their interviewees with a contentious claim whilst presenting the utterance as a quote from some 'other'. Harré (1988) notes how pronoun use links speech between speaker and hearer. In his study of Japanese society he argues that pronoun use represents an encoding of a social order within the grammar such that accounting is always performed within a context of deference and condescension. Harré suggests that pronouns are indexical expressions, mapping the relations between speaker, utterance, place and time. This loosely ties in with conversation analytic and ethnomethodological understandings of indexicality. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, utterances such as pronouns are 'indexical' insofar as they display speakers' understandings of a locally constructed context through relevancy constraints.

Conversation analysts have also stressed the importance of reported speech as a footing device in building up or undermining the factual status of accounts (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998; Wooffitt, 1992). As Leudar and Antaki (1996) point out, this reporting of speech is in itself a construction of context. This has been incorporated into discursive psychological analyses. Footing, as discursive psychologists study it, is examined for its deployment in working up or undermining of facticity. Generally speaking, if a speaker wishes to increase the facticity of an account, a distant footing

is maintained through the adoption of an animator position, whereas the undermining of facticity requires the adoption of an 'author' level of footing. However, footing is not the only way in which speakers can work up or undermine the facticity of accounts. Footing is usually studied in relation to speakers' concerns with 'dilemmas of stake or interest'. Hence, it is to these matters that this chapter will turn to next.

Dilemmas of 'Stake' & 'Interest'

Discursive psychologists also note how matters of 'stake' and 'interest' can become important resources for working-up and undermining the credibility of particular 'versions' of reality and hence, attend to issues of accountability. Edwards and Potter (1992:158) suggest that:

> Anyone who produces a version of something that happened in the past, or who develops a stretch of talk that places blame on someone or some category of persons, does so at the risk of having their claims discounted as the consequence of stake or interest...participants should be thought of as caught in a dilemma of stake or interest: how to produce accounts which attend to interests without being undermined as interested...people can perform attributional actions such as blamings indirectly or implicitly through providing an ostensibly factual report which allows others to follow through the upshot or implications of the report.

In brief, they claim that when participants orient to issues of accountability they also have to manage potential accusations of 'well you would say that wouldn't you'. As Potter (1996) notes, people can be constructed as 'having an axe to grind'. Thus, speakers may face a problem in producing an account or 'version of events' that appears factual, rather than motivated by personal and political interests. Many discursive studies have considered how speakers routinely manage such dilemmas in their accounts. For example, a prominent area of study is the examination of how politicians manage such 'dilemmas of stake' in interviews (Potter and Edwards, 1990; Edwards and Potter, 1992b; Edwards, 1997). By virtue of definition, politicians

espouse political accounts. Hence, it is particularly problematic for a politician to present a version of reality that appears 'factual' and unmotivated by political stake and interest. As accounts that appear politically motivated can be discredited on the grounds of their bias and lack of factual status it becomes a concern for politicians to present their discourse such that its 'facticity' is worked up.

For example, Potter and Edwards (1990), in a study of a press conference given by Nigel Lawson (The Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1988) to Sunday newspaper journalists, consider how both parties manage dilemmas of stake and interest. As 'off-the-record' controversial statements made by Lawson (such as the proposed 'means testing' of old age pensioners) are subsequently published in the newspapers, both Lawson and the press promote differing versions of the 'reality' of the conference. Of interest to Potter and Edwards is how the journalists and Lawson construct the 'facticity' of their own accounts and at the same time accuse the other of having a political stake in their counter-version. For example, the authors note how journalists construct independent consensus amongst 'others' who have also witnessed the press conference. Such 'consensus' functions to corroborate the journalists' account of what happened, and also inoculates against having a political stake in producing a particular version of reality. However, from an analysis of Hansard parliamentary debates, Potter and Edwards examine Nigel Lawson's construction of conspiracy to indicate the political machinations of journalists to invent such versions in order to discredit him. Hence, the management of dilemmas of stake and interest are particularly problematic for politicians.

Quite clearly then, a prominent theoretical aspect of such studies is a concern with

how speakers convincingly allocate and reject blame whilst avoiding the risk of being treated as a biased party predictably blaming the other. However, these discursive studies are not restricted to political data. In their analysis of the televised 'Panorama' interview between the late Princess Diana and Martin Bashir, Abell and Stokoe (1999) note how Diana manages 'dilemmas of stake' throughout the interview. They suggest that her blaming of particular 'others', these being the media, the royal family, and Prince Charles, accomplishes for Diana a construction of herself as reasonable and diplomatic. It would be easy to dismiss Diana as a biased party (in view of her separation from Charles), motivated to discredit the royal family. Thus, the facticity of her version of events, and her own credibility as a speaker become issues that need to be addressed throughout the interview. As Buttny (1993) claims, when people are involved in the conversational business of accounting, they must present their own actions 'so as the render them sensible, normal, understandable, proper, and the like' (p. 15). Thus in this way, we can begin to see how the study of identity and accountability become inextricably linked. The management of one's own accountability often requires the construction of one's self, or identity, as factual and credible in some way. Likewise, to discredit a counter-version of reality as biased can also involve the active construction of some 'other' identity that is negative in certain respects.

However, discursive theorists have also argued that speakers can work to 'inoculate' against potential accusations of stake or interest before they happen. In Dorothy Smith's study 'K is mentally ill' (1978), she noted how a speaker's negative attributions towards some 'other', such as being 'mentally ill', required delicate management. For example, such attributions could be dismissed as non-factual and as

serving the self-interests of the person who makes such claims. Thus, Smith noted that when speakers made such attributions they would inoculate against potential accusations of having a 'stake' in these descriptions through claiming to be a 'close friend' of the person afflicted with mental illness. Such constructions of close friendship functioned to present the speaker as acting in the close friend's best interests rather than serving his/her own.

In a similar vein, confessions of stake can also function to counter potential criticisms of 'you would say that wouldn't you'. This simply means that speakers can acknowledge having a stake or interest in the version of reality that they produce. Potter (1996:130) suggests that such confessions can 'work as a display of honesty and objectivity: the author is someone who can stand outside his interests and is well aware of their distorting potential.' Thus, such declarations can function to increase rather than decrease the facticity of accounts and the credibility of its author.

In a brief gloss of Potter and Edwards's discursive analytic study of Nigel Lawson's controversial press conference, it was noted that the 'consensus' and 'conspiracy' could serve to attend to accountable matters in discourse. The intention here is to just briefly revisit these notions and consider how discursive psychologists have applied them to analyses of data.

A Double Edged Sword: Constructing Consensus and Conspiracy

As has perhaps already been gleaned from an earlier consideration of these concepts constructions of consensus are an important externalising device in the development of 'factual' claims. That is to say, when a speaker makes claims in talk s/he can

warrant the factual status of such claims through the construction of consensus from independent sources. For example Gastil (1992) notes how politicians often invoke consensus for their claims through the reported talk of scientific and/or apolitical 'experts'. Dickerson (1997) claims that the citing of consensual 'others' in televised political interviews can function to increase the credibility of a speaker's claims. Potter and Edwards (1990), noted how journalists invoked independent consensual others to corroborate their versions of the Nigel Lawson press conference. as well as counter claims that such accounts were politically motivated and inaccurate.

However as noted earlier, consensus can also function to undermine the credibility of claims made. Potter (1996) notes that the sources of such consensus can also be constructed as contrived and/or guided by particular interests and motivations in their agreement. Again, in the Potter and Edwards example (1990). it was noted how Nigel Lawson defended his version of the press conference through claims that journalists were engaging in conspiratorial activities, which accounted for the biased reports in the newspapers. Hence, the credibility of the account is challenged on the grounds of being contaminated in some way. Such uses of consensus and conspiracy can prove to be very powerful devices in the assigning and avoiding of blame and accountability. However, it perhaps should be stressed that discursive psychologists do not regard such concepts as reflecting real-world states of affairs but as rhetorical resources that can be mobilised in discourse to attend to accountable matters.

As noted earlier. accountability is inextricably linked with identity. This is pursued a little further in a brief discussion of another device for increasing the factual status of an account. Here, the intention is to consider how the conversation analytic concept

of 'category entitlements' function for speakers in attending to accountable issues such as increasing and binding together notions of credibility and identity.

Category Entitlement

The concept of 'category entitlements' has already been mentioned in relation to Baker's study of parent-teacher interactions (1997), in chapter 2. It was clear from this work that category entitlements have fundamental implications for identity construction. Harvey Sacks introduced the notion of category entitlements in his lectures to explain how certain people in certain contexts are constructed as knowledgeable and 'entitled' to be in possession of such knowledge. Previously it was noted how the MCD of 'family' linked the categories of 'mommy' and 'baby' so that the two separate utterances of; 'The baby cried. The mommy picked it up', marks the mommy who picks up the baby, as the baby's mother. Moreover, it was suggested that the category entitlements of 'mommy' infer that she 'ought' to pick up the baby. Sacks claimed that these two sentences performed a description in which members of the category 'family' engaged in a category-relevant activity. Furthermore, he claimed that 'category-bound activities' refer to those expectable actions performed by members of the relevant category. So, it can be inferred that the 'mommy' had specific entitlements to pick up the baby. Hence category entitlement makes available a particular person's knowledge or rights within a specific domain.

However as many discursive theorists have argued, the boundaries between members, categories and their entitlements are problematic and need to be worked-up in talk (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984; Potter, 1996; Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995). For example, Abell and Stokoe (forthcoming) note how the late Princess Diana worked up

her category entitlements as a member of the royal family but also as an 'ordinary' woman to warrant the adoption of a future role as 'ambassador'. Hence, her entitlements as a member of the royal family are not unproblematic and are treated as accountable by Diana. Furthermore, invoking a construction of British national identity that is used to define Diana's identity, she shores up her entitlements to speak on behalf of the British public. Thus who 'we' are, is not a given. Instead, we have to actively construct who 'we' are, and treat ourselves as accountable for the version that we produce. As Rapley (1998), suggests from his analysis of MP Pauline Hanson's parliamentary speech, individuals may construct their own 'personal identity as constituting…entitlement to speak on behalf of a shared social category' (p. 341).

Thus, both category membership and the entitlements of members have to be negotiated within talk. Often people's entitlements to be a member of a particular category are challenged and require careful management at a local discursive level. These are all accountable matters that speakers attend to in discourse. Therefore, it would be expected that political category membership and entitlements are also accountable matters that need to be attended to in talk. It is argued that even politicians have to construct their political identities and their entitlements, and having done so, treat themselves and each other as accountable for the version they give. These 'versions' are not fixed but open to challenge and negotiation. Hence, from a study of category entitlements discursive psychologists have examined how speakers constructions of their own identity, together with their entitlements, can function in talk to increase the facticity of a version of events and hence, attend to accountable business.

Thus, so far it has been considered how discursive psychologists have studied accountability, which is a central concern in their analyses of discourse. Moreover, it has been suggested that the discursive construction of 'facts' can function to attend to such accountable matters. As was noted previously, these orientations to accountability are embedded within situated descriptions of events (past, present or future), objects, people, and actions. The discursive construction of mind, reality and identity can be analysed as rhetorical resources orientated towards the accomplishment of accountable issues for the speaker. However in addition to this, some discursive theorists have claimed that such descriptive accounts can form narratives and should be studied as such. Moreover, they argue that these narrations have implications for the social psychological study of identity. It is perhaps appropriate therefore, to end this chapter with a brief consideration of how the treatment of accounts as 'narratives' can be applicable to a study of identity and accountability.

Narrating Accountable Lives

Many theorists have emphasised the role of narrative in the shaping of identity. Goffman's notion of multiple selves is organised around the presentation of narrative. Sarbin (1997) claims that stories often provide the structures for self-narratives. He argues that we live in a 'story-shaped world. The identities of men and women are shaped by stories told, stories enacted, stories read' (p. 79). From a psychological perspective, writers claim that narrative is the basis for human understanding and becomes a means through which people can organise and guide their experiences of the world (Bruner, 1990; Frye, 1957; Geertz, 1983). Hence, within mainstream psychology the thrust of the research has been dedicated to the investigation of what

lies beneath the narrative. Explanations embracing theories of cognitive capacities. mental apparatus and motivation have characterised psychological work on narrative. Moreover. narratives have often been treated as accurate reports of social reality.

However. rather than regarding narratives as reflections of social reality. social constructionists` maintain that they are constitutive of it. Mary Gergen (1988) claims that within psychology narratives are regarded as a means of providing coherence to one`s life. She argues that narratives are fundamental for analysing how people construct and understand their identity as they involve the positioning of self in relation to others. In this sense of the word, narratives are not treated as representations of a 'real self' but as social constructions. Harré (1988) suggests that narratives make life's events intelligible to the speaker and listener through their sequential location within a larger story.

Conversation analysts have also considered narrative in talk. However. much of this work is concerned with how narratives are signalled in conversation and the structural order of such long stretches of talk (Goodwin. 1984; Jefferson. 1978; Labov. 1972; Schegloff. 1988. 1992). Antaki (1994). notes that narratives, or `storied accounts`. become of interest to the conversation analyst insofar as they require the search for:

> ...sequential rules which might be applied to the giving and receiving of account `chunks`. We shall find these rules have something helpful to say about the telling of tales which are called up by the interactional demands of the moment. and whose force is measurable within the interaction itself. (p.107).

This approach to narratives was signalled by Sacks (1972). who argued that analysts should shift away from a concern with revealing what lies behind it motivating it along to a concern with `when`. `where` and `how` participants used them. However.

rather than relying solely upon sequential structures and the application of conversational rules, Antaki argues for the potential partnership between conversation analytic and more 'metaphorical' interpretations of narratives. He suggests. 'What conversational organisation would promise, though, would be a more complete description of account-giving to set alongside (and possibly be a channel for) the narratives and metaphorical structures that a different sort of analyst could provide (p. 113). This shift in focus, from a concern with the structural properties of narrative to an emphasis upon the local functions accomplished by the deployment of narratives has been widely adopted by discursive psychologists. Moreover, their function in the local negotiation of accountability has been of particular interest to some discursive theorists.

Edwards (1997), in his critique of script-theory suggests that speakers' concern with accountability is often managed at two levels of narration. The first is in the current interaction and the second within the recounting of a past event. He argues that when a narrative is produced in talk the business of the analyst is to ask why this has appeared now. Often such narrations include claims of memory and forgetfulness. Edwards argues that utterances of 'remembering' or 'forgetting' form an intrinsic part of story-telling, as they 'deal with relations between mind and world...Memory and events, mind and world, feature in discourse as mutually defining and delimiting categories' (p. 282). Moreover, within narratives emotional and mental states of self and/or others can be made inferentially available. Narratives enable speakers to connect events over time and make certain incidents relevant to the current business in hand. They can be deployed in attending to matters of accountability. To illustrate the point Edwards (1998) notes how narratives of events may be used in a counselling

session to account for the past and present actions of self and others to avoid and assign blame. Within the field of health psychology Mathieson and Barrie (1998), have noted how narratives are often used in interviews to account for the progression of illness in cancer patients. Abell, Stokoe and Billig (2000) considered the deployment of narratives in Princess Diana's 'Panorama' interview (November 1995) with Martin Bashir. From a detailed analysis of the data they suggest that narratives function in televised royal interviews to position one's own positive identity (in this case, Diana) in relation to negative 'others' (such as Charles and the Royal Family). The narrating of past events can become an important tool in locating and avoiding blame. So, it can be expected that when narratives are produced in talk they are attending to particular local accountable issues for the speaker.

A Coherent Analytical Framework: Tying Up Loose Ends

As has been emphasised throughout this chapter, discursive psychology invests much of its theoretical interests in the explication of accountability and its management in talk. In accomplishing these aims, discursive psychologists have considered issues such as the construction of factual discourse, the deployment of narratives, argumentation, the rhetorical management of dilemmas of stake and interest, footing, and so on. Moreover, it argues that the study of identity is tied to matters of accountability. Hence, for the present purposes, it becomes a useful analytical framework for examining how politicians assign and avoid blame for the BSE crisis of 1996. It should be stressed that although this present work aims to illustrate the usefulness of this framework in the investigation of political and national identities surrounding the BSE debates, it does not claim that it is the only framework (discursive or otherwise) that can be appropriately applied to this data. Indeed, there

are many issues connected with political discourse in general and this thesis in particular, that discursive psychology cannot address as adequately as an alternative framework (and these will be noted as they arise). However, it is maintained that discursive psychology provides the most valuable theoretical and methodological tools for addressing the specific aims of this thesis. Certainly, as already discussed, many discursive psychologists have previously demonstrated the value of adopting this framework in conjunction with political data. The intention therefore, in the next chapter is to locate this present thesis' aims, data and methodology within this analytical framework. To begin this, chapter 4 will turn to consider the application of discursive psychology to political and media discourse. In particular, attention will be paid to illustrating the specific aims of this present thesis.

4.

Methodology

A Political Dilemma or a Load of Old Bull? Applying Discursive Psychology to Investigate the BSE Parliamentary Narrative.

Aims of Chapter

The aims of this chapter are two-fold. Firstly, as this thesis is based upon an analysis of political debates and media text, it will be considered how discursive analysts have approached such sources of data. Moreover. prior social scientific work, which sought to analyse the BSE crisis of 1996, will be noted. It is suggested that although this work predominantly exists within the field of media and communication research, it provides a useful analytic backdrop for this current study. In particular Brookes' (1999), observation that the representations of BSE within the media reflected a shift from a concern with public health, to issues surrounding national identity, is examined in detail. However, rather than focussing predominantly upon the media, it will be argued that a discursive analysis (rather than a content analysis) of the parliamentary debates and newspaper articles about the BSE issue provide a more comprehensive understanding of *when*, *how*, and *why* this shift occurred. Secondly, drawing upon the discursive psychological framework for analysis as outlined in chapter 3, the specific theoretical and analytic goals of this present thesis will be presented. It will be noted that a discursive analysis of the 'BSE narrative' can provide a clear understanding of how notions of political, scientific and national identities become fundamental (and accountable) issues within these debates, shaping contestable versions of the 'reality' of BSE. Before the specific details of this work are examined in detail, it should first be noted how discursive theorists have studied political and media data previously.

The Speaker's Own Terms, or the Analyst's? The Discursive Study of Political and Media Discourse.

> Politicians bad reputation concerning their political conduct is to a large extent due to the way they use language. (Holly, 1989, p. 115)
>
> ...many ordinary people in everyday life, have the feeling that politicians and political institutions are sustained by 'persuasive' or 'manipulative' uses of language of which the public is only half-aware.
>
> (Chilton and Schaffner, 1997, p. 207).

The study of political and media talk is certainly not new in the social sciences and attracts considerable attention. Its investigation extends across the fields of political science, linguistics, social psychology, sociology, and media studies to name just a few. It should therefore come as no surprise to learn that discursive psychologists have also invested a lot of time and resources into the explication of political and media discourse. Contributions are both numerous and diverse, rooted in discourse analysis, conversation analysis, linguistics, rhetoric, and discursive psychology (for example see, Billig, 1996; Bull, 1994; Dickerson, 1997; Edwards, 1997; Garrett and Bell, 1998; Potter and Edwards, 1990; Potter, 1996). However, what unites much of this work (discursive and non-discursive) is a common focus on the construction of identity (in particular national identity) in political and media talk. For example, within the field of media studies Thomas Fitzgerald (1992) has theorised the relationship between the media and ethnic identity. He argues that the recent surge in technology and mass media has resulted in the production and reproduction of ethnic identities that no longer need to be embedded within a particular cultural space in order to be authentic. Thus, for Fitzgerald media discourse is understood as a crucial factor in the shaping of identity. Focussing on politics, Frank Trommler (1998) claims that understandings of national identity are now irretrievably linked with the imagining of political communities. He suggests that "Unless an "us" is created that is separate from "them", organising human beings into a political unit can hardly

succeed' (p. 21). Thus for Trommler, politics is fundamental to the construction of communal and segregate identities. It is perhaps unsurprising that discursive writers should invest so much time in examining how identities construct, and are constructed by, political and media discourse. However, there is a tension between those discursive studies that regard identity as shaped by the political practices from which it is constructed and those who work to address matters of identity as participants' concerns, oriented to the local interactional context in the accomplishment of social actions *in talk*. In the former case, the 'political' is often treated as an external context that shapes, and is shaped by, discourse. In the latter case, 'the political' only becomes important to the extent that the speakers *themselves* make it relevant to the business at hand. Thus, the political context is not treated as existing independently of the discourse but as constituted within it.

These disputes arise from a basic problem defining what political discourse is and how one should analyse it. Chilton and Schaffner (1997) are keen to point out that what is 'political' is a matter of interpretation. They claim that what is defined as political 'depends on the standpoint of the commentator' (p.212). Furthermore, they suggest that there is a potential problem in deciding whether acts conducted through language are political or simply informative or heuristic. How the analyst addresses these points determines the theoretical and methodological assumptions that follow.

Those discursive studies that analyse how political practices shape identity are typically rooted in CDA. A strand of discursive analyses related to CDA, dedicated solely to the investigation of political discourse has been termed 'Political Discourse Analysis' (PDA). Advocates of PDA suggest that discourse becomes political when it involves notions of power or resistance (Chilton and Schaffner, 1997). They claim

that a close analysis of the linguistic details of political discourse can unravel both the ideological assumptions of the political actors, and the relationships that are constructed in the text between political actors and the ordinary public. To clarify the point, Chilton and Schaffner state that PDA exemplifies:

> ...the procedure for interpretatively linking linguistic details on the levels of pragmatics, semantics and syntax to the strategic political functions of coercion, resistance, opposition, protest, dissimulation, legitimization and delegitimization (1997, p. 226)

In a similar vein to Chilton and Schaffner, other CDA theorists have considered how political rhetoric can function in the reproduction of power relations in society. This is to say that they can be used to maintain a status quo in society, producing and reproducing power relations between the genders, social classes, or races, amongst others. For example, in their examination of the production of national identities in Austrian political discourse De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak (1999), claim that this construction entails a notion of difference between groups that can be deployed to promote the interests of the elite. Likewise Wodak and Matouschek (1993), argue that Austrian political discourse produces national identities such that anti-Semitism, racism and prejudice remain part of the national consciousness and function to protect the dominant ideological framework.

In this way the analysis of political discourse becomes tied up with power relations. The focus for such analyses is to consider how the micro-level discourses of printed texts and talk shape the macro-level social order of the elite. Widdicombe sums up this CDA position as follows:

> ...it is argued that in order to understand identity and subjectivity, we need first to identify the relevant discourses and the positions they make available, and then examine the power relations that are facilitated, the historical and structural conditions giving rise to particular discourses and their ideological effects. (1995, p. 107)

This linguistic approach to discourse analysis has proved to be the cornerstone of many examinations of political and media texts. Indeed, some of the most revealing studies of political language exists' within linguistic-based approaches.

The work of Edelman (1977) cuts across a range of analytic approaches (including linguistics) to study the production and reproduction of political myths and rituals. He notes how political language typically incorporates metaphor and syntax to increase the appeal of policies and ideologies. Hence, Edelman's work is primarily concerned with the performative aspects of politics. He suggests that certain groups or classes of people are repeatedly categorised as enemies through extrematisation of their characteristics. In his consideration of the characterisation of Jews in Nazi Germany, Edelman notes how these characteristics are represented as posing such a serious threat to the nation that they must be exterminated. He states:

> Dominant categories of speech and of thought define the economically successful and the politically powerful as meritorious, and the unsuccessful and politically deviant as mentally or morally inadequate. For the same reason, policies that serve the interests of the influential come to be categorised as routine and equitable outcomes of duly established governmental processes. Metaphor and syntax mask the amenability of these processes to unconscious (or conscious) manipulation in line with private advantage. (p. 39)

Whilst the academic importance of such work cannot be denied, it has come under increasing criticism from non-linguistic discourse approaches. In particular, discursive psychologists have argued that many linguistic analyses contain unqualified assumptions and important omissions concerning the performative aspects of talk. Discursive psychologists have challenged the tendency of CDA to assume the political or media status of talk and to theorise the implications this has for speakers. Theorists such as Edwards and Potter (1992) have not been averse to the examination

of political and media data. Rather than focussing upon the political status of such discourse and providing a theory of the implications this may have for speakers and interaction, discursive psychologists have emphasised the performative aspects of the talk itself. Of particular interest in such sources of data are the delicate management of blame and accountability as issues of stake and interest are debated. Similar attention has also been paid to media data. In their analysis of newspaper reports in the wake of Princess Diana's death, MacMillan and Edwards (1999) avoid theorising the ideological practices of the press. Instead, they focus on how the media construct particular versions of the accident and position themselves within it. The authors note how these 'versions' of reality function to manage the controversial issue concerning the media's accountability for the accident.

This discursive psychological study of political and media data is also reflected in the field of applied conversation analysis (which influences current work in discursive psychology). Here the research has been devoted to talk in institutional settings, which includes the political interview, news interviews, court trials and so forth. However, there exists a distinction between this work and that of discursive psychologists insofar as these conversation analytic studies focus upon the use, pattern and function of specific conversational techniques in producing the institutional setting rather than the negotiated construction of a speaker's identity (Greatbatch, 1998; Hutchby, 1996). For both discursive psychologists and conversation analysts the identity of the speaker or the status of the data do not drive the analysis. Instead it is the discourse itself which is placed in the driving seat. In an analysis of the political interview it is not assumed a priori that the politician's status will have implications for particular interactions, nor that his/her discourse reflects a

status quo that protects the interests of the elite at the expense of the oppressed. Whether the data is taken from a political arena or a mundane conversation it is analysed in the same way for the social actions that are accomplished. Widdicombe (1995) promotes this type of discursive analysis and criticises CDA as follows:

> It is in the context of interaction that issues of identity are live, practical concerns. Discourse analysis, which overlooks this in the search for abstract discourses about which political statements can be made, misses significant features of social life at its most basic level of interaction. Moreover, by not attending to the ways that people portray the significance of their own identities, researchers do a social injustice to those people who they claim are the objects of their concern. (p. 124)

This present thesis follows the discursive psychological approach to the analysis of political and media data. It does not assume a priori that certain power practices constrain and shape the discourse and identity production within them. Instead, it suggests that such power practices are relevant issues to the extent that they are made relevant and invoked by the political speakers themselves. Thus, power and resistance issues only become relevant *if* and *when* the politicians themselves make it so.

Debating BSE and Locating National Identities

As this thesis takes its data from parliamentary debates about BSE during 1996, it is perhaps worth outlining how this issue has been studied previously in the social sciences. In this way the theoretical findings from this work, as well as the issues that have so far been ignored, can be addressed in the context of this present research.

As was noted previously in this chapter, the main focus of this work has arisen from media research. The most prominent approach has been to theorise the implications of BSE for human health and to provide some kind of measurement of people's

reactions to the disease (Miller and Reilly, 1995, 1996; Nelkin and Tancredi, 1994; Philo, 1996; Schanne and Meier, 1992; Stallings, 1990). For example, in their study of the media's reporting of the BSE crisis Kitzinger and Reilly (1997), state that the issue is a 'risk event'. Citing the work of Adams (1995), they note that 'risk' is characterised by the absence of conclusive scientific evidence. Moreover, they suggest that coverage of such 'risks' by the mass media is selective. They suggest that stories attract media attention when there are decisive scientific statements and areas of Government conflict. Of particular interest is their claim that BSE was given increasing media attention in 1996 following its lapse after 1992. They offer the following reason for this revived interest:

> BSE did not capture the headlines again until March 1996 and then the change was very dramatic indeed. By the end of 1995 there were 10 new cases of CJD, which had appeared in younger people. (p. 343).

In addition to this work Reilly (1997), noted how media coverage was considered to be the main source of information about BSE for participants' in focus groups. She also claims that her participants were more 'aware' about BSE in 1996, than when asked previously between 1992-3. She writes: 'for our respondents it was undoubtedly the statement made by the Health Secretary in March 1996 which changed their attitudes towards BSE.' (p. 134).

Whilst neither of these studies focus upon the 'discourse' of BSE they both maintain that BSE became a significant issue for media concern in March 1996. As Reilly suggests, this concern coincides with a speech made by Stephen Dorrell (Secretary of State for Health) on 20 March 1996. However, these media approaches to BSE tend to focus upon the reactions of the general public in relation to the newspaper and television coverage. They do not analyse the discourse of the media coverage itself

other than simply regarding its role as an important source of information. Neither do they study the speech made by Stephen Dorrell in the House of Commons, which they claim triggered both media and public reactions to BSE. Instead it is the case that BSE is treated as un-problematic 'fact' and is only of interest to the extent that the media and politicians report it and the public reacts.

However, some limited attention has been paid to the media discourse surrounding the BSE issue. A recent study by Brookes (1999) has charted the media reports of BSE during 1996, within the British press. Of fundamental interest to this current thesis is his claim that these BSE media reports reflect a shift in emphasis from a concern with the public's health to a focus on national identity. He writes:

> As the crisis developed from predominantly a health crisis to a political story about Britain and the European Union, public health concerns were eclipsed by explicit questions of national identity relating to the beef industry and the economy, culminating in the 'beef war'. (p. 250).

Brookes notes that this shift was signalled by the worldwide ban of British beef by the European Union. In particular, he notes the role of the press in constructing the 'myths' of nationhood and defining the 'imaginary' boundaries between Britain and Europe that come to characterise the BSE issue. Focussing specifically upon the *Sun* newspaper, Brookes considers how the media discourse creates a contrast between the 'self-interested' Europeans and the victimised British. His work provides some important starting points for this present thesis. The concern with the impact the European Union has upon the construction of BSE within the press is a central issue. Moreover, his suggestion that national identity characterises BSE reports is informative. However, there are three important omissions and over-simplifications in this work, and that of Kitzinger and Reilly, which this current thesis seeks to address.

Firstly, neither Brookes nor Kitzinger and Reilly pay any attention to the parliamentary debates about BSE that took place in the British House of Commons at this time. Although the media coverage of the BSE issue is an important factor in understanding its significance in contemporary society, many of the press reports were based on statements given in these parliamentary debates (as noted by Reilly). These press reports often became the topic of debate in parliamentary debates. Thus, it makes sense to consider in some detail how BSE is constructed and contested within these debates. Secondly, Kitzinger and Reilly note that the 'indecisive scientific evidence' contributes to the increased reporting of BSE in March 1996. However, in doing so they take the media's unquestionable assumption about the status of this 'uncertain' scientific information. Hence, the notion that the status of this scientific evidence may be a contentious issue is omitted. In Kitzinger and Reilly's work it is not examined how competing accounts of the status of such scientific information may be valuable flexible resources for producing particular versions' of the reality of BSE. Thirdly, whilst Brookes acknowledges that the media coverage of the BSE issue shifts from a concern with health to one of national identity, he does not examine in detail how such shifts are accomplished. He does not consider how constructions of whom 'we' the British are, in contrast to 'them', may also change during the BSE crisis. Brookes' study uses examples of press articles and features to point out that a shift has occurred and it is assumed that the worldwide ban on British beef by the European Union is ultimately responsible. Although he notes national identity becomes a prominent feature of BSE reports, he does not examine *if* or *how* British and European identities are constructed and mobilised prior to European action. The central role identity plays in assigning and avoiding blame for the BSE issue is beyond the scope of Brookes' work. These omissions from this

previous work are a useful starting point to develop the aims and methods of the thesis.

Setting the Scene

This present analysis focuses upon parliamentary debates about BSE and media constructions of the disease. In doing so, it hopes to provide an in-depth analysis of the BSE issue as analysed from a different theoretical angle. Central to this work is the implication debates about BSE have for how politicians produce an 'us' in contrast to 'them'. The parliamentary debates about BSE at the 'peak' of the BSE crisis occur between 20 March and 20 June 19896. This time-span includes the imposition of the European Union ban upon the import and export of British beef (25 March 1996). So the focal point of this study is to examine not only the role identity construction plays in these debates but also how they change across time, before and after European intervention. Adopting a discursive psychological approach it is suggested that BSE is not an unproblematic 'fact' but is a matter for negotiation and definition. Contrary to the work of Kitzinger and Reilly (1997), the concern of the analysis does not rest upon public reactions to the media coverage about the disease but upon the actual production of the event itself by the politicians who debate it within parliament.

At the heart of the parliamentary debates about BSE is a question of blame. Arguments concerning whose fault the BSE crisis is and the legitimacy of particular kinds of information and action were highly contentious issues during 1996. At present there is no analytical work that examines how politicians accomplish competing versions of the reality of BSE in attributing and avoiding blame for the

crisis. As was claimed in chapter 3, discursive psychologists note how the management of blame and accountability also involve the construction of identities of self and others. How identities are defined is crucial in contesting blame for the BSE crisis. The analysis, therefore, focuses upon how political speakers create their own authentic identity in a locally managed context of certain national, political and scientific others with whom the self can be compared and contrasted against.

However, before this work can turn to an analysis of these matters within the BSE debates it must first be clarified where the data for inspection is taken from and the theoretical grounds for such selection.

The Data

This thesis takes its data from two prominent arenas in which BSE was defined and debated. The first of these are three parliamentary debates, which took place in the House of Commons between 20th March and 20th June 1996. The second source of data concerns a published article written by the Foreign Secretary at this time (Malcolm Rifkind), for the *Sun* newspaper on 31 May 1996.

Hansard

The transcripts of the House of Commons parliamentary debates are taken from the official 'Hansard Sixth Series'. The basis for choosing such data rests upon both the unavailability of live recordings and the aim to illustrate the usefulness of both discursive and conversation analytical techniques to textual data.

These parliamentary debates discussed the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) issue. The first debate, occurring on 20th March 1996, was the first major

parliamentary debate on this issue. As Kitzinger and Reilly (1997) note, it is in this debate that the Health Secretary during this time (Stephen Dorrell) gives his opening statement about BSE and the 10 new cases of CJD. It is on the basis that this first parliamentary debate about BSE in 1996 (following its absence since 1992) is selected. Earlier it was noted that media theorists claim press reports about BSE during March 1996 were characterised by indecisive scientific evidence and an emphasis upon the public health. From a discursive analysis of this parliamentary debate it can be examined how a particular 'version' of BSE as a scientific and public health issue is constructed by Stephen Dorrell (Secretary of State for Health, Conservative). A discursive psychological analysis can also be used to consider how this particular version of BSE can function to manage potential and actual accusations of blame for the crisis. It can be investigated how the invocation and mobilisation of particular identities within this debate, position speakers as credible or illegitimate sources of information. In addition to this, attention is paid to how such versions of the 'reality' of BSE can be challenged and undermined by counter-arguments from Opposition speakers. The Shadow Health Minister, Harriet Harman`s (Labour) response to Dorrell's opening statement is examined in detail. Thus, it is noted how the status and relevance of scientific evidence can be challenged and identities questioned and re-positioned within a discourse of blame. This debate is particularly attractive for analysis as it provides a forum for the construction of BSE as a public health issue before intervention from the European Union. It becomes an important starting point from which to trace the BSE parliamentary narrative.

The second debate, which took place on 25th March 1996, is also examined in the analysis and is noted for its sequential status with regard to the first debate. In this

debate two exchanges are analysed in detail. The first is between Paul Marland (Conservative) and Douglas Hogg (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Conservative). The second occurs between William Cash (Conservative), Douglas Hogg, and George Foulkes (Labour). In accordance with the claim that the BSE parliamentary narrative charts a change in focus from health to national identity, these exchanges allow for an analysis for how this shift is achieved within the discourse and how constructions of 'us' change within the context of a European 'them'. This debate occurred on the same day that the European Union announced the imposition of a ban upon the import and export of British beef. This debate becomes important insofar as competing 'versions' of the legitimacy of the ban can be investigated, as can the implications these have for locating Britain and the British people inside and outside the national category of Europe. It is noted how the identities attributed to 'us', which were invoked and mobilised in the earlier debate, are replaced by national definitions as the emphasis switches to the contentious construction of imaginary boundaries of inclusion and exclusion between Britain and Europe. Constructions of who 'we' are, change in the emerging local context of who 'we' are not.

The third parliamentary debate chosen for analysis takes place on 20th June 1996. Although this debate is identified in Hansard as a discussion about the European Union, it was selected on the basis of repeated references to the BSE issue. The analysis centres on how and when BSE is invoked. It is suggested that BSE is a discursive resource for the construction of an explicit national dichotomy between Britain and Europe. This debate marks the final stage in the narrative, as national identity becomes the feature in political arguments about BSE. Again, it is noted how definitions of 'us' the 'British' are contested in the context of 'them' the 'European

others'. The particularisation of Europe to Germany is noted for the implications it has on constructing who 'we' are.

The analysis also focuses upon how national identities and conflicts are managed within an ideological dilemma of reasonableness and prejudice/xenophobia. It is suggested that political speakers find themselves caught up in this dilemma as they debate the national boundaries between Britain and Europe, whilst at the same time maintaining their own credible and even-handed identity. It is examined how references to an article written for the *Sun* newspaper, by the Foreign Secretary (Malcolm Rifkind) can function to manage such ideological dilemmas as politicians debate the legitimacy of European action. Moreover, it is noted how references to articles written for the tabloid press by politicians are important resources for reproducing xenophobic discourse within parliament and the press.

The *Sun* Tabloid Newspaper

In an edition of the *Sun* dated 31 May 1996, Malcolm Rifkind (Foreign Secretary, Conservative) had an article published titled 'End This Mad Ban...For All Europe's Sake'. This article was chosen for inclusion into the thesis on two related grounds. Firstly, the piece of writing provides another 'version' of the BSE issue by a politician. Secondly, this article was also chosen on the basis of its invocation in the third parliamentary debate, dated 20 June 1996. The analysis focuses predominantly upon Malcolm Rifkind's article and considers how he defines who 'we' are in comparison to the Europeans as he attributes blames for the BSE crisis.

The decision to base an analysis of the BSE narrative upon textual sources of data is

not unproblematic and is susceptible to particular criticisms concerning its accuracy and representativeness. Thus, in this next section the intention is to briefly consider what some of these arguments might be and to qualify the theoretical and methodological significance of such data.

Accuracy, Representativeness and Institutional (Textual) Data

Firstly, neither of these sources chosen for analysis in this thesis are considered to be wholly representative of the BSE debate within Britain. It is *not* the aim of this work to provide a coherent overview of how BSE was discussed by politicians throughout 1996. Indeed, the inclusion of certain fragments of Hansard data from particular debates and the subsequent exclusion of other segments means that this work cannot claim to be representative. What this work does illustrate is how political and national identities are flexibly constructed and undermined in negotiating blame for the BSE problem, at a *particular* point in the text. It also contributes to the body of discursive psychological work that argues social psychology needs to take account of the dynamic ways in which identity can be constructed and deployed by speakers, before it can fully comprehend its importance in the accomplishment of social action.

This work also considers how BSE is variably constructed as the debates' progress across March to June 1996. After 20 June 1996, debates dedicated to discussing BSE declined rapidly in the House of Commons as political and media interest waned. Between 1999 –2000, this interest is being rekindled as the European Union lifts the ban upon British beef and the political debates begin once more. However, to consider these more recent issues would be beyond the scope of this thesis.

Edwards and Potter (1992) have noted how the study of political discourse, such as that derived from Hansard transcripts, is often attacked for being an 'easy area' of study. Critics of this kind of analysis have challenged such work on the basis of expecting to find matters of fact constructions, arguments, attributions of blame, and so forth within a public political arena. Thus it should come as no surprise to note their presence within parliamentary debates. However as Edwards and Potter note, the analyst of such data does not dispute this. Indeed, what is of interest to the analyst is how discourse fulfils performative functions in accomplishing such things as fact construction, challenges and defences. Instead, the criticism can be countered on the grounds that public political discourse is a 'hard area' of study insofar as politicians' claims and arguments go 'on the record' in these debates. Hence, they can be checked. As Edwards and Potter suggest, there are many different records in existence of political debates, claims and statements. This, fortunately, is not something that usually has to be taken into consideration in everyday talk. So, when political speakers do make claims and engage in debates they have these wider concerns to attend to. Quite often in parliamentary debates, the basis of many counter-arguments are grounded in a politician's inconsistency in statements across several official records. Such inconsistencies can be quoted in political debates and reported in the press. These are potential issues that the political speaker must attend to in parliamentary debates.

Parliamentary debates are also a rich source of data for studying argumentation. Traditional social psychology tends to assume that consensus is the 'norm' (also recent criticisms directed towards CA have noted similar preferences for agreement, see Billig 1999). As was noted in chapters 2 and 3, the image of the consistent

individual who strives to resolve conflicts is prevalent throughout such literature. However, in political arenas disagreement is the 'norm'. Therefore, the study of this type of data is a useful site for explicating how disagreements, rather than agreements, are anticipated and dealt with.

Finally, in defence of analysing Hansard data it is claimed by Edwards and Potter (1992) that the study of political discourse can help to make sense of everyday talk as it shares the same features. These 'features' include such contentious issues as the rhetorical management of dilemmas of stake and interest and the construction of factual discourse. These are speakers' concerns in mundane talk as well as within institutional political talk. They are not features of talk that are specific to politics but are shared across all aspects of discourse. The often heightened and exaggerated form of political discourse therefore, provides the analyst with a rich arena for studying these aspects of talk. Wilson (1990) sums up the point neatly, stating:

> There is no 'will to truth'; politicians manipulate language for their own ends, yes! But the manipulations are frequently no different from those employed in everyday interaction...The stakes and consequences of any manipulation are, of course, much higher in the political game. (p. 16)

The strand of CA that is dedicated to studying institutional discourse argues that the same assumptions that guide the analysis of everyday talk should also be followed for institutional talk. Heritage (1997) writes:

> Rather than starting with a 'bucket' theory of context in which pre-existing institutional circumstances are seen as enclosing interaction, CA starts with the view that 'context' is both a project and a product of the participant's actions. The assumption is that it is fundamentally through interaction that context is built, invoked and managed, and that it is through interaction that institutional imperatives originating from outside the interaction are evidenced and made real and enforceable for the participants...Empirically, this means showing that the participants build the context of their talk *in and through* their talk. (p. 163)

However, it is notable that conversation analysts such as Drew and Heritage (1992) do

not extend their analyses to institutional 'texts'. Despite this, it is this understanding of 'context' that is adopted by the thesis and applied to textual data. That is to say, the status of politicians and their discourse is not considered a cultural 'given' but as something that needs to be negotiated, worked-up and argued for. The rhetoric of political discourse is analysed at a local level in terms of how the participants themselves orient to the talk and what they treat as problematic. In this way then, groups and categories such as national and political memberships are not regarded as a 'given', but as 'live issues' that require discursive construction by the participants at an interactional level. Their invocation and arguable relevance to political debates shapes the versions of BSE that are produced.

Also worthy of note is the claim that non-verbal interaction is also an important factor within political discussions. Goffman (1959) was especially interested in how rituals were maintained through adherence to forms of non-verbal behaviour such as costume, manner and spatial elements. These factors are also prominent in House of Commons debate. Members of the House conform to certain standards of dress, manner and seating arrangements. However, these considerations lie outside the scope of this thesis. Here the emphasis is upon verbal interaction and its role in constructing particular versions of reality. Also quite clearly, certain conventional rules do constrain and facilitate turn-taking sequences and the content of speeches within the House of Commons (for example, politicians are not allowed to accuse each other of being liars). No prior assumptions about how this will affect political speeches are speculated upon. Instead, the analysis focuses solely upon the talk itself and those aspects of the institutional setting which are invoked and made relevant by the speakers themselves.

The Nuts and Bolts of the Thesis

This thesis aims to address its research questions through the application of discursive psychology. In particular, discursive psychology's emphasis upon the explication of common-sense understandings of mind, reality and identity are fundamental to this analysis. The concepts deployed by discursive psychologists, many of which have derived from the separate fields of CA, DA, rhetoric and ethnomethodology, are applied to parliamentary and newspaper data. Examinations of the tools of fact construction are noted, as are those of identity construction. As speakers anticipate disagreements the discursive psychological framework, with its emphasis on rhetoric, becomes a valuable resource for investigating how argumentation is accomplished within the political debates about BSE.

Having established the aims and analytical approach of the thesis, Chapter 5 marks the beginning of an examination of Hansard data taken from the House of Commons debate in March 1996. It considers the opening speech made by the Secretary of State for Health, Stephen Dorrell (Conservative), in the House of Commons on 20 March 1996, and the reply made by the Shadow Health Minister, Harriet Harman (Labour).

5.

House of Commons Debate: BSE – 20 March 1996

The Scientific Experts 'V's' the Worried British Public: Negotiating Blame through the Construction of 'Us'.

Aims of the Chapter

As was noted in chapter 4, the focal point for analysis is *how*, *when*, and *why* particular identities are constructed in parliamentary debates and how their mobilisation functions within a discourse of blame for the BSE crisis. It was also claimed that this thesis would trace how constructions of British national identity change in the context of the European Union ban. In relation to these points, this chapter will examine how politicians construct identity, in particular scientific and British national identity, before intervention from the European Union. The analysis will also consider how the invocation of these identities functions in terms of their category memberships and entitlements to address matters of blame.

This analysis examines the first major debate about BSE in the House of Commons, which occurred on 20 March 1996. This debate was broadcast nationally in Britain on television and radio. Hence, the mainly British audience of this debate is both simultaneously present (in the House) and absent. The implications this has for the debate are discussed in the analysis as speakers address the nation as a whole rather than just those physically present. Gruber (1987), argues that politicians have to manage two levels of communication, the first being fellow politicians and second the public. Wilson (1990) writes:

> The fact that politicians have differing audiences to deal with undoubtedly has some effect on their discourse, but the basic aim of all communicators is to maintain *face* no matter what or who the audience. (p. 79-80).

As Gruber notes, these audiences have some impact upon the way politicians present

themselves and their claims. Politicians must maintain a positive public face and position whilst at the same time attacking each other.

As noted previously by Reilly (1997), the opening statement from the Secretary of State for Health marks this debate as significant. A transcript of this debate show that responses made throughout are addressed to Dorrell and to points raised in his opening statement. Therefore, the analysis first considers sections of this opening speech and considers how Dorrell works to establish the scientific frame and context in which BSE is to be understood. However, in constructing the scientific basis upon which the debate should rest Dorrell must orient to both his own accountability and that of the Government (Conservative) for the occurrence of BSE in cattle and humans. The analysis notes how Dorrell constructs and mobilises the categories of 'science' and 'scientist' to address such concerns.

As well as analysing this opening statement by Stephen Dorrell, the response given by the Opposition, Harriet Harman (Shadow Health Minister, Labour) is also examined. The chapter notes how Harman rhetorically undermines the scientific context in which Dorrell defines BSE and his own credibility as an authoritative speaker. Of particular interest in Harman's response are her rejection of Dorrell's scientific identities that define the BSE issue and her mobilisation of the 'worried' British public to establish the Government's blame for the disease. The absence of any other national identity, with which the British can be compared, is noted. Harman's construction of similarities between scientist and the British public are of interest here for the rhetorical work this achieves in assigning blame to the Government. From a rhetorical standpoint it can be noted how the logoi and anti-logoi (Billig, 1996) to an argument are constructed and contested within a parliamentary debate.

Because a predominant interest in this data is the analysis of the rhetoric of science in developing and undermining political claims, this chapter will turn to briefly consider some previous literature that has considered such features of discourse.

The Rhetoric of Scientific Discourse

The study of 'scientific discourse' has received increasing attention recently within the social sciences. For example, Michael (1996) notes the privileged status 'science' enjoys in society. From his consideration of the literature on scientific knowledge, he notes how such information assumes that the public recognises the need to attain a certain level of scientific literacy in order to be regarded as proper participating citizens of a democratic society. However as Wynne (1992) suggests, people do not blindly follow the recommendations of scientific evidence or information but first evaluate the source of such information as to whether it is credible or not. This is an important issue if an analyst is to study the rhetoric of scientific discourse, as attention is paid to how the credibility of such evidence and information is worked-up and is oriented to potential challenges.

Bazerman (1987) has examined how the credibility of the scientific discourse and its producer are rhetorically enhanced. He claims that scientific discourse typically suggests that the implied audience is interested in the findings, but not as being involved with the research in any way. Scientific enquiry is located firmly within the realm of the scientists themselves uncontaminated by the general, unscientific audience. As Ibanéz (1991) notes, scientific 'truth' is rhetoric, and suggests that certain conditions must be satisfied before this 'truth' becomes credible. It is claimed that the truth must be presented as unique and as having a monopoly over its field of competence. In addition, the 'truth' cannot be seen to be the result of human activity.

Humans can only 'discover' the truth but are not actually constitutive of it. In scientific texts, the characters of the scientists are routinely absent (Billig, 1997; Mulkay, 1991).

This is linked to an issue raised by Shotter (1991) who claims that debates about science do not just involve arguments about the scientific facts themselves but also how those 'facts' were discovered in the first place. There is a concern whether the correct scientific values have been exercised in 'discovering' this knowledge. It is not the case that just anyone can 'discover' scientific facts, but instead arguments are mounted as to who is entitled to do this 'discovering' in terms of their scientific entitlements. Ibanéz (1991) further suggests that scientific facts need to be endorsed with legitimacy to achieve their effects fully and problems arise when the reality of the truth is challenged or when the competency of the mediators is doubtful. In this way then, consensus within science, regarding what the 'facts' and 'truth' are, can be seen as a rhetorical achievement. As Bazerman claims, science will always remain in the realm of rhetoric, as there is no absoluteness in science.

Some researchers have considered the way in which scientists who disagree from the majority of the scientific community are excluded from scientific texts in their attempts to maintain consensus. Mulkay (1991) notes how the notion of consensus is itself a rhetorical tool. He suggests that scientists cite consensus to both criticise their opponents and justify their own position. Therefore, scientific consensus is also a matter for discursive management. The 'facts' and 'truths' can always be challenged and undermined in discourse.

Whilst theorists like Mulkay maintain an interest in examining the scientific discourse itself this present chapter focuses upon political, non-scientific talk. Many writers

have noted how scientific discourse is not confined to the realms of 'science' itself but can be deployed in a variety of non-scientific arenas (Barthes, 1975; Latour 1979; Moscovici, 1983). Gastil (1992) notes how politicians often use scientific terminology as a rhetorical tool for increasing the factual status of their claims and their own credibility as knowledgeable speakers.

Despite the arena in which scientific claims are made for discursive and rhetorical analysts, the interest lies in a consideration of how they function in producing plausible, credible and persuasive accounts. It is therefore perhaps reasonable to investigate some of these rhetorical features of scientific discourse within a debate that is primarily about BSE, but also includes constructions and mobilisations of the categories of 'science' and 'scientists'. In debates that construct and mobilise the notion of a 'scientific community' the business of the analyst is to consider how that group's identity is created, challenged and defended in talk by the speaker, 'for it is not clear how all the group members come to interpret and apply the 'facts' in the same way' (Shotter 1991: 499). To this end, the analysis here considers how scientific consensus is accomplished rhetorically, how 'scientific facts' are established in political discourse, and how they can be contested and defended.

Political Protocol

It is perhaps worth noting that some of the content of these political speeches adheres strictly to parliamentary protocol. As noted in chapter 4, in parliamentary debates there are ritualised activities such as turn taking, question and answer sessions and addresses to 'Madam Speaker'. In the present data, phrases such as 'My learned Friend' and addresses to 'Madam Speaker', are not studied in any analytical detail here as this is not the interest of the thesis (although this has received considerable

attention in conversation analytic studies, Drew and Heritage, 1992). Rather. it is the constructive and rhetorical functions of the speeches that are considered in detail that are not dictated by parliamentary tradition.

Analysis

Stephen Dorrell (Secretary of State for Health, Conservative)

Setting the Agenda?

In his political capacity as Secretary of State for Health, Stephen Dorrell opens the parliamentary debate in the House of Commons, which is specifically about BSE. Van Dijk (1997) suggests that within political discourse there are sets of strategies that are used to control the debate, such as the distribution of turns at talk by the Speaker of the House. He also notes that there are hierarchies of power within politics and those further up the hierarchy are able to define the overall agenda of the talk. In the present example therefore, it could be argued that Dorrell has the 'power' to set the agenda of the debate. However, whilst Dorrell's opening of the debate is not contested in the present case, the 'agenda' which is proposed *is* highly contentious and is certainly not treated as unproblematic by members of the Opposition or Dorrell himself. Hence, the argument here is that the political status of the 'Secretary of State for Health' is not an assumed position of power, but one that requires careful construction and management.

The narrative organisation of Dorrell's opening speech and the account given of the BSE issue is of analytical interest, as these become the landmarks of Dorrell's later statements throughout the debate. It is this opening definition of the issue upon which the Opposition bases its counter-arguments. Widdicombe (1993) suggests that the way in which an account is organised have significant implications for its meaning. It is suggested here that this opening speech is organised into four main 'themes' and

how these are sequentially located has an impact upon the overall interpretation.

Furthermore, Drew and Heritage (1992), state that the formalised exchange systems of speech in parliamentary debate impact upon the management of disputes. In such debates, disagreement is an inherent feature of the interactional encounter. An analysis of the organisation of Dorrell's opening speech should therefore point to these aspects of political debate with potential issues of disagreement attended to. The first 'theme' and few lines of Dorrell's speech introduce the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee.

The Committee

As Brookes (1999) notes, prior to the EU ban BSE was characterised by health issues. Moreover as Kitzinger and Reilly (1997) argue, what is prevalent in media reports of the 'risks' of BSE is the indecisive and contradictory nature of the scientific evidence. However, it is interesting here that Dorrell presents an account of the scientific evidence, derived by SEAC (Spongiform Encepathalopathy Advisory Committee), which is both decisive and consensual. As Wilson (1990) observes, '...what politicians say and what journalists say they say is not the same thing' (p. 16-17). It is immediately striking how Dorrell's account of BSE differs from the media reports at this time. What is notable by its absence from this opening statement by Dorrell is scientific evidence which has arisen from sources other than SEAC, and is inconsistent with the committee's findings (for example, that of Professor Richard Lacey). So, the first part of this analysis considers how Dorrell constructs a consistent account of the scientific information and works up the entitlements of SEAC to provide it.

Extract 1.1

1 With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the
2 latest advice that the Government have received from the Spongiform
3 Encephalopathy Advisory Committee. The House will be aware that the
4 Committee, which is chaired by Professor John Pattison, was established in
5 1990 to bring together leading experts in neurology, epidemiology and
6 microbiology, to provide scientifically based advice on the implications for
7 animal and human health of different forms of spongiform encephalopathy.

In this extract, Dorrell marks out the distinction between Government and committee (SEAC). This is a fundamental matter of political stake that requires immediate management by Dorrell. By definition, Governments are political whereas scientists are neutral. Therefore, he needs to maintain the distinction between the political activities of the Government from the neutral 'fact-finding' of the scientists. There is an issue at stake here concerning how much influence each has over the activities of the other (one that is raised by the Opposition, as will be shown later). So, here we see Dorrell carefully managing a dilemma in terms of presenting the 'factual' and 'scientific' status of info provided by SEAC, as well as the apolitical and expert status of the members themselves.

To do this, Dorrell first emphasises the immediacy of the information received by the Government from SEAC, and in doing so attempts to head off potential accusations that this is out-of-date and could be challenged by more recent scientific information not derived by SEAC. Moreover, it emphasises the Government's commitment to action. Indeed, the term 'latest' (line 2) could be removed from the speech and the structure of the sentence would be unaltered, however the meaning would change. Thus, it is interesting that Dorrell chooses to insert it.

Secondly, Dorrell delays from offering the details of this information and instead turns his attention to the members of the SEAC themselves. Although the statement *The House will be aware* (line 3) reflects a standard parliamentary phrase there is an

additional argument that can be made, which is that it not only addresses the fellow politicians present in the House but also constructs a shared context of knowledge between them. This metacognitive construction of 'awareness' is a discursive practice, which as Middleton and Edwards (1990) suggest, often arise when a speaker's account provokes potential dispute from another. In the present case, together with the statement that the SEAC were established in 1990, Dorrell uses 'awareness' to head-off potential accusations that what is being claimed about the SEAC is 'new' unestablished information, or that they are irrelevant to the debate. Thus, through a construction of all politicians united in their knowledge of the SEAC and its members, Dorrell can continue his speech about BSE on the basis of the findings of the SEAC (although still contentious), as they are positioned at the centre of the debate.

Dorrell now switches to consider the members of SEAC themselves and, orienting to potential counter-arguments concerning their expertise or findings in the light of other scientific research, he works up their entitlements to be members of SEAC as well as those for providing particular 'expert' (and non-political) scientific information. The chair of the committee is the only member mentioned by name and title, as Professor John Pattison (line 4). The analytical interest here is why this particular member is singled out from the rest whilst the others remain unspecified. As Gastil (1992) notes, naming conventions are often used in political debates to direct the audience's (both present and absent) attention towards a generic role or capacity. This is certainly relevant here. Although the naming convention given is academic rather than political (in fact the consequences of a political name would be disastrous for Dorrell's account), the credibility and entitlements to knowledge are developed, despite the absence of any specific information concerning what John Pattison's

activities are. Moreover, the status of the chair is affords credibility to the rest of SEAC, who we are told are 'leading experts' (line 5-6). It is interesting that they are not defined as 'the best', but instead the weaker 'leading' is used. As many political linguists have noted, politicians typically make use of implication in their speeches. Hence it can be inferred that 'leading experts' are indeed the 'best'. However, such explicit claims are also deniable. In this case the claim that the scientists who constitute the SEAC are 'the best' is a potentially controversial claim. As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, the rhetoric of scientific truths and facts is typically characterised by an absence of the individual scientists themselves. This certainly holds true here. It is interesting to note that the individuals of the SEAC are not particularised in any way, but simply categorised as representative of the fields of *neurology, epidemiology and microbiology* (lines 5-6). The use of the 3-part list here to define the SEAC using scientific terminology is interesting as it not only marks out Dorrell as someone who is familiar with the relevant information about BSE, but also appears to present a comprehensive list of knowledge. Also as Potter (1996) notes such generalisations play an important rhetorical role as they allow the speaker to provide an overall impression concerning the status and knowledge of a particular category and its members without being specific. Precise details are directly contestable, whereas generalisations are more difficult to challenge and easier to deny. As Gastil (1992) suggests, such scientific or technical terminology in a political debate often works to mystify the audience into assigning otherwise unqualified esteem and status to either the politician or the people s/he claims to speak for. Sacks notion of Membership Categorisation Devices (MCDs) is also relevant here. In the present example the category of scientific committee functions to explain its members activities. Without going into detail Dorrell can infer that the individual members of

the committee act in a way that is typical of scientists.

Thirdly, this absence of individuality from SEAC also functions to construct a homogenous committee who provide consensual information. The difference in opinion that may occur between individual scientists in the pursuit of evidence is missing from Dorrell's account. Indeed, it is important that it remains absent if Dorrell is to provide a coherent and credible version of the scientific work being done. As was mentioned earlier Shotter (1991), claims that how scientists reach agreement is itself an achievement of rhetoric as they are constructed as doing so. Certainly the *scientifically based advice* (line 6) presents a consistent and consensual view of the information received without explaining how such agreement was arrived at, or any contradictions or differences of opinion that might exist within that advice.

Thus in these opening lines, contrary to the media reports of inconsistent and indecisive scientific evidence, Dorrell has provided a coherent account of information provided by the SEAC that is presented as conclusive and consensual. Fundamentally in these opening lines, Dorrell has positioned the findings of the SEAC at the heart of the parliamentary debate, and based his account of BSE and Government action upon this scientific information. However as has been noted, the identity of these scientists is certainly not unproblematic or treated as a 'given' by Dorrell. It is simply not the case that scientists enjoy such a privileged position of authority in our society that they require no further questioning. Instead, Dorrell has treated their identity as something that has to be accounted for, in terms of their entitlements to knowledge and the status of the information they provide. Moreover in the absence of an actual challenge to this opening statement, he orients to a potential argument (which is anticipated in political debate), concerning the relevance of SEAC to the debate and

the status of the information they provide.

However, having managed a few potential areas of dispute Dorrell now returns to the contentious issue concerning the neutral and apolitical status of SEAC information and the amount of influence the Government has over their findings.

The Committee, the Government & the Whole Community

Extract 1.2

8 The committee provides independent advice to the Government.
9 Its members are not Government scientists, but leading practitioners
10 in their own field. The purpose of the committee is to provide advice not
11 simply to the Government, but to the whole community on the scientific
12 questions that arise in its field.

What is most notable about this next section of the speech is the use of pronouns to construct a contrast between the Government and SEAC. Wilson writes:

> ...in a prescripted speech the politician is consciously involved in the organisation and selection of each lexical item and each syntactic construction in an effort to achieve the maximum required effect on the audience. We should not be surprised to discover then, that it is in the scripted speech that most attention is given to the selection of pronouns. (p. 60)

Firstly, Dorrell inserts the term *independent* (8) to clarify the apolitical and neutral status of the scientific information provided to the Government. Secondly, this dilemma concerning the relationship between Government and SEAC is managed more comprehensively through Dorrell's use of the pronoun 'its' (lines 9 and 12). From an analysis of Neil Kinnock's speeches in parliament in opposition to Margaret Thatcher, Wilson notes how he uses 'it' as a rhetorical distancing strategy in terms of a pronominal scale to distinguish his policies from hers. This distancing effect is reflected in Dorrell's use of it in relation to the SEAC. He distinguishes between 'its' members (SEAC) and the Government (line 9), and also refers to the nature of the work that is done in *its field* (line 12). Line 9 is also interesting insofar as it appears to show an acknowledgement from Dorrell that there are such people as *Government*

scientists, and in doing so he confesses a potential issue of stake. The implication therefore, is that not all scientists are neutral. So why would Dorrell appear to undermine the neutral credibility of scientists? In this case he contrasts the Government scientists with SEAC. Hence, the BSE issue is afforded particular attention and status from the Government because it requires an i*ndependent* body of scientists to investigate it. The implication is that SEAC scientists must be not only neutral but also of higher status that Government ones. This counters the potential accusation that SEAC are politically motivated through the acknowledgement that if the Government had wanted to influence the findings they could have used their own scientists.

Furthermore in lines 9-10 and 10-11, Dorrell uses a 'not X but Y' formulation to develop the neutral status of SEAC. The explicit voicing of stake *Its members are not Government scientists* (X) is a confession of possible stake, whereas (Y) *but leading practitioners* functions to inoculate against it using an identity ascription. In the second example, (X) *to provide advice not simply to the Government* (line 10-11), again confesses a potential matter of stake, whereas (Y) *but to the whole community* (line 11) establishes that this information is publicly available although does not explicitly state who makes it available. Thus, there remains another controversial issue concerning who decides what information gets published.

The invocation of community is interesting in this speech. 'Who' this refers to is not explicit and cannot be traced back from earlier in the speech. Likely candidates include the scientific, political, and the national community. However the term 'community' suggests boundaries of inclusion and exclusion so it is inferable that there are sections of people who do not receive this information. Perelman (1979)

notes that speakers can often refer to a 'universal audience', which is what Dorrell appears to be addressing here. Bearing in mind that his speech is broadcast nationally it is likely that he is addressing the nation and presuming the national audience to be universally 'rational'. This carries the implication that SEAC are not only responsible to the Government for the information they provide, but to the public (although this is never explicitly stated). The credibility of the SEAC therefore is expanded in terms of their increased accountability. Whilst a committee that provides advice simply to the Government (line 11) can be dismissed as political, one that provides information to the public warrants earlier claims concerning its expert scientific and apolitical status.

So far, Dorrell has managed his own distant footing from both SEAC and the Government. However, in this next section of speech he self-references himself as a member of the Government and in doing so positions his own identity as someone who follows the scientific advice of SEAC and does not treat BSE as a political issue.

Extract 1.3

13 The Government have always made it clear that it is our policy to base our
14 decisions on the scientific advice provided by the advisory committee. The
15 committee has today agreed new advice about the implications for animal and
16 human health of the latest scientific evidence. Copies of the committee'
17 advice, together with a statement from the chief medical officer that is
18 based on that advice, have been placed in the Vote Office.

The repeated use of the pronoun 'our' (line 13) clearly aligns Dorrell with the Government. It is interesting that he positions himself as a member of the Government at this point in the speech having previously managed the dilemma concerning their relationship to SEAC. Thus, this section of the speech is presented as being less controversial as Dorrell closes the distance between himself and the topic of discussion.

In this extract Dorrell describes the actions of the Government with respect to BSE. Again the detail is rhetorically vague and general. The decisions made by the Government (line 14) are unclear, as is the advice of the SEAC (line 15) and the latest scientific evidence (line 16). As Edwards (1997) notes, when a speaker aligns him/herself closely with a category of other people, his/her own accountability is put at a stake together with that of other members. It is perhaps unsurprising then that Dorrell should choose to briefly script the actions of the Government together with those of SEAC and the chief medical officer.

Again, addressing a potential challenge to the Government that their action towards BSE has occurred recently (particularly in response to the recent news concerning identified cases of CJD in humans, to which Dorrell attends next), Dorrell inserts the term 'always' (line 13). This orients to the past and attends to anticipated challenges that this current Government action is exceptional and not normative. If the Government is presented as acting normally they cannot be blamed. However, this is implied rather than explicitly stated in lines 13-14. Dorrell could have said 'The Government have always based our policies on the scientific advice'. However this is contestable on the grounds of evidence. So, the insertion of the words 'made it clear', reduces the statement from one of fact based on physical action, to one of assertion based on statement. Thus, it is more difficult to deny and easier to defend.

The earlier argument that the SEAC had a commitment to the 'wider community' is partially warranted here as Dorrell claims the information is available to the political wider community (and thus only those present). So, at this point in the speech, the 'wider community' refers to fellow politicians. Again, the immediacy of this information is emphasised through the use of terms 'today' (line 15), 'new' (line 15)

and 'latest' (line 16). Moreover, the earlier claim that the Government have 'always' based decisions upon scientific evidence is made relevant to the claims made concerning the 'new' advice given about human and animal health (lines 15-16). Thus there is available the accusation that as the evidence is 'new', so is the Government's decisions to act in accordance with scientific advice. The narrative structuring of this section of speech functions to head off those kinds of counter-claims.

Again consensus amongst SEAC is implied, as the advice must be consistent in order for it to be published and relevant to fellow politicians. In addition the chief medical officer is invoked at this point to enhance the credibility of the advice. Referring to the position held by Kenneth Calman (as the chief medical officer) rather than simply providing his name, works to direct the audience's attention towards a conceptual category of authority and to establish the BSE issue as essentially a 'medical' rather than a political one.

The Rhetorical Management of Controversy

Having positioned the BSE debate within a scientific context Dorrell moves on to consider cases of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) that have been identified in humans. This is clearly the most controversial aspect of Dorrell's opening speech. As the Government at this time lies at the heart of a discourse of blame for the occurrence of BSE, the potential link between the disease in cattle and CJD in humans is a particularly contentious area for debate. Also at this time, politics and media centered on the reporting of new cases of CJD that had appeared in humans since the introduction of advice and policies recommended by SEAC and Government. This is a potentially devastating blow to the 'scientific' actions of SEAC and Government.

Therefore, not only is Dorrell's reference to these cases striking because of their invocation by a key member of the Cabinet, but also how he manages to turn around a potentially damaging issue into one that warrants the current actions and policies of SEAC and Government is particularly notable.

Much of this accomplishment arises from the use of narrative structuring throughout this opening speech. For example, why did Dorrell not begin his speech with a consideration of these cases of CJD? Why wait until halfway through the speech? It is here that the scientific context in which Dorrell has previously positioned both Government and SEAC in their management of BSE becomes rhetorically relevant for managing such controversial areas of the debate.

Extract 1.4

19 The committee has considered the work being done by the Government
20 surveillance unit in Edinburgh, which specializes in Creutzfeldt-Jakob
21 disease. That work, which relates to the 10 cases of CJD that have been
22 identified in people aged under 42, has led the committee to conclude that
23 the unit has identified a previously unrecognized and consistent disease
24 pattern. A review of patient's medical histories, genetic analysis and
25 consideration of other possible causes have failed to explain those causes
26 adequately. There remains no scientific proof that bovine spongiform
27 encephalopathy can be transmitted to man by beef, but the committee has
28 concluded that the most likely explanation at present is that those cases are
29 linked to exposure to BSE before the introduction of the specified bovine offal
30 ban in 1989. Against the background of that new finding, the committee has
31 today agreed a series of recommendations, which the Government are making
32 public this afternoon.

In this extract, Dorrell has a dilemma to manage concerning the Government's involvement with the scientific research on CJD. The pronoun 'that' (line 21) to describe the work being done in Edinburgh implies the research going on in Edinburgh is not exhaustive of all work being done CJD. Of course, there remains the potential argument concerning the existence of non-Government work on CJD, which produces different findings to that reported by the Government and SEAC. However, herein lies the dilemma. Whilst the listener is informed that it is the Government that

is involved with the research, it is the SEAC who reach the scientific conclusions consequently. It is important that it is not presented as the Government that produces the conclusions, as this would suggest an issue of political stake driving the advice.

Whilst acknowledgement of the 10 cases of CJD would appear to be damaging to the Government, in this extract Dorrell uses them to warrant support for the bovine offal ban of 1989. However before this, Dorrell has to first manage the reasons why these 10 cases of CJD have not been identified or prevented earlier. He does so using a three-part list, claiming *A review of patients medical histories, genetic analysis and consideration of other possible causes* (lines 24-25), have failed to account for the disease. Jefferson (1990) suggests that three-part lists such as this one are useful strategies in talk for strengthening a particular point or position. She notes how three-part lists often begin with two specific components and finish with a third generalised list-completer. In this extract, Dorrell provides two specific elements (medical histories and genetic analysis) and ends with a very ambiguous third element (other possible causes). Again, what is interesting from the speech is what is absent. Firstly, the individuality of these 10 cases is removed. From Dorrell's speech, it appears as though these patients are homogenous in their contraction of the disease. Furthermore, Dorrell does not say that 'all' possible causes have been investigated to explain the cases of CJD, as this is easily defeasible. Instead, the generalised 'other possible causes' enables Dorrell to imply a range of investigations without committing himself to any of them. The insertion of the term 'adequately' (line 26) leaves open the possibility that these cases of CJD can be explained, to some extent, by the review carried out.

In lines 26-30, Dorrell presents a progressive account of the committee's conclusions.

Woolgar (1980) notes how scientific accounts are often characterised by notions of motion and objectivity such that the research is presented as an ongoing process 'out there', but independent from human activity. He informs the House that *there remains no scientific proof that bovine spongiform encephalopathy can be transmitted to man by beef* (lines 26-27). However, he does not exclude the possibility that this conclusion may be revised in the future. The term 'most likely' (line 28) is an example of what Gastil (1992) terms imprecise words. As such, Gastil notes how such imprecision can function to enable a political speaker to suggest a particular version of affairs without committing him/her self to it. In the present case, it is interesting that Dorrell does not explicitly claim that these cases of CJD are caused by problems before the bovine offal ban, as this is contestable. Instead, he uses the imprecise terms to imply that there are other candidate explanations for the cases, whilst at the same time actively promoting a particular one. Moreover, the term at present (line 28) indicates the progressive (and potentially incorrect) nature of scientific research. Such reliance upon the use of imprecise terminology, together with a progressive account of science is inserted at the most controversial point of Dorrell's opening statement. As discursive theorists noted, these rhetorical devices are useful in managing difficult and controversial areas of talk and debate. In this case, it enables Dorrell to manage a dilemma concerning the Government's accountability for the cases of CJD.

Moreover, between lines 27-30 Dorrell uses the cases of CJD to warrant support for the bovine offal ban put in place in 1989. The clarification of the year it was established (1989) is important as it counters the accusation that these cases of CJD are 'new'. Had they been 'new' it would damage the credibility of Government and SEAC action. What is also interesting in these final few lines is Dorrell's implicit

acknowledgement of other scientific findings about CJD, using the pronoun 'that' (line 30), to describe this 'new' finding by SEAC. Again, this is a particularly contentious issue. There is other research evidence, which conflicts with the findings of SEAC. Dorrell does not explicitly deny that such information exists, but focuses instead upon that provided by SEAC. The emphasis is again laid upon the immediacy of SEAC information and Government action as 'new' findings are to be made public *this afternoon* (line 32). Previously the listener has been informed that certain information is to be made available to fellow politicians, but here Dorrell seems to be attending to his wider audience (the public).

In this extract, the narrative structuring of Dorrell's speech, as well as the earlier invocation of scientific identities coupled with the use of imprecise terminology and the progressive account of scientific research, are important rhetorical and discursive strategies for managing matters of political stake and blame. The final extract taken from Dorrell's opening statement considers how he concludes his speech, using externalising devices, and the invocation of a particular identity to finally warrant Government action in response to BSE.

<u>Corroborating Scientific Evidence and Political Action</u>

Although Dorrell has presented a particular 'version' of BSE and Government action through the invocation of scientific identities, he still requires some independent warrant for this action. Dickerson (1997) notes how particular 'others' may be cited during the course of a speech as agreeing with the source of a message in order to warrant and endorse a speaker's utterances. However as Potter (1996) notes, the 'others' who provide consensus should be constructed as independent of the speaker so as to avoid accusations of conspiracy. In the present case, the independent

corroboration for Government and SEAC action comes from Sir Kenneth Calman, the chief medical officer. Dorrell informs his listeners that:

Extract 1.5

> 33 The chief medical officer will write today to all doctors, to ensure that
> 34 the latest scientific evidence is drawn to their attention. In the statement
> 35 by the chief medical officer that I have placed in the Vote Office, Sir
> 36 Kenneth Calman poses to himself the question of whether he will continue
> 37 to eat beef. I quote his answer:
> "I will do so as part of a varied and balanced diet. The new measures and effective enforcement of existing measures will continue to ensure that the likely risk of developing CJD is extremely small."
>
> (p. 375-376)

Again, Dorrell reiterates the up-to-date nature of SEAC information using *latest* (line 34), and reminds his listeners of the immediacy of action, *The chief medical officer will write <u>today</u>* (line 33). The earlier claim that Government and SEAC have a commitment to the wider community is warranted further as the listener is informed that doctors will receive this information from Sir Kenneth Calman. However, it is simply not possible that one man (Calman) could write to *all* doctors. People other than Calman will be involved in this process but are left out of the speech. It is a much more persuasive strategy to claim that the wider community will receive information direct from Calman due to the authoritative position he is attributed with in the speech. Using a naming convention, the listener is informed not only of his position (repeated twice between lines 33-35), but also that he is a Sir (line 35). It is shared national knowledge that knighthoods are an external sign of credibility.

However, perhaps what is most striking about this final section of the speech is Dorrell's use of externalising devices to work up the facticity of SEAC research and Government action, as well as highly credible independent support for it. Firstly, Dorrell externalises the origin of Calman's question concerning the decision to eat beef, claiming he *poses to himself the question* (line 36). Again, a potential matter of

the Government having a political stake in the opinions of Calman is managed.

Secondly as noted in chapter 3, discursive theorists (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998; Potter, 1996; Wooffitt, 1992) recognise the role of 'active voicing' or 'reported speech'. Potter (1996: 161) writes, '…the beauty of active voicing – it brings into being separate corroborating actors who, like ventriloquists dummies, seem to have life, opinions and personality of their own'. The appearance of reported speech is common across parliamentary debates as politicians seek to warrant and undermine arguments. Here, Dorrell quotes the statement made by Calman to warrant the actions taken in response to BSE through the independent corroboration of the chief medical officer.

So What?

As was noted by Reilly (1997), this opening statement by Dorrell became particularly notable because of his acknowledgement of the 10 new cases of CJD and the subsequent reporting of it in the media. However as has been noted here, Dorrell does not construct these cases as 'new', but claims that the explanation for their occurrence is new. Contrary to studies of media reports that claim the inconsistent and contradictory claims of science have heightened the BSE issue, Dorrell presents a consistent and conclusive account of scientific evidence based on the findings of SEAC. He does imply throughout the speech that there are other sources of scientific evidence, however he does not define them explicitly and continues to promote the status and entitlements of SEAC to providing the definite version. Furthermore, what is notable by its absence is the explicit national identification of the 'wider community', or even that the BSE issues arises because of a problem with British beef. As has been noted from the media reports, a sense of British national identity is not made relevant to this statement but instead the focus remains upon issues of health

and the status of scientific information.

Secondly, of fundamental importance to this speech is the use of narrative organisation. The analysis has noted how and when certain 'themes' of the statement arise and how they are positioned before and after earlier claims. In particular, it has been claimed that Dorrell's emphasis upon the scientific identity of SEAC at the start of the speech is crucial for managing issues of political stake and accountability later in the speech. Thirdly, although Stephen Dorrell is the first speaker in this debate it is interesting to note how the confrontational demands of the House of Commons are oriented to in his opening speech. Throughout the opening statement, he attempts to inoculate against potential accusations of stake that could be levelled at him later.

Having introduced the BSE debate in this way, the analysis now turns to consider how a member of the Opposition can rhetorically undermine those points raised and managed by Stephen Dorrell. In particular for this thesis, emphasis is placed upon challenges to the relevance and construction of those scientific, Government and wider community identities made by Harriet Harman, as she re-positions Dorrell and the Government within the discourse of national blame.

The Right to Reply
Harriet Harman (Shadow Health Minister, Labour)

As was noted earlier, Billig (1996) asserts a rhetorical approach to psychology that emphasises the 'two-sidedness' of language. Following this rhetorical approach, Billig suggests that in talk arguments (logoi) can always be challenged by counter-arguments (anti-logoi). It was claimed earlier that Dorrell orients his account towards potential counter-arguments. The analytical study of a response to Stephen Dorrell's

opening speech, is an opportunity to consider how such anti-logoi is constructed. As the Shadow Health Minister, political convention dictates Harriet Harman's turn to speak immediately after Dorrell in the debate. In her reply to Dorrell, Harman both contests and redefines the identities invoked in the opening statement in terms of their status, entitlements, and relevance. However, what is particularly notable is Harman's redefinition of the BSE crisis as a British national problem, and her invocation of the public in the production of a conflicting version of its 'reality'. Attention is paid to how Harman undermines Stephen Dorrell's speech through the construction of political stake and interest. Furthermore, in her capacity as Shadow Health Minister, Harriet Harman's reply could be dismissed as a non-credible account given by a biased party predictably attacking another. Therefore, the analysis also considers how she manages her own 'identity' and orients towards her own accountability in the debate. It will be noted how these concerns are located within the organisational structure of the speech, the formulation of scripts, and the factual reporting of the claims made.

Analysis

As was noted in Stephen Dorrell's speech, Harriet Harman's reply is narratively organised into particular themes. The analysis considers each of these areas in turn. The first of these focuses upon Harman's receipt of Dorrell's speech and his particular 'version' of the BSE issue.

Thanking the Committee

Extract 2.1

38 I thank the committee for its work. I welcome the two principal new measures
39 that it has proposed, on which the Secretary of State is acting. I also welcome
40 the fact that he has made available to me the advice of the chief medical
41 officer on this important and difficult issue. I appreciate that.

One of the most striking differences between Dorrell and Harman's speeches is the degree of self-referencing which goes on within them. Whereas Dorrell typically adopts the footing of an animator, deflecting attention away from his own position in the debate, Harman deploys the pronoun 'I', to immediately position her own identity and beliefs with regard to the BSE issue. From a linguistic point of view, Wilson (1990) claims that the use of the first person-singular forms is often used in political speeches to convey sincerity. In the present example, Harman not only notes her sincere acknowledgement of the SEAC and Government work on an *important and difficult issue* (line 41), but also produces a contrast between herself and Dorrell using the pronouns 'I' and 'he'. Whilst the differences between the two speakers with regard to their position on BSE is not elaborated upon in these first four lines of speech, they become a useful strategy for re-positioning Dorrell and the Government within a discourse of blame in contrast to Harman.

This communication of sincerity is an important move as it positions Harman as someone who realises the seriousness of BSE and distinguishes her from those groups of people who might treat the issue as party politics. It also identifies her as a reasonable person. However, the personal evaluation *I appreciate that* (line 41) is unclear as to what it refers to. The possibility is that it could be heard as an appreciation of the work of SEAC, the actions of Dorrell, and/or the actions of Kenneth Calman. However, the point is that it does not commit Harman to condoning the contents of the advice but probably just the passing on of information from Dorrell.

<u>Speaking and Describing 'the Public'.</u>

Harman now begins to challenge Government action. In doing so, she introduces a

particular category of people, these being the 'public'.

Extract 2.2

42 Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that public confidence on this issue
43 is hanging by a thread? Public confidence must be restored, but the public
44 have to be given the full facts and honest advice on which to base their
45 decisions. That relies on two things. It relies, does it not, on the Secretary of
46 State giving full disclosure of the scientific evidence? I hope that he will
47 publish all that information and give clear advice and guidance.
48 Is it not the case that the time has passed for false reassurance? There must be
49 no more photo-calls of Ministers feeding beefburgers to their children. The
50 question whether there is a link between BSE and CJD is an issue, is it not, of
51 immense importance to consumers, and particularly for parents of young
52 children. Does the Secretary of State acknowledge, as I do, that it is also of
53 immense importance for hundreds of thousands of people who work in
54 farming and the meat industry? Does he acknowledge that the situation
55 remains uncertain and that it is now apparent that there has been too much
56 reassurance and too little action?

As many theorists have noted, the role of questions in political debates is crucial. Politicians ask, answer, and often evade questions in the public eye. It is perhaps therefore, worth considering their function within this particular debate. This particular extract is organised around four questions addressed directly to Stephen Dorrell. Through the repeated invocation of his position, Harman makes him personally accountable for issues connected with BSE.

The first of these issues concerns the invocation of 'the public'. This group of people are clearly distinguished from those present in the House, yet Harman will be aware that members of the 'public' constitute many of the listeners to this debate. Previously, Dorrell had considered the 'wider community' but it remained unclear who this referred to. Here, the public, although not given a national face, is ascribed a particular identity, that of being 'not confident'. The metaphor of *hanging by a thread* (line 43) exaggerates the point made several times throughout this speech. As Gastil (1992) and Wilson (1990) have noted, the deployment of metaphors in political debates is particularly interesting as they are typically used to make a point without committing the speaker to a specific claim of 'reality'. Here, Harman cannot

comment specifically upon the nature of this lack of confidence, but instead uses the metaphor to describe the feelings of an imaginary collection of people. Usefully Wilson (1990) suggests that metaphors assist speakers in reducing 'complex political arguments' to a 'metaphorical form' (p. 104). This first question (lines 42-43) cannot possibly be answered as it is not based on fact. However, its purpose is to make a point concerning a description of the public that re-positions the Government and Dorrell as blameworthy.

As was identified in Dorrell's opening speech, the construction of consensus and agreement is a participant's concern in discourse and can be used to manage potentially contentious claims. In the present case, Harman constructs agreement between the 'public' and in doing so narrates a world 'out there', independent of politics. Having defined this 'out thereness' as an unconfident public and 'confidence as a problem to be solved, she holds it constant, enabling her to suggest ways in which the Government can change to restore public confidence. Firstly, Harman takes issue with Dorrell's earlier repeated claims of a Government commitment to making available all scientific information and advice (lines 43-47). Although Harman does not explicitly state that the Government has not disclosed all the information, the structure of her speech here enables her to imply that Dorrell has failed to do so. The insertion of the extreme-case formulations 'full' to explain the facts, and 'honest' to describe the advice (line 44) enable Harman to imply inadequate disclosure of information from the Government. Indeed, the statement would have made sense with these two words removed. Harman proposes a view of science that suggests it is possible not to just have the 'facts', but the 'full facts'. This implication is worked upon further with the insertion of 'full' again, to describe the disclosure of the scientific evidence (line 46). Furthermore, the terms 'all' and 'clear' (line 47) are not

crucial to the structure of the sentence but are deployed to ambiguously describe the previous published information as inadequate. Again, Harman positions herself with this debate using the pronoun 'I' to indicate her sincere commitment to the questions she asks.

Secondly, Harman implies that the lack of public confidence is due to 'false reassurance' from Government action. The suggestion that there has been a 'time' of false reassurance is implied (line 48) and is given further warrant through its narrative connection with a negative account of Government activities. Harman formulates a script that reports a pattern of Ministers activities, which is treated as emblematic of their routine activities (lines 48-49). Unlike script theory that maintains that the social events themselves are predictable and organised enabling us to behave accordingly in such situations, discursive theorists have emphasised the constructive work done by script talk. Edwards (1997) argues that when participants provide a description of an event or 'reality', they actively construct actions and events as either routine or exceptional in some way. These descriptions and script formulations can be studied in terms of what is achieved rhetorically for the speaker. In the present case, Harman uses the script formulation to make available the 'moral character' of the Ministers, so that issues of accountability can be challenged and undermined. In addition, the activity of 'photo-calls' contrasts with the earlier request for 'full scientific evidence' (line 46). This makes available a contrast between the seriousness of the science and the non-seriousness of the Ministers, undermining their actions further. Moreover, political stake is constructed in the activity of Ministers 'feeding' beef to 'their children.

Lines 49-52 are also indicative of Harman's concern to populate her account with an

array of national identities. The sequential location of these claims, contrasting the 'political activities' of the Ministers with the 'serious concerns' of consumers and parents, functions to delegitmise Dorrell's earlier claims that the Government treat BSE as an important matter. Firstly, following the organisation of lines 48-49, Harman manages to imply the Ministers' responsibility for the 'false reassurance' (feeding beefburgers to children). Secondly, the activities of these Ministers are an apparent trivialisation of this *important and difficult issue* (line 41). Whilst the parents and consumers consider the question of a link between BSE and CJD to be of *immense importance* (line 51), Ministers, who we are informed indirectly are also parents ('their children', line 49), are feeding burgers to their children. The Ministers are members of the category of 'parents', but their activities are scripted so that they deviate from the normative concerns of parents and are constructed as putting their political interests before the interests of their children. The photo-calls of feeding beefburgers to their children suggest that this is for the benefit of the cameras and not a genuine concern with feeding. In this way, Harman is able to challenge Dorrell's earlier account of the Government's actions as scientifically based (lines 19-32), with an account of photo-calls implying political stake and political interests guide the work of Ministers.

Therefore, Harman undermines Dorrell's previous management of Government accountability. Whilst Dorrell aligned Government action in accordance with scientific advice concerning the BSE issue, Harman has constructed a disparity between them. Whilst expressing personal gratitude for the scientific work (lines 38-41), she provides a factual report of public confidence and photo-calls that are used to illustrate that Ministers do not act in accordance with the scientific work, but are motivated by political interests. Furthermore, Harman contrasts her own 'sincere' and

reasonable concerns over the importance of BSE (*as I do*, line 52), with the unreasonable activities of the Ministers.

The 'hundreds and thousands' of people working in the farming and meat industry are united in their concern with parents and consumers over BSE (lines 52-54). This rhetorical strategy serves to isolate the Ministers from the public at large. In addition, contrary to Dorrell's claims that conclusions have been arrived at through collaboration between Government and committee (lines 22-24), Harman claims that the *situation remains uncertain* (lines 54-55*)*. This is warranted in the public's lack of confidence, illustrated through the concerns of parents, consumers, and workers.

Therefore, in the first lines of her response to Dorrell, Harman begins to undermine essential points made by Dorrell. Through the invocation of the identities of Ministers, public, parents, consumers and workers, Harman challenges the credibility of Government action and the nature of the scientific evidence. Moreover, she makes available her own positive identity (as someone who is sincere and concerned about BSE) in contrast with a negative construction of Dorrell and the Government.

<u>The Controversial Cases of CJD</u>

Previously it was noted how Stephen Dorrell treats the section of his opening speech that mentions the 10 cases of CJD as controversial, and employs particular rhetorical strategies for managing issues concerning the Government's accountability for their occurrence. Here it will be considered how Harriet Harman re-defines the matter, and in doing so challenges Dorrell and the Government's accountability for CJD in humans. Of particular interest in this extract is the national identification of the public as British.

Extract 2.3

57 We must all be concerned, must we not, that 10 cases of a new strain of CJD
58 have appeared? Will the Secretary of State confirm that what is most
59 worrying about this new cluster is that it has occurred in people under the age
60 of 42, and that all cases have occurred in the past two years and only in the
61 United Kingdom? The conclusion that stares the British public in the face is
62 that there may well be a link between BSE and CJD.

The use of the pronoun 'we' is an important change in footing at this point of the extract. Firstly, as Muhlhausler and Harré (1990) note, there are two forms of 'we', inclusive and exclusive. In the current extract, the 'we' is inclusive as it includes both speaker and listeners to the issue in hand. Secondly, it positions Harman as the mouthpiece for everyone else. Thirdly, as Wilson (1990) suggests, the pronoun 'we' is often adopted when the subject matter of a stretch of discourse becomes difficult or controversial. 'We' enables Harman to diffuse responsibility for what is uttered across all people rather than remaining personally accountable for the version of events that is stated. The terms 'we' and 'all' (line 57) are references to a 'universal audience'. It was noted how Dorrell appeals to the universal audience in his opening speech to increase the committee's accountability to the wider community. However, it can be inferred who this 'universal audience' actually is, and through a process of simple linguistics it can be determined that this audience is not universal but actually quite specific. In the present case these pronouns are also examples of deixis. Billig (1995) suggests that deictic utterances are a 'form of rhetorical pointing' (p. 106), and to whom the utterance refers must be interpreted from the position of the speaker. In the present example, it is not clear at this point, if Harman is referring to the House, nation, or universe. However, who 'we' are can be inferred following a technique from linguistics called an anaphoric process. This simply means that textual cohesion is sometimes maintained through the way in which elements of the discourse are linked by going forwards through the speech. Connecting the utterances made in

line 57, with those made in line 61, it becomes clear that 'we' are British.

In his opening statement, Dorrell claimed that the committee had arrived at conclusions to explain the causes of these cases, and these conclusions were the most likely *at present* (line 28). The conclusions stated that these cases were linked to exposure to BSE before the bovine ban in 1989. However in her response, Harman begins to undermine this explanation of Dorrell's and again addresses him directly in assigning blame.

In line 59, Harman describes the strains of CJD as 'new'. The term 'new' is a direct challenge to Dorrell's claim that these cases have occurred before 1989, as is her statement that they have occurred in the *past two years* (line 60). Harman also points towards a psychological state, that of 'worrying' (line 59), to construct a reaction to these cases. Harman is not specific about 'who' is worried, but rather treats the mental state of 'worrying' as an 'out-there fact'. Furthermore, whilst Dorrell was unspecific about where these cases had occurred, Harman is explicit in her claim *only in the United Kingdom* (line 6). Harman at this point begins to re-define the BSE problem as a national problem to the exclusion of all other nations. This redefinition is borne out further as the 'public' is again mobilised (line 61), but this time is specified further by its 'British' nationality. It is at this point that who the 'we' are (line 57) is clarified as the British public, inferred by the sequential context. Hence, the 'we' becomes a form of banal national deixis (Billig 1995).

Furthermore in this section, Harman disputes Dorrell's claims that there is no scientific evidence for a link between BSE and CJD (lines 26-27). Using the metaphor *stares the British public in the face* (line 61) she suggests *there may well be a link between BSE and CJD* (line 62). Firstly, the metaphor enables Harman to

imply that the British public believes there is a link between BSE and CJD without explicitly stating it. Such an explicit statement would be disputable, whereas the suggestion that such a conclusion is so obvious that the British public *may* recognise it is easier to defend. Also, the phrase *stares the British public in the face*, implies that the conclusions are so obvious even the public recognise them. This also works to undermine Dorrell's earlier claims concerning the exclusive category entitlements of the committee to arrive at any conclusions. Secondly, the use of the imprecise term 'may' is interesting here. As Gastil (1992) notes, it allows a speaker to infer two opposing positions without committing him/her-self to either. This not the opinion of just Harman herself, but of the British public, of which she is a member. This enables Harman to utter a position that is contrary to that given by Dorrell earlier and manage her own accountability as a potentially biased party, as the British public shares her opinion. Harman orients towards the possibility that her remarks may be challenged as being predictably those of a biased source and as such not credible or factual, but governed by political stake and interest. However, by adopting the position of an animator at this controversial point in her speech, Harman is able to utter a potentially contentious view and work up the credibility and factual status of the account, through its warranting from a consensual 'British public'.

The Interrogation of Generalised List Completers: 'Other Possible Causes'

In Dorrell's opening speech, it was noted how he produced a three-part list to present a review of the investigations carried out by SEAC to explain the causes of the 10 cases of CJD. In this section of the analysis, it is noted how Harman interrogates the implications of the 'other possible causes' that Dorrell used as the list completer.

Extract 2.4

63 The public have a right to know that there has been a comprehensive
64 consideration of all the options. Will the Secretary of State tell the House the
65 most radical option that SEAC considered? In addition to knowing what the
66 Secretary of State was advised had been considered and acted on, the House
67 needs to know what the committee considered and what it ruled out, to be
68 reassured that all the options were considered.

Harman works-up the public's category entitlements to knowledge. As she is being listened to by the British public, she speaks on their behalf claiming they *have a right to know* (line 63). Challenging Dorrell's earlier comments that emphasised a commitment to the public in passing on information, Harman implies that this has not been done. She questions Dorrell's generalisation of the investigations in her request for a *comprehensive consideration of all the options* (lines 63-64). The insertion of 'comprehensive' suggests that this has not characterised the investigations so far, otherwise its inclusion into this statement would not be necessary. The repetition of the term 'considered' throughout this extract drives the narrative, concerning how SEAC reaches its conclusions. Challenging Dorrell's previous account of SEAC who arrive at the conclusions and Government who simply pass on its recommendations, Harman re-defines them as both jointly accountable to the public in terms of what was considered and acted upon at each stage. By asking for information from both sources, she is able to imply differences between the two. Contrary to Dorrell's claims that the Government passed on all the information from committee to the public, Harman suggests that there are some political interests guiding what information is passed on.

So in this section of Harriet Harman's speech, it has been suggested that she invokes certain categories to attend to Dorrell and the Government's accountability in the 10 identified cases of CJD. Most prominently, she invokes the 'British public' and their entitlements to knowledge to address both the Government and the SEAC's

accountability. Contrary to Dorrell's claims that there is no link between BSE and CJD, Harman maintains the possibility that there may be. Whereas Dorrell gave generalised descriptions of the actions the SEAC took in response to the cases of CJD, Harman requests more specific details so that the investigations can be challenged on the grounds of adequacy.

Kenneth Calman: The Chief Medical Officer, Sir, & Grandad.

It was claimed that Dorrell reports the words of Kenneth Calman in his opening speech to provide consensus and credibility for actions and advice of the Government and SEAC, and to warrant the claims made concerning the safety of consuming beef. Furthermore, it was suggested that whilst Stephen Dorrell avoided giving a personal opinion on the BSE issue the words of Kenneth Calman served to provide one.

In this section of analysis, the focus will concentrate upon Harman's undermining of the 'credibility' of Kenneth Calman, through reference to another candidate identity he possesses, that of Grandad.

Extract 2.5

69 Is it not the case that, unfortunately and, I am sure, inadvertently, the House
70 has been given yet more false reassurance? The Secretary of State said that
71 Sir Kenneth Calman, the chief medical officer, would continue to eat beef as
72 part of his balanced diet; but he should tell the House whether Sir Kenneth
73 would be prepared to feed beef to his young grandchildren. It is not just a
74 question of the safety of beef for adults; it is a question of the safety of beef
75 for children. Will the Secretary of State confirm that SEAC members who are
76 parents or grandparents are not giving beef to their children or grandchildren?

Line 69 can be treated as adhering to political protocol, which states that a speaker in the House of Commons cannot accuse another, explicitly, of lying or making false claims. Harman therefore manages to imply that Dorrell has *unfortunately* given the House *false reassurance*, but this is mitigated in the words *I am sure inadvertently.* However as Brown and Levinson (1987), note such over-politeness can be ironic. By

raising this issue, Harman is being ironic at the expense of the Government. This is to say she is deflating the 'seriousness' of Dorrell by raising the image of the Government through such over-politeness. However, such ironic talk maintains the possibility that she is mistaken and the false reassurance is deliberate. The adoption of the pronoun 'I' conveys possible ironic sincerity throughout the claim (the irony can always be denied).

In lines 70-72, Harman reformulates Dorrell's reported statement of Calman's endorsement of eating beef. Heritage and Watson (1979) suggest that such formulations invoke notions of shared knowledge. This formulation of Calman not only provides a gloss on that shared information but as Edwards (1997: 125) notes, 'is also an opportunity for performing constructive and consequential work on the content of prior talk'. Harman establishes what is already commonly understood in the House and uses this as a basis on which to proceed.

She proceeds to question the credibility of Calman's statement. Whilst Dorrell stressed Calman's position as chief medical officer, Harman invokes a further identity category, that of grandparent. Although she does not explicitly state that Calman is a Grandad she uses a Membership Categorisation Device, that of 'grandchildren', to make available Calman's identity. Hence, the credibility of Calman's statement is challenged as being politically biased, made from the position of the chief medical officer and not from the perspective of a grandparent. Moreover, the category of 'grandparent' is not only more inclusive than that of chief medical officer, in terms of its members, but it also implies cultural associations of family obligations of care and what is typically expected of a member. By introducing another category to which Calman belongs, Harman is able to imply that the statement made is motivated by his

political interests but may conflict with his deeper personal actions. She draws attention towards the age of his grandchildren, claiming they are *young* (line 73). This is used to warrant her earlier claims regarding the implications of a link between BSE and CJD for children, and the *immense importance* (line 53) placed upon the issue by parents. The implication therefore is that as a grandparent, Calman's statement deviates from the routine and normative activities of other grandparents.

As has been argued in this thesis, identity categories are flexible and dynamic resources, which are open to debate. Here, we see the unstatic nature of identity ascriptions as Harman moves on to challenge the conclusions of the SEAC, by means of invoking their category memberships as parents and grandchildren. In his opening statement, Dorrell constructs the homogeneity of committee as *leading practitioners* (line 9) in their representation of the scientific field. The differences between individual members are routinely absent from the account and typical of scientific rhetoric. However, here Harman undermines this homogeneity through the introduction of the other categories to which these people belong.

As was mentioned above, these categories of 'parents' and 'grandparents' carry cultural associations. They are also examples of commonplaces (Billig, 1996). In the present case, Harman uses the commonplace to undermine the facticity of Dorrell's account through the construction of a contrast between the scientific advice and the actions of the scientists themselves. She not only invokes the individual identities of the members of SEAC as 'parents' or 'grandparents', but also asks about their human activities concerning their children and grandchildren (lines 75-76). It can be considered how the credibility and facticity of an account can be rhetorically undermined through the construction of alternative candidate identity categories,

entitlements, and what is typically expected of members of those categories. As Harman suggests there might be a discrepancy between Calman's statement and his actions as a grandparent, she likewise constructs the possibility of difference between the scientific advice and the actions of the scientists, as parents and grandparents.

Contrasts & Solutions

During the course of her speech, Harman has challenged the presentation of certain scientific and political 'facts' in Dorrell's opening speech. She has questioned his commitment to fully informing the public and re-defined the relationship between science and politics. Harman has also undermined the credibility of Kenneth Calman's reported statement in response to the Government and the committee's actions over the BSE issue. In this final section of her reply to Dorrell, she produces a summary of the important points made in her account.

Extract 2.6

77 The right hon. Gentleman must take the public into his confidence. He must
78 recognize that he must lead public opinion, so the public must not be left in
79 the dark. Public concern is so great that Ministers have a duty to be entirely
80 open about the considerations that are involved. If the facts are not fully
81 disclosed, the public response will be fear, which will then be stoked up
82 by ignorance and innuendo [Interruption]. I appreciate that the position is
83 difficult and the information uncertain, but it is clear that the Secretary of
84 State has lost the confidence of the British people. While he was advising
85 people that it was okay to eat beef, local education authorities throughout the
86 country were withdrawing it from school meals. We need to restore public
87 confidence in the advice of the Department of Health. If we are to do that,
88 people must know that the Government are doing all they can, that they will
89 publish all SEAC's deliberations and that enough resources will be devoted
90 to future research.

(p. 376-377)

In lines 77-80, Harman works-up the public's expectations of Dorrell and in doing so implies that these have not been fulfilled. She questions again Dorrell's earlier claims regarding the duty to the public, using a metaphor to claim that the public *must not be left in the dark* (line 78-79). This implies that the public is currently in the dark and

one that is borne out in the following lines of this extract. She notes not only the public's expectations of Dorrell as a Secretary of State for Health, but also those of Ministers generally claiming *they have a duty to be entirely open* (line 80). The notion that Dorrell had not fulfilled such expectations was previously implied (lines 45-46), as was those of the Ministers through the earlier account of feeding beefburgers to children. Furthermore, she implies that this has occurred due to Dorrell's failure to *recognize that he must lead public opinion* (line 78). This implication is achieved in lines 83-84, where Harman states that he has lost the British people's confidence and that he has failed as a leader. To have 'lost' something requires that one must have 'had' it to begin with. These claims are treated by Harman as a 'given', and as such are not accredited with a source, but merely presented as 'facts'. However, they are further justified as the listener is informed that the local education authorities are withdrawing beef from school meals (lines 83-86).

Again treating the claims as factual and independent of her, Harman constructs the mental state of the public using emotion talk. In lines 84-86, she claims that failure to disclose facts leads to public 'fear', 'ignorance', and 'innuendo'. This scripting is achieved using an 'if-then' strategy (Antaki, 1994; Edwards, 1997; Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998). These devices function as warnings or predictions of future events or actions. Such events and actions are narratively sequenced so that they appear to logically follow on from one another. The 'if' in line 80 and 'then' in line 81 is conditional. The 'if' sets-up the premise of 'disclosing facts'. The action routine of facts that are not fully disclosed describes the scripted behaviour of the Government. This enables her to perform scripting work that creates a logical connection between scripts and dispositions. In the present case, the non-disclosure of the full facts is

treated as the logical premise for the negative reaction of the British public. The emotion categories of 'fear' and 'ignorance' are used to assign causes and motives to actions and to achieve the credible attribution of blame and accountability towards the Ministers and Dorrell. These emotional states have been accounted for in lines 80-81 (caused by the non-disclosure of facts), and provide evidence for the kinds of events and actions which may follow consequently. This emotion talk functions to construct the scripted event sequences as normative and reasonable actions.

Again reiterating a point made in line 41, Harman notes that *the position is difficult and information uncertain* (lines 82-83). This apparent mitigation works to warrant her own account as both reasonable and diplomatic, and position her own identity as a credible speaker. However having provided such mitigation, Harman claims that *it is clear that the Secretary of State has lost the confidence of the British people* (lines 83-84). This is a progression from her earlier claims that *Public confidence is hanging by a thread* (lines 42-43). It is interesting that this extrematisation is located towards the end of the speech. Had Harman made such extreme claims at the beginning of her account, the credibility and facticity of such utterances would have been reduced and easily contested. However, by using a structure which has enabled her to script the general and routine behaviour of Ministers bolstering such claims with examples, Harman is able to produce such an extreme claim by couching it within an account that warrants both the 'truth value' of the claim and its source (Harman).

Using contrastive discourse, she gives an account that produces differences between the Government and the people. Between lines 84-85, Harman constructs the difference in actions between Dorrell and local education authorities. As discursive theorists have noted, (Smith, 1978; Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995) contrastive

discourse is a device that can be used to construct a mundane 'world out there'. Harman scripts both the generalisable and routine activities of the Government and those of the local education authorities. However, these activities are contrastive and work to warrant Harman's earlier claims that 'the people' are not confident of the Government's advice and actions. She constructs consensus between the apolitical and independent local education authorities. Moreover, these authorities are representative of the children's interests. Thus, Harman contrasts those who are seen as working in the interests of a political party with those working for the interests of children. Considering her earlier characterisation of the Government as politically motivated rather than concerned with children's health, the contrasting actions of the local education authorities are warranted as reasonable. The scale of this contrast is emphasised in lines 85-86, *throughout the country*. The number is not specific, but the overall impression is one of total agreement. This establishes the BSE issue as a national problem, peculiar to Britain.

The final few lines are suggestions concerning how to restore public confidence. The notion that the public need their confidence restoring is treated as a 'given'. Again, Harman appeals to the British audience using 'we'. In addition, she scripts possible future events and actions between lines 87-90, claiming that the Government should publish all SEACs information. Again, the insertion of the word 'all' to describe the Government (line 88) and SEAC (line 89), together with the 'enough' to describe resources (line 89), imply that so far each of these actions have been inadequate. The 'if' (line 87) is conditional, connecting the public's confidence to the scripted routine behaviour of the Government. Hence, in these final few lines Harman constructs a contrast between the British people and the Government (and SEAC). In doing so. she discredits Dorrell's claims that the Government is committed to working for the

people, and the scientific evidence on BSE is conclusive. British national identity is an important resource in this early debate to construct an 'us' and 'them' on a positive/negative scale. In this case, 'us' refers to the reasonable public and Opposition, whereas 'them' quite clearly relates to the unreasonable Government and SEAC.

Concluding Comments

In the above exchange between Stephen Dorrell and Harriet Harman, it has been considered how certain discursive strategies can be employed in an account to do rhetorical work. The particular interest in this case was the invocation of particular identities to position Government and Opposition within a discourse of blame for the BSE crisis.

This analytical study of Harriet Harman's reply to Stephen Dorrell has focussed upon the construction of anti-logoi. Of fundamental interest in this data was the invocation, redefinition and mobilisation of identity categories, category boundaries, members and their entitlements as members. Following the organisational structure of the reply it has been noted how, when and why Harman has attended to matters addressed by Dorrell. Firstly, it has been argued that Harriet Harman problematises the identities of SEAC, Government, and 'Kenneth Calman' in terms of their members. By invoking their membership to other contrasting identity categories such as parents and grandparents, the analysis has suggested that Harman is able to compare the 'typical' activities of each and attend to matters concerning political stake and bias within the BSE debate. Secondly, it has been stated that Harman also introduces 'new' identity categories into the debate. These include 'the British public', 'consumers', and 'Ministers'. A discursive analysis of the deployment of these categories suggests

these are also used in the construction of contrasts. These centre upon a contrast between the Government's actions and those of the public. Contrasts are also produced to show disparity between Stephen Dorrell's words and the actions of the Government. Finally, Harman also questions the entitlements to knowledge which members of these categories have. She claims that members of the 'British public' are entitled to know the 'full facts' and the entitlements of SEAC and the Secretary of State for Health dictate that they should provide them.

In this way, identities are not only constructed but are defined and re-defined, contested, negotiated, undermined and challenged as speakers produce an account of the BSE issue and construct their own identity and that of others. It is argued here that these arguments are linked to a rhetorical concern with entitlement and credibility. Who is entitled to possess such scientific knowledge and act upon it, and who is not, is a disputable matter. Moreover, the credibility afforded to the speaker's account of BSE is likewise an issue requiring careful discursive management and negotiation of his/her category entitlements.

As the analysis of this data is located within a wider analytical concern with the discursive negotiation of 'identity', the explication of these categories is considered in terms of their discursive function in its construction. A central tenet of this analysis rests on the argument that speaker's 'identities' are not unproblematic 'facts' within the debate but are open to dispute. However, they can also be upheld and argued for in the promotion of a particular point of view. Hence what is of interest is how speakers orient towards this problematic notion of identity in terms of contesting and undermining others, whilst trying themselves to resist being challenged.

Finally, it has been noted how Harman constructs a national British 'us' in contrast to

'them', the Government, and SEAC. Britain is not defined at this point in relation to some national 'other', but just in comparison to the Government and SEAC. In this present debate, Brookes' claim that BSE is first characterised by a concern with the national health is certainly borne out. Moreover, Kitzinger and Reilly's claim that the scientific evidence is inconclusive is also seen here. In particular, this inconclusive scientific information is important, not because it might be true or false, but because it functions rhetorically to position other politicians negatively within a debate about blame. From an analysis of a parliamentary debate, it can be noted how this scientific evidence is actively constructed and contested in terms of its consistency, status, and accessibility.

In the next debate to be analysed, particular attention will be paid to how those identities, that have been invoked in the debate here, are constructed. However, of specific analytical attention will be how the construction of 'us' (as British) changes as a national European 'other' becomes relevant to the debate. Moreover, who is entitled to be included and who is excluded from these identity categories is the business of talk. The analysis focuses not only upon the construction of these nations themselves, and the location of self and others within them, but also their function in the management of accountability concerning the BSE debate.

6.

House of Commons Debate: BSE – 25 March 1996

Constructing 'Us' and 'Them': Nations as Resources in Talk about BSE.

Aims of Chapter

In chapter 5, it was noted that Stephen Dorrell and Harriet Harman constructed and mobilised particular identity categories to assign and avoid blame for the BSE crisis. Of particular interest was the casting of BSE as a discussion about health and the status of scientific evidence. The debate that is considered in this chapter follows on from that given on 20 March 1996, insofar as it is the next parliamentary discussion specifically about BSE. What is significant about this debate is that it is held on the same day that the European Union (EU) impose a worldwide ban on the import and export of British beef. On this date, a statement was issued from the EU claiming that once a sufficient number of British cattle had been slaughtered and a thorough investigation of the disease completed, then the ban would be lifted (recent events note the lifting of this ban at the end of 1999).

As media theorists have been at lengths to illustrate, this action by the EU led to a change of focus in how BSE was reported in the media in Britain. However, what remains to be investigated is how this ban was talked about in politics and the implications this has for identity construction. Although some political background has been provided here, this ban is not treated as an unproblematic given within these debates. Indeed, the legitimacy of such European action is debated in the House of Commons, as is the implications this will have for Britain. It is not the case that all politicians are consensual on their agreement or disagreement of EU action. Rather it is the case that arguments and counter-arguments are mounted over such issues.

Instead of producing an analysis that has an unproblematic 'version' of this EU ban, and simply considering how it influences the debate a more data driven approach is adopted. It treats the ban on British beef as a speaker's concern and considers how the particular version offered functions in the overall assignment and avoidance of blame for the crisis. Attention is paid to how political speakers invoke this action by the EU and the implications this has for the construction and mobilisation of 'relevant' identities. Those identities that were central to the debate on 20 March 1996 are noted for their presence or absence in this later debate. In particular, the invocation of British and European (previously absent) national identities is examined for the performative work they do in this debate. The analytic focus is upon how constructions of 'us' change from 20 March to 25 March, with the emergence of a national 'them'.

Before this chapter turns to an analysis of extracts taken from this debate, this matter of ascribing a national identity to self in the context of some relevant national 'other' is a particularly interesting point and one that has received much attention from social scientists. Therefore, it is perhaps appropriate to consider how discursive theorists have examined the constructive functions of national identity previously and the implications this research has for more orthodox approaches to identity (such as Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorisation Theory).

Constructing the National 'Other' to Construct Self Identity

As was noted in chapter 2, the traditional approaches of social identity theory and self-categorisation theory have focused upon the process of comparison between 'self' and 'other' in forming one's own self-identity. However, as emphasised earlier these comparisons are considered to be based on cognitive and perceptual judgments. The

basis for such comparisons is assumed to stem from one's group membership. It is argued that one's social identity is cognitively 'switched on' as a consequence of the presence of a relevant outgroups in the social context. However, contrary to this perspective, discursive theorists have aimed to shift the focus of comparison from being based on cognition to being based in discourse. In particular, they have stressed this issue of relevance is not a cognitive process, which the observer passively reads from the social context, but is a rhetorical and discursive accomplishment. For example, Dickerson (forthcoming) has also noted how speakers' accounts of others can be investigated as a means by which they actively construct their own identity. He argues that these constructions of self and others are flexible and subject to change as they are inextricably linked to the unfolding context of the interaction. In his study of BBC news interviews, Dickerson states that interviewees can either construct themselves as members of the category 'public' (for example), or as distinct. The identity claimed for 'self' is made inferentially available through the discursive construction of another identity, with whom the self can be contrasted against. Such presentations of self are always oriented to the demands of the interactional context. This notion of constructing 'otherness' is also drawn upon by Michaels (1996). Focusing upon the work of scientists, Michaels noted how pro-animal experimenters represented a series of 'others', such as foreign scientists, as a way of rendering themselves in a more positive light. He claims that these 'others' are typically notable by their physical absence from the debate or immediate situation, yet their representation remains pertinent within it.

A wealth of literature on such discursive analyses of comparison has arisen in the study of national identity (Achard, 1993; Billig, 1995; Lee, 1992; Lutz, Phoenix and Yuval-Davis, 1995; Rapley, 1998; Reicher, Hopkins and Condor, 1997). For

example, Hardt-Mautner (1995) in her study of the British press, in particular the *Sun* newspaper suggests that 'other' national identities are constructed negatively. She claims that a positive British national identity is typically constructed in the discursive context of a negative European identity. These comparisons centre specifically on the European countries of France and Germany. Hardt-Mautner states that such negative comparisons contribute to increasing anti-European sentiments amongst the British public. Also focusing upon language within the press, O'Donnell (1994) has examined how national stereotypes are perpetuated in the sports reports of 15 European countries. He claims that the press constructs national categories in terms of positive and negative traits and each becomes understood in a discursive context of others. Adopting a Critical Discourse Analytic approach, O'Donnell suggests that the press produce a macro-discourse that functions to promote the ideological interests of that particular society's elite. What is important in all these studies is that a positive identity for 'us' is acquired and understood within the rhetorical context of a negative 'them'.

Condor (1996b; 1997a; 1997b) adopts a more rhetorical approach to claim that self-identity ascription is often not explicit, but instead can be made inferentially available through the construction of a national 'them' with whom the self can be contrasted against. She notes how national stereotypes are constructed in talk and how they vary and become meaningful in different rhetorical contexts. In her study of British interviewees, she considers how they may construct other national members in terms of negative stereotypes to explain how s/he is different from the rest of the category. Condor suggests that rhetorical deployments of stereotypes can be used to manage dilemmas of appearing prejudiced or reasonable. A speaker may compare his/her own 'tolerant' identity with the stereotypical xenophobic and nationalistic identity of other

members of the British national group. Identifying oneself as 'British' or 'English' can be constructed as carrying xenophobic sentiments, or assertions of ethnic prejudice. A speaker's own identity becomes understood within a locally constructed network of other category members. Speakers can flexibly represent themselves as similar too, or distinct from, these other members. In doing so, they warrant an authentic identity for themselves. Hence, according to discursive psychologists any research that embarks upon a study of identity needs to be alert, not only to the identities a speaker constructs for him/her self, but also those attributed to others. The analysis should consider the functions these constructed comparative 'identities' perform in the talk.

Some writers have also noted that the nations themselves are also problematic in terms of where the boundaries lie, who is included, and who is excluded in the category. Calhoun (1999) argues that social theories of nationalism and citizenship need to problematise the contrasts between territorial boundaries and examine the rhetoric of nationalism that constructs communities. Likewise, Billig (1995) suggests the 'imagining' of a particular national category typically involve the 'imagining' of where the national boundaries lie. He argues that these boundaries are not fixed and stable 'real' entities, but are fluid and flexible resources used by speakers' to perform particular rhetorical business. Expanding upon Anderson's (1983) notion of 'imagined communities', Billig claims that the imagining of nations not only involves the imagination of a community of people, but also the imagining of a place, a homeland, and national boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. He notes that the construction, of who 'we' are, invokes a comparison of who 'we' are not, i.e. some national other(s). Contrary to the traditional approaches in psychology, this is not to state that these comparisons reflect a psychological or cognitive reality in any way,

but are rhetorical accomplishments, to be argued for, contested and defended. For Billig, nationalism is not the stuff of extremists, but is commonplace. The ideology of nationalism is reproduced on a daily basis, in routine reminders embedded within the social practices of everyday life. He argues that the reminding of nationhood should not only be acknowledged as the flags wave at events such as 'The Proms', but also recognised in the banal reminder of the unwaved flag which hangs from the side of a public building. Billig draws attention to the small deictic utterances of 'we', 'ours' and 'them', which are used in everyday talk, locating people within a particular nation, excluding others, and simultaneously producing an international context of other nations.

Reicher, Hopkins and Condor (1997), consider how national identity as it is perceived by SIT and SCT, removes any elements of social construction. They state that national identities are:

> Not things that arise in the mind and drive our behaviour…we use them in order to be able to communicate, both in the sense of constituting the social reality which allows communication to occur, and in the sense of pushing particular version of reality for particular ends. (p. 73)

However, they are also critical of discursive approaches to its study, claiming they are in danger of losing sight of nationhood and provide no explanation as to why such an identity can function to mobilise masses.

Whilst these studies of national identity are diverse, they embrace the notion of nation and nationhood as resources that can be used flexibly in talk. This present analysis aims to draw upon the work of such discursive analyses in explicating how national categorisations and identities are invoked in talk. Incorporating the arguments proposed by Billig, it will be suggested that the ideology of banal nationalism enables speakers to indicate the nation of Britain through the use of deictic utterances such as

'we', whilst the explicit uttering of the national category label is often notably absent. Moreover, it will be noted how who 'we' are becomes understood in a discursive context that also constructs and makes available a description of national 'others' with whom the nation ('we') can be compared and contrasted.

Analysis

This parliamentary debate, which occurred on 25 March 1996, is divided into two separate sections. The first section begins with an opening statement by Stephen Dorrell, and concerns the relation between BSE and health. However, the extracts used for analysis here are taken from the second section of the debate, which is concerned with BSE and its effects upon agriculture. In his position of Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, Douglas Hogg makes the opening address for this section of the debate. What is significant in both sections of this debate is the overall shift in emphasis from the implications BSE has for public health, to matters of British and European national identity. Rather than simply providing a content analysis of the different ways in which national identity is invoked across both sections of this debate (of which there are many), the analysis will focus upon two separate exchanges within this debate. The first occurs between Paul Marland (Conservative) and Douglas Hogg (Conservative Minister). The second is taken from a discussion between William Cash (Conservative), Douglas Hogg (Conservative) and George Foulkes (Labour). These particular sections of data have been chosen based on the basis that national identities are invoked and become resources for managing matters of blame. The analysis will focus upon how speakers' construct a British national audience and identify themselves as members. The functions of this rhetorical move will be considered in working-up the credible and factual status of an account. The analytical interest is not simply in claiming that British and European

national identities are present in the debate (such as Brookes' content analysis of the newspaper reports during this time), but in examining *how* and *why* these are made relevant. It is argued here that such matters can be investigated in-depth from a detailed analysis of sequential exchanges between political speakers in the debate. Thus, it becomes necessary to select particular (representative) examples from a larger body of data.

Exchange 1

In the first exchange to be analysed here, between Paul Marland and Douglas Hogg, particular emphasis is placed upon the dilemmatic construction of the boundaries between Britain and Europe, and the implications this has for constructing 'us' and 'them'. Analytic attention is also paid to discursive constructions of consensus and deviation. It is examined how notions of history and scientific advice are defined and located within the talk, producing contrasts and developing the factual status of the accounts. In response to an earlier statement by Douglas Hogg, Paul Marland begins his comments as follows:

The Concern for Public Health & the Nauseating Opposition

Extract 3.1
Paul Marland (Conservative, West Gloucestershire)

1 I know that my right hon. and learned Friend will agree that we are all here
2 this afternoon because we care about public health. Does he also agree that,
3 given that we are all here for that reason, it is nauseating for Opposition
4 Members to try to claim this as their own public domain? I commend my right
5 hon. and learned Friend: his actions have been taken on the basis of the best
6 scientific advice available, not just today but historically. With the benefit of
7 hindsight, it is easy to criticize what has gone on in the past, but the
8 Government and the Ministry have always acted on the basis of the best
9 available scientific advice. The Government have been very responsible in
10 that regard.

The term *my right hon. and learned Friend* (line 1) indicates political protocol and identifies Marland as belonging to the same political party as Douglas Hogg. 'Right

Hon' indicates that Hogg is a member of the Privy Council. and 'learned' acknowledges that he is also a lawyer. Marland makes available certain information about Hogg that can be developed upon in the account. Adopting the footing of an author, ('I') Marland aligns himself with everyone else present in the House, using the inclusive collective pronouns 'we' and 'all' to construct shared knowledge and concern regarding public health (lines 1-2). The category of 'public' is introduced as a means of representing consensus amongst politicians in terms of their 'care'. Therefore, at this point, it would seem that this debate about BSE focuses again upon health issues.

However, although it would appear that who 'we' are, refers to those politicians in the House (acquired through the deictic use of 'here', line 1), this interpretation is subsequently problematised in lines 3-4. Contrasting 'we all' with 'Opposition Members' (lines 3-4), it becomes clear that 'we' only refers to the Conservative Party, as everyone else present must constitute the Opposition. Therefore, having established common ground within the House in terms of a reasonable concern for the public's health, Marland then begins to produce an account that illustrates deviance from this consensus by members of the Opposition. They are, by contrast, unreasonable as they do not care for the public's health. The term 'nauseating' (line 3) is interesting as it not only goes beyond ordinary displeasure but also has an association with the earlier term 'health' (line 2). The implication is that whilst there are people in the House who *care about public health* (line 2), the Opposition does not. The term *their own public domain* (line 4) suggests that the Opposition's actions with regard to the BSE issue are politically motivated rather than guided by genuine 'care' for the public's health. The boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are drawn through the deployment of pronouns, to contrast the reasonable Government ('we all',

lines 1-3) with the unreasonable and politically motivated Opposition ('their', line 4).

The rhetorical deployment of notions of history have been documented in discursive work for their functions in increasing the factual status of accounts (for example see Condor, 1997b). In the present case, it is interesting to note that Marland deploys the term 'historically' (line 6) to warrant his claims concerning the actions of the Government. Earlier, this concern with inoculating against potential accusations that Government action was a sudden response to recent reports of CJD in humans was noted in Stephen Dorrell's opening speech (20 March 1996). Here Marland confesses the anticipated accusation *not just today*, so that he can use it as a premise for basing an alternative account, *but historically* (line 6).

Between lines 4-6, Marland explicitly positions himself in agreement with the actions taken by Douglas Hogg, and like Dorrell previously, works up the status of the scientific evidence that is being followed. However, Marland goes further than Dorrell, claiming that this scientific advice is *the best* (line 5). Earlier it was noted that Dorrell avoided such explicit claims about this scientific information ('leading experts'). The term 'available' (line 6) mitigates the claim that this scientific evidence is 'the best'. It maintains the possibility that there is other evidence, but it is not available. Like Dorrell, Marland orients to the confrontational nature of parliamentary debates and seeks to position himself, Douglas Hogg and the Government positively to avoid blame for BSE.

This issue of blame is worked upon more explicitly between lines 6-7, claiming *With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to criticize what has gone on in the past*. This is an example of prolepsis, whereby a potential criticism is dismissed as being 'easy' and therefore not a valid one. Marland is rhetorically vague about 'who' criticises.

although it can be assumed from the narrative organisation of the speech that Opposition Members are likely candidates. The term 'the past' again incorporates a sense of history into the account, but this time it functions to illustrate the progressive nature of science and provide mitigation for criticism of Government actions. The 'past' is also a commonplace (Billig 1996), insofar as what constitutes history is not under attack but it becomes a rhetorical weapon for constructing a particular argument. What happened in 'the past' is not easily definable and could allude to a number of different and contradictory versions of events. This device enables Marland to treat 'the past' as something which is already commonly known (although not necessarily agreed on) and not under dispute. Having established it as such, he is able to produce a defensive account of the Government's activities.

The defining of scientific evidence as the 'best' and 'available' is repeated again in lines 8-9. Here, not only is Hogg's personal accountability attended to, but it is extended further to the whole Government and Ministry. In acknowledging possible criticisms of the Government and Ministry, he mitigates them in terms of not having 'the benefit of hindsight' at the time, as well as the ease of the criticism. Also, as Dorrell maintained that the Government <u>*always*</u> acted on the scientific advice, so does Marland (line 8). The rhetorical citing of history becomes a powerful weapon in managing accountability. Again, the 'best scientific advice' is downgraded to that which is 'available'. Marland maintains the possibility that there may be better scientific advice, but it is unavailable to the Government. He gives an evaluation of the Government's actions concerning their responsibility for acting in accordance with scientific advice(lines 9-10). This 'responsible' Government clearly contrasts with the politically motivated Opposition Members who treat BSE as *their own public domain* (line 4). However, the responsibility of the Government is downplayed a

little, through the insertion of the term *in that regard* (lines 9-10). This ambiguous statement certainly has available an alternative reading, which is that the Government has not been responsible in other regards. Considering that Harriet Harman previously noted the Government is feeding beefburgers to children, it would be difficult for Marland to claim that the Government has acted completely responsibly with respect to BSE.

In these first few lines of Marland's speech, he has established common ground between members of the House, but also constructed the actions of the Opposition Members as deviant from this consensus. He then goes on to consider matters of both Douglas Hogg and the Government's accountability in the BSE issue. Using the notions of 'scientific advice' and appeals to 'the past', he tries to inoculate against potential criticisms whilst also working-up the factual and credible status of their actions. Thus, so far there has been little difference in this speech from Dorrell's earlier statement on 20 March 1996. However, bearing in mind that this debate occurs on the same day that the EU announce a ban on British beef, the sudden shift in Paul Marland's speech is interesting. He switches his focus from a concern with public health and scientific evidence, to the newspaper reports about BSE in other European countries.

From Health to National Identity: The 'Staggering' Europeans

Extract 3.2

Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that a considerable amount has been written in today's newspapers about what is known in Europe as mineral deficiency, or manganese staggers? Is he entirely convinced that that is not just another name for BSE in France or Holland? Should it not be examined very carefully? I have a feeling that our European Union partners are using the current difficulties here as an opportunity to do down our beef industry to the betterment of their own.

(p. 726)

It is interesting to note that Marland organises his account so that the Government, which bases its actions upon 'the best scientific advice', can be compared to these press reports of BSE in Europe. The number of newspapers containing reports about BSE in Europe is ambiguous, although the imprecise term 'considerable' suggests that there are many. It is clear that Britain is excluded from the category of Europe, otherwise Marland would not have to ask Douglas Hogg whether he was 'aware' of the press reports, or 'knows' the terms 'manganese staggers' and 'mineral deficiency' (line 13). It is implied that Britain does not have cases of 'manganese staggers' or 'mineral deficiency' and that these are peculiar to Europe.

In his second question to Douglas Hogg, Marland becomes more specific, suggesting some kind of political stake guiding the labelling of these diseases. Using an extreme-case formulation Marland inserts an adverb to ask Hogg if he is 'entirely convinced' that these diseases are not also BSE. The insertion of 'entirely' implies that there is reason not to be convinced. Indeed, the sentence could have 'entirely' removed and it would still make sense, but the implication would also have been removed. The naming of France and Holland identifies them as members of the European Community. It also provides its own inclusions and exclusions about who 'knows' what manganese staggers and mineral deficiency is. Britain is defined in terms of lack of knowledge and is excluded. As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is interesting to note how the national identity of Britain often becomes available through an implicit contrast with some national 'other'.

As Marland is talking about an explicitly controversial issue, he reduces his own responsibility for the questions asked. The listener is told that the source of these opinions comes from the newspapers, not Marland himself. In addition, it is not

explicitly stated whether he himself believes that manganese staggers or mineral deficiency is another name for BSE.

The third question is rhetorical in its assertions and denials. Marland asks *Should it not be examined very carefully?* (line 15), which contains ambiguities concerning the legitimate grounds for such examinations. For example, it is interesting that Marland does not say 'I think it should be examined carefully', as this would directly position him as someone who believes there is something sinister about certain diseases in Europe. Moreover, the notion these diseases require some examination imply foul play from France and Holland. Instead, through the adoption of a distant footing (the removal of 'I'), together with the insertion of 'not' ('should it not'), maintains the two-sided possibility that there are legitimate grounds for examining the diseases, but also that there are no legitimate grounds for examining the diseases. Indeed, if Hogg answered 'yes' to this question, it would be uncertain which of the two possibilities he was confirming. Therefore, here Marland is very careful about how he formulates this question to Douglas Hogg. Furthermore, the upgrading of 'carefully' to 'very' (line 15) implies that these reports indicate something sinister that requires an examination so that the truth may be discovered lurking underneath.

The implication of foul play from France and Holland are worked upon further in the last few lines of this speech and are available for comparison with the 'scientific' basis of the Government's actions due to the narrative organisation of this speech. Having previously been careful in avoiding positioning himself within a controversial topic of debate, Marland now shifts his footing to reflect on his personal feelings. He claims, *I have a feeling that our European Union partners are using the current difficulties here* (line 15). This in an interesting shift in footing as Marland changes

the focus of attention from particular countries (France and Holland) to a more inclusive category, that of the European Union. This is a personal evaluation of the activities of the European Union. The idea that this is only a 'feeling' enables Marland to avoid explicit declarations of belief or opinion. Feelings can be changed easily, whereas opinions and beliefs suggest something more fixed and stable. Furthermore, as discursive theorists have noted 'feelings' indicate authenticity for the speaker's account (Edwards, 1997).

The term 'our European Union partners', increases the scope of who is being referred to. Arguably, the phrase could be ironic in its over-politeness. It also indicates matters of national identification. Who 'our' refers to is ambiguous. It could include anyone from British politicians to the nation of Britain in general. The 'our' is certainly British as it is detectable from the inclusion of 'here' (line 16). The category of 'partners' indicates commonality between 'us' and the European Union. However, it also problematises the relationship between then national categories of Britain and Europe. Typically, the category of 'partners' involves associations of sharing and friendship of some form. Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) suggest: 'Such categories do not merely provide us with convenient labels which allow us to refer to persons: they also provide a set of inferential resources by which we can come to understand and interpret the behaviour of persons so designated' (p. 69). The category of partners enables Marland to provide a particular range of inferences about what 'partners' typically do, and then establish that these normative inferences do not apply here. In this way, the deviant nature of other European Union countries is made implicitly available. It also enables him to orient towards certain dilemmatic themes within his talk. On the one hand, Britain is part of Europe and therefore included in the national category (denoted by the term 'partners'). However, on the other hand

Britain is simultaneously excluded from the national category in terms of the differences between the actions of Britain and those of Europe concerning the issue of BSE. Thus, 'our partners' enables Marland to manage an ideological dilemma, positioning Britain both inside and outside the national category of Europe.

Therefore, the activities of the European Union are worked-up as being peculiar in some way. Marland contrasts the pronouns of 'our' with 'their' (line 17). In this case, the use of 'their' is a rhetorical distancing strategy, whereas 'our' is a collective pronoun that unites speaker and listeners as British. Marland suggests that 'our' difficulties are being used to better 'their' beef industry. In this extract, who the 'British' are becomes interpretative within a discursive context of who the 'Europeans' are. Differences are constructed between the two national categories, despite being 'partners'. Marland provides an account of Europe as homogenous ('their'), as is the construction of 'our' difficulties. The overall impression of Europe is unfavourable and it is against this that 'our' national identity is inferentially made available for contrast. It is interesting to note that because Marland has adopted the pronoun 'our' to identify Britain, he acquires a positive identity for himself as well as for Britain. The pronoun 'our' is connected to Britain deictically using 'here' (line 16), thus it becomes evident who 'we' are. It is interesting that Marland does not outline what the 'difficulties' are, neither does he define exactly how Europe are using them to *the betterment* (line 17) of their own beef industry. However, the speech has served to position Britain and Europe on a positive/negative scale, such that one is distinguished from the other.

Therefore, what has been considered so far is how notions of scientific advice and the past can function within talk to work-up the factual status of an account and be used

in the management of blame. More importantly in this speech, it has been examined how the shift in emphasis from health to national identity has been achieved. In particular, it has been examined how the national categories of France. Holland and the European Union can be invoked and mobilised within a political speech to indicate the illegitimacy of a ban on British beef. It has also been noted how these national categories create contrasts between a negative European identity and an implicit positive British identity. The use of the pronoun 'our' can function in these debates to claim a positive national identity for the speaker as well as for the listener (both present and absent). Finally, it has been suggested that there is some dilemma in identifying the boundaries between Britain and Europe. As has been considered here, the term 'partners' addresses such ideological dilemmas of national inclusion and exclusion.

The next set of extracts is taken from Douglas Hogg's response to this speech. Again, the analytic attention is upon how Hogg orients to both the health and national identity issues raised by Marland in relation to BSE.

Douglas Hogg (Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Conservative)

Previously, Marland noted the category entitlements of Douglas Hogg as a member of the Privy Council through adherence to political protocol. In the response by Hogg, the entitlements of Paul Marland are also made available through political protocol. These are increased further in the providing of additional information.

Entitlements to Speak

Extract 4.1

18 I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for his support. He brings a great
19 deal of knowledge to the issue, partly as a result of his time on the Select
20 Committee on Agriculture and partly because of the nature of his constituency.

Hogg begins his response to Marland with an account of his entitlements to particular knowledge (lines 19-20). He makes reference both to a committee to which Marland has been involved and his constituency. Although the listener is not informed of his particular role on the Select Committee on Agriculture, the general reference is sufficient to mark out Marland's entitlements in a distinct manner. Having attended to the credibility of Marland as a knowledgeable speaker, Hogg turns to consider aspects of his speech in detail.

'Our' Paramount and Overarching Duty to Public Health

Extract 4.2

21 On the question of public health, my hon. Friend is entirely right. I have
22 already stressed that maintaining public health is our paramount and
23 overarching duty. He is also entirely right about the question of acting on
24 scientific advice. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health
25 has made absolutely plain, we have always published the scientific
26 conclusions and recommendations and have acted on them fully and
27 promptly.

In line 21, Hogg resolves the initial question made by Paul Marland concerning public health (lines 1-2). Furthermore, he confirms the positive status of the question using the extreme-case formulation, *is entirely right*. Moreover, Hogg upgrades the 'care' in Marland's speech (line 2) into a *paramount and overarching duty* (lines 21-22). This two-part list denotes not a general concern, one amongst other concerns, but an ultimate duty. However, to whom this 'duty' refers is problematic. The 'our' is ambiguous and could refer to all members of the House, or just the Conservative Party. It certainly excludes the British nation, as 'our' is contrasted with 'the public' (line 22). The important point to note is that such ambiguity permits the syntax of hegemony.

Hogg does not address the question posed to him concerning the 'nauseating Opposition', but he does pick-up on Marland's concept of 'scientific advice'. Hogg

notes that this advice has always been 'published' (line 25). The emphasis therefore is not only on acting in accordance with science, but making this information public. As was seen previously in Dorrell's opening speech on 20 March 1996. this stress upon communicating scientific information is an important feature of Government political talk in managing issues of accountability. Hogg also orients to Marland's notions of 'the past', again using the term 'always' (line 25) to warrant Government action. The switch from 'scientific advice' (line 24), to 'scientific conclusions' is significant here. 'Conclusions' are more limited and specific than 'advice' and thus reduce the commitment to what has been 'published'. Hogg shifts the footing to deflect the attention away from just himself and instead moves it onto the whole Government, using the pronoun 'we'.

Having attended to Marland's statements concerning the public's health and Government action, Hogg now moves on to address the questions posed to him concerning Europe. What is significant here is the generalised response he gives.

The 'Suspect' Europeans

Extract 4.3

28 I was asked whether there is BSE on the mainland of Europe.
29 There are indeed cases – I suspect that there are more than have been disclosed
30 but I proceed on the basis that the problem is greater in Britain than on
31 mainland Europe.

(p. 726)

Line 28 provides a reformulation of the question asked by Paul Marland. The direct question posed by Marland contained implications of deceit, which is avoided by Hogg. He claims, *I was asked*, referring to someone else having invoked Europe into the debate. Again, it is interesting to note the variability in references to 'Europe' both between and within speakers. Hogg defines the category to be accounted for as *mainland Europe* (lines 28 and 31). Previously, Marland used the general terms of

'Europe' and 'European Union', as well as the more specific 'France' and 'Holland'. Unlike Marland who invoked the term 'partners' to construct an ambiguous relationship between Britain and Europe, Hogg creates immediate distinction between 'them' and 'us' using the term 'mainland'. Geographically Britain is not part of mainland Europe. Therefore, it becomes implicitly evident who the European 'other' is, and more explicitly who 'we' are in comparison. Hogg provides clarification and names the nation explicitly as *Britain* (line 30).

Hogg does not name the diseases of 'manganese staggers' and 'mineral deficiency', and in doing so avoids addressing Marland's contentious claim of a cover-up. He states quite directly, *There are indeed cases*. However, he follows this up with a personal evaluation of these cases using the verb 'suspect' (line 29). As Marland indicated his own feelings to avoid making an explicit statement of fact, so does Hogg and warrants authenticity for the claim. He does not elaborate upon on the basis for such suspicions, but sidelines feelings in favour of recommended political action by the E.U., *upon the basis that the problem is greater in Britain* (line 30). The term 'but' (line 30) functions as a softener as Hogg switches from personal feelings to political action. In doing so, Hogg formulates a script of his own political duties, which are not based upon personal feelings or suspicions but upon some external factor.

In this exchange between Paul Marland and Douglas Hogg, it has been examined how references to science and the past can function in talk to manage delicate matters of accountability. Both Marland and Hogg make relevant the category of 'public' to establish common ground between all members of the House and to represent the concerns of the Government. Marland also uses this to assign a negative identity to

Opposition Members as they deviate from this consensus. It has also been considered how footing can be used to position speakers outside of their own account. References to external sources from politics, such as newspapers, can be mobilised within talk to enable a speaker to utter controversial reports concerning nationalist issues without rendering oneself as the author of what is said. Presenting oneself as nationalistic is considered socially unacceptable, as would be explicit utterances of racism or prejudice (Billig, 1996; Potter and Wetherell, 1992; van Dijk, 1993). The construction of Britain and Europe is problematic. Both Marland and Hogg produce an account of Europe that is negative and unfavourable. This in turn is used to contrast the national category of Britain. A positive identity is produced for British speaker and listener as the scientific approach of the Government is contrasted against the 'suspected' foul play of Europeans.

Exchange 2

This second extract taken from the debate is an argument between William Cash (Conservative), Douglas Hogg, and George Foulkes (Labour). Whilst the previous exchange took place between two Conservative members of the House, this present discussion involves a Labour backbencher. This is of interest in terms of differences in parliamentary language between the Conservative and Labour speakers. These extracts permit an analysis to be made of how emotion categories and descriptions of mental states can function in political debate to construct and contrast identities. It is suggested that these enable speakers to construct a positive identity for themselves and Britain, and develop an implicit contrast with a negative identity of Europeans. It is argued that narratives and descriptions are discursive resources from which inferences of political motives can be construed in terms of producing contrasts.

The first speech to be considered is a question to Douglas Hogg by William Cash. Here the focus is upon the construction and mobilisation of a generalised national 'other' and how this functions to produce a contrast with 'the British'.

The 'Objective' Consumption of a Sunday Roast

Extract 5
William Cash (Conservative, Stafford)

32 Will my right hon. and learned Friend take this opportunity to redress the
33 balance that has been created by people in other countries who are seeking
34 to take commercial advantage from beleaguered British farmers, in respect
35 of both dairy and beef farms, and from other people who depend on them for
36 the goods that they sell here and abroad? Will he ensure that, in other
37 countries, a proper summary is put in newspapers by way of advertisement,
38 for example, so that people have an objective analysis against which they
39 could form their judgments on British beef, which I ate on Sunday and
40 again today?

(p. 730)

Who the *people in other countries* (line 33) are is unclear at this point. However, they are clearly not British. The term is rhetorically vague and indicates a generalised 'other'. Whilst their explicit definition is notably absent from the speech, Cash provides a description that enables him to attribute negative inferences and dispositions towards this 'other'. The listener is informed that these national 'others' *are seeking to take commercial advantage* (line 33-34). This notion of 'commercial advantage' is one that was implied earlier by Paul Marland and is a typical accusation of European 'others' in this particular debate. The term 'seeking' indicates both a motive and a political interest guiding the activities of these 'others'. Cash asks Hogg directly to *redress the balance* (lines 32-33). This statement does two important things. Firstly, it suggests that a balance that was once in place is no longer there. Secondly, it constructs the agent of this loss of balance as the 'people in other countries' who have 'created' it. Once again, matters of allocating motives and interests to an ambiguous 'other' is discursively managed.

These *people in other countries* are contrasted with *beleaguered British farmers* (line 34). The use of the description 'beleaguered' functions to emphasise the differences between the two identity categories, suggesting an element of suffering and persecution. The narrative organisation of this speech enables Cash to imply that it is the other people who are the cause of the 'beleaguerement' (although this is not explicitly stated). Moreover, the invocation of the identity 'British', to describe the farmers allows Cash to infer national differences between 'Britain' and 'other countries'. Although Cash does not explicitly compare Britain with a national 'other', he does make the contrast inferentially available. Furthermore, the 'people in other countries' are not only compared with British farmers, but also with a further category of *other people who depend on them* (line 35). It is not clearly apparent who these 'other people' are, however it can be plausibly assumed that they are also British as they 'depend' on British farmers. This is confirmed in the term *here and abroad*, where 'here' denotes Britain (line 36). This rhetorical use of generic vagueness permits Cash to imply a wide scope of British people who are suffering as a result of the politically motivated actions of 'people in other countries'. Cash relies on implication here as explicit claims could be easily undermined and challenged, and he would put his own reasonable identity at stake. Hence, Cash avoids producing explicit nationalistic utterances, although these are heavily implied. So whilst the listener has not been informed of who precisely these people 'in other countries' are, they have been told who they are not. It can be assumed that they are certainly not British.

Having constructed the problem of a negative relationship between Britain and other countries, Cash proposes a possible resolution. He suggests that a *proper summary is put in newspapers* (lines 36-37). The use of the term 'proper summary' suggests that

at present the information available to 'people in other countries' is not 'proper' in some way. The adjective 'proper' is not an integral part of the sentence structure, but has implications for its meaning. It also implies that the source of this 'proper summary' is the British. This adds to the construction of a negative/positive dichotomy between Britain and people in other countries. The notion that this summary could be put into a newspaper and made publicly available warrants its 'proper' nature further and increases its factual status. Cash states that this action will give people (in other countries) an *objective analysis* of *British beef* (lines 36-37). The term 'objective analysis' is telling. The implication is that before the publication of a 'proper summary', the 'people in other countries' are not making 'objective' judgments. The contrast between Britain and 'others' is developed for a final time in this speech. Identifying beef in national terms as 'British' reminds the listeners of the contrast being implicitly made between 'other countries' and 'Britain'.

Between lines 39-40, Cash shifts footing as he offers a personal evaluation of British beef. Using the pronoun 'I', he aligns himself with the British side of the constructed dichotomy and in doing so claims for himself the positive identity of being 'proper' and 'objective'. The earlier description of 'objective analysis' dismisses the criticism that Cash's consumption of beef is guided by political interest (as Harriet Harman criticised the Government Ministers in the previous debate). It is interesting that Cash did not begin this speech with a personal evaluation of British beef, but instead inserts it at the end. The activity of eating a traditional Sunday roast is objectively informed. The British nation is flagged in the final lines as the association between 'us' and the traditional Sunday roast is made available (line 39).

Therefore in this extract, the use of contrastive discourse using narrative sequencing

and description permits Cash to suggest a national distinction between the British and a generalised 'other'. What is of interest here is that the dilemma of producing national distinctions whilst avoiding the presentation of one's own identity as prejudiced is managed by means of these rhetorical strategies. Cash positions these national 'others' within a discourse of blame. He suggests that the differences between these two categories of people lies not in nationality (although this distinction is heavily implied), but in matters of political stake and interest as opposed to being 'proper' and 'objective' about BSE. Thus, Cash infers who 'we' are through a constructed contrast with who we are not. Likewise, he produces a negative account of 'them', not explicitly, but by means of a contrast with a positive British 'us'.

This speech is directly addressed to Douglas Hogg. Therefore, the analysis now turns to his response. In this next extract, particular attention will be paid to his clarification of the 'people in other countries'.

The Absent British and the Unsaid 'Them'.

Extract 6
Douglas Hogg

41 My hon. Friend makes an important point. Essentially, it is this: how best do
42 we try to ensure that the debate in other European Union countries is as
43 rational and as considered as that which we are seeking to have in this
44 country, and that people can make decisions in the informed and considered
45 way that we are able to do in this country because of the quality of the advice
46 that we receive.

(p. 730)

Hogg marks out an *important point* (line 41), which enables him to reformulate Cash's speech, avoiding nationalistic rhetoric and instead adopting a more banal response. The term *Essentially it is this*, opens the discursive space for the reformulation. Whilst Cash was very ambiguous in his definition of 'people in other countries', Hogg provides clarification claiming they are *other European countries*

(line 42). The inclusive pronoun 'we' used throughout this extract is ambiguous. It could refer to Government and nation. However, it is British and marks the setting-up of a contrast between 'this country' and 'other European countries'. However, Hogg also constructs similarities, as well as differences, between 'this country' (lines 43-44) and 'other European Union countries'. The term 'other' indicates that 'this country' is a European Union country. This similarity is constructed because of a shared political affiliation, rather than on any national dimensions. So, whilst Cash constructed differences between British farmers and 'others' in terms of nationality and objectivity, Hogg re-defines the national boundaries into political ones, and in doing so includes Britain within the national category of European.

Cash previously described the British as able to give a 'proper summary' (line 37) and 'objective analysis' (line 38). Here, Hogg uses similar descriptions suggesting that the debates in Britain are 'rational' and 'considered' (line 43). Again the term 'seeking' is used (line 43), but whereas Cash used it negatively to allocate political motivation to the activities of 'others', Hogg employs the word positively to describe 'this country' and its debates.

It is interesting to note that the national category label of 'Britain' is notably absent from this speech by Hogg. As Condor (1996b) notes, British people often avoid talking about Britain explicitly. This again indicates an orientation to the ideological dilemma of nationalism. As Billig (1996) suggests, what is often most revealing about talk is what is ignored and remains unsaid. Furthermore, whilst the attributes of Britain are given as 'rational', 'informed' and 'considered', the opposing description of Europe is left unsaid. As Hogg constructed a difference between Britain and other European Union countries in terms of the debates they have about BSE, it is

reasonable to assume that 'other European countries' have debates that are irrational, unconsidered, and ill informed. The source for Britain's rational, considered and informed judgments comes *from the quality of advice that we receive* (lines 45-46). However, as noted earlier the 'we' is extremely ambiguous. Previously the listeners have been informed that it is the Government who receives scientific information about BSE. 'We' could just denote the Government. 'We' could also be applied to the British national audience, as Hogg and Cash have been discussing the relationship between Britain and Europe. Thus, Hogg is able to develop credibility for the British people and manage the Government's accountability at the same time. As Billig (1995: 98) comments, 'In addressing the imagined national audience, they dress it in rhetorical finery and, then, these speakers-as-outfitter hold a mirror so the nation can admire itself'. So, as well as presenting the Government in a positive light, Hogg also maintains the possibility that this can extend to the nation's informed response to BSE.

In this response to Cash, Hogg flags the national categories of Britain and Europe, and constructs similarities and differences between them. Again, a dichotomy is created between 'them' and the positive identity of 'this country'. Perhaps what is most striking about this response from Hogg is what is <u>not</u> said. The absence of the term 'Britain' or 'British' is particularly notable, yet through implication (such as 'this country' as opposed to 'other European Union countries') it becomes clear who 'we' might be. Furthermore, Hogg produces an account that develops a positive 'us' in the rhetorical context of an unsaid negative 'them'. Which specific European Union country Hogg is referring to is not made clear. Neither does he directly accuse these other countries of imposing an illegitimate ban or as acting in an irrational way towards BSE. However, these implied meanings all remain available throughout the

extract. Moreover, as Hogg develops a positive identity for 'we' the Government and 'we' the nation, he also claims these attributes for himself.

Of interest in these extracts taken from Conservative political speakers have been the implied illegitimacy of the EU ban, and the positioning of Britain and Government as acting in an 'informed' manner about BSE. In contrast to this, the final response to be considered here is given by George Foulkes directed to Douglas Hogg. In this speech, it is noted how the techniques of listing, script formulation and the ascription of emotional and mental states can be useful rhetorical strategies in re-positioning the Government as blameworthy and the EU ban as legitimate.

<u>The Legitimate Ban and the Panicking Government: Re-defining an 'Emotional' Topic.</u>

Extract 7
George Foulkes (Labour, Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley)

47 Is the Minister aware that I am astonished at his complacency while countries
48 around the world are banning British beef, while slaughterhouses are closing,
49 while farmers in my constituency have been telephoning me all weekend
50 distraught at what is happening and while meat renderers, butchers and
51 processors are paying people off? All that is happening not because of
52 any scaremongering by Labour Members – [HON MEMBERS: "Oh!"]
53 Not at all. It is caused by the Government's panic, indecision and dogma.
54 It is about time that they dealt with the matter with the urgency and
55 seriousness that it deserves.

(p. 730-731)

Of prominent interest in this speech by George Foulkes is the emotion talk, which distinguishes it from the previous two responses by Cash and Hogg. Foulkes informs Douglas Hogg that, *I am astonished at his complacency* (line 47). He ascribes an emotional state to describe both himself (astonished) and Hogg (complacency). As Edwards (1997, 1999b) suggests, such emotion talk enables speakers to perform particular rhetorical business. It can be used to manage issues of accountability and blame through the attribution of causes to actions. He writes:

> The discourse of mind and emotion is first of all a participants' discourse, and it is rich and various, full of contrasts and alternatives, and marvellously useful in working up descriptions of human actions, interpersonal relations. and in handling accountability. (1999b, p. 273)

In the present case, it enables Foulkes to develop a positive/negative contrast between himself and Douglas Hogg. He presents Hogg's speech as 'astonishing' and therefore an object of criticism. This initial ascription of emotional states allows Foulkes to produce a narrative of descriptions of people, actions, and events, which warrant such astonishment.

The cause for Foulkes astonishment is Hogg's complacency. This is warranted using a scripted list of events. Foulkes' first claim in this list is that *countries around the world are banning British beef* (lines 47-48). Unlike Douglas Hogg and William Cash previously, he directly invokes and makes relevant the ban on British beef and implies that this ban is justified. Who these countries refer to, and how many are involved in the 'banning' is ambiguous and not specified. However, the generalised term, 'around the world', and the scripted formulation of this activity not only constructs consensus, but also present it as normative. The 'complacency' of Hogg is rendered as deviant from the consensus and unreasonable. The activities of Hogg and Government are contrasted against the actions of the rest of the world. The national identification of the beef as British (line 48) is again significant as it enables Foulkes to make a contrast between these other countries, which are banning beef, and Britain, which is not.

The strategy of scripted formulations continues to be deployed as more events and actions are described in the list. The number of slaughterhouses that are closing is avoided, as is the amount of telephone calls Foulkes receives (lines 48-51). However, the specific detail of telephone calls, together with extreme-case formulation 'all' to

describe the amount, warrants Foulkes experience. The emotional state of 'distraught' is ascribed to the farmers who have been telephoning. This is again an example of how emotion talk can be used to produce contrasts and attribute causes and blame. The 'distraught' farmers contrast with the 'complacent' Minister, rendering the disposition of Hogg as inappropriate and unreasonable. This 'distraught' description also renders the 'astonishment' of Foulkes as normative and reasonable. The three-part list of *meat renderers, butchers and processors* (lines 50-51) functions to provide a comprehensive account of the actions of people working within the beef industry. Therefore, Foulkes provides an account that constructs the deviant actions of the Government in contrast to those of the people who work in the meat industries, and thus are associated with the knowledge concerning the safety of beef. This also provides a contrast with the claims of Stephen Dorrell and Douglas Hogg, who emphasised the importance of scientific information about beef and SEAC's conclusions that British beef is safe. Here, Foulkes compares such claims with the actions of ordinary people who work in the relevant industries. These listing techniques validate Foulkes' 'astonishment'. They also manage issues concerning Foulkes' own identity in the account. It is predictable that Foulkes, as a member of the Labour party, would criticise Douglas Hogg and Paul Marland. He has a dilemma to manage concerning the credibility of his criticism. The production of the scripted events permits him to formulate normative actions through the construction of external consensus. Furthermore, he attributes the causes of actions to the complacency of Hogg and the Government. Listing techniques and script formulations containing emotion categories perform an important rhetorical function in attributing blame and assigning causes to actions. Edwards (1999b) notes the fundamental role emotion discourse plays in managing blame and accountability

through the production of scripted narratives. He claims:

> An essential feature of emotion discourse is its deployment in *narrative* and *rhetoric*. Emotion terms occur not merely as one-off descriptions of specific acts or actions, but as parts of interrelated sets of terms that implicate each other (syntagmatically) in narrative sequences, and also (paradigmatically) in rhetorically potent contrasts between alternative descriptions. Narrative sequence and rhetorical contrast are *ways of talking* about things, ways of constructing the sense of events, and orienting to normative and moral orders, to responsibility and blame, intentionality and social evaluation.
>
> (p. 279, italics in original)

In the present case, Foulkes deploys the strategies of narrative and emotion discourse to attend to his own accountability and that of the Labour party. He inoculates against a potential accusation of political stake claiming that these actions are not caused by *any scaremongering by Labour Members* (lines 51-52). The term 'Labour' is interesting here, as it is not commonly used within parliamentary debates. The more typical term of 'Opposition' has been notably replaced. 'Opposition' could potentially apply to anyone in the House who is not a member of the Government. However, the category label 'Labour' denotes a specific group membership and allows Foulkes to defend their accountability directly.

Having established who is not to blame for these events, Foulkes describes explicitly what the cause is. He states, *It is caused by the Government's panic, indecision and dogma* (line 53). The Government is described in this 3-part list in terms of emotional and mental states. Again through the scripted event sequencing of this speech, Foulkes makes available the contrast between the emotional and mental states of the Government with the categories of people such as 'distraught farmers' and himself who is 'astonished'. As Smith (1978) suggests, the use of listing techniques and the scripted formulation of events and actions can produce 'contrasting discourse'. It is interesting that this accusation of the Government does not appear at the beginning of Foulkes' speech, but towards the end when such claims have been warranted through

previous references to the actions of an outside world.

Having constructed the problem and warranted it with examples of scripted events and actions Foulkes offers a solution claiming, *It is about time that they dealt with the matter with the urgency and seriousness that it deserves* (lines 54-55). The reference to time permits Foulkes to imply that Government action in response to BSE has been neither 'urgent' nor 'serious', but quite the opposite. Moreover, this request for urgency and seriousness contrasts with the earlier description of the Government as 'panic, indecision, and dogma'. The pronoun 'they' clearly contrasts with Foulkes' earlier use of 'I' and thus establishes him as not a member of the Government, and not accountable for treating BSE as an unimportant matter.

Concluding Comments

The analytical focus in this chapter has primarily rested upon the construction of national identity categories and their mobilisation in talk. It has been suggested that as Brookes (1999) claims, the BSE debate does mark a shift in focus from public health to national identity. However, it has been suggested here that the positioning of self and others into national categories, and ascribing descriptions to those identities is deeply problematic. Firstly, the positioning of self and audience within a particular national category also involves the explicit or implicit construction of a national 'other' with whom the 'us' can be compared. National differences can be produced using contrastive discourse, in which the positive attributes of one nation can be rhetorically compared to some negative national 'other'. As has been noted here, descriptions of this negative national 'other' are not made explicit, but are made inferentially available in the talk. Secondly, it has been argued that speakers treat Europe as problematic. Rather than treating these national categories as fixed entities

with stable boundaries, a discursive analysis has noted how speakers themselves orient to the flexibility with which these categories can be constructed and deployed in talk. Of particular interest is the term 'partners' and 'other European countries', which are used in this political debate to manage an ideological dilemma. These terms can be used to position Britain within the national category of Europe, whilst at the same time locating the nation outside. Thirdly, it has been considered how constructions of a national 'us' change in the rhetorical context of a national 'them'. In this debate, 'us' explicitly defines a rational, scientific and informed British nation, whereas 'them' Europeans are implicitly irrational, politically motivated, unscientific, and ill informed. This is a significant shift from the worried and unconfident British public that Harriet Harman presented (in the context of a politically motivated Government), and the total absence of the British people from Stephen Dorrell's opening statement (20 March 1996).

Moreover, the analysis of this parliamentary debate has suggested that a number of discursive devices can be deployed in talk to manage matters of blame and accountability for BSE. It has been argued that the construction of consensus can produce normative accounts and render opposing accounts as deviant and unreasonable. It has also been claimed that contrasts can be constructed in talk to perform particular identity work. In the present example, it has been claimed that contrasts can function to create differences between political parties and national identities. It has also been stated that the scripting of activities and the use of emotion talk can be used to develop such contrasts. Furthermore, it has been argued that such contrastive discourse can function to position speakers positively within an ideological dilemma of nationalism.

This chapter has considered the continuing use of 'scientific evidence' as a resource. Previously in chapter 5, it was noted how 'science' is a flexible category that can function to both build the credibility of political accounts and undermine them. In this second debate, 'scientific evidence' has been deployed to construct contrasts between Britain and Europe. For Conservative speakers, themselves and the British people are informed, rational and objective in comparison to the 'unsaid' irrational, unreasonable and unobjective Europeans. However, for Labour speakers, the informed British public and Europeans are contrasted against the politically motivated British Government.

Chapter 7 will now turn to the final parliamentary debate to be considered here. This next chapter will take as its basis some of the theoretical points raised here concerning discursive constructions of national categories and the rhetorical management of ideological dilemmas. In a debate that does not take BSE as its central theme, but instead is labelled as one about Europe more generally, the analysis will focus upon how this issue is raised in order to permit national identities and dichotomies to be constructed. Particular attention will be paid to the deployment of the media in political debates for talking about BSE, defining national categories, and the positioning of speaker and 'others' within the discourse of blame.

7.

House of Commons Debate: European Union – 20 June 1996

Beef in 'The Sun' as a Resource for Managing Dilemmas of Xenophobia

Aims of Chapter

So far, the analysis has focussed upon those parliamentary debates that are specifically about BSE. It has been argued that in these debates, the construction and invocation of political, national and scientific identities have implications for how BSE is discussed. Moreover, it has been argued that these identities are a central feature of these debates, permitting speakers to assign and avoid blame for the BSE crisis. However, there is a sharp decline in parliamentary debates about BSE after the end of March 1996. This is paralleled with a steady increase in parliamentary debates that discuss the European Union. This certainly is an interesting shift in itself. Considering that BSE debates signal a change in focus from issues connected to health, to those associated with British and European identity, this shift is notable.

In these debates about the European Union, many topics for discussion are raised such as the single currency and policy-making. Amongst these topics, the matter of BSE is repeatedly raised throughout such debates. One example is a debate held in the House of Commons on 20 June 1996. This political discussion is interesting because it occurred during peak reporting of BSE within the British press. Blatantly xenophobic headlines and articles, dividing Britain and Europe, were particularly prevalent in the tabloid newspapers at this time (such as the *Sun*). The political writer Hugo Young (1999), claims that 'BSE unleashed the media dogs' (p. 463). Although this parliamentary debate is about the European Union, the topic of BSE is raised repeatedly throughout. In particular, the issue concerning the legitimacy of the ban

imposed upon British beef, by the European Union, is a hotly contended issue. Politicians remain divided over the matter. The Government maintains that this ban is illegitimate on the grounds that the European Union is acting unscientifically and irrationally. Opposition members' (predominantly Labour) claim that the ban is legitimate and reflects the failings of the Government to inspect and regulate the meat industry effectively. As Young (1999) notes BSE was a 'consequence, it was often argued, of the deregulatory, anti-inspection prejudices of high Thatcherism' (p. 460).

From a discursive analytical perspective, what is particularly notable about this data is *how* BSE becomes a resource for speakers to invoke and construct British and European identities. Thus, it is when BSE is discussed that national dichotomies between Britain and Europe are invoked. However as has been noted in chapter 6, the construction of national identity involves the management of an ideological dilemma of prejudice and reasonableness. How do members of the Government construct differences between Britain and Europe in terms of their approach to BSE, and at the same time distance him/herself from the xenophobia that appears in the tabloid newspapers? Likewise, how does the Opposition position Government members as xenophobic, voice their prejudice, and at the same time safeguard his/her own tolerant identity? Finally, how can the xenophobia that is 'unleashed by the media dogs', such as the *Sun* newspaper, be deployed as a rhetorical strategy for managing such dilemmas? These questions are the interests of this chapter.

Specifically, the analysis focuses upon an argument between two politically opposed members of the House, Robin Cook (Shadow Foreign Secretary) and Malcolm Rifkind (Foreign Secretary). Political theorists have noted the differences between these two speakers on the basis of their approach to European integration. Whilst

Robin Cook is a renowned Euro-sceptic (although writers have argued his position has changed recently. See Young, 1992, 1999), Malcolm Rifkind remains an Euro-enthusiast (see Northcott, 1995; Young, 1999) However, these political positions do not apriori determine the analysis. Instead, the concern remains with *when* and *how* BSE is invoked, and how it is used performatively by the two speakers to construct British and European national identities. The analysis concerns itself with an examination of how constructions of a British 'us' shift in the rhetorical context of a particularised national 'them'. Whereas previously speakers referred to a generalised Europe, what is notable in this later debate is how Europe is particularised into one nation, that of Germany. The role of the *Sun* newspaper is fundamental in permitting this identity construction. Thus, the analysis considers the implications German national identity has for constructing 'us'.

As this chapter concerns the delicate management of xenophobia within parliamentary debates, it is perhaps appropriate to consider some of the previous discursive literature that has considered the dilemmatic nature of prejudice. In this sense, it can be understood how and why xenophobia requires the deployment of rhetorical strategies for its communication.

The Reasonably Xenophobic

As many writers have noted, to appear prejudiced is socially undesirable and as a result it is routinely avoided in talk (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; van Dijk, 1984; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Reeves (1983) notes how in British political discourse, politicians avoid using racial categories. Using a device he terms 'discoursive deracialisation' he claims that politicians phrase immigration policies in such a way that the word 'race' is avoided. Similarly, Billig (1997) suggests that the imagining of

a national identity is often tied up with racial aspects. In his analysis of ordinary people's talk he examines how the topic of 'race' is routinely avoided when they talk about the royal family and its meaning for British national identity. As Billig (1996) claims, the prejudice itself forms part of a common sense insofar as it reflects an agreement that certain ways of talking are taboo. He suggests that to understand fully how prejudice functions and how a speaker can be 'reasonably prejudiced', one needs to consider it in terms of the two-handedness of rhetoric. On the one-hand a speaker makes the claim that s/he is not prejudiced, but on the other s/he makes a prejudiced statement. Hewitt and Stokes (1975) have analysed how this is managed and claim that speakers can simultaneously utter prejudicial sentiments and maintain their own 'reasonableness' through 'credentialling'. They suggest this can function in the form of disclaimers, or claims to base prejudicial statements on the basis of worldly fact rather than inner feelings. Hence, if prejudice is to be constructed and reproduced in political debates it should be possible to analyse what Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton and Radley (1988) term 'reasonable prejudice'. They note that the:

> reasonably prejudiced may be caught in the dilemma of possessing contrary ways of talking about 'them', drawing upon opposing themes of tolerance and prejudice, sympathy and blame, nationalism and inter-nationalism. In this sense their discourse, and indeed their thinking, possesses a dilemmatic quality. The unreasonable know no such dilemma. (p. 117)

Billig et al (1988) suggest that these ideological dilemmas of prejudice and reasonableness can become resources in talk for positioning self as tolerant in comparison to some 'other' who is prejudiced and thus, delegitimate. The existence of such dilemmas enables speakers to construct their world, and their position within it, flexibly. As Billig (1996) suggests, those who hold the other value become the enemy. 'Categorised as the enemy, they are placed beyond the bounds of legitimate discourse. Under these circumstances, the common ground disappears, as the two

common-senses are drawn more tightly, and less dilemmatically, around their valued symbols.' (p. 267-8). Billig et al (1988) claim that 'modern politicians need to deny prejudice, and thereby they need the symbol of prejudiced behaviour from which to distance themselves' (p. 115). In this way, it can be considered how prejudice can be used as a resource for constructing the world and political speakers in a particular 'moral' way.

This assignment and avoidance of prejudice can be analysed as something that functions rhetorically to strengthen or undermine political claims made about Britain's relationship to Europe. In recent years the issue of xenophobia surrounding the media and political debates about Britain's ambivalent relationship to Europe has received increasing attention within the social sciences. In particular, the function of the tabloid media in the reproduction and legitimisation of this relationship has been noted by CDA theorists. For example, Hardt-Mautner (1995) notes the role of the *Sun* newspaper in contributing to the confusion British people feel in identifying themselves as European. Taking the Maastricht Treaty as an example, she claims 'The *Sun* has adopted the role of mediator, simplifying, reinterpreting and in fact grossly distorting the Treaty' (p. 199). She examines how hostile national constructions of France and Germany within the tabloid press are accountable for British reluctance to accept a European identity. Likewise O'Donnell (1994) claims that 'The British tabloids, in particular, tend to be more aggressive than their continental European counterparts, most notably in their presentations of German stereotypes' (p. 354). Thus, the confusion experienced by British people in identifying themselves as European originates from a media discourse of hostility and ambivalence.

However. this examination of prejudice in the media has not been limited to CDA theorists. Flavell and Tambini (1995), in their revealing essay concerning the problematic links between Britain and Europe, note how racism and xenophobia are rooted in political history. They suggest:

> But perhaps the most visible symptom of the continued presence of an acceptable xenophobia in public and political life, is the almost pathological obsession of the British media, a vocal section of the Conservative Party, and a large slice of public opinion, with the 'European question'...the separation lives on in the mind; in all the talk of the 'clear blue water' between 'Us' and 'Europe', with the Union Jack fluttering high over the Bournemouth Conservative Party conference, in defence of the 'English' channel. Britain's Euro-phobia is a peculiar attitude: a mixture of old guard Commonwealth colonialism; and extraordinarily blind belief - exemplified in the special romance of the Thatcher-Regan years - in an entirely fictitious 'special relationship' with the US...and the secretive Foreign Office belief that Britain is still a key player in the World diplomatic scene. Politicians brought up on these ideas are generally tight lipped about what they think about foreigners. Occasionally, however, a clearly xenophobic attitude will slip out...(p. 160-161)

Flavell and Tambini make two important points here. The first can be related to Billig's (1995) thesis of 'banal nationalism' (mentioned in chapter 6). Flavell and Tambini note how the Union Jack flying from the top of a Conservative Party venue serves to remind 'us' of who 'we' are, but more importantly distinguishes 'us' from 'them', the Europeans. In this way Billig's claims, that the ideology of nationalism is embedded within everyday social practices, are verified. The second point to note is that Flavell and Tambini, like the CDA theorists, lay the blame for present day xenophobia towards Europe firmly at the feet of the politicians and the media.

Such analyses of national identity and British nationalism have proved enlightening. In particular, CDA's regard for locating the source of this prejudicial relationship, the study of the infiltration of elite discourses into lay discourses, and the extent to which the ideology of nationalism is reproduced in politics and the media, has informed social theory. However, there are a few aspects to this issue that have received

limited attention. What is notably absent from the literature is a detailed micro-level consideration of how the relationship between Britain and Europe is constructed between the political speakers themselves. There has been no attention paid to the function the tabloid media might play in the construction of Britain and Europe *within* political debates. House of Commons parliamentary debates are often littered with references made to particular headlines and articles written by Members of Parliament. Although these citations receive intense scrutiny from the political speakers within the House, discourse analysts do not afford them the same attention. The question is one of *how* and *why* are such tabloid articles made relevant and what is their role in the subtle communication of national prejudice. Here, the concern is with how the media contributes to the flexible construction and contestation of British and European national identities in parliamentary debates.

Analysis

This extract is taken from mid-way into the debate and includes a complete speech by Robin Cook and replies by Malcolm Rifkind. This extract has been chosen on the basis that it is an example of when and how BSE and the *Sun* newspaper are made relevant to the debate. Extract 8.1 starts at the beginning of Robin Cook's challenge to Malcolm Rifkind. Here the focus is upon how Robin Cook locates Malcolm Rifkind 'beyond the bounds of legitimate discourse', within an ideological dilemma of xenophobia and reasonableness.

<u>Europe: 'Our' Common Enemy or the Government's? Scripting Xenophobia.</u>

Extract 8.1
Robin Cook

1 In his remarks the Foreign Secretary stressed that Britain's future lays in
2 Europe, and ended by praising the achievements of the European Union.
3 If that is his position, the Foreign Secretary must take account of the wave of

jingoism and offensive hostility to our European partners that has been released by the Government's activities over the past month, particularly from those newspapers that told us that the Government had declared war in Europe and that told us – presumably with some spinning – that the Foreign Secretary was presiding over a war cabinet. The problem is that wars require an enemy. Inevitably those newspapers that announced we are at war started to write about the other countries of Europe as our enemies.

In this extract, Cook does not simply explicitly state that Europe is the enemy of Britain. Instead, he is careful to position his own reasonable identity in contrast to a xenophobic 'other' (the Government), before making such claims. Thus, the symbol of prejudice is invoked so that Cook can distance himself from it. However, what is important is that the prejudice itself is still constructed and reproduced within a political debate. To accomplish this, there is the development of a contrast between the actions of the Government and the statements of Malcolm Rifkind, as well as the invocation of a national war between Britain and Europe. In producing these contrasts, Cook provides a reformulation of an earlier speech given by the Foreign Secretary (lines 1-2). As mentioned previously, reformulations are not simply glosses on information, but are devices for performing constructive work (Heritage and Watson, 1979). In the present example the reformulation of Rifkind's speech permits Cook to develop the contrast between his words and Government actions. Adopting Sacks (1992) notion of Membership Categorisation Devices (MCDs), the audience is aware that the Foreign Secretary is a member of the more inclusive category of Government. Therefore, the xenophobic activities of the Government extend to include the Foreign Secretary also. Moreover, the category expectations of a Foreign Secretary rely on reasonableness and national tolerance. Here Rifkind's xenophobia is constructed as deviant from this expectation and becomes more poignant as a result.

It is interesting to note that in the first two lines of this speech, Cook explicitly uses the national category labels of *Britain* (line 1) and *Europe* (line 2). As was suggested in chapters 5 and 6, speakers often avoid using the national label of Britain explicitly

to avoid appearing nationalistic. However, as Cook adopts the footing of an 'animator', simply relaying the statements made by Rifkind and the scripted activities of the Government, his accountability for invoking these two nations is reduced. The pronoun 'I' is notably absent from this extract as Robin Cook produces a factual piece of discourse.

This notion of 'scripted activities' is an important feature of the narrative account. Cook scripts the Government's actions that contrast with Rifkind and locates the script within a narrative structure. Whereas cognitive psychology treats scripts as the neutral consequence of perception, such that they guide appropriate behaviour, discursive theorists have claimed that they are rhetorically designed and deployed in talk. Edwards (1997) suggests that the analytical focus should:

> move away from how cognitive scripts are formed, with the usual assumption of a disinterested, 'naïve scientist'...towards the study of how, on specific occasions, and specifically *for* those occasions, people descriptively construct activities as routine or anomalous.' (p. 144).

According to Schank and Abelson (1977) scripts are the result of perceptual experience enabling the perceiver to pick out regular features of different events, situations and interactions, such that they behave in the appropriate manner. Thus the script is a value-free 'fact' about how certain aspects of social reality function. However in extract 8.1, Cook clearly scripts the activities of the Government *over the past month* (line 5). Here, the script is not a neutral perception of members of the Government but is a version of social reality that is rhetorically designed to pick out their xenophobic 'routine' activities. The implication is that although prejudiced behaviour is not what is typically expected of members of Governments, it is normative behaviour for this particular Government. Moreover, the contrast between Government action and Rifkind's statement is signalled with the conditional use of

'if' (line 3). This provides Cook with the basis for proceeding with the narrative that provides the contrast. Cook positions the Government as accountable for a *wave of jingoism* and *offensive hostility* (lines 3-5). As Potter (1996) notes, the generic detail is a powerful rhetorical strategy for increasing the facticity of accounts. It is interesting that Cook does not elaborate on these xenophobic activities or describe them in their particularities, but instead locates them within a generalised abstract script. However, through positioning the Government as xenophobic, Cook makes inferentially available his own 'reasonable' identity by means of an evaluation of these activities (as 'offensive'). Again, Edwards' work on scripts is useful here as it sheds light on how these generalised descriptions of events and/or behaviour can 'make inferentially available particular dispositional states of the actors: their moral character; personality, or state of mind' (1997: 149). What is interesting in this present example is that the scripted activities of the Government not only makes the personalities of its members available (as xenophobic), but also that of Robin Cook in contrast (as reasonable).

What are also interesting in this extract are the dilemmatic boundaries that are drawn around Britain and Europe. The pronoun 'our' (line 4) signifies Britain, which is detectable by tracing the narrative back to line 1. Moreover, the use of 'partners' is deployed again in political talk to include Britain within the national category of Europe. Thus, 'we' are both included within the national category of European ('partners'), whilst at the same time excluded ('our'). Previously, in chapter 6, it was how Paul Marland (25 March 1996) constructed Europe as 'our partners' to produce a contrast between what is typically expected of 'partners' and Europe's actions. However, here the description of Europe as 'our partners' offered by Cook marks homogeneity between Britain and Europe, but at the same time maintains the

distinction between them. This inclusion of Britain into the wider category of Europe is contrasted against the xenophobic words of the Foreign Secretary and the actions of the Government.

Later in this extract, Cook begins to invoke notions of a war between Britain and Europe. As wars infer issues concerning national prejudice, the deployment of *those newspapers* (line 6) is a powerful rhetorical strategy to manage Cook's own 'reasonable' identity, whilst positioning the Government as xenophobic. Arguably, Robin Cook is using a well-known political code that indicates an ironically mentionable class of newspapers. His listeners are aware of which newspapers are being referred to. The use of the phrase 'that told us' is deployed ironically in a statement about war. To have to be 'told' ironies the claim made by the newspaper. Moreover, it can be inferred indexically that who 'us' refers to is the British nation. The only categories mentioned in this speech so far is Europe and Britain, and the listener is informed that Europe is the opposition, so it becomes apparent that the 'us' must be British. It is the British public that read 'those newspapers'. Hence, 'those newspapers' is a useful tool that permits Cook to continue an account of a 'war' between Britain and Europe. This is clearly an example of 'credentialling' (Hewitt and Stokes, 1975). Cook bases the prejudiced statement on some worldly fact (the newspaper reports) rather than on personal feeling, and in doing so maintains his own reasonable identity. 'Who' is doing the spinning is ambiguous. It could indicate either the newspapers or the Government. The term 'presumably' to describe the spinning, is an imprecise adverb that suggests this is not a factual statement, but a possible one and, therefore, deniable. However, the 'spinning' suggests that the war between Britain and Europe is not a 'fact', but reflects the underlying political interests of the Government and/or the newspapers.

The notion of a 'war cabinet' is reported from the discredited newspapers and is not presented as the opinions of Cook himself. It warrants Cook's suggestion that a 'war' reflects the interests of the Government, and is not based on a serious worldly fact. So, by making 'those newspapers' relevant and reporting their contents, Cook is able to utter xenophobic notions of war between 'us' and 'Europe' whilst maintaining his own credibility as a non-prejudiced speaker. Furthermore, the 'told us' (line 7), together with the phrase 'presumably with some spinning' allows Cook to ironize such claims as absurd. It is interesting that the word 'that' is inserted into the phrase *told us <u>that</u> the Government had declared war in Europe and <u>that</u> told us – presumably with some spinning – <u>that</u> the Foreign Secretary was presiding over a war cabinet* (lines 6-8). This pronoun is not crucial to the sentence structure, but is an effective rhetorical device for distancing the claims of war between Britain and Europe from the personal beliefs of Robin Cook.

The introduction of the term 'enemy' (line 9) is presented as being the inevitable consequence of talk about war. Moreover, 'enemy' permits a syntax of homogeneity in European hostility towards Britain. So firstly, the insertion of the terms 'enemy' and 'war' enable Cook to ironically delegitimize the claims of the newspapers and the Government. Secondly, it also allows Cook to introduce further national categories in addressing the problem, namely 'who' the enemy are. The term 'inevitably' (line 9) is not central to the structure of the statement. However, its inclusion marks out the reporting of the 'enemies' as a normative sequential action of the newspapers and warrants Cook's invocation of them into the speech.

In extract 8.1, Cook categorises Europe on the basis of its 'presumed' hostility towards Britain. However in extract 8.2, Cook particularises one nation of Europe. In

doing so he provides clarification of who this national 'other' is that is at war with 'us' the British.

Flouting the Common Sense Taboo of Prejudice: Xenophobia in the *Sun*

Extract 8.2

11 *The Sun* offered helpful advice to its readers on how best to insult German
12 tourists. Last week, the Foreign Secretary made a speech in which he
13 declared that the Government is not anti-European. I welcome that
14 statement, although I am bound to say that I find it revealing that the
15 Foreign Secretary should feel obliged to have to announce that. I also
16 find it revealing that broadcasting authorities should regard the
17 announcement as sufficiently newsworthy to include in their bulletins.

Through the use of careful narrative sequencing and the adoption of an animator footing, the 'enemy' of war is identified explicitly as Germany. This can be inferred from the previous talk of British enemies and the sequential invocation of German tourists (lines 11-12). The connections between Britain, Germany and the war are made available by means of narrative structure. However, Cook shifts his footing from animator to author to mark his own 'reasonable' evaluation of this national dichotomy between Britain and Germany produced by the press and Government. Cook is explicit about the newspaper to which he refers and names it as the *Sun* (line 11). The 'helpful advice' the *Sun* provides is ironic, indicated by the explicit flouting of the 'common-sense' taboo of prejudicial talk. Again, here is an example of how scripts can function rhetorically to assign prejudice. In extract 8.2 the particular instance of an article about how to insult German tourists is invoked. Firstly, this is a gloss on the actual title. It's actual title was '20 Things To Steer Clear Of' (the *Sun*, May 22, 1996). In this article, insulting German tourists was only one point raised amongst 19 others, of which none made any further reference to German tourists. Secondly, this instance of xenophobia is used to drive the narrative

from a particular emblematic episode to a script of 'typical' xenophobia in the *Sun*.

Edwards (1997) notes that for discursive theorists the issue is:

> how people move from *episodes* (singular events that happen, or that are described as such), to the status of these as *instances* of a more general pattern. to *script formulations* of what kind of pattern that is. Script formulations can be fleshed out or warranted by detailed episode descriptions, just as episodic events can be described and scripted up into generalisations. (p. 149).

In this current extract, this instance of xenophobia becomes the basis for warranting episodes and generalised script formulations concerning the routine xenophobic activities of the *Sun* newspaper. Moreover, Cook uses this ironic reference to articles that appear in the *Sun* as a means of warranting the xenophobia of the Government. Earlier in this speech, Cook had implied the Government was accountable for what appeared in the newspapers (lines 3-8). Thus, in this later extract, the Government become linked with particular instances of xenophobia within one particular newspaper, the *Sun*.

Again, Cook contrasts a speech made by Malcolm Rifkind, *that the Government is not anti-European* (line 13) with the xenophobic activities of the *Sun* newspaper. This contrast appears in a surrounding local discursive context in which Cook has implied Government accountability for articles that appear in the *Sun*. As Potter (1996) suggests, the construction of inconsistency and contradiction is an effective strategy for undermining the credibility of a speaker. Here it is used to discredit the claims made by Malcolm Rifkind.

The shift in footing here is revealing as Cook deploys the pronoun 'I' to position his own 'reasonable' identity in contrast to the xenophobia of the Government. In a series of personal evaluations, Cook flexibly constructs a particular version of events, positioning himself and Rifkind at opposite ends of a moral scale of prejudice and

tolerance. Genette (1980) claims that when speakers produce a narrative of events, they have available to them a number of different ways of telling the story and presenting an opinion. For example, in this extract Cook uses what Genette terms 'internal focalisation' to present his own point of view about Rifkind's announcement. In these kinds of narratives the audience typically takes on the position of the narrator, or person whose opinion is being represented. As Potter (1996) notes, using this form of focalisation 'that character will have a technical advantage over the other characters' (p. 164). So in the present example, Cook produces a narrative of actions taken by the newspapers and Malcolm Rifkind, reported from his own point of view. Hence, the audience is likely to adopt Cook's 'reasonable' negative evaluation of these actions.

The expression *I am bound to say* (line 14) expresses Cook's reasonable identity and irony. It is not normative for people occupying the positions of 'Foreign Secretary' or 'Shadow Foreign Minister' to <u>have</u> to make these kinds of announcements, as being 'reasonable' is a category expectation. Indeed, the term indicates Cook's reluctance to make the statement. The implication of a xenophobic Foreign Secretary is contrasted against the implicit 'reasonable' identity of Robin Cook.

Furthermore, he ironies the statement made by Malcolm Rifkind claiming, *I find it revealing* that he *should feel obliged to have to announce that* (lines 14-15). The 'I' is clearly contrasted against the xenophobia of the Foreign Secretary. The term 'revealing' implies that such announcements are produced to protect an underlying political stake in the matter. Moreover, the reference to inner emotional states, 'should feel', suggests that Rifkind would prefer to make a different statement, but is obliged to reveal a more reasonable position towards Europe. Cook implies that it is

normative for a Government not to be anti-European. Therefore, Malcolm Rifkind's statement appears deviant from what is typically expected from a Government. As discursive theorists have noted, the factual status of claims can be dramatically reduced when their basis are constructed as rooted in mental/emotional interests rather than worldly fact (Edwards, 1997, 1999b; Potter, 1996). The insertion of the verb 'should' (line 15, and also line 16) is an interesting feature of this extract. Surplus to the syntactic structure of the statement, its inclusion throws imprecision on Rifkind's 'feelings' and the 'regards' of the broadcasting authorities. Hence, the verb 'should' drives the statement from neutral fact to personal opinion. Cook has already provided his listeners with an explanation of why these statements are necessary in his construction of a Government that is responsible for 'jingoism and offensive hostility' (line 4). The gloss on Malcolm Rifkind's speech is further ironized as Cook reports the actions of the broadcasting authorities. The repetition of the verb 'revealing' (line 16) together with the adjective 'sufficiently' to describe the noun 'newsworthy' (line 17) drives the irony. Furthermore, the introduction of 'broadcasting authorities' provides Cook with independent consensus for his suggestion that this announcement is not normative and is indicative of a Government that is hostile towards Europe.

In the next extract, Cook further warrants the suggestion that the Government is anti-European, providing glossed statements made by key members of the Government that are inconsistent with the reported position of Malcolm Rifkind. Moreover, the national category of German is again invoked and contrasted with Britain.

From Scripts to Emblematic Instances: Warranting Xenophobia in the Government.

Extract 8.3

18 If the Government are not anti-European, perhaps the Foreign Secretary

should tell the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, who –
of all people – said it was unbelievable that the BBC had adopted
Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" as a theme because it was a German tune.
Perhaps he should also tell the chairman of the Tory party, who – in a
pithy statement of his cultural tastes – said that he would have preferred
the BBC to choose "a bit of British music". Perhaps the Foreign
Secretary should also tell the editor of The Sun.

Two important points should be raised about this extract. The first concerns the use of emblematic instances to construct a generalised script of Government activity. The second notes the use of MCDs and category expectations.

Again, Robin Cook ironies the Foreign Secretary's statements using the conditional word 'If' (line 18) to maintain the possibility that the Government are anti-European. It also signals a narrative sequencing of actions and events. The irony is performed in Cook's suggestion that Malcolm Rifkind 'should tell' other Government members of their position. In this extract the contrast between Rifkind and Government is emphasised through the use of emblematic examples of key members. Firstly, 'Government' is an MCD that includes the members Secretary of State for Education and Employment, and the Chairman. Reference is made to what is typically expected of a person occupying the position of Secretary of State for Education and Employment[4], in the words *who-of all people* (lines 19-20). Thus, Cook draws his audience's attention towards the category expectations of the Secretary of State for Education and Employment and displays her comments about the Germans as deviant from this norm. Secondly, the term 'unbelievable' emphasises the difference between the 'reasonable' broadcasting authorities and the xenophobic Secretary of State for Education and Employment. Finally, the national category of 'German' is raised again, but this time used to describe a 'tune'. Whilst the nation of Germany has not been referred to explicitly, the particularising of 'German tourists' and 'German tune' all point towards the national category generally. Following the narrative

structure of Cook's speech, it can be inferred that this is further clarification of the 'enemy' of Britain. However, the responsibility for invoking the term 'German' to describe the 'enemy' rests with the *Sun* and the Government.

A further emblematic example of inconsistency between the Foreign Secretary and the Government is described in another ironic attack. This time the actions of the Chairman of the Tory Party[5] are reported. The conceptual position of 'Chairman' is invoked, and the expectations one might have of a 'reasonable' person occupying such status are contrasted against the xenophobic reality. The term 'pithy' to describe the chairman's 'tastes' is an interesting use of associated words to convey Cook's evaluation of him. Furthermore, the term *a bit of British music* (line 24) contrasts with the earlier term of *Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy'* (line 21). The minimiser 'bit' functions to reduce the status of the British music, whereas that of the 'German tune' is maximised through the explicit naming of composer and title. It also provides a further irony of the Secretary of State for Education and Employment's statement that this was just a 'German tune'. The notion that the Foreign Secretary has to 'tell' these members of the Government clearly contrasts with his statement that, *the Government are not anti-European* (line 18). Again, the insertion of 'should' is notable in Cook's proposal for the future 'reasonable' actions of the Foreign Secretary. As was seen in extract 8.2, the reference to particular instances can become the basis for constructing episodes and generalised scripts of routine xenophobic behaviour. In extract 8.3, the examples of the Secretary of State for Education and Employment and the Chairman become symbols of Government prejudice.

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[4] The Secretary of State for Education and Employment at this time was Gillian Shepherd.
[5] The Chairman of the Conservative Party at this time was Michael Heseltine.

Previously, Robin Cook implied a relationship between the Government and the *Sun* newspaper insofar as the tabloid reported Government activities and statements. Here, this relationship is reworked in terms of an implied personal relationship between Malcolm Rifkind and the editor of the *Sun.* A contradiction is constructed between what Malcolm Rifkind says publicly in the House of Commons, and what is said privately to the editor. Once more, the verb 'should' is included into the syntactic structure to convey a proposal for future 'reasonable' behaviour from the Foreign Secretary.

One final point about extract 8.3. In the production of this narrative the focalisation has shifted from internal to 'zero focalisation'. Rather than claiming to provide any personal opinion on the activities of members of the Government, Cook simply passively observes them. This functions to increase the facticity of what is being reported. In the following extract the BSE issue is made relevant to the debate. Earlier in this chapter it was stated that BSE is a discursive resource that politicians use to construct national dichotomies between Britain and Europe (also Germany). So far both Britain and Europe have been invoked into the debate without any apparent reference to BSE. However, if one follows Cook's speech to completion it becomes clear that it is precisely the issue of BSE that enables these national categorisations to be made at all. The 'war' that was attributed to the Government and press, that permitted Cook to report prejudiced sentiments, is clarified in these later lines as a 'beef war'. Thus, it is reference to BSE that creates the links between Britain, Europe and Germany in terms of a 'war'. What therefore becomes of interest analytically, is its rhetorical function in constructing national comparisons, attributing blame, and political point scoring.

Cartoons in the *Sun*: Location as a Resource for Blatant Xenophobia.

Extract 8.4

26 The Foreign Secretary wrote an article on the beef war for *The Sun*, which was
27 carried under a cartoon of a German U-boat sinking British ships. In the line
28 immediately above the photograph of the Foreign Secretary, the
29 German U-boat commander says: "Mein Gott, it's good to be
30 torpedoing British ships again!" The Foreign Secretary will be aware that I
31 wrote to him to invite him to join me in a joint appeal against that type of
32 offensive xenophobia. He will know that he refused.

What is most striking in this extract is the invocation of a newspaper article written by Rifkind for the *Sun* newspaper. The citation of this article becomes a powerful piece of rhetoric for discrediting Rifkind on the grounds of being xenophobic. Moreover, it becomes the key instance in an episode of Government xenophobia. The notion that the article is evidence of a xenophobic activity is not explicitly stated but is implied through the narrative structure of Cook's speech. Previously, listeners were informed that the *Sun* published articles on *how best to insult German tourists*. So, the Foreign Secretary's article is discredited on the grounds of its association with the newspaper.

The 'war' that was invoked in line 6, becomes clarified in two distinct ways in extract 8.4. First, this is a 'beef war'. Second, this is a war between Britain and Germany rather than the more inclusive national category of Europe. It becomes apparent that media reports about BSE are useful resources in parliamentary debates for constructing the national identities of Britain and Europe and, in particular, the sensitive relationship between Britain and Germany. The listener is not told the details of the content of this article, but is informed of its location on the page (line 27). As noted previously, discursive theorists have argued that precise details can be undermined. In this case, the content of the article may not be xenophobic. This would of course be damaging to Cook's positioning of Rifkind as prejudiced. Therefore, he instead focuses upon the location of the article within the newspaper.

The concern therefore, is *why* this is made relevant. Primarily, it implicates the Foreign Secretary in the 'offensive xenophobia' (line 32) of the *Sun* newspaper simply through location of his article. Moreover, through reference to location the association between 'beef war' and 'German U-boat sinking British ships' is made inferentially available to a British national audience. Cook even notes that there is a photograph of the Foreign Secretary directly below the cartoon, implying a link to Rifkind's possible endorsement of it. This link is reiterated in Cook's report of Rifkind's refusal to condemn xenophobia in the *Sun* newspaper (lines 30-32). The quotation of the newspaper's cartoon enables Cook to manage an ideological dilemma, this being the uttering of blatant 'xenophobia' whilst maintaining his own reasonable identity. Hence, the cartoon is the ultimate symbol of xenophobia against which Cooks makes inferentially available his own reasonable identity. Again, this is a further example of credentialling as Cook orients to the ideological dilemma of prejudice, basing the evidence of xenophobia of worldly fact (the cartoon) rather than personal opinion or suspicion. Adopting the footing of an animator, or relayer of information (Clayman, 1992), Cook is able to make available the association between 'war' and 'Germany' through the narrative structuring of the speech.

In this extract 'us' become the victims of war, as opposed to 'them' the Germany perpetrators. This theme is reproduced explicitly in the media at this time. However, what is interesting is how this ambivalence between Britain and Europe is also reproduced in the parliamentary debates. However, due to the dilemmatic nature of such nationalistic constructions of difference, *how* it is accomplished in politics differs significantly from the blatant style of the tabloid media. Politicians have 'reasonable' identities to manage. Throughout this speech Cook manages his own reasonableness by means of positioning the Government and Malcolm Rifkind outside

the boundaries of legitimate discourse and providing an implicit contrast with himself. The idea that Cook finds this xenophobia as 'offensive' positions him within the ideological dilemma of prejudice as reasonable. He also implicates the Foreign Secretary in a 'joint appeal'. However a contrast is constructed between Cook and the Foreign Secretary as the latter *will know that he refused* (line 32). Hence. Malcolm Rifkind is, by implication, positioned within the dilemma as xenophobic. The details of the letter of invite to appeal, or the reasons for the Foreign Secretary's refusals are notably absent from the speech. However, the construction of shared knowledge between Robin Cook and the Foreign Secretary function to establish his refusal as 'known' and also provides the basis upon which Cook can warrant his attack on Rifkind's identity.

In the final few lines of this speech, Cook shifts from this political 'knockabout' style of speechmaking, to a more serious evaluation of Government activities. Moreover, he switches from the particular instances of xenophobia to a generalised script formulation of Government prejudice.

Transforming Instances into Scripts & the Dilemma of Constructing European Boundaries

Extract 8.5

33 There is no point in assuring our partners that the Government are not anti-
34 European if they see that that is the type of company that he keeps. It is a
35 shortsighted diplomacy that says one thing to our partners and then sends out
36 a different signal to the editor of The Sun, because the other members of the
37 European Union can see through that.

In this extract, Rifkind's article in the *Sun* becomes the basis for warranting Government xenophobia in the proposition made between lines 33-34. The term *our partners* are a typical feature of these political debates, and are deployed to position Britain both outside and inside the national and political boundaries of Europe. From

a linguistic perspective, Cook develops a pronominal scale on which 'our partners' is contrasted with 'the Government' and 'he'. The use of 'our' unites Cook and audience under a national category of British. However, it also displays Rifkind and Government activities as deviant from what is typically expected of 'partners'. Interestingly, although Britain is identified as European, Cook also maintains British distinction from Europe, contrasting 'our' with 'they' (lines 33-34). Cook could have used the pronoun 'we' and decisively positioned Britain as a European nation. He displays reluctance to provide such clarification. So the dilemma concerning Britain's relationship to Europe is not resolved here by Cook, but instead is reproduced within an ambivalent discourse. However, Britain's position as a member of the political category European Union, amongst *other members* (line 36) does not provide Cook with similar dilemmas, but is resolved immediately. Thus, when Europe is constructed in national terms the dilemma of British identification is apparent. When the political description of 'European Union' is used, Britain is clearly categorised as a member.

The use of the word 'shortsighted' (line 35) to describe the Government provides a 'pun' on the claim that *the other members of the European Union can <u>see</u> through that* (lines 36-37). Hence, a further contrast is made between a Government that is discredited as being 'short-sighted' with the European Union who can 'see'. Who the *other members of the European Union* are is unclear, however the listener can infer from the narrative of Robin Cook's speech that Germany is one of them.

Finally, what is also of interest in this extract is the use of 'signal' (line 36) to describe Rifkind's relationship to the editor, which replaces the earlier 'says' (line 35) to denote a relationship with 'our partners'. Thus, Cook avoids the explicit claim that

Rifkind has a direct influence over the editor of the *Sun* and instead implies it through the downgraded 'signal'. Such assertions are easily proved to be false and can be denied. However, the implication is not verifiable and becomes difficult to deny.

So, what has been interesting in Cook's speech is the reproduction of xenophobic discourse to describe the relationship between Britain and Europe/Germany, through the deployment of the *Sun* newspaper reports about BSE. In particular, the development of a contrastive discourse, episodic instances and scripts are central to the construction and positioning of identities within the ideological dilemma of prejudice and reasonableness. In extract 9, the Foreign Secretary provides the 'anti-logoi' to this speech as he defends himself and the Government from the challenges made by Robin Cook. Having been positioned as xenophobic, the analysis considers how Malcolm Rifkind resists this identity and in defence re-positions Robin Cook and the Labour Party within the dilemma. Moreover, the analysis notes how arguments about categorisations and particularisations can function as rhetorical weapons in challenging and defending each political speaker's prejudiced identity. The remainder of this political exchange between Robin Cook and Malcolm Rifkind occurs in the form of short challenges and responses.

Shifting the Moral High Ground

Extract 9
Malcolm Rifkind

38 I seem to remember that the Leader of the Opposition had an article in his
39 name published in *The Sun* recently. Will the right hon. Gentleman
40 dissociate himself from that?

In line 38, Rifkind claims *I seem to remember*. Edwards (1997) suggests that references to memory can be studied as a participant's concern. References to memory can be analysed as public practices oriented towards issues of blame and

accountability. Middleton and Edwards (1992:9) claim, 'Primarily it can be seen in argument about contested pasts and plausible accounts of who is to blame, or to be excused, acknowledged, praised, honoured, thanked, trusted and so on, that occur as part of the pragmatics of everyday communication.' In the present example, the use of the term 'remember' forms the basis for the event that is consequentially described. Moreover, the pronoun 'I' permits the relation between mind and world that establishes the speaker's factual authenticity. However, the insertion of the imprecise word 'seem' throws a degree of doubt upon Rifkind's reporting of 'memory'. As has been mentioned previously, Gastil (1992) notes how imprecise words are common features of political talk as they allow possible counter-arguments to be maintained, and do not commit the speaker to a particular version of events. In the present case, the word 'seem' maintains the possibility that Rifkind's memory is incorrect. Given the notion that what is being remembered is an article published in a newspaper, the word 'seem' ironies the suggestion of possible doubts about Rifkind's memory. Hence, Rifkind avoids addressing the issue of his own article in the *Sun*, by pointing to another publication in the same newspaper by the Leader of the Opposition[6]. In doing so, he makes Cook accountable for the 'Leader of the Opposition's' article and leaves inferentially available contradiction between Robin Cook's evaluation of the *Sun* newspaper as xenophobic, and the actions of his own political party. The term 'recently' (line 39) strengthens the relevance of the reporting of the event.

Rifkind re-positions Cook within the dilemma by posing a rhetorical question. If he dissociates himself from the article he will appear divided from his party leader, however if he disagrees with the question he will be condoning the publication of

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[6] The Leader of the Opposition at this time was Tony Blair

articles in the *Sun* written by Members of Parliament. In extract 10, Cook manages the dilemma by drawing upon the rhetoric of categorisation and particularisation.

Particularising the Category

Extract 10
Robin Cook

41 No, not in the slightest. But I must say that my right hon. Friend the Leader of
42 the Opposition has dissociated himself from that cartoon and the like. Will
43 the Foreign Secretary now dissociate himself from what *The Sun* has said?

In this response, Cook particularises the article written by Blair as an exception to the category of xenophobia. He resolutely rejects the invitation of dissociation (line 41), and qualifies his answer by reference to the Leader of the Opposition's dissociation from the cartoon. 'The like' (line 42) is an ambiguous term that suggests category boundaries without stating what they are. It is not exhaustive of all the newspaper's contents, but likewise does not define what is included and what is excluded. What is 'like' the cartoon is a matter of interpretation and is therefore incredibly ambiguous. This vagueness is important as a contrast is made between articles written by the Leader of the Opposition and those written by Rifkind.

Hence, here we have an argument about categories and particulars. Robin Cook particularises Tony Blair's article as unrepresentative of the category of xenophobia. Cook cannot dissociate himself from articles published by the leader of his party but he can construct differences between those written by the Leader of the Opposition and those written by the Foreign Secretary. To do so, he invokes the cartoon again into his speech, claiming the Leader of the Opposition 'dissociates himself' from it. This is particularised in a locally managed discursive context which categorises Malcolm Rifkind's article as xenophobic and evident of his condoning such articles as the cartoon. Cook ends his response by positioning Rifkind in a dilemmatic situation.

If he dissociates himself from the *Sun* newspaper he risks undermining the credibility of his own article. However, if he does not dissociate himself, he likewise risks appearing to condone xenophobia. Therefore in his defence, Rifkind also needs to make an argument of particularisation and categorisation which distinguishes between xenophobic articles that appear in tabloid newspapers and his own reasonable article.

Categorising the Particular

Extract 11
Malcolm Rifkind

44 I have no difficulty whatsoever in condemning unreservedly the
45 xenophobic nonsense that appears in the tabloid newspapers. But
46 the idea that the Leader of the Opposition can have articles published in *The*
47 *Sun* and that I am not allowed to do so without being associated with other
48 headlines in that newspaper is one of the more absurd propositions made by
49 the right hon. Gentleman.

Billig (1996), in writing about the rhetoric of logoi and anti-logoi claims, 'One should not passively accept the question as it is phrased, but should undermine the appropriateness of the challenge' (p. 254). Here, it is interesting to note that Malcolm Rifkind does not answer Robin Cook's question directly but instead challenges the 'appropriateness' of the proposed dilemma. The question is specifically about the *Sun*, yet Rifkind generalises his answer to refer to 'tabloid newspapers', claiming he condemns *unreservedly the xenophobic nonsense* within them (lines 44-45). Thus, neither Cook nor Rifkind 'dissociate' themselves from the *Sun* newspaper explicitly. The cartoon is not addressed directly either. What Rifkind classes as 'xenophobic nonsense' is not specified, however he particularises his own article as unrepresentative of this category. As the response is given immediately following Cook's speech with regard to the 'cartoon' it can be assumed that this is a representative example of such 'xenophobic nonsense'. It is interesting to note that the term 'xenophobic' is reintroduced into the debate by Rifkind to position his

reasonable identity. Cook's argument for the categorisation of Rifkind's article into the xenophobia of the *Sun*, and the particularisation of Tony Blair's article from the same category, is described as 'absurd' (line 48) and beyond the boundaries of reason. Moreover, the insertion of this proposition as *one of the more absurd* (line 48) implies that this is just one amongst many.

In the final response to be considered in this chapter, Cook returns invocations of BSE. Here it is noted how this is used as a resource for particularising Tony Blair's from the xenophobia of the *Sun*, and categorises Malcolm Rifkind as emblematic of prejudice.

<u>In A Spin over the Beef War: Finalising the Government Script</u>

Extract 12
Robin Cook

50 The Foreign Secretary cannot wriggle out that way. The reason why *The Sun*
51 ran that type of cartoon and others like it is that the right hon. and learned
52 Gentleman and the Government led them – through the spinning on this beef
53 war – to talk about it as a war, to talk about a war Cabinet and to regard
54 the other countries of Europe as our enemies. The Foreign Secretary knows
55 perfectly well that the reason why he did not agree to make that joint
56 declaration against xenophobia is that he did not want to offend the editor
57 of *The Sun*

In extract 12, Rifkind's article is categorised as xenophobic on the grounds that it is about BSE. As is a common theme throughout this debate, BSE is now referred to as the 'beef war'. Thus, all the earlier scientific terminology and concerns about public health within parliamentary debates are sidelined in favour of a national conflict between Britain and Europe. The notion of a Foreign Secretary who is trying to *wriggle out* (line 50) implies that Rifkind is politically motivated in his avoidance of offering explicit condemnation of the *Sun*. Moreover, the verb 'wriggling' suggests that Malcolm Rifkind is experiencing difficulties in responding to Robin Cook's questions.

Earlier Robin Cook noted that the articles on the 'war', which appeared in the tabloids, were subject to spinning. However it was not clear at this point who was responsible for the spinning. Here he clarifies. 'Spinning' suggests that the Government have a political stake in the 'beef war', and the term is used to both discredit the claims of Malcolm Rifkind and also warrant their accountability for the xenophobic articles published in the *Sun*. It is made apparent who is accountable for talk about a 'war' with regard to the beef issue, this being the Government and the Foreign Secretary. This assertion is located at the end of an exchange in which Robin Cook has previously given emblematic examples of Government xenophobia. What is interesting here is that Cook mitigates the *Sun's* accountability for xenophobia, claiming the Government *led them* (line 52). This is an important rhetorical move, which enables Cook (like Rifkind) to avoid explicit condemnation of the *Sun* newspaper. Considering both politicians has some degree of association with the newspaper (indeed it is often a useful forum for political comment), their reluctance to condemn it as xenophobic is revealing. Furthermore, it is the Government, and not the *Sun*, who are presented as accountable for regarding *the other countries of Europe as our enemies* (line 54). The constructed conspiracy between Malcolm Rifkind and the editor of the *Sun*, which has been worked-up during Robin Cook's speeches, is finally realised in these concluding lines of this political exchange.

Concluding Comments

At the start of this chapter, a few theoretical points were made concerning the dilemmatic nature of prejudice and the ambivalent relationship between Britain and Europe. It was also claimed that BSE becomes a useful resource in parliamentary debates for reproducing this ambivalence, through the construction of a British 'us' in

contrast to a European/German 'them'. In the present example it has been argued that Robin Cook positions his own reasonable identity in contrast to a prejudiced Government and Foreign Secretary. These assignments of prejudiced identity function to discredit and delegitimise 'pro-European' claims made by Rifkind. However. the flexible ways in which these prejudiced and reasonable identities can be deployed have been noted, as political speakers assign and avoid accusations of xenophobia. Thus, these identities are not fixed but can be challenged and defended in the cut and thrust of political debates.

The analysis has also examined the *Sun* newspaper as a discursive resource in political debates for reproducing the ambivalence between Britain and Europe. References to articles in the newspaper permits Robin Cook to explicitly flout the 'common-sense' taboo of voicing prejudiced remarks and construct his own reasonable identity. Hewitt and Stokes (1975) concept of credentialling is relevant here, as speakers base prejudiced sentiments on 'out there' events rather than on personal beliefs. Furthermore, the references to the *Sun* enable Cook to particularise 'them' into Germany. By means of narrative sequencing and invocations of the BSE issue, the associations between Britain, Germany and the war are made inferentially available. Thus, as the BSE crisis extends across time the national identities of Britons change in the context of this German 'them'. Whereas previously 'we' were the victims of European commercial advantage, we are now the victims of 'war'. The significance of BSE has permitted political speakers to escalate the hostile relationship between Britain and Europe in terms of a war, and all the associations that carry with it.

Finally, this chapter of the thesis was concerned with the rhetorical arguments proposed by Billig, for analysing talk. Contrary to traditional social psychology, it has been noted here how categorisation can be regarded as a rhetorical weapon in political arguments, rather than simply a distorting cognitive simplification. Arguments about categorisations and particularisations have been examined for their function in challenging and defending political credibility. Moreover, the notion of 'logoi' and anti-logoi' has also been adopted here to study how political arguments are constructed in orientation to a potential counter-argument.

This chapter marks the final examination of discursive analyses of political debates within Hansard. Within the three debates analysed, it has been claimed that the BSE crisis had an impact upon the construction of British national identity across time. Chapter 8 differs from these previous analyses on the grounds that it is an examination of a newspaper article and not a parliamentary debate. More specifically it considers how BSE is constructed in the *Sun* at the height of its media reporting. In particular, the article written by Malcolm Rifkind for the *Sun*, invoked into this current debate by Robin Cook, is examined.

8.

End This Mad Ban...For All Europe's Sake: The *Sun*, 31 May 1996.

The 'Reasonable' British and the 'Unreasonable' Europeans: Flagging the Homeland in the *Sun*.

Aims of Chapter

Considering the vast amount of media reporting about BSE during 1996, and the previous research that has already been undertaken in analysing its content, something would be strangely amiss if no reference was made to these data here. However, in this chapter the intention is not to provide a content analysis of three months worth of British newspaper media (indeed, this has already been done). Instead, the focus is upon one article in particular and the surrounding rhetorical context in which it is located within a tabloid newspaper. As was seen in chapter 7, Robin Cook refers to an article written by Malcolm Rifkind (Foreign Secretary) for the *Sun* newspaper. This article was primarily about the European Union's ban upon British beef. Hence, it is no surprise that Rifkind's article is situated amongst other reports and articles about BSE within the newspaper. In chapter 7, the analysis focused upon how constructions of a British 'us' were constructed in contrast to a European and German 'them'. Moreover, the analysis suggested that Robin Cook's invocation of the article in terms of its position in the newspaper, became an important rhetorical tool for managing the ideological dilemma of nationalism. The invocation of this article reflects a general shift in focus, from constructing BSE in terms of a public health issue, to an overriding concern with national identities, conflicts and imaginary boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, within parliamentary debates.

Much of the discursive research that attempts an investigation of media data exists within the field of CDA. The top-down approach to media analysis, favoured by

CDA theorists provides an innovative forum for analysing the linguistic techniques of media reporting. Indeed, this current analysis acknowledges some of the informative aspects of grammatical approaches, such as the use of font styles, colloquialisms and change in register, which are all characteristics of tabloid newspapers. In particular Fairclough's (1999) argument for including an intertextual analysis into the study of media is also very informative. He notes how the linguistic style of tabloid newspapers incorporates a 'hybridisation of public, written discourse and private, conversational discourse (p. 190). For Fairclough the analysis of content is inextricably linked to that of form and the discourse genres combined within the text. From other fields of discourse analysis, interesting and revealing analytical frameworks for studying the media have been developed. For example, Bell's (1999) analysis of media as a personal narrative, notes how journalists follow a particular organisational format in order to present and promote particular versions of events. However, this present chapter aims to adopt a more bottom-up approach to the analysis. Rather than speculating upon how this article by Malcolm Rifkind reflects and reproduces the ideological concerns of the macro-structures of politics and the media, the focus is upon the local concerns of the report itself. The analysis considers how British and European nations are flexibly constructed within the article, and how Malcolm Rifkind positions his own 'reasonable' self in relation to an ideological dilemma of nationalism.

However, the analysis does not simply consider identity construction within a tabloid article. As noted earlier, media theorists have focused primarily upon how BSE is constructed within the media during 1996. Unfortunately, the parallels between media and parliamentary discourse have not received any attention with regard to BSE. In this chapter, the dilemma concerning matters of inclusion and exclusion when

negotiating the relationship between Britain and Europe, noted in the parliamentary debates, is investigated here and similarities noted. Furthermore, it is examined how the categories invoked and mobilised across the parliamentary debates are used in the article for the tabloid press. The dominant analytical concern during the course of this thesis is with the discursive management of accountability and the construction of identity in orientating to such matters. Therefore, the focus of this analysis rests upon how Malcolm Rifkind protects his own 'reasonable' political identity, and avoids blame for the BSE issue, whilst at the same time assigning blame to some European 'other'. It is noted how certain 'others' are invoked in this newspaper article, and are deployed as discursive resources for warranting claims made, constructing a credible political self-identity and undermining the actions of Europe. This requires an examination of contrastive discourse, also used in parliamentary debates to attend to delicate matters of accountability and self-identity. This chapter also acknowledges that the data subject to analysis is taken from a tabloid newspaper. Thus, previous discursive work concerning the structure and format of media texts are noted for the contribution they extend to an analysis of content.

However, before this chapter pursues an investigation of these matters, it is worth reviewing some of the dominant strands of media research within the social sciences, so that this present analysis can be located appropriately in the field.

Theorising Media Discourse Across the Disciplines

As noted in chapter 4, the study of media discourse exists across a diverse range of social scientific disciplines. Van Dijk (1988), writing from the perspective of CDA, urges for an interdisciplinary enterprise in the analysis of mass communication. This is a view echoed by Fairclough (1999) who requests an eclectic mix of methods and

theories in order to study media discourse comprehensively. In this chapter the intention is to elaborate upon some of the points raised in chapter 4 concerning the discursive study of media discourse, so that the adopted style of analysis can be properly situated within the field.

Whilst research into media discourse shares many similar concepts and understandings, much of this work departs on the basis of different emphasis upon the relationship between micro and macro-level analysis. Most prominently, supporters of CDA have argued for an approach to discourse that recognises the media's influence upon hierarchical frameworks in society. A classic study of media discourse from the field of CDA, is that provided by Fowler (1991). Whilst recognising news discourse as a discursive practice for constructing social reality, he also maintains that this 'news language' performs a cognitive role in providing an organising mental representation for our experience' (p. 3). He writes,

> What is being said is that, because the institutions of news reporting and presentation are socially, economically and politically situated, all news is always reported from some particular angle...Anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position: language is not a clear window but a refracting, structuring medium. (p. 10).

Hence what becomes classified as 'news' is subject to an active process of selection from the institutions of mass media. To illustrate the point he notes how the health issues of salmonella and AIDS received public attention as a consequence of their selective reporting in the mass media to construct a public health problem in terms of a 'crisis'. The process of selection reflects the political and social situatedness of these two health issues. This approach to the media is also exemplified in the work of Phillips (1996) who notes how the discourse of Thatcherism was reproduced and reified at a micro-level within the news. She links this penetration into public discourses with the macro-social processes of social and cultural change. In this way,

the key political concepts of Thatcherism become embedded within the mundane discourse of ordinary folk, constructing and reproducing a particular reality. In a similar vein, Fairclough and Wodak (1997) have noted how the political movement of Thatcherism as a public discourse reproduced in the mass media is linked to an ideological project of political change and reforms.

Proponents of CDA have also documented the construction of national categories in the media and considered how these shape, and are shaped by, particular social, cultural, economic and political frameworks. Lee and Craig (1992) have noted how media discourse constructs national dichotomies of 'us and them' in defining national boundaries with regard to Polish and Korean labour strikes. They argue that news organisations are institutional practices that propagate ideological frameworks. Through an examination of newspaper style, content and presentation they suggest the ideology embedded within these discursive practices can be analysed. In particular they claim that newspapers use the pronoun 'we' to construct consensus between text and reader, engage in top-down processing to influence the interpretation of the text, adopt a specific style to indicate a particular socio-cultural framework, and use factual discourse as a strategy for persuasiveness. Likewise, Fowler (1991) has also noted how the content and presentation of editorials in newspaper perform a symbolic function in providing an authoritative voice of opinion and judgement, reflecting the legitimate position of the media in the organisation of information.

These approaches to media discourse, rooted in CDA, provide an interesting and informative methodology for analysing media texts. Moreover, they offer a workable framework of analysis that can be applied to textual discourse. Certainly, one of the shortcomings of conversation analytic informed approaches to discourse analysis is its

distinct distaste for textual data. Its unsuitability for analysing mass media texts also limits its application to discourse. However, what is worth noting about conversation analysis is that despite its dislike for analysing texts, converting conversation to text is precisely what it does. Thus, CDA becomes an attractive alternative . In accordance with discursive approaches generally, they stress the 'constructive' functions of discourse in producing a particular version of reality. The focus upon the role of factual language, persuasive strategies, and consensus are theoretical concerns shared across disciplines. Fowler notes that newspapers produce an ideology of consensus. He writes:

> Sometimes the referents of 'we' are collected in moral or social, rather than geographical/political, terms, e.g. the 'ordinary folk' who are terrorised by 'thugs' or '*Sun* readers' who are supposed to agree on a whole sheaf of beliefs. 'Consensus' assumes, and in times of crisis actually *affirms*, that within the group, there is no difference or disunity in the interests and values of any of the population, or of any institution. (p. 49 emphasis in original)

Moreover, many of these CDA studies have conceptualised how the use of 'we' in newspaper texts functions to define national boundaries, and implicate matters of inclusion and exclusion. Such analyses of language-use in the media are common across social scientific disciplines. However, what CDA approaches also attempt to do, is provide a theory which links these micro-levels of news discourses to macro-levels of the culture, politics, and economics of society. Moreover, as mentioned previously in chapter 4, some CDA theorists strive to provide a theory that explains how the strategies deployed by news discourse has a cognitive effect upon the thinking structures of individuals. It is argued that news discourse has a profound influence upon how individuals represent and structure their experiences of reality, and this in turn reifies particular ideologies. This theme is also apparent to some extent in Social Identity Theory. For example, Cinnirella (1996) argues that the British media's negative representation of Europe is reflected in ordinary people's

talk about national identity. He claims that as the media increases the salience of national category memberships, it becomes responsible for their arousal from an otherwise dormant state of consciousness. In particular, Cinnirella notes that the media's representation of a national outgroup is a fundamental aspect of arousing representations of British national identity. He states:

> It seems quite likely, given the salience of the national sovereignty issue for the British, that the motives for autonomy and control might be especially linked to British identity *when this identity is considered in the context of European integration* (p. 265, emphasis in original)

In conclusion, Cinnirella suggests that if EC integration is to be supported in Britain by ordinary folk, the media must adopt a more balanced approach to its social representations of Europe. This SIT perspective is informative in its emphasis upon the role the media plays in forming everyday discourse. Moreover, Cinnirella's stress upon the European context in which British national identity becomes meaningful is also insightful. However, what Cinnirella fails to provide is a detailed analysis of *how* this European context is constructed within the media. He tends to assume that negative representations of Europe exist within the media (supported with examples), without investigating how this is achieved rhetorically. Furthermore, Cinnirella provides no explanation of where or how these national identities exist when 'dormant'. As Billig (1995) suggests, national identities are not simply forgotten, to be switched on and off in the presence of some relevant 'other'. Instead, he claims that national identities are reproduced within an ideology of nationalism that is embedded within the routine practices of everyday social life. Moreover, Cinnirella would find it difficult to explain how British national identity can be flexibly constructed and mobilised in discourse in the absence of a 'relevant' national other, such as Europe (such as Harriet Harman's construction of the British public, chapter 5).

Brookes (1999) has also emphasised how Britain becomes understood in the media within a context of national others. During the BSE crisis, Brookes notes that 'us' the British are explicitly identified in contrast to 'them' the Germans. He notes:

> As the *Sun* proclaimed the beginning of the 'CATTLE OF BRITAIN' (22 May 1996), a sustained anti-Europeanism permeated the tabloids following the European Union ban on British beef…Stereotypes of German national character were everywhere, continually evoking the 1939-45 war. (p. 247)

Adopting a textual analytical approach, Brookes argues that the newspapers actively identify the nation as a dominant cultural identity. This is exemplified in the reporting of BSE as the British tabloid press offered a version of 'crisis' of a public health problem that put an entire nation at risk. As has been suggested in this thesis from an analysis of the parliamentary debates between 20 March until 20 June 1996, BSE became increasingly structured around national identity and national boundaries. These boundaries were constructed on the basis of threats from, and towards, national communities. Even in parliamentary debates, one of the prominent national 'others' with which Britain was compared was Germany. In common with approaches within CDA, Brookes notes the use of 'we' in news discourse to imply national consensus. He argues that as newspapers are nationally distributed, it can be inferred that 'we' must refer to the British nation. He claims that the newspapers had two aims with regard to the BSE issue. The first was to show how BSE had also occurred in Europe, and the second to claim European countries were dishonest. As has been illustrated previously in this thesis, politicians also voiced similar arguments. In chapter 6, Paul Marland, William Cash and Douglas Hogg all make similar claims concerning these issues of European 'honesty', either explicitly or implicitly, in the House of Commons debate that took place on 25 March 1996. So, both press and parliament portrayed Europe as pursuing its own self-interests at the expense of the British beef industry.

Also from a media perspective, Kitzinger and Reilly (1997) claim that the media coverage of BSE was very selective. However, unlike Fowler who claimed news selection is governed by ideological institutions, Kitzinger and Reilly suggest that selection is based on more practical matters of news reporting. They suggest that reasons for the lapse in BSE reports between 1991-1995 include such factors as a lack of source authority for information, no 'real events' to report as evidence, no human interest, the lack of questioning cultural beliefs, and the general lack of political activity. In the newspapers BSE became a high priority from March 20 1996. As has been documented in the analysis of parliamentary debates, it was at this time that politicians and SEAC admitted that BSE could 'possibly' be transmitted to humans and there was a possible link with CJD (Stephen Dorrell, 20 March 1996). Moreover, there was the emergence of a conflict between the scientists, most famously from Professor Richard Lacey who publicly disagreed with the advice and conclusions provided by the SEAC. The absence of 'real events' was resolved as 10 new cases of CJD in young people were reported in parliament and then media. Furthermore, there was a signalling of new government policies and European intervention. Most fundamentally, politicians were now held to be accountable by both press and parliament for what was to be constructed as a public health issue. According to Kitzinger and Reilly, it was the inclusion of these factors into press reports about BSE that conspired to raise its media profile to 'risk' status.

This current chapter acknowledges the contributions made to the analysis of media discourse by CDA and SIT. However, this present chapter focuses upon the text itself rather than the institution of media as a whole. As this chapter concerns one particular article written by the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, for the *Sun* newspaper, it does not attempt to theorise about the links between this specific text

and the tabloid's general political position in relation to a particular ideological framework. However, it does aim to incorporate some of the concepts proposed by Bell (1999), Fairclough (1999) and Fowler (1991) concerning media data, in trying to develop a workable and informed discursive psychological approach to text analysis.

This analysis also considers the previous research on media coverage of the BSE matter undertaken by communication and media theorists such as Brookes, and Kitzinger and Reilly, and notes similar analytical issues concerning the construction of national dichotomies, and the implication of consensus through pronoun use such as 'we'. This present chapter extends this work insofar as it not only locates such issues within the text, but also provides a theory of *how* these analytical issues function, i.e. what do they accomplish for Malcolm Rifkind in terms of constructing a plausible account whilst managing delicate matters of accountability.

What cannot be easily dismissed is the location of this political piece of writing within a media context concerning other stories, reports and version of the BSE issue. Just as speakers produce a locally constructed context within which their accounts are to be understood, it can be argued that newspapers generate their own context in terms of positioning articles and producing particular headlines. Indeed, theorising the links between articles, newspapers, the status of the editor, and the institutional organisation of the media is the business of CDA. However, this chapter will *not* consider a micro-level analysis of any other articles except that of Malcolm Rifkind, but it *will* take into account the constructed local context in which the article appears, with respect to other headlines and the physical location of the article on the page. This is not to provide a theoretical link between the article, the newspaper and political ideology, but to briefly consider how a locally constructed context across two

pages of a tabloid newspaper can function rhetorically to provide a particular 'version' of BSE.

Analysis

Positioning the Themes of Nationalism

There are two main themes made available, across pages 6 and 7 of the *Sun*, just on the basis of positioning of articles and headlines. The first is that Britain is at war with the EU The second, is that Germany is located at the centre of the EU Most obviously the homeland of the *Sun* readers is explicitly flagged. The article written by Malcolm Rifkind appears on page 6 of the *Sun* newspaper, dated 31 May 1996. The header across both pages 6 and extending across page 7 is titled 'Battle for Britain' and is repeated five times. As CDA theorists have noted, the repetition of key words and phrases is a strategy of persuasion used by tabloid newspapers (Fowler, 1991; van Dijk, 1988). Moreover, the context in which the reports on pages 6 and 7 are to be understood is in terms of a 'battle'. This metaphor of battle is emphasised through the use of national flags. Union Jacks are printed on each side of the header. Billig (1995) notes how Union Jacks are used in everyday social life to explicitly 'flag' the nation. He suggests that, ''Our' newspapers, on 'our' daily breakfast tables, present routine flags for 'our' benefit, as do 'our' sociological and psychological theories (p. 48). He notes how flags are symbols of the homeland, displaying its own position and distancing itself from national 'others'. Such symbols are considered to be banal reminders of nationhood. Billig states, 'they are flagging it unflaggingly' (p. 41). The use of flags such as the Union Jack is a form of rhetoric, which distances 'us' from 'them'. Billig further claims, 'And 'we', writer and readers, are assumed to belong to a reasonable world, a point-zero of nationalism'

THE SUN SAYS

On the brawl

PAUL GASCOIGNE is 29 years old. But he still hasn't grown up.

He is a foul-mouthed beer swilling lout who would bring shame to a football terrace never mind a football pitch.

Our view. One picture says it all. If that is how the cream of English soccer think they should behave then we may as well pull out of Euro 96 now.

Because the only thing we'll win is the Most Behaving Badly Trophy for Drunken Also Rans.

There was a time in football when the name England was synonymous with impeccable behaviour. Men like Moore, Charlton and Matthews enhanced our reputation around the world.

Now thanks to Gascoigne and his like our name is trash.

What makes it worse is the weakness of the men who are supposed to control the game.

Graham Kelly, chief executive of the FA, blandly praises Gascoigne for signing hundreds of autographs after the match and bouncing babies on his knee.

Not a word about his drinking.

What will the FA do to Gascoigne for smashing TVs on the flight home? Kelly will have a very strong word with him.

Kelly's cowardice is as pathetic as Gascoigne's immaturity.

Sorry state

WE'VE had a grudging apology from the Tories about the policies that hurt.

How about one from Labour?

They should say sorry for all the policies they rammed down our throats for 30 years — and which they have now ditched as unworkable or unpopular.

The latest U-turn is on education. Labour want to banish trendy teaching methods.

We rejoice that the sinner repents. But it is Labour-run local authorities and Labour's ally the NUT who have largely done the damage in education.

Would that change under Labour? Maybe — everything else has.

Look how Tony Blair has stolen the Tories' clothes on the economy, law and order, health and trade unions and dressed New Labour in them.

Only on Europe is there a discernible difference.

And that is because Blair is sitting on the fence in case he jumps the wrong way.

And finally...

PHEW! It's back at last.

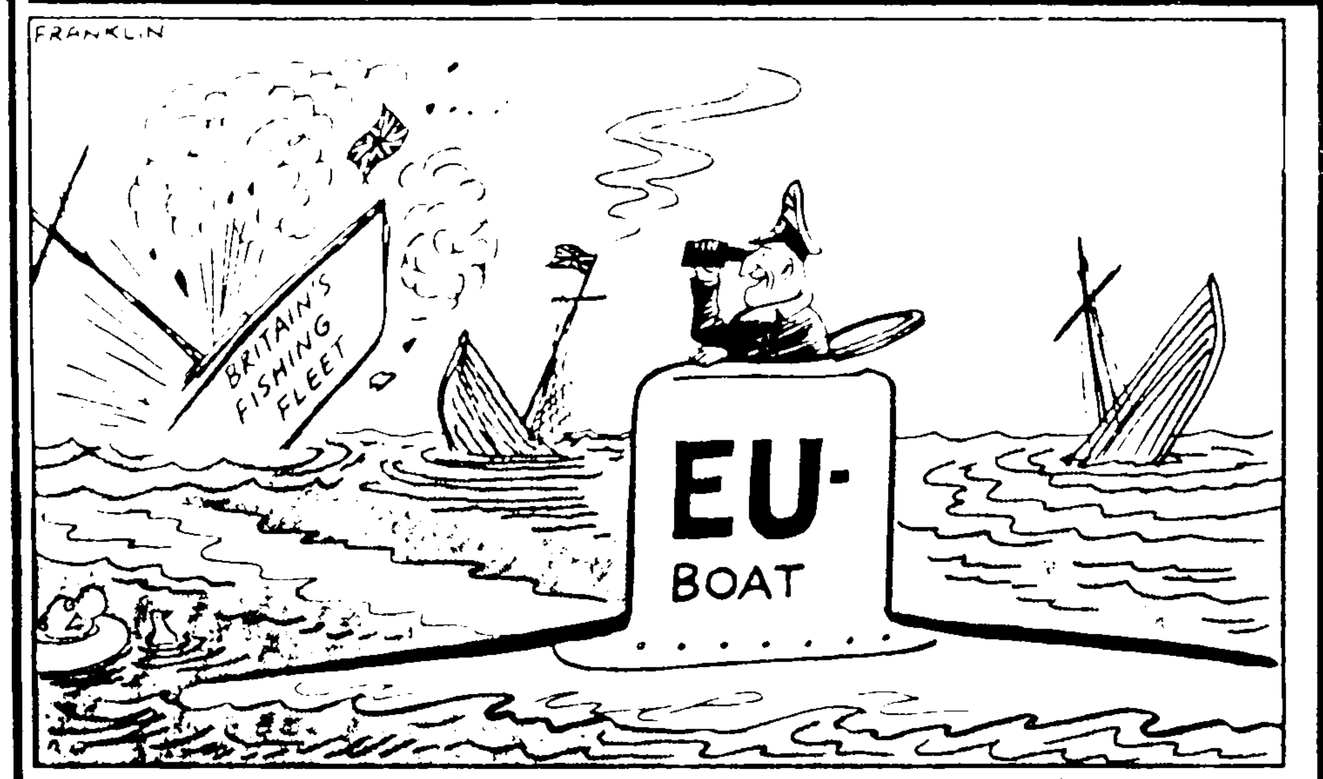
The sun sizzled across the land yesterday after months of soggy, cold and rain.

But you better enjoy the good weather while you can.

We hear Europe is about to ban it.

BATTLE FOR BRITAIN++BATTLE FOR BRITAIN+

THE LIVES



"MEIN GOTT, IT'S GOOD TO BE TORPEDOING BRITISH SHIPS AGAIN!"

END THIS MAD BAN.. FOR ALL EUROPE'S SAKE

Rifkind ... plain speaking

By MALCOLM RIFKIND
FOREIGN SECRETARY

NEXT week Douglas Hogg and I will be taking the case for British beef direct to Europe.

In a tour of European capitals we will be seeing heads of government and other ministers.

It will be a time for plain talking.

The simple truth is that Europe cannot allow this ... to go on. ... and for about ... because ... to our food industry.

... also want to see other European governments ... after ... that politics was the ... obsession of politicians ... but so far we have ... unable or ... proper ... to ... about how to end the ban and get ... the European beef ... back ... payments are ... confused in a number of ... Most beef consumption has been put on ... worse than in the U.K. The ban on British beef has backfired.

And European politicians do not like the blackmail tactics we have begun to adopt in Europe ... it is in everyone's interests to sort this problem out.

Reasonable

The British case is ... reasonable.

FIRST we want to ... to the ... in science on ... The World Health Organisation says that beef ... is safe as ... genuine ... seven are safe. Only an ... the certificate ... equivalent said the ... was not safe ... a man in the UK. Test ... cattle exports ... That should be a ... basis for ... But ... payments are ... for our European partners. Our first demand is that the ban on beef products to be lifted at next week's meeting of Farm Ministers.

SECOND we want the rest of Europe to agree a ... plan of action for ... the ban.

We know the ban in our ... will not be lifted at a ... stage.

It is bound to be a ... step-by-step process. Douglas Hogg and I will be taking ... proposals to Europe ... next week.

As well as ... we will also be presenting our detailed ... for eradicating BSE. ... to help restore consumer confidence ... beef. For all ...

THIRD ... Prime Minister ... last two weeks ... we want to ... Europe ... with our ... as usual ... but ... our interests were being harmed ... We are using the system ... to ... all that we can ... attention to the need ... to move ... against ... to lift the ban ... that ... is being EU ... decisions ... not one we have taken lightly.

And we are not ... it to ... Ministers ... for its own sake ... But we ARE seeking a ... political signs ... Britain wants plain ... and ... dealing from the ... of Europe.

Strong

Our ... is strong. And we're ... it forward not just in ... but in Europe's interest.

Our ... is not a ... that Britain ... as some claim ... pulling ... from the ... of the rest of Europe.

On the ... we have a ... role to ... in the continent's future.

Douglas Hogg ... I want to ... that we have ... and ... next week.

+BATTLE FOR BRITAIN++BATTLE FOR BRITAIN++BATTLE FOR BRITAIN

EU WRECKED

Fishing cutback is the final nail in our coffin, say skippers

From CHRIS PHARO in Brixham, Devon

TOUGH trawler boss John Sanders stood at the helm of one of his three boats yesterday, and surveyed the bleak future facing Britain's fishermen.

The 18 year old skipper has been left reeling by EU plans to slash our 9,000 strong trawler fleet by 40 per cent in the next five years.

That would mean more than 1,000 boats going for scrap and the end of fishing in scores of British ports. One of the casualties could be John's home town of Brixham.

Looking across the picturesque Devon harbour from the bridge of his 70ft vessel Rebecca Ellen, skipper John declared bitterly: "The old days when fishermen were respected in this country are gone.

"Over the past 25 years our industry has been taken apart piece by piece and this could be the final nail in the coffin.

"It will destroy fishing towns like this. We get our traditions and our families out of work. Families like my own.

"Many skippers have already seen the sea by signing EU compensation. I am on a boat to scrap their trawlers."

Bribe

And John continued: "Things had got so bad he had even considered taking the Brussels bribe to retire. If I'm honest ...

"Once ... families ... tradition in one of the ... and ... professions had stopped him.

He explained: "My dad, Bill ... my grandfather, Albert ... and my brother ... skipper.

"My son John ... can tell ... to ... on my trawlers. So ... my daughter Kathy ... Even my sister is married ... a trawler captain.

"There is nothing else I could ... a living for. I'll keep ... fighting to stay afloat ... for my heritage ... for my sons ... and for my sons' future.

Shared

The ... want him to ... scrapped in my place if it's not ... much to ask.

The ... crackdown ... a ... at preserving fish ... But ... fishermen ... and ... to ... they are ... hardest hit of all ... the EU ... policies.

Under the rules ... to ... tonnes of fish ... and ... season. ... British skippers ... seat ... but ... their ... until ... The rest is ... out among our ... partners.

And ... the British ... a ... per cent ... Spain ... who ... their ... fish ... empty ... their ... and ... empty ... run ... ravishes ... stormed. "We ... shouldn't take this ... should protect our waters.

And if that means ... out of the ... Common fish ... then so be it.

"The ... must ... one of the ... industry ... to ... in the water.

"It isn't ... the fishermen ... that will suffer ... for years to ... there are ... engineers, ... and ... suppliers.

"We need ... and ... to ... keep ... And for a town ... like Brixham ... there is ... Thousands ... come here ... because ... the ... of the ... industry. ... they wouldn't bother.

"Most ... farm ... they are ... still ... on ... made ... British ... out of the European Economic ... mounts ... .

"In time ... to ... our ... other ... fishermen ... are ... and ... to ... many ... trips ... .

"... of the ... fleet ... .

"I ... skipper ... Dartmouth ... decommissioned ... and ... trawlers ... hunt for ... and ... and I said: 'The ... system ... has gone mad'.

"In the North ... some ... is not an ... fish ... more ... the ... fishermen ... the ... are ... allowed. And ... and ... for ... an ... who ... their ... more ... .

He added: "We should ... out of the CFP ... and ... that ... powers ... we should ... of there as ... .

"We have had a ... in ... to be proud of ... and ... to ... be ... .

"I have ... to have a ... and ... to ... a boat off ... .

"Last year ... veteran ... to have a ... and ... to the EU ... to see ... Russian ... .

He said: "I was the ... and I have to ... .

"But I had no ... the EU ... made fish ... to ... .

"I couldn't ... the ... have at my ... .

The EU ... should ... at once. I ... if ... they treat ... fishermen ... .

Mark ... farm ... they are still ... on ... made ... British ... out of the European Economic ... mounts ... .

In time ... to ... our ... other ... fishermen ... are ... and ... to ... many ... trips ... .

Stuart ... I ... suppress ... British ... feelings ... I ... that ... people ... on ... They have ... and ... to ... a ... .

Peter ... of ... engineers ... Ltd ... to ... the ... fishing ... It ... to ... for ... to ... .

It wasn't ... all ... could ... tourism. ... Council ... .

It ... We ... that ... news ... to ... I ... to ... left ... Brixham ... unemployment ... already ... high ... what ... men ... have been at sea for years ... .

Malcolm ... of ... Brixham ... Agents ... said: "If we ... at sea ... the ... we would be ... a ... .

"... of the ... South ... fish ... are ... said: "... I ... Spain ... .

"... to ... Spain.

IN WESTMINSTER ... for ... was ... up ... the ... issue.

Ministers ... that ... to ... maximum ... Brussels ... to ... the ... was ... by Labour ... The ... will ... a ... to ... Brussels ... Britain ... by ... .

'I'll keep on fighting for my boy's future'

Three generations. Bill Sanders, left, and skipper John Sanders (with his son John) fear fishing is doomed

PM 'finished' if Beef War is lost, says Tory

By TREVOR KAVANAGH

TORY MP James Cran said last night that John Major was "finished" unless Britain won the Beef War.

His warning came as the world's leading vets gave our cattle industry a clean bill of health.

Mr Cran, who works for Ulster Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew, said of John Major: "If he doesn't win he is finished. We have to fight. There is no way back."

He said threats of legal action by EC boss Jacques Santer — "a civil servant" — against Britain's sovereign government were "offensive."

But Chancellor Kenneth Clarke began to wobble in the face of a Brussels counter-attack.

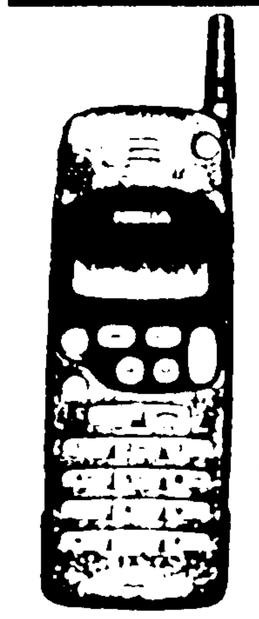
Pro-European Mr Clarke signalled he wanted the disruption campaign ended before next month's EU summit in Florence. He attacked Tory right-wingers for trying to "ratchet up" the row with Brussels.

Britain won an ally yesterday as the 118-nation World Organisation for Animal Health declared our beef safe.

Its report said there was no proof linking mad cow disease with beef by-products. It did not call for a mass cattle slaughter or an export ban.

Santer ... offensive warning

3 MONTHS FREE
DIGITAL LINE RENTAL



100 HOUR BATTERY
PER SECOND BILLING
Free next day delivery
Free leather carry case
Free travel adaptor
Limited time offer
Line rental £18.33 per month
Offer ends 30.6.96
NOKIA 1610
£4.99
Have your credit card to hand and Dial a phone now on Freephone
0800 00 00 77

(p. 49). Here it can be noted how national consensus is constructed between reader and writer in terms of a British national identification and belonging. However, where the homeland is, and who 'we' are requires constructing and defining in discourse. Moreover, 'us' the British become understood in a rhetorical context of 'them' the Europeans. This differs from the CDA perspective insofar as claims are not made here concerning the influence of ideological frameworks upon such national constructions. An ongoing concern in this thesis has been how arguments and claims are made for Britain's membership into the more inclusive category of 'Europe', whilst at the same time maintaining its differences from other members of the category. Whilst 'we' are like 'them' in some respects, 'we' are also unique.

The main headline 'The Lives The EU Wrecked' appears in bigger type and is written in white type contrasted against a black background. One of the two articles is about damage being done to Britain's fishing industry by the EU (page 7). The other is a statement claiming the Prime Minister will be 'finished if Beef War is lost'. The first column on page 6 is dedicated to the editorial '*The Sun Says*'. Fowler (1991) argues that editorials partition the newspaper into opinion and fact. As the editorial represents the opinion of some disembodied media 'other'; the rest of the paper is treated as fact. Moreover, Fowler notes that tabloid editorials are typically connected with the cartoon that appears adjacent to it. Here on page 6, next to the editorial, there is a cartoon situated directly beneath the main headline and immediately above Malcolm Rifkind's article. This cartoon is the one referred to by Robin Cook in the debate in the House of Commons (20 June 1996), the punchline being '*Mein Gott it's good to be torpedoing British ships again*'. The cartoon depicts a captain of a submarine labelled 'EU Boat' as German. The punchline is in response to a picture in the same cartoon of a boat sinking labelled 'British Fishing Fleet'. The link is made

between the EU and Germany. Moreover, this is polarised against the British fishing fleet. Firstly, the textual implication is that Germany is at the centre of the EU Secondly, the headline containing the word 'wrecked' provides a 'fishing' connection with this cartoon. The cartoon occupies half of the remaining space on page 6. The Rifkind article is located within the remaining lower half of the page. Situated directly underneath the cartoon Malcolm Rifkind's photograph is located directly beneath the cartoon and to the right (as noted by Robin Cook). To the left is the headline 'End This Mad Ban..For All Europe's Sake' in bold type. It is not clear who the author of this headline is. However, it denotes the article as being concerned with 'the ban'. Furthermore, it links the article with other features and articles which appear on pages 6 and 7. The description of the ban as 'mad' immediately locates the article in opposition to the ban, regarding it as unreasonable and negative. The claim 'For all Europe's sake' signals Britain's membership to the category of Europe, and extends the effects of the 'ban' to a wider and more inclusive national group. Beneath this headline and adjacent to the photograph appears Malcolm Rifkind's name and his political position of Foreign Secretary. As Brookes claims, the construction of the BSE issue in terms of a 'beef war' in the tabloid press is prevalent across these two pages of the *Sun*.

Having considered something of the positioning of Malcolm Rifkind's article the analysis will now turn to its narrative structure and contents. For the sake of analysis, the original presentation of the article has been altered to include line numbers.

A Discursive Analysis of Structure, Form and Content

Setting the Scene for Future Action

Extract 13.1

END THIS MAD BAN..FOR ALL EUROPE'S SAKE

By MALCOLM RIFKIND FOREIGN SECRETARY

1 Next week Douglas Hogg and I will be taking the case for British beef direct to Europe.
2 In a tour of European capitals we will be seeing heads of government and other ministers.
3 *It will be a time for plain talking.*

As Bell (1999) suggests news stories such as those presented in tabloid newspapers, share a similar narrative structure as personal narratives. He claims that all news articles that appear in newspapers share similar narrative features. In brief, he states that newspaper reports possess the basic narrative structure of abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, and resolution. Although the present article is not typical of news stories, insofar as the author is a politician whose views are represented in the article, the structure proposed by Bell does serve to explain how the report is put together appropriately for a tabloid newspaper. Moreover, this analysis of narrative structure informs the rhetorical and discursive contents of the article. Here, the abstract of the article is emphasised in bold print (line 1). Bell suggests that the function of the abstract is to summarise the central points and pre-empty the question 'why is this story being told?'. Thus, the point of article, written by a politician, is that Rifkind and Hogg are taking a future trip to Europe concerning the beef crisis in Britain. The photograph of Malcolm Rifkind, together with the pronoun 'I' makes it clear that he is the author of the article. This article is distinct from the other features on the page insofar as a politician and not a writer write it for the *Sun*. Thus, Malcolm Rifkind will provide the evaluation of this trip and the reasons why it

needs to be embarked upon. However as will be seen in extract 13.2, this evaluation is predominantly presented as the consensual opinion of a homogenous wider British community. As well as positioning his own identity, in terms of providing a version of a particular political reality, Rifkind also implicates *Douglas Hogg* in the description of future actions to be taken *next week*. The statement of Douglas Hogg's name rather than his political position signals informality in Rifkind's communication to the *Sun* reader. Moreover, in this opening line the description of *beef* in terms of the national category *British* is interesting. It invokes the national categories of Britain and Europe, and signals the development of a dichotomy between them in the first line of the text (abstract). It is also notable that it is a *case* being taken to Europe, signalling a planned and detailed 'reasonable' report, which is being used to challenge an earlier decision or action by Europe.

Between lines 2 and 3, Rifkind provides what Bell (1999) terms the 'orientation' of the article. He introduces the relevant characters and sets the scene for future action. Bell writes, 'For journalists, *who, what, when* and *where* are the basic facts which concentrate at the beginning of a story, but may be expanded further down' (p. 240 emphasis in original). Although Rifkind is not a journalist in the strictest sense of the word, these points concerning the function of orientation are certainly relevant here. Rifkind introduces the main actors and sets the scene of the narrative, providing the backdrop against which action will proceed. Rifkind scripts a future tour to Europe (line 2). Note that this is not just a tour of 'Europe' but is upgraded to a tour of its capitals, suggesting some important significance to the tour. The scene is set. Rifkind also makes reference to the people he will be meeting in Europe. This detail achieves two important actions in this text. Firstly, it works up both Douglas Hogg and Malcolm Rifkind's category entitlements to 'see' such people 'directly', as

well as embark upon European capitals. Secondly, this description of official visits with 'heads of government' and 'other ministers' contrasts with the following phrase, *It will be a time for plain talking* (line 3). This sentence is italicised in the newspaper and visibly stands out from the previous two lines. Fowler suggests that such typographical devices as these are used in newspapers to vary the tone, stress and pace of the account. Moreover, he suggests that the use of italics in printed text is a symbolic breaking of the written code, which claims that contrasts can be stressed in speech but not in writing. In the present example the use of italics' emphasises the contrast between 'plain talking' and the description of an official tour around Europe. It also marks the 'plain talking' as unusual from what is typically associated with ministerial visits and serves as an informal term to identify with the reader. The term *It will be a time*, indicates that previously 'plain talking' has not been the norm.

Furthermore, CDA theorists have also argued that such modal expressions imply the presence of an authoritative voice behind the printed text who is qualified to make such judgements. In particular, Fairclough's argument for intertextual analysis is relevant here. As mentioned previously, he suggests that the *Sun* newspaper contains a hybrid of different discourses. Between lines 1-3, we can see Rifkind switching between a political discourse and a more conversational colloquial discourse. Fairclough (1999) states that the selection and combination of discourse genres depend upon the nature of the social context. In the present example, intertextual discourses enable Rifkind to forge a social relationship between himself and the *Sun* readers, using the conversational discourse, but also between himself and Douglas Hogg and other European ministers, using the political discourse. However, a discursive perspective would maintain that qualifications and entitlements to pass such political judgements have to be worked up and negotiated in discourse.

Unsurprisingly then, Malcolm Rifkind attends to his political entitlements to judgement and opinion throughout this article. As Rifkind switches between political and conversational/colloquial forms of discourse he simultaneously identifies and distances himself from his *Sun* reader.

Having provided a brief description of a future event, Rifkind now needs to warrant such action. Why would a British politician need to talk 'plainly' to European ministers? What has happened in the past to necessitate such action? Having introduced the relevant actors and scenery, the narrative structure of this article shifts from orientation to evaluation as Rifkind develops the problematic relationship between Britain and Europe over the beef ban.

Evaluating the Unreasonableness of Europe

Extract 13.2

4 The simple truth is that Europe cannot allow this crisis to go on. Here in Britain people feel
5 frustrated and bitter about the damage being done to our beef industry.
6 They also want to see other European governments practising what they preach.
7 Our partners say they are showing us political solidarity – but so far we have been unable to
8 get a proper negotiation going about how to end the ban and get confidence back into the
9 European beef market.

The narrative structure of the article shifts into what Bell terms the 'evaluation' between lines 4-6. Bell considers the evaluation as a means of establishing and justifying the significance of the story as well as warranting the author's reasons for claiming the reader's attention about a particular issue. He usefully states that the evaluation is the 'lens through which the remainder of the story is viewed' (p. 241). Here, Rifkind provides a negative evaluation of European actions, positioning himself as the public mouthpiece for the British community's opinion. However, rather than restricting the analysis to just narrative structure, it can be noted how this evaluation section of the article can become a powerful rhetorical weapon in constructing and promoting a particular version of BSE reality.

In line 4, the term 'simple' follows on from the previous use of 'plain' and continues the informal and colloquial style of the account. Rifkind claims to provide a *truth* about Europe and *this crisis*, thus evaluating their activities and warranting the future action to be taken by himself and Douglas Hogg. The evaluation of Europe is constructed as the collective mind of the British community rather than simply Rifkind. He warrants this crisis in the beef market beginning with the deicitic utterance *Here in Britain* (line 4). This use of deixis functions to link both Malcolm Rifkind and reader as members of the national community of Britain. However, the British people are distinguished from Rifkind in terms of their feelings towards Europe. He scripts what has happened to 'our' beef industry, making discursively available emotions of frustration and bitterness. This kind of emotion talk is often a feature of accounts about events. As Edwards (1997) suggests, 'Emotional states may figure as things to be *accounted for*, as *accounts*, and also as evidence of what *kind of events or actions* precede or follow them' (p. 170 emphasis in original). In the present case the emotional categories are used to warrant 'a crisis' and assign blame to Europe. The notion that British people feel 'frustrated and bitter' warrants the claim that 'damage' (line 5) has been done to the British beef industry. Moreover, such emotion discourse provides a warranted basis upon which Malcolm Rifkind can proceed with an account of future actions to be taken by himself and Douglas Hogg.

Again, formulating the wishes of the British people Rifkind writes *They also want to see other European governments practising what they preach* (line 6). The term 'other European governments' is interesting as it locates Britain as a member of the category 'Europe', but at the same time distinguishes it from the other members who are guilty of 'not practising what they preach'. Thus, Britain is 'reasonable' in

contrast to 'unreasonable' European others. Fowler (1991) suggests proverbs and metaphors like this are often used in newspaper discourse to imitate an 'oral mode'. Hence the communicative gap between media text and reader is narrowed by means of adopting an informal style, which is indicative of actual speech. However, the function of this term is to define who 'we' are within a locally constructed context of who 'we' are not. In this case 'we' are part of 'Europe', but 'we' are unique from other members in respect to our reasonableness. Moreover, 'practising what they preach' enables Malcolm Rifkind to imply dissonance between the language and actions of European governments.

The beginning of the 'complicating action' which drives Rifkind's negative evaluation of Europe arises between lines 7-9. Bell notes that the action within a newspaper article does not usually follow a chronological order, which one would expect from any other kind of story, but tends to flexibly switch between past, present and future. In the present example, Rifkind shifts to a discourse of past actions by Europe to warrant future actions. The complication is that Europe are not 'practising what they preach', and there exists a conflict between their words and actions. This conflict between language and actions is expanded upon and warranted using contrastive discourse. In line 7, the category of 'our partners' is invoked and builds upon Rifkind's claims that Britain is a member of the category of Europe. As has been noted throughout this thesis, the term 'our partners' is an effective rhetorical device, used by politicians, for managing the dilemmatic relationship between Britain and Europe in terms of inclusion and exclusion. The descriptive detail of this contrast between European words and actions renders Europe as deviant from what 'partners' typically do. Previously, it was considered how the category of 'partners' was used by Paul Marland in a parliamentary debate (25 March 1996) to contrast what is

typically expected of 'partners' with the scripted actions of Europe. In both examples the category is useful in producing an account of the activities of Europe as deviant, illegitimate and politically interested. In the current example, having set-up what is expected of 'partners', to show *political solidarity* (line 7), Rifkind contrasts this with the actions of Europe with whom *we have been unable to get a proper negotiation going about how to end the ban* (lines 7-8). Rifkind slips back into political discourse as he describes the situation between Britain and Europe, and British Government attempts to act upon the wider community's feelings. Here, the political genre entails that the pronoun 'we' does not extend to the British community as a whole, but only denotes the Government (including Rifkind) who are 'entitled' to perform certain actions. As Edwards and Potter (1992) have noted, such contrastive discourse is often used to show the speaker's account as superior to an alternative one. In this case, the speaker's account of a 'reasonable' Britain is contrasted with the 'unreasonable' actions of Europe. Moreover, the political entitlements of Rifkind and Government to act, are contrasted with the everyday 'feelings' of the British people.

Rifkind extends the scope of the problem from the British beef market (line 1) to the European beef market (line 9). Having already argued that Britain is part of the bigger category of Europe, he can now make the claim that it is a European problem as well as merely a British one. It is this worked-up claim that is signalled in the article's headline, 'For All Europe's Sake'.

So, in this section of the article, it can be seen how the category of 'partners' can be used in newspaper text, as well as parliamentary debate, to construct contrasts. The normative actions of 'partners' are scripted and shown to not apply to Europe. In the next section of the article, Rifkind continues with the development of a negative

evaluation of Europe, together with an account of the complication between Britain and Europe in terms of the ban on beef. Of particular interest is the shifting between past and present events to warrant future political actions. Here, Rifkind shifts to consider the ban itself, and the implications it has on Europe as a whole.

Extending the Beef Crisis

Extract 13.3

10 In Europe consumers are confused. In a number of countries beef consumption has been hit
11 much worse than in the UK. The ban on British beef has backfired.
12 And European politicians do not like the blocking tactics we have begun to adopt in Europe.
13 So it is in everyone's interests to sort this problem out.

The invocation of European consumers develops Malcolm Rifkind's claim that the BSE problem extends beyond Britain, to the more inclusive category of Europe. Extending the scope of the BSE problem, Rifkind states that *a number of countries* have been affected by the beef problem (line 10). The verb 'has' shifts the narrative back into the past, as Rifkind accounts for consumer confusion. Moreover, the claim is followed up with the statement that in these countries the problem is *much worse than in the UK* (line 11). The extreme-case formulation 'much worse' functions to make the attribution of a particular negative state of affairs in these countries, as compared to the UK, compelling and believable. As Pomerantz (1986) notes, extreme-case formulations used in this way are involved in the business of persuading listeners into certain conclusions. The final complicating action in the narrative about the beef ban is that it has 'backfired' (line 11). Again, Rifkind switches to a more colloquial style of language, identifying with the typical *Sun* reader in his attempts to persuade them of the 'reality' of European action. This implies that Europe has some kind of political interest in banning British beef, otherwise how could it 'backfire' This firstly suggests Europe is also affected by BSE (a claim made by Paul Marland,

25 March 1996), but secondly, also implicates them in a political conspiracy directed at Britain.

From line 12, the narrative shifts from past to present (signalled by the verb switch from the past 'has backfired' to the present 'begun'), as Rifkind describes reactions of *European politicians* in response to British action. These are the same European politicians who featured in the orientation section of the article, as Rifkind introduced the relevant actors in setting the scene. Here, present actions become justified in the discursive context of past events. Moreover, the negative reactions of European politicians are discredited as 'unreasonable' in the surrounding content of the 'reasonable' British case. Rifkind is vague in describing what the *blocking tactics* (line 12) are that have been adopted by Britain. However, the use of the term 'tactics' is notable, as it suggests a planned and strategic move rather than a spontaneous decision. The use of the pronoun 'we' to attribute the deployment of 'blocking tactics' denotes the British Government, however it also flags their shared British national identity in the context of European 'otherness'. It creates a common British identity between Rifkind and reader. As Rifkind shifts between political and lay discourses, he identifies with his British audience. Thus, when the pronoun 'we' is invoked, it becomes an inclusive collective pronoun, uniting author and reader at the level of national belonging. 'We' share the same British homeland, and are distinct from 'them' the Europeans.

Previously, it was noted that Rifkind set the 'lens' through which the article is interpreted in the orientation section of the article. He began the article with a future action to visit Europe and warranted it by means of a description of past negative European actions towards Britain. His future trip to Europe becomes justified as

Rifkind presents himself and Douglas Hogg as the upholders of British interests in the face of European adversity. However, the construction of a planned and deliberate political action such as 'blocking tactics' towards Europe could still potentially undermine the credibility of Rifkind's speech. Such actions could render 'us' the British as no better than 'them' the Europeans. 'We' likewise could be challenged as politically motivated, interested and biased. Therefore, in lines 13-14, Rifkind attends to this potential accusation switching back into the future tense. He states that such a move is not just in Britain's interests but *it is in everyone 's interests to sort this problem out* (line 13). Thus, he returns his reader back to the issue at hand, justifying British political action in the context of past events. Moreover, the extreme-case formulation of 'everyone' follows on from Rifkind's earlier claims that Britain is a part of the category of Europe, which is also affected by the BSE problem. He avoids the potential accusation that the British Government is equally as politically motivated, underhand and unreasonable as those in Europe, through the wider claim to universal reasonableness.

Line 13, signals the beginning of the resolution section of the narrative. Unlike stories, news reports are not neatly resolved, but usually 'finish in mid-air' (Bell, 1999, p. 243). In this case, although the fight between Britain and Europe has not yet been won, Rifkind can propose possible 'reasonable' resolutions to the problem. The following lines develop the 'reasonableness' of these resolutions.

Warranting British Reasonableness

Extract 13.4

Reasonable

14 *The British case is completely reasonable.*
15 **FIRST**, we want decisions to be based on science and facts.
16 The World Health Organisation says that beef products such as tallow, gelatine and semen are
17 safe. Only last week the veterinary equivalent said there was no need for a ban on UK beef

18 and cattle exports.
19 That should be good enough for our Euro partners. So our first demand is for the ban on beef
20 products to be lifted at next week's meeting of Farm Ministers.

Most striking is the word `Reasonable` printed in bold type and emphasised as a sub-heading. This clearly indicates a section in the article that focuses upon developing an account of `reasonable` resolutions to the beef crisis, as opposed to the `unreasonable` actions of Europe.

Line 14 appears in the text italicised and visibly stands out in the article. Again, the use of italics marks the use of contrastive stress between the `dislike` of the European politicians towards British actions (line 12), and the reasonableness of Britain`s blocking tactics. The use of the extreme-case formulation, `completely reasonable`, differs in its function from the previous two, insofar as it serves to upgrade the correctness of the claim.

What is noteworthy in extract 13.4 is the invocation of science and health to warrant the reasonable nature of British political action. In the analysis of parliamentary debates, particularly on those held on 20th and 25th March 1996, it was considered how the categories of `science` and `scientist` were used to work-up and also undermine the credibility of `factual` accounts of BSE. This return to science and health science becomes a powerful rhetorical weapon for developing the credibility of a political piece of journalism and British claims.

Line 15 signals the beginning of a three-part list. Atkinson (1984) notes how three-part lists can be used in political discourse to strengthen or confirm a broader argument and perform contrastive work. However, his work focusses primarily upon spoken discourse. In the present case the three-part list is visibly present within a text. The list functions as an organising structure to the visible presentation of a

resolution. The article is split into three sections, each one beginning with the word 'First', 'Second' or 'Third' in bold type and block capitals. Hence the list is highly visible on the page. The first part of this list is worked up between lines 15-20.

Between lines 16-18 Rifkind provides examples of independent sources of scientific claims. Firstly the *World Health Organisation* is reported as stating certain beef products are safe. He specifies these products as, *tallow, gelatine and semen* (line 16). Fowler (1991) suggests that scientific or official terms are typically avoided by the popular press, and are replaced by more informal slang, catchwords and proverbs. However, in the present example Malcolm Rifkind explicitly provides the specific names of these beef products, which distinguishes him from the category of journalist, and instead qualifies him as someone who is entitled to use such terms knowledgeably. Moreover, Fairclough would argue that this signals the intertextuality of media discourse. Previously, Rifkind has switched between political and conversational/lay discourses. Here, he adopts that of scientific discourse to demonstrate not only his own knowledge and entitlements to make such statements, but also to distance him from the claims made about beef products. Note it is the Health Organisation which makes such claims about the safety of beef and not Rifkind or the collective British audience. The use of the three-part list is again echoed in the presentation of these beef products.

Secondly, the listener is informed that consensus for this view is provided by the *veterinary equivalent*, who claim *there was no need for a ban* (line 17). Thus again, this formulated gloss of the veterinary advice implies that in the absence of scientific justification the ban must be unreasonable, based upon the desire for political advantage. The source of this claim is independent, scientific and apolitical, and more

importantly does not come from Rifkind himself. The quotation of such sources is important here. It not only serves to develop the credibility of the *British case* as *completely reasonable* (line 14), but it also functions to undermine the reasonableness of Europe's ban. This develops Rifkind's prior suggestions that Europe may have some political interest in maintaining the ban on British beef (line 11). Again, Rifkind shifts back into the recent past to warrant such claims, *Only last week* (line 17). It was noted previously in the Hansard data how orientations to time and being up-to-date was a participants concern, challenging potential accusations of being out-of-date and irrelevant.

Shifting from an account of the past to present demands Rifkind again adopts an informal colloquial tone, dropping the scientific discourse, to conclude *That should be good enough for our Euro partners* (line 19). Once more Rifkind identifies with his *Sun* reader by virtue of a particular discourse genre. It is notable that the category of 'partners' is mobilised once again in the article to signal European deviancy. This is emphasised as the national category of 'Europe' is shortened to 'Euro' and adjacent to the word 'partners', thus marking irony and sarcasm. Again, from a CDA perspective, theorists have argued that such deliberate use of slang is typically used in newspaper discourse to imitate the oral mode of speech, and create a face-to-face intimacy between writer and reader (Fairclough, 1995; Fowler, 1991; van Dijk, 1988). Furthermore, it can be argued that line 19 signals a 'modal expression', which is used to suggest the qualified status of Malcolm Rifkind to pass such judgements.

Rifkind now summarises the first proposed resolution with *our first demand is for the ban on British beef to be lifted* (lines 19-20). The credibility and 'reasonableness' of

such a demand has been attended to in lines 15-18. Rifkind now moves on to the second part of the list.

Shared Reasonableness & Common Sense

Extract 13.5

21 **SECOND**, we want the rest of Europe to agree a clear plan of action for lifting the ban.
22 We know the ban on all our beef will not be lifted at a single stroke.
23 It is bound to be a step-by-step process. Douglas Hogg and I will be taking specific proposals
24 to Europe next week.
25 We will also be presenting our detailed strategy for eradicating BSE. This should help to
26 restore consumer confidence once and for all.

This 'second' point of the list is distinguished by means of capitalised lettering and bold type. Once more Britain is included within the category of Europe by means of the deictic utterance *we want the rest of Europe* (line 21). However, at the same time a distinction is maintained between 'we' (Britain and British Government) and Europe. More significantly, Rifkind maintains the definition of Britain as 'reasonable' in his statement *we know the ban on all our beef will not be lifted at a single stroke* (line 22). Affiliation is again constructed between Malcolm Rifkind and the British nation in terms of shared knowledge and common sense. The use of an extreme-case formulation, 'all our beef', is also deployed again in this article, but is used defensively to emphasise the correctness and fairness of Rifkind's request. 'Single stroke' is a metaphorical statement, which serves to acknowledge the complexity of lifting the ban. Hence Britain, Rifkind and the Government are positioned as 'reasonable' in terms of their shared common sense knowledge of what is realistic and what is not.

This construction of British reasonableness is equated with inevitability stating *It is bound to be a step-by-step process* (line 23). Here, he switches back to the proposed future actions to be taken by himself and Douglas Hogg, adopting a political genre of

discourse. Such actions are warranted in the context of past scientific conclusions and the reasonable nature of their claims. Moreover, this reasonableness is also exemplified in the 'detailed strategy'(line 25), suggesting that British requests are informed and planned. Using another example of extreme-case formulation Rifkind ends this second part of the list mobilising the category of 'consumers' again. Thus the proposed strategies are warranted in the colloquial extreme-case formulation, benefiting 'consumers once and for all'. The insertion of the imprecise phrase 'should help' enable Rifkind to avoid the more contentious claim that these future actions 'will' restore consumer confidence.

Rifkind now turns to consider the third and final part of the list. As Jefferson (1990) notes in conversation analytic studies of speech, the third part of a list may be a generalised completer. Although this list is presented in the written text of a newspaper article, the third point is certainly more abstract than the previous two. Rather than stating a clear request or demand, this final point is an evaluation of the proposals. However, Rifkind again avoids positioning himself as the author of an evaluation of Europe, but instead refers to a past statement given by the Prime Minister.

Side-Stepping Accountability: Bring on the Prime Minister!

Extract 13.6

27 **THIRD**, the Prime Minister made clear last week that we could not carry on in Europe with
28 business as usual while our vital interests were being harmed over beef. We are giving the
29 system a deliberate jolt so that we can focus attention on the need to move fast to agree how
30 to lift the ban.

The generalised and abstract nature of this third part of the list involves a combination of orientations to the past, present and future to finally warrant British action against Europe. Rifkind introduces a new category, that of Prime Minister (line 27). It is

interesting that Malcolm Rifkind refers to the Prime Minister, and not John Major, (as he addressed Douglas Hogg), thus working-up the credible status of the statement. Rifkind formulates a past statement from the Prime Minister about the beef issue to warrant the proposed action. In this case Rifkind provides a gloss on the statement made by the Prime Minister. The pronouns 'we' (line 27) and 'our' (line 28) establish the 'Prime Minister' as British. Moreover, the implication is made that it is Europe who are harming *our vital interests* (line 28). The word 'our' unites Prime Minister, Malcolm Rifkind and the reader as people whose interests are being 'harmed'.

The discourse now switches to the present as Rifkind confesses a potential issue of British political stake, stating *we are giving the system a deliberate jolt* (lines 28-29). Here the 'we' refers to Douglas Hogg, Malcolm Rifkind and the Prime Minister as united in collective political action. However, Rifkind has already established the illegitimacy of the ban using scientific sources, and made the suggestion that our 'Euro partners' have a political interest in enforcing the ban on British beef. Furthermore, this confession of stake immediately follows a construction of 'reasonable' British requests. Thus, this confession of stake in deliberately 'jolting' a system is justified, credible and warranted in the local context of what has been established previously. Again, the language used here is informal and colloquial as Rifkind glosses Government action.

He now moves away from the list and the resolutions to a general evaluation of British Government action. This is an unusual structure of a news story, as they typically end on a proposed resolution for a particular state of affairs. However, in this present example the author is not a neutral journalist, but a politician, and one who has a personal and political stake in the report he provides. His own reasonable

and credible identity is tied up with the contents of the article he writes. Thus, in returning to a final evaluation of proposed political action (directly concerning the author), Rifkind positions his own reasonable identity in relation to the events he describes. This requires him to both voice and inoculate against dilemmas of having a biased 'stake' in reporting a particular reality.

Inoculating Against 'Stake' in the Beef Crisis

Extract 13.7

31 *Our policy of blocking EU decisions is not one we have taken lightly.*
32 And we are not doing it to cause trouble for its own sake.
33 But we **ARE** sending a clear political signal that Britain wants plain and honest dealing from
34 the rest of Europe.

Having confessed having a stake in blocking EU decisions, Rifkind again attends to the potential accusation that such a move is irrational, unreasonable and reflects political and national bias. So far the representation of Britain has been in terms of 'reasonable' requests and actions. Hence, Rifkind must evaluate these blocking actions positively; claiming this is not a *decision we have taken lightly* (line 31). Furthermore, he explicitly states what such an accusation might be, *doing it to cause trouble for its own sake* (line 32). He contrasts this accusation with an alternative 'reasonable' account for the blocking action, *sending a clear political signal* (lines 33). Potter (1996) has noted how the explicit stating of an interest of political stake, in this case 'cause trouble for its own sake', can function to render a speaker's account as factual and credible. Edwards (1997) has also suggested that such statements (not X but Y) can provide the frame and discursive space for a speaker to produce his/her own alternative credible and factual version of events or actions. In the present example, Rifkind produces a contrast between the potential accusation and the defensive response. In constructing the accusation, he is able to work up the credibility and facticities of the response, making it appear superior. The word 'Are'

is distinguished on the page in bold type and capital letters, thus visibly emphasising the contrastive discourse. The term 'plain' is repeated again in the article from line 3. and this time produced in association with the word 'honest'. From a CDA perspective, it can also be argued that the use of such informal language in the article, 'cues the illusion of an oral mode' (Fowler, 1991, p. 63), which is an important factor of persuasive tabloid journalism.

The article so far has suggested that Britain has not received 'plain and honest dealing' from the rest of Europe. Such claims have been warranted in the reactions of consumers, the British people and the scientific evidence. Again the suggestion that Europe has a political stake in imposing a ban on British beef is implied, although not explicitly stated. By means of footing, deixis and implication, Malcolm Rifkind manages his own identity as a politician and member of the British community, seeking to provide a reliable source of information relaying certain 'facts' about the BSE issue. The final few lines is sub-headed as 'Strong', and is presented as a description of Malcolm Rifkind and Douglas Hogg's 'case'.

A Matter of Geography

Extract 13.8

Strong

35 Our case is strong. And we're putting it forward not just in Britain's, but in Europe's interest.
36 Our campaign is not a sign that Britain is – as some claim – pulling down the shutters on the
37 rest of Europe.
38 On the contrary, we have a massive role to play in this continent's future.
39 Douglas Hogg and I will be setting out our case firmly and clearly next week.

The pronoun 'Our' is repeated twice in this final section (lines 35 and 36), marking collective action between Malcolm Rifkind and Douglas Hogg, which can be extended to the British reader. Here the 'case' is repeated (from line 1), but this time defined in terms of strength. It is notable that such a description only appears at the

end of the article when the reasonableness of the 'case has been worked up and developed.

Rifkind also concludes the statement that this case is *not just in Britain's, but in Europe's interest* (line 35). He attends to a controversial issue concerning acting solely in Government interests at the expense of Britain and Europe. Thus, he firstly has to identify the Government's shared British national identification, to claim to speak on the nation's behalf. Secondly, he also has to claim to act in Europe`s interests. This claim to represent Europe's interests not only extends the reasonableness of the British Government, but also carries the implication that they also have a problem with BSE. This anticipated counter-argument concerning the unreasonableness of the British Government is also attended to between lines 36-37. Who the 'some' are that make this accusation is not specified, although it could include members of the British and European communities as well as other British politicians (Members of the Opposition). He produces the contrast claiming, *we have a massive role to play in this continent's future* (line 38). The use of 'we' unites once more Rifkind with the British nation. The extrematisation of the 'role' Britain will play is upgraded in the word 'massive', although the details are not provided. Moreover, Rifkind defines Europe in different terms. Previously in this article, Europe has been defined as a political category. However, here he also defines the category in geographical terms calling it the 'continent'. Previous discursive work on the flexible construction of European boundaries has noted how politicians define Europe in geographical terms when strong arguments are made concerning Britain`s inclusion or exclusion. In particular, constructions of Europe as a continent are invoked when claims are made to include Britain, unproblematically, within the wider category (Abell, 1996). In the present case, as Britain belongs to the continent of

Europe, Rifkind deploys this definition to strengthen his claims to speak on its behalf, as a member.

Finally in this article, Rifkind concludes with a statement that echoes the opening line of the article stating his proposed trip to Europe (line 39). This last point is distinguished from the surrounding text insofar as it is presented in italics, which emphasises the stress placed upon it. Hence, the article has explicitly come full circle. It began with the scripting of a future visit to Europe and then shifted between past and present events to focus upon the reasons for it. Here, Rifkind reiterates the future event, thus ensuring that the fundamental point of the article (as stated in the abstract) is not lost. However, this time it sequentially follows a locally constructed context, which has attended to the credible reasons for such 'reasonable' political actions.

Concluding Comments

It has been suggested in this chapter that a study of political writing in a tabloid newspaper provides a rich source of data for examining how descriptive and rhetorical devices can be used in managing accountability and assigning blame. Moreover, it has been argued that a 'bottom-up' analysis of this media text is both useful and informative when considering the performative functions of discourse. However, as the current framework of discursive psychology does not attend to textual media data, it has sometimes been informative to incorporate aspects of CDA and other discursive approaches to fully understand the issues of interest.

The analysis of a media article written by Malcolm Rifkind, for the *Sun* newspaper, has considered and expanded upon some of the issues raised in the study of parliamentary data. This particular tabloid data was chosen on the basis of Robin Cook's use of it in a speech in the House of Commons on 20 June 1996. In both the

parliamentary debates about BSE and this newspaper article particular discursive and rhetorical devices are deployed in attending to matters of political accountability and the attribution of blame towards Europe. It has been noted here that in attending to these concerns, political speakers and writers define and validate their own identity and actions in a locally constructed context of particular scientific, independent, national and political 'others' with whom they can be compared and contrasted against.

In both newspaper and parliamentary sources of discourse, national categorisations have played an important role. In debates about BSE, and a newspaper article about the ban on beef, the defining of the 'British' nation has been attended to. Furthermore, this definition of who 'we' are, entails further claims about who 'we' are not. In terms of the BSE debate this has been treated as complex matter. As politicians define Britain they often do so in a managed local context of Europe. In the newspaper article, Malcolm Rifkind constructs a 'reasonable' Britain in contrast to an 'unreasonable' and politically motivated Europe. Both in parliament and in the *Sun* newspaper, speakers/writers manage a dilemma of national inclusion and exclusion. As speakers in parliamentary debates invoke the word 'partners' to position Europe and Britain within this dilemma, here Malcolm Rifkind refers to 'partners' and 'the rest of Europe' to simultaneously locate Britain inside and outside the wider national category. Further references to the 'continent' of Europe and 'consumers' establish Britain's dilemmatic position within Europe. However, as Billig (1995, 1996) and MacMillan and Edwards (1999) note, issues of inclusion and categorisation are accompanied by counter-arguments of exclusion and particularisation. In the current example, Malcolm Rifkind argues for Britain's uniqueness from the 'rest of Europe', describing 'us' as 'reasonable' and 'not wishing

to cause trouble'. This is rhetorically contrasted against a Europe that is presented as politically motivated, intent on destroying Britain's beef industry, and imposing a ban that is scientifically unfounded. As was noted previously, Brookes (1999) claims that one of the central aims of tabloid coverage about BSE was to present Europe as dishonest. Moreover, as has already been suggested from an analysis of parliamentary debates during the period from March to June 1996, the political and media focus on BSE has shifted from a concern with public health to one of national identity; the relationship between Britain and Europe; and the construction of a 'beef war'.

As well as the construction of national categories other categories are also recurrent in both sources of data. Most notable is the deployment of the British people. In the current example, it is used to warrant an explanation for a future visit to Europe. The British people are positioned, homogeneously, as the source of a consensual negative evaluation of European actions. Rifkind claims that the British people are 'bitter and frustrated', and scripts the future political activities of himself and Douglas Hogg as being in response to such emotions. Moreover, as CDA theorists, communication and media writers and discursive psychologists generally have noted invoking the British people enables a speaker/writer to identify with his/her intended audience. In the present example, invoking the 'British people' enables Malcolm Rifkind to present himself as speaking on their behalf, as well as implicitly establishing his own national identity. Fairclough's theoretical concept of intertextuality is useful here as it enables the analyst to consider how media texts combine a 'hybrid' of discourses. Thus, Rifkind switches between political, scientific and conversational/colloquial discourses as he constructs a multiplicity of identities for himself.

Another category invoked in the newspaper article is that of consumers. This is also used in both parliamentary data (Harriet Harman 20 March 1996). In both sources of data the category functions to warrant specific claims made by the speaker or writer. Here it is used to validate the claim that BSE is not simply a British problem, but a European issue. This links with the second claim made by Brookes (1999) namely that much of the tabloid coverage during the BSE issue was centred around the claim that BSE existed in other European countries, not just Britain.

References to 'science' and apolitical and independent sources, is also an important tool in this political data. In the House of Commons debates (Stephen Dorrell 20 March 1996, Douglas Hogg 25 March 1996), the categories of science and scientist are worked up and negotiated to develop credible accounts concerning Government policy in response to the BSE issue. However, the categories can also be used to form counter-arguments to undermine such political credibility, and also be used to construct a negative account of Europe. In the parliamentary debates and in the current media article, such references to apolitical and scientific sources are used to define the actions of Europe as 'unscientific' and 'unreasonable' in contrast to a 'scientific' and 'reasonable' Britain.

These 'others' do not always have to be independent or apolitical to warrant a claim or action. Malcolm Rifkind reports claims made by the Prime Minister, to validate future political actions to be taken by himself and Douglas Hogg. As has been noted in parliamentary debates the reference to an official title directs the audiences attention towards the generic position s/he holds in society, and as such works-up the credibility of claims made (most notably Stephen Dorrell's quotation of the Chief Medical Officer, Kenneth Calman – 20 March 1996).

It has also been considered how the location of an article on a newspaper page can also carry implications. In his speech on 20 June 1996, Cook claimed that Rifkind's article was xenophobic, due to its location below a particular nationalistic cartoon. In the beginning of the analysis of this piece, the headlines and locations of the articles on both pages 6 and 7 were considered for the implications they carry. Adopting the rhetorical approach outlined by Billig (1995), it was noted how headlines, cartoons, photographs, drawings, and their location across two pages could function to 'flag' certain national themes and dichotomies. However, this analysis differs markedly from the 'top-down' approaches favoured by CDA theorists. Although it has often been useful to draw upon some of the grammatical categories provided by critical discourse analysis, such as 'modal expressions' and the use of italics in conveying contrastive stress, this current analytical work has tried to follow a more 'bottom-up' perspective. Hence, it has not been considered how Malcolm Rifkind's article, or any other articles that appear in this particular edition of the *Sun* newspaper, reflect or construct a particular ideological framework. The idea that the media is an institution, which is positioned within a particular societal hierarchy, is an issue that has not received analytical attention here. Instead, the focus has been upon the performative aspects of discourse, as analysed at a more micro-level. MacMillan and Edwards (1999) provide a clear distinction between the aims of CDA and those of more ethnomethodologically influenced approaches. They suggest that the grammatical approaches to media discourse:

> …sometimes cut across and obscure an analysis of discourse's performative business. The constructive, rhetorical, and performative business of discourse is often accomplished by what the specific words are, and their particular context of use, rather than by what grammatical category or kind of syntactic structure they are part of. (p. 171)

It is this fascination with the 'performative business of discourse' that has driven the analysis of political debates and media articles concerned with the BSE issue of 1996. It has been argued that in both oral debates and printed written text discourse is analysable at the micro-level. Moreover, in all forms of discourse, whether oral or written, participants' concerns with their own identity and accountability can be analysed and understood in terms of the 'functions' of language. With regard to the BSE issue, political writers and speakers present an over-riding concern with managing their own political identity, by means of avoiding and assigning blame to particular national, political, scientific and independent 'others'.

9.

Conclusion

Order in the House!

A Question of Identity and Accountability

This thesis began with the claim that in social psychology the notion of 'identity' has come to be reconceptualised (chapter 2). Rather than treating identity as a fixed mental attribute and assembling instruments to measure it, theorists increasingly regard the concept as a communicative notion. That is to say, social scientists have become concerned with how identities are constructed in discourse and their rhetorical functions in performing social actions. This of course carries the implication that identities are not static but highly variable, shifting to meet the discursive demands of the interactional context. The work of Tajfel (1978) and Turner (1982), which suggests that identities are cognitively 'switched on' according to the salient features of the social context, has been challenged for its mentalist and essentialist assumptions. In particular, discourse theorists have argued that identities do not simply get 'switched on' as a result of a passively perceiving the social scene, but are constructed and mobilised in language (McKinlay and Dunnett, 1998). As Edwards (1999) notes, what is interesting about identity research is *when* and *how* they are made relevant in talk and what rhetorical business they accomplish. Those theorists working from within a social constructionist perspective have also challenged mainstream psychology's view of 'context' as something to be perceived neutrally. Discursive theorists have suggested that the social context itself requires social construction. Thus, when speakers do produce an identity for themselves they must also construct the social context in which that identity is to be understood.

Hence, the social context of comparison and contrast is a rhetorical feature of talk rather than a cognitive process.

In chapter 3 it was noted that for discursive theorists, identity is inextricably linked with accountability. Individuals do not simply produce identities for themselves but treat themselves and each as accountable for them. In this chapter the work of discursive psychology was considered for the emphasis it lays upon the need to explicate identity and accountability in discourse. In particular, Potter and Edwards (1992) claim that speakers are concerned with producing credible identities for themselves and others was examined. To this end, they suggest speakers engage in fact construction, deploying devices such as consensus and external validation to warrant the identities they produce and assign to themselves and others. Moreover, discursive psychology stresses the role of description and narration in the production of these accountable identities. Rather than treating a speaker's description of past, present and future events as neutral reflections of reality, Potter and Edwards suggest they are rhetorically loaded to produce a particular version of reality that will warrant or undermine the identities ascribed to self and others.

These criticisms of cognitive approaches to identity have informed this thesis. As this present work was concerned with how politicians talk about BSE, it was argued that the framework provided by discursive psychology was useful for analysis. In this case, the tools of discursive psychology could be deployed to note how politicians construct, assign and avoid identity ascription, as well as investigating *why* they were made relevant at a particular point in a debate. Chapter 4 noted the theoretical and analytical questions that could be addressed in this thesis by using discursive psychology. Considering the controversial nature of the BSE issue in Britain during 1996, an analysis of the political debates must also take into account how politicians manage accountability for the ensuing health crisis. It was suggested that in blaming opposition political parties and key members, political speakers should also be concerned with positioning their own accountable identity in the rhetorical context of 'others'. Thus, one of the focal points for the analysis became concerned with how a speaker convincingly allocates blame to another speaker whilst at the same time not appearing as one biased party predictably attacking the other. If a political speaker is to construct another's identity as unreasonable and blameworthy, s/he must also

position her/his own reasonable identity in contrast. Thus, the dialogic positioning of self in relation to 'other', whether absent or present, became a particular focus for analysis. In agreement with the work of Tajfel and Turner, it was noted that the context in which one's own identity becomes understandable is in comparison to some 'other'. However, the analysis proceeded on the basis that this context is rhetorical, not cognitive, and as such variable and not fixed. The examination of data focused on the function identity construction has in political talk about BSE.

Political Arenas & Textual Data: Discursive Limitations

The data for analysis was political and the analysis relied upon textual transcripts (Hansard) and a tabloid newspaper article, which raised problems for the application of discursive psychology. As discursive psychology is largely based upon conversation analysis, it becomes difficult to understand how such an approach could be applied to textual data. Moreover, this was not mundane conversation, as favoured by CA, but a public political arena with an audience that was both present and absent. The ritual of turn-taking within parliamentary debates differs significantly from their organisation in everyday interactions. In this respect, other approaches to discourse analysis, such as critical discourse analysis (CDA) appeared eminently more suitable. However, the aims of this thesis were not upon the linguistic deconstruction of the Hansard text, nor did they rest upon the powerful positions occupied by speakers within the House of Commons. Thus, although more linguistic/textual approaches to discourse analysis often proved useful to understand political rhetoric, they were applied to the data in addition to the theoretical framework of discursive psychology. The field of discourse analysis is also rich with research carried out on media discourse, but these tend to arise from CDA and media studies. Once more, these discourse analytic studies become an informative source when analysing media data, but their usefulness is somewhat limited. As much of CDA focuses upon the powerful role of the media in reproducing elite discourses and dominant political ideologies (e.g. Phillips, 1996), this does not fit into the scope of this current work.

which remained concerned with identity construction and the management of accountability. Thus, this thesis aimed to apply the methodologies provided by discursive psychology to textual data but also integrated other approaches when discursive psychology failed to provide any insight. For example, in chapter 8 it was noted how the work of Bell (1999) proved to be useful when considering the form of newspaper articles. Likewise, Fairclough's work on intertextuality (1999) also proved to offer practical insights into the differing discourse genres operating throughout a tabloid media text. The point hardly needs reiterating that discursive psychology, with its emphasis upon the spoken word, can be integrated with some basic concepts from more textual approaches to discourse analysis in order to provide a coherent framework for the study of written discourse.

BSE: From Health to National Identity

The topic of BSE may appear to be a rather obscure area upon which to base a thesis about identity construction. However, on the contrary, this issue has proved to offer a rich body of data that can be analysed using rhetorical and discursive concepts to explicate identity production as a resource for managing blame. BSE is not a new focus for research but current examinations remain somewhat limited. At the time of writing, the majority of research on the impact BSE had upon Britain lies within the field of communication and media studies. As mentioned in chapter 4, work by Kitzinger and Reilly (1997) and Brookes (1999) have adopted content analysis to examine the changing narrative of BSE within the media. The fundamental point from this body of work is that the topic of BSE underwent a progressive shift in emphasis from public health to British national identity. As discussed in chapters 6 to 8, media theorists have recognised the decline of scientific information concerning the link between BSE and CJD from media reports, and the increasing focus upon British

national identity in the context of European national identity. Moreover, this work notes that it is the introduction of the European Union ban upon the import and export of British beef that signals this shift. However, to date no research exists upon the political debates that occurred during this time, or how this shift occurred and was managed in parliament. Therefore, this thesis aimed to examine the shifting debates about BSE across time to see, firstly, how identity construction became a central feature within these debates (as blame was located) and secondly, to examine how those identity constructions of 'us' shifted in the rhetorical context of a present (opposition politicians) and absent (national and scientific) 'them'. Furthermore, as the issue of BSE progressed attention was paid to how the focus for comparison, 'them', changed from debate to debate.

For analysis, the thesis considered 3 House of Commons debates on BSE. Chapter 5 examined the first debate about BSE that occurred on 20 March 1996, when Stephen Dorrell acknowledged a link between BSE and CJD. The analysis considered how particular scientific, political and public identities were constructed, negotiated and challenged as politicians located blame for the health problem in Britain. In particular, the conflicting identities of the 'expert' members of SEAC were contrasted with the worried and unconfident British people in the negotiation of blame. Whilst Conservative politicians constructed the scientific and expert identities and entitlements of SEAC and defined the Government's role in passing on 'factual' information about BSE, Labour speakers undermined the 'factual' nature scientists and Government. This chapter illustrated how identity boundaries and meanings are not fixed but open to construction. For example, the category of scientists was flexibly defined homogeneously as 'experts' (as defined by Stephen Dorrell, Conservative) and heterogeneously as family members such as parents and

grandparents, subject to the same human flaws as everyone else (Harriet Harman, Labour). Thus, identity construction is linked to the social actions that are being performed by the speaker.

This emphasis upon the variability of identity construction was also noted in chapter 6. This chapter focused upon the following debate that took place on 25 March 1996. What was significant about this debate was that it occurred on the same day that the European Union announced a worldwide ban on the import and export of British beef. Hence, the analysis examined the construction and mobilisation of this European ban during the debate and the implications it had for identity. A close study of exchanges between Douglas Hogg, Paul Marland, William Cash and George Foulkes noted the beginnings of a change of emphasis as the debate moved away from scientific issues to matters of national identity. In particular the analysis considered how constructions of 'us' centred on British national identity and were located within a rhetorical context of European 'others'. The deployment of contrastive discourse was particularly pertinent as Conservative speakers constructed 'scientific' and 'reasonable' Britons in the context of unscientific and politically motivated Europeans. The legitimacy of the EU ban was debated as Conservatives question the legality and reasonableness of such actions. However, Labour speakers (such as George Foulkes) redefined these identity boundaries. Foulkes claimed that 'us' the British and 'them' the Europeans were united in a shared concern for BSE and the Government's disregard for human health. Moreover, he contrasted 'us' with 'them', the Conservative politicians, who were to blame for BSE. Thus, although identities were positioned along national lines in this debate, *how* and *why* they were constructed, mobilised and made relevant depended upon the rhetorical business the speaker aimed to accomplish.

However, it was also noted in both chapters 6 and 7 (20 June 1996) that constructing national identity represents a dilemma for speakers. As discursive theorists have noted previously, constructing British national identity is deeply problematic and the relationship between Britain and Europe remains ambivalent. The representation of positive British national identity in the context of negative Europeaness requires some delicate management. This contrast tends to be implied rather than explicitly stated, thus speakers avoid the appearance of xenophobia. In the present data the term 'our partners' serves as a useful device for enabling politicians to manage and reproduce the dilemmatic relationship between Britain and Europe. Politicians simultaneously locate Britain both inside and outside the wider category of Europe thus representing British similarities and particularities. Thus, national boundaries are not fixed but open to construction and argument. However, as speakers produce a positive-negative contrast between Britain and Europe, they also take care to position their own reasonable tolerant identity within the dilemma. This was considered in detail in chapter 7, as Robin Cook implicitly positions his own reasonable identity in contrast to the prejudice of Malcolm Rifkind. The emphasis upon science is largely absent from the debate that occurred on 20 June 1996, as BSE is sidelined in favour of a discussion about British and European relations. In particular, this chapter noted the function media articles fulfil in political debates for managing ideological dilemmas of prejudice and tolerance. It was examined how Robin Cook referred to a newspaper article written for the *Sun* paper by Malcolm Rifkind to assign xenophobia to the Foreign Secretary and reproduce the prejudice itself through quotation of a cartoon caption. Moreover, as Cook positions Rifkind as xenophobic he implicitly positions his own tolerant identity in contrast. Finally, chapter 8 focused upon the newspaper article itself, and considers how the positioning, structure and content of an article

written by a key politician can function to reproduce xenophobia, whilst at the same time protecting the author's own tolerant identity. Throughout the analytical chapters not only has the BSE narrative been investigated, from health to national identity, but the role of descriptions, narratives, emotional discourse, contrasts, fact construction and so on have been analysed for their role in identity construction and the function it plays in assigning and avoiding blame for BSE in Britain.

Courting the Europeans: Trouble in the House Post 1996:

This debate about BSE is not confined to 1996, but continues to echo around the House of Commons and media centres at the present day. Recent events include the official lifting of the European Union ban from British beef and France's refusal to acknowledge the ruling. At present, the British Government (now Labour) is seeking to take France to the European court to overturn their decision to not sell British beef. The supermarkets are littered with advertising slogans enticing the consumer to buy British beef. However, Germany is also refusing to accept British beef until France agrees to do so. Thus, confusion and uncertainty continue to surround the issue of BSE and the possible link it has to CJD in humans. Hence, debates about BSE throughout 1999 and the start of 2000 are once again characterised by a mix of science, politics and national identity. SEAC's scientific findings are increasingly challenged by other 'experts' from Britain and other European countries. Moreover, as the theme of war dominated the British press's portrayal of British relations with Germany in 1996, so similar patterns are to be found in the press today. However, this time the target is France rather than Germany. However, in negatively defining who 'we' are not, positive representations of the 'us' the British are positioned within a discourse of prejudice and tolerance. No doubt a detailed analysis of current day debates would explicate old and new identity constructions, as political speakers

continue to assign and allocate blame for BSE in Britain. Although these debates are based on issues of human health and safety, there remains an equally serious matter, that of British national identity and its relationship to Europe. As Young (1999) writes about BSE:

> Was this because the substance at issue was the Roast Beef of Old England, the complete culinary symbol of British eating? Major himself...called beef 'part of the psyche of our nation', to be reckoned alongside forests for the Germans. Might poisoned lamb, or contaminated chicken, have touched a less sensitive national nerve? (p. 463)

Indeed, many political speakers in the House of Commons during 1996, and 1999 pledge their commitment to the traditional British Sunday Roast. Thus, it would appear that in political debates about BSE, more is at stake than simply beef.

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