Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis: putting the personal in the political in feminist research

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Abstract

Discourse analysis is a useful and flexible method for exploring power and identity. While there are many ways of doing discourse analysis, all agree that discourse is the central site of identity construction. However, recent feminist concerns over power, agency, and resistance have drawn attention to the absence of participants' first-hand experiences within broad discursive accounts (Lafrance & McKenzie-Mohr, 2014; Saukko, 2008). For those with an interest in power relations, such as feminist researchers, this is a problematic silence which renders the personal functions of discourse invisible. In this paper, we argue that the 'personal' and 'political' are inextricable, and make a case for putting the 'personal' into broader discursive frameworks of understanding. Further, we assert that feminist research seeking to account for identity must much more explicitly aim to capture this interplay. To this end we argue that voice is the key site of meaning where this interplay can be captured, but that no clear analytical framework currently exists for producing such an account. In response, we propose *Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis* (FRDA) as a voice-centered analytical approach for engaging with experience and discourse in talk. We then set out clear guidance on how to do FRDA, as applied in the context of women working in UK policing. Finally, we conclude that by prioritizing voice, FRDA invites new and politicized feminist readings of power, agency, and resistance, where the voices of participants remain central to the discursive accounts of researchers.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, feminisms, voice, agency, feminist psychology, qualitative methods

Introduction

Discourse analysis is a useful and flexible method for exploring power and identity, which provides a range of critical concepts and methods for theory and research (Parker, 2013). There are many frameworks incorporated under the umbrella of discursive research, which propose multiple ways of doing discourse analysis (e.g. Edley & Wetherell, 2001; Parker, 2013; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Stainton-Rogers, 2003, 2011; Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Wiggins & Potter, 2008; Wood & Kroger, 2000). These are shaped by specific "intellectual desires, problems and institutional demands" (Arribas-Allyon & Walkerdine, 2009, p. 91), making discourse analysis antithetical to formalization. Parker (2013) argues that discursive research is "all the better" (p. 224) for the internal contradictions brought about in such desires and demands, which constantly force researchers to confront, develop, and redraw methodological boundaries. However, what these approaches have in common is that they all view discourse as the primary site of power and meaning in identity construction and social relations. Typically, discourse analysis involves a researcher reading the accounts of participants for their discursive meanings. This process is in itself a discursive practice, whereby the voices of participants come to be translated by the researcher into a theoretical account.

When carrying out feminist research, the power relations set up by such practices can be problematic, in that already marginalized voices can become obscured in the very processes of knowledge production that seek to understand them. Recent feminist concerns over power, agency, and resistance in discursive research have also drawn attention to the absence of participants' first-hand experiences within broad discursive accounts (e.g. Lafrance & McKenzie-Mohr, 2014; Saukko, 2008). Driven by feminist intellectual desires, in this paper we outline Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis (FRDA), an analytical approach that captures experience and discourse simultaneously. The paper is presented in three parts, addressing the title in reverse. Firstly, we will discuss why FRDA was developed for *feminist research*, providing a background to the approach. Next, we will outline the tensions, principles, and parameters of *putting the personal in the political*. Finally, we will outline *feminist relational discourses analysis*, providing a step-by-step guide for researchers.

Feminist research

Feminist activism and research aims to disrupt and transform social relations that oppress people along the lines of gender identity, sex, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and ability under raced, classed, and gendered systems of patriarchal privilege (Cole, 2009; Barker, 2015). Due to its focus on magnifying the voices of those obscured in these structures of power and privilege, FRDA lends itself – and should only be applied to – research that seeks to further feminist goals. It is an approach for feminist research and activism.

By definition, then, feminist work requires a structural approach. However, feminists also emphasize the importance of capturing the personal in relation to the structural, speaking to the inherently personal conditions of structural relations:

> There is no question: it is personal. The personal is structural. I learned that you can be hit by a structure; you can be bruised by a structure. An individual man who violates you is given permission: that is structure. A girl is made responsible for his violence: that is structure. A policeman who turns away because it is a domestic call: that is structure. A judge who talks about what she is wearing: that is structure. A structure is an arrangement, an order, a building; an assembly. (Ahmed, 2017, p. 30)

In discursive research that seeks to account for the structural, a failure to recognize the personal can prioritise the researcher's interpretations of structural oppression over the voices of participants (Saukko, 2008). For instance, in feminist poststructuralist research, which is informed by Foucauldian discursive theory (see Arribas-Allyon & Walkerdine, 2009), a focus on macro-level discourse can obscure the personal experiences of individuals in favor of dominant and widespread discursive patterns developed by the researcher. Foucault himself expressed moral concerns over scholarship that seeks to "transform the singular adventure that tells the individual memory in(to) a general phenomenon in the name of science" Foucault (1973, p.8). More recently, McSpadden (2011) reflects on her struggle to recognize and hear herself in discursive representations of her lived experiences. In response, feminist researchers are particularly concerned with how the voices of participants are interpreted and represented. Reflected in this concern is a feminist commitment to representing voices that are not typically included, or rewritten in the mainstream enterprise of knowledge production,

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which is historically dominated by white middle-class men (Wilkinson, 1986). For this reason, the interpretation and (re)writing of women's voices by researchers is a central concern for feminist research, particularly in producing collective accounts of personal experience (Lafrance & McKenzie-Mohr, 2014). This leads us to ask how we might promote collective responses to the encounters of individuals in oppressive institutions, while retaining the encounters of those individuals in the process. One feminist response has been a turn to voiced stories. Indeed, Lafrance and McKenzie-Mohr lead their argument with the question: "how can individual stories of resistance be mobilized for collective discursive change?" (2014, p. 1). Here, prioritizing the personal is a political act: it is part of the political project of resistance. Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis provides a way to identify stories that can then be mobilized in relation to broader discursive systems of power to promote collective change. It serves feminist intellectual desires for transformation in problematic institutions that are resistant to change.

Putting the personal in the political

Weedon (1987) first set out feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis as a means by which to interrogate problematic patriarchal discourse. Since its inception, feminist psychologists have taken up and developed this method of analysis in order to expose these discourses and their political implications (e.g. Gavey, 1989; 1997; 2011). Indeed, Nicola Gavey (1997) argues in line with Weedon (1987) that feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis aims to subvert the taken-for-granted discourses around ways of being and behaving that run through hegemonic discourses and preserve patriarchal power relations.

According to Gavey (1997), feminist poststructuralism is distinctive from other poststructuralist approaches in its political orientation, which "maintains an emphasis on the material bases of power (for example, social, economic, and cultural arrangements) and the need for change at this level of discourse" (p. 54). Thus, the epistemological underpinnings of feminist poststructuralist approaches necessarily require the consideration of broader historical and social materialities and the degrees of power they offer. Gavey argues further that discourses function to offer different degrees of power in line with material conditions. However, she notes that individuals are not passive in relation to discursive power. Instead, she argues that people are active and able to position themselves in relation

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to a variety of discourses. Thus feminist poststructuralist epistemologies place emphasis on agency and the notion that meaning and identities are actively produced through the uses of discourse. Although Gavey (2011) notes the potentials that feminist poststructuralist approaches offer for agency and resistance, in that they "shine a light on possibilities for being and acting otherwise" (p. 185), others have argued that in focusing on broader and overarching discourses, women's individual voices and the stories they have to tell of agency and resistance(s) are lost (e.g. Saukko, 2010).

One key reason that voice is so commonly lost in such collective accounts is the historical tensions that arise between phenomenological and social constructionist epistemologies. What ties social constructionist approaches together is the assumption that there is no 'authentic' experience that occurs within people without the action of language, and therefore discourse (Gergen, 1985; Wiggins & Potter, 2013). Thus, according to social constructionist approaches, there is no 'inward mentality' without representation through actions of language. Here, such 'mentality' is constructed and performed through the expression of language and the use of narratives and discourses. To this end, focusing merely on subjective experience neglects the powerful performative role of language (Butler, 1990), its political dimensions, and its functions (Gergen, 1985; Butler, 1990).

For these reasons, concepts of individual voice and discourse tend to be deemed epistemologically incompatible within mainstream psychological traditions (e.g. Gergen & Thatchenkery, 1996). Such assumptions are grounded in traditional empirical values of theoretical purity, which rightfully assert that some epistemologies are fundamentally irreconcilable. While this is the case for some approaches, such as those underpinned by empiricist epistemologies, it has increasingly been argued that this does not necessarily have to be the case for language-oriented approaches (e.g. Gilligan et al., 2006; Gavey, 2011).

It has also been argued that adopting a 'one or the other' approach to experience and discourse may leave important gaps in knowledge. For instance, Saukko (2008) argues that the political agendas behind purely discursive research can serve to silence the voices of those telling the story. For example, presenting a person's discursive account for the purpose of explanation or critique is at a fundamental level regarded as a discursive appropriation of that voice. It is argued that this can

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overlook the "powerful counternarratives" that may emerge in approaches more sensitive to experience (Saukko, 2008, p. 79).

On the other hand, when adopting a purely phenomenological approach there can be a tendency to conceptualise voiced accounts as pertaining to truths awaiting elicitation or discovery. This promotes a realist approach to voice, encouraging the researcher to interpret accounts of experience unreflectively and independently of their cultural and social underpinnings. For instance, Smith's (1999) interpretative phenomenological analysis of women's transition into motherhood arguably reveals problematic discourses around pregnancy in male-dominated working environments, but leaves these unquestioned. Here, experiences of alienation in the workplace are accepted as truths, and are not accounted for in terms of problematic discourses around motherhood, such as the containment of femininity and pregnancy in the workplace (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005). This renders the interpretation relatively superficial and naively uncomplicated.

The fundamental contention here surrounding experience as a site of meaning is the notion of authenticity. Authenticity has a number of definitions, but traditional empiricist understandings seem to follow the definition of authenticity as the truth of an account in relation to its essence (Van Leeuwen, 2001). Contextualising authenticity within the epistemological traditions of modernism and postmodernism helps us to show how voice has become a key site of epistemological tension. Modernism and postmodernism take different approaches to language and how authentic meaning is produced. Thus, these perspectives take different epistemological stances on what is to be considered an 'authentic' account. Traditionally, debate around voice within psychological literature hinges on whether a person's spoken or written account of their self is or can be taken as a representation of their 'true' 'self'. According to modernist empiricist thought, which treats language as representation, voice represents "an outward expression of an inward mentality" (Gergen & Thatchenkery, 1996, p. 361). Here, a voiced account is taken uncritically to be an authentic representation of the internal self, as in Smith's (1999) phenomenological research.

On the other hand, postmodernist theory rejects the concept of language as representation in favour of notions of language as action. Poststructuralist arguments hold in line with broader discursive theories (Potter, 2003) that language not only expresses meaning, but also constructs and establishes meaning

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about the world we experience. This rests on the argument that our experiences and therefore our understandings of these are "founded on convention" (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 113). In other words, Wittgenstein argues that the meaning we already hold about the world ultimately allows us to make sense of our experiences, and that this meaning shapes how or what we are able to tell ourselves and others about events.

These philosophical considerations render traditional divisions between experience and discourse within psychology rather unhelpful to researchers concerned with identity work, because they set up theoretical barriers at the expense of more complex and contextualised understandings of language-based identity negotiation. Gavey (2011) argues that such divisions derive from pressures within empiricist psychology to present clear and singular methods that set out formulaic modes of enquiry and interpretation. From a feminist perspective, it is no coincidence that these barriers and constraints have systematically hindered the development of progressive and transformative understandings of women's lives (Wilkinson, 1986).

Indeed, feminist researchers such as Nicola Gavey (2011) have come to reflect on their initial unease with notions of 'experience as text', lamenting their previous dismissals of experience as a legitimate site of analysis (Gavey, 1989). For instance, Gavey (2011) tells of her reflections through stories of her grandmother's depression: treated with medication but grounded in everyday patriarchal conditions of an oppressive marriage. Here, she points to the "complete enmeshment of experience and culture" and the ways in which discourses can show us "the cultural conditions of possibility for ways of being in the world" (p. 186). In doing so, she advocates notions of theoretical impurity, recognising the importance of experience, and arguing, "human experience *in relation to* the (cultural conditions of) possibilities for human experience has always been at the heart of my concerns and interest" (Gavey, 2011, p. 186).

As such, discourses and voiced experiences can be reunderstood as complementary rather than oppositional, with experience being inextricably linked to material political conditions. Indeed, Gavey (2011) argues that we still need 'broad theoretical platforms' such as poststructuralism within critical psychology, but these should be flexible enough to take into account such shifts in epistemological

thought. In line with this argument, Saukko (2008) argues that voiced experiences are a "powerful counterpoint to mainstream discourses" (p. 303). In this case, voice, which articulates experience and discourse, is valued for the different representations of subjects and objects that it presents. In this respect, Saukko's (2000; 2008) approach allows feminist research to remain true to women's voices by recognising the ways in which these voices are representative of experience, but also mediated by discourse.

Therefore, Saukko (2008) argues that voice is a key site of meaning, because voices are structured and mediated by discourses. Equally, discourse cannot then be taken as a site of meaning without voice, because it is through voice that discourses construct and mediate identities, and discourses *become* situated. Pointing out the tendency for poststructuralism to focus on broader discourses and draw "grand conclusions" (p. 81), Saukko argues that a focus on discourse alone can render accounts of women flat and one-dimensional. From this perspective, Saukko (2008) argues that explorations of voice and discourse provide a political opportunity by complicating flat and broad discursive accounts, or grand narratives, of women's agency and resistance while at the same time listening to their traditionally silenced voices. Feminist relational discourse analysis aims to shed light on structural systems of power and the voices of those who go unheard within these. Here, the personal is political, and the political is personal.

A turn to voice

From feminist perspectives, voice is conceptualised as a socially and politically contested site of meaning (Gilligan et al., 2006; Lafrance & McKenzie-Mohr, 2014). Indeed, the notion of 'giving voice' has been pointed out by critical psychologists as a site for the temporary and strategic allocation of power by the powerful to those who are relatively disempowered (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2009). Thus, voice has been identified as a key site of power distribution. This conceptualisation resonates with broader critiques of mainstream psychology, which have historically silenced women's voices and thus marginalised women in relationships of power (Hollway, 1991; Jack, 1993; Wilkinson, 1991). The issue of silencing is therefore crucial for feminist researchers. Indeed, Saukko (2008) argues that one of the key underscoring principles of feminist research is to remain "true to silenced or misunderstood voices" (p. 78) of disempowered groups, such as women.

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Saukko (2000; 2008) takes debates over voice and discourse as the starting point for her research, presenting a dilemma in capturing experience and discourse simultaneously:

> How can we be true to and respect the inner experiences of people and at the same time critically assess the cultural discourses that form the very stuff from which our experiences are made? (Saukko, 2000, p. 299)

This dilemma arose from a deep discomfort and dissatisfaction with public discourses surrounding self-starvation practices, referred to commonly as 'eating disorders'. Her discomfort stemmed from her own lived experiences of self-starvation, which she felt did not resonate either with popular medical or feminist representations of 'eating disorders'. For Saukko (2000), the dilemma between inner experience and discourse is also reflected in her interpretative work as a feminist researcher. For example, in her partially autobiographical research, she expected women to adopt a similar critical position to her own on mainstream constructions of anorexia. However, she found that women often engaged in self-criticism, subscribing to mainstream notions of selfishness and vanity. This led her to feel torn between her feminist commitment to remain true to the sometimes self-oppressing voices of these women, and her commitment to critiquing these problematic discourses around self-starvation. Here, her dilemma arose in raising silenced voices that could be supportive of problematic dominant discourses. On one hand, taking these voices seriously might risk unwillingly reproducing oppressive and silencing discourses. On the other, a critique of these discourses without women's voices might risk prioritising the interpretations of the researcher, positioning the women "as if they were in the dark about themselves" (Saukko, 2000, p. 301), and obscuring their complicated negotiations of dominant discourses.

In their discussion of women's voices, agency and resistance, Lafrance and McKenzie-Mohr (2014) argue that dominant discourses present problematic frameworks of understanding that women struggle to negotiate in relation to their embodied experiences and identities. Here, women's embodied experiences are often at odds with broader narratives, which tell stories they do not recognise, giving rise to powerful counter-narratives. This collection presents accounts of women storying and re-storying their lives, in accounts of lesbian identity (Gibson & Macleod, 2014), childbirth (Chadwick, 2014), rape (Mckenzie-Mohr, 2014), premenstrual change (Ussher & Perz, 2014), violence

(Boonzaier, 2014), sexual desire (Farvid, 2014), sadness and distress (Lafrance, 2014) work (Rickett, 2014), and bodies (Brown, 2014). Throughout this collection, the authors show how the stories of women offer opportunities to listen for resistance to harmful discourses and narratives, and for collective change at the level of discourse. Resisting a 'one or the other' approach, this collection advocates for the study of *both* the personal and the structural, through the analysis of voice.

The importance of voice here is two-fold. First, the voiced experiences of silenced people can offer powerful counternarratives of serious political importance, and should therefore feature centrally in feminist research. Second, analyses of voice allow us to understand how spoken and written accounts of the self are shot through with discourse, and thus central to constructions of identity and agency. Saukko (2010) argues that analyses of voice can build on existing discursive theory around silenced groups in order to understand how lived experiences are actively structured, mediated and negotiated within broad and overarching discursive systems of meaning. From this perspective, voice carries both experience and discourse. As such, voice represents a political site where we are able to capture the interplay between experience and discourse, and analysis of voice allows us to understand the discursive, ideological, and personal functions of discourse. However, no clear analytical framework currently exists for capturing voice along these lines.

Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis (FRDA)

Following in a long tradition of discursive work (Parker, 2013), FRDA was developed primarily out of necessity in the context of feminist organisational research exploring police work as a gendered site of identity negotiation. The research set out to ask why policewomen subscribed to 'oppressive' organisational discourses, as found in previous research (e.g. Dick & Cassell, 2004). To this end, our aims were to understand *how* police officers negotiated gendered organisational discourses, and to better understand the functions of these discourses for identity. We were also acutely aware from previous accounts of gendered labour that this is often conflicted, difficult, and heavily embodied (Monaghan, 2002; Rickett & Roman, 2013). Thus, we wanted to explore organizational discourses with policewomen with a view to developing a more explicit understanding of the personal functions and implications of these discourses. We did this in focus group sessions, where policewomen were invited to discuss organizational discourses. Guided by a feminist desire to listen to silenced voices,

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we aimed to make space for policewomen to contest the ideas that served to define them in this heavily masculinized workspace. We then required an approach to analysis that could account for these voices within the broader discursive context of police work. Although Saukko (2000; 2008; 2010) presents a compelling theoretical case for exploring both broad discursive patterns and the experiences of those of whom they speak, we found no clear guide for researchers wishing to conduct such an analysis.

FRDA combines two clear analytical phases to explore how experiences and discourses come to be situated together through voice. Because we are working in a discursive framework, we are informed by Foucauldian principles that view people as inextricable from and active in discursive contexts (e.g. Foucault, 1973; 1977; 1988). For this reason, the first analytic phase involves identifying the broad discursive patterns that people actively negotiate in their voiced accounts. This phase allows us to identify the discursive realms that inform participants' accounts. The second phase involves tracing voices through that person's discursive realms, in order to understand how they actively locate and relocate themselves within these realms, and the personal functions and implications of this. Together, these analytical phases allow us to put the personal in the political and account for agency in inherently feminist ways.

This focus on agency builds on Foucauldian discourse analysis (Arribas-Allyon & Walkerdine, 2009), which ultimately seeks to account for how people negotiate particular discourses within relations of power. Here, analysis is focused on how people actively construct and are constructed by discourse. FRDA seeks to account not only for these discourses, but also how they "hit" and "bruise" us (Ahmed, 2017, p. 30), and how we story and re-story them in relation to our embodied experiences. Here, analysis is focused on the personal functions of dominant discourses that on a macro level might be problematic, harmful or oppressive, thereby capturing the interplay of the personal and political in accounts of identity. In the following sections, we detail the analytical framework we developed to conduct such an analysis, providing a step-by-step account for feminist researchers with an interest in this approach. To provide a worked example of each analytical step throughout these sections, we will draw on examples from the data we analyzed using this approach.

Analytical Phases

Phase 1: poststructuralist discourse analysis

The first analytical phase requires the researcher to conduct a form of discourse analysis informed by Foucauldian principles (e.g. Willott & Griffin, 1997; Woolhouse, Rickett, Day, and Milnes, 2012). This phase involves the identification of discursive patterns within a transcript using the method set out by Willott and Griffin (1997), and subsequently adopted by feminist researchers such as Woolhouse et al. (2012) for conducting a Foucauldian-informed discourse analysis. There are 7 steps to complete in this first analytical phase:

1. Reading and listening to the talk
2. 'Chunking' talk into sections
3. Labelling chunks of talk with descriptive codes
4. Identifying recurring codes, or 'in-vivo themes'
5. Identifying discourses
6. Identifying discursive patterns
7. Theoretical Accounting: Identifying Discursive Realms

Step 1: reading and listening to the talk

The first step involves reading and re-reading of the data for meaning. FRDA also requires the researcher to perform multiple listenings at this stage of the analysis, which means that the data must also be audible. Data must therefore comprise some form of spoken word that adopts a first person perspective. At this stage, readings and listenings are done in order to build familiarity with the data, to tune in to the stories being told, and to provide an opportunity to make note of any emerging themes, voices, or plots. These can be identified by listening for different stories in the data, paying attention to the topics of these stories, the way these stories are told, and what happens in these stories. For instance, when talking about work, work-life balance might emerge as a recurring topic. However, this topic might be discussed in different ways. For example, while stories might be optimistic in some places, others might be more laboured, denoting different emergent voices around that topic. In addition, these stories might involve different people, locations, and endings, denoting different plots. In our initial listenings, we make note of these different stories, how they are told, and what they might tell us. We also reflect on our own responses to these stories, in order to situate

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ourselves relationally and understand how these responses might shape our understandings of the stories being told. For instance, there might be a story that we can particularly identify with and relate to, where we feel a close connection to the person telling it. It might be that our connection to that story helps us begin to imagine it as a collective story. Here, we begin our work of connecting the personal and the structural.

Step 2: "chunking" talk into sections

The second step allows the researcher to begin to identify systematic patterns of meaning within the talk. This is done by dividing the transcribed talk into 'chunks' – or sections of text concerned with a particular topic – each time there is a change in topic. Here, a change in topic represents the end of one chunk and the beginning of another. This could simply be a consequence of a change in speaker. In contrast, a speaker may change the subject from one topic to another. For instance, the speaker might move between different topics, as we see in the following extract from Julie. Here, the extract has been divided into two chunks using brackets:

> [And I do have a really good support network. My parents are great. And I know a lot of bobbies don't have it, and their kid has to have a childcare or whatever. I'm really lucky I have my parents as the main childcare. But I can't rely on them, you know, on their days off, or whatever, to then take them to gym, or take them swimming. It is... I feel that they're missing out, you know, I don't want that for them really but it's difficult.] [You really do juggle, as a parent and as a full time police officer. You've just gotta be so with it, all the time. And that in itself is quite stressful. That's what you've got around. You've got that to deal with in your head, and then you've got work to deal with in your head. Like you say, you go from job to job, or you don't know what's happening in the day, and just gotta be like... Sometimes, you just go home and you're like, Ohhh.]

In the extract above, we see Julie change the topic from family support to work-life balance, indicating two distinct chunks of talk on different topics. At this stage, our aim is to identify and mark out sections of talk about different topics, dividing the transcript in preparation for the third step of analysis.

Step 3: labeling chunks of talk with descriptive codes

The third analytical step involves assigning a descriptive code to each chunk of talk. Codes should simply reflect the general topic of discussion in that chunk of talk. For instance, in the extract presented in Step 2, the first chunk might be coded as 'family' and the second chunk might be coded as "work-life balance." By the end of this process, every chunk should have been assigned a descriptive code.

Step 4: identifying recurring codes, or "in-vivo themes"

The fourth stage of analysis involves identifying chunks that are labelled with similar or the same codes. This allows the researcher to identify 'in-vivo' themes, or recurring patterns of meaning within the talk. This involves a certain degree of interpretative work, so the researcher must remain close to the data at this stage in order to identify the meanings being discussed by participants. On completion of this fourth step, chunks that allude to the same in-vivo theme should be collected and placed together into 'theme files', producing groups of extracts that refer to the same or similar topics. The researcher must then assign a name to each theme file, which represents the topic being discussed. For instance, all of the chunks presented below from Julie and Lynn allude to the dilemmas of being a mother while working, and were therefore grouped into a theme file labelled 'the working mother'.

Julie:

…because I work full time, that I have to pass them from pillar to post, and I do go through bouts of feeling really crap about it and really guilty, and my kids are absolutely fine. They're happy kids, they love to be with their gran, they love to be with my mother-in-law, you know. They're just happy kids, and I really don't have an issue. But I feel bad because I'm not spending time with them.

Lynn:

…you miss nativity plays, you miss parents' evening, sports days, and miss all of these things because, you know, we are so organised that, you know where the kids are, you know where your other half is and you know where you need to be. And then, the school or the nursery or the dance club, the gym club, whatever club, decides with two weeks notice that, actually, your kid has gotta be somewhere different, and it's like, uh.

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Julie:

You really do juggle, as a parent and as a full time police officer. You've just gotta be so with it, all the time. And that in itself is quite stressful. That's what you've got around. You've got that to deal with in your head, and then you've got work to deal with in your head. Like you say, you go from job to job, or you don't know what's happening in the day, and just gotta be like... Sometimes, you just go home and you're like, Ohhh.

Following this, themes should be compared, and any that are similar should be merged. For instance, 'the working mother' might be merged with 'work-life balance'. This process is known as 'collapsing' themes.

Step 5: identifying discourses

The fifth analytical step involves identifying how each theme is constructed. The different ways of talking about themes – or 'discourses' – are identified. At the most fundamental level, a discourse has been defined as "a system of statements which construct and object" (Parker, 1992, p. 5), such as a type of person or phenomenon. These systems of statements refer to some kind of 'reality' about the object which functions to represent it in a particular way: often in line with existing taken-for-granted knowledge (Parker, 1992). In practice, the process of identifying discourses involves grouping together sets of statements that talk about a theme in similar ways. These groups of statements should 'hang together' meaningfully to present a coherent set of statements or assumptions about that theme. These sets of assumptions are typically multiple and contradictory representing different discourses around that theme. For instance, in relation to the theme of 'The working mother', discourses included 'The good mother doesn't work' and, in contrast, 'Working women can have it all', representing contradictory discourses around the theme of 'The Working Mother'. Once the different discourses around one theme have been identified, this process should be repeated until the discourses at play around each theme have been identified.

Step 6: identifying discursive patterns

Having identified discourses, the sixth step involves looking across these discourses in order to identify any that 'fit' distinctively together to tell an overarching story of the data. These overarching stories represent 'discursive patterns' within the data. For instance, across our data we identified

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discourses around femininity and work that dissolved traditional gendered inequalities and divisions of labour, such as 'Women can have it all', which fitted with discourses of 'Police work as a meritocracy', and 'empowered femininity'. These discourses all seemed to reproduce taken-for-granted logics of post-feminist culture, where women are viewed as having achieved equality with men, and feminism has rendered itself redundant. The overarching discursive pattern identified here was named: *'I should be a mum before I'm a police officer. But I'm obviously not' – Negotiating femininity around post-feminist logics of sexism.*

Step 7: theoretical accounting—identifying discursive realms

The seventh and final analytical step involves a turn to theory and research in order to make sense of these discursive patterns. This involves consideration of genealogy, power, and subjectification (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2009), and the consultation of previous research in order to understand how these discursive patterns might function in broader social, historical, and ideological contexts. For instance, in relation to the discursive pattern identified above, it has been argued that under the conditions of post-feminism, sexism becomes invisible and unspeakable (McRobbie, 2014). At this stage, poststructuralist discursive analysis would account for how such discursive logics function to position women. Here, conclusions might be drawn which construct women as active participants in post-feminist discourse and therefore complicit in their own oppression. However, such broad discursive readings obscure the stories that women tell of this participation, and the ways in which they position themselves within these discursive realms. In FRDA, these discursive realms provide a starting point from which to trace the voices of those they define and confine.

Phase 2: analyzing emergent voices in relation to discourses

In this second analytic phase, participants' voices are analyzed in relation to each discursive pattern, by identifying the first-person accounts present in participants' discursive constructions. Here, extracts of talk pertaining to each discursive pattern are identified within the original interview recordings and form the basis of the second analytical phase.

To identify voice, we turn to the analytical approach set out by Gilligan et al.'s *Listening Guide* method (2006). Here, emphasis is placed on multiple sequential listenings of a text, to identify the multiple layers and voices present within the expressed experiences of individuals. Gilligan et al.

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(2006) argue that a Listening Guide analysis can be employed in conjunction with other qualitative interviewing methods, offering a way of "illuminating the complex and multi-layered nature of the expression of human experience and the interplay between self and relationship, psyche and culture" (p. 268) along the different pathways of qualitative interviews. In the case of FRDA, a voice-centred analysis informed by the Listening Guide allows us to identify how voice features in relation to the discourses identified in phase 1. What emerges is a personal, political account of experience and discourse, as mediated by voice (Saukko, 2008). The *Listening Guide* sets out four analytical steps for a voice-centred analysis. We will now provide a step-by-step outline of this method as it applies in the second analytical phase of FRDA.

Step 1: multiple listenings

Firstly, the researcher listens for the plot within first-person accounts. This enables the identification of themes within the first-person accounts of participants, and also reflection on the research process. Because, themes, plots, and voices are identified in phase 1 of FRDA, we move here to the second, third, and fourth steps of the listening guide.

Step 2: generating I Poems

The second step of the analysis involves the generation of 'I Poems'. 'I Poems' are generated by listening to each individual participant separately, and underlining statements made in the first person, including each 'I' statement and accompanying verbs. Here, the researcher should identify the voices of individual participants in extracts of talk relating to each discursive pattern. For each individual, these statements are then placed into sequential order within a new document, to resemble the lines of a poem. Gilligan et al. (2006) argue that 'I Poems' allow the researcher to distinctly hear the first-person voice of each participant, and to listen to the ways in which the person speaks about their selves. Below is an I poem generated with extracts from Julie's talk around the discursive pattern identified in phase 1: *'I should be a mum before I'm a police officer. But I'm obviously not'* – *Negotiating femininity around post-feminist logics of sexism.*

I poem:

I have two young kids and I feel that,

I work full time,

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I have to pass them from pillar to post,

I do go through bouts of feeling really crap about it and really guilty, and my kids are absolutely fine

I really don't have an issue

(But) I feel bad because I'm not spending time with them.

(And somebody), I can't remember who it was, whether it was just one of me friends, had said, if they

cut you in half, you'd say West Yorkshire Police, you wouldn't say mother.

(And) I was like, I don't really know how to take that,

Because I should be a mum before I'm a police officer

But I'm obviously not.

And that should... sometimes does make me feel really bad.

I do, I do feel rotten sometimes.

I feel that they're missing out, you know

I don't want that for them really but it's difficult.

You really do juggle, as a parent and as a full time police officer.

You've just gotta be so with it, all the time.

You've got that to deal with in your head, and then you've got work to deal with in your head.

You go from job to job, or you don't know what's happening in the day

Sometimes, you just go home and you're like, Ohhh.

Step 3: listening for contrapuntal voices

Once the I Poems have been generated, the third step of analysis involves listening for 'contrapuntal

voices' in single accounts. Gilligan et al. (2006) argue that these contrasting voices represent the

'multiple facets of the story being told' (p. 262) by one person. This step involves reading individual

'I Poems' and identifying contrasting voices and stories in the first-person accounts of individuals. In

contrast to the discursive notion of 'subject positions' (Davies & Harre, 1990), this step aims to

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capture the personal in relation to the political, rather than the political in relation to the political. In other words, while discourse analysts would seek to capture the multiple and competing discursive subject positions occupied by a single person within an account, feminist relational discourse analysts would seek to capture the competing personal functions of *each* of these discursive subject positions. Rather than viewing the self as discursively produced, FRDA views the self as emerging from the constant mediation of experience and discourse. In this sense, the analysis aims to deconstruct a person's discursive positioning, putting the personal into the political by treating first-person voice as the central site of meaning. For example, within the I poem above, which spoke to the discourse: *'I should be a mum before I'm a police officer. But I'm obviously not' – Negotiating femininity around post-feminist logics of sexism*, we identified a voice of *accomplishment* in managing to juggle multiple roles successfully. However we also identified both a voice of *guilt* which emerged through negotiating this discourse. Here, a multi-layered account of individual voices was allowed to emerge, with consideration for the broader discursive realms in which they were situated.

Step 4: putting the personal in the political

The fourth and final step of analysis involves composing a theoretical account of the analysis, which ties together the findings about the individual(s) in relation to the research question(s). In the case of FRDA, this involves considering the personal and political functions of discursive negotiations. Here, the first-person accounts of participants were considered as part of their discursive work. For instance, listening to the voices of accomplishment and guilt that came with their negotiation of post-feminist logics, we theorised that women were not straightforwardly subscribing to oppressive post-feminist ideals. Rather, they were subscribing to these ideals with feelings of guilt, and negotiating this discourse with a sense of discomfort. From this, we argued that the post-feminist ideals promoted at the discursive level within this specific organisational context were working against women, and that this was evident if we listened to their stories. Thus, the discursive realms negotiated by women were experienced as uncomfortable and fraught. Here, the women's voices offered an opportunity to make space and understand the interface of experience and discourse, allowing us to interrogate organisational discourses in ways that previously had not been available. By placing women's voices as central to the project of analysis, they became a priority in the project of theoretical accounting. In

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addition, we were also able to critically examine the organisational initiatives promoting these

discourses, such as 'flexible working', which encourage women to balance their home and working

lives. In their accounts of juggling childcare and police work, women drew upon in the idea of 'doing

it all', which is presented as easy, achievable, and ideal under post-feminist myths of gender equality

(Hughes, 2002). However, the women's voices of guilt told a different story: of a failure to achieve

this balance. Here, women's experiences in the discursive realms of work were at odds with the broad

narratives of success told by dominant liberal discourses. Indeed, rather than straightforwardly

reproducing these discourses, our analysis found that the women offered powerful counter-narratives

of resistance against these ideals, articulating their oppressive functions. It is here that women's

voiced experiences came up against organizational collaborations with women's oppression.

Doing feminist relational discourse analysis: applications, dilemmas and potentials

In this paper, we have presented a feminist analytical approach for voice-magnification within

institutional settings. Here, we have followed the calls of activists and scholars such as Foucault and

Deleuze and the Prison Information Group, for a magnification of voice in the name of institutional

change. Using the site of women in police work, we argue that FRDA provides an approach for

researchers seeking to negate grand discursive narratives in accounts of identity, agency, and

resistance. In doing so, researchers are able to disrupt the dominant discourses – such as postfeminist

– female empowerment, that sustain institutions, and dismantle grand narratives about those they

define (e.g. the 'good' worker). We see this in the personal accounts of women discursively

negotiating the highly politicized terrain of police work, concurring with feminist scholars (e.g.

Saukko, 2008; Lafrance & McKenzie-Mohr, 2014) that resistance develops when people are allowed

to counter-story their lives. Following in the tradition of discursive work before us (Parker, 2013), this

research forced us to bring together theory, history, and subjectivity in new ways to develop feminist

research in the institutional context of police work. Rather than formalizing the process of discourse

analysis, we have presented one approach to analysis driven by the intellectual desires of feminist

knowledge production within an institution that demands feminist attention and transformation.

Although FRDA was developed within the specific disciplinary institution – or state apparatus

(Foucault, 1977) – of policing, we view FRDA as applicable to institutions broadly defined as social

apparatus that carry disciplinary power. FRDA can therefore be applied to diverse cultural 'institutions' – from the broadest senses of gender essentialism, cisgenderism, sanism, heterosexism, or whiteness, to specific disciplinary institutions such as policing, hospitals, schools, and prisons (Foucault, 1977). Because feminist political goals drive this approach, however, FRDA is specifically designed to account for power, oppression and resistance in institutions that regulate identities according to established power and privilege. For instance, in our research, we were interested in the functions of organizational discourses for those practicing policing, in order to contest institutional power in this context. Here, we developed Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis in order to put the personal into the structural, accounting for the multiple adventures of women within the discursive terrain of policing.

However, while we view the personal as structural, we see some limitations in both realms of analysis. In the structural realm, if discursive subject positions ultimately function to contain identity, we must ask whether our analysis merely works within the confines of institutional power to reproduce existing power relations. And our answer to this question is – partially – yes. We do not dispute that institutional power functions to shape our everyday encounters and constructions of identity. We also do not dispute that our research may be coopted in the interests of institutional goals, and respond to this possibility with vigilance. However, we do dispute that attending to this power simply reproduces existing power relations. Instead, we contend that FRDA attends to voice and the personal functions of discourse in order to understand the relational interplay of experience and discourse and disrupt institutional power. Here, the self is relationally produced. In this sense, FRDA breaks from what McNay (1992) describes as approaches that believe "the postmodern deconstruction of categories such as subjectivity and agency denies women the chance of analyzing their experiences, just as they are beginning to realize the possibility of overcoming their marginalization" (p. 6).

On the other hand, a focus on the personal realms of experience could be mistaken for an uncritical approach to experience, in which myths of agency are coopted in the interests of neoliberal and modernist projects of individualism (e.g. Attwood, 2013; Erel, 2013; Gill & Scharff, 2013; Lazar, 2013; McRobbie, 2009; Tyler, 2013). While we recognise the Foucauldian possibilities of resistance and self-determination (McNay, 1992), we do not dispute that agency is limited, and we do not

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propose that agency can be created using FRDA. We also do not propose that FRDA allows us to suddenly uncover agency that was there all along, as though we just hadn't worked out how to 'tap into' it. We do not claim that this approach will deliver agency in oppressive institutions. Rather, we recognize that we are always confined by power, and need ways to name its effects. In doing so, we argue that magnifying voice and voiced resistance offers a powerful means by which to expose how structures and institutions conspire in what feminists know to be very personal and ultimately political ways (Ahmed, 2017). In line with Foucauldian concerns (Foucault, 1973), this approach offers ways to attack the very foundations of institutions (Dilts & Zurn, 2015). If voices offer powerful counter-narratives to dominant discourses, voices together offer potentials for collective challenges to dominant rules about what should, might, and can be done by those they define. Here, voices can undermine institutional power, building collective resistance in clear recognition that the personal is political.

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