A Performative-Performance Analytical Approach: Infusing Butlerian Theory into the Narrative-Discursive Method

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Abstract

Judith Butler's theory of performativity provides gender theorists with a rich theoretical language for thinking about gender. Despite this, Butlerian theory is difficult to apply, as Butler does not provide guidance on actual analysis of language use in context. In order to address this limitation, we suggest *carefully* supplementing performativity with the notion of performance in a manner that allows for the inclusion of relational specificities and the mechanisms through which gender, and gender trouble, occur. To do this, we turn to current developments within discursive psychology and narrative theory. We extend the narrative-discursive method proposed by Taylor and colleagues, infusing it with Butlerian theory in order to fashion a dual analytical lens, which we call the performativity-performance approach. We provide a brief example of how the proposed analytical process may be implemented.

Key words: narrative analysis; discursive; performativity theory; performance; gender trouble

In this article we present a performativity-performance approach to qualitative inquiry. This approach combines the theoretical richness of Butlerian theory with the empirical rigour of narrative-discursive analysis. As such, we propose a way of utilising Butlerian theory in an empirical account of discursive practice and action that simultaneously extends the narrative-discursive approach outlined by Taylor and colleagues.

Judith Butler's theory of performativity provides gender theorists with a rich theoretical language for thinking about gender (Bordo, 1992). Her well-known, and widely utilised of concept of 'doing gender' describes the process of how gendered subjects come into being through a process of recurring discursive imitation and repetition—or 'recitation'—of gender

norms (Butler, 1993a). This process is described by Butler (1990) as: "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (p 43).

Butler's radical proposition, therefore, is that gender is a discursive formation that fundamentally shapes, or produces, the sexed body (Butler, 1990), that is, gender (and other) norms actually 'materialise' the body (Butler, 1993b). She collapses the gender/sex binary and challenges "the law of two sexes", that is, the assumption that 'natural' sexual dichotomy is the stable bedrock of gender and that as a consequence there are two (and only two) opposite and complementary sexes/genders. She does this through a strategy of subversion that entails the troubling of gender by denaturalising its binary categorisation and its supposed naturalness. Certain deployments of gender (such as parodic or incorrect enactments) trouble gender by highlighting the disjunction between the sexed body and the performance, and thereby revealing the imitative nature of all gender identities and undermining their presumed metaphysical reality. For her, it is the cultural necessity of reiterating the symbolic norms of gender that shows them to be unoriginal and imitative in nature (i.e., copies or parodies) and therefore potentially changeable (McNay, 1999).

"Butler's work has profoundly reshaped how we come to think about gender" (Hey, 2006, p. 441). At the time of its emergence in the early 1990s, it significantly contributed to the debates on sexuality and gender by offering an alternative to the then widely-held polarisation of sex and gender (Campbell & Harbord, 1999) and leading to an emphasis on the discursive construction of sex/gender. More recently, feminist theorists (see for e.g., Coole & Frost, 2010; Wilson, 2004, 2010) have begun to problematise the privileging of the discursive and the "antibiologism" (Wilson, 2010, p. 195) in feminist theory. Butler's position is, however, not necessarily at odds with this recent theoretical turn, as indicated by Barad (2003), who argues that "If performativity

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is linked not only to the formation of the subject but also to the production of the matter of bodies, as Butler's account of 'materialization' … suggest[s], then it is all the more important that we understand the nature of this production" (p. 808). On this premise Barad (2003) formulates what she calls a posthumanist notion of performativity. While recognising these recent materialist adaptations of performativity, our focus is on the application of performativity theory in discursively-orientated work which, we argue, requires the supplementation of performativity with performance.

It was only about fifteen years after the publication of the foundational works *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that matter*—in which the bulk of her labour on performativity theory occurred—that Butler (2004) applied her theory empirically, analysing, for instance, sex reassignment and intersex subjects. This, coupled with the notorious difficulty of Butler's writing and theorisation, has meant that mis/interpretations of performativity theory have abounded and application has been complicated (Cadwallder, 2009; Hey, 2006; Segal, 2008). In this regard, Speer (2005) highlights Butler's failure to translate her discussions of context sensitivity and the re/inscription of meaning into a systematic analysis of language use. It is to this task that we turn in this article, proposing a way of applying performativity theory to interview data.

In order to apply performativity theory, we suggest *carefully* supplementing the notion performativity with that of narrative performance in a manner that allows for the inclusion of relational specificities and the mechanisms through which gender, and gender trouble, occur. We propose that 'performativity' and 'performance' each capture different dimensions of the process of 'doing' gender. Incorporating the notion of performance offers a way of applying Butler's theory as well as highlighting elements of her theory—such as reflexivity and active imagination—that remain unclear or underdeveloped. Performance, we shall argue, is an essential

element of performativity and paying attention to performance provides a way of studying gender construction and troubling.

This supplementation requires some engagement with a central point of disagreement and difficulty in relation to Butler's performativity theory, namely the extent to which gender performativity might entail performance. That is, whether we might consider subjects, at least in some part, as doers (Brickell, 2005).This is especially necessary given the mis/interpretations of Butler's theory that have caused theorists to move away from her original anti-foundationalist intentions or to read her theory as deterministic and restricted in terms of the possibility for emancipatory action (Brickell, 2005; Cadwallader, 2010).

In order to supplement Butler's notion of performativity with that of performance, we turn to current developments around the notion of performance within discursive psychology and narrative theory. As we shall show, we build on the narrative-discursive method (a particular discursive approach to narrative analysis, see Taylor, 2005 & 2006; Taylor & Littleton, 2006), infusing it with Butlerian theory in order to fashion a dual analytical lens, which we call the performativity-performance approach. The narrative-discursive method provides a concrete analytical strategy that, inter alia, draws attention to subject positioning and interactional trouble within the micro politics of particular localised discursive contexts. The concept of interactional trouble resonates with the Butlerian notion of 'troubling moments' and provides a way of contextualising and making 'gender trouble' visible in real life settings.

As it stands, however, the narrative-discursive approach requires some expansion in order to (1) locate 'trouble' beyond individual identity work and (2) understand discursive resources as dynamic. The concept of 'trouble' in the narrative-discursive incorporates both the constraints of the immediate interactional context and earlier accounts, with the latter allowing for an understanding of continuous individual subjectivity (see Taylor, 2005). However, the focus of

this method is largely on interactional, micro-level trouble, and so the implications of 'trouble' beyond the continuity of individual subjectivity and restoring interactional balance are neglected. We argue that linking interactional trouble with performativity and 'gender trouble' is a useful expansion in the analytical procedure. In addition, narrative-discursive theorists' assertion that interactive accounts are "shaped and constrained by the meanings which prevail within the larger society" (Taylor & Littleton, 2006, p. 22), in particular discursive resources such as interpretative repertoires and canonical narratives, does little to acknowledge that these resources are dynamic and changeable. Butler's theorization of performativity and of gender trouble which involves "slowly bending citations" (van Lenning, 2004, p. 30) helps to account for both the entrenchment of norms and their instability and permeability.

Before we begin, we must note that a central concern in this endeavour is not to reintroduce the originary pre-discursive subject, since we recognise that the radical potential of Butler's theory lies in its deconstruction and the ways that this problematises the order of sex, gender, and sexuality. Yet, we maintain that it is possible to preserve the anti-essentialism of performativity while developing an account of gender construction as both inter/active and performed. In order to ensure that Butler's theory is applied in a way that remains true to her original intentions, analyses must be based upon a clear understanding of the relationship of the concepts performativity and performance to one another.

In the following we explore the relationship of these two concepts to one another. First we explicate Butler's understanding of the concepts and how they relate to 'doing gender' and to one another. We then briefly consider two common pitfalls that have resulted from mis/interpretations of Butler's work, *viz.,* the pitfalls of voluntarism and determinism, and the implications these have for the subject's capacity for resistance. This discussion is important as it lays the foundation for conceptual clarity in the analytical task. Thereafter, we discuss how we envisage

the relationship between performativity and performance and how they could be usefully combined for methodological purposes. To this end, we outline some of the basic tenets of the narrative-discursive method, indicating how it may be extended through the infusion of Butlerian theory. We conclude with a brief analysis of extracts from interviews conducted by the first author in order to illustrate how the performativity-performance lens may be applied.

Doing Gender: Confusion and Contention

Butler's (1990) assertion that "gender is always a doing" (p. 33) comes with the crucial caveat: "though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (p. 33). Her theory rests on a critique of the notion of the subject as an originator of action and opposes the idea of an underlying substantial identity, or 'subject'. The notion of 'the subject' is problematic because it invokes an actor behind the 'performance'—which presupposes an already existing performer and often leads to a humanist understanding of the autonomous, sovereign subject (Brickell, 2005). Instead, Butler (1990) takes the Nietzschian position that "there is no 'being' behind doing, acting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction imposed on the doing—the doing itself is everything" (p. 25). The (illusion of the) 'doer'/subject is created and maintained by a series of performed deeds. As Butler (1991) puts it, "the 'being' of the subject is no more self-identical than the 'being' of any gender; in fact, coherent gender, achieved through an apparent repetition of the same, produces as an *effect* the illusion of a prior and volitional subject" (p. 24). In other words, subjects are the effects rather than the causes of discourses (Salih, 2002). Hence, gender is not fashioned by the subject, but rather shapes the subject (Hey, 2006).

However, since the workings of these discourses are concealed, there only *appears* to be the subject who is 'doing'. This is what Butler calls the 'subject effect' of discourse. She maintains that subjects are not simply 'there' (e.g., from birth) but 'effected' in various ways as

they are instituted into specific contexts at specific times (Salih, 2002). The concept of performativity captures the paradoxical notion of gender as constitutive, that is, as appearing to be fixed, but actually requiring continual maintenance (Hey, 2006).

Potential Pitfalls Related to the Misreading of Butler's Work

The claim that 'there is no doer behind the deed' has raised the question concerning how there can be a performance without a performer or an act without an actor (Benhabib, Nicholson, & Fraser 1995). Butler does not claim that gender *is* a performance, however. Accordingly, much of the contention and confusion, indeed even misreading, in relation to Butlerian theory concerns the extent to which subjectivity is determined by the discursive formations in which a speaker is positioned (Taylor, 2005). The issue of agency has been a central focus in the discussion generated by Butler's work (Cadwallader, 2009), an area that has been called conceptually 'fuzzy' (especially in her earlier works in which she lays much of her theoretical foundation) (Brickell, 2005). Butler (1999b) concedes to this, stating that her lack of clarity between the concepts of performativity and performance means that at times the concepts seem to blur into one another. The conceptual slippage in Butler's theorising of subject formulation has resulted in "a lack of clarity [regarding] the capacity for action held by subjects relative to the power that enables their existence in the first place" (Brickell, 2005, p. 28). It has resulted in two mutually exclusive understandings of Butler's work, that of either voluntarism or determinism (Brickell, 2005; Cadwallader, 2009). As Lloyd (2007) explains:

> Some interlocutors, … regarded Butler as legislating a voluntarist (even hyper-voluntarist) politics where subversive gender identities could be fabricated and reshaped at will; where subjects could deliberately make 'gender trouble'. Paradoxically, others argued that performativity was a form of determining where, depressingly, subjects were inextricably locked into oppressive relations of power but unable to change them. (p. 57).

The notion of 'performance' has been instrumental in promoting voluntarist understandings, particularly her use of the word 'performance' and of the metaphor of *acting* in *Gender trouble* (Hey, 2006) where she claims that she "waffle[d] between an understanding of performativity as linguistic and casting it as theatrical" (Butler, 1999, xxvi), sometimes describing gender in terms of linguistic performativity and at others characterising it as straightforward theatre (Salih, 2007). Hence, the idea of 'doing gender', which has become increasingly popular in gender studies, is utilised in such a way that the notion of performativity is interpreted simply as the performance of gender, (i.e., the intentional, dramatic enactment of gender identity) (Boucher, 2006). In response to this to Butler (1993a) has argued that "*the reduction of performativity to performance would be a mistake*" (p. 234) since 'performative' is derived from the word 'perform' in the sense of performing an *action* rather than performing as in *acting* a part (Hey, 2006)."'Performance' connotes an act and an actor. 'Performativity' suggests action; that is, "the constitution of regulatory notions and their effects" (Brickell, 2005, p. 28), of which the gendered subject is one. Butler (2007) has argued that gender cannot amount to a "*performance* that a prior subject elects to do" (p. 341). Since performativity is principally a constitutive process in which the performance itself constitutes the subject, it cannot "refer to [prediscursive] subjects 'doing gender'" (Brickell, 2005, p. 28).

However, this does not preclude political action or resistance on the part of the subject as some critics have feared (Salih, 2007). Rather Butler offers a "'third way' between issues of voluntarism and determinism" (Cadwallader, 2009, p. 291). She argues that

> the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency. For what is it that enables a purposive and significant reconfiguration of cultural and political relations, if not a relation that can be turned against itself, reworked and resisted? (Butler, 1995, pp. 45 - 46).

Adopting a Foucauldian-inspired position, namely, "construction is not opposed to agency; it is the *necessary scene* of agency" (Butler, 1990, p. 147). The undermining of power occurs within

"a dialectical relation between constraint and agency" (Boucher, 2006, p. 113). Thus, Butler does not eliminate the possibility of agency, but simply *reconceives* it (Dow Magnus, 2006).

Rather than being "mere cultural dupes" (Boucher, 2006, p. 112), it is precisely the subject's forcible compulsion to recite gender that grants it the possibility of subverting the law against itself (Salih, 2007). The necessary iterability of the signifier reveals "the citationality and the intrinsic—but necessary and *useful*—failure of all gender performatives" (Salih, 2007, p 63). According to Butler (1993a), it is owing to "reiteration that gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions, as that which escapes or exceeds the norm" (p. 10). She therefore locates the subject's room for manoeuvre in anomalies, whether they are unintentional or deliberate, specifically, in the imperfections of each gender performance (Van Lenning, 2004). For example, the political promise of queer deployments of gender, such as drag, has to do with "the exposure or the failure of heterosexual regimes ever fully to legislate or contain their ideals" (Butler, 1993a, p. 237). Butler (1993a) does not therefore believe "that drag *opposes* heterosexuality, or that the proliferation of drag will bring down heterosexuality; on the contrary, drag tends to be the allegorisation of heterosexuality" (p. 237). This allows for the possibility of troubling gender, as we shall discuss next.

Troubling Moments: 'Slowly Bending Citations'

For Butler, resistance must always be articulated from within existing discourses. "There is only the taking up of the tools where they lie" (Butler, 1990, p. 145). Consequently, all gender performances bear the vestiges of heteronormativity and may inadvertently reinforce the heterosexual matrix, regardless of authorial intention (Butler, 1990). Furthermore, Butler (1993a) understands gender construction as "a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms; [it] is both produced and destabilized in the course of reiteration" (p. 10). Thus, while

performances bear the vestiges of normativity, shifts in gender discourses or 'scripts' also occur over time and allow different subjectivities to operate. Gender trouble therefore entails "slowly bending citations" (van Lenning, 2004, p. 30).

This slow bending of citations or shifts in gender scripts over time are linked to the troubling moments that occur "in the interstices between the impossibility of identical recitation and necessary reiteration" (Lloyd, 1999, p.201) and disrupt gender. These troubling moments manifest as imperfections or *momentary* discontinuities in *specific* performances of gender. Based on Butler's understanding of resistance, gender trouble can be said to amount to the cumulative effect of individual 'failed' gender performances that create disjuncture in hetero/normative gender scripts.

Since trouble manifests as *momentary* lapses in *specific* performances, trouble must be considered contextually in relation to where and when it occurs and how it is interpreted (Bordo, 1992). Signs make sense in their historical present (Lloyd, 1999). As Lloyd (1999) points out, they unavoidably have the potential to be read in numerous ways so that the possible consequences can never be contained. For example, a homosexual couple with children could, in one context, be considered as a parody of the patriarchal, nuclear family, which destabilises the power of normative, hetero-relational practice and undermines the inevitable linkage of parenthood and gender. In another context, however, this scenario could be seen as a reinforcement of the recognisable family form that continues to legitimate kinship bonds that inadvertently reiterates heteronormative assumptions regarding parenthood and gender norms (Butler, 2002; Donovan, 2000; Folgerø, 2008; Lubbe, 2007; Nentwich, 2008). Hence, Lloyd (1999) concludes that "only some performances in some contexts can impel categorical thinking" (p. 210).

It is therefore crucial to consider the context of *specific* performances. The trouble "is not just about what parodic intervention signifies but also where, when and to whom it signifies in the ways that it does" (Lloyd, 1999, p. 208). To fail to pay attention to performance as an aspect of performativity is to overlook the context in which troubling moments occur. What the notion of performance allows, then, is the possibility of considering *specific* re/enactments of gender within particular contexts, including those that may cause ruptures in the sanctioned gender scripts and, over time, serve to change these.

Performativity and Performance: How Might They Be Related?

The discussion above points to the possibility that an active, reflexive subject is not precluded in Butler's work (Brickell, 2005), and, furthermore, based on her theorisation of subversion and gender trouble, "it is clearly the case that at least part of people's identity *is* performed" (Pilgrim, 2001, p. 88). For instance, in *Gender trouble* Butler (1990) relates linguistic and theatrical performativity, affirming that theatre may provide crucial opportunities for queer or 'theatrical' politics. Her use of drag (and other transgressive performances) as an illustration links discourses of performance to performativity (Hood-Williams & Cealy Harrison, 1998). In her early work she states that "the task is not whether to repeat, but *how to* repeat" (Butler, 1990, p. 148; emphasis added) and refers to gender as "both intentional and performative" (Butler, 1988, p. 522). Later, in the preface to the anniversary edition of *Gender trouble* where she clarifies misunderstandings between performance and performativity, she considers the links between the two concepts, stating that "I have come to think that the two [concepts] are invariably related" (Butler, 1999, p. xxvi). Thus, notwithstanding the definite ruling out of the pre-discursive, volitional subject in Butler's work, there is a strand that entails an active subject, who imitates, recites, styles and enacts in particular ways (Brickell, 2005).

The concept of performance might usefully bring this element to the fore so that we can consider subjects to be 'doers' in the Butlerian sense of reciting. It also provides a means for investigating the specific performances that reinforce gender norms or, alternatively, cause gender trouble. Langellier (1999) maintains that "performativity relies upon performance to show itself" (p. 136). In other words, performance is the way that culture exhibits itself to itself and to others. She maintains that as soon as performativity comes to rest on *a* performance it becomes discussible. Therefore, it provides the context in which to investigate questions of embodiment, social power relations, political effects and so forth. It makes "cultural conflict concrete and accessible" (Langellier, 1999, p. 129).

In order to integrate performance into performativity, we turn to the notion of narrative performance. Discursive theorists have started attending to narrative performances or narratives-in-interaction in an attempt to acknowledge the reflexivity and agency of the subject so as to move away from 'totalising' constructions of subjectivity (Bamberg, 2004; 2006). Narratives are seen as "rhetorical tools" (Bamberg, 2004, p. 223) that always accomplish rhetorical work in a particular moment or context, including the fashioning of interactively useful self-portrayals, management of confrontations or contradictions and negotiation of meaning (Bamberg, 2006).

Analysts are especially interested in how narrators mitigate or deal with interactional trouble—the contradictions or inconsistency that may arise within the interactive struggle over meaning (Bamberg, 2004; Reynolds, Wetherell, & Taylor, 2007).This action orientation, the hallmark of a discursive approach to narrative, is highlighted by the dramaturgical metaphor. Narratives are seen as performances. They are told, recounted, related, described, recited or reported for an (actual or imagined) audience (Riessman, 2002). Thus, by synthesising narrative and discursive theory and adopting a discursive approach to narrative, analysts are able to explore

how individuals 'do' narrative in the sense of drawing on culturally available discursive resources to construct narratives within a particular interaction (Reynolds, Wetherell, & Taylor, 2007).

By infusing the narrative-discursive method with Butlerian theory, we fashioned an analytic lens that allowed us to attend to the performance dimension of narrative in relation to the performative dimension. Utilising the narrative-discursive method within a Butlerian theoretical framework made it possible to elaborate on the politics of narration, both on the local or micro-level (e.g., in relation to positioning and interactional trouble) and the macro-level, with regard to gendered norms and the broader political implications of 'trouble'. The particular method we used (which we merged with a Butlerian performativity approach) was the narrative-discursive method as outlined by Taylor and colleagues (Reynolds, Wetherell, & Taylor, 2007; Taylor, 2005 & 2006; Taylor & Littleton, 2006). We discuss this method in the following section.

The Narrative-Discursive Method

Taylor and Littleton (2006) present their narrative-discursive approach as a development of the synthetic approach outlined by Wetherell (1998). As such, their method shows how the wider discursive environment is implicated in speakers' biographical talk while at the same time exploring the "identity work through which these available meanings are taken up or resisted and (re)negotiated" (p. 23). This narrative-discursive analysis has three broad foci. The first is to understand talk as situated in a "complex aggregate of contexts" (Taylor & Littleton, 2006, p. 26), which means that a story "will vary with the occasion of telling" (p. 26) – or in Butler's terms will be a reiteration of a citation located within a particular interactive, social and discursive context. Secondly, talk is social in that speakers draw on common discursive resources (interpretative repertoires or canonical narratives) to construct their accounts. Thirdly, social constraints operate on talk in that there "is an onus on speakers to be consistent, both with their

own previous identity work ... and also with what is more generally recognised and expected" (Taylor & Littleton, 2006, pp. 26 – 27). The analysis comprises of two iterative tasks. The first task entails looking for common elements that occur across several interviews as well as at different times within one interview and which point to particular discursive resources. The focus in Butler's (1990) terms then is on the subject's "taking up of the [discursive] tools where they lie" (p. 145). The second task involves studying the use of these discursive resources within the context of the interview. This includes attention to rhetorical work as well as the possible 'trouble' that may arise as a result of the use of a particular resource. In Butlerian terms, this means that attention moves to the re-citation of discourse and possibilities for transforming citation. Key concepts in the analysis are 'positioning', 'trouble', and 'repair'. Each of these concepts will be discussed below.

Subject positioning is, according to Reynolds, Wetherell and Taylor (2007), "particularly apposite in an exploration of identity as performed in narratives, since it is the concept that connects wider notions of discourses and dominant cultural storylines to the social construction of particular selves" (p. 336). Narrative positioning potentially allows the analyst to acknowledge the narrator's reflexive awareness and creative action within narrative performances, while bearing in mind that it is not a performance enacted by a pre-discursive, intentional actor since she or he can only utilise existing discursive resources which constrain any performance. Subjects are seen as "complex composites of, on the one hand, who they create themselves as and present to the world, as a way of 'acting upon' it" and on the other hand, "who that world makes them and constrains them to be" (Taylor & Littleton, 2006, p. 23).

In this manner, the notion of narrative positioning balances determinism and voluntarism, being positioned and positioning oneself, by proposing an active meaning-maker who re/cites as well as performs and transforms available discourses (Peterson & Langellier, 2006). This may be

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thought of as the tactical and situational improvisation of existing discursive resources so that they are adapted to the current context and according to particular ends. The strategic or tactical modification of authoritative discursive resources occurs in response to (anticipated) audience reception. Narrators do not simply recite received discourses or scripts, but are able to alter and resist them. The issue then, as Butler (1990) has indicated, is *how to* recite. Thus, narrative positioning captures speakers' in-the-moment response to the discursive setting as they re-iterate scripts in different ways according to the demands of that discursive context (both local and global), including its power dynamics. It also offers the analyst a concrete means of investigating the complexities and subtleties of social performances and how people inter/actively utilise discursive resources to produce gender.

The notion of 'trouble' in the narrative-discursive framework refers to difficulties with regard to the onus to remain consistent in narration or to audience challenges, as well as the awareness of (potentially) occupying a negative or socially disadvantageous position. As Butler (1999) maintains, gender performances occur "within compulsory systems" (p. 190) with a view to the potential consequences of incorrect or failed performances. Accordingly, speakers face moments of 'trouble', when they appear to occupy either (1) contradictory or (2) undesirable positions (Taylor, 2006). These two kinds of interactional or micro-level trouble may overlap where speakers engage in inconsistent positioning, which may include negatively valued social identities. For instance, a man who initially claims to be liberal and then later states that he expects women to take the greater share of household work and childcare not only runs the risk of being seen as conservative, unfair, or sexist in particular interactional settings, but cannot be both 'liberal' and 'conservative' at the same time without doing some explanatory or 'repair' work.

'Repair' encompasses various narrative strategies, like the use of rhetoric or argumentation. This may also called 'rhetorical work' (e.g., Taylor & Littleton, 2006). When interactional trouble occurs, speakers may re/construct their positions in order to be "interactively useful" (Bamberg, 2004d, p. 221). They employ particular rhetorical strategies, such as correcting or revising a previous position or drawing on new discursive resources, in order to forestall audience criticism or to avoid being negatively positioned and thus preserve positive positioning or 'save face' (Bamberg, 2004).

The narrative-discursive method is useful because it extends the concept of 'trouble' to take into account the constraint of earlier accounts as well as the positions found in these. This is used to account for the construction of a continuous individual subjectivity (see Taylor, 2005). However, the focus of this method is largely on interactional, micro-level trouble, and so the implications of 'trouble' beyond the continuity of individual subjectivity (in other words, the implications of gender trouble) are somewhat neglected. Moments of trouble that occur in a narrative performance also point to the broader political effects that narratives may have, including the subversive potential of 'incorrect' gender performances. In each narrative performance there are inevitably failures to accurately replicate the norm or instances when the naturalness of certain constructions is shown to be artificial. These instances have to be managed which allows for alternative ways of re-citing particular discursive resources or scripts to emerge.

What We Achieve By Infusing a Narrative-Discursive Approach with Butlerian Theory

Taylor and Littleton (2006) suggest that there are two main analytical tasks in a narrative-discursive approach. The first is to look for common elements across a series of interviews and across different points in a particular interview; these elements are discussed in terms of discursive resources. The second is to consider how resources are drawn on in particular

interview in order to understand the positioning and identity work accomplished by drawing on certain resources and to understand 'trouble' and the process of 'repair'.

We argue that the first of these tasks needs to be extended to analyse how these common elements may take surprising turns: how shifts in discursive resources and norms may be evident over a data set. In other words, we argue that an analysis of the discursive formations or "set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time" (Butler, 1999, p. 43) needs to be supplemented with an exploration of the slow bending of citations in which norms or regulatory frames are troubled.

The second task needs to be supplemented with an analysis of how cases of interactional trouble in relation to gender may signal the failure to do gender properly. In other words, troubling moments or the momentary discontinuities of specific performances need to be linked with the troubling of gender norms. As Butler (1990) maintains, discontinuities or anomalies that disrupt the gender binary must be explained away and regulated (i.e. repaired) or ignored in order to maintain the illusion of gender as anchored to the sexed body. We therefore also need to consider how instances of interactional trouble are explained away or talked down so that narrators avoid gender trouble and 'do gender' in an acceptable way, conforming to what may be more generally expected of them.

We argue, thus, that by utilising the narrative-discursive method within a Butlerian theoretical framework it is possible to elaborate on the politics of narration, both on the micro-level (in relation to positioning/interactional trouble) and the macro-level (discursive resources, norms, the slow bending of citations, and normative trouble). It is possible to make explicit the broader implications of gender trouble and how power comes to bear on an account, as well as the possibilities for resistance, when investigating troubled positions in relation to gender within narratives. Hence, the notion of trouble can be expanded to take into consideration how

interactional trouble may also signal gender trouble used in a Butlerian sense. Incorporating the narrative-discursive method into an explicitly Butlerian approach—to form the performativity-performance approach—allowed us to explore how gender constructions may be re-cited and potentially transformed, as we shall show next. Before doing so we offer the following table which summarises the key analytic concepts that we have explained and will use in the application.

<Insert Table 1 here>

Using a Performativity-Performance Lens to Investigate Gender Trouble

In this section we provide a short example of how the extension of the narrative-discursive method referred to above may be implemented. The illustration is, of necessity, truncated and readers are referred to Morison (2011) for a more detailed analytical exposition. The data below are taken from a series of interviews conducted by the first author with parents and child-free young adults regarding male involvement in the initial decision/s regarding parenthood. We found that talking about male involvement in reproductive decision-making was difficult for the participants and that the interviews frequently meandered into various other topics, especially parenting which acted as a familiar reference point for people's stories.

In the following we show how: (1) 'children's needs' are used as a discursive resource to achieve both the entrenchment of gender norms around parenting, in particular intensive mothering, and a slow bending of citations in which these norms are (partially) challenged; (2) the deployment of the 'children's needs' discursive resource allows and restricts particular subject positions in relation to intensive mothering; (3) trouble occurs in (a) audience challenge that potentially undermines gendered parenting norms; (b) the recitation of gender that partially undermines gendered norms; and (c) the slow bending of citations in which the cumulative effect

of individual trouble and 'failed' gender performances result in gender norms curving in new directions.

(1) Entrenching Gender Norms And Explaining Interactive Trouble Away

'Needs talk' allows for value judgements and normative relationships to appear as timeless and universal facts and lends them moral force (Lawler, 1999). In fact, 'needs talk' bears such moral and rhetorical force that it functions as an "unchallengeable discourse" (Adenæs, 2005,p. 219). Our participants used this powerful rhetorical strategy to justify traditional gender norms and to remedy audience induced interactional trouble that hinted at gender trouble. This is shown in the following extract from an interview with 'Koos' a married, 48 year-old father of four.

> Koos: So, I thought that my wife must stay with the kids—and she also thought that, it's not that there was any problem with that—until they are a certain age so that she can teach them the values from that age that we want them to have. So that was important and I based it basically only on that advice from the book that says that for the first six or seven years you've got to lay the right foundation and that would make a big difference later on.
> Tracy: Do you think Mom is better at doing that?
> Koos: Sorry?
> Tracy: Because obviously [according to your view] there must be a parent at home with the child.
> Koos: You mean better than me?
> Tracy: Well, better than Dad.
> Koos: I won't say so. I think so at the end, yes. Probably, because in the family structure as I'm used to it the dad is responsible for winning the bread and even if it might've been better for me (.) or if we had to switch, it would be abnormal for me to be winning the bread AND I'm looking after the kids, but I'm sure… But I think that she's has a better way with kids, especially when they're that size. I'm more the wise guy at the end of the [day], supposed to be, [laughs] that would give advice and would be overall the manager I reckon, if you can put it that way. But doing the day things, "Clean up here, you threw this out or wash your hands before you eat, did you brush your teeth this morning" a woman is more, I would say, (.) they concentrate on nitty-gritty things. A man is not like that. That's why they use women to pack parachutes because they are focused on small things and doing them right. They look at the smaller picture and the man looks at the bigger picture, I think. So, I think it's better for the woman or the wife to do that job, of laying that foundation.

A significant part of Koos's justification in the extract above lies in his reference to children's needs as he invokes the notion of intensive mothering, which is backed by the

authority of expert discourse ("the advice from the book") and the subject positioning of women as naturally suited to caring(Kendall, 2007). This contemporary model of appropriate care-giving "tells us that children are innocent and priceless, and that their rearing should be carried out primarily by individual mothers and that it should be centred on upon children's needs" (Hays, 1996, cited in Almack, 2006, p. 6). Koos justifies the gendered positioning by stating that this childcare arrangement was based on a concern for their children's moral wellbeing. He thus utilises the power of 'needs talk' as these supposedly ideal conditions for childbearing are equated with children's interests and welfare. This defence is bolstered by 'Oneness talk' (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004, p. 176), which foregrounds commonality, as the caregiving arrangement is construed as mutually agreed upon. This might also indicate the speaker's anticipation of potentially being seen as unfair or chauvinist, especially by a female interviewer.

The interviewer's question makes explicit taken for granted gender norms of conventional behaviour and troubles the gender norms which construe parenting as a fundamentally gendered enterprise. The implication of this question is that a mother may not necessarily be automatically considered as best suited to meet children's needs purely on the basis of her gender. This question represents an "unusual conversational move" (Reynolds & Taylor, 2004, p. 203)—as Koos's response suggests—in that it is considered curious or intrusive to explicitly question normative behaviour that could be considered acceptable by current social standards(i.e., that a woman should be the primary care giver for small children or infants). The speaker attempts to repair the trouble posed by the interviewer's challenge by invoking the discursive resource of innate gender differences that allows for the subject positioning of women as better suited to the role of primary caregiver. In so doing, he also bypasses gender trouble by firmly reconnecting parenting to gender and invoking entrenched, biologised subject positionings of women and men.

(2) Troubling Moments: Re-Citing Norms

In contrast, the following extract illustrates how a young woman used the discursive resource of 'children's needs' to partially challenge established scripts around intensive mothering. In the extract below, the narrator, aged 21 years and childfree, was discussing the positioning of women as full-time primary caregivers.

> Elize: [Laughs.] Obviously if he [father] can look after you, I'd say for the first years [of child's life], but you're going to get bored. Either that or you're going to turn into a very needy person that's gonna be fluffing over your kid the whole time, which is just gonna in the end just gonna push you away from your child because your child's gonna think you're overbearing and over-caring and all that stuff. So I think that not necessarily, you've still gotta have your own [career], because I mean your child's gotta look up for you one day. For instance, if you have a daughter and you're just at home…

In this extract Elize harnesses the power of 'needs talk' to challenge the gendered norm of intensive mothering, which she construes as potentially harmful, and to reconstruct good mothering to some degree. Here Elize justifies working outside the home after the 'first years' by referring to possible benefits to children. She redefines what children need (e.g., a positive female role model) so as to represent her own needs (e.g., paid employment) or interests as congruent with those of the needs of the child.

Elize's performance coheres with Butler's (1999) view of gender construction as "a strategy of survival within compulsory systems[:] gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences" (pp. 190 - 191). Elize 'talks against' the established script of intensive mothering, but only partially so as the mother remains the central parenting figure. She does not challenge traditional gender roles by, for instance, stating that childcare is not solely the jurisdiction of females or that men should take part in care-giving.

This extract shows how young women are able to perform appropriate femininity while at the same time resisting some of its demands by drawing on the very same formulation that potentially positions them in a restrictive manner (Lawler, 1999). Such reformulations of

children's needs, as evidenced above, allow young women to partially 'bend' the gender norm of intensive mothering, thus reconciling the contradictory mandates of ideal femininity (traditionally premised upon selflessness and domesticity) and self-development, which pose a particular dilemma for women in contemporary society (Williams, 1991).

(3) Troubling Gender Positioning and the Reflexive Narrator

'Children's needs' also offered a powerful discursive resource for bolstering more overtly subversive gender positioning, resourcing talk that advocates the importance of *both* mothering and fathering for appropriate child development. This occurred mostly among younger participants, especially women, who described a scenario of co-parenting based on fairness and gender equity. The following extract is from an interview with Dalena, a young childfree student.

> Dalena: I want him to be actively involved. I want us both to give 110 *per cent* and not just a 50/50, because you'll have a 50/50 *per cent* child, you know, sort of a half nitwit [laughter] [inaudible]. Ja, I want 110 per cent from both, despite work, because obviously both of us will be working, we both have a degree. ... although we've both got science degrees and going to be very busy in our lives one day, still 110 *per cent* of our lives must be given to them. … If I can imagine myself, I will probably be living in some city and we'll both have jobs, if I look at my parents, whoever's free will help the other. If we need to be somewhere, one of the parents will drop everything to take us. I just want that, almost like a mutualism?
> Tracy: A partnership?
> Dalena: A partnership. If the one really can't do it then the other can just substitute or do something [to] make a plan. No, I want that to be almost a combined effort. One day I'll take the child to school and vice versa. My dad takes my sister to school every morning and picks her up every day. My mom's just too busy nowadays or something. I mean, it's really no one's duty to do something.

Dalena describes a scenario of equal parenting in which *both* parents "give 110%". Her rationale is that this will best serve the child. Notably, female and male parents are positioned as equally responsible for normal child development and the implication is that childcare is not the

job of women alone. Parenting is therefore disconnected from traditional gendered assumptions to some degree (Donovan, 2000). According to this construction, women and men are allowed to assume non-traditional positions, as is also evident from the positioning of women as co-providers. The paid employment of both partners is described as a given (as denoted by the word "obviously") and both parents' jobs are construed as equally important. This is not *entirely* taken for granted, however. Some justificatory work occurs as the speaker comments (twice) that she and her future partner will be equally qualified.

Of course, since resistance must always be articulated from within existing discourses, all gender performances bear the vestiges of heteronormativity and may inadvertently reinforce the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990). In Dalena's case, the heterosexual nuclear family form is implicitly reiterated as the ideal site for children's optimal development, and intensive mothering simply shifts to intensive parenting. Thus, as Nentwich (2008) argues, equity may in fact extend *only* to women's and men's roles as parents, since what is challenged is what mothers and fathers *do* and not what they *are*. Therefore, although the gender hierarchy may be challenged and the gender binary blurred to some degree, "what is troubled is not the gender binary but its content" (Nentwich, 2008, p. 224). So, although mothers and fathers may perform the same tasks, men and women are still believed to be different entities and the unquestioned association of mothering with women and fathering with men remains.

(4) The Slow and Partial Bending of Gender Norms

We argued above that the narrative-discursive method could fruitfully be extended by showing how, over a full data set, shifts in discursive resources and norms may be evident. Juxtaposing the three extracts above illustrates how the deployment of the discursive resource of 'children's needs' simultaneously allowed for the entrenchment of highly traditional gender

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norms in the form of intensive mothering and for the slow, albeit partial, bending of these norms through an appeal to the usefulness of women's self-development and the importance of co-parenting. According to a Butlerian understanding of resistance and subversion, changes in gender roles are not a result of entirely novel ways of understanding gender, but rather arise as variations or improvisations of existing gender scripts. As a result, there are various—often competing and conflicting—ways of understanding gender roles available for narrators to re-cite according to their particular interactive narrative performance. The extracts above demonstrate how resistance is not a straightforward act, but a complex and incremental process. Thus, instances of contradiction and dissent, such as Elize's and Dalena's, represent the slow and necessarily only gradual and partial bending of gender norms (van Lenning, 2004).

Conclusion

In this paper we have articulated what we have called a performative/performance approach to qualitative inquiry. This approach integrates the theoretical richness of Butler's work with the empirical procedures proposed in the narrative-discursive analysis outlined by Taylor and colleagues. In undertaking such an analysis a careful and nuanced view of the relationship between the theoretical notions of performance and performativity is required, an understanding that does not undermine the anti-essentialist nature of Butler's work but simultaneously allows for an active, reflexive and imaginative subject. The theoretical labour required is one in which determinism and voluntarism are collapsed and the flow between performativity and performance is highlighted and used to analytical effect.

A performative/performance approach to analysis entails, we have suggested, a supplementation of the analytical tasks proposed by Taylor and colleagues. The first task of

looking for discursive resources across a series of interviews and across different points in a particular interview needs to be supplemented with an exploration of the entrenchment of norms and the slow bending of citations in which norms or regulatory frames are troubled. The second task of considering how resources are drawn on in a particular interview or narrative to accomplish positioning and identity work, and how this may result in interactional 'trouble', needs to be supplemented with an analysis of how momentary discontinuities of specific performances may spell the troubling of gender norms or alternatively are explained away to 'do' gender in an acceptable manner and hence entrench gender norms.

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Table 1 Tasks involved in performative-performance analysis

'Task 1': Performative dimension	
i. Identifying **discursive resources** (interpretative repertoires, canonical narratives, scripts) within and across accounts. ii. Examining the **slow bending of citations** in which norms or regulatory frames are troubled (discursive resources or practices shift).	*The analyst searches for patterns that occur across interviews and within the same interview.*
'Task 2': Performance dimension	
i. Exploring the operation and negotiation of the discursive resources within the particular constraints including attention to **positioning** and the **rhetorical work** associated with trouble and repair. ii. Linking (a) specific performances to entrenchment of gender norms; (b) specific interactional **trouble** to the troubling of gender norms and (c) specific acts of **repair** to the avoidance of gender trouble.	*The analyst considers a resource contextually in order to analyse the work accomplished by deploying a particular resource and possible trouble that it may give rise to.*