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Introduction to Special Issue on Discursive Psychology

The aim of this special issue is to showcase current research in discursive psychology. It emerged out of a conference panel at the *International Conference on Conversation Analysis* in 2018, a four-yearly event that was held, in its 5th iteration, at Loughborough University, in the UK. Its origin in this particular conference rather than, say, a *British Psychological Society* event, is relevant to the aims and approaches of the papers, as they all combine discursive psychology (DP) with conversation analysis (CA), in the tradition established by the "Loughborough School" of social psychology (Stokoe, Hepburn, & Antaki, 2012).

Discursive psychology's origins lie in several influential domains of psychology, including the pioneering sociology of scientific knowledge-inspired discourse analysis laid out in Potter and Wetherell (1987); Billig's (1987) approach to rhetoric and argumentation; Edwards's (e.g., Edwards & Mercer, 1987) fine-grained analysis of classroom interaction, and Antaki's (1988) excavation of practices for everyday explanations. In the mid-1990s, after the term 'Discursive Psychology' was first formulated (Edwards & Potter, 1992), DP drew further on and closer to conversation analysis, with which it had strong epistemological affinities and with which it has since developed a mutually beneficial methodological partnership (e.g., Antaki, 1994; Edwards, 1997; Potter, 1996b). By adopting CA as its primary analytic framework, DP developed an inductive, data-driven approach for the detailed empirical examination of practices of conduct that comprise everyday life. This has opened up new spaces for psychological investigation and theorising allowing discursive psychologists to "capture" and study identities, attitudes, emotions, and other psychological phenomena "in the wild"; that is, in everyday settings where these phenomena are relevant and consequential

for the outcomes of the interactions. As DP has reached maturity, via numerous methodological debates between discursive psychologists and scholars within neighbouring fields (e.g., Coulter, 1999, 2004; Hammersley, 2003b, 2003c, 2003d, 2003a; Potter, 2003b, 2003a; Potter & Edwards, 2003; Speer & Hutchby, 2003) it still fosters some productive methodological diversity (Billig, 2009) and polemics (Billig, 1999b, 1999a; Schegloff, 1997, 1999b, 1999a; Wetherell, 1998) while continuing to draw on, contribute to, and sometimes challenge CA (Stokoe, 2020).

This special issue brings together DP studies that address key psychological topics, mainly (but not exclusively, see Alexander & Stokoe, this issue) by undertaking a respecification of core psychological constructs. Thus, the papers engage in discussions with well-established bodies of psychological knowledge around, among others, attitudes, persuasion, and personality. Before introducing the papers, let us first review DP's position within, respecification programme for, and contributions to psychology.

1 Discursive psychology within the context of psychological science

For psychology, DP embodies the "turn to language" that has permeated the social sciences in the second part of the 20th century. DP approaches psychological phenomena through either social constructionist or ethnomethodological frameworks thus challenging the social cognition paradigm to which psychological science has adhered in the last 70 years. These frameworks led to a shift both in the ingrained epistemological assumptions that are brought to bear on the investigation of psychological phenomena as well as in the methodological practices related to the collection/generation and analysis of empirical evidence.

Within psychology, DP has argued and provided evidence for the need to treat language as a medium for action and not as a "window" to the mind (Edwards & Potter, 1993), in direct challenge with what we might consider "mainstream" psychology for which

individuals' responses to stimuli are means of getting at their psychological processes rather than social actions worthy of investigation. Discursive psychological research has demonstrated time and again that and how we "do things with language", even in experimental settings (Gibson, 2013; Leudar & Antaki, 1996). But, to study language-in-action, discursive psychologists had to step outside the experimental laboratory or the interview room and take a recorder to the settings where life happens. Thus, DP, through its methods of data collection, distinguishes itself not only from quantitative and experimental psychology, but also from other well-established qualitative methodologies.

Discursive psychologists have studied extensively what are traditionally conceived of as "core" psychological topics such as memory, attitudes, prejudice, identity, and emotions (Tileagă & Stokoe, 2016). But many psychologists, especially in North American psychology, remain unfamiliar with the established DP theory, method, and findings. This is due not only because DP's respecification of psychological topics is incongruous with longstanding cognitive conceptualisations of, say, attitudes, memories, attribution, or emotion (Edwards & Potter, 1992); but also because much of psychology is constrained by its (quantitative, experimental) methods, and because it is often wrongly assumed that DP is a subsection of qualitative or critical psychology without understanding how radically different it is to, say, the methodologies of thematic analysis, or interview-based work (Stokoe, 2020).

Three decades of findings from DP studies seriously challenge established, but often normative, cognitive representations of psychological phenomena, rendering discursive and mainstream psychology difficult to reconcile, with DP often taking a critical stance on cognitive psychology (Edwards & Potter, 2005), experimental (Antaki & Leudar, 1992; Leudar & Antaki, 1997), survey (Antaki, 2006; Antaki & Rapley, 1996) and qualitative methods (Potter & Hepburn, 2012; Puchta & Potter, 2004). By re-examining core psychological topics through a discursive lens, DP has provided insights into the sequential,

rhetorical, and interactional organisation of psychological constructs, which has led to their respecification from veiled, individual cognitive processes to demonstrable, shared discursive practices. By focusing on the natural, practical, and intersubjective organisation of psychological business in and through discourse, DP's respecification programme, which we present next, has endeavoured to revolutionise psychology in a similar way to how ethnomethodology has transformed sociology (Garfinkel, 1988).

2 Discursive psychology's programme of respecifying psychological topics: from cognitive constructs to discursive practices

Discursive psychology's respecification programme encompasses a set of methodological procedures that set apart DP from other qualitative approaches within psychology. First, DP takes an inductive approach to examining psychological topics, by bracketing theoretical assumptions about the investigated phenomena. DP studies deconstruct and debunk deep-rooted, previously unexamined assumptions about fundamental topics. For instance, instead of treating gender as an explanatory factor for human behaviour, DP has examined how gender categories are used in constructing exculpatory accounts (Stokoe, 2010) or how they are made relevant in the course of mundane actions such as making a compliment (Edwards, 1998). While, DP is theoretically agnostic (but see Billig, 1987; Gibson, 2019), analytically, it builds on and uses findings from previous interactional studies, leading to a robust, cumulative, and closely intertwined body of knowledge.

Second, discursive psychologists consider language to be a medium for action (Wiggins & Potter, 2007) which has radical epistemological implications for how we use data in DP research. How individuals talk and what they actually say, whether in response to survey questions, to the experimenter in the lab, or to their best friends on the phone, constitute discursive actions with real-life consequences. For DP, verbal and written discourse is not a fleeting representation of otherwise inaccessible cognitive processes. Therefore, the

configuration of cognitive structures which presumably underlie human conduct should no longer be inferred from discourse.

Third, how then can human conduct be explained, if we question the assumption that our behaviour is governed by cognitive structures? Following Sacks's (1984, p. 22) programmatic observation that in mundane social interactions "there is order at all points", DP treats any stretch of talk or text as the product of a set of formal procedures and rules that can be identified and described. Consequently, the task that DP sets for itself is to document the rules that govern the organisation of psychological business in and through discourse.

Fourth, instead of (re)creating memories or attitudes in the experimental lab and "putting them under the microscope", DP looks for setting in which people spontaneously recount and assess past events for instance when they share their first impressions of others (Humă, 2015). DP studies have sought to explicate "how psychology is constructed, understood, and displayed as people interact in everyday and more institutional situations" (Wiggins & Potter, 2007, p. 73). The relocation of psychology from the lab to mundane settings and the treatment of discourse as action has led to discursive psychology preferring data that pass the "dead social scientist's test" (Potter, 2002, p. 541), mainly texts and embodied talk-in-interaction (1) that are produced without the researcher having to instigate them and (2) that are naturally and endogenously organised by co-present individuals (Goffman, 1983).

As a result of these meta-theoretical and methodological choices, findings from DP research are hard to reconcile with mainstream representations of psychological topics as primarily reliant on the workings of cognitive processes (Potter, 2003a). It is worth emphasising that DP does not take an ontological position that negates the existence of cognitive structures *apriori* (Edwards & Potter, 2005; Iversen, 2016). Instead, by studying psychological topics "in the wild", discursive psychologists have arrived at the conclusion

that human conduct can be explained without appealing to the workings of a "box of cognitive wires" that underlie behaviour. DP does not dismiss the existence of cognitions, instead, we study them as manifestations in discourse, as individuals' concerns in and tools for interaction (Edwards, 1997). Finally, DP does not disavow mind-body, objective-subjective, or inner-outer dichotomies, but instead it examines how individuals construct and use these dichotomies in and through discourse (Edwards, 1999).

How do these meta-theoretical options translate into a scientific approach for studying psychological phenomena in and as part of the social arenas where they occur spontaneously and where they matter for individuals? In the next section, we highlight the main theoretical and methodological innovations through which DP has contributed to the study of psychological phenomena as discursive practices.

3 Discursive psychology's key theoretical and methodological contributions

Over the last 30 years, DP has not only provided new insights into the interactional organisation of psychological phenomena but has also pioneered new procedures and techniques for the study of naturally occurring social interaction. In this section, we review the main theoretical and methodological contributions of DP, with three aims. First, we set out to explicate how DP's meta-theoretical assumptions (presented in the previous section) translate into research practices. Second, we hope to demystify DP by addressing some of the most frequent misconceptions about DP as a research method. Third, we aim to show how DP's inductive empirical approach achieves methodological integrity and rigour in accord with the standards for qualitative research (Levitt et al., 2018) while also developing its own quality standards. Specifically, we will highlight that and how DP employs ethical, systematic, and topically adequate data collection procedures as well as transparent, detailed, and publicly inspectable practices for analysing data, practices that draw on and reinforce

prior research findings, thus producing a cumulative and internally coherent body of knowledge (Potter, 1996a).

3.1 Pioneering an inductive approach to naturally occurring data collection

The preference for recording naturally occurring data, which DP shares with other methods for studying social interactions – conversation analysis, ethnomethodology, and membership categorisation analysis – forms the bedrock of a DP study's validity: audio and video recordings constitute a selective but "good enough" record of what happened: "Other things, to be sure, happened, but at least what was on the tape had happened" (Sacks, 1984, p. 26). As such, interaction analysts start with an accurate and undisputable representation of the phenomenon of interest (Peräkylä, 2011).

In line with an inductive ethos, DP (as well as CA) studies set out with only a few predefined parameters. The first step in such a study consists in carving out a topic of interest for investigation, for which there are two approaches. First, a study can originate in the interest to explore the discursive practices of an established psychological construct such as attitudes (Potter et al., this issue), personality (Alexander & Stokoe, this issue) or agency (Weatherall, this issue). The specificity of the topic can range from generically investigating attitudes as discursive actions (Wiggins & Potter, 2003), to more focused subjects such as the management of racial attitudes (Potter & Wetherell, 1988), to even more focused themes such as the subtle manifestations of racism in official governmental documents (Popoviciu & Tileagă, 2019). On this basis, discursive psychologists formulate one or more exploratory research questions, while still allowing the investigation to develop into new and exciting directions. For psychologists who are used to operating with hypotheses and strictly operationalised variables, this approach may appear as an unsystematic and haphazard endeavour (Potter, 1996a). It is not. This flexibility ensures the adequacy between research objectives and empirical evidence, at every step of the research process. It enables the

researcher, after an initial inspection of the data, to rethink the aims of the study in order to integrate unanticipated empirical insights.

Discursive psychologists need to identify real-life settings in which the phenomena of interest occur unprompted in ways that matter for co-present individuals. For instance, Huma et al.'s study of persuasive conduct (this issue) is based on recordings of "cold" calls in which salespeople try to get appointments to visit prospective customers. In this study, "cold" calls serve as a "natural laboratory" (Stokoe, 2018) where persuasion crops up spontaneously, as part of sales work. By choosing this setting, the researchers were able to explore the natural organisation and interactional outcomes of persuasive practices which would not be otherwise available for inspection, for instance through prompting individuals to recount their experiences of persuading / being persuaded.

But how can we ensure that the phenomenon of interest will indeed spontaneously recur, in a particular setting, without researcher elicitation? To some extent, like in any inductive approach, it is not possible to predict what we will find in the data. Prior familiarity with the setting achieved through personal experience with it, and by reading ethnographic accounts or prior interactional studies conducted in similar environments, is helpful for determining the suitability of the setting for the topic of the study. In any case, speculations about the presumed difficulties of working with naturally occurring phenomena because of their unpredictability have proven to be unfounded (Stokoe, 2009). For example, the notion that studying topics like 'gender' or 'racism' would be like searching for "the proverbial needle in the haystack" (van Dijk, 1987, p. 119) is a key argument for conducting interviews, to guarantee the required content. However, several studies of membership categories in action (inter alia Kitzinger & Mandelbaum, 2013; Stokoe, 2010; Stokoe, Sikveland, & Humă, 2017; Whitehead & Lerner, 2009) which have demonstrated the "capturability" of categorial practices on the basis of the orderliness of social life.

Separately, a solution to this conundrum consists in using already available corpora with which we are familiar and in which we have noticed, on previous occasions, instances of the phenomenon we are interested in. This option is made possible by the richness of naturally occurring data, which lend themselves to multiple interrogations in a range of different ways (Gill, 1996). At any single time, there are multiple levels of organisation that operate simultaneously within conversations. For example, participants manage their relationships with each other, their respective epistemic and deontic rights in numerous jointly produced courses of action, activities, and projects. Therefore, while working on one aspect of a conversation, researchers can become interested in other phenomena co-present in the setting, which will then be the subject of subsequent empirical investigations. For example, Hepburn and colleagues have examined different forms of social influence in parent-children interaction during mealtimes, such as threats (Hepburn & Potter, 2011), the negotiation of food intake (Wiggins & Hepburn, 2007), and admonishments (Potter & Hepburn, 2019). Building on this, Hepburn's article featured in this special issue, puts forward a respecification of "socialisation" as a situated practice relying on parents systematically withholding directive actions, thus showing an orientation to a preference for self-direction as a means for accomplishing socialisation-in-interaction.

3.2 Ethics *in* and *as* action

Accessing a research setting in order to record interactions is not always straightforward. One should not underestimate the ethical and practical challenges that come with accessing the selected setting. For most institutions, gaining the support of gatekeepers constitutes a key step, before informed consent from participants can be sought (Wiggins, 2017). Studies that rely on naturally occurring data require ethical approval even when the interactions-to-be-examined are already recorded, as standard institutional practice, such as calls to emergency services (e.g., Kevoe-Feldman, 2019) or helplines (e.g., Tennent & Weatherall, 2019),

incoming/outgoing telemarketing conversations (e.g., De Stefani, 2018; Stokoe et al., 2017) or police interviews with suspects and victims are already being recorded (e.g., Jol & Stommel, 2016).

If accessing a setting of choice becomes problematic, online media platforms can provide an alternative source of data. Publicly available video recordings from platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo (e.g., Laurier, 2013) as well as TV (e.g., Demasi & Tileaga, 2019) and radio broadcasts (e.g., Horowitz & Kilby, 2019) can be of use, as long as they are live, unscripted, and as much as possible unedited. Finally, there is a growing availability of data corpora[1] that can be accessed by researchers interested in language-in-interaction.

With increasingly strict rules around the use of personal data (e.g., the General Data Protection Regulation applicable in the European Union), provisions for storing and handling naturally occurring data securely need to be made well in advance of data collection, usually as part of ethical approval applications. As we collect and store recordings containing participants' personal information, we are required to minimise the risks associated with the management of data, through increased security and safeguarding measures. These include storing the data on password protected, encrypted institutional devices, using pseudonyms in publishable transcripts as well as anonymising audio and video recordings and stills of the later featured in presentations and publications (Information Commissioner's Office, n.d.). Many qualitative researchers may opt to dispose of digital recordings once the projects have been completed or, increasingly tend to make recordings and/or transcripts publicly available in data repositories. By contrast, discursive psychologists, like conversation analysts, tend to

[1] For example, the CallFriend corpora (several languages) set up by the Linguistic Data Consortium or the Archiv für Gesprochenes Deutsch (German language) set up by the Leibniz Institut für Deustche Sprache

privately store collected data which, due to their richness, can be revisited in subsequent projects.

DP's contribution to research ethics stretches beyond devising strict procedures for safely and securely handling of private, sometimes highly sensitive data. DP, like CA, is effectively equipped to problematise and empirically investigate ethical practices within mainstream psychological research. Such a study, undertaken by Speer and Stokoe (2014) found that obtaining free, non-coerced informed consent from participants is more difficult than anticipated due to the preference structures which operate in talk. By examining sequences of consent gaining, DP can feed back into ethical guidelines which could be improved by taking into consideration the contingencies of ethics-in-action.

3.3 Transcription as incipient analysis

Preserving the rich detail of how talk-in-interaction unfolds, as captured in video and audio recordings, in subsequent visual and textual representations of the interactions is a central concern for discursive psychologists. The transcription process is based on a system invented by Gail Jefferson (2004) (2004), and subsequently further developed to capture, for instance, crying (Hepburn, 2004) and multimodal conduct (Mondada, 2018). Like music notation, the system enables researchers to produce consistent and transparent transcripts. However, anybody who has ever transcribed even a few minutes of talk-in-interaction will know that capturing every single aspect of an embodied conversation is impossible. The transcription process is necessarily selective (Mondada, 2018) and, of course, the data are the recordings, not the transcripts. Discursive psychologists aim to produce transcripts that are attuned to their studies' analytic objectives, which leads to transcribing being regarded as an incipient analytic stage (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013; Wiggins, 2017).

Conversation analytic transcriptions appear, also like music notation, hard to decipher for the untrained eye. DP/CA researchers (including some of the authors of this editorial) are

often accused of including ‘too much’ detail, and that the details are unnecessary, or distracting, thus rendering the analysis difficult to follow. For instance, in a more general set of caricatures of DP/CA, Parker (2005, p. 91) complains that discourse analysts in psychology should “Beware conversation analysis”, for its “use of detailed transcriptions *that make it seem like* you are really seeing what is there” (emphasis added). Again, we disagree. First, we argue that, aligned to the ostensible goals of much qualitative and critical psychology, transcripts that aim to represent exactly what and how people say things maximizes the ‘giving voice’ to research participants. DP/CA studies have demonstrated that prosody, silences, pronunciation, overlap, or volume of talk-in-interaction are relevant and consequential for the interactional business that individuals are engaged in – often for the very purposes of exposing the workings of power, asymmetry, and so on. The point is that detailed transcripts are not ‘too’ detailed – they represent what people actually do. To create impoverished transcripts would, we argue, give less voice to participants. Thus, producing Jeffersonian transcripts is a moral and ethical decision.

Another way to think about this is in the context of studying online communication. Presumably researchers do not delete emojis or punctuation marks when examining, say, WhatsApp or SMS messages, as they are considered to be integral by the writers who put them there. Thus we posit that, by omitting these fine, but crucial details of talk-in-interaction, other qualitative traditions, that use verbatim (orthographic) transcripts and “correct” individuals’ talk, are in danger of failing to accurately represent their participants “voices” (Aguinaldo, 2012; Potter & Hepburn, 2005b; Roulston, 2001), as well as rendering the actual conversations opaque. In DP/CA, any researcher can, if the right permissions are in place, re-analyse it with their own questions in mind. Indeed, DP/CA is committed to open data, and there are multiple datasets and spoken language corpora available online (Albert et al., 2018).

Once transcripts have been produced, the original data – the recordings – remain are necessary throughout the analysis process. For video data, discursive psychologists often need to go back to re-transcribe or check other details of the interaction. Transcribing qualitative data, especially when using the Jefferson and the Mondada systems, can be a time-consuming process; however, the close engagement with the data pays off analytically as researchers become immersed in the setting they are examining.

3.4 Transparent and accountable collections of discursive practices

Transcribing the data requires a set of analytic decisions regarding the selection of relevant aspects of the interactions to be represented visually and in writing on the transcripts, thus constituting the first step of the analytic process (Potter, 1996a). Annotating the data and building collections require further analytic judgments as researchers interrogate the data for instances of the phenomena of interest. Again, we should emphasise that these are not theoretical principles; in fact, discursive psychologists strive to treat their data, which often depict familiar settings, such as family mealtimes or shopping encounters, as anthropologically "strange" (Gill, 1996). This requires bracketing theoretical assumptions about these interactional environments in favour of revealing relevant practices in the data.

The systematicity and reliability of this analytic endeavour relies on annotating being an iterative process which requires the researchers to go through the data several times, each new reading being informed by prior 'noticings'. This requirement ensures that annotations are coherent and consistent across the data set while also being grounded in empirical observations. Through several rounds of annotations, researchers identify stretches of talk – extracts – that can form collections of possible relevant cases of the target phenomena. The composition of a collection, which is over-inclusive at first, is likely to change as researchers move from annotating the data to analysing each extract in the collection. As the practices identified in the data become clearer through focused analysis, some extracts may be

eliminated from the collection, on the basis that they do not exhibit the identified practices . Conversely, researchers may decide to go back to the data corpus to now search for a specific discourse practice.

Creating a collection of relevant cases constitutes one of the challenges for DP respecification studies which do not start with predefined notions of how psychological constructs figure in discourse. Instead discursive psychologists set out to discover the discursive configurations of psychological phenomena through inductive and iterative scrutiny of the data. Hence, the creation of collections relies on initial noticings of potentially relevant stretches of talk which are then marked for further analysis. A word, phrase, turn or sequence is considered to be potentially relevant if it features discursive practices employed to achieve some action or interactional effect related to the topic of the study. For some psychological phenomena, the identification of relevant practices can rely directly on participants' use of vocabularies vernacularly associated with those phenomena. For example, researchers can track psychological predicates used to index putative mental states and processes such as "concerns" (Potter & Hepburn, 2003), "wants" (Childs, 2012), or "thoughts" (Barnes & Moss, 2007). However, at times, the discursive management of the psychological phenomena may occur in more subtle ways, especially when the phenomena are tied with participants' stakes in constructing versions of events. A case in point comes from a study of intentionality in police interviews with suspects. Recurrently, in these interviews, the police officer tries to establish whether the suspect has committed the crime with intention or accidentally (Edwards, 2008). Intention here can be made relevant via direct references such as a police officer asking, "Did you int<u>e</u>:nd to cause any damage to the window of the car" (p. 184) or via elaborate descriptions of suspect's actions, and their thoughts regarding their anticipated effects. The value and novelty of DP lies in enabling researchers to spot practices associated with the interactional management of psychological

topics even when participants do not employ terms and phrases that are predictably associated with these topics.

While it is not possible to establish a strict procedure for building collections, based on the papers in this special issue, we can delineate three main approaches for identifying possible relevant cases for DP collections for respecification studies. Probably the most straight forward process of searching for and collecting instances of talk that feature particular psychological topics consists in searching for terms that index manifestations of the phenomenon. This strategy has been employed by Flinkfeldt in her paper on the invocation of a "worry" in welfare encounters. Her collection was built by searching for lexical terms that index negative emotions such as "concern", or "fear", and then extended with the inclusion of metaphoric expressions such as "lying sleepless". A second strategy for building a collection of candidate instances of a respecified psychological construct consists in tracking the linguistic resources, other than psychological predicates, that are recurrently used to accomplish some action or interactional effect related to the phenomena of interest. This strategy is exemplified by Weatherall's paper in which the author has systematically collected proposals that either feature the speaker (I-formatted proposals) or the recipient (YOU-formatted proposals) as the agent doing the future action. She demonstrates how the design of these actions is intimately tied to issues around agency and responsibility for the proposed actions. Both strategies presented so far pose minimal challenges for the researchers arguing for the relevance of their collections for the topic of interest. By contrast, the third option is somewhat less straightforward because it relies on researchers collecting sequences of talk in which the topic of interest is demonstrably accomplished, while not being explicitly referred to. An example of this strategy is Hepburn's paper that respecifies children's "socialisation". In her data, the parents do not talk about socialisation, they "do" socialisation by designing their actions to encourage children to self-direct their behaviour instead of issuing directives

and commands. Hepburn's collection consists of cases in which parents can be seen to withhold directive behaviours and instead build opportunities for children to display agency over their own conduct.

Building a DP collection relies on criteria that are worked out in and through the process of examining the data; however, it does not mean that the criteria are mysterious or unreliable. In fact, the "acid test" for any DP study consists in clearly and compellingly articulating the practices that underlie the exclusion/inclusion criteria for a collection. Furthermore, discursive psychologists habitually open up their analytic procedures for scrutiny in data sessions (Harris, Theobald, Danby, Reynolds, & Rintel, 2012), where other researchers can examine, comment on, or even challenge collections-in-progress. Once published, DP studies remain transparent by presenting analyses and the data they are based on together. Thus, in the context of the current 'replication crisis' within the social and behavioural sciences (Dreber & Johannesson, 2020), DP is aligned with the strive for open science in that readers can undertake their own examination of the transcripts and their analyses. While these provisions do not preclude researchers from producing poor quality analyses, they do provide for the most accessible, transparent, and accountable presentation of empirical findings.

Collections serve the role of carving out, from the data corpus, those stretches of talk that exhibit a similar practice (which will be worked out in detail through analysis) that appears to be relevant for our target phenomenon. While annotating and building collections is presented here separate from data analysis – which we describe next – in DP, there is, in fact, no clear break-off point between these two activities.

3.5 DP as an emic analysis of social actions

Many novice DP scholars find analysing data to be an elusive or even baffling practice because it does not entail a recipe-like process. Learning to do DP has been described as a

"craft skill" comparable to "riding a bicycle or sexing a chicken" (Potter, 1996a, p. 140). With no formal procedural rules to rely on, what can analysts hang on to while making sense of what seem, but are actually not "messy" conversations? The answer lies in two key analytic principles that DP shares with conversation analysis and ethnomethodology. First DP abstains from speculating about why individuals behave the way they do, and what their motives, or intentions may be. Instead, DP aims to describe discursive conduct and its constituent features, including how people themselves speculate – within sequences of action in interaction – behave the way they do. This focus on observable and demonstrable discursive practices renders DP analysis robust to re-analysis and scrutiny. Second, DP, like CA, privileges participants' perspective and interpretation of talk-in-interaction. This approach keeps DP analysis grounded in what is, for participants, relevant and consequential about what they and their interlocutors are doing (Potter, 1996a).

These principles inform the detailed examination of each extract within the collection that we have assembled. The analysis alternates between focusing on single extracts and the collections as a whole and, on occasion, researchers can even go back one step; to scrutinise the data corpus for new cases of the identified practice. There is no strict rule on what the analysis of a single extract should focus on. Discursive psychologists can pick out linguistic, sequential, or rhetorical features of the interactions, thereby relying on findings from conversation analysis, rhetorical psychology, discourse analysis, ethnomethodology, membership categorisation analysis, and interactional linguistics.

Usually, researchers approach each extract with a set of analytic questions such as (1) what actions are being performed by the participants and how, (2) what version of the world is being constructed and by whom, (3) what are the upshots of this way of depicting events, (4) what is at stake, for the participants, in the interaction and how are those stakes managed, and (5) how is our phenomenon of interest referred to (constructed) and what are the implications

of this way of constructing it (Wiggins, 2017). By answering these questions, we end up producing detailed descriptions of each extract, which we can then refine by focusing on the practices that recur across the collection.

The iterative process of identifying regularities across the collection can also lead to the discovery of data extracts which do not exhibit the presumed practice. These divergent cases are not dismissed or omitted from the analysis, without first being scrutinised. It can turn out that they represent deviant cases, where the identified interactional regularities are infringed, while still being oriented to by the participants (Wiggins, 2017). Such cases do not invalidate our findings; on the contrary, they corroborate and reinforce them. They demonstrate that the absence of the rule/regularity is noticeable and noticed by the participants, which in turn further underscores its importance (Schegloff, 2007). Unlike survey-based studies that search for patterns across aggregated data sets and in which divergent cases are explained away as measurement imprecision or unavoidable variation, in DP studies every single case is considered informative for the practice under investigation.

How do we validate DP analyses given that the criteria applicable to quantitative, deductive realist research methods are not relevant for naturally occurring interactions conducted within a discursive constructionist framework? Before answering this question, let us first highlight that DP studies have validation criteria built in at every step of the research procedure, as we have hopefully already demonstrated. Similarly, validation criteria are inherent to DP analysis through the following analytic practices (see also Peräkylä, 2011; Potter & Hepburn, 2005a): (1) the scrutiny of deviant cases, (2) the iterative organisation of the analysis, (3) the reliance on the "next turn proof procedure"; that is, participants' orientations and understandings of their interlocutors' actions, as displayed through their responses, in subsequent turns (Edwards, 2004), (4) the restriction of the analysis to what is observable in the data and (5) most importantly, though what is probably one of the earliest

forms of open science: the publication of data and analysis, side-by-side, allowing readers to fully scrutinise all analytic claims and, thus, make their own judgments.

3.6 Empirically grounded theorising

While DP research starts out without a theoretical framework, their empirical findings can contribute to psychological theorising. Nonetheless, most DP studies end up being incompatible with or critical of mainstream psychology. A classic example comes from research on attitudes, conducted more than 30 years ago and one of the bedrocks of DP. In an interview-based study of racial attitudes Potter and Wetherell (1988) showed that participants' evaluations of racial minorities where often inconsistent, and tailored to the sequential context in which they were produced. This led them to suggest that the existence of underlying stable racial attitudes, conceptualised as evaluations of psychological objects, seemed to receive little support from their data. In fact, they argued, when individuals take a stance towards or make an assessment of a racial category, we cannot separate the object of that assessment from its indexical reference in talk-in-interaction, which is inherently evaluative.

If participants' assessments are not underpinned by attitudes-as-cognitive-objects, how then should we understand evaluative conduct? Discursive psychologists have demonstrated that evaluations and assessments are discursive actions, designed and implemented to achieve particular interactional effects such as managing a person's subject-side (Edwards, 2003), pre-empting and supressing counter-arguments (Billig, 1989), or handling alignment and affiliation (Edwards & Potter, 2017; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987; Pomerantz, 1984). 30 year onwards, discursive psychologists are continuing to document the interactional architecture of assessments (Potter, Hepburn, Edwards, this issue) and to build a compelling body of evidence for attitudes as discursive accomplishments.

Early DP studies of attitudes also revealed that, in formulating assessments, individuals construct them as either objective evaluations of the world-out-there, based on

facts, evidence, or measurements – what in DP we call "object-side" assessments – or as individual judgements, based on personal dispositions, preferences, stakes, and interests – what in DP we call "subject-side" assessments (Edwards & Potter, 2017). Subsequently, DP has continued to investigate the discursive practices through which individuals manage object- and subject-side and the implications thereof in, for example, constructing credible accounts of paranormal events (Wooffitt, 1992), complaining about absent third parties (Edwards, 2005), and undermining interlocutors' accounts (Edwards, 2007). The concern with object-subject relations – what Edwards (1997, 2003) has also referred to as mind-world relations – is pervasive across psychology. DP's unique contribution consists in the empirical investigation and theorising of subject-object relations not as the researchers' but as the participants' practical concerns, managed in and through talk-in-interaction. Looking into the future, the exploration of subject-object relations is a promising avenue for discursive psychological research (Edwards & Potter, 2017). Let us now turn to the studies comprised in this special issue, which provide novel insight into the interactional underpinnings of key psychological topics, such as emotions, attitudes, knowledge, persuasion, agency, socialisation, and personality, in the tradition established by DP and outlined so far in this editorial.

4 Summary of the papers in the SI

This Special Issue of Qualitative Research in Psychology provides a propitious opportunity to showcase the breadth and depth of DP as a way of revealing psychological matters in and through members' everyday practices. The seven empirical papers below engage with a range of psychological themes in both mundane and institutional environments.

The article by *Potter, Hepburn and Edwards* investigates mainstream social psychology's claim that attitudes are defined by cognitive/motivational reasoning, by

systematically showing how assessments (i.e., judgements, evaluations, attitudes) function in everyday interaction. Potter at al. illustrate how object (O)-side (e.g., 'nice lady') and subject (S)-side (e.g., 'I liked her') assessments, and combinations thereof, build particular actions - for instance, O-side first, S-side second utterances can build affiliation, while S-side first, O-side second utterances can be resources to pursue further dispute. The article sheds new light on how the different dimensions and categories of assessments are produced, revealing the social and sequential organisation of interactional practices as discursive psychological resources.

Huma, Sikveland and Stokoe show how the traditional psychological concept of persuasion is built as an interactional practice by salespeople in business-to-business 'cold' sales calls in the UK. The authors show that successfully secured meetings with prospective clients are bound to particular conversational resources in turn-taking and sequence organisation. For instance, restricting opportunities for prospective clients to reject a proposed meeting by designing preamble turns as presupposing the arrangement has already been agreed (e.g., scheduling a meeting time). In contrast, self-invitations (e.g., 'can we come and have a chat about your phone systems?') were regularly rejected by would-be clients. The findings illustrate the ways in which persuasion, as a type of social influence, can be interactively and collaboratively accomplished in these institutional encounters through its respecification as a discursive psychological phenomenon.

The contribution by *Flinkfeldt* examines how formulations of the lexical 'worry' (e.g., 'I'm really worried now') are designed in telephone calls between citizens and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency's helpline, in the service of call-takers assisting with housing allowance issues. The analysis shows how worry formulations (retrospective, current and prospective formats) are epistemically bound in various ways – such as, when callers display themselves as having gained knowledge related to their concern, worry is treated as

unwarranted, or alternatively, as a preventative measure against potential future worry. In contrast, a lack of knowledge about their problem is treated as warranting a legitimated reason for calling the service. Flinkfeldt's findings supplement DP's programme of research on emotion-relevant topics and extend knowledge of how psychological matters are modified as serviceable concerns in these institutional encounters.

Weatherall examines how agency is displayed by call-takers when proposing assistance to those contacting a Victim Support helpline in New Zealand. The analysis reveals the ways in which assistance is designed within the remit of the organisation; in so doing, displaying the contrastive deontic rights of interactants (i.e., self or other) in the advancement of service provision. For example, formulations may be designed as call-takers having agency (e.g., 'I can give you the number) or affording agency to callers (e.g., 'you can call the police non-emergency number'), as well as morpho-syntactic variations in 'I' and 'you' formatted turn design (e.g., 'did/do you want to…', 'I can/could…). The findings illustrate the various ways in which offers of help are collaboratively accomplished in the service of future courses of action. Further, the article extends discursive psychological work on how in-situ interpersonal relationships are built in these institutional encounters.

The paper by *Alexander & Stokoe* show how characterological formulations are designed to mobilise speakers and others as particular 'types' of people when reporting neighbourhood problems in calls to dispute resolution services in the UK (mediation and environmental health). Analysis of '[descriptor] person' utterances reveals the moral work done by callers; designing themselves as reasonable people (e.g., 'I'm an extremely tolerant person') contrasted with their neighbours (e.g., 'he's a rather obnoxious person), and further, shows how callers' actions are designed as a situational consequence of their neighbour's conduct. Alexander & Stokoe's article complements existing DP work in the areas of identity, (membership) categorisation and disposition(s), but also, extends knowledge in how

complainable activities can be designed to shape the institutional relevance for service provision by orienting to the underlying character of people in favourable and unfavourable ways.

Iversen & Evaldsson demonstrate the ways in which Swedish professionals (teachers and counsellors) discuss school pupils' troubles in Pupil Health Team (PHT) meetings. In contrast to PHT guidelines which promote the importance of professionals understanding each other regarding pupils' needs, the analysis reveals that and how *pupils'* issues are problematised as the source of misunderstanding in these meetings – for instance, the designedly vague formulation of a pupil doing 'really strange things.' Iversen & Evaldsson extend DP's programme of work on the management of accountability by showing how professionals present themselves as not disposed to incompetence or lacking knowledge in the handling of morally delicate matters; instead orienting to pupils' transgressions without explicitly marking out the objectionable elements of their conduct.

In the final empirical article, *Hepburn* investigates the interactional resources that parents use when seeking to progress some course of action (and manage resistance to these bids) for their child in family mealtime interactions. Drawing on preference organisation, Hepburn demonstrates how more coercive practices of behaviour modification and management are withheld in favour of actions that provide opportunities for children to develop self-directed solutions to problematic behaviour – such as, holding off escalating an admonishment, or cajoling and interactionally deleting a failure of the child to comply. The article develops understanding of (dis)preference in these encounters – that a preferred version of a course of action is to start with lower invasion – in so doing, distinguishing the practice from self-correction and self-remediation. Further, the article demonstrates how the sociological notion of 'socialisation' is reworked and enacted as a discursive psychological resource.

The concluding commentary by *Wiggins* reflects on DP as a foundational resource for respecifying psychological concepts, and as a developing methodology across academic landscapes and interactional environments. Wiggins emphasises the richness of DP, underpinned by the rigorousness of its analytic insight. In turn, this thoughtful and engaging contribution affords the reader an opportunity to consider the deep and lasting impact of DP as a unique way of understanding social conduct.

Taken together, the quality and variety of contributions in this Special Issue demonstrate the vibrancy of the DP community; in turn, showing the value and importance of DP's programme of respecification as a way of engaging with and revealing psychological matters as enacted in day-to-day life.

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