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1

Introducing Psychosocial Studies of Emotion

Shelley Day Sclater, Candida Yates, Heather Price and David W. Jones

Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the papers that make up this book. The psychosocial contributors represented here all share an interest in affect, the emotions and emotional life. Some recent writers (e.g. Blackman and Cromby, 2007) make clear distinctions between ‘emotion’ and ‘affect’, with, for example, ‘emotion’ being used to refer to conscious experience, and ‘affect’ to a more basic drive – or bodily based phenomenon. We agree with Greco and Stenner’s (2008) suggestion that such distinctions are not always fruitful, partly because the terms are used highly inconsistently. Emotions exist partly in the body, but they are also in our minds, in our language and in the cultures that surround us. They can be understood as a crucial bridge between the individual and the social, and are quintessentially psychosocial phenomena. They have a mercurial status, not existing without an individual to experience the emotion, but often having little significance without a socio-cultural framework that imbues feelings with meaning.

The contributors to this volume assume a subject who is social to the core, and a society that, at its heart, for better or for worse, is created and sustained by the everyday practices of living, breathing and passionate people. Contributors also share in common a belief that disciplinary splits such as those between the sociological and psychological can hinder processes of inquiry into the mutual constitution of such individuals and the social relations in which they are enmeshed. The psychosocial contributions offered here therefore aim to challenge the fixity of disciplinary boundaries, and to work instead towards transdisciplinarity.

The history of the psychosocial thinking that motivates this book is only just beginning to be written, and to date little attention has been paid to the development of psychosocial studies as a ‘discipline’ (although see the ‘Conclusion’ in this volume). This is perhaps a symptom of the interest in working across disciplinary boundaries, rather than building them.
However, as Walkerdine (2008, p. 341) notes, the project of psychosocial studies emerged ‘institutionally’ from the University of East London (UEL) in the early 1980s, and many of the authors in this book have a connection with psychosocial studies at UEL. The fact of its institutional birth at what was then called North East London Polytechnic (NELP) – and not a wealthier, longer established university is significant. The polytechnic history meant that there has always been a strikingly practical orientation rather than a strictly abstract flavour to the pursuit of the psychosocial. It is notable that centres of psychosocial thought have emerged in other ‘new’ universities (e.g. the University of the West of England and the University of Brighton).

The emergence in East London is also perhaps no accident. East London has been an intense crucible of social change. The close-knit working-class communities documented by the ethnographic studies of the 1950s (e.g. Young and Wilmott, 1957) have been transformed and have become globalised communities marked by high levels of transience, migration and unprecedented levels of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity (Eade, 1997; Butler, 2000). The personal histories of the students of the ongoing B.A. in Psychosocial Studies have reflected this diversity; their interest is in making sense of their own experience in the post-modern world they have been actively creating, as they themselves transcend national, cultural and social boundaries. In our experience of working with students at UEL over many years, they are additionally attracted to the psychosocial studies programme because they have been seeking work in the various caring or welfare or therapeutic industries. One could argue that they have been wanting, in very immediate ways, to make their world a better place (see discussions of teaching in this context in Brown and Price, 1999; Yates, 2001).

The aim of trying to ‘make things work better’ has also distinguished much psychosocial research, at UEL and elsewhere, from traditions grounded more centrally in deconstruction, for example, or (post)-Lacanianism. The aim in these latter traditions tends to be to maintain space for more radically critical and explicitly ‘negative’ critiques. A further difference between the psychosocial research presented in this volume, and most discursive psychology, cultural studies, literary studies and sociology, is in the use made of psychoanalytic ideas. The latter disciplines have largely turned away from clinically based psychoanalysis in this country. Clinical practice in the UK is still dominated by the work of Melanie Klein and the British ‘Object Relations’ tradition. It is the latter thinking that has been most influential upon psychosocial theorising in the UK. These traditions have been particularly alive at UEL thanks to the strong academic links with the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, founded to provide research, training and treatment in the fields of mental health and mental disorder.

An important question for this tradition of psychosocial studies, and its students, therefore concerns the theoretical and practical consequences of privileging (a particular) psychoanalysis, and offering positive or reformist
critiques rather than adopting a more negative stance. It is important to ask in what way psychosocial studies is a product of ‘therapeutic culture’ (Richards and Brown, 2002; Furedi, 2003), and whether it – and such a culture – is potentially emancipatory, or constraining and regulating. This is a crucial question to which we return in the conclusion.

It is clear that there is no one psychosocial approach, no single theory to frame thinking, and no tried and tested methodology by which to elaborate the psychosocial world. Nevertheless, psychosocial theorists have attempted to elaborate psychosocial studies as praxis, a way of conducting research (e.g. Clarke, 2002, and in this volume).

At UEL, the development of particular psychosocial methodologies to explore a diverse range of research questions has generated innovative work that has been driven by problems, interests and topics, rather than by discipline boundaries. The result has been the marking out of a distinctively interdisciplinary territory that encompasses innovations in observational, biographical, clinical and narrative methods, that seeks to integrate theory, method and practice. This psychosocial work has generated new debates and set new research agendas that flag up the centrality of emotion in personal lives and social and cultural worlds.

Early examples include Barry Richards’s *Crises of the Self* (Richards, 1989) in which he began to explore the relationships between internal states and features of the external world, particularly culture and politics. Richards’s later innovative work on advertising (Nava et al., 1997; Richards et al., 2000) applied psychosocial thinking to explore the ‘dynamics’ of advertising, the appeal of advertisements and the ways in which they modulate emotion and so made an important contribution to a broader sociology of consumption as well as having practical implications. In her psychosocial study of divorce, Shelley Day Sclater (1999) built on the seminal work of Henriques et al. (1984/1998) to develop a narrative methodology, informed by Object Relations psychoanalysis and discourse theory, and so addressed crucial issues of family policy. More recently, scholars at UEL and elsewhere have further developed the psychosocial project in fields as diverse as mental health (Jones, 2002), education (Price, 2006), film studies (Yates, 2007), crime (Jones, 2008) and methodology (Andrews et al., 2000; Hollway and Jeff- ferson, 2000). Many others have deepened and broadened the psychosocial project, exploring crucial issues of subjectivity, identity and belonging.

Joanne Brown (2006a, 2006b and in this volume) has suggested that this praxis can be characterised by the use of a ‘psychosocial imagination’. She follows C. Wright Mills’s discussion of the ‘sociological imagination’ as ‘...a quality of mind that “seems most dramatically to promise an understanding of the internal realities of ourselves in connection with larger social realities”’ (Mills, 1959, p. 15, quoted in Brown, 2006b, pp. 18–19). She characterises his sociological project as humanist and interventionist, and notes that it aims to ‘conjoin the biographical and historical’ (p. 19) as well as
providing meta-theory. In extrapolating from this to the idea of a psychoso-
cial imagination, Brown suggests that a ‘sociological imagination’ could be
in danger of reductionism (the individual is best explained by locating them
in their socio-historical context). Brown notes that in bringing psychoana-
lytic accounts of affective life into dialogue with sociological discourses, the
effort is made to hypothesise, in different contexts, the ‘dialectic relation
between social and psychic change’ (p. 22).

There is no single theory, psychoanalytic or otherwise, that can claim
to capture the fullness or all the nuances of the psychosocial imagination.
The essays in this book reflect an eclectic plurality of approaches; each has
something different to offer the exploration of the psychosocial approach to
emotion. What follows is an overview of the four parts of the book.

Overview

Part I: A Psychosocial Approach to Emotion

The three remaining chapters in Part I are theoretical in focus, and present
very different conceptual contributions to the psychosocial understanding
of emotional life. The three theorists, Michael Rustin, Anthony Elliott and
Juliet Mitchell, present contrasting sociological, (post)-Lacanian and clinical
Object Relational psychoanalytic accounts respectively.

Michael Rustin opens with an exploration of why most social scientific
perspectives, in thrall to a ‘norm’ of rationality, have historically found it
difficult to incorporate emotions into their disciplinary schemas, leaving
complex and elaborate exploration and theorisation of the emotions to the
arts and humanities, and to psychoanalysis. However, Rustin reviews a range
of original sociological theories that ‘bucked’ the general rationalist trend,
and have been characterised as ‘historicist’ (Perri 6 et al., 2007) in their
conceptualisation of the relations between the social body and emotions.5
Among others, Rustin cites Elias’s (1939/1978) thesis that a ‘civilising pro-
cess’ was evident in the transition in Europe from a medieval to a modern
society, with its accompanying changes in the regulation of behaviours, and
Hirschman’s (1977) argument that in the move from pre-market to market
societies, a shift occurred from the organisation of social life in terms of war
and honour, to one in terms of rational ‘interest’. Rustin then discusses the
rehabilitation of the emotions in (social) scientific and philosophical dis-
course as itself a ‘psychosocial’ phenomenon. He follows the sociological,
historicist accounts above in suggesting that the interest in emotional life
is itself concomitant with a major societal transition, to a consumer soci-
ety which encourages ‘…the release of inhibitions, and an efflorescence of
emotionality’ (see Section 3, Chapter 2 in this volume). In reviewing the
contemporary emotional construction of social life, Rustin draws on Reddy’s
(2001) term, ‘regimes of emotion’, describing how particular constellations
of emotion are regulated in a given context. Rustin makes the suggestion
that ‘regimes of emotion’ can be studied psychosocially, at societal (macro), organisational (meso) and interpersonal (micro) levels. In the remainder of his chapter, he goes on to give some research examples of each.

Anthony Elliott’s chapter builds upon contemporary developments in the work of Cornelius Castoriadis (1998) and Julia Kristeva (1974) to present a re-thinking of the relationships between affect, fantasy, representation and processes of repression. Elliott briefly re-examines Lacan’s work in order to argue that the free-floating power of complex, primally unconscious configurations of representation and affect was systematically downgraded in Lacanian-inspired approaches to the study of cultural and social processes of representation. He argues that Lacan’s particular reading of Freud’s discussion of the unconscious as being structured like a language led to a mis-representation of Freud’s theory as tying unconscious expression to organised signifiers. He comments, ‘The Freudian point against Lacan is that the unconscious is resistant to ordered syntax [...] The unconscious precedes language’ (see Section 2, Chapter 3 in this volume). Elliott suggests that this in turn has had major consequences for psychoanalytically inspired theories of the relations between self and society in sociology and cultural studies. He discusses recent attempts in European psychoanalysis to recover the radical Freudian notions of representation and affect in Castoriadis and Kristeva. He argues the case for reconstructing a psychosocial account of the desiring subject in which both representation and affect are accorded due recognition.

Juliet Mitchell’s chapter might seem at first glance to be out of place in this volume as it appears to be not overtly concerned with ‘social’ or ‘cultural’ phenomena. But as her previous work has demonstrated (Mitchell, 1974, 2003) an exploration that begins in the most apparently private, intimate world of individual psychic development will inevitably lead to the social, and vice versa. In her now classic book *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* Mitchell argued that an exploration of the unconscious dynamics of gender development could lead to a better understanding not only of the subjectivities of gender, but also of more ‘structural’ issues such as patriarchy. Here Mitchell, while still clearly working within a psychoanalytic framework challenges a great deal of psychoanalytic orthodoxy by examining the significance of sibling relationships both to individual psychic development and thus ultimately to social formations.

Drawing upon Winnicott’s work (see Hoggett, 1992; Price, 2006; Caldwell, 2007; and Yates, 2007 for other psychosocial examples), Mitchell demonstrates the psychosocial thinking that is at the core of Winnicott’s work. In her chapter, she makes the case for the centrality of an organising stage in the psyche based around sibling (lateral) relations. She argues this is as significant as the Oedipus complex, or the early identification with the maternal object, in its developmental implications. Mitchell suggests that sibling ‘object relations’ are ‘creative but not procreative’ in the unconscious.
In building her argument, she draws on Winnicott’s conceptualisation of the ‘use of an object’, and his idea that aggression and destructiveness are implicit in creativity. She reviews Winnicott’s suggestion that to move beyond primary narcissism requires toleration of the subject’s act of destructiveness against an object (or the other), and perception of the survival (obdurateness) of the object or other. Mitchell suggests that the dynamics of love and hate in relation to sibling figures, like those in relation to parental figures, are core to understanding the placing of self in the world. The latter part of her chapter unpacks the implications of sibling relations for gender (as opposed to sex) identity. Sexual identity, in classical psychoanalytic terms, is organised through the perception of sexual difference as refracted through the Oedipus complex, and is assigned in the unconscious according to binary and procreative relations. Mitchell notes that gender identity is concerned with sexual assignment by culture, coinciding with the rise of the perception of the significance of sibling or lateral relationships, and free from reproductive concerns or binaries: ‘It is Freud’s polymorphously perverse child of the “Three Essays on Sexuality” grown up.’ Mitchell concludes by arguing that sibling or lateral relationships are connected to the laying down of pro-social and anti-social patterns of relating. Her thesis has considerable implications for those psychosocial researchers interested in key contemporary phenomena – the rise of the significance of lateral or friendship and peer relations (see Roseneil, forthcoming, for a related psychosocial discussion), and of laterally organised, networked social groups and organisations (see Cooper and Lousada, 2005, for another).

Part II: Emotions in the Public Sphere

Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 in Part II (Barry Richards, Jessica Evans, Candida Yates and Helen Powell) explore emotions in the worlds of politics and popular culture, using a range of media case studies. While addressing a variety of themes and concerns, the chapters each utilise a psychosocial approach that locates the study of unconscious fantasy within historically specific cultural, social and political contexts. These applications might also be called ‘psycho-cultural’, as the chapters focus on cultural concerns such as advertising imagery, celebrity culture and broadcast news and terrorism. They each explore the affective processes that underlie the ‘mediatisation’ of contemporary cultural life.

The theme of Barry Richards’s chapter is emotional governance, or the advisability of public emotion management. In relation to the specific example of the potentially ‘toxic’ emotion of humiliation, he suggests that certain images and reports circulating in the Western media have the potential to be read as a humiliation of Islam, and of Muslims personally, even if this is not the media intention. Richards describes how the experience of humiliation can be a catalyst for explosive violence on the part of some individuals, and he makes a link with fundamentalism, extremism and jihad.
terrorism. Quoting the work of Volkan (2004) on the significance of ‘chosen traumas’ in sustaining group national, religious and ethnic identity, he suggests that shared trauma can generate and amplify a sense of personal humiliation. Noting that intense, direct experiences of oppression and humiliation do not in themselves lead to terrorist action, Richards explores the developmental and unconscious roots of humiliation in the individual, distinguishing it from shame. Richards discusses how, in some individuals, the narcissistic wounding inherent in experiences of humiliation may be experienced as insurmountable, leading to a sustained sense of grievance and the desire for active, violent revenge. Richards’s argument leads him to conclude that those in political authority should pay more responsible and strategic attention to the content of (news) media.

Jessica Evans’s core argument is that politicians must now project a particular identity, a managed ‘mediated persona’ which is ‘celebrified’. Such celebrification, she says, involves the projection of an illusion of one-to-one intimacy with the electorate, holding out the promise of confession or revelation of the private self. Evans notes that the ‘as if’ quality of the intimacy points towards the consumer’s disavowal: the viewer both knows and does not know that the relationship is manufactured from the sum of the politician’s media appearances. Evans plots the rise of celebrification in politics and connects it to Sennett’s (1977) argument about the ‘fall of public man’: a politician ‘… must surmount the disability of appearing to have a merely political will’ and offer integrity (see Section 5 in Chapter 6). She goes on to review the media campaigns of Hilary Clinton and Sarah Palin in the run-up to the US presidential election of 2008, arguing that ‘female agents in the public sphere have a particular pact to make with personalisation’ (Section 1, Chapter 6). Making a similar point to that of Richards, that a mediation’s form is one precondition for the form of emotional affect made possible in the public sphere, she describes how both Clinton and Palin faced a gender-specific double bind. Personalisation encouraged them to ‘reveal’ a feminine, private emotional self, which, once on display, was simultaneously accepted, thus disqualifying them from ‘serious’ public engagement, and rejected as manipulative, thus undermining their integrity as public figures.

Candida Yates’s chapter also discusses the gendered nature of emotion in the public sphere, but her focus is upon fantasies of masculinity and the play of emotion within the flirtatious strategies of political communication in the UK and elsewhere. Through her analysis of flirtation, Yates’s chapter explores the potential failure of emotion in the public sphere of political communication as represented by the superficial pleasures of flirtatious communication and the refusal to commit to a particular position, policy or party. She suggests that the ideology of intimacy is evident in the public fascination with the personality of politicians. The precarious underpinnings of the ‘as if’ persona of celebrity culture outlined by Evans in the previous chapter are echoed in Yates’s review of the flirtatious nature of political communication,
where the substance of policy and debate is increasingly replaced by the seductions of ‘spin’ and the fantasies invoked by particular representations of leadership personalities. Yates notes that some of the tensions surrounding representations of female politicians (as described by Evans) are also present in relation to male politicians who, on the one hand, project traditional masculine qualities of leadership associated with mastery yet, on the other, are increasingly expected to project less authoritarian, ‘metrosexual’ images of masculinity. As Yates discusses, the extent to which such representations signify a meaningful hegemonic shift in masculinity, or whether the mobilisation of such images merely signifies the shoring up of patriarchal masculinity in a new guise, is open to debate.

Finally, in Chapter 8, Helen Powell also takes up the theme of emotion and promotional culture by examining the ‘affective turn’ in consumer culture and advertising imagery. The chapter discusses the powerful role of emotion and its symbolism in generating brand ‘loyalty and trust’ and the emotional attachment that consumers experience in relation to certain branded goods such as the ‘i-phone’. Powell then moves on to look at the role of the celebrity in promotional culture. She notes that images of stars and celebrities have played a key role in the history of the emotion-alisation of promotional culture and the psychosocial shaping of consumer identities. Powell takes the supermodel Kate Moss as a contemporary case study, and makes links with Barthes’s essay on Garbo and Hepburn in noting Moss’s idiosyncrasy and her transparency about her own identity construction, through her changing relationship with fashion. Powell draws on both Lacanian and Kleinian psychoanalytic ideas to consider the nature of the late-modern consumer’s identification with celebrities such as Moss. On the one hand, she notes, celebrity endorsement may fuel problems of identity construction in the consumer, creating cycles of ‘desire–acquisition–use–disillusion–renewed-desire’ (Campbell, 2005, p. 90), as the self falls short of the ideal image the celebrity provides. On the other hand, Powell suggests, the identificatory use the consumer makes of a celebrity like Moss may be more active, complicated and less ‘enamoured’ than that implied by the Lacanian reading – consumers may use celebrities as resources and ‘sites for experimentation’ on their own terms.

Part III: Emotions in the ‘Private’ Sphere
All the chapters in this part (Chapters 9–12) take topics that have often been regarded as belonging simply to the ‘private’ worlds of individuals. Each of the topics discussed – racism, employment and exploitation, motherhood and romantic love – could have, and indeed have been, studied through conventional social science methods. However, here, all benefit from a specifically psychosocial concern with reflexivity in discussing how to interpret the empirical material gathered, whether by depth interviewing
(see also Jones, 2004), life history research or psychoanalytically informed observation.

Chapter 9, by Simon Clarke, presents interview material from a study researching community cohesion, and it notes the significance of local tribal structures for the white communities in Bristol and Plymouth where his interviews were conducted. Clarke argues that notions of racism need to be understood in terms of the emotional commitments to a sense of locality, rather than more abstract notions of nationalism. In common with the points made in the Introduction above, Clarke’s discussion of the psychosocial emphasises a plurality of psychosocial studies, exploring a range of diverse phenomena. For Clarke, as for Brown (cited above), the psychosocial can be characterised not by allegiance to a particular theoretical position or methodology per se, but by a distinctive ‘stance’. He suggests the psychosocial encapsulates several concerns: with researcher reflexivity in relation to unconscious dynamics; with the ability of research to give voice to research subjects; with consideration of the unconscious in relation to the transmission of an identity into the research environment; and finally, with the role of imagination in research.

Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson’s chapter, Chapter 10, recapitulates a 2005 article for the British Journal of Social Psychology, which sought to engage with (critical) social psychology in offering a distinctively psychosocial perspective upon the conceptualisation of affect, emotion, agency and intentionality. Hollway and Jefferson distinguish between emotion and affect, using Blackman and Cromby’s (2007) definition of emotions as phenomena more consciously identifiable by the subject, and then focussing on affect, particularly unconscious anxiety. They emphasise the need to consider the personal historical conditions under which individuals make affective investments in particular discursive positions. The case study of ‘Vince’ documents one interviewee’s discussion of his dilemma in relation to whether to stay or leave a particular job. The authors suggest his decision has intersecting social, discursive and psychic dimensions: he is restricted in employment choices, has a commitment to his role as family provider and, unconsciously, is caught by a particular repudiation of his father and identification with his mother. Hollway and Jefferson read the ‘decision’ to go off sick as a highly over-determined, complex act of conscious and unconscious agency, about which the subject feels little choice. Hollway and Jefferson’s research deliberately explores questions of central importance for a psychosocial approach: how warranted and equipped psychosocial researchers are methodologically, when they are interpreting unconscious dynamics in contexts outside the consulting room; and how effective they can be in using concepts originating in a clinical context.

In taking a psychosocial approach to identity in Chapter 11, Cathy Urwin draws firstly on Hall’s (1988) observation that identity can be described as the ‘…unstable point at which the “unspeakable stories of subjectivity” meet
the narratives of history and of a culture’ (p. 440). Focussing on that instability, Urwin then looks at how a small group of mothers sought to build a sense of personal continuity as they actively re-worked their identities following the births of their first children, and gradual separation from them. The mothers observed were grappling with cultural, geographical and personal historical dislocation, and Urwin argues that it was in the face of such dislocation that paradoxically, they were able to articulate and work towards a sense of enhanced continuity. She hypothesises that the maternal task of separation from the young child might foreground this process (a child’s apparent difficulty separating may be connected to a mother’s difficulty in letting go). Urwin is one of a small number of psychosocial researchers employing empirical observational methods rooted in psychoanalytic (infant) observation (see Brown, 2006a, Urwin, 2009, Price in this volume and Price, 2006). In presenting her observational material and its analysis, Urwin argues that culture enters the psyche in the work of separation, and that cultural processes provide a psychic resource contributing to individuals’ reflexive identities, generating a relatively stable sense of ‘who we are’. Joanne Brown’s chapter, Chapter 12, argues that romantic love is particularly appropriate for psychosocial study, because the ‘binocular vision’ of the psychosocial can address the fundamental attachment needs and socio-historical scripts that romantic love speaks to. She notes Day Sclater’s (1999) description of how individuals can be ‘hailed’ by a discourse, which invites identification with a particular self-image, and she suggests that what the psychosocial approach can study is the specific ‘cathexis of the social’ by individuals, in contrast to a psychoanalytic focus on the ‘landscape of [their] internal world[s]’ (see Section 2, Chapter 12). Brown considers two groups of interviewees discussing romantic love and intimacy, contrasting ‘thirty-something’ and ‘eighty-something’ reflections. She notes that the younger age group engaged in active ‘sociological’ and ‘psychological’ deconstruction of romance, and suggests, drawing on Giddens (1992), that ‘…a transformation of intimacy is conducive to a psychosocial sensibility (and vice versa)’. As noted in the Introduction, she begins to explore the very interesting question of the praxis of psychosocial research, arguing that it may contribute reflexively to self-transformation, functioning as a ‘transformational object’ (Bollas, 1992). She notes this raises reflexive questions for psychosocial researchers, puce Craib (1994), about the nature of their endeavours in relation to conceptual as well as empirical research. As noted above, these questions are explored in more depth in previous work by Brown (2005, 2006a).

Part IV: Practices, Interventions and Therapies
As the Introduction began to suggest above, one of the central debates in a psychosocial approach to emotion concerns the social and political meanings of potentially ‘therapeutic’ practices. Frank Furedi (2003), like
Christopher Lasch before him (Lasch, 1979, 1980), is deeply sceptical of ‘therapy culture’ and sees the constitution of ‘problems’ requiring ‘treatment’ or ‘modes of relating’ requiring ‘improvement’ as a way of achieving social and political aims. Foucault argued that the ‘taming’ or domestication of the unconscious in some therapies, and in accounts of the right conduct of emotional life that derive from them, is part and parcel of disciplinary power. Some of the chapters below refer to Foucault; all engage, implicitly or explicitly, with the ‘proper’ use of a ‘therapeutic project’ as it connects to their area of research.

Andrew Cooper, in Chapter 13, begins by noting David Armstrong’s comment that ‘No emotional experience in organisational life is a suitable case for treatment. It is rather a resource for thinking, for releasing intelligence’ (2004, p. 27). His chapter is a critique of ‘top down’ approaches to policymaking, and it argues for serious value to be given to emotional responses to policy, in place of a simple focus on rational consultation about it. Cooper cites the example of a child protection worker who experienced an inarticulate mix of angry resistance and depression in the face of organisational policy in relation to the progression of casework. The worker eventually articulated her experience as akin to being on a factory line, producing as many ‘finished’ cases as possible. Cooper discusses how the collapse of strong intermediate collectives engaging in the political process within the contemporary social polity may leave individual ‘policy actors’ particularly exposed to emotional experiences which are psychosocial in origin, not merely personal: ‘What might once have registered and been available at the level of social conflict, instead becomes inscribed as part of subjective experience.’ The chapter presents one analysis of why policy initiatives may attract little commitment, and highlights the importance of a different kind of engagement by policy makers with their reception.

In Chapter 14, Loraine Gelsthorpe focuses firstly upon the development of the discipline of criminology, before turning her attention to contemporary political discourse surrounding criminal justice, and the emotionalisation of the legal system. She notes how criminology underwent ‘scientisation’ in order to establish itself as a discipline. Emotional life has consistently been apparent in criminology, yet has not been theorised. Feelings are there, if indirectly: in radical (critical) criminology’s focus on the possibilities of deviance as a ‘fully authentic action’; in feminism’s deconstruction of the myth of ‘hygienic’ criminological research, and sensitivity to affective dimensions of criminality and victimhood (Smart, 1976; Heidensohn, 1996); and in writing on the sensuality of crime (Katz, 1988). More recently there has been a move to grasp the unconscious investments in crime and victimisation (Gadd and Jefferson, 2007) and a more over-arching psychosocial approach to understanding criminality (Jones, 2008). Gelsthorpe’s argument about contemporary political discourses about crime is that although restorative and expressive justice appear therapeutic and can be
democratising, in their political performance and rhetoric, they have taken a punitive and victimological turn. This is in line with wider policy shifts in the responsibilisation of citizens in relation to crime, and a managerialist approach to the justice system.

Heather Price, in Chapter 15, considers emotional literacy teaching in contemporary UK state schools as a phenomenon of what Furedi (2003) negatively characterises as ‘therapy culture’, and what Richards and Brown (2002) characterise subtly differently as a ‘therapeutic culture’. Thus she treats the newly institutionalised teaching of what has been enthusiastically characterised as the ‘fourth “R”’ (alongside reading, writing and arithmetic) as an example of the emotionalisation of contemporary life, and of a pre-occupation with its management. Price applies Ian Craib’s (1994) discussion of the psychologisation and proceduralisation of grief and mourning, to her discussion of the recent (2005) creation of a school curriculum for ‘social and emotional competence’. She notes Craib’s emphasis upon the ‘dark’ or negative side of this process: it can prescribe, sanitise and marketise a dimension of human relations. At the same time, by using a psychoanalytically informed observational methodology to present vignettes from emotional literacy teaching and learning in the infant school, Price shows how teachers and pupils do not simply either receive or oppose such a curriculum, but are engaged immediately in translating it into terms where they can exhibit and negotiate a lively sense of individual potency and understanding.

David Jones, in Chapter 16, looks at the category of personality disorder, and the problems society has in understanding individuals who appear to perceive the world in a rational manner but whose emotional responses and connections often seem highly abnormal. He notes that legal discourses of responsibility and psychological models of identity and agency don’t ‘fit’ these individuals, and within psychiatry, the ‘Personality Disorder’ diagnosis remains liminal – are these patients ‘really’ mad? Jones notes how such categories expose societal controversy and irresolution about human nature, and the constitution of self, emotion and thought in relation to the social body. He makes a strong argument for the importance of historicisation in the study of contemporary psychosocial phenomena. His account of the transmutation of ‘moral insanity’ into ‘personality disorder’ revisits the way that the loss of reason, certainly in legal and medical discourses, came to be equated with madness. He highlights the concurrent societal emphasis upon new kinds of ‘civilised’ masculinity. Jones shows how a gradual submergence of the significance of emotion in conceptualising mind and human nature silenced questions about the coherence of human consciousness, and the origins of distinctive human faculties, particular sensibilities or higher feelings, although he notes how elements of psychoanalytic thought (particularly the work of Henderson, 1939) continued to represent this marginalised tradition within psychiatry. His historical analysis clearly shows why policy initiatives, and the legal and criminal
justice systems, continue to struggle at the present time with ‘what to do’ with individuals who not only do not ‘fit in’ but can do great harm to themselves and others.

Chapter 17 in the book, by Nicola Diamond, references Foucault’s account of torture as public spectacle, designed to horrify and instruct. In developing a psychosocial argument, she notes that in late-modern society, torture takes place in private, but exists as a social practice. She describes her work as a therapist with victims of trafficking and of abuse under particular political regimes. In arguing that torture inscribes dynamic power relations upon the body, she shows how these relations continue at the level of affective somatic states and experiences of self-disintegration, and can be transmitted inter-generationally and in the therapeutic relationship. Her emphasis throughout is on the unbearability and unthinkability of the reality of the torturer–tortured relation, which is a social relation, and in this her argument has links to Cooper’s (2007) analysis of the explosive effects of the exposure of child sexual abuse. Diamond notes that the raw affect she describes is not the deep affective material of the drives that classical psychoanalysis posits at the inner ‘navel’ of the individual unconscious. Rather, it is inter-subjective, coming from external reality. This inflection of the social affectively within the subject has been less explored and countenanced in the psychoanalytic tradition (but see Layton, 2007). Diamond’s use of neuroscientific insights illustrates one way that a link between the psychosocial and neuroscience need not bring about a ‘domestication’ (Radstone, 2007, p. 189) of psychoanalytic, psychosocial thought and practice.

Overall, the chapters in this book demonstrate the utility of a psychosocial approach to the world of emotion. Psychoanalytic ideas have been an important thread within psychosocial studies and yet as many chapters demonstrate, it is important that we are able to understand psychoanalytic ideas themselves as both products and shapers of the social and cultural world. The growth of ‘psychosocial’ thought in the last few decades is itself arguably symptomatic of important social shifts. It is possible to celebrate this move to a more emotionally intelligent culture, while it is also possible to view this as a more worrying trend that further signals the colonisation of the internal worlds of the individual. As noted in the opening section, this issue will be returned to in the conclusion.

Notes

1. Or almost to the core, in the case of some of the more classically psychoanalytically influenced authors.

2. There is some sign of change in this respect. For example, in 2007, a relatively informal group of people who felt they worked ‘psychosocially’, set up a network in the UK (see Hollway 2008), and Valerie Walkerdine (2008) has traced a brief history of psychosocial studies.
3. But by no means all of it – see the debates represented in the December 2008 issue of the Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society, and within the Psychosocial Studies network.

4. The Tavistock Clinic is also an established ‘home’ of Kleinian psychoanalysis.

5. Perri 6 et al. (2007) note that such approaches ‘…propose that patterns of emotions change markedly between periods…[the] fundamental logic of “different times and places, different feelings” is consonant with…theory that holds that emotional structures have developed differently in different, geographically or socially separated societies’ (p. 12).

6. It has been the subject of major, recent debate within psychosocial studies; see Note 3 above.

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