

1990: 285). To return to the clinical sphere, it is certainly not the case that one tends to confuse aphasia and amnesia, and a standardised memory test such as the Rivermead Behavioural Memory Test can, with relatively minor modifications, be used for patients with language problems, or indeed perceptual problems (Cockburn *et al.*, 1990a, b).

We are told that cognitive psychologists always require memory to be measured against past known events. While it is desirable if one can do this, where this is not feasible, other techniques are devised, such as the Autobiographical Memory Interview (Kopelman, *et al.*, 1990), in which it is rarely practicable to check the accuracy of a patient's recollections. Kopelman did however go to considerable lengths during the standardisation of the test to cross-check with relatives the factual information that forms the most stable part of the test. He found that even patients suffering from amnesia or dementia rarely produce false information, being much more inclined to admit that they just can not remember. That is not of course to say that they would not have produced less reliable "memories", given a different social situation, nor that such data would be intrinsically uninteresting. It would however be rather less helpful in assessing the memory capacity of a damaged brain, an issue of no less importance than that of the social factors on group discussion.

In conclusion then, while I do not yet propose to give up cognitive psychology, I am intrigued to know what Dr Edwards and his colleagues have been finding out about groups reminiscing. While rhetorical articles may be very stimulating, next time it would be nice to know just what they have found out, how they interpret it and why.

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## The lures of ecological realism

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UPON HEARING that Mr Weintraub's artificial intelligence program had succeeded in fooling some judges about the species they were conversing with, the proprietor of a neighbourhood store, Guido's Fine Foods, commented "If it's artificial how good could it be? ... We don't sell artificial things if we can help it." (*New York Times*, 16 November, 1991). No plastic pastrami, no plastic intelligence. While there is no reason why Guido's corporate knowledge of fine food should extend to understanding the Turing test, it is embarrassing when similar views about the artificial are expressed by scientists.

Edwards, Middleton and Potter are concerned about ecological realism, identified by a confusing dichotomy in the first paragraph: There are those who measure memory using controlled procedures, and then, there are those who care about the way memory really works. For the latter group, is the method of discourse analysis, which in this paper at least, appears to be a list of values about relativ-

ism. Underlying the commandments (eg. Read the stories of the subjects; Do unto action as you would do unto cognition) is Edwards *et al.*'s annoyance that the features of everyday remembering are just not reflected in experiments about remembering. My reactions will sound familiar (Banaji & Crowder, 1989, 1991) but bear repeating in the context of this paper.

Hypotheses about the nature of psychological phenomena can be derived from *any* source (a revelation from God, the wisdom of a character in a bad novella; see McGuire, 1983 for 44 techniques to generate a hypothesis). Tests of hypotheses, (alas, the fun is over for some) must proceed quite differently. If you cast your lot with the empiricists in the seventeenth century, and feel a thrill at the trouncing of the rationalists, then, the study of memory in the twentieth century imposes a simple criterion to determine the truth of a hypothesis: Systematic, controlled observation yielding replicable results. Can discourse analysis provide such data? If it is a sort of content analysis (which it appears to be) it might provide useful data about the quality of stories that people generate (we can even count the number of times in a "spontaneous" outburst, a subject mentions *death* or *life*, for example). But it cannot tell us about memory. Having no control over conditions of input cannot inform about output. Unlike Edwards *et al.*, I was unaware that this was a matter for debate. As for "studies of memory, which define it as information processing" (p.442), what else can it be?

To give up controlled observation because its practitioners excluded classes of variables that intrigue other investigators is to throw the baby out because it has a cold. For example, experimental research on the social psychological influences on memory addresses questions of the sort that Edwards *et al.* would agree are high in ecological realism. Or, does the experimental method, by definition, disallow ecological realism? The choice of a method should be guided as much by the importance of the question it is designed to address as the tractability of the method itself. It is difficult to imagine the viability of discourse analysis as a method for memory research.

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## Creating a new rhetoric for the psychology of memory

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EDWARDS, Middleton and Potter are creating a new rhetoric for the psychology of memory by redefining the phenomena to be studied, the research methods used and, consequently, the types of theories we will have about memory in the future. They are not proposing the replacement of the study of memory as a faculty; instead, they are offering a broadened conception of memory from a functional perspective. Their questions are driven more by a concern for how memories are used than in the internal structures of mental representations and knowledge ac-