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Abstract

Disgust is a complex phenomenon that pervades a number of social situations. To date, disgust has primarily been understood as an individually experienced emotion or as a way of defining boundaries between people or objects; the detailed social practices through which disgust is choreographed, however, have yet to be fully explored. The social implications of disgust are particularly apparent when food and eating are involved, as it is in such settings that individuals, objects and social boundaries coincide. In this paper, I argue that the enactment of disgust is an inherently social event, and that we can evidence it as such through the way in which it is produced and oriented to in everyday interaction. The setting for this paper is family mealtimes, as a situation in which children and parents explore the boundaries of what is, and what is not, disgusting. A large corpus of video and audio recordings of mealtimes in England and Scotland were analysed using a discursive psychological approach, with a focus on explicating the sequential and prosodic features of disgust markers, such as 'eugh' and 'yuck'. The analysis demonstrates that disgust markers are typically preceded by a 'noticing' by speakers and that 'eugh' is usually uttered alone and at the start of a turn in talk. It is argued that, regardless of their putative status as emotions or cultural concepts, disgust markers work as assessments of food and eating practices in everyday interaction. They orient others to a trouble source and attend to people's entitlements to 'know' disgust. The implications for our understanding of disgust as a social psychological concept are further explored.

Keywords: disgust, assessment, mealtimes, eugh, yuck, discursive psychology.

Introduction

To date, disgust has primarily been understood as either an individually experienced emotion or as a concept that defines boundaries between people. The full potential of social psychological research on disgust has not yet been fully realised and this paper contributes to social psychological understandings of disgust by offering an empirical analysis of those moments in which disgust is made relevant and enacted in social interaction. In particular, the paper will focus on disgust around, and of, food and eating practices within a social setting. Often treated as 'core disgust', the rejection of oral incorporation of an object is typically theorised as a basic human emotion. Orienting to disgust at food or consumption practices while eating with others, however, can be a delicate matter. When the setting is a family mealtime, as a situation in which children (and parents) explore the boundaries of what is, and what is not, disgusting, then the issue is further complicated. What is treated as disgusting, and how this disgust is enacted, are highly contingent on the social context. In this paper, I will argue that disgust around (and of) food is an inherently social event, and that we can evidence it as such through the way in which it is produced in everyday interaction.

The psychologising of disgust

Although its etymological origins (from the 16th century Latin 'dis' (reversal) and 'gustus' (taste)) and early work by Darwin (1965) suggest otherwise, disgust is not just about taste. The Oxford English Dictionary defines disgust as both a noun ('a feeling of revulsion or strong disapproval aroused by something unpleasant or offensive') and a verb (to 'cause (someone) to feel revulsion or strong disapproval'). In their pioneering work on the psychology of disgust, Rozin and Fallon provide a narrower definition: "revulsion at the prospect of (oral) incorporation of an offensive object" (Rozin & Fallon, 1987, p. 23). Note that disgust is distinguished from *distaste*, which is typically understood

as the rejection of food based on sensory factors alone; by contrast, there is also an ideational element to disgust. To be recognised as disgusting, the disgust object must have a contaminating property (referred to as the 'law of contagion'; it taints all other objects which come into contact with it (Martins & Pliner, 2006; Rozin, Fallon, & Augustoni-Ziskind, 1985).

In the wider psychological literature, disgust is typically regarded as an emotive, visceral response to an offensive object or as a moral response to a social activity or behaviour (Schnall, Haidt, Clore, & Jordan, 2008). These two concepts are often referred to as core disgust and socio-moral disgust respectively (Danovitch & Bloom, 2009; Rozin & Fallon, 1987). Psychological research has focused on the development of core or socio-moral disgust in individuals (Martins & Pliner, 2005, 2006; Rozin, et al., 1985; Rozin, Haidt, & McCauley, 2000) and family resemblances for disgust reactions (Rozin, Fallon, & Mandell, 1984). A Disgust Scale has also been developed to measure individual differences in disgust sensitivity (Haidt, McCauley, & Rozin, 1994; Rozin, Haidt, McCauley, Dunlop, & Ashmore, 1999). Core research in this area, therefore, theorises disgust as primarily an individual property; something we acquire or experience internally.

Within the developmental and emotion literatures, disgust is also understood as an individual concept, though there is a substantial body of recent research into the 'transmission' of disgust between individuals. This work has to date focused on facial expressions of disgust and the perception of these by children and adults (Barthomeuf, Droit-Volet, & Rousset, 2011; Barthomeuf, Rousset, & Droit-Volet, 2009; Repacholi, 1998, 2009; Repacholi & Gopnik, 1997; Widen & Russell, 2008, 2010). Other research has also begun to examine the processes through which disgust might be 'transmitted' between parents (or other adults) and children (Stevenson, Oaten, Case, Repacholi, & Wagland, 2010), though this work is still in the early stages (Wiggins, forthcoming). While this work is beginning to focus on the social relevance of disgust, that disgust might be more than an individual response to external stimuli has not been fully considered. It is to this other theorisation of disgust that we now turn.

Becoming disgusted: the importance of social practices

While typically conceptualised as an emotion, disgust is also recognised as a culturally specific phenomenon (Douglas, 1966; Miller, 1997), one that can tell us as much about social structures as it does about individual sensitivities. Disgust can thus be considered as a social phenomenon in that it helps to define boundaries, whether bodily or social, between individuals and groups (Miller, 1997; Taylor, 2007). There are obvious connections here with Mary Douglas' (1966) work on dirt and pollution. Douglas explicates the classification systems that are revealed through the ways in which societies deal with dirt. For example, procedures for dealing with human waste indicate societal rules about the classification of clean versus unclean objects. It is not that dirt exists *a priori*: dirt *becomes* dirt through the processes of ordering our social environment (ibid). If dirt does not exist in essence, neither does it exist as dirt in all cultures. Douglas argues that while dirt is universally offensive (and by corollary, disgust is universally known), "there is no such thing as absolute dirt" (ibid. p. 2). Arguing from a philosophical standpoint, Knapp similarly argues that disgustingness is a relative property (Knapp, 2003); things are not disgusting *per se*, rather they are made disgusting through social practices. It is exactly this concern with social practices – both as a precursor to, and as a result of, disgust – that is the focus of this paper. How are objects oriented to *as* disgusting in different social settings?

There is now a fairly substantial social psychological literature on the relationship between disgust and social groups. For instance, this work presents evidence for the role that disgust may play in the negative portrayal of out-groups, and thus lead to prejudice or bigotry (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Lieberman, Tybur, & Latner, in press; Taylor, 2007; Terrizzi, Shook, & Ventis, 2010). It is here that we can begin to see the consequences of disgust for social interaction. If disgust is such a core emotion and individually-based, however, then the prospect of reconciling social groups or avoiding prejudice is potentially non-existent unless we can 'unlearn' disgust responses.

In related research, there is also strong evidence for a disease-avoidance account of disgust (Curtis, 2011; Oaten, Stevenson, & Case, 2009; Siegal, Fadda, & Overton, 2011). This work provides a framework for understanding the processes of stigmatisation of different social groups and the potential for changing our behaviour in this regard (Oaten, Stevenson, & Case, 2011; Park, Faulkner, & Schaller, 2003). Collectively, this body of social psychological research is essential for developing our understanding of the interplay between disgust as an emotion and social psychological processes: the 'social life' of disgust, as it were. The status of disgust as a social phenomenon, however, is still yet to be fully appreciated. While researchers might accept that disgust as an emotion is socially relevant, that it may be, in and of itself, social (and regardless of its ontological status as an internal state), does not seem to have been fully examined.

The current paper contributes to this broader social psychological literature on disgust by explicating, in detail, some of the practices through which disgust is enacted in everyday interaction. In doing so, it encourages us to reconsider how we theorise disgust: not simply as an emotion that can be evoked in social settings or as a boundary-defining concept, but as a socially contingent practice. As with many studies on eating practices, psychological and social psychological research on disgust relies heavily on experimental and questionnaire studies, even though imaginative scenarios and stimulus materials produce vivid responses. What we need now is a clearer understanding of how disgust is played out in real time: what does it look like, and how is it managed? It is from this starting point that we now move to examine the enactment and choreography of disgust in everyday, moment-to-moment interaction.

Disgust in interaction

If we are to understand how disgust is realised in interaction, then mealtimes are an excellent place to start. Here, we have a setting in which food is offered, accepted or rejected and – particularly

when children are involved – the negotiation of food preferences and (dis)tastes are often brought to the fore (Wiggins, 2001, 2004a, 2004b). While disgust is not purely about eating, ‘core disgust’, as noted earlier, is defined as revulsion at the prospect of oral incorporation of a contaminating object (Rozin & Fallon, 1987) and many studies on the acquisition of disgust focus on the rejection of various foodstuffs. Disgust has also been noted to be the only emotion which is explicitly related to food (Rozin, 1990). Family mealtimes, therefore, are the ideal setting in which to explore the social nature of disgust. Understanding how and when disgust appears around food and eating is the perfect opportunity to explore the social underpinnings – and theorisation of – disgust in detail. Even in a family setting we are still in a social context, albeit defined by particular routines, assumptions and practices. Family mealtimes are no less social simply because they are familiar. Indeed, it is their apparent familiarity that is of interest; it is exactly in such settings that disgust can be explored for its everyday, normative presence.

If we are to understand how disgust is enacted in interaction, then we might first look to examine verbal utterances which imply that disgust is being invoked. To do so would be to begin with an observable and culturally available feature of interaction that is associated with disgust, and to use this as a starting point for theorising – and empirically analysing – disgust in social interaction. Existing work in this area has identified what has been termed ‘revulsion sounds’ (such as ‘euw’ or ‘eugh’), as part of a larger category of response cries, and defined as “exclamatory interjections which are not full-fledged words” (Goffman, 1981, p. 99). Other examples of response cries include, ‘oops!’, ‘phew!’ and ‘eek!’. As Goffman notes, uttering such a cry allows the speaker to briefly step out of the conversation, and in the case of revulsion sounds, to distance the speaker from the associated behaviour or object (cf. Douglas, 1966). Whether or not the speaker has been contaminated, or is ‘experiencing’ disgust is not the point. What is important is that these utterances provide the interactional space in which speakers might achieve another activity. Recent work on response cries, for example, has noted that they build intersubjectivity between speakers, orienting others’ attention to a specific object or regulating social norms for appropriate emotional

displays (Aarsand & Aronsson, 2009; C. Goodwin, 1996; M. H. Goodwin, Goodwin, & Yaeger-Dror, 2002; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006).

One way to explore disgust in interaction (as a verbal utterance) might then be to consider it a response cry. But it appears to do more than this. The concept of disgust (whether defined as an emotion or as means of creating boundaries between people) arguably involves an *evaluation* of the situation; indeed, one might argue that a core feature of disgust is that it makes a moral judgement about the target object. Disgust creates a boundary between one object (or person) and another, and thus implies that these objects or people are qualitatively different and that one is inferior to the other. The term 'disgusting' would in itself, when uttered in interaction, work as an objective evaluation, though as yet there is no known published work which examines the empirical use of such a term as an assessment. In order to examine this evaluative element further, we must then consider how evaluations (typically referred to in the literature as assessments) are organised in interaction.

Existing work on assessments in social interaction has clearly demonstrated that – and how – they are deeply embedded in the unfolding sequence of social interaction (C. Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992; Mondada, 2009; Pomerantz, 1984). Their status as indicators of physiological or cognitive states (such as emotions or attitudes, for example) only makes sense if we also understand them as situated practices. For instance, making an assessment involves displaying access to, or authority over, knowledge in a particular setting (Heritage, 2002; Heritage & Raymond, 2005) as one might gain from participating in an event (Pomerantz, 1984). If I claim that my food tastes 'good', for example, then I am also – by implication – claiming that I have access to knowledge about this food, whether that knowledge is sensory, cognitive or otherwise.

Food assessments can also be understood in terms of their part in the social management of taste and eating practices (Mondada, 2009; Wiggins, 2004b; Wiggins & Potter, 2003). For instance, research into the semantically opposite, but prosodically similar, gustatory 'mmm' demonstrates

how apparently experiential aspects of eating (such as the gustatory pleasure of eating food) can also be understood as occasioned, linguistic features in interaction (Wiggins, 2002). Uttering ‘mmm’, for example, is not a solitary activity, and individuals typically produce this utterance in particular places in conversation (i.e. at the start of their turn in talk, and with rarely any explanation as to what they are referring). If we are to understand the social practices in and through which disgust is made relevant and consequential, therefore, then an important starting point is to examine the evaluative work achieved through the enactment of disgust in interaction.

The data corpus

The data for this study comes from a large corpus of video and audio recordings of family mealtimes in England and Scotland, which were collected with the aim of capturing a range of everyday social interactions around food. This data corpus comprises the author’s own data, the Forrester corpus from the CHILDES database, and data kindly provided by fellow researchers in family mealtime interaction (see acknowledgements section). A small number of additional disgust-relevant examples were also found in unpublished or published data. The socio-economic status of the families is not known, though in most cases it is visually apparent that the families are of white ethnic origin. The recordings are dated from around 1998 to 2011. Each family contains at least one child or young adult (i.e. all families contain a mother and/or father plus daughter(s)/son(s)). In most cases, only the nuclear family is included in recordings, and recording was carried out without the presence of the researcher. In this way, families had control over when, and what, was recorded, and the recording equipment became a part of their family routine for the duration of the data collection period. In total, over 92 hours of video or audio recorded interaction were included in this study.

Analytical procedure

All data were transcribed (by either the author or other researchers) and the full corpus searched for instances involving ‘disgust markers’, i.e. variations on ‘eugh’, ‘yuck’ or ‘disgusting’, where these *were related to food or eating practices*, including non-food items placed in the mouth. Disgust markers are defined as those utterances or ‘revulsion sounds’ (Goffman, 1981) that hearably provide a negative evaluation of a person, object or behaviour, while also (particularly in the case of ‘eugh’) being ambiguous in linguistic form (compare with ‘unpleasant’, for example). That these utterances are culturally available as putatively indexing disgust was a starting point for the research, and early examinations of the data suggested that these utterances were marking something different to standard food evaluations (Wiggins & Potter, 2003). As noted earlier, it is the familiarity of these utterances that is of particular interest: while we may recognise them as disgust-relevant, the precise way in which they *enact* disgust in a social context needs to be clarified. Indeed, we can analyse them as social practices without needing to make any claims as to their ontological status as individual emotions. A total of 63 instances of disgust markers were identified in the full corpus. These instances were extracted from the main dataset and included in a file of disgust markers. Table 1 below provides details of the data corpuses where examples of such utterances were identified. Where possible, the analysis section includes examples from across the different datasets.

Table 1; Data corpuses containing disgust episodes

Data corpus	Number of families involved	Approx ages of children/young people	Number of meals recorded	Format of data	Approx. total time of data recordings	Number of disgust sequences found
Adams	3	1-4 years old	9	Video &	2.5 hours	3

				audio		
Forrester	1	1–3 years old (same child recorded over this period)	33	Video & audio	12 hours	13
McMaster	3	2-10 years old	79	Video	30 hours	9
Tobin	3	6-17 years old	15	Video & audio	8 hours	8
Wiggins	10	7 – 19 years old	86	Audio	40 hours	25
Misc published data	Unknown	Unknown	N/A	Video & audio	N/A	5
Total	20	1-17 years	222	-	92.5 hours	63

Discursive psychology (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Wiggins & Potter, 2008) was used to analyse the data. The analysis focused on the organisational and intonational features of disgust markers, such as where they occurred within the ongoing interaction, how they were produced and how other speakers oriented to them. Although family mealtimes were used as the data source, the focus is about social practices within this setting, rather than on the dynamics of parent-child interaction in particular. The principles of discursive psychology were applied by examining the practices through which subjectivity and embodiment are enacted in social interaction (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2005, 2007). The management of subject-object relations is an ongoing concern for discursive psychological research (Edwards, 2005, 2007), though there is still much to be understood in terms of how subjectivity and objectivity is produced and challenged in interaction. Examining the management of embodied activities, such as eating practices and disgust, provides the perfect

opportunity to explore the boundaries between subject/object and how these are consequential for social interaction. Similarly with embodiment, the current paper contributes to research which aims to explicate the practices through which embodiment is produced and the resultant form of this embodiment (Hepburn, 2004; Jenkins, 2009; Wiggins, 2002).

ANALYSIS

The analysis is divided into two sections. First, the features of disgust markers are described and illustrated with examples; second, the occurrence of disgust markers (DMs) as assessments of food or behaviour will be explicated. That disgust is usually theorised as an emotion (with visceral elements) is not precluded here; what is being argued is that disgust-associated utterances can also work as interactional resources regardless of any putative internal states.

(1) Enacting disgust: features of disgust markers

Despite the large data corpus searched for this study, the number of disgust markers identified in relation to food and eating practices is relatively small. Indeed, it was due to the relative infrequency found in the initial dataset that prompted the author to search a larger corpus. Only 63 disgust sequences, with each sequence typically lasting less than one minute, were found in over 92 hours of recorded mealtime interaction. Despite the relative infrequency of these disgust markers, they are not typically treated as note-worthy; speakers do not explicitly mark them out as exceptional or unusual utterances. Moreover, food evaluations per se are a very common feature of mealtime interaction, so it may be that disgust markers are simply an extreme case.

The first step is to map out the features associated with disgust markers. In mealtime interaction, disgust markers overwhelmingly present as an ‘eugh’ utterance¹, with an emphasised and often elongated prosody. They are characterised by three key sequential features:

1. They typically follow a ‘noticing’ about food (whether verbal or oral); this can be seen in the form of another speaker’s story about food or a noticing of something in the present situation
2. They are usually turn initial; i.e. occurring at the start of a speaker’s turn in talk
3. They are predominantly uttered alone, without explanation, or with a minimal phrase (e.g. repeating the name of the food/action, or stating a further assessment)

In most cases, the conversation following a disgust marker quickly moves onto another topic. An example of a typical disgust marker is as follows. In this instance, Roger and Laura are the parents of the family, with Beth their 11-year-old daughter and only child. The setting is breakfast in their home. Roger is eating peanut butter on onion bread.

Extract 1

1. Beth: I can smell the <↑pea:nut [butt:er>
2. Roger: [mm-hm
3. (1.2)
4. Beth: have ↑you put that on the ↑onio:n bread
5. Laura: ↑mmm
6. (0.6)
7. Beth: → ↑eur:::↓gh
8. (4.0)

¹ Early evidence suggests that it is predominantly young children who use the term ‘yuck’ rather than ‘eugh’. See Wiggins (forthcoming) for discussion and empirical evidence on this issue.

There is a clear semantic and prosodic distinction between ‘eugh’ as a disgust marker and ‘er’ as a form of hesitation or discourse marker in talk. The disgust marker is typically emphasised and extended in its prosody, and sequentially positioned following talk or actions that relate to a particular topic. In the case of family mealtimes, such topics almost always involve food and/or its actual consumption, with a few instances referring to bodily practices or processes: ‘body envelope violations’ (McNally, 2002; Miller, 1997). Note here how Beth first provides a ‘my side’ telling (Pomerantz, 1980) about the peanut butter, which serves as a preliminary orientation to the food. When this is only minimally receipted (line 2), the ‘noticing’ on line 4 (expressed with rising intonation, which specifically draws attention to the subject, Roger, and the object, the onion bread) then creates the sequential environment in which a response might be normatively expected.

That the noticing precedes the disgust marker is highly pertinent, and it is here that the social choreography of disgust begins to be revealed. It enables the speaker to set the focus for the subsequent response (the ‘eugh’) and also demonstrate their participation in the activity (‘witnessing’ the disgust). This is important if they are able to claim entitlement to assess the activity (Pomerantz, 1984). The noticing ‘works by mobilizing attention on the features which it formulates or registers, but it treats *them* as its source, while projecting the relevance of some further action in response to the act of noticing’ (Schegloff, 2007, p. 219). So the noticing works like a social sleight-of-hand, shifting attention onto something else before the main activity is conducted. This then provides the context in which the disgust marker is relevant. Having formulated a potentially problematic or disgust-relevant source, the disgust marker then enables the speaker both to enact it *as* disgusting while also distancing themselves from it (c.f. Goffman’s notes on response cries).

A second instance of the disgust marker ‘eugh’ in extract 2 provides an empirical example of how these can work as response cries. In this family, Liz and Brian are the parents, with Martin (19 years old), Debbie (9 years old) and Helen (7 years old), their children. This example is noticeable in the

data as being an occasion in which a number of disgust markers are produced in a short period of time.

Extract 2

1. (1.0)
2. Helen: → urgh:::
3. (2.0)
4. Debbie: (what)
5. Martin: → ↑ur[gh>:::
6. Liz: [what (0.4) >what you foun[d<
7. Martin: → [↓uggh::::
8. Debbie: [heh heh heh
9. Helen: → urgh (.) ↑urgh:::
10. Liz: >what's the ↑matter (baby)<
11. Helen: → urg:h
12. Brian: drink (0.6) (have) Deb's:
13. Debbie: ↑no:::
14. Liz: what's the [mat:ter
15. Debbie: [heh heh heh (>you're not having mine<)
16. Helen: <it ↑tastes horrible>
17. Liz: well spit it °out then Hel you don't have to ↓eat it
18. (if its horrible)°

As with the other examples, the disgust marker here ('urgh') is uttered alone by two speakers, in turn-initial position, and the 'noticing' in this case is the actual consumption of the food (Helen has the food in her mouth). It may be this form of noticing that contributes to the repeated presence of the disgust markers; until the food is removed, the noticing may continue. The above extract also highlights another characteristic of disgust markers: that they occasion a collective orientation to the

particular target of disgust (i.e. the food or offending behaviour) and demand attention of the other speakers in a way that mirrors other response cries. We can begin to see, then, how disgust becomes a socially accountable activity when it is produced in interaction; it draws others into our eating practices and re-orientes them to a target object or behaviour, or to a 'trouble source'. This in itself orients to the embodied character of the disgust marker; that there is something 'the matter' in extract 2 suggests that the 'urgh' is treated as representing an underlying negative state. One might imagine a similar response to pain cries ('ouch!'), in which other speakers then orient to the source of the trouble (Jenkins, 2009). So we can see how disgust markers work as response cries; what will be shown later on is that they also work as assessments.

There are two, less frequent variations on disgust markers found in family mealtimes: 'yuck/yucky' or '(that's) disgusting'. These terms are less likely to be in turn initial position when used by adults or older children (Wiggins, forthcoming), and are often accompanied by other talk. In extract 3, we see Jenna (12 years old) left at the dinner table with her younger sister Pippa (6 years old), while the rest of the family are clearing up in the kitchen.

Extract 3

1. Jenna: I don't like mushy peas: (.) [do you?
2. [((looks up toward Pippa))
3. Pippa: °(mm hm)° ((nods head))
4. Jenna: → I think they're quite yucky ((looks down at plate))
5. (1.0)

Figure 1:

There is often no prosodic emphasis on the word ‘yucky’, though the semantics of the word in the English language strongly connect it with disgust. Above, we see Jenna using the term ‘yucky’ to provide an objective and category-based evaluation of the food (Wiggins & Potter, 2003) which supports her earlier claim not to like it (line 1; serving as the noticing). While Pippa’s turn appears muted and possibly ambiguous, Jenna’s second evaluation (line 4) suggests that she treats Pippa’s turn as counter to her own; it is softened (‘think’, ‘quite’) and provides support for the first assessment (Pomerantz, 1984). Indeed, Pippa soon after tells Jenna that “all it is is peas” (sic), and so the ‘yuckiness’ of the peas is diminished by the younger speaker. The orientation to other speakers (i.e. through glancing from food to Pippa, to food again; see figure 1²) also suggests that this disgust marker is as much about social obligations to eat and seeking support when these are resisted, as it is about, putatively, revulsion at the food itself.

The final extract for this section is a clear example of how two DMs might be uttered in the same turn in talk. In extract 4, Ian is the father of the family, and Amy his 15 year old daughter. Ian has been telling the family about a prior occasion involving eating around a campfire, using hot stones to cook raw meat.

Extract 4

² The visual data is included here to illustrate some of the interactional elements of disgust markers. This issue of facial expressions of disgust in interaction is a highly pertinent area for research (on emotion perception more generally as much as disgust) and warrants a full analysis in itself.

1. Ian: °that'd° been heated up in an ov↓en (0.4)
2. then you got- (0.4) raw stea:k (0.4) and
3. you put the steak on the rock (0.6) and it
4. ↑cooked it
5. Amy: → eurgh (.) °that's disgusting°
6. (1.0)
7. Amy: ↑think how many dogs could have peed on that
8. (0.4) r:ock

This is a particularly clear example of a fragment including the term 'disgusting', which at times follows the 'eugh' disgust marker. The law of contagion is also demonstrated here: it is not the rock that is the problem here, it is the possibility of contaminants on the rock (urine; 'peed', line 7) which may have passed to the food. We can also note how the 'eugh plus evaluation' mirrors the sequential format of 'gustatory mmm plus evaluation' that is common in talk where gustatory pleasure is enacted (Wiggins, 2002).

(2) Disgust markers as assessment

Having outlined the standard format of disgust markers in family mealtime talk, this section will examine the evaluative work achieved by disgust markers. Before focusing on the 'eugh' utterance, we can note that the terms 'yuck' and 'disgusting' are easily identifiable as objective assessments (i.e. they are evaluative in their semantics) as can be seen in extract 5 below (see also extract 4). Alexia is eating dinner with her three daughters, two of whom are audible here. Roslin (10 years old) has been telling the others about a recent trip to a pizza restaurant where she ate a 'cheesy beano pizza'.

Extract 5

1. Alexia why would you put baked beans on a ↑pizza
2. (0.6)
3. Roslin ↑hmmm↓ (.) its nice
4. (3.0)
5. Pippa its <dis↑gusting>
6. Roslin you've never tasted it
7. (1.0)
8. Alexia no, (.) but I have to say the idea of it sounds
9. disgust[ing]
10. Roslin [(well) <don't judge> a book by its cover

The elongated 'disgusting' by Pippa (line 5) comes as a strong contrast to the claim by Roslin that the pizza is 'nice' (line 3). That it might be disgusting re-positions the food in different territory, not just 'not nice' but something with potentially moral implications. Roslin defends her ground using an experiential basis for claiming epistemic rights over the assessment: she has tasted it and Pippa has not (line 6). Note, however, that it is Alexia who responds to this epistemic assertion in lines 8-9. The evaluation ('disgusting') is downgraded to 'sounds disgusting' based on 'the idea' (line 8) rather than the taste³. Note how the objective assessments (lines 3 and 5) are contrasted with claims about subjectivity (lines 6 and 10 in particular) and speakers' positions with respect to their knowledge about the food. There is also prosodic mirroring, with the drawn out 'don't judge' (line 10, mirroring 'disgusting', line 5) re-shifting the focus back onto the subject. Whether or not the pizza is disgusting, what are now at stake are speakers' entitlements to be able to make such an assessment: if you haven't tasted it, Roslin's argument goes, how will you know if it is nice or disgusting? The 'disgust' in this sequence – while removed from the source of the trouble (the pizza)

³ Indeed, this is the basis on which much of the disgust literature is based: that people will express disgust *before* the food is placed in the mouth, as it is as much an ideational concept as a sensory one. As Miller notes, it is the senses of touch and smell (and, presumably, cognition) that are first involved in disgust; taste is the final barrier (Miller, 1997).

– is thus a matter not so much about emotions or boundaries, but about how individuals make judgements about food and how those judgements are managed in interaction.

As extracts 3, 4 and 5 have illustrated the terms ‘yuck’ and ‘disgusting’ work to explicitly provide an assessment of food. In these examples, they are formulated as objective and category-based assessments, and as such enable the speakers to defend their rhetorical position by suggesting factual-based and enduring characteristics about these foods which are unrelated to their own gustatory experiences (Wiggins & Potter, 2003). We now move to examine the more prevalent ‘eugh’ as an assessment of food or eating behaviour; first are examples where the DM is accompanied by either an explicitly objective or subjective assessment. Extract 6 shows Laura and her daughter Beth eating breakfast together, with Laura eating an orange. Note how in this case, an objective assessment is provided *first* (line 4), before the disgust marker:

Extract 6

1. Beth: ↑why d’you ta:ke all the white stuff ↓off:
2. (1.0)
3. Laura: the pith:
4. Beth: >its< ↑ni:ce
5. (0.6)
6. Laura: → ↓eugh:: (0.2) its ↑horri::d
7. Beth: its ↑ni:::ce
8. Laura: °(not)° (0.2) the pith: on these is ↑horrid (0.2)

Food assessments are used here, as in other situations, to justify the consumption (or non-consumption) of a particular food. The DM is positioned at the centre of this two-part objective assessment exchange (‘its nice’, line 4; ‘its horrid’, line 6). Note the upward intonation and elongation of objective assessments (lines 4, 6 and 7), marking them as countering the previous

assessments. By contrast, the downward intonation of the DM ('eugh', line 6) suggests that it is not working here as a response cry, which is more likely to have an upward intonation (compare with 'eek!' for example). Had it been working solely as a response cry, we might also have expected it to occur in or around line 3, at the point at which the pith is first mentioned, i.e. closely following the noticing on line 1. The positioning of the DM within the organisation of the interaction (i.e. turn-taking order) as well as sequential organisation (i.e. at the start of the turn) is thus important here. Although the 'eugh' is in turn-initial position, its position a few turns after the noticing and its prosody suggests that it is not working as a response cry.

So how is the DM working in this interaction? As with extract 2, this is an example of a DM in conjunction with an objective assessment. Two points are worthy of note here. First, the explicit assessment (line 6) refers to the food as being 'horrid' or 'horrible', rather than disgusting. For now, this is important in that the ontological status of the DM is ambiguous. While the 'eugh' expression is culturally recognised as being disgust-relevant, the surrounding talk orients to this as an evaluation about the *taste* of the food alone, not its ideational implications. The second point is that the DM is being used *in conjunction with* the objective assessment. Whether or not the DM is treated *in itself* as an objective claim about the food is another matter; it may simply be being used, instead, as support for the assessment.

Let us move now to an example where disgust markers might be treated as, or alongside, subjective assessments. Extract 7 below shows a mealtime with Lynn and her children Adam (13 years old) and Daisy (4 years old).

Extract 7

1. Lynn: °sausas↓ges°
2. Adam: they're full of ↑red things:
3. (0.8)
4. Lynn: tomato (0.4) °(I think)°

5. Adam: → °↑urgh:::°
6. (1.0)
7. Adam: don't li:ke it
8. Lynn: °heh heh heh°
9. Daisy: Mummy, (0.4) [I want uhm- (.) (got) two,

The use of DMs alongside subjective assessments in the data corpus is variable. At times, the DM occurs close to other speakers stating 'I don't like it', or occasions such as the extract above, where the subjective evaluation is used by the same speaker (line 7), in close proximity to the disgust marker (line 5). In extract 7, we see the DM positioned immediately after the noticing (that the 'red things' are tomato, line 4) and thus works well as a response cry, in that it situates Adam's utterance as one that has been occasioned by the information about the food. That there is no immediate uptake of this (note the pause in line 6) might warrant the use of the subjective assessment in line 7. As with the example of objective assessments and DMs, however, whether or not the DM is *itself* used (or treated) as a subjective assessment of the food is unclear. The impact of this more explicit assessment (the 'don't like it') is, though, to re-construct the DM as aligned with a personal preference rather than a comment on the morality of the food itself.

Examples can be found, then, of disgust markers being used alongside objective and subjective assessments. For the most part, however, the eloquence of DMs is in the way in which they assess an object (food), person or behaviour in a manner which does not directly attribute blame to one thing or the other. They appear to do this as follows, and through the semantic, prosodic and sequential features of the utterance 'eugh/urgh'. First, because 'eugh' is not clearly a descriptive term (as 'disgusting' is, for example), then it is somewhat ambiguous as to its meaning. We must gain meaning, therefore, from cultural knowledge (i.e. that it is commonly associated with disgust in the English language) and from observing it as it is used in social situations. Second, we have already seen that its typical sequential location (at the start of a turn in talk) suggests a spontaneity of

expression, but that the prior 'noticing' suggests a delayed, interaction-focused response. In other words, if 'eugh' was simply a claim to having a particular embodied reaction (rejection) of the food or behaviour, then we would not expect this delayed pattern. We can also note that the 'eugh' is not typically questioned by other people; people do not ask, 'what do you mean, "eugh"?' It may be challenged as a way of evaluating the source of the trouble, but not challenged as a conversationally-relevant thing to do. Because of this pattern, and their ambiguous format, whether the source of the trouble is the food (i.e. the object: is it disgusting?) or the person (i.e. the subject: are they disgust-sensitive?) is not made explicit.

The final two extracts illustrate this ambiguity or vagueness of the 'eugh' utterance. Unlike gustatory mmms, which are also semantically vague but for which speakers are not usually held accountable (Wiggins, 2002), disgust markers invoke accountability in two ways. First, for the person who utters the DM: they can be held accountable for what caused the utterance (see extract 2, or extract 6 where the DM is challenged). Second, for the person to whom the DM is aimed (where this is relevant): they are noting something about the other person's behaviour which is treated as problematic in some way. Extracts 8 and 9 demonstrate this second form of accountability.

Extract 8 below (and figure 2) illustrates an example where the disgust marker is collaboratively produced by more than one speaker in the interaction. Here, the disgust is first enacted by the older son, Jonny (17 years old), after Sandra (the boys' mother) notices Justin (13 years old) using his fingers to pick the skin off his baked potato. He has been doing this for a short while before either Sandra or Jonny draw attention to this behaviour. The father of the family is also present at this meal, though does not comment in this instance.

Extract 8

1. Sandra film played back- ↑what are you doing to that potato
2. Jonny E:::UGH[:::]
3. Sandra [that's disgusting (.) never do that in public
4. [((Sandra taps Justin's arm then moves his
5. hand away)
6. Justin £whoops£

Figure 2: Screen capture from extract 8 (lines 2-3)

The 'noticing' of the behaviour is produced in line 1, with the cut-off from the previous discussion and raised intonation making Justin's behaviour the relevant trouble source. It is then the older brother, Jonny, who first enacts disgust here (line 2), following his mother's noticing (note that in figure 2, Sandra is sitting beside Justin. Dad has his back to the camera, and Jonny is seated opposite Justin but unseen by this camera). The extended, loud, 'eugh' works to corroborate Sandra's turn (again, working as a response cry) but also to present this in a particularly negative way. The evaluative and moral component is then made more explicit by Sandra with the utterance 'that's disgusting' (line 3), and the directive not to carry out such behaviour in public (Craven & Potter,

2009). If we were to treat the DM on line 2 as an assessment, then Sandra's DM on line 3 might be characterised as a second, upgraded assessment. Given that it would be difficult to imagine how to upgrade such a demonstrative 'eugh' as provided by Jonny, 'that's disgusting' works then to define the behaviour in a more explicit manner.

What appears to be happening here is that disgust is invoked by two participants in the interaction, and used to make an assessment of another's behaviour. Jonny's DM is much louder than the surrounding talk, and hints at the social consequences of disgust; this is not a private emotion, but a socially consequential event. The two DMs serve to hold Justin accountable for his actions, to which he then responds with humour (line 6; possibly hinting at the presence of the cameras which could be treated as 'in public', see line 3). In terms of the source of the disgust, however, the 'eugh' (line 2) alone does not associate the disgust with either the speaker (Jonny) or the behaviour (Justin's); it is only when Sandra then states 'that's disgusting' (line 3) that the source of the disgust is located with the object. In doing so, the disgustingness of the activity is not only corroborated, Sandra's position as being entitled to state 'that's disgusting' is also confirmed. She might equally have achieved this with an 'eugh' or a 'yuck', though the more explicit form of assessment works to distance herself even further from the disgusting behaviour. In a sense, expressing a DM like 'eugh' implicates the speaker in an experiential framework; they are alluding to internal states that may or may not be shared by other speakers. In other words, uttering an 'eugh' implies that the speaker is potentially experiencing disgust (as a visceral state/emotive response). To do so might then also leave open the possibility that they are potentially disgust-sensitive. By contrast, stating 'that's disgusting' does not imply any embodied reaction; instead, it works more simply as an evaluation of a person, object or event.

In extract 8, the DMs are in turn-initial position, and immediately following the noticing of the trouble source. There are other occasions, however, in which the DM occurs *after* an initial evaluation (e.g. extracts 4 and 5), and these are worth noting because they provide further evidence

that DMs work as assessments in interaction, rather than (or instead of) being treated as an emotional expression or response cry. To work as a response cry or as an emotive rejection of food, for example, their position as turn-initial is paramount: they must create the impression that they are immediately produced following the receipt of ‘news’ (whether this news is based on verbal, visual or sensory information). To work as an assessment, they do not necessarily need to be in turn-initial position, though it might help. The final example for this section illustrates this point. Here, Mike is facing his 1 year old daughter, Ella, while she is eating at her high-chair.

Extract 9⁴

1. Mike: [for dadd↑y
2. [((points to food on high-chair tray))
3. Ella: [((looks down at food while sucking rubber glove
4. (1.0)
5. Mike: → >no don't< suck that (0.4) [e:u:↓rgh:::
6. [((M tries to pull glove away
7. from E))
8. (0.8) ((M smiles at E, E returns smile))
9. Ella: hhheh
10. Mike: [£give it to Daddy::£
11. [((holds out hand with palm facing up))

It is the child’s behaviour here – sucking a rubber glove – which is the source of the trouble (line 5). This ‘trouble’, however, is receipted first by Mike, then by Ella, with smiles and laughter (lines 8 and 9), so its status as morally questionable is not clear. That DMs are accompanied by laughter is found elsewhere in the data corpus, and also suggests that speakers are attending to more than simply a matter of disgust. We would expect a very different response from Mike if the rubber glove was covered in faeces. Instead, what we see is a directive from Mike (‘don’t suck that’, line 5) and *then*

⁴ This extract can be seen in Forrester 053 in the CHILDES data corpus, available at <http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/>.

the disgust marker. This might be an instance of a deviant case, where the lack of DM in turn-initial position marks it as not quite authentic; that it is not marking 'disgust' as an assessment based on emotional responses, but as a characterisation of a particular behaviour. We might speculate, particularly given the age of the child that this is one way in which parents socialise young children into the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Discussion

This paper details features of disgust markers (specifically, 'eugh' and 'yuck') and their function as assessments in family mealtime interaction. The main analytical points raised were as follows:

- The most common disgust marker used by adults and older children (i.e. older than 5 years old) is 'eugh'; this is usually uttered alone and without explanation
- Disgust markers are typically preceded by a 'noticing', which orients other people to the source of the trouble
- Disgust markers work to assess a food, person or behaviour, either alongside a subjective/objective assessment, or in themselves
- The enactment of disgust in interaction through these verbal utterances demonstrates the social and interactional nature of disgust.

So what are the implications of disgust markers being used as assessments in mealtime interaction?

That disgust has an evaluative component is not new – and in many ways this is a defining feature of the concept - but what the analysis has shown is an aspect of the social processes through which disgust is enacted and *becomes* evaluative through its sequential and prosodic features. If conceptualised as an emotion, and as categorically different from distaste, then emotion cannot simply be reduced to the status of assessment or evaluation of food. There is a social aspect to disgust – not just as an emotion that can be used to create boundaries between social groups, for

example – but as a socially contingent practice in itself. That is, the enactment of disgust is collaboratively achieved; disgust markers have been shown to be sensitive to their location in interaction as well as being used alongside other assessments made by the same, or other speakers. They are typically preceded by a noticing, so speakers are attending to the social setting *before* any disgust-related utterance is produced. There are patterns to the way in which disgust markers are produced; we now need to know more about how the social management of disgust is dealt with in other settings, and with other consequences.

This paper also contributes to the broader literature on social psychology and emotions, demonstrating, in line with recent arguments (Stokoe, Hepburn, & Antaki, 2012) that by examining discursive practices rather than emotions as individual states or reactions, we can understand the role that emotions play as social entities; as part of the complexity and subjectivity of social interaction. This account is no less ‘emotion’ based, it just offers a different perspective to emotions that enables us to examine them as they are ‘lived’ rather than as a report of some other behaviour (Hepburn, 2004).

Similarly, that disgust as a concept may be a way to create or define boundaries between people or social groups, or as a disease-avoidance mechanism, is not precluded here. The arguments within this paper do not dispute these accounts. What *is* argued, however, is that we need to re-consider treating disgust *a priori* simply as an individual, visceral response to external stimuli. Disgust markers – as one way of enacting disgust in social settings – suggest that interactional processes are also at work here. Moreover, it may be helpful to regard this interactional element as the intermediary between the visceral response and the broader social frameworks that disgust helps to shape.

This paper is limited in that it only looks at verbal utterances (with a brief glimpse at visual and gestural elements); what we need to do next is to focus in more detail on the choreography of the verbal, facial and gestural enactment of disgust. Do facial disgust markers precede verbal

utterances, for example? What happens when facial movements enact disgust but there is no verbal utterance to accompany these? The families used here could also be regarded as classic nuclear families, but we may learn a great deal from examining disgust markers as used by, say, young adults learning to cook for the first time, or patients in a hospital ward. As with other work on discursive practices within mealtime interaction (Laurier & Wiggins, 2011), there is much variation to be covered and we have only just begun to scratch the surface of disgust in interaction. Subsequent research might examine the organisation and management of disgust between babies/infants and parents, or the use of laughter around disgust markers, and how facial movements and verbal utterances are combined to enact disgust in everyday interaction.

If we understand more about the social settings within which food is rejected, accepted and otherwise managed, researchers can then begin to point to strategies through which people might change their eating behaviour or those of dependents. This is particularly pertinent for those parents and health professionals dealing with children who cannot, or refuse to eat for psychological reasons. More broadly, if we can understand more clearly the processes through which disgust is involved in the categorisation and prejudice of social groups then we can begin to undermine or intervene in these processes. It is hoped that this paper will serve as an empirical tool by which this work can be undertaken.

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