When words are not enough: Combined textual and visual multimodal analysis as a Critical Discursive Psychology undertaking

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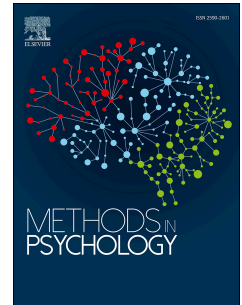
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ARTICLE TITLE

When words are not enough: Combined textual and visual multimodal analysis as a Critical Discursive Psychology undertaking

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TITLE

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we sketch out the progress of our recent work, concentrating on methodological developments and insights we have gained along the way. Broadly, we situate ourselves in the field of Critical Discursive Psychology (CDP), but the focus of this paper extends to the study of combined semiotic realms, hence we describe our work as Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). By outlining MCDA and sharing some insight from our own engagement with it, we hope to connect with growing interest amongst qualitative psychologists, and discursive psychologists in particular, to examine discourse beyond *just* text and talk, and offer a practical example of how to apply MCDA. We begin by briefly outlining discursive psychology and CDP, before introducing MCDA as an analytic method that initially developed in the field of critical linguistics. We reflect on our work in MCDA combining visual and textual modalities to show how this approach can enable exploration of different semiotic forms in a manner that aligns with the ambitions of CDP. We argue that MCDAs novel insights illustrate both a need and value in undertaking discursive psychology of this kind (cf. Byford, 2018). We conclude by emphasising that meaning potentials availed through the visual and textual components of a multimodal discourse are more than the sum of individual components. The combination of modalities fosters a liminal space where meaning potentials expand beyond the additive combination of individual components and are instead rooted in holistic affordances of the multimodal discourse.

KEYWORDS

Critical Discursive Psychology, Multimodality, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, Visual Analysis, Satirical Cartoons

(CRITICAL) DISCURSIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Discursive psychology emerged in the mid 1980's, a feature of the broader 'turn to language' that cut across the social sciences (Wetherell, 2007), and reflective of the so termed 'crisis' in

social psychology. In their seminal work, Potter and Wetherell (1987) laid out a comprehensive and radical approach which argued for the close analytic study of discourse as a primary focus for psychology and sought to respecify the study of core psychological topics such as cognition and emotion. At the same time, Billig (1987) revealed the argumentative qualities of talk and established a central concern with rhetoric (te Molder, 2015). The now widely used label, 'Discursive Psychology' (DP), was first coined in the work of Edwards and Potter (1992), challenging mainstream experimental psychology and its focus on 'inner' cognitions (te Molder, 2015). A central concern for DP is that of construction: discourse is constructed *through*, for example, metaphors and repertoires, and constructive *of* specific states of affairs, positioning one 'version' of events over others. For over three decades DP has argued, and evidenced, that language is fundamentally a medium for action, and that we 'do things with language' (Huma et al, 2020).

Disciplinary origins and influences of DP are varied, the work of Wittgenstein had a significant impact, along with post-structuralist theories and thinkers. Conversation analysis and its concern with the ethnomethodological approach to the study of talk-in -interaction also provided an important influence (te Molder, 2015). As Wetherell (2007, p. 663) notes, early discursive work took an "integrative standpoint attempting to pull together a diverse set of influences (including semiotics and speech act theory), into new syntheses". As the field has matured, DP's interdisciplinary origins led to the growth of a number of differing "stances and orientations within the broader umbrella of discursive work in psychology" (Wetherell, 2007, p. 664). Amongst the varying approaches, Wetherell (2007) points two key orientations that researchers are often distinguished by; (i) those primarily aligned with a conversation analytic approach and a central interest in the fine-grained analysis of naturally occurring talk-in-interaction; (ii) those with a desire to explore discourses through a range of micro and macro lenses.

This second approach has increasingly been referred to as Critical Discursive Psychology (CDP) (Wetherell, 2007). Central to what distinguishes those who might best be described as aligning with CDP versus CA/DP includes differing epistemological perspectives (Sims-Schouten et al, 2007). CA/DP typically favours a relativist stance, centring its focus on the ways in which discourse actively constructs reality through discursive practices such as categorisation, attribution and rationalisation. As Wetherell (2001) points out, many

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proponents of CA/DP are unconvinced that there might ever be access to anything beyond the discourse. From this vantage, it often follows that reality is itself discursively constructed. In contrast, CDP typically aligns with critical realist epistemology, keenly influenced by the writings of Roy Bhaskar whereby "material practices are given an ontological status that is independent of, but in relation with, discursive practices" (Sims-Schouten et al 2007, p. 102).

Willig (2013) indicates a range of differing views around how absolute the conceptual boundaries between differing kinds of discourse analysis might be, and highlights Wetherell's (1998) pursuit of an "eclectic approach" (p. 405). As Willig (2013) notes, such eclecticism "pays attention to *both* the situated and shifting nature of discursive constructions as well as the wider social and institutional frameworks (of meaning, practices, of social relations) within which they are produced" (Willig, 2013, p.127).

The approach of Wetherell (e.g., 1998, 2001, 2003, 2007), incorporating both Foucauldian and ethnomethodological themes, features in much of the contemporary body of CDP (see Locke & Budds (2020) for a contemporary overview and discussion of the practical application of CDP in health psychology). Whilst not necessarily always adopting the label of CDP explicitly, much discursive research exploring a range of psychological questions, political issues, and social problems has engaged this kind of 'twin approach' and considered different kinds of data. Examples include interviews (Abell, Condor, & Stevenson, 2006; Condor, 2000; Condor & Gibson, 2007), focus groups (Xenitidou & Morasso, 2014), political speeches (Leudar, Marsland, & Nekvapil, 2004), open letters (Barnes, Auburn, & Lea, 2004), television (Goodman & Johnson, 2013), blogs (Goodman & Narang, 2019), opinion pieces (Kilby, Horowitz, & Hylton, 2013), and radio broadcasts (Kilby & Horowitz, 2013).

CDP also has much in common with the wider field of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), a catch-all description for discursive approaches that focus upon studying, questioning and challenging social problems, systems and practices, whose origins primarily lie in critical linguistics (e.g., Fairclough, 2001; Wodak, 2001; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; van Dijk, 2001). CDS is explicit about its socio-political intentions:

> "The critical approach of CDS characterises scholars rather than methods: CDS
> scholars and their research are sociopolitically committed to social equality

and justice. They are specifically interested in the discursive (re)production of power abuse and the resistance against such domination. Their goals, theories, methods and data and other scholarly practices are chosen as academic contributions to such resistance. CDS is more problem-oriented than discipline-oriented, and requires a multidisciplinary approach." (van Dijk, 2016, 63)

As van Dijk (2016) emphasises, CDS is a multidisciplinary endeavour. Whilst we do not seek to detract from that, for the purposes of the current paper, it is helpful to make explicit what distinguishes something as CDP within the broader CDS endeavour. Put simply, "discursive psychology is a *psychology* because it is concerned with psychological phenomena such as memory or identity" (Willig, 2013, p. 117). On the issue of political commentary within DP, Wetherell (2001) is clear that there is no simple mapping across from the adoption of a critical realist or a relativist epistemology to political engagement (or not). Further, whilst more CA focussed DP is not necessarily working with the same agenda as CDS, that does not preclude shared interests. Indeed, CA/DP with its close analytic study of talk-in-interaction is "relevant and consequential for the interactional business that individuals are engaged in – often for the very purposes of exposing power, asymmetry, and so on" (Huma et al, 2020, p. 9). However, CDP is more explicitly aligned with CDS, often seeking to examine and critique relations of power and/or existing social structures that uphold the status quo or give rise to inequalities.

As we move on to introduce MCDA and its relevance for CDP, we follow Billig (2012) and his caution against discursive work in social psychology (especially) becoming institutionalised: overly prescriptive and thus losing its argumentative potential to speak 'truth to power' by seeking positive social change. The study of multimodality can be seen as part of this mix due to its embrace of discursive mediums beyond *just* language-use. There has been a developing interest in studying differing kinds of multimodality across DP. Interestingly, the greatest gains have thus far been made in the more CA focussed arena which has pursued the study of aspects of embodied action such as gaze, movement, gesture and posture as integral elements of the interactional space where talk is occurring. (See Mondada, (2019) for a recent overview of multimodal studies in CA. See also Wiggins and Osvaldsson Cromdal, (2020) for exploration and theoretical development of DP and the study of embodiment). Within CDP

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research there is also interest in multimodality, including the study of combined textual and visual modalities (e.g. Byford, 2018, AUTHOR CITATION), however the study of text remains the primary concern. Byford (2018) contends that a disinclination amongst DP to study visual discourse is, in part, a reflection of a deeply held belief that imagery, as compared to textual data, is "less amenable to systematic, empirical examination" (p.288). This point is something we return to later. By contrast, the study of interrelations between language and other mediums increasingly features in the broader field of CDS (e.g., Dynel, 2020; Ledin &, Machin, 2019; Richardson & Wodak, Smith, 2019; Wodak & Meyer, 2016, Wodak, 2015; 2011).

Our interest in multimodality reflects our ambition to consider how semiotic components are arranged and articulated in visually mediated space. The term 'multimodal' is an attempt to acknowledge 'multiples forms' of "a practice or representation in all its semiotic complexity and richness" (Iedema, 2003, p.39).

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITS VERSUS METHODOLOGICAL BOUNDARIES

Our desire to look beyond our usual methodological limits was initially driven by a practical problem related to a research project – namely, we wanted to analyse a satirical cartoon, and as such we needed to understand the visual and the textual components. In 2006, French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo reprinted a series of cartoon images of the Prophet Muhammad (for background see Müller et al, 2009). The publication of these images was reported across global media, with responses reflecting two staunchly opposing interpretations: the publication was either judged to be a contentious and intentional provocation toward Islam by visually depicting the Prophet; or viewed as a demonstration of widely shared and much cherished rights in the West to engage in free speech, secularism and equality (AUTHOR CITATION). In the wake of a series of attacks on their offices, one of which led to the death of twelve people including staff, visitors and police officers, Charlie Hebdo announced it would publish a 'survivor's issue', with intense media speculation about the issue's possible content. The 'survivor issue' would feature a visual of the Prophet Muhammad dominating the front page.

Our analytic interest was piqued by the media and public response to this front page. The secular-religious debate was engaged, but this was complicated by a widespread uncertainty

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about what message this front page was conveying. From our CDP perspective, this confused reaction was especially interesting given that the textual component of the front page was seemingly straightforward. Our sense was that ambiguity emerged from the combined textual and visual affordances. This therefore necessitated a search for tools that would allow an holistic exploration of both the textual and visual elements. Our central interest was the study of identity - religious, cultural, and national, hence we did not seek to abandon our critical discursive approach, rather to expand our toolkit and apply new or adapted methodological tools to examine the data.

MULTIMODAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Those who practice MCDA are focused on a central concern: discourse is inherently multimodal, and increasingly dependent on technology (Levine & Scollon, 2004). Indeed, as Iedema (2003) argues, "The increased ubiquity of sound, image, film, through TV, the computer and the internet is undoubtedly behind this new emphasis on and interest in multi-semiotic complexity" (p.33). Social change also fuels this semiotic turn:

> "…multiculturalism, electronic media of communication, technologies of transport and global economic developments…dissolve not only cultural and political boundaries but also semiotic boundaries." (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996, cited in Iedema, 2003, p.34/8)

While the semiotic transformation of society is contemporary ('liquid modernity' as Bauman [2000] puts it) the multimodal features of discourse can be seen historically. In England, we need not look far for examples. Kitchener's 1914 'call to arms' poster combines bodily (the finger point) and speech commands ('your country needs you'). William Hogarth's 1751 iconic 'Beer Street' and 'Gin Lane' represent moral ills through both satirical captioning as well as differing uses of alcohol consumption between social groups. A recent example can be seen in the 'Keep Calm and Carry on' poster; originating as a government public broadcast preparing for The Blitz, it has since been reappropriated for consumer decoration and design products. The combination of rhetoric (evocative of the 'stiff upper lip'), royal iconography (the Crown) performative acts (calm routine, rather than hasty panic!) and colour (red and white) mutually support one another towards an anglicised, if not British, message of solidarity; like a Sophist *topoi*, it is vague enough to be applicable in various contexts.

Carter (2011, p.61) shows how MCDA can and has been applied to photographs, toys and even music, in each case MCDA helping us "…better understand how language and other types of semiotic signs are used together to construct, express, and challenge social power." Thus, MCDA allows for a more nuanced understanding of how different discursive components can come together to co-produce meanings. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen are commonly cited as originators of the approach (e.g., Ledin & Machin, 2018). They propose that multimodal analysis involves consideration of features such as Narrations (represented *participants*, their relations and actions); Concepts (relations between *languages* and *images*); Interaction (relations between the *audience* and the *image*); Interpretation (based on the modality markers of the image and its relation to 'reality'); and finally, Meaning (linking textual functions, coherence and rhetoric). A fascinating additional feature lies in **3D** (involving the attributes of dynamic moving images). In the following sections we expand on the work of Kress and van Leeuwen and others, drawing upon examples of our own research to demonstrate how we have gone about the 'doing' of MCDA.

DOING MCDA: ANALYSING POLITICAL CARTOONS

Our MCDA research to date has centred upon analysing satirical political cartoons that combine textual and visual modalities. As already outlined, our initial focus was analysis of the Charlie Hebdo 'Muhammad' cartoon (AUTHOR CITATION), and in a separate MCDA project we examine a corpus of satirical cartoons concerned with the UK vote to leave the European Union, an event internationally referred to as 'Brexit' (AUTHOR CITATION)[1]. A central focus in each of these projects was a concern to explore ambiguity and contestation that exists, both as an explicit feature of the multimodal data we examine, and as inherent to the macro discourses that our data are drawn from. Both macro discourses can be glossed as ideological confrontations that pose a zero-sum game outcome. The 'Charlie Hebdo' case centres upon *religion vs. free speech*, and in the case of 'Brexit' it is *the EU vs the UK*. Our focus on satirical cartoons also locates our analysis within a discourse genre with humour at its heart. Satire, and humour more broadly, can be particularly challenging to investigate, in large part because humour relies upon layers of ambiguity. Humour resides both in the conceptual mental spaces *between* what is said and what is left unsaid, and in the assumed

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[1] Links to all cartoons can be found at the end of this paper

ideological and situated places promoted by the discourse itself, and the those occupied by the recipient(s). In his development of a social critique of humour, Billig (2005) challenges the taken for granted assumptions about the basic 'goodness' of humour within society. He argues for a theoretical distinction between two kinds of humour. Disciplinary humour which he describes as the kind of humour that maintains a foundation of conservatism and can be called upon to uphold social order, and rebellious humour, which he outlines as humour that presents a challenge to the status quo. This kind of humour can be used to critique and disrupt. Whilst our data driven approach did not require us at the outset of our analytic work to speculate on the kind of humour that political satire might embody, the genre of satire could reasonably be assumed to operate as rebellious humour. However, through multimodal analysis we found these assumptions to be tested. This is something we later return to.

A Framework for MCDA Research

To structure our analytic work, we draw heavily on the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006; 2001); van Leeuwen (2005); van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2001). These texts extensively detail theoretical and methodological approaches to visual analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001), as well as offering comprehensive entry points to the study of multimodality and social semiotics. This body of work includes a detailed consideration of a number of discourse genres that routinely combine visual and textual modes (E.g. advertisements, diagrams), however, none of these texts sets out to offer a step-by-step guide to *doing* combined visual-textual analysis, and so our challenge was to formulate a series of steps that would enable us to mine the richness of the theoretical, methodological and analytic insight available and apply it to our data. In outlining the steps that we find to be most apposite for MCDA analysis of satirical cartoons, we do not presume that this process readily maps across differing kinds of multimodal data. The sheer array of potential semiotic resources that might be combined in a multimodal discourse render it impossible to develop any single process. Further, we do not claim that our approach is the *only* way to approach a combined visual/textual analysis, or that there was nothing more that can have been uncovered in our data. We concur with van Dijk (2001) when he argues that there is no such thing as a complete discourse analysis*.* However, we do contend that these steps permit a structured and robust analysis of the combined visual and textual semiotic resources that

routinely operate in the genre of satirical cartoons, and we also suggest this approach might provide useful for the study of memes. We further suggest that these steps might, at the very least, present a start point for analysis of other printed and online semiotic products that are of interest to critical discursive psychologists, forms of news reporting that combine text and image; newspaper and magazine advertisements, and other published promotional materials (e.g. leaflets and flyers) .

COMPOSITION OVERVIEW

van Leeuwen (2005, p.198) describes composition as the way that "semiotic modes are articulated in space". A study of composition is an exploration of how each element occupies and coexists in that space, and how the varying elements are balanced in relation to one another. Following Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), in our analysis of composition, we focus upon three key elements, *Information values, Salience* and *Framing*. These elements combine to create the interactive and representational affordances of the discourse. *Information values* are signified through the relative placement of each component in relation to one another (i.e., positioned to the left, right, top, centre or bottom), and they are further signified dependent on how they are positioned in relation to the viewer (e.g. through use of perspective). *Salience* is a matter of how viewer attention is directed to components, via techniques such as foregrounding through relative size affordances, or contrasting by means of colour. Lastly *framing*, involves the presence or absence of connective or dis-connective features that signify how some components relate in some sense, or how they conflict.

Studying the overall composition as an initial stage of analysis can in some respects be likened to the 'first pass' of the data that will undoubtedly be familiar to many qualitative researchers working with monomodal visual or text-based data. However, we emphasise the importance of approaching the study of composition as a close analytic stage of MCDA. We would further highlight that, whilst analysis of the overall composition in our work has been an entry point, leading to additional and increasingly nuanced analysis of components of the data, dependent on the research aims and the data corpus, detailed analysis of the composition might serve as a central analytic phase. Either way, an adequate assessment of the overall composition is important because the composition provides the framework, or the 'visual syntax' (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001), which structures the available representational reading(s) of the discourse.

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Visual syntax derives from the spatial relationships that operate in the composition (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and Jewitt and Oyama (2001) emphasise the potential for two different kinds of spatial relationships that engender different kinds of syntax. Narrative structures present action sequences, unfolding events or a process of change, whereas conceptual structures reflect more generalised, and often more stable or established ideas. Thus, where narrative structures emphasise action and doing, conceptual structures draw attention to meaning. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), propose that deciding whether a narrative or a conceptual structure is in play can often be determined by the presence of vectors. Vectors are argued to feature only in narrative structures, creating distinctly directional movement (e.g., a pointing finger or an outstretched arm) which engenders a sense of dynamism or action. Conceptual structures on the other hand often encourage classification which serves to "'define' or 'analyse' or 'classify' people places or things" (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001; p.143). Moreover, some conceptual structures are 'symbolic structures' which serve to imbue a represented participant with meaning or identity.

We found the study of spatial relationships and the visual syntax of the overall composition to be particularly illuminating for understanding the rhetorical qualities of our data. For example, in the case of 'Charlie Hebdo', the spatial relationships created a distinctly symbolic conceptual structure which articulated a particular Western political and moral discourse, whilst also elevating and bringing arguments about Muslim identity to the fore.

In our 'Brexit' analysis we further found that a close examination of composition also offered a means to further organise our data and structure subsequent stages of analysis in a manner that supported working with a larger corpus of multimodal data. In contrast to the single case analysis of the 'Charlie Hebdo' cartoon, our 'Brexit' data comprised twelve cartoons. At the outset, each cartoon was treated as a single item and the composition of each data item was examined individually. Analysis of the composition of each item alerted us to two distinct tropes operating across the 'Brexit' data corpus. Having organised each data item within these tropes, we then examined in trope in turn. This structuring did not prevent an exploration of interesting and unique elements of a given data item in our ongoing analysis, but it did sharpen our attention toward shared aspects of each trope. Orienting to shared features of this discourse was important because we were interested in identifying dominant arguments

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that were circulating in mainstream media that served to structure shared representations about Brexit and contribute to rhetorical debates around remaining or leaving the EU.

COLOUR

Following an analysis of the overall composition, we then turned our attention to colour. It is useful to note that colour relates to salience (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), thus an assessment of colour might feature within the study of overall composition. However, in practice, we have found it helpful to separate this out. Our MCDA research to date has involved analysing full colour cartoons and, in each case, we have found that close theoretical consideration and analytic scrutiny of colour has been particularly illuminating for understanding how unspoken aspects of the multimodal discourse serve to connect a viewer with shared social, cultural, ideological arguments. Underpinned by Halliday's meta-functional theory, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) point to three 'metafunctions' of colour: ideational, interpersonal and textual. Of particular interest for us as critical discursive psychologists examining overtly ideological discourses playing out at societal level was the ideational metafunction of colour, and the ways in which colour serves as a rhetorical shortcut between the focal issue at hand (E.g. Brexit) and pre-existing cultural, social, moral, political 'common places' (Shotter, 1993).

Moreover, examining colour proved to be especially insightful, and a key stage in developing our arguments regarding the potential for variable interpretations of the discourse. For example, in the case of 'Charlie Hebdo' full page cartoon, only four colours are used. Green is the only primary colour, and it is also the only colour to be used extensively, providing a solid backfill to the entire page. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006; 2001), emphasise the importance of exploring the 'provenance' of colour and contend that colour has a strong sociocultural symbolic value. Thus, in the case of 'Charlie Hebdo', the dominant use of Green, which is widely understood within Muslim culture as 'the colour of Islam' (Abu Bakar, n.d) appears highly relevant to the discourse, and yet this relevance is also clearly socio-culturally bound. Focussing on the sociocultural affordances of colour, emphasises the potential for variable readings across a diverse audience. As we argue, in our paper, the cultural relevance of the colour green in a discourse that is pitting widely shared Muslim religious and cultural sensitivities against dominant Western ideals about the sanctity of free speech, will likely have

relevance for the Muslim audience, and yet it might be overlooked by most of the non-Muslim audience (AUTHOR CITATION).

In contrast to the use of colour in the 'Charlie Hebdo' cartoon, in our 'Brexit' analysis, we found there was a much more restrained, but equally meaningful use of colour. Against a largely muted background palette, the use of primary colour is mainly limited to combinations of Red, White and Blue, or displays of Blue and Yellow. These are the colours of the British national flag, and the European Union Flag respectively. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) point out that the meaning potentials of colour often relate to cultural history and they further highlight national flags as a prime example. Hence, in the context of debates about The UK leaving the European Union, we argue that colour serves to infuse a rhetoric of nationalism (Billig, 1995), and to construct the British nation as physically and ideologically separate from Europe (AUTHOR CITATION).

These initial two steps of analysis - composition and colour - simultaneously explore the visual and the textual elements of the discourse. Examining spatial relationships within and between textual and visual elements, and analysing colour as it features in the visual components (e.g., caricature representations of people) and the textual components (e.g. spoken text, headlines, banners). Having completed these steps, we turn to focus more closely on visual elements of the discourse and then move on to a closer analysis of the textual components.

REPRESENTED PARTICIPANTS

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) propose that there are two kinds of participants to consider when analysing visual discourse. *Represented Participants* (RP's) refers to people, objects, places that are depicted in the discourse, whilst *Interactive Participants* (IP's) refers to producers and viewers of the discourse. These authors point out that whilst in some circumstances the producer and the viewer might share a direct interaction, such as when sharing photographs with a friend, or providing a diagram to assist a colleague, in many cases there is no direct relationship between interactive participants. Viewers often have nothing but the product, be it a newspaper, an advertisement, or a cartoon. Similarly, for producers, their relationship is largely with an imagined audience. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) point out that the disjunction between the context of production and the context of reception

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causes social relations between interactive participants to be represented rather than enacted, and critically:

> "whether or not we [the viewer] identify with that [a given] position will depend on other factors – on our real relation to the producer or the institution he or she (sic) represents, and on our real relation to the others who form part of the context of reception. All the same, whether or not we identify with the way we are addressed, we do understand how we are addressed, because we do understand the way images represent social interactions and social relations (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; p. 116).

In relating this to our work, we take as our start point that visual, and multimodal discourse broadly, avails multiple possible interpretations which might be variously accessible dependent on what the viewer 'brings' to the discourse, and their real or imagined relationship with the discourse producer. Regardless of how the viewer might recognise and/or judge attempts at interactive positionality (Davies & Harré, 1990), or indeed awareness on the part of the producer about positions that are availed, there exists a fundamental communicative capacity for engaging with the discourse which is shaped by the fabric of our social relations. It is worth stating that our own analytic concern does not extend to a realist evaluation of the individual or institutional producers of the discourse, although it is perfectly feasible that one might wish to do so. Equally, we do not seek to undertake an analysis of the demographics of the target audience, but again, this might be relevant for some research. The analytic focus of our work is solely toward RPs (people, objects, things) as they feature in the data, and exploring what meaning potentials they afford in the broader social, cultural, historical and political context in which the given discourse operates. Moreover, we place a particular emphasis toward evaluating how certain social relations, identities and ideologies are elevated whilst others are obscured or downplayed.

In our analyses of satirical cartoons, visual portrayals of people have been prominent. Central to exploring the meaning potentials that are realised through these portrayals has been a careful assessment of the construction of social closeness or distance (I.e. shared values, cultural norms, familiar routines) between the RP and the viewer. (c.f. Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). We would add to this, that the construction of closeness and distance also relates to the psychological level (I.e. emotional and spiritual connectedness). Kress and van Leeuwen

(2006) theorise that the norms of physical closeness and distance which shape our lived social interactions provide the framework through which we interpret visual construction of closeness or distance. Hence, an RP that is visually presented in close-up form communicates closeness with the viewer. Closeness or distance is further indicated by the size of the RP in the context of the overall image. The smaller the RP relative to the overall image, the greater the social or psychological distance between RP and viewer. A related analytic concern when evaluating the role of RP's in the construction of the overall communication, requires that the analyst pay close attention to gaze. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) propose that images which portray direct gaze emanating from the RP can be understood to make a 'demand' of the viewer. In contrast, images without direct gaze convey to the viewer an 'offer' which might present information, or encourage contemplation, but without requiring the viewer to feel personally invested.

Looking across our 'Charlie Hebdo' analysis and our 'Brexit' analyses, satirical portrayals of people were a central element in both, and yet the rhetorical work achieved through these RP's is markedly different. In the 'Charlie Hebdo' cartoon, the caricature of the Prophet Muhammad takes up almost the whole page. Moreover, it is a close- up of his face, and his large eyes gaze directly out at the viewer. In this way the visual seeks closeness with the viewer and, along with other facial characteristics it makes an impassioned emotional appeal (AUTHOR CITATION).

In contrast, although there are many caricatures of recognisable UK and European political figures that feature in the 'Brexit' data, these figures are almost exclusively portrayed at distance and there is a lack of direct gaze across the dataset. RP's appear small relative to the size of the overall image. Many are portrayed out at sea, and in one cartoon, RP's are portrayed as tiny figures standing on the moon. In contrast to the 'Charlie Hebdo' discourse, in these 'Brexit' cartoons, the creation of distance between the RP's and the viewer, positions the viewer as looking on at Brexit, as something happening 'out there' (AUTHOR CITATION).

PERSPECTIVE AND ANGLES

The final visual element in our steps of analysis concerns the role of perspective and angles and how they serve to create either an objective or a subjective image (Kress & van Leeuwen,

2006). Objective images imply that the perspective afforded to the viewer enables them to know all there is to know, that everything is made available to the viewer. Certain images rely on this level of objectivity as key to their communicative function (E.g., diagrams or maps), and typically, objectivity is achieved through offering the viewer a perpendicular or top-down visual vantage. In contrast, visuals that convey only a partial view are termed 'subjective'. Such images offer a central perspective and rely upon either frontal or oblique positioning and horizontal angles (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Tracing the history of art back to the Renaissance, and the development of visual 'points of view', Jewitt and Oyama (2001) also propose that when a 'frontal angle' is used, it serves to accentuate the relationship between an RP and the viewer, encouraging a sense of viewer identification and involvement with the RP.

In addition to the differing meaning potentials afforded by subjective and objective images, viewing angles are also understood to construct symbolic power relations between the viewer and an RP (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Visuals that suggest the viewer and the RP are looking at one another at eye level convey equal power relations. A perspective that gives the viewer the impression of looking down upon an RP locates power with the viewer, whilst a perspective which creates the impression that the viewer is looking up to the RP affords power with the RP (cf. Jewitt & Oyama, 2001). Crucially, the capacity of these semiotically constructed symbolic power relations, as opposed to 'real' relations, is that they offer meaning potentials that can move the viewer beyond the 'real'. As a result, such visuals can "make us relate as an equal to people who in fact have very considerable power over our lives (for example, politicians)" (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 135).

Relating this to our 'Brexit' analysis, we found a contrast in the ways that perspectives and angles were used between the two broad tropes that we identified. In one trope, every data item offered an objective visual. Perpendicular or top-down perspectives strongly conveying a narrative in which the viewer 'looked down' upon the issues of 'Brexit'. We argue that this top-down perspective, coupled with the strong use of social distance emphasised a reading whereby the viewer was watching 'Brexit' unfold before them, but far beyond their direct reach (AUTHOR CITATION). Trope two, in contrast relied upon subjective perspectives, offering the viewer particular 'points of view'. Frontal angles invited the viewer in, asking

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them to stand alongside particular RP's, encouraging the viewer to see 'Brexit' through a particular ideological lens (AUTHOR CITATION).

TEXTUAL COMPONENTS

Before outlining our approach to examining the textual components of combined textual and visual multimodal discourse, we want to again emphasize the variability of multimodal discourse. The textual analysis is of course dependent on the extent of the textual content within the multimodal discourse. Satirical cartoons routinely contain relatively minimal text, thus the extent of textual analysis in our work is limited. These norms will differ across varying genres of multimodal discourse, with other genres necessitating more substantial textual analysis. In such circumstances, and in keeping with our prior research, (e.g., AUTHOR CITATIONS), our approach would be to engage a substantive CDP analysis. However, what we hope to demonstrate in this article, is that even when very limited text is present, when that text is analysed as a component part of a multimodal analysis, it becomes evident that meaning potentials of the text are interdependent with the other multimodal components.

READING THE TEXT IN 'SEMIOTIC SPACE'

Multimodal theorists draw a distinction between the information values that are derived from components of the discourse located toward the left side and those toward the right side. Information presented to the left is argued to routinely convey existing or familiar knowledge, whilst content on the right typically shares new information, or that which is most salient (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; van Leeuwen, 2005). Jewitt and Oyama (2001) relate this to norms amongst societies that routinely read text from left to right, such that we move along from accepted or familiar knowledge to that which is new or not yet agreed upon. Van Leeuwen (2005) also highlights that accepted passage of time, moving from left to right, with the right always future bound. Further stating that "where there is 'general' and 'specific' information, the 'general' is usually placed on the left and the 'specific' on the right" (p. 201).

In addition, drawing on a range of examples from varying forms of multimodal discourse, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) further contend that differences exist between information located toward the top and that which is positioned toward the bottom of the discourse. Information at the top is described as the 'ideal', and argued to convey ideological or idealised

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claims, whilst what is 'real' is found at the bottom, this includes routine information and mundane matters of fact that often serve to support the ideological assertions. Jewitt and Oyama (2001) describe the 'ideal' as expressing the essence, or the most ideologically salient aspect of the information, whilst the 'real' offers more grounded information. Referring to the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), van Leeuwen (2005) highlights that whilst 'up' and 'down' are first and foremost spatial dimensions, there are many metaphorical associations where 'up' stands for "positive effects, and power, but also for an excess of abstraction and unworldly idealism" whilst 'down can stand for "negative effects and a lack of power, but also for a realistic 'down-to-earth' 'feet on the ground' attitude" (p. 200)

Consideration of how components are spatially arranged applies to all elements of the discourse, i.e., in our research, both the textual and visual components. However, we discuss spatial arrangement here, because paying attention to the spatial positioning of textual components presents an opportunity for the analyst, especially those of us who routinely analyse textual discourse, to reflect on text as it exists in spatial context. It reminds us that, in the vast majority of print medium, the textual is also always visual. Text occupies a physical space on a page, a billboard, packaging and so forth. The occupied space is one element within the overall physical space, and in relation to other elements. Thus, it is not only the social, moral, historical, political context in which we need to examine textual discourse, when multimodality is a concern, it is also the spatial context.

Analysis of the 'Charlie Hebdo' cartoon offers a clear example of the importance of analysing the text with an eye to spatiality. This cartoon contains two textual components - a headline which reads: 'tout est pardonné (English translation: 'all is forgiven'), located at the top of the page above the head of the prophet Muhammad. The second textual component which reads 'je suis charlie' (English translation 'I am Charlie') appears toward the bottom of the page. This text is presented as a message scribed on a placard held by the prophet. Taking into account that information toward the top conveys the 'ideal', whilst what appears toward the bottom conveys the 'real' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), we approach these components, not simply as text, but as spatially situated textual aspects of a multimodal discourse. As such, the message of forgiveness can be understood as an idealised or ideological message, whilst what is conveyed on the placard offers the 'real'. As we argue in our paper, this 'real' textual grounding, to an extent, shapes the message of forgiveness (AUTHOR CITATION). Moreover,

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as we unpack in the section below, meaning potentials of the text are shaped through the interactive relationship between the textual and the visual. Thus, what on the one hand appears as an unambiguous message of forgiveness when the only consideration is the text, becomes entirely ambiguous when the text is approached as just one element of a multimodal discourse.

Turning to the 'Brexit' cartoons, minimal textual components feature in each of the cartoons, either in speech bubbles; as headlines or titles; as labels, or as simple signs. Typically, the text highlights ideological tensions, either by explicitly drawing attention to contradictions in the wider Brexit debates, or by developing an ideological contrast between the textual and the visual components (AUTHOR CITATION). As with the 'Charlie Hebdo' study, we find that the spatial arrangement of the text is key, and that meaning potentials offered by the textual components are not divisible from the visual components.

Given the limited text available to analyse within satirical cartoons, we are mindful that one question that might arise relates to our claim that what we are doing in such MCDA work can be meaningfully positioned as Discursive Psychology. On this point, it is worth highlighting that the findings from our MCDA analysis of 'Brexit' and 'Charlie Hebdo' sit comfortably alongside traditional CDP findings in these fields, and our work reflects central CDP areas of concern. The long-standing interest in interpretive repertoires (e.g., Wetherell & Potter, 1992) is akin to our focus on tropes, whilst the obfuscation of political or ideological alternatives is a central interest of rhetorical psychology (Billig, 1987). More broadly, CDP regularly concerns itself with examining arenas of contemporary civic discourse (see Condor et al., 2013), and a concern to assess their interpretative implications (Edwards & Potter, 1992). This is precisely our concern, both in the 'Brexit' and the 'Charlie Hebdo' analysis. Furthermore, we are centrally concerned with examining the construction of identities – national and political identities, as well as ethnic, religious, and cultural identities. In this respect our MCDA work extends our earlier CDP research in this area (AUTHOR CITATION) and contributes to a longstanding project for both DP and CDP (Willig, 2013). Thus, we contend that MCDA, and multimodal discourse analysis broadly, can and does align with CDP and that it offers analysts a means of pursuing research that combines the existing analytic and methodological strengths of CDP with additional tools for exploring other semiotic components that routinely feature alongside text.

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AMBIGUITY, LIMINALITY, AND GESTALT HOLISM

In drawing together our outline of the steps that we have taken to complete a combined textual/visual MCDA study, we want to convey that our final analytic step involves bringing the analysis together in a way that emphasises a layer of meaning-making rooted within the multimodal affordances of the discourse. Our analysis of satirical cartoons has revealed that, even a discourse consisting of just a handful of words, and basic cartoon drawings, readily constructs and conveys complex and often contentious arguments to a public audience in a manner that operates beyond what can be known from studying either the text or visual alone. Our start point with the 'Charlie Hebdo' research was a desire to understand why this cartoon was met with such a confused and contested response, with differing commentators struggling to decide what it was conveying. Ambition to get some purchase on this ambiguity led us to a multimodal approach, and the upshot of our work was a recognition that ambiguity resided in the interaction *between* the visual and the textual components. Similarly, in examining 'Brexit' cartoons, ambiguity was sometimes evident in the absence of an explicit 'pro' or 'anti' stance, but we also identified a deeper structural level of ambiguity and partiality linked to the construction of British nationhood and Brexit as a political endeavour. This ambiguity, we argued was significant for the work of the overall discourse, but not easily apparent until the visual and the textual analysis was brought together.

Given our focus on satirical cartoons, one key issue was a consideration of humour. As previously mentioned, Billig draws a distinction between disciplinary humour and rebellious humour. Satire might routinely be anticipated to align with rebellious humour, presenting a challenge to the status quo, and partly we do identify the engagement of rebellious humour, however we also found that the ambiguity inherent to these satirical cartoons could equally well be understood to promote disciplinary humour. Our findings are in keeping with Billig's (2012) theory of humour, emphasising his argument that on occasion "rebellious humour - or humour that is claimed and experienced as rebellious – can have conservative and disciplinary functions (p. 212).

What we propose here is that the engagement of multiple semiotic modes and the intersection and interaction between those differing modes readily fosters ambiguity and opens up a liminal space where ranging meaning potentials, often existing in stark contrast

with one another (c.f. AUTHOR CITATION) are available to the viewer. We understand liminality as both a "temporary transition through which identity is reconstructed, and/or [an] experience of ambiguity and in-between-ness within a changeful context" (Beech, 2011). What we contend is that ready affordances of multimodality, including the capacity to complicate or manipulate core facets of the identity of RP's such as we witness in the 'Charlie Hebdo' example; and an ability to narrate processes of change whilst retaining ambiguity such as in the 'Brexit' example, generate liminal spaces which the viewer experiences and negotiates within their context of reception (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Thus, meaning potentials are variously, apparent - or not; apprehended – or not; accepted – or not, and people's sense-making and self-making in relation to the issues at hand are open to be confirmed, hardened, challenged, altered, or transformed.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have sought to draw attention to the potentials that existing approaches to the study of multimodality present for CDP by enabling analysis to extend beyond *just* language. While we follow the ethos of CDP in attending to empirically evidencable linguistic features, we argue there is a clear benefit in attending to other semiotic features that permeate our social lives, augmenting and often complicating language-use in everyday settings. We acknowledge that, in moving beyond analysis of text in the manner outlined here, it is necessary to utilise a range of theoretical assumptions that inform the visual analysis, and this might present a barrier for some proponents of DP. On this issue, we take a pragmatic view, which is to say that the value of investigating discourse beyond the text requires an openness to differing theoretical perspectives, and in our work, we have found that following the social semiotic approach of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and others, has enabled us to meaningfully interrogate multimodal data.

Moreover, as Byford (2018; p. 299) argues, "Acknowledging that the visual is an intrinsic part of everyday social and emotional life does not require a break with discursive psychology's broader intellectual project". Byford (2018), reminds us of Billig (1998) who pointed out that, when it comes to the study of ideology, making space for intellectual judgement or scholarly 'hunches' can be as valuable as following rigid procedures. Thus, whilst we found it challenging to work with a set of theoretical assumptions about how visual discourse operates

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(e.g. the ideological qualities associated with visual syntax of the 'top' and the 'bottom'; what colour signifies, and so forth), ultimately we cohere with Byford, and Billig, in the belief that intellectual scholarship has an important role to play alongside method. We content that, given its concern to identify and critique structural relations of power, CDP especially should resist a methodological straightjacket and rather than method delineating the object of study, we should look to expand our techniques to meet the challenges of our research.

Following too, the distinctly critical agenda, we encourage a multimodal spotlight on phenomena that are of traditional interest to critical discursive psychologists, for example the presentation and construction of attitudes, values and identities, and the negotiation of ideological dilemmas such as sovereignty vs. subjugation, rationality vs. emotion, or peace vs. conflict.

To date our MCDA research has featured in two contemporary edited volumes of CDP research, one volume making a substantive contribution to the field of Peace Psychology (Gibson, 2018), and another showcasing contemporary CDP contributions to Political Psychology (Demasi et al, 2020). We take this as indication that there is space to explore multimodality as part of the CDP project, and openness amongst the CDP community to consider the merits of such. We hope that this paper might offer some practical insight into doing MCDA research of this kind and offer an entry point for qualitative psychologists interested in exploring multimodal research.

DECLARATION

CARTOON LINKS

Charlie Hebdo

C1   "All is forgiven" by Luz. Published in Charlie Hebdo on 14th January 2015. See 'All is forgiven': Charlie Hebdo's new cover shows Prophet Muhammad holding 'Je Suis Charlie' sign-World News , Firstpost

Brexit

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C1 *"Final Preparations" by Chappatte. Published in the New York Times (USA) on 21st June 2016. See https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/21/opinion/chappatte-on-brexit-final-preparations.html?rref=collection%2Fbyline%2Fpatrick-chappatte*

C2 *"FREE AT LAST" by Chappatte Published in the New York Times (USA) on 23rd June 2016. See https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/23/opinion/chappatte-on-brexit-free-at-last.html?rref=collection%2Fbyline%2Fpatrick-chappatte*

C3 *"BRITAIN before BREXIT" by Billy Day. First published on Caglecartoons.com (USA) on 24th June 2016. Found on https://www.politico.eu/interactive/brexit-eu-referendum-leave-david-cameron-boris-johnson-nigel-farage-ukip-cartoons/*

C4 *Not title by Hajo de Reijger. First published on Caglecartoons.com (The Netherlands) on 24th June, 2016. Found on C4 https://www.politico.eu/interactive/brexit-eu-referendum-leave-david-cameron-boris-johnson-nigel-farage-ukip-cartoons/*

C5 *'Brexit' diminishes Britain and threatens European security" by David Horsey. Published in LA Times (USA) on 28th June 2016. See https://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-brexit-updates-horsey-brexit-diminishes-britain-and-1467127052-htmlstory.html*

C6 "Abandon Ship! Brexit, Great Britain's Escape" by Ben Garrison (UK). First published on https://grrrgraphics.wordpress.com/2016/06/11/abandon-ship-brexit-great-britains-escape-ben-garrison-cartoon/ (UK) on 11th June 2016. Found on https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/14/leave-eu-cartoon-racist-nazi-brexit-antisemitism-1945

C7 *"I THINK WE'D BE BETTER OFF STAYING IN" by Kal. Published in The Economist (UK) on 28th May, 2016. Found on https://www.politico.eu/interactive/brexit-donald-trump-us-elections-brussels-terror-attacks-angela-merkel-migration-refugees-aleppo-russia-vladimir-putin-cartoons-best-of-2016/*

C8 *"I've decided to step down" By Dave Granlund. First published on Politicalcartoons.com (USA), on 24th June, 2016. Found on https://www.politico.eu/interactive/brexit-eu-referendum-leave-david-cameron-boris-johnson-nigel-farage-ukip-cartoons/*

C9 "Victory" by S Adams. Published in the Telegraph (UK) on 24th June 2016. See https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/24/what-can-we-learn-from-the-eu-referendum-results/

C10 *No title by Pavel Constantin. First published on Caglecartoons.com, Romania, 22nd June 2016. See https://twitter.com/globalcartoons/status/745685181852430337. Found on https://www.politico.eu/interactive/brexit-eu-referendum-leave-david-cameron-boris-johnson-nigel-farage-ukip-cartoons/*

C11 *"REFUGEES WELCOME" by Marian Kamensky. First published on Caglecartoons.com (Slovakia) on 30th June 2016. Found on https://www.politico.eu/interactive/brexit-eu-referendum-leave-david-cameron-boris-johnson-nigel-farage-ukip-cartoons/*

C12 *"We could always become something like Panama" by Axel Scheffler. Published on the front page of Süddeutsche (Germany) on 23rd June 2016. Image of paper found on https://twitter.com/michaelsteen/status/745899134209622017/photo/1)*

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DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The authors declare no competing interests with this paper.