Discourse Analysis and Systemic Family Therapy Research: The Methodological Contribution of Discursive Psychology

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My aim in this chapter is to discuss certain ways in which the theoretical and methodological approach of discursive psychology can contribute to systemic, couple and family therapy research. Discursive psychology is part of the wider trend of qualitative, hermeneutic research methodologies as well as theoretical proposals for the study of discourse, which are usually clustered under the over-inclusive, transdisciplinary term, discourse analysis (Potter & Hepburn, 2005; Tseliou, 2013, 2018; Willig, 2013). Discourse analysis has incorporated epistemological and theoretical advances in humanities and social sciences, which have highlighted the constitutive role of language use for all phenomena, widely known as the discursive turn (Bozatzis, 2014; Tseliou, 2013, 2018; Tseliou & Borcsa, 2018). The field of systemic family therapy has also witnessed the effects of the discursive turn, as evident in the shift toward constructivist and social constructionist epistemological perspectives, which gave birth to post-modern therapeutic approaches, like collaborative, dialogic, and narrative approaches. More recently, it seems that the field has also welcomed the use of discourse analysis research methodologies mostly for the study of couple and family therapy process (Borcsa & Rober, 2016; Tseliou, 2017, 2018; Tseliou & Borcsa, 2018). Nevertheless, the deployment of discursive psychology in particular remains marginal. This is striking given the common epistemological background and certain isomorphic tenets between systemic family therapy and discursive psychology. Like in the case of systemic family therapy, discursive psychology advances a re-thinking of psychological phenomena in discursive and interactional terms in that it prioritizes the context of language-use in interaction as *the context* per se for their constitution and study (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Wiggins, 2017). Most importantly, however, discursive psychology

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can provide methodological input to systemic couple and family therapy process research suitable to address systemically informed inquiries concerning the therapeutic dialogue.

In this chapter, my aim is to introduce three specific theoretical and methodological proposals of discursive psychology which are indicative of its potential for systemic couple and family therapy research, due to their affinity with systemic family therapy tenets. These include the pragmatic orientation to theorizing and studying discourse, the intersubjective/interactional theoretical and methodological approach to the understanding and the study of psychological phenomena, and specific suggestions for studying the ways in which historical and socio-cultural and political contexts shape discourse use in therapy. Prior to discussing in detail these three proposals, I will first briefly introduce discursive psychology as well as its up-to-date deployment in the field of systemic couple and family therapy research.

Discursive Psychology and Systemic Family Therapy

In this section, I will start with a brief introduction concerning the place of discursive psychology in the broader spectrum of discourse analysis research. I will then present the history and some basic tenets of discursive psychology, which denote its affinity with systemic family therapy. Then I will conclude with a brief overview of its up-to-date use in systemic couple and family therapy research.

Discourse Analysis and Discursive Psychology: A Brief Introduction

Currently there is extensive use of the term discourse analysis across disciplines like education, psychology, linguistics, literary theory and criticism, etc. (Tseliou, 2013, 2017). Irrespective of differences in theoretical, epistemological, and methodological preferences, the term broadly refers to approaches which have incorporated main premises of constructivist, social constructionist, or post-structuralist frameworks. Such frameworks have introduced the idea that language is central for the constitution of every phenomenon. Knowledge, including scientific knowledge, is more a construction than a reflection of an independently existing reality, inseparable from the knowing subject or else the observer (Burr, 2015). Furthermore, they have forwarded the idea that language use is not neutral. Instead, history, culture, and ideology shape language use and delineate certain power relationships (Willig, 2013). Against this epistemological backcloth, discourse analysis approaches introduce certain methodological proposals for the study of talk and texts while sharing the premise that research is an interpretative process of knowledge construction, a process considered as historically and socio-culturally situated. These methodological proposals share the idea that the object of study is language per se. However, there is variability in the ways that different discourse analysis trends approach both the

theorizing but also the study of discourse. This variability accounts for the treatment of discursive psychology as a distinct theoretical and methodological approach.

Discursive psychology is affiliated with discourse analysis approaches which focus on the study of how people use language to manage the course of their everyday interactions and how language use shapes interpersonal interaction. These approaches are rooted in the Anglo-Saxon tradition of the linguistic philosophy of Wittgenstein and Austin (Tseliou, 2013, 2017; Willig, 2013). They also utilize the intellectual heritage of conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974), a tradition distinct from discourse analysis, which is rooted in ethnomethodology. Conversation analysis aims at the identification of the normative structure of talk-in-interaction or else at the investigation of conversational structures, which depict how the social world is performed via talk-in-interaction (Antaki, 2014). Analysis entails a micro-detailed scrutiny of both the content and the process of talk-in-interaction with an emphasis on the local context/setting of conversations. According to a frequently reiterated distinction in the field of psychology (Tseliou, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2018; Tseliou & Borcsa, 2018; Willig, 2013), these discourse analysis approaches differ from a second group of approaches, which focus on highlighting how the historical and sociopolitical contexts of language use restrict our choices when we use language over the course of our everyday interactions (Tseliou, 2013, 2017; Willig, 2013). In drawing from post-structuralist thinking like Foucault's theorizing (Foucault, 1972/1969) or post-Marxist contributions, like the ones by Laclau and Mouffe (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) such approaches highlight issues interrelated with power and hegemonic conditions which shape language use. The main idea is that while people talk, they draw from historically available, ideologically laden, systematic ways to construct versions of the world, which they then negotiate and re-construct in the course of their everyday interactions. According to this approach, talk is not politically or ideologically neutral. Thus, post-structurally informed discourse analysis aims at the identification of systematic ways for speaking and for constructing objects/subjects, which are historically constituted and ideologically laden.

Despite what comes across as an "ontological quality" of such a distinction, discourse analytic practice often includes creative cross-loans between the different traditions. Furthermore, critical approaches to discursive psychology (see e.g., Bozatzis, 2009, 2016; Wetherell, 1998, 2007) mostly undertake a "both–and" perspective in that they combine the micro-detailed analysis of the "bottom–up" discursive approaches with the macro-orientation of the "top–down," post-structuralist approaches to discourse.

Discursive Psychology: A "Systemically" Informed Psychology?

Up-to-date, there are very engaging narratives of the historical origins of discursive psychology as well as of its evolution (Potter, 2012a, 2012b; Tileagă & Stokoe, 2016). Furthermore, there are many, very informative sketches of its basic tenets (e.g., Hepburn & Wiggins, 2005; Lester, 2014; O'Reilly, Lester, & Kiyimba, 2018; Potter, 2011, 2012a) including presentations of its main features, which I have

reported elsewhere (Tseliou, 2015; Tseliou & Borcsa, 2018; Tseliou, Smoliak, LaMarre, & Quinn-Nilas, 2019). Thus, here, I will inevitably reiterate some key points concerning the history, the evolution, and the basic tenets of the discursive psychology approach to discourse analytic research.

Like in the case of discourse analysis, there is variety in the narratives concerning the history of discursive psychology and the elaboration of the term (e.g., Augoustinos & Tileagă, 2012; Billig, 2012; Edwards, 2012; Tileagă & Stokoe, 2016). Furthermore, there are different narratives, which attempt to delineate the various, existing trends of discursive psychology as well as its historical evolution (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2005; Potter, 2012a, 2012b; Wetherell, 2007). As concerns its origins, Edwards and Potter (1992) seem to have introduced the term, whereas most narratives (e.g., Billig, 2012; Hepburn & Potter, 2011; Potter, 2012b) relate the emergence of discursive psychology with a broader attempt to introduce a re-conceptualization of mainstream psychology and social psychology in particular. Such attempt included a critique of mainstream psychology for entailing an essentialist, ahistorical, and mostly cognitivist approach and is reflected in earlier writings of scholars like Jonathan Potter, Derek Edwards, Margaret Wetherell, and Michael Billig in the 1980s (see e.g., Billig, 1987; Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Broadly speaking, discursive psychology is not simply a methodological proposal for the analysis of talk and texts. It further constitutes a theoretical proposal for a radical re-conceptualization of psychological phenomena, in ways similar to the re-conceptualization of psychopathology and psychotherapy introduced by systemic family therapy. For discursive psychology, psychological phenomena like cognition, memory, identity, etc. are treated as "matters of interested communication between speakers" (Antaki, 2014, p. 75) or else are "re-conceptualized as language-based activities" (Billig, 2014, p. 159). In that sense, discursive psychology is interested in how psychological phenomena are evoked in talk-in-interaction (Edwards, 1997, 2012; Potter, 1996). It thus shifts the locus of interest from the intra-psychic realm where psychology traditionally locates the understanding and the study of psychological phenomena to the realm of language use and interaction.

Like in the case of systemic approaches (Bateson, 1979), discursive psychology approaches discourse as interrelated with context and places particular emphasis on both the local context of discourse use, that is the specific occasion of language use, but also on the wider, social, historical and institutional context. This emphasis on the latter, although not identical, is reminiscent of post-structural developments in the field of systemic family therapy like the narrative approaches (White & Epston, 1990) which have been inspired by Foucault's thinking.

Furthermore, for discursive psychology the emphasis on theoretically and analytically approaching discourse is rather on its pragmatics as compared to its semantics, like in the case of pragmatic, systemic theoretical conceptualizations of communication (e.g., Watzlawick, Beavin-Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967). Discursive psychology also undertakes a rhetorical perspective in approaching discourse (Billig, 1987), according to which we constantly engage into an attempt of persuasion and argumentation concerning our views. Finally, discursive psychology subscribes to the ethnomethodological emphasis on how speakers themselves make sense of the

conversations in which they participate (Tseliou, 2017, 2018), thus adhering to the interpretative and intersubjective quality of meaning-making processes.

As concerns analytic practice, discursive psychology shares the emphasis that conversation analysis places on the importance of disentangling what is constructed in talk utterance by utterance, while doing analysis. It also shares the ethnomethodological principle for analyzing naturally occurring talk, that is, talk as it naturally occurs, like in the case of transcribed, recorded counseling/psychotherapy sessions. Following a brief overview of the use of discursive psychology in family therapy research, I will explicate the above features in detail while elaborating on their potential for theoretical and methodological contributions in the field.

Discursive Psychology and Systemic Family Therapy Research

Despite the resonance between discursive psychology and systemic family therapy tenets, the deployment of discursive psychology in systemic family therapy research remains particularly marginal. Systemic family therapy research has grown out of polarized debates concerning the preference for either quantitative or qualitative research methodologies and currently undertakes a "both/and" perspective for the study of therapy process and outcome (Tseliou, 2018; Tseliou & Borcsa, 2018). Nevertheless, the use of qualitative research methodologies remains marginal, as they are mostly deployed for the study of therapy process (Tseliou, 2018; Tseliou & Borcsa, 2018). This is isomorphic to what seems to be the case in the broader spectrum of psychotherapy research, where qualitative research methodologies are minimally used.

In this context, there is growing use of discursive methodologies like conversation or discourse analysis (Borcsa & Rober, 2016; Tseliou & Borcsa, 2018), with few of the existing studies undertaking a systematic, discursive psychology methodological perspective (for an overview, see Tseliou, 2013). On the other hand, the literature of discursive psychology research of couple and family therapy seems to be growing rapidly (e.g., O'Reilly et al., 2018; Patrika & Tseliou, 2016a, 2016b; Sametband & Strong, 2018).

To date, discursive psychology has been utilized by small-scale studies which entail a limited number of sessions as data or which follow a case-study type of research design. The laborious nature of the detailed micro-analysis which discursive psychology necessitates coupled with the difficulty of acquiring access to the naturally occurring data of recorded or video-taped family therapy sessions possibly account for this scarcity. Such studies have investigated a range of topics, like family therapy problem talk in respect of attributions (O'Reilly, 2007; Patrika & Tseliou, 2016a, 2016b; Stancombe & White, 2005), the use of circular questioning in initial systemic family therapy sessions (Diorinou & Tseliou, 2014), or the negotiation and construction of cultural identities in the case of immigration (Sametband & Strong, 2018). However, this limited application of discursive psychology as a methodology for the study of couple and family therapy process does

not pay justice to its potential for addressing questions concerning therapy process (and outcome) framed in systemic terms, that is, in ways which highlight an intersubjectively oriented, discursive perspective.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss three specific aspects of the methodological practice of discursive psychology which I think can add to systemic, family therapy process research, as they bear strong affinity with certain premises of systemic family therapy. These aspects relate to main adherences of discursive psychology which I will further elaborate in the following section by also engaging into a more specific demonstration of how they can be pursued in the context of analytic practice.

Discursive Psychology: Methodological Contributions to Systemic Family Therapy Research

Discursive psychology can facilitate the study of systemic family therapy process, by providing methodological tools for its study, which allow for the study of the therapeutic dialogue in tune with systemic/constructionist premises. Elsewhere (Tseliou, 2018) I have elaborated on the methodological potential of conversation analysis and discursive psychology for psychotherapy research. I have argued that they allow for the study of psychotherapy by highlighting interdependency in respect of therapist and client interaction while simultaneously allowing for an "insider's view," i.e., for investigating psychotherapy from therapist and clients' perspective. Here, I will focus on three specific, theoretical, and methodological aspects of discursive psychology. These include the pragmatic approach to the understanding (and study) of therapeutic dialogue, an intersubjective approach to the understanding (and study) of psychological phenomena, and also the potential for addressing the political and ideological aspects of therapeutic dialogue.

Argumentation and Rhetorics: The Pragmatics of Psychotherapeutic Discourse

Theorizing Discourse Early systemic theorizing (Bateson, 1979; Watzlawick et al., 1967) introduced a pragmatic approach to the understanding of communication, in that the emphasis was placed not so much on the content of discourse but on its function in the context of interaction as well as on its consequences for behavior and interaction. Similarly, discursive psychology adheres to the notion that talk is social, performative, and not neutral. This suggests that while in talk-in-interaction we are not simply transmitting content or information in an unproblematic way. Instead, discursive psychology places particular emphasis on what we perform by means of discourse use. For discursive psychology, discourse is action and has

consequences for behavior. In that sense it has a functional aspect, we *do* things by words in the context of our discursive exchanges. Thus, discourse entails an *action orientation* in that we actively construct phenomena or versions of the world by means of discourse use and such constructions attend to interpersonal aims, like when we construct a complaint (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). For discursive psychology, this performative aspect of talk-in-interaction is also rhetorically structured in the sense that we engage into a constant effort of persuasion as we argue for the "truth" and the "reality" of our views. However, for discursive psychology views are neither stable nor consistent. Instead, people express contradictory views even within the same course of interaction as each view is constructed in relation to its opposite. In that sense talk and thinking are approached as being dilemmatic, i.e., as always entailing two contrasting sides (Billig, 1987; Billig et al., 1988). Therefore, whenever we engage in talk, it is not so straightforward to adopt one view or another. For discursive psychology, co-conversants are always faced with dilemmas posed by the rhetorical context of their talk-in-interaction. The key dynamic for such "dilemmas of stake," in discursive psychology terminology, is how to talk so that our co-discussants cannot undermine our arguments as arising out of personal interest (Edwards & Potter, 1992, 1993). "Factual" discourse is a discourse structure, which facilitates the management of this dilemma. "Factual discourse" is any discourse where views are constructed as facts existing as a reality beyond speakers' personal views or preferences. This *fact and interest* perspective is interrelated with the notion of *accountability* (Edwards & Potter, 1992, 1993). For discursive psychology, discourse structure and content are revealing of the ways in which we attempt to manage accountability issues, that is, issues concerning the undertaking of responsibility for our choice to say (or not say) something as well as for what we choose to say (discourse content). These three aspects which constitute the pragmatic/rhetorical perspective of discursive psychology, namely, the *action orientation*, the *fact and interest*, and the *accountability* features, are depicted in the Discursive Action Model (DAM) (Edwards & Potter, 1993). DAM was originally introduced as an alternative to mainstream, social psychology theorizing for attributions and is extensively presented in the discursive psychology literature (e.g., Edwards & Potter, 1993; Potter, 2012a; Potter & Hepburn, 2005) as well as in family therapy research which deploys DAM for analysis (e.g., Diorinou & Tseliou, 2014; O'Reilly et al., 2018; Patrika & Tseliou, 2016a, 2016b).

Except of the rhetorical/argumentative perspective, there is a further important dimension concerning the discursive psychology approach to the theorizing and the study of discourse. This is the interactional perspective, a perspective very similar to systemic, family therapy theorizing concerning communication. Discursive psychology, in tune with ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, places emphasis on how we *intersubjectively* make sense of each other's discursive contributions and *jointly* construct phenomena in talk-in-interaction (Tseliou, 2018).

Analysis of Discourse The theoretical orientation that discursive psychology undertakes concerning discourse indicates a set of certain methodological principles

for the analysis of any discourse, including psychotherapeutic discourse. Here, due to my particular focus, I will indicatively select the setting of initial systemic family therapy sessions, to briefly explicate these methodological principles. I will draw examples from studies, which have deployed discursive psychology for the analysis of initial systemic family therapy sessions.

A first methodological principle entails the *analysis of the rhetorical context*. From a discursive psychology perspective, when the therapist and the family members meet, they do not simply exchange their views concerning what seems to be troubling in an unproblematic way. Instead, they engage into argumentation concerning their perspectives, their epistemologies, and their worldviews about "the problem." Research (Ugazio, Fellin, Pennacchio, Negri, & Colciago, 2012) has indicated that in the case of systemic family therapy, these entail significant discrepancies. Family members usually share a linear epistemology according to which the identified patient has a problem for which they should not be held responsible. On the contrary, the systemic therapist espouses a perspective, which favors circular causality and relational responsibility. According to this, everyone contributes to the construction of the relational/discursive pattern within which the reported problem is embedded. This dynamic sets the ground for analyzing what is "at stake" for both sides. Patrika and Tseliou (2016b) present a detailed analysis of the "dilemma of stake" for family members and for the systemic therapist. For family members problem talk is challenging. On the one hand, the family therapy setting is a setting where problem talk is normatively expected as people enter therapy in order to ask for help about their problems. Problem talk, however, raises issues of attributions of responsibility and often denotes a search for a cause, i.e., for someone who is accountable or to be blamed for the reported difficulties. In a family therapy setting, family members are potential candidates. Consequently family members seem entangled within the dilemma of how to speak about problems but without facing risks concerning the attribution of responsibility (Patrika & Tseliou, 2016b). Correspondingly, the systemic family therapist seems equally caught in a difficult to handle dilemma: how to speak about problems without simultaneously blaming family members including the "identified patient," given that on the one hand, there is a normative expectation from an expert to diagnose problems and their cause(s) but on the other, the systemic perspective necessitates a neutrality perspective (Patrika & Tseliou, 2016b).

For discursive psychology analysis, this dynamic is critical as it provides the context for the interpretation of what is uttered by both sides. Such analysis, however, is not merely a descriptive analysis of the content of therapist and family members' discourse. Instead, a second methodological principle dictates a *shift from the level of content to the level of process*, in systemic terms. A discursive analyst needs to de-code what is performed by what the therapist and family members say: he/she needs to analyze the function of their words. Diorinou and Tseliou (2014) exemplify this feature in their analysis of a father's discourse in an initial systemic family therapy session. They show how father's factual discourse concerning his son's

problem behavior, i.e., a discourse constructing the problem behavior as a fact existing independently of father's report about it, seems to attend to a multi-faceted function. It addresses the preceding invitation by the therapist to talk about the problem in a way, which delicately manages accountability issues. Father's factual discourse seems to eschew the risk of constructing his son as being responsible for the problem behavior while simultaneously eschews the risk of constructing himself as a father who accuses his son for the family's troubles (Diorinou & Tseliou, 2014). Diorinou and Tseliou (2014) analyze in detail the features which add factuality to father's discourse, like the use of direct quotation in the phrase, "there is no harmony in our house, no coordination, no consistency and all this may come up, let's say, through certain phrases like when my older son said "in my life I feel alone" (Diorinou & Tseliou, 2014, p. 110).

    In order to reach an interpretation of what is performed in talk, analysis needs to follow a third methodological principle, which dictates a *sequential analysis of talk-in-interaction* in discursive psychology terms. This implies that the interpretation of the function of each utterance needs to take into account its conversational context. In other words, analysis of one utterance needs to take in into account both the preceding as well as the subsequent utterances. It further implies that the analyst needs to examine in detail, utterance by utterance, how therapist and family members de-code each other's discursive contributions. To accomplish this kind of analysis, discursive psychology makes use of contributions by ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. The first tradition has contributed the idea that talk entails reflexive markers, which indicate how speakers themselves interpret each other's contributions (Garfinkel, 1967). It thus acknowledges that talk has a reflexive quality, in that it is revealing of the constant process of interpretation and construction of meaning in which co-conversants engage. The second has provided an extensive body of empirical research concerning normative conversational structures (see, e.g., Sacks et al., 1974). Such normative expectations about what is anticipated or not in talk-in-interaction suggest a social accountability, intersubjective perspective to the study of therapeutic dialogue. For example, conversation analysis literature has identified normative structures which have the form of pairs and which are termed adjacency pairs (Sacks et al., 1974). In their case, when a first part of a pair is uttered, like an invitation, the second is normatively expected, like acceptance. However, breaches of such normative structures are often the case, e.g., denial of invitation, and these are of great analytic interest. In that sense, a detailed, sequential analysis of this kind can shed light to the function of a question in the place of a normatively expected answer by a family member, following a therapist's question. Patrika and Tseliou (2016a) present an example of this kind of sequential analysis, when they show how mother's question as a response to the therapist's circular question – "Who is happy with this?"– (Patrika & Tseliou, 2016a, p. 476) is part of a sequence which seems to contribute to the construction of a blaming pattern where both family members and the therapist seem to contribute.

An Interactional Perspective to Psychological Phenomena in Psychotherapeutic Discourse: The Case of Identity

The pragmatic/rhetorical perspective, which I have discussed in the previous section, is interrelated with the overall approach that discursive psychology undertakes concerning psychological phenomena. Discursive psychology suggests their re-considering in discursive and interactional terms, an orientation also undertaken by systemic family therapy. In order to further explicate this perspective, both on the level of theorizing but also in analytic terms; here I will indicatively select the notion of identity. Once more, I will draw examples from studies of initial systemic family therapy sessions, which have deployed discursive psychology as a method for analysis of therapy discourse.

Perhaps one of the most relevant identity categories as concerns the psychotherapeutic setting is the one of the patient. Systemic family therapy has deliberately selected the category of the identified patient aiming to denote a non-essentialist and non-pathologizing approach to the diagnosis of psychological problems. Similarly, when identity categories like "the hyperactive child," "the problematic child," "the depressed," or the "stressed mother" are deployed in family therapy talk, instead of ascribing to them a realist, ontological quality, the systemic therapist engages into an attempt to translate such categories in semantic or pragmatic sequences entangled in interactional patterns by means of circular questioning (for the latter see Penn, 1982; Tomm, 1985). For example, he/she may investigate both the meaning of such categories but also the pattern(s), which connects all family members' behaviors in relation to such a category. Circular questioning facilitates this investigation with questions like, "what does he/she do that makes him hyperactive?", "what does father do when he/she does that?", etc.

Discursive psychology undertakes a very similar perspective. Instead of approaching the deployment of identity categories in talk as pointing to an unmediated, one-by-one relationship between the category and the individual's identity, it attempts to decode their function in talk-in-interaction. In that sense, it approaches identity as a matter which speakers make relevant in their discourse and which they construct, often in various and contradictory ways, while they speak. There is extensive discursive psychology literature on identity (see, e.g., Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998) where an alternative approach to mainstream, social psychology theorizing about identity is discussed. There is also extensive debate within the discursive psychology literature, which reflects wider tensions concerning psychological theorizing about subjectivity correspondingly reflecting wider ontological and epistemological debates. For example, discursive psychology scholars are criticized for undertaking a "blank subjectivity" approach when they restrict notions like identity to the discursive deployment of relevant categories in talk-in-interaction and solely lean to the analysis of conversational exchanges (Parker, 2012). Some lean to psychoanalysis for handling this issue (e.g., Billig, 2014) whereas others, like Margaret Wetherell (1998, 2007), strive for theoretical articulations without resorting to a psychoanalytic perspective. Wetherell's proposal (Wetherell, 2007) suggests

an approach, which combines an analysis of how identities are constructed in the micro context of discursive exchanges with an analysis which further seeks to identify regularities both in interpersonal relationships but also in the drawing of broader, culturally available and historically constituted ways of talking about certain categories, e.g., gender. This reflects an attempt to combine a conversation analytic perspective as depicted in membership categorization theory (Sacks, 1989) with post-structural theorizing which uses the notion of subject positioning to refer to the ways that speakers position themselves and their co-conversants in identity terms (see, e.g., Guilfoyle, 2018). A full discussion of such debates definitely extends the scope of this text. Once more, what seems striking here is the resonance of such debates with debates concerning the place of the individual in systemic theorizing and therapy (e.g., Flaskas & Pocock, 2009).

As exemplified in the previous section, analytic practice in the case of identity categories deployment follows the main methodological principle of interpreting its *function in the particular rhetorical and sequential context* of its deployment. O'Reilly's (2007) analysis of the deployment of the category of the "naughty" child by parents in initial systemic family therapy sessions is a good example of such an orientation. O'Reilly (2007) has shown how the deployment of this category facilitates the management of accountability issues concerning the family's troubles or the construction of the identity of a "good parent." Similarly, Patrika and Tseliou (2016a) in their analysis highlight how the category of the "stressed mother," deployed by mother, seems interwoven with the construction of her child as "problematic" and seems to facilitate the management of accountability issues concerning the family's reported difficulties. For an example, see the following lines from the analyzed extract (Patrika & Tseliou, 2016a, p. 476): "I was an anxious mother… Because since he started walking, I was following him all the time, because I didn't know what he was going to do."

Ideological Aspects of Psychotherapeutic Discourse: History and Socio-Political Context

Critical discursive psychology scholars (e.g., Bozatzis, 2009, 2016; Wetherell, 1998, 2007; Wetherell & Edley, 2014) argue for the necessity of contextualizing the pragmatic/rhetorical perspective with an analysis of the historical and ideological conditions of discourse use. This indicates that interpretation should extend the micro-rhetorical and sequential context of the local setting where talk-in-interaction takes place. Instead, it should include an analysis of the historical and the political genealogy of patterns of language use. In discursive psychology literature, this perspective is elaborated by means of notions like "interpretative repertoires" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) and "ideological dilemmas" (Billig et al., 1988). Interpretative repertoires indicate that there are historically and culturally available, systematic sets of constructions of phenomena from which speakers draw when in talk-in-interaction.

These can be traced by means of analyzing the content of discourse, including its grammar and structure (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Here I choose to focus on the notion of ideological dilemmas, which is less popular in the discursive psychology research literature.

Billig et al. (1988) discuss ideology as "lived ideology," meaning that ideology is constantly constructed and re-constructed in the context of peoples' everyday interactions. Thus, dilemmas of stake, like the ones explicated in the previous section, are not ideologically neutral. Instead, they are interwoven with wider, historically constituted ideological dilemmas. Addressing the ideological aspect as well as the interrelated aspect of power relations can also grant access to interpreting what is not said, what speakers refrain from uttering (Billig, 2014). This perspective is potentially attentive to arguments concerning the necessity of addressing the political and ideological aspects of family therapy discourse in the context of criticisms levelled against initial systemic family therapy models of the first cybernetic era (e.g., Hare-Mustin, 1994). It further resonates with therapeutic approaches, which have undertaken a more political, activist stance to therapy in light of Foucault's theorizing (White & Epston, 1990).

Undertaking such an orientation in analysis necessitates linking discourse tensions of the local context with wider ideological tensions. Analysis should further trace the ideological conditions of the historical constitution of what is talked about. Up-to-date it seems that no discursive psychology study of family therapy discourse undertakes this perspective in analysis, although there are such examples in the critical discursive psychology literature (Bozatzis, 2009, 2016) as well as examples of critical perspectives in discourse analysis of family therapy (e.g., Guilfoyle, 2018; Kogan, 1998). Here I will attempt to provide an example by discussing the phenomenon of psychologization (see, e.g., Sapountzis & Vikka, 2015) in family therapy discourse, under the light of Billig et al. (1988) notion of ideological dilemmas. Such phenomenon entails the use of terminology of expertise in respect of psychological matters, like diagnostic discourse as indicated by the use of terms like "depression," "hyperactivity," etc. by lay speakers like family members. This may be coupled with appeals to the therapist for providing a diagnosis for the problem. For example, family members may pose questions to the systemic family therapist like, "Will you now tell us what the problem is?" In order to highlight the broader, ideological dynamic of this kind of discourse, I will draw from Billig et al.'s (1988) discussion of a specific ideological dilemma. This is the "expertize vs. equality" ideological dilemma, which I think that is of critical relevance for systemic family therapy discourse.

For Billig et al. (1988) an expert's position in a democratic society is not that straightforward in the sense that the power exercised by an expert may be in conflict with the democratic ideal of equality: the more expertise the more that equality is at stake. On the other hand, democracy does not necessarily go together with equality, given that power has not entirely vanished in democratic societies. For Billig et al. (1988) this creates a context of ambivalence as concerns the relationships between experts and non-experts. In this context, there seems to be a constant process of negotiation between the expert and the non-expert concerning the limits of the

expert's power. Furthermore, and paradoxically so, the more that experts try to establish equality the more inequality may be established, for it is not that easy to eliminate the tension between equality and inequality. For example, non-experts may respond to such efforts with further pleas on experts to practice expertise, like in the case of the question addressed to therapists reported above. As Billig et al. (1988) put it, especially concerning professions like the one of the psychotherapist, the more one tries to become friendly and equalitarian the more there is the danger that he or she may be accused for doing something that anyone could do and thus the more he/she seems in danger of losing his/her professional identity. On the other hand, the more he/she stays with (professional) distance the more he/she is in danger of being accused that he/she adheres to non-democratic ideals by attempting to establish the non-symmetrical position of an expert.

In Patrika and Tseliou (2016b, p. 11) there is analysis of an excerpt of an initial family therapy session where mother repeatedly poses the following question to the therapist: "Is this normal?" She does so in respect of her son's behavior which she has previously referred to as hyperactive. The therapist refrains from giving an answer to this question and instead reciprocates the question by asking mother whether she considers the child's behavior as being normal: "I am wondering, do you consider it as being normal or don't you consider it as being normal?" (Patrika & Tseliou, 2016b, p. 11). In their analysis, Patrika and Tseliou (2016b) address the local, rhetorical context of mother's appeal and highlight the related tension, concerning both the therapist and mother. Mother is there for getting an expert's view concerning her troubles, and her question can be seen as an attempt to evoke the therapist's expertise. On the other hand, the systemic therapist tries to eschew the risk of adopting a straightforward expert's role by providing an answer, given his/her commitment to an equalitarian, non-expert, non-interventive role, as a systemic, post-modern, collaborative therapist (Patrika & Tseliou, 2016b). If interpreted under the light of the ideological dilemmas perspective, such tension can be seen as also reflecting wider ideological tensions concerning expertise as juxtaposed to equality. Expert's effort – in this case the therapist's – to collaboratively share expertise with non-experts by assigning them power seems to intensify their efforts to evoke his expertise. Simultaneously, though, he/she remains the one "in control" of their dialogue and the one assigning power, for "nobody wants to take democracy that far" (Billig et al., 1988, p. 70). As Billig et al. (1988) put it, this tension is not so easy to handle, as power differentials do not simply vanish out of our wish to act collaboratively, given the institutional assignment of the role of an expert.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have argued that discursive psychology can fruitfully contribute to systemic family therapy process research. I have discussed how undertaking a discursive psychology methodological approach can facilitate the investigation of therapeutic dialogue in ways, which resonate with systemic adherences. I have

discussed three specific ways, which include a pragmatic approach to discourse, an interactional perspective to the understanding and study of psychological phenomena, as well as a historical and ideological approach to discourse use. Discursive psychology analysis can shed light to the subtle ways in which the therapist and family members co-construct the therapeutic dialogue, while they argue for their views and struggle with certain dilemmas. Further, it can allow for approaching both the therapist and family members as competent, social actors, whose discourse seems entangled with wider, ideological tensions.

My proposal, however, should not be considered as an appeal to replace other qualitative or quantitative methodologies for the study of therapeutic discourse, which have and still prove particularly illuminating (Tseliou & Borcsa, 2018). Discursive psychology has potential but also bears certain limitations as it can address specific research questions framed in the context of certain epistemological adherences. Further to that, analysis is a laborious endeavor, which necessitates a rather sophisticated expertise and this may discourage researchers from giving it a chance. There are also unresolved tensions, which further complicate the venture of doing discursive psychology type of analysis, like debates over what constitutes proper analysis (Bozatzis, 2014). The latter coupled with the lack of specific guidelines of how to go about an analysis and with the so far limited deployment of discursive psychology for the study of systemic couple and family therapy further complicate the picture. My prejudiced view, given my "close relationship" both with systemic family therapy and with discursive psychology, is that their meeting can contribute to both fields. My wish is that this chapter will contribute to this aim.

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