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Subjectivity, Not Personality: Combining Discourse Analysis and Psychoanalysis

Peter Branney*

Research Fellow, Centre for Men's Health, Leeds Met

Abstract

Mainstream psychology can often be criticized for turning the liberal concerns of psychologists into conservative practices focusing on the individual. In the United Kingdom, the discursive turn in social psychology has been marked by an audacious body of work critical of cognitive attempts to theorize the social. A particular psycho-discursive strand has emerged, which combines discourse analysis and psychoanalytic theory in an attempt to change both the subject of, and the subjectivity (re)produced by, mainstream psychology. This paper reviews three different psycho-discursive approaches: (i) Hollway and Jefferson's Free Association Narrative Interview method; (ii) Billig's Psychoanalytic Discursive Psychology; (iii) Parker's Lacanian excursions into social psychology. In these psycho-discursive approaches, 'subjectivity' replaces personality as the key theoretical construct where the social forms part of who we are and these approaches seem to offer social psychologists the theoretical tools to start to appreciate how individual personality and social context are intimately connected.

In the 1960s, behaviorism's obsession with the outwardly observable became a failure to conceptualize inner mental states as psychology turned to cognition. Whereas experimental cognitivism continues to dominate the psychological landscape, the 1980s saw the start of a turn-to-language as psychologists took an interest in how context bound actions can be understood to construct and reconstruct our worlds. In UK social psychology, the turn-to-language – also known as the discursive turn – was marked by an audacious, innovative, and prescient (Marecek, 2002) strand, which some have argued highlights the possible irrelevance of mainstream social psychology (Bayer, 2002) because of its failure to adequately attempt to theorize the social (Leach, 2002). The now seminal publications *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation, and Subjectivity* (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1984) and *Subjectivity and Method in Psychology: Gender, Meaning, and Science* (Hollway, 1989) attempted to change the subject of psychology and the theory of subjectivity that psychology relied upon. The main critique was that mainstream psychology assumed a unitary rational subjectivity, which meant that the liberal concerns

of psychologists

were resulting in conservative practices focusing on the individual. To take one example, Crocker, Thompson, McGraw, and Ingerman (1987) conducted two studies that seemed motivated with a concern that prejudice is a pervasive detrimental social phenomenon. The general conclusion that can be drawn from Crocker et al.'s two studies is that people with low self-esteem are prejudiced towards higher status groups. The groups concerned were sororities. Notice how such research gloss over the social–political structures of those sororities and their differential status to suggest that prejudice is a result of low self-esteem. The implication seems to be that challenges to the social processes that may systematically and unfairly privilege one sorority over another should be replaced by attempts to make the marginalized happier or more confident.

The discursive turn helped change the subject of, and the subjectivity (re)produced by, mainstream social psychology by focusing on language. Broadly, the focus was on what we do with language and what language does to us. The construction of subjectivity is one of the things we can do with language but, as socio-cultural phenomena beyond the control of any one person, language limits the possibilities open to us. As such, 'subjectivity' replaces personality as the key theoretical construct. There are two additional concepts: a discourse is a term for regularities in how something is spoken about, and the positions that a discourse constructs for different people are called 'subject positions'. For example, Hollway (1989) persuasively demonstrates the construction of a discourse of a biological drive for sex that is underlined by an evolutionary need to reproduce in the talk of couples. The subject positions this discourse constructs would seem to be a male, at the whim of his sexual drive, actively seeking procreation, and a female, controlled by her drive to reproduce, passively waiting for procreation. Additionally, these subject positions would appear to exclude the possibility of homosexual and platonic heterosexual relations. Subject- ivity could therefore be the subject position we happen to inhabit at a particular point in time, but, below, we shall see that this may not be enough.

Discursive methods have been particularly adept at changing the subject of psychology. For example, contemporary research on alcohol abuse in psychology could be driven by concerns of improving health, but there is a

risk that the subject of such research will be limited to the individual drinker rather than the socio-political institutions that legitimize problematic drinking. That is, we may learn about how we consume alcohol (the people who drink too much alcohol, or their friends and family), while failing to consider how alcohol consumes society (not just by providing employment and profit but by constantly creating and recreating social structures that define who we are). In contrast, research on alcohol by Day, Gough, and McFadden (2004) moved beyond a social–individual dichotomized focus on health by using discursive methods to explore the constructions of women and drinking in the print media.

Although questioning the discourses constructed by particularly powerful socio-political institutions, such as the print media, may be an important change in the subject of psychology, there is a difficulty with the subjectivity assumed by discursive methods. This is where a distinction between subject-ivity and subject position may be important. Subject positions are constructed through discourses but how do subject positions come to constitute a particular individual or individuals? It would seem that subjectivity is a blank atheoretical space (termed blank subjectivity by Parker, 1997a), waiting to be filled by subject positions. How, for example, do we come to have a history and a sense of a future if there is nothing to hold discourses in place? It is partly because of the difficulty with blank subjectivity that others have attempted to combine discursive methods with other theor- etical frameworks, such as phenomenology (Butt & Langdridge, 2003), personal construct theory (Burr & Butt, 1992), and psychoanalysis (Parker, 1997a).

Psychoanalysis has a rich history of working within and against psychology (Frosh, 1989). For example, Roudinesco (1990), the historian, has highlighted that key figures in cognitive development psychology (Jean Piaget), experimental psychology (Edwin Boring), and neuropsychology (Alexander Luria) had links with, and undertook, psychoanalysis. Whereas the links between psychology and psychoanalysis have been largely erased from mainstream psychology (Parker, 1997a), some working within the turn-to-language in the UK seem to have found psychoanalysis a fertile resource. When attempts to *change the subject* started in the 1980s, one of the main advantages psychoanalysis offered discursive methods was a framework for considering how we may be invested in a particular discourse. Since then, psychoanalysis and discursive methods have been combined in a variety of

ways and it would be useful to consider how this has been done and the implications for the subject of, and the subjectivity assumed by, psychology, which is what I hope to do in this paper. Before, it is important to comment on the terminology that will be used to describe the different combinations of psychoanalysis and discourse analysis.

Terminology

In this paper, the terms ‘discursive’ and ‘discourse analytic’ are employed to capture a plethora of research, resulting from the turn-to-language in psychology, that has attempted to investigate discourse. Perhaps best known as ‘discourse analysis’, discursive methods can develop a bottom-up, top-down, or eclectic analysis examining discourse. Bottom-up analyses (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) focus on how discourses are constructed by looking at the intricate details of the use of language. For example, a heterosexual man talking about his experience of a gay club says he ‘had a bloody good time’, but despite this emphatic remark, he reports thrice that the experience ‘didn’t really bother him’ (Speer & Potter, 2000; p. 549).

Attending to the detail of what is said suggests that, first, the heterosexual man presents himself as not having any difficulty with homosexuality and therefore as not heterosexist. Second, the heterosexual man then distances himself from any suggestion that he may have homosexual desires with such repetition as to undermine the importance of his non-heterosexism. Top-down analyses (Parker, 1992) focus on what discourses do to us by considering the implications of the subject positions that discourses construct, such as how the subject positions constructed by the discourse of a male sexual drive (Hollway, 1989) exclude the possibility of platonic heterosexual or homosexual relations. Eclectic analyses consider both the bottom-up use of language to construct discourse and the top-down consequences of discourse (Wetherell, 1998). When considering how psychoanalysis has been combined with discursive methods, it is important to attend to the type of discourse analysis used.

Finding a term that encompasses the variety of combinations of psychoanalysis and discourse analysis is a little more difficult. ‘Psycho-discursive’ (Wetherell & Edley, 1999) usefully prefixes a discursive approach with a concern for theorizing subjectivity but this is not limited to

the use of psychoanalysis. ‘Psycho-social’ (Hollway, 2004) prefixes the social with the ‘psycho’ but this is limited neither to the use of discourse analysis nor psychoanalysis. While unwieldy, ‘psychoanalytically informed discourse analysis’ does focus on psychoanalysis, but it does suggest that discourse analysis is the most primary, which, as we shall see, is not always the case. ‘Critical transformative psychoanalytic discourse analysis’ (Parker, 1997a) may be useful for encapsulating the broad array of approaches, but few are likely to recognize it as such. Perhaps the possibility that ‘psycho-discursive’ may include frameworks other than psychoanalysis makes it the best term because it helps avoid essentializing psychoanalysis. That is, psychoanalysis does not have to be used as if it is advocating biological determinism. Just as psychoanalysis may succeed or fail in explaining why a specific subject position comes to constitute an individual at a particular time, so too may other psychological approaches. Furthermore, there are a number of schools of psychoanalysis that may have less in common with each other than they do with other theoretical frameworks, which means that psycho-discursive should help avoid conflating different psychoanalytic perspectives. Indeed, as with the type of discourse analysis used, it is also important to consider the school of psychoanalysis drawn upon.

Consequently, the aim of the paper is to review psycho-discursive approaches that have developed in UK social psychology since the publication of *Changing the Subject* (Henriques et al., 1984) and *Subjectivity and Method in Psychology* (Hollway, 1989). Throughout, this paper will refer to the specific turn-to-language in UK social psychology as the project to *change the subject*. In addition, this paper shall consider the type of discourse analysis and psychoanalysis the psycho-discursive approaches draw upon. Unfortunately, with such a rich body of work related to the project to

change the subject, it is beyond the scope of this paper to review all the psycho-discursive work in UK social psychology. Instead, this paper will consider one approach that takes the type of discourse analysis as its main focus [Approach II: Psychoanalytic Discursive Psychology (PDP)] and another approach where psychoanalytic perspective used is primary (Approach III: Lacanian excursions into social psychology). As a continuation of Wendy Hollway’s work in *Subjectivity & Method in Psychology*, the Free-Association Narrative Interview method (FANI) is perhaps the psycho-discursive approach more clearly aligned to *changing the*

subject than PDP and Lacanian Psychoanalysis. As such, it is to FANI that this paper turns first.

Approach I: Free Association Narrative Interview Method

Wendy Hollway's *Subjectivity & Method in Psychology* (1989) drew upon individual and couple interviews as well as her own diary and personal accounts to develop what is now seen as a seminal examination of subjectivity in psychology. In this book, Hollway's key analyses are formed through the use of a broadly top-down discourse analysis and aspects of the German psychoanalyst, Melanie Klein, and French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan. Since then, Hollway's collaboration with Tony Jefferson seems to have resulted in a more formal psycho-discursive approach (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Termed the Free Association Narrative Interview method – or FANI for short – this approach can be separated into two parts: data collection and analysis.

FANI: Data collection

As the name suggests, FANI collects data through the use of interviews, which employ semi-structured questions around a research topic to allow the interviewee to free associate their own answers or narrative(s). As the focus of the interviews is to elicit narrative, an interview schedule may include as few as three to five main questions for 1 to 2 hours of interview. The questions will probably be biographical in approach by asking the interviewee to relate the research topic to their own life history. For example, a study on violence may ask, 'can you tell me about a time when violence has been an issue in your life'. The first interview is then followed up with a second, one to two weeks later, to explore further questions or seek clarification, and to offer the interviewee the opportunity to raise anything that has come to mind. The biographical slant and the double interview process produce what could be called case studies. Whereas multiple researchers can collaborate to conduct interviews on the same research project, the same researcher would usually conduct the follow-up inter- view. Researchers are not easily interchangeable because the analysis looks at the interaction in the interview and not just the responses of the interviewee.

FANI: Data Analysis

The second step of the FANI approach is to develop an analysis of the data using Kleinian psychoanalytic theory. This would be started after the first interview to help develop questions for the second interview. Much of Klein's work is based upon the analysis of children, where a child's display of love and hate towards the same person, particularly the mother, was important. Klein (1952) observed that the warmth and comfort offered by a mother seemed to be immensely satisfying for the child but the mother could also be experienced as a source of frustration. For example, a mother could not realistically provide comfort all the time, and the baby may experience loss as comfort is taken away or a demand remains, however momentarily, unmet. At first, this may result in ambivalence towards the mother but would become anxiety as the child split off and projected the bad, frustrating parts onto the mother, growing to resent her more and yet fearing self-destruction because the child feels so bound up with the mother. The splitting of the bad (frustrating) from the good (comfort providing) and the projection of the bad onto the mother are defenses to deal with the anxiety that characterize the paranoid-schizoid position (ibid). As the child matures, it can be expected to move towards a more complex position where it recognizes that the good and bad are within the mother at the same time, which is termed the depressive position. Although the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions can be understood as developmental stages, Klein (see, Laplanche & Pontalis, 1983) theorizes that we return to them throughout life. Contemporary psychologists may be more likely to know of the pioneering work of Bowlby than of Kleinian psychoanalysis, but attachment theory echoes a similar focus on the relationship between mother and infant and how anxiety is successfully (or not) managed in the relationship. Utilizing these principles, the analysis step of the FANI approach is particularly concerned with both what the interviewee says about their childhood and what happens between the interviewer and interviewee.

FANI: Uses & example

Since being first used to examine fear of crime (Hollway & Jefferson, 2001), FANI has been used to explore male violence against women (Gadd, 2000, 2003), violence against men (Gadd, Farrall, Dallimore, & Lombard, 2003; Gadd, 2004a), and theoretical issues, such as agency (Hollway & Jefferson, 2005) and interviewee–interviewer dynamics (Gadd, 2004b). Gadd's (2004a) work on male violence against women is apposite because it provides case

studies from men attending an anti-violence program where mainstream social psychology is particularly influential. These programs (e.g., Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis, 1996) combine behavioral notions that violence is ‘learned’ and ‘intentional’ with a cognitive perspective to ‘re-education’

where clients could be persuaded, such as through correcting their cognitive distortions, to see that their behavior amounts to abuse and that they have to be responsible for their behavior. Gadd (2004a) seems to argue that these programs assume an unduly simplistic subjectivity where denial succeeds in mitigating awareness and responsibility for violence. One case study is of Paul, a 33-year-old intimidating, visibly disabled, troubled man who is violent to his wife. Paul found out about an anti-violence program after asking his ex-probation worker for help. As Paul reported seeking help to end his violence and was explicit that his wife ‘Karen’ was ‘not there to be punched and battered’ (ibid, p. 186), it would seem cognitive–behavioral notions usually utilized here fail to explain Paul’s behavior because he was not in denial about his abuse. FANI was utilized to theorize a complex subjectivity driven by the avoidance of anxiety where the individual and social are merged. Gadd (ibid) argues that Paul is not denying his violence through cognitive distortion, but that Paul’s violence is an act of denial that succeeds in obliterating anxiety about his failure to become an acceptable husband and father. As such, Paul is understood as motivated to suppress his failure to meet social expectations to provide for his family. Hence, Paul’s violence requires going beyond cognitive–behavioral notions to develop an understanding of the society of which he is a part as well as an understanding his individuality.

FANI: Overview

The FANI approach uses individual free association narrative interviews to develop biographical case studies, which are analyzed using Kleinian psychoanalytic theory. Although the main text on FANI does suggest that it is an approach committed to individual interviews as a source of data – which may not be particularly surprising given the predominance of inter- views in qualitative research (Potter & Hepburn, 2005) or the dominance of individual psychoanalysis – it may be incorrect to assume a rigid relationship between data collection and analysis in this approach. Indeed, both Hollway and Jefferson, the original proponents of FANI, have developed Kleinian analyses

– of date rape (Hollway & Jefferson, 1998) and Mike Tyson (Jefferson, 1997) – using a range of materials. Nevertheless, the approach does seem to focus on cases of individuals and, even if it does look at how anxiety is worked up interrelationally, does suggest the anxiety and any defenses for dealing with it belong to the individual. Even worse, FANI would seem to risk leaving the individual as, unaware of their unconscious anxiety, victims of their own defenses. Given the focus on interrelational subjectivity from the FANI approach, focusing on an individual in data collection seems to suggest that to answer any questions – for example, why did Paul, mentioned above, use violence as an act of denial rather than using another defense mechanism such as splitting – we need to delve deeper into the individual by returning to ask them more questions, and this seems to privilege the

individual. It is certainly plausible for researchers to draw upon other methods of data collection, such as Gough's (2004) Kleinian analysis of focus groups. In addition, researchers could still focus on a single individual without solely relying on interviews by utilizing archive material. The next psycho-discursive approach, PDP (Billig, 2006a), is one that, like FANI, considers an individual's biography in-depth but primarily through the use of archive materials.

Approach II: Psychoanalytic Discursive Psychology

In *Arguing and Thinking: A Rhetorical Approach to Social Psychology*, Michael Billig (1987) added to the discursive turn a focus on how psychological processes occur within dialogue and, particularly, where talk includes contradictions, disputes, dilemmas, or, as the title of the book suggests, argument. However, Billig was well aware that in focusing on what is said in dialogue he was ignoring those things that dialogue successfully avoids, which led to a reconsideration of Freud's work using the tools of the discursive turn where, for example, repression was reworked as something that is achieved within dialogue (Billig, 1999). Having argued that psychological and psychoanalytic processes occur within language, Billig has developed an approach, termed Psychoanalytic Discursive Psychology (PDP; Billig, 2006a), for considering them together.

PDP: Data collection

Unlike the FANI approach, PDP has given little time to explicitly considering

it methods of data collection. The work of Billig's that seems to have led to the development of PDP (primarily Billig, 1999) takes great pains to explore archive material around a particular 'case', which is often, but not solely, Freud. In the introduction to *Arguing & Thinking*, Billig is unashamedly bookish; 'the antiquarian suffers from uncontrollable urges to wander from the laboratory to the library. Passages from old and not-so-old books are haphazardly read, noted and thus collected, in a way a modern psychologist might think pathological' (Billig, 1987; p. 32). There is certainly no reason to suggest that PDP should limit itself to archive materials, but it does highlight that almost any material linked to a case can be a useful source of research material. Moving from interviews to archives as sources of data can seem counterintuitive, however, given that, as we shall see, the discursive element in PDP has tended to privilege capturing live communication.

PDP: Data analysis

As the name PDP suggests, the approach to analysis it takes is built upon Discursive Psychology (Edwards & Potter, 1992), which produces bottom-up

analyses considering the minutia of interaction and how language is used to construct and achieve things. Discursive Psychologists (e.g., Potter & Hepburn, 2005) seem to favor explorations of interaction turn-by-turn and have been critical of research ignoring interactional aspects of interviews and desiring abandonment of interviews as a method of data collection altogether. However, Billig (2006a) would seem to have found that the focus on interaction in Discursive Psychology wanting because it directs attention away from the larger context in which that interaction occurs, which has led him to rework Freudian psychoanalysis to consider how ideology works in interaction. Giving too little consideration to socio-political context is also a common difficulty for mainstream social psychology. More specifically, turn-by-turn analyses of interaction have so far focused on what is said while ignoring the possibility that one function of a particular interaction could be to avoid saying something. As such, Billig (1999) has reworked the Freudian psychoanalytic notion of repression as something that can be evidenced from the intricate detail of language. It would seem, therefore, that the data analysis favored by the PDP approach is a bottom-up discourse analysis that pays particular attention to how things are not said and the implications of not saying them.

PDP: Uses & example

As PDP was first developed through a reformulation of Freud, it has primarily been used to examine particular aspects of Freud's case studies to develop an argument for a discursive repression. In particular, Rat Man (Freud, 1909b) is used to consider how repression occurs in internal dialogue; Little Hans (Freud, 1909a) is used to show how children learn to repress as they learn to talk; and Elizabeth von R. (Freud, 1895) shows that we can be unaware of our own emotions because emotions are socially constructed. Having used these case studies to provide an argument for a discursive understanding of repression, Billig turns to the case study of Dora to present an analysis of Freud's own repression. Specifically, Billig (1999) argues that Freud's case study of Dora (1905) represses consideration of the oppression under which Jews lived in Austria at the time. In the case history, Freud mentions that Dora had difficulty explaining why she spent two hours looking at Raphael's painting of Madonna. A footnote in the case study is used by Freud to offer an interpretation, which emphasizes that the example is not important for the main theme of the text. In addition, the footnote focuses on the sexual aspect (virgin mother) of the Madonna viewing. Billig points out that the example is of a Jewish girl looking at an image of the Christians who would have been, in the name of Christianity, oppressing almost everyone Dora (and Freud) knew at the time. Consequently, repression of anti-semitism is achieved discursively, through minimization of relevant material (to a footnote) and then avoidance. As such, an understanding of subjectivity is developed using a psychoanalytic–

discursive framework (in this case, discursive repression) by drawing upon archive material, which is, importantly, contextualized historically. For mainstream social psychology, such analyses highlight the importance of the subtly that experiments are so often deliberately designed prevent. Indeed, even those that may be unconvinced by the utility of PDP will surely be unable to deny that it shows the potential of reflecting on social–psychological scholarship and considering what it has avoided and how.

PDP: Overview

PDP utilizes archive material to develop case studies, which are analyzed using a discursive interpretation of psychoanalytic theory. The crux of the

PDP approach is the focus and care it takes in analyzing the archived discourse, and there is no reason that the archive material could not be supplemented by interviews with the particular cases. The extreme focus on language risks, in the words of Frosh (2002), a ‘flattening out’ of experience. That is, PDP limits our understanding of subjectivity to what can be evidenced from our uses of language, but this fails to account for those times when words seem to fail to do justice to lived experience, or when remaining silent seems preferable to attempting to express our experience (Frosh, 2001). Flattening out experience is a limitation common to bottom- up discourse analyses, but perhaps PDP’s attempts to utilize this perspective on discourse to examine what-is-not-said makes it stand out. Instead of trying to understand what cannot be said, PDP would seem to at least offer an approach for examining how what-is-not-said is not said. Interestingly, although PDP has so far been used on Freudian psychoanalytic theory, it is not presented as necessarily aligned to any particular psychoanalytic school. However, Billig (1999) is at pains to avoid the Lacanian psychoanalytic school of thought, but, as Parker (2001) has noted, both PDP and Lacanian psychoanalysis seem theoretically aligned by an understanding that each time something is said something is also not said. This will be explored in more detail in the third and final approach.

Approach III: Lacanian Excursions into Social Psychology

In his book *Psychoanalytic Cultures: Psychoanalytic Discourse in Western Society*, Ian Parker (1997b) takes great care with a broad array of psychoanalytic theorists and demonstrates how, in particular contexts, their work has come to be taken for granted as understandings of ourselves. That is, for how psychoanalytic concepts structure subjectivity. Parker can be understood as broadly treating psychoanalysis as a discourse and, therefore, Psychoanalytic Culture is psycho-discursive in its combination of psychoanalysis and discourse analysis. Since then, Parker has initiated a program of work on the French psychoanalytic theorist, Jacques Lacan, considering the potential and dangers of Lacanian psychoanalysis for, broadly, social psychology

(e.g., 2003, 2005a). Parker’s program of work does not seek to establish a methodology like FANI or PDP, nor is Parker alone as a number of scholars (e.g., Branney, 2006; Georgaca, 2001; Hollway, 1989; Walkerdine, 1987)

have drawn upon discursive theory and Lacanian psychoanalysis. The term, ‘Lacanian excursions into social psychology’, best encapsulates the multiple uses of Lacanian psychoanalysis in this approach. Rather than drawing upon all these excursions, concentrating on Parker’s work will provide a focus for considering how to collect data and develop an analysis.

Lacanian excursions: Data collection

Like Billig, Parker has utilized archive materials and rarely draws upon interview or focus group data. Unlike both Hollway and Billig, Parker almost never develops a ‘case’ of a particular individual, although Parker’s book on the contentious Slovenian thinker, Slavoj Žižek (2004), could be understood as an extensive case study. Parker’s approach to data collection could be thought of as broadly drawing upon archive materials around particular issues rather than specific individuals. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to think that this is the definitive suggestion for data collection in Lacanian psychoanalysis because the Lacanian work preceding Parker’s engagement with Lacanian psychoanalytic theory could also be included. Indeed, as a clinical method it is not surprising to find clinical case studies combining Lacanian psychoanalysis and discourse analysis (Georgaca, 2001, 2003). Consequently, it would seem that Lacanian psychoanalysis is potentially open to all possibilities of data collection, although it is difficult to see how the experimental approach of mainstream psychology to data collection would fit. Although this does mean that there is little general guidance to offer on what data to use and why, considerations of data collection are perhaps best developed in parallel with conceptual development in the data analysis.

Lacanian excursions: Data analysis

For Lacan, the unconscious is structured *like* a language (Lacan, 1998; p. 48), which seems to chime with Billig’s notion that each time something is said, something is also not said and the unconscious could be that which remains unsaid as part of our entry into language. Lacan is commonly referred to as a post-structuralist, but structure seems particularly important. Specifically, the structural relations constituted by, and constituting, language are fundamental for understanding subjectivity. Nevertheless, Lacanian psychoanalysis does not offer a comprehensive theory, and it would be difficult to select any

concepts that could either introduce Lacanian psychoanalysis or provide the foundation of data analysis. The writing of Lacan and many Lacanians is notoriously obscure, and it can be difficult enough to read never mind to figure out how Lacanian psychoanalysis

could be used to change the subjectivity assumed by, and the subject of, psychology. Instead, specific Lacanian concepts could offer the starting point for an excursion into some aspect of social psychology. Along the way, the concept, or concepts, used may be found wanting, in need of devel- opment, or the path taken may need redirecting. Parker's (2005a) description of the seven elements of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory that are relatively compatible with discursive theory certainly provides a useful start.

Lacanian excursions: Uses & example

Lacanian psychoanalysis has been used to examine the production of girls' desire in comics (Walkerdine, 1987), heterosexual subjectivity in interviews and a journal (Hollway, 1989), views of the self in long-term psychotherapy (Georgaca, 2001, 2003), and understandings of domestic violence in government policy (Branney, 2006). A particularly useful example is where Parker (2003) reworks Lacanian psychoanalytic notions to comment on the relation between psychology and Lacanian psychoanalysis. For Lacan, we are symbolic beings who draw upon language to understand our world and ourselves, which means that self-knowledge is always socially mediated and full self-consciousness is impossible. Note how discursive theory seems to be already included in Lacanian theory, as any self-knowledge would always be a social construction and true self-conscious theoretically irrelevant. To use Lacanian terminology, we are *barred subjects*, barred from knowing ourselves. As Parker (ibid) highlights, the barred subject is useful for considering the relation between social psychology and Lacanian psychoanalysis. More specifically, Parker suggests that Lacan is a *barred psychologist* because Lacanian concepts are sometimes so antithetical to psychology that they prevent development of the understanding of subjectivity psychologists so often seek. As such, Lacanian psychoanalysis offers particularly alluring excursions into social psychology that may already combine discursive theory but are likely to represent a serious challenge to the research enterprise.

Lacanian excursions: Overview

Lacanian excursions into social psychology usually draw upon a specific Lacanian concept, or concepts, to reconsider a particular aspect of social psychology. As the theoretical terrain offered by Lacan and other Lacanians is so different to social psychology, there is certainly a great potential for Lacanian excursions to change the way we think about and research different aspects of social psychology. While the term 'excursion' might summon up the image of a walk over a few hills, the work of Lacan is willfully obscure, often arrogant, and difficult to read. For Billig (2006b), Lacan not only places obscurity over clarity but, as can be evidenced from Lacan's often misleading citation practices, is contemptuous of scholarly activities. For

anyone considering turning to Lacanian psychoanalysis, they are unlikely to find a text that will help them easily assimilate Lacan's teachings. Lacanian psychoanalysis does not provide a theory of subjectivity that, if only we could understand it, would provide real understanding of ourselves. Rather, the obscurity of Lacanian texts encourages questioning, disagreement, and further inquiry, which may lead to a more fruitful process. As such, Lacanian excursions have the potential to radically change the subject of, and subjectivity assumed by, psychology.

Conclusion

UK social psychology has been marked by an innovative strand of work that has attempted to change the subjectivity assumed by, and the subject of, psychology. Dropping personality as a theoretical concept, FANI, PDP, and Lacanian excursions into social psychology can be understood as three different approaches to combining psychoanalysis and discourse analysis to theorize an alternative subjectivity. FANI is the psycho-discursive approach emerging most obviously from the project to *change the subject* in the 1980s and utilizes interviews and Kleinian psychoanalytic theory to develop case studies. PDP uses discursive theory to the greatest extent to develop cases by analyzing archive materials and using a discursively reworked psychoanalytic conception of repression to consider what-is-not-said and how. In contrast, the benefits of discourse analysis are already present in Lacanian excursions, but it is much more difficult to capture how Lacanian psychoanalysis should be done.

A difficulty for psycho-discursive approaches is the issue of warranting, which can be broken down into (i) whether the particular issue analyzed warrants analysis and (ii) whether the analysis provided is warranted by the material. Frosh and Emerson (2005) provide an extremely useful discussion of the warranting of an analysis, or interpretation, by providing psycho-discursive and discursive interpretations of the same material. They conclude that psychoanalytic interpretations require more grounding, but it is not clear what constitutes more and what enough is. Indeed, warranting is an issue for all interpretative methods that is difficult to counter and where we find a psycho-discursive analysis that we think is not warranted it is important to attempt to explain why and to provide an example (which does not necessarily have to be psycho-discursive) that we think is warranted.

In relation to warranting, some currents evident in the three approaches reviewed seem counter-intuitive. Both FANI and PDP seem to be establishing set methodologies that can be applied to certain aspects of social psychology. Establishing a method does allow a researcher to develop something tangible that can not only be used to conduct research but could become a focus for research methods courses taught to social scientists globally. As a particular analysis is developed, the researcher may go to great lengths to fit their data to the methodology or, which is more likely,

as the researcher develops an analysis they will become immersed in the theoretical aspects such that they come to see and understand themselves and the world in that particular way. I would argue that establishing a methodology as a tool that can be wielded will only limit the potential for innovative research and will quell the audacious character of much psycho-discursive research. Certainly, having a variety of approaches from which to draw upon will help as they offer methodological texts and specific analyses for comparison. Parker (2005b) uses the metaphor of the recipe to explain how one could undertake an analysis, and Branney (2006) uses a read-analysis-supervision cycle that may help students and research teams. Nevertheless, psychoanalytic texts, and not just Lacanian texts, can be extremely difficult to engage with and establishing a methodology seems to offer an easy way out but would risk undoing much of the work attempting to change the subject of, and subjectivity assumed by, psychology.

What these three approaches show is that the radical ferment of the turn-to-

language and, particularly, attempts to *change the subject* are still taking shape, leading to some of the most interesting and engaging, if not difficult, scholarship within, and on the margins of, psychology. For all three approaches, issues of prejudice, for example, are not the subject of an individual's perception as for each; subjectivity is intimately social, where the social forms part of the very structure of subjectivity. With such a rich history, it is difficult to imagine how these approaches will continue to develop. We can certainly hope to see more work from Hollway, Billig, and Parker – presented in this paper as the main proponents of each approach – but the most interesting question would seem to be how other scholars will utilize these approaches. Perhaps some or all of the approaches will be taken up by psychologists en masse. Midgley (2006) suggests that greater interaction between psychoanalysis and psychology will enrich both fields, although it is more likely that psycho-discursive approaches will remain on the margins, but maybe this is where the most interesting work is to be produced.

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Short Biography

Peter Branney's research is concerned with, circularly, critically exploring contemporary issues around gender and health while developing and evaluating methods for doing so. His doctoral thesis, *Deconstructing Domestic Violence* (University of Leeds, 2006), argues that critique of public policy needs to be able to imagine its own policies and ways of realizing them and highlights that psychoanalysis has the potential to offer an effective approach. Current research includes analyses of domestic violence policy, male-targeted health service provision, and issues for postgraduates who teach. Before taking on his first post-doctoral position as a research fellow in the Centre for Men's Health, Leeds Metropolitan University, Peter had held an ESRC studentship at the University of Leeds and was a visiting doctoral student at Massey University, Aotearoa/New Zealand. He holds a BSc in psychology and philosophy, an MSc in psychological approaches to health, and a PhD in psychology from the University of Leeds.

Endnote

* Correspondence address: Centre for Men's Health, Leeds Met, Leeds LS2 8AJ, UK. Email: p.branney@leedsmet.ac.uk

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