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The power of feeling: Locating emotions in culture

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Recommended Citation

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Abstract

Within cultural studies, there has been little detailed investigation of emotions as part of everyday personal, cultural and political life. In this article, we argue the need for a cultural studies approach to emotions that focuses in detail on: how emotions are constituted, experienced and managed; what is culturally permissible for specific categories of subjects to express as part of their constitution within contemporary power relations; and the techniques and contexts in and through which the emotional subject is produced. We develop an analytical framework based on a critical review of, first, Michel Foucault's analyses of modern power, discourse and the formation of subjectivity (focusing on 'technologies of power' and 'technologies of self'), second, Alison Jaggar's conceptualization of 'emotional hegemony' and, third, Raymond Williams's conceptualization of 'structure of feeling'. We apply this framework to specific examples to demonstrate how emotions might participate in the reproduction of culture, subjectivity and power relations. Here, we discuss the unexpected and extensive public outpourings of grief following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, and media and government responses to these. We also look at the ways in which diaries/day planners may be used to provide a structure not only for appointments, but also for feelings – registering and managing individual emotional states – and self-construction. In each of these examples, we consider how 'the emotions', as a category of experience, might be implicated in negotiations of the (hierarchically arranged) public/private divide.

Introduction

Emotions, widely considered to be individual and private phenomena, hover beneath the surface of the publicly acknowledged world and historical record. But they are increasingly being recognized as part of the fabric of professional, institutional and organizational settings, as well as personal and family relations.

In the UK, recent debate has developed around the idea of 'emotional literacy' (Orbach, 1999), a concept that appears to articulate an awareness of the social and political importance of giving more presence to emotion as a category of experience. Emotional literacy draws attention to a psychological relationship between private and public spheres and the cultural/political necessity of managing individual emotional states. In doing so, it also highlights the fragility of the border separating the private and the public, inner and outer worlds. At an individual level, and sometimes at a collective level, emotions leak out and disturb others. Contemporary self-help and popular commentators like Orbach provide some understandings of how and why this might happen. They address and constitute subjects who, once in possession of such understandings, might be in better control of their own emotional (negative and damaging) responses to situations.

Contemporary recognition of 'the power of feeling' is clearly significant. However, discussion of emotional literacy offers little insight into the cultural and historical contexts in which emotions may be managed and the effects of contexts on emotional expression and management. We argue that a thorough investigation of the cultural meanings and functions of emotion from a cultural studies perspective is timely.

To date, emotions and emotional responses have largely been investigated through a range of scientific, biomedical and psychological discourses. Within cultural studies, there has been little detailed investigation of emotions as part of everyday personal, cultural and political life. In this article, we discuss the development of an analytical framework for critically understanding the dynamic and creative 'workings' of emotions in the reproduction of culture,

subjectivity and power relations. Our cultural analysis of emotions attempts to show how power, as a web of unequal relations, works through specific articulations of emotion. We view emotions as culturally constructed and permeating all levels of personal and social experience and, in this sense, as undermining any clear and fixed division between the public and the private.

We set out a rationale for our cultural analysis through considering, first, how emotions as a category of experience might be implicated in negotiations of the (hierarchically arranged) public/private divide in contemporary popular discourse and, second, how some cultural theorists have addressed emotions. We go on to develop our analytical framework based on a critical review of concepts elaborated by Raymond Williams, Alison Jaggar and Michel Foucault.

Emotions and the reproduction of a public/private divide

The division between public and private has a very long history in western social and political thought (Thompson, 1995). The public and the private refer to areas of separation in social life and social space that appear to be generally agreed on and taken for granted. However, the content of each category and the location of the boundary between them are culturally and historically relative (Kuhn, 1984). There is often conflict over where the private ends and the public begins and over the content of each category.¹ What is at stake in definitional struggles over the public/private distinction, Kuhn (1984) argues, is the regulation of the social order.

The gendered separation of a public sphere (the world of work, life outside the home) sharply distinguished from the private sphere (family, life within the home) has become particularly intense in the development of capitalist societies (Martin, 1989: 15).² The 'private', as it emerged through the 19th century, was a highly gendered and sexualized space; one where women were most evident, where supposedly 'natural' functions like sex and the bodily processes related to procreation belonged, and where the primary focus was on the affective content of relationships (Martin, 1989: 16). In other words, the public/private code has been gendered and sexualized as an integral part of its constitution.³

In this article, we discuss the ways in which emotions (feminized and personalized) may be part of, and constituted through, the discursive production of the public/private code. We are concerned with how, and what happens when, public/private boundaries are transgressed and emotions appear to 'seep into' public space, and how boundaries are drawn and redrawn. Indeed, what are the creative power effects of such moves?

For instance, the death of Diana, Princess of Wales was followed by unexpected and extensive public displays of emotion. Public outpourings of grief – expressed through tears, flowers, notes, gifts and the sheer numbers of those who lined the streets of London to watch the funeral procession – stood in stark contrast to the public perception of the royal family's lack of emotion. Indeed, in her lifetime, Diana had spoken publicly about her suffering in the midst of a royal family whom she described as very cold (Campbell, 1998). Beatrix Campbell quotes Elaine Showalter's poignant reference to the sharp contrast between the public's display and royal reticence: 'Every flower outside Buckingham Palace is a vote against the desert within' (*Guardian*, 6 September 1997: 15).

According to Campbell: 'British society was split not by class or politics, or even gender and generation: it was split into feelings about Diana's death, between those who felt strongly and those who felt little' (Campbell, 1998: 250). Those who bonded together, on her side and against 'the Establishment', were showing that they cared about and empathized with her suffering (Campbell, 1998). In addition, we suggest that Diana's death and public responses to it

were marked by an intensity of feeling and debate about how, when and where feelings can and should be expressed. Discussion about the appropriateness (or not) of feeling intersected with a series of political positionings – for and against the monarchy, within civil society, across gender, class and race – which were clearly also being constituted through emotion.

draws attention to a specific historical moment in which expressions of emotion could not be contained within the category ‘private’ and spilled over into ‘the public’, putting pressure on an institution (‘the monarchy’) to display sorrow and grief. Pressure by crowds of emotional subjects did lead to some concessions. The Queen eventually made a formal tribute to Diana and, against tradition, the flag flew at half-mast at Buckingham Palace. A public funeral ceremony was held in Westminster Abbey, and the Queen and her family stood outside Buckingham Palace with heads bowed as the funeral cortege passed by. Although public display of emotion (seemingly potent and arresting from a government/monarchy standpoint) did not produce anything like a political crisis or a republican movement, it did fuel a debate that problematized the routine exclusion of emotion and reference to feelings in public life. The idea emerged that the expression and understanding of emotion might be a desirable element of late modern citizenship.

Campbell’s discussion of responses to Diana’s death contextualizes public outpourings of grief and sorrow as part of a contemporary discourse about ‘the way men, women and children live together’ (Campbell, 1998: 252). In particular, discussion focused on the nature of the family unit, its coherence and durability, the impact of adultery and divorce on women’s and children’s lives. Media commentators and those they interviewed insisted on speaking of Diana primarily as a single mother and a divorced wife. This occasioned a lengthy series of identifications and commentaries on the experiences of single motherhood, rejection and divorce, despite the clear and obvious dissonance in the economic circumstances of Diana and most other divorced single mothers. Discussion also focused on the behaviour and attitudes of men towards their wives and children and what women might want and expect from men in terms of support and commitment in the face of the demands of motherhood.

Campbell and others trace a border between the private and the public, inner and outer worlds, and show it to be permeable. At an individual and a collective level, emotions may leak or even burst out and become visible. Writers like Campbell help to expand the possible meanings of emotions and the ‘public’. But they do so while remaining committed to the reproduction – however changeable its border – of a public/private divide. They offer little insight into the cultural and historical contexts in which and through which emotions are constituted, and the effects of those cultural and historical contexts on emotional expression and management. Contemporary discussions that argue the need for greater recognition of emotion as a category of public life, as well as private existence, do not provide a detailed understanding of the ways in which expressions of emotion may help to reproduce subjectivities within unequal power relations.

The idea that individuals need to (be helped to) manage their emotional states finds some resonance in the contemporary use of diaries/day planners. The imperative to keep a diary/day planner has intensified since the 1980s, alongside the professionalization of certain social groupings (Shifrer, 2000), as we struggle to organize our everyday lives around the varying demands of work, domestic/child care responsibilities, looking after the health care needs of ourselves and others and pursuing leisure activities. Forms of personal writing, such as keeping a diary, may be seen as a specific technique for imposing order on one’s personal life and managing emotions. Day planners/diaries serve as a point at which a public/private interface is

acknowledged and negotiated on a routine everyday basis. However, diary writing needs to be viewed as more than a personal activity; that is, diary writing should be considered in relation to the discourses and institutions that produce the subject who writes and the contexts (incitements and constraints) within which s/he writes. They can also be examined in terms of the way they help constitute the public/private code. Diaries increasingly provide a structure not simply for appointments, but also for feelings; they become a site for self-construction. The practices of 'writing the self' and managing feeling take place within the context of a range of discourses that stipulate where, when and with what degree of intensity specific emotions may be considered reasonable, appropriate and healthy – or not.

We argue that a cultural studies approach to emotions is needed, one that focuses in detail on the techniques and contexts in and through which the emotional subject is produced. A cultural studies approach views emotions as social, cultural, political, as well as individual phenomena, and views a repertoire of possible emotional responses as culturally and historically produced, along with the subject, in specific cultural/historical contexts and power relations.

Cultural studies and emotions

The affective realm, as an area of experience, has received little critical attention within cultural and feminist studies even though some theorists acknowledge that affectivity plays an important part in the (re)production of culture. Stuart Hall, for example, describes emotions, along with other discursive formations, institutions and social practices, as constitutive of culture and, as such, integral to the processes of meaning production:

To say that two people belong to the same culture is to say that they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts and feelings about the world, in ways which will be understood by each other. . . . [C]ulture is about feelings, attachments and emotions as well as concepts and ideas. (Hall, 1997: 2)

Larry Grossberg (1984) asserts that affect is a constitutive part of popular culture. He argues persuasively that we cannot make adequate sense of cultural forms or activities solely by considering them as cognitive, rational or ideological practices. Affect is, indeed, the 'missing term' that might explain, for instance, why certain ideologies take hold and not others or how, through affective investments, ideologies are internalized and naturalized (Grossberg, 1992).

Within feminist theory and gender studies, there has been some debate about the affective qualities associated with nurturing and women as empathic social beings, whether these qualities are acculturated or essentializing characteristics and how they might be enlisted towards political ends. This has led to some conceptual work on the emotions. Most notable is Alison Jaggar's piece 'Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology' (1989). Jaggar identifies mechanisms of 'emotional hegemony', which Michelle Wallace suggests is 'another way of saying that the personal was always political' (Wallace, 1994: 217). Significantly, Jaggar inflects the concept of 'the personal' with an affective register in addition to its biographical and quotidian sensibilities.

However, formative conceptualizations such as Jaggar's have been relatively few and far between in (the overlapping fields of) gender studies and cultural studies. This is in marked contrast to intense recent interest in 'the body' and sexuality, and extensive critiques of Enlightenment-based concepts of mind and reason. Whilst it has been argued that 'Feminism certainly cannot afford to leave the body untheorised as simply the inert matter on which gender

is inscribed' (Jackson, 1998: 142), equally feminist/gay and lesbian/cultural studies cannot allow the emotions to be left untheorized. Indeed, emotions may be seen as a terrain upon which gender and other unequal power relations are constructed.

We aim to address the omission of emotions from much theoretical concern and to begin to build a foundation upon which 'the emotional' might be conceptualized. In particular, we aim to explore some of the ways in which emotions contribute to the reproduction of culture and meaning, to locate this as a dynamic, changing historical process and to view emotions as social/public as well as individual/private phenomena. In other words, we aim to begin giving a history to affective experience – so frequently understood to be without history (Foucault, 1991) – and to discuss the emotional as that which lies beneath the surface of the publicly acknowledged world.

We argue for an approach that considers, in tentative ways and through specific occurrences, how emotions might be constituted, experienced and managed; where and when they may be considered appropriate/inappropriate; how they might function with/in structures of power towards both dominant and resistant ends; and the role they play in the formation of subjectivity and identity in the everyday lives and practices of individuals and collectivities. Our discussion pertains to emotional constructs within West European and North American traditions.

In this article, we argue that Foucault's analyses of power, subjectivity and discourse are especially useful in investigating the cultural construction of 'the emotional', although his own work did not engage directly with this domain. We regard the construct 'emotions' both as elements in the exercise of social control and the construction of power relations and as constituting a domain of creative freedom (based on our reading of Foucault's later work). We integrate Alison Jaggar's concept of 'emotional hegemony' and Raymond Williams's concept of 'structure of feeling' with our readings of relevant aspects of Foucault's work.

Foucault, discourse and power

Foucault describes discourse as an organizing principle that produces and orders the phenomena of which it speaks and compels and constrains what can be thought, spoken and enacted (Foucault, 1986). In addition, we suggest that discourse establishes what can be felt – a revulsion for, admiration of or disinterest towards. Also, from the perspective of a Foucauldian analysis of the operations of modern power, emotions may be viewed as 'strategic formations' that encompass discourses, institutions and technologies – 'the said as much as the unsaid' (Foucault, 1980: 194). More specifically, various particular emotions form their own (non-fixed, historically altering) strategic formations that continually interact with and are (re)produced and regulated by other strategic formations such as gender, family, law, science, medicine, psychiatry, and so on. Simultaneously, emotions constitute an integral part of the constitution, organization and application of these other strategic formations. For instance, the family is not only an economic, social and discursive system, but is also produced through the organization of affect. While discourses of nationalism and patriotism can be understood to produce loyalty and pride, equally these are operative in the construction of nationalism and patriotism.

Foucault developed two major models of the formation of subjectivity: one based on discipline and normalization (technologies of power); the other based on care of the self and the uses of pleasure (technologies of self).

In the first model, the hegemonic function of relations of power is to constitute subjectivity and organize 'techniques for "governing" individuals – that is, for "guiding their

conduct” (Foucault, 1991: 337). Thus, the law-abiding citizen and the criminal are constructed through the discursive practice of the law, husbands and wives are the effects of heterosexuality, and so on. The ‘self’ is the effect of cultural processes or regimes of power/knowledge which, in the modern era, are more often internalized and self-regulating (discipline) than physically coercive and imposed from outside (punishment). Identity is not a deep essential nature, but the accumulation of the many changing subject positions that are taken up by and shape a person. And because of their altering unstable qualities, subjectivity and identity are positionings or processes that must be continually re-enacted.⁴

Technologies of power centre on the relationship between the social entity and individuals, and work to make the latter useful productive citizens by making them into disciplined docile bodies. In contrast, technologies of the self are considered (that is, rationally-based) techniques for living, a meticulously formulated and practised map of how to live – an ‘ethics’ or ‘art’ of existence (Foucault, 1987). Technologies of the self produce a self-contained individual who is simultaneously the subject and object of her/his actions, their means of circulation and the terrain upon which they occur. Technologies of the self entail a shift from the idea of limited resistance as a counterforce to domination to the idea of an ability to practise freedom by the self on the self, a mode of self-determination. In this way, ‘technologies of power’ appear to produce a ‘passive’ subject and ‘technologies of self’ a more ‘active’ subject. However, Foucault insists that the coerced subject is able to exercise a degree of active subjectivity through resistance. Similarly, the care of the self includes elements of coercion and self-discipline.

Foucault’s analyses of subjectivity, although requiring further unravelling, may contribute a great deal to a critical understanding of the workings of emotion. ‘Technologies of power’ can serve as a conceptual tool in investigating whether and how emotions may be instrumental in the (re)production of power relations. From this perspective, we might ask: how much and how specifically do they constitute techniques of discipline that help forge what we do and who we are? Here, power is a central concern in which emotions are mechanisms of force, a means of deploying power relations. However, a view of emotion-as-power could well fail to account for the complexity, range and changeability of emotions. Specific actions and events do not always guarantee specific affective responses, calling into question the potentially deterministic aspects of emotion-as-power. ‘Technologies of the self’ may provide alternatives to some of these limitations and open up other possibilities in the cultural construction of emotions and subjectivity. In order to develop and apply Foucault’s analyses of subjectivity to a critical understanding of emotion, we integrate our reading of his work with the concepts and analyses of other theorists.

Jaggar and ‘emotional hegemony’

The term ‘emotions’ draws together complex, inconsistent and diverse phenomena. Jaggar’s starting point is that emotions are culturally and historically constructed. To illustrate this, she cites the existence of emotions in other cultures that are ‘non-felt’ in the West and the education of children in culturally ‘appropriate’ emotional responses, for example, to fear strangers. She argues that many emotions make no ‘sense’ without a cultural context, for instance, the feeling of betrayal without social norms of fidelity (Jaggar, 1989: 150–1).

With the advent of the Enlightenment and modern science, emotions have increasingly been placed in dichotomous opposition to the rational, as well as the intellectual, the cultural, the universal, the public and the male. Understood as irrational, the emotions have been situated

alongside the physical, the natural, the particular, the private and the female (1989: 145). In this way, Jaggar argues that the ideological function of discourses on the emotions works to keep members of dominant political, social and cultural groups in dominance – where they are almost invariably aligned with reason while subordinate groups are associated with emotions. From such an association, people of colour and women, for example, are viewed as more subjective, biased and irrational while, at the same time, in an ideology-confirming practice, they may be culturally required to express emotions more openly, as in the case of women and notions of ‘femininity’. Such an ‘assignment of reason and emotion’, as Jaggar calls it, bolsters the authority of dominant groups and discredits subordinate groups, constituting a process of ‘emotional hegemony’. However, as in other hegemonic systems, the possibility of resistance is always present.

Jaggar therefore understands emotions as working to position individuals within structures of dominance or relations of power. However, when contradictory emotions are felt by a sufficient number of people, they form a basis for the constitution, in discourse and history, of subcultural experiences and groups.

Jaggar’s conception of emotional hegemony positions emotions as effective at an individual micro level, but only as part of larger or macro sociocultural operations. Jaggar argues that the ‘modern redefinition of rationality required a corresponding reconceptualisation of emotion’, according to which emotions are defined as: a) ‘private’ (that is, functioning at an individual personal level); and, b) ‘involuntary’ (that is, imposed upon the individual from within). This reconceptualization is further grounded in the ideological construct that the emotions are ‘pre social, instinctive responses determined by our biological constitution’ (1989: 150).

In contrast to this ideological assumption, emotional responses are necessarily guided by cultural evaluations. If someone is unafraid in a situation generally perceived as dangerous, their lack of fear requires further explanation; conversely, if someone is afraid without evident danger, then their fear demands explanation; and, if no danger can be identified, their fear is denounced as irrational or pathological (1989: 153). Here, ‘dominant values are implicit in responses taken to be pre cultural or acultural, our so-called gut responses’ (1989: 159). That is, while persons may appear to act individually and spontaneously, their reactions are conditioned by cultural understandings of ‘appropriate’ or ‘inappropriate’ emotional behaviour.

‘Emotional hegemony’ may imply a binarism at odds with Foucault’s concept of power as dispersed and multicentred. However, we interpret Jaggar’s work as drawing attention to the ways in which discourse on emotions may work to consolidate, constrain and subordinate categories of subjects within binary positionings. These oppositions may also form the basis for a range of resistances.

Jaggar’s work usefully identifies the ways in which the designation ‘emotional’ participates in the constitution of gender relations and the public/private code. Consideration of gender is notably absent from the work of Williams and Foucault.

Williams and ‘structure of feeling’

From within cultural studies, Raymond Williams’s somewhat contentious notion of ‘the structure of feeling’ is relevant to an analysis of emotion.⁵ Williams describes structure of feeling as ‘the felt sense of the quality of life at a particular place and time’ (1975: 47). The emphasis on ‘felt’ is important. Williams was describing something, in his words, ‘of feeling much more than thought – a pattern of impulses, restraints, tones’ (1979: 159). In place of the ‘official

consciousness of an epoch – codified in its doctrines and legislation’, Williams was attempting to bring into historical and theoretical discourse ‘the whole process of actually living [an epoch’s] consequences’ (1979: 159).

Here, structure of feeling is equated with the experiential results of living within a specific social and cultural context, particularly those results affectively experienced. A distinction is drawn between the knowledge that can be derived from an era’s institutions and social structures versus an understanding of its relations of experience (1975: 67). Structure of feeling deals ‘not only with the public ideals but with their omissions and consequences, as lived’ (1975: 63), that is, something that exists beyond or in addition to the articulated beliefs and values of a specific society or social group.

However, because the historical past, ‘the period culture, consciously studied, is necessarily different from the culture as lived’ (1975: 59), the structure of feeling of any given time or place is extremely difficult to recapture. An epoch’s structure of feeling is precisely what is missing from historical investigation, omitted from documentation and records and unamenable to institutional analysis. Indeed, a sense of ‘culture as lived’ is also missing from Foucault’s work who, at least implicitly, holds institutional and rational analyses to be sufficiently descriptive in understanding an historical era.

The concept ‘structure of feeling’ opens up significant theoretical possibilities. First, it allows the experiential to include categories of existence beyond the rational and empirical without rendering them irrational. It allows for certain aspects of experiential or ‘lived’ existence, such as the emotions, to be viewed as having specific, ascertainable and important effects – considerations that are largely excluded from current theoretical formulations. Second, structure of feeling includes the idea that the emotions are culturally constituted and culturally shared. While feelings remain largely intangible, their structures of organization and behaviour become accessible to investigation. With structure of feeling, the emotions become a widely held cultural experience, not solely an individual (in the sense of biological or behaviourist) one.

Williams’s work is particularly significant because it attempts to account for those (felt) aspects of lived existence that elude records, documents and most historical and public accounts. His work outlines the possibilities for recapturing intellectually what has been experienced emotionally. Williams represents emotions as rich, complex sociocultural practices with productive or causal functions. That is, emotions produce culture and are not simply the reverberations of other social formations and power relations.

Although Williams conceives of experience, including the emotions, as culturally constituted and shared, his analysis tends to conjure up vast singular structures of feeling reflecting unified configurations of subject positions – class or generational – at a particular historical moment or location. And, while he acknowledged the possibility of a multiplicity of co-existing alternative structures of feeling, his own analysis does not accommodate this (1979: 158). Williams’s conceptual framework involves a minimal sense of conflict, competition or struggle between the structures of feeling of any epoch.

In contrast, we wish to highlight the idea of resistance. We draw on Foucault’s general conceptualization of power as a strategy that is exercised from ‘innumerable points in the interplay of non egalitarian and mobile relations’ (Foucault, 1981: 94) and met with a ‘multiplicity of points of resistance’ (1981: 95). And we work with Jaggar’s idea of emotional hegemony, the constant requirement for its reproduction and the specific possibilities for resistance this generates. For Jaggar, the ideological function of emotional discourses is to keep members of dominant political, social and cultural groups in dominance while discrediting

subordinated others who may form subcultures of opposing or alternative emotional discourses. Integrating the concept of emotional hegemony with structure of feeling acknowledges both the multiplicity of structures of feelings and the ways in which these operate in a continual process of reproduction and resistance (of/to specific relations of power).

We propose simultaneously both narrowing and broadening Williams's conception of structure of feeling. We propose narrowing his concept by considering the term structure of feeling not as signifying all experiential or 'lived' existence, but as referring specifically to emotion. We suggest broadening it by thinking not of a singular (or few) structure(s) of feelings, but of a multiplicity of structures of feelings that operate in a complex interactive web of emotional and other discursive and non-discursive events and responses. We suggest considering various structures of feeling as interactional, culturally constituted and historically changing.

Williams's concept 'structure of feeling', together with Jaggar's concept of the cultural construction and hegemonic function of emotions, can be used to enhance our (Foucauldian) concept of emotions as 'strategic formations' to refer to the way emotions are deployed – in relation to what is culturally permissible or appropriate in specific times and contexts and for specific categories of subjects. For example, discourses of anger invoke technologies such as 'self-control' and anger management and institutions such as prisons, courts and psychiatric organizations, particularly when anger oversteps its disciplinary bounds. Sports form culturally permissible and culturally controlled – in the sense of both constraining and compelling – arenas for the 'expression' or training of anger. Structure of feeling is viewed, within this framework, as the organization of those culturally constructed discourses of appropriate and inappropriate responses and behaviours whose purpose is to govern the individual, construct the subject and position categories of subjects within power relations.

Our approach to studying the emotions, therefore, entails drawing creatively from the above theoretical positions to examine some of the ways the emotions are constituted and operate upon the social and individual body/psyche to create specific series of effects. And, further, it entails determining how they might interact with other cultural practices and strategic formations to produce and reproduce subjects and power relations (through the disciplinary and positive mechanisms of technologies of power and technologies of self) in specific historical and cultural contexts. Next we illustrate our analytical approach to emotions by focusing on some specific contexts and techniques in/through which the emotional subject is produced.

Power and the management of feeling

Emotional responses to the death of Diana, Princess of Wales and media and government reactions to these can be analysed for what they reveal about the structure of feeling at that time – that is, the organization of discourses that shape what is culturally permissible for specific categories of subjects to express as part of their constitution within contemporary power relations.

Media commentators described the crowds lining the streets after Diana's death as presenting (to the Establishment) a 'frightening mixture of sentimentality, grief and rebelliousness' (*Observer*, 7 September 1997: 13). According to Campbell, 'the crowds' commitment to their feelings' was interpreted by many journalists 'as a loss of control; an engulfing, feminine rush of sentiment' (1998: 240). This interpretation is consistent with the historical view of crowds as mobs, meaning unpredictable and irrational forces. It is also part of an ideological manoeuvre in which emotions, as feminine sentiments, are ascribed to large

segments of the population as part of a process of invalidation and subordination. In an alternative interpretation, Campbell argues that the crowd did not rage or express mass hysteria, but rather was 'a benign, quiet, still crowd that made itself immovable' (1998: 240). The crowd's expression of grief made 'deep narrative sense' to many members of the public, whether they themselves participated or simply observed.

We suggest that the discourse that sprang from the historical moment of Diana's death and public responses to it reveals both a deep-seated assumption that emotion is considered as always already private and feminine (expressed by 'rush of sentiment' and 'loss of control'), as part of the very constitution of these categories, and the contemporary fragility of the private/feminine as a category for containing emotions.

Expressions of grief at that time suggested a structure of feeling focused on loss and capable of drawing together a diversity of differently positioned subjects into a temporary collectivity that felt able and compelled to display grief and sorrow publicly. These expressions challenged the position of other (royal) subjects and indicated that it was not culturally permissible, at that moment in time, for them to remain 'unemotional'. As a result of strong public articulations of emotion, members of the royal family were obliged to modify their actions and presentations of self through expressions of emotion. In this way, emotional response to Diana's death reveals how emotional hegemony – where emotions are part of the positioning of individuals and groups within hierarchical relations – was felt and became part of the formation of a temporary subcultural identity that cut across social categories, such as gender, class and race, and offered a fleeting resistance to prevailing hegemonic relations.

Simultaneously, as public grief cut across social categories, it was accompanied by a recognition of changing social relations. Responses to Diana's death included public discussion about the meaning of her life in terms of gender and family relations. That is, discourse surrounding her death (and life) included a detailed consideration of changes in attitudes to and experiences of gender roles, parenting and single motherhood. Quite explicitly, this included discussion of the practices – and consequences for women and children – of unfaithful or neglectful husbands, and of being a trophy wife who is expected to be acquiescent and supportive of her husband's professional life. Campbell suggests that people who paid their respects to Diana in 1997 'were able to move into a public space and say something to each other about how men should behave towards children, how men should treat women and how the royal family should learn something from the rest of us about respect' (1998: 252).

The social significance of people's expression of grief was perhaps that it articulated a collective desire to speak out about the painful aspects of everyday life for many people – disappointments, losses, feeling let down – which are often born in silence. For a moment, a temporary category of subjects came into being, through the expression of grief, who wanted to talk about what was important in their lives, what was difficult and their sense of wanting more – more recognition of how they struggled to be good parents and partners and the obstacles they encountered, and more support for their efforts. This new social grouping drew attention to some of the effects of the unequal relations of gender and class and presented itself as a reflective collective whose longing to have more in life was especially poignant in the face of the obvious finality of Diana's death.

Public displays of grief opened up debate about how the royal family should conduct themselves, what types and intensity of emotional expression were appropriate and acceptable⁶ and what, as a society, we 'do with' our emotions. The government of the time read the 'public

mood' and influenced the royal family to make concessions by modifying its self-presentation through particular expressions of emotion. This initiative was an effective technique of power designed to appease public sentiment, but not to lead to any great political changes.

In summary, responses to Diana's death can be seen as a passing moment in which: a) sets of power relations (and the public/private code as a support for these) were disrupted and questioned; b) individuals on a massive scale engaged in a process of recognizing and articulating their feelings (exercising technologies of self); c) grief formed the basis of a rapidly created, fluid and quickly dissipated subcultural identity and basis for limited resistance; and, d) the government and monarchy, through specific concessions, quickly recouped the ground they appeared to be losing (exercising technologies of power). One of the most enduring consequences of this historical moment was that it created a space in which a popular discussion on emotions could develop, focusing on how we routinely manage emotional states by designating them as private and how we might otherwise display and manage them.

The social expectations and practices of working on and managing our emotional selves assume the commonly evoked model in which emotions emanate from within the individual and potentially leak out or impinge (more or less dramatically) upon the outside social/public world. Emotions originate in and move from private to public realms. As a result, their containment or management is posited as a personal function, a matter of individual responsibility. In contrast, we argue that work on self produces a subject who is not only emotional (or emotionally managed), but also already positioned in terms of gender, class, sexuality, race. The ways in which the subject acts emotionally are also part and parcel of the reproduction of these specific categories of subjects and the power relations that constitute them. The produced subject, whose production is ongoing and never complete, acts within horizons that constitute the very potential for acting (Butler, 1992).

The constitution of feeling and its part in the creation of subjectivity within contemporary power relations can be traced through an examination of journals, diaries and other forms of personal writing. Such modes of writing comprise sites where technologies of power and technologies of self simultaneously struggle to produce and regulate the subject through the constitution, organization and management of emotions. An analysis of the structures of feeling surrounding the use of diaries/day planners, for example, also reveals ways in which the public 'intrudes' upon or constructs the personal, and vice versa. Here, we are not advocating a biographical analysis (events and rhythms of daily life) or a psychological interpretation. Rather, our approach entails assessing how journal and letter writers speak of and manage their own emotional existences – both the emotions they directly experience as well as those they encounter in others – and what they reveal about the structure of feeling at a particular historical moment.

On initial consideration, diaries/day planners might be considered largely a forum for exercising a technology of the self. Within these terms, they serve as an instance of the ideographic; the writing of one's self. 'Ideographic' is a term from psychology that refers to the compilation and study of the case histories of individuals. But, in its root sense of own (ideo) and writing (graphic), a frame shift can be performed in which it comes to signify, instead, the writing of one's own self. Rather than being discharged by the authority of an expert or professional, ideography conveys the act of the individual describing his/her own emotive case history or experiences. An ideographic approach leads us to consider diary keeping as a technology of the self, entailing scrutiny of emotional responses as part of a process of creative, inventive, transformative 'work on self'.

However, practices of the self must also be contextualized in relation to disciplinary and other hegemonic constraints (that is, as part of and mediated by technologies of power). Anne Shifrer, in her analysis of diaries/day planners, argues that they came into popularity in the 1980s as part of the professionalization of certain social segments (Shifrer, 2000). She analyses the categories of activities structured by diaries on a daily and weekly basis. For example, the Horizons Planner, a rather upscale New Age version, contains, along with its daily calendar pages, a narrow insert called 'Weekly Compass' and subtitled 'What Matters Most'. This insert divides personal activities into four subcategories: physical, social/emotional, mental and spiritual. The planner's owner is meant to fill in the space adjacent to each category with an intended weekly activity. Rather like a balanced diet, one is meant to have a serving of each on a regular basis. Below this on the 'Weekly Compass' insert, space is provided for one to compartmentalize and evaluate the various identities one occupies under the heading 'Role' – the examples provided in the Horizons' ad are wife, mother, employee – and to itemize the goals to be accomplished by the persona of each role. In the ad, the sample goals suggested are: as wife, 'Spend more quality time with David'; as mother, 'Help John with his homework'; as employee, 'Use constructive criticism to my advantage'.

Shifrer argues that contemporary professionals are driven by the dual emotions of guilt and fear by never feeling sufficiently productive. The diary serves three functions with respect to such feelings: 1) filling the pages of the day planner with activities can provide temporary alleviation of guilt/fear; 2) it can be a means of driving oneself further and harder; and, 3) it can be a way of measuring accomplishment in what is, possibly, an inevitably dissatisfying tally and an indefinitely deferred sense of achievement.

In this instance, the practice of attempting to scrutinize, work on and effectively manage our emotional selves helps to produce 'responsible' subjects – the type of citizens required by contemporary late capitalist societies. Following Shifrer's observations, diaries can be understood as both a site and an act of, a product and a producer of, a particular structure of feeling in the last decades of the 20th century – guilt and anxiety on the part of middle- to upper middle-class professionals. Diaries, in which activities, commitments and feelings are organized, mark a perhaps small but tangible and effective example of a technology of power in action, in that they are a means of regulating the self, of productively organizing one's existence. They serve as one moment of relay in the complex processes of emotional hegemony, in this instance, in the maintenance (production and reproduction) of the structures of late capitalism. Such diaries, in their marshalling of the managerial classes, are tools that prepare and make available workers. They help direct and monitor a white collar workforce in time and task management so that its members are better able to manage themselves as well as other employees. This particular instance of a technology of power is dependent on the inciting and constraining effects of guilt and fear.

One outcome is that, although diaries and other forms of personal writing may appear to offer potential as a forum for self-care and a measure of creative self-invention, they are just as (or more) likely to function as techniques for self-management and discipline. However, we argue this point without wishing to foreclose the possibility that among such self-disciplinary organizational activities, alongside or in the gaps of their corrective functions, space simultaneously exists in which to perform practices of self-care.

In Foucauldian terms, the accounts of emotional existence found in journals and letters might well be considered modern forms of 'confessional'. Journals, diaries and other styles of personal writing, along with religious and psychological forms of confession, would then all be

means of authority and control over the individual. But it may also be possible to find in personalized discourses of emotion some element of ‘self-revelation’, not in the sense of a depth or essence of discovery, but as ideography – a way of speaking or writing, and thus bringing into being, one’s own self. An ideographic approach is the attempt to locate, in the organizational and disciplinary techniques effected upon the self, traces of manoeuvrability within or between the various subject positions taken up by any individual.

Concluding remarks

Our framework for analysing the place of emotions in culture draws upon key theoretical insights generated by Foucault (technologies of power and technologies of self), Williams (structure of feeling) and Jaggar (emotional hegemony). While there are tensions between the projects of these individual theorists, who place differing levels of emphasis on emotions as a category of experience and on gender and other power relations, we productively integrate key elements of their insights into a composite framework.

We view emotions as culturally constructed and as permeating all levels of personal and social experience, and, in this sense, as undermining any clear and fixed division between the public and the private. We reject the model according to which emotions emanate from within the individual pre-existing subject, only to then come into contact with and effect, usually negatively, the outside social/public world. We conceptualize the process of emotional experience in interaction with cultural practices and social relations as the constant construction, solidification and renewal of structures of feeling, just as the ongoing constitution of emotions prescribes and proscribes the construction of cultural practices and social and personal relations. We understand emotions as part of the (re)production of culture and subjectivity – emotions as constitutive of culture and subjectivity, and culture and subjectivity as constitutive of emotions – always within power relations. In all these ways, we aim to ‘historicize’ emotions.

To historicize emotions means to radically contextualize them by locating them in and across specific time periods and cultural spaces within relations of power and resistance. Historicizing the emotions entails ceasing to understand them as isolated personal experiences or as prewired intuitive, instinctual or gut responses set off by specific stimuli. It is, instead, to reimagine them as structures of feeling, as competing values of power and meaning operating in complex circuits of social, cultural and individual relations. To historicize is to give presence to that which lies ‘a little beneath history’ (Foucault, cited in Sawicki, 1991: 28), just under the surface of the publicly acknowledged world. Emotions as a category of experience exist just beyond the reach of history, as do the lives of those who have come to represent emotional experience.

Notes

1. For example, states have become increasingly interventionist, pursuing policies aimed at economic and social regulation, blurring the distinction between public and private (Thompson, 1995). The very boundary between public and private is a key issue in political debates, 'as successive governments attempt to redefine the scope of state activity by expanding public services and investment, or, alternatively, remove concerns from the public sector through privatisation' (Thompson, 1995: 122).
2. The evolution of these two spheres (public and private) in the 19th century has been the object of much detailed research (see, for example, Alexander, 1976; Davidoff and Westover, 1986; Martin, 1989; Poovey, 1989; Rowbotham, 1977; Walkowitz, 1982; Weeks, 1989).
3. That is, women's exclusion from the public sphere has been not 'simply a contingent historical circumstance, short of the ideal', but actually 'constitutive of the very notion of the public sphere' (Thompson, 1995: 92–3).
4. For further discussion of Foucault, discourse analysis and subjectivity, see Harding (1998) and Pribram (1999).
5. Williams originally defined 'the structure of feeling' in relation to the analysis of literature.
6. Campbell argues that Diana's death and the monarchy's response to it revealed that members of the royal family were not simply devoid of emotion, but seething with destructive emotion: 'they weren't just cold and conservative, they were crass, full of fury, envy and spite' (1998: 235).

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