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## ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the mixing of theories that make up the theoretical framework the researcher uses to apply the systematic method of narrative analysis called the Listening Guide (L. Brown and others, 1991). The Listening Guide, a voice-centered relational method was developed to uncover how girls and women talk about themselves through their relationships while considering research themes. The paper discusses the multitude of discursive theories and practices that guide the researcher's current research on female coaches as she explores the coaches' sense of themselves as seen through the narratives of their coaching relationship. The Listening Guide asks the researchers to encounter the participant's narrative several times, each time listening for different voices, each of which tells a different narrative of the relationships. The Listening Guide is based on many theories, but to the researcher, it is most effective and useful when grounded in the discursive theory of feminism. As a voice-centered methodology the Listening Guide allows the researcher to hear the voices of women, and feminist theory guides the listening to empower the research. (Contains 6 notes and 41 references.) (SLD)

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**Mixing Theories:  
Interpreting and Using a Relational, Voice-Centered Methodology**

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Paper presented as part of the symposium:  
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## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the mixing of theories that make up the theoretical framework that I use to effectively apply the systematic method of narrative analysis called the Listening Guide (Brown, Debold, Tappan, & Gilligan, 1991; Brown & Gilligan, 1991, 1992; Brown, Tappan, Gilligan, Miller, & Argyris, 1989). The Listening Guide, a voice-centered, relational method was developed by Lyn Mikel Brown, Carol Gilligan, and colleagues<sup>1</sup> to uncover how girls and women talk about themselves through their relationships while considering research driven themes. “[It] is a method of psychological analysis that draws on voice, resonance, and relationship as port of entry into the human psyche. It is designed to open a way to discovery when discovery hinges on coming to know the inner world of another person” (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 157). The Listening Guide responds to the polyphonic nature of human voice, tuning-in to harmonies and dissonances and searching out feelings and thoughts that are distinctive to the narrator’s voice (Brown, 2001; Gilligan et al., 2003). The Guide intentionally attends to the listener’s voice, the researcher, the person in power and authority, asking the question: “Who is listening and what is the nature of her relationship with the speaker, especially with respect to power?” (Brown, 2001, p. 97). The guide cautions against overriding or voicing over the voice of the narrator (Gilligan et al., 2003), a necessity when one is committed to knowing the speaker’s intentions (Borland, 1991). For me, the Listening Guide is a systematic and rigorous methodology that digs so deeply into the narrative that unearthing is a near certainty. This paper discusses the multitude of discursive theories and practices that guide my current research on female coaches as I explore the coaches’ sense of themselves as seen through the narratives of their coaching relationships.

## Theories Behind the Listening Guide

The creators of the Listening Guide utilized several theories to produce it, including relational psychological theory, psychoanalytic theory, literary theory, and music theory (Gilligan et al., 2003). Relational psychological theory (see e.g., Gilligan, 1993; Jordan, 1997; Miller, 1991, 1997; Surrey, 1991) asserts that for many women the construction of a sense of self takes place within the context of meaningful relationships. This theory is grounded in feminist research (Gilligan, 1993) that found that many women develop through attachment, through the actual shaping and maintaining of relationships (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Using this theory, the Listening Guide adroitly uncovers unique and distinct qualities of the participant by listening for voices of self in narratives of relationships (Brown & Gilligan, 1991). Psychoanalytic theory<sup>2</sup> emphasizes the “layered nature of the psyche, which is expressed in a multiplicity of voices” (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 157). The Listening Guide holds true to this theory by listening for the different voices of the narrator during four or more distinct analytic listenings of the transcript. One voice divided into categories or themes would not expose and convey the layered nature of the informant’s experiences as the many voices from this analysis do. The Listening Guide employs two positions in literary theory. The first is the reader response theory, where the listener attends to her own responses, noting thoughts, feelings, and associations with the narrative being analyzed (Gilligan et al., 2003), because according to feminist theory, the researcher is not capable of being a neutral or objective observer (Morawski, 2001). The guide suggests that the reader use a separate journal to document all personal responses to the interview from feeling of surprise and disbelief to recognition and empathy. As the one in a position of power, the researcher must be cognizant of her presuppositions and her biases. Resisting listening (Brown & Gilligan, 1992)<sup>3</sup>, derived

from new criticism (Gilligan et al., 2003) is the other literary theory infused into the Listening Guide. As a resisting listener, one frees herself from the dominant culture and gives voice to a different reality and different vision (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). When using the Listening Guide it is important to listen for “signs of self-silencing or capitulation to debilitating cultural norms and values” (p. 30). From music theory the authors draw on the “language of music: voice, resonance, counterpoint, and fugue” (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 158), listening several times to the fine tuned voice of the narrator.

I presented the theories drawn upon and drawn together to development the Listening Guide because it is important to know the theoretical grounding of the method, but also to show the eclectic theoretical thought that can be drawn upon to design a study around the Listening Guide. Critical to employing the guide is the desire to reach beyond categories and themes to what your participants are feeling and thinking about themselves, their hidden, yet existent perceptions of self. I continue this discussion by highlighting the additional discursive theory of feminism that I draw upon to focus my view as an interpretive researcher and to engage the Listening Guide as I seek to discover the hidden fine points of women’s professional lives as coaches.

#### Discursive Theory: Designing a Study Grounded in Feminist Theory

While not mentioned in the most recent writings of the Listening Guide (Brown, 2001; Gilligan et al., 2003), incipiently the Listening Guide was a feminist method concerned with the pervasiveness of androcentricity in the American culture (Brown & Gilligan, 1991). The guide originated from listening to girls’ and women’s stories of relationships (Gilligan, 1993). The originators of the guide, mindful that relationships are ever-changing (Brown & Gilligan,

1992) needed a method that explored interpersonal relationships because “[w]omen in contrast [to men], tended to speak of themselves as living in connection with others and yet described a relational crisis: a giving of voice, an abandonment of self, for the sake of becoming a good woman and having relationships” (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 2). As researchers, they sought a method that would be “both responsive to others’ voices and yet resistant to the dominant voices, the cultural overlays that serve to drown out, mute, or distort the voices of those with less power or authority” (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 15). They created “a ‘guide to listening’ – a pathway into relationship rather than a fixed framework for interpretation” (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 22).

The feminist foundational qualities are what drew me to the Listening Guide. Perhaps Gilligan et al (2003) and Brown (2001) specifically exclude the discursive theory of feminism from their description of its development so that other researchers are encouraged to use the guide by grounding it with the paradigms that guide their thinking and practices, perhaps for other reasons; I cannot be sure. I consider the developing theories named above (relational psychological theory, psychoanalytic theory, literary theory, and music theory) to be the essence of this methodology and once one is able to grasp the essence of the Listening Guide, one can bring into the research additional theories to create a study of societal and personal value.<sup>4</sup> My guiding light (so to speak) throughout the research process is feminist theory. The research from which I draw this paper, my study on the professional lives of female coaches, utilizes the Listening Guide while grounded from a feminist perspective.

Foundational feminist theorists saw feminist research as research *for* women (Klein, 1983; Stanley & Wise, 1983), placing the social construction of gender at the center of the inquiry (Lather, 1992). According to Lather (1992) “feminist researchers saw gender as a basic

organizing principle that profoundly shapes/mediates the concrete conditions of our lives” (p.91). Foundational research for women took “women’s needs, interests, and experiences into account and aim[ed] at being instrumental in improving women’s lives in one way or another” (Klein, 1983, p. 90) with researchers committed to challenging the status quo (Lather, 1992).

Contemporary theorists continue to acknowledge the belief that “gender is a primary category of experience” and that feminist research is committed to “remedying the disadvantages of women” (Morawski, 2001, p. 57). Feminist work sets the stage for more research, definitive actions, and policy changes that transcend and transform (Olesen, 2000).

To do feminist scholarship is to apply a fundamentally political concept – feminism – to the world of academic research.... [Feminism is] a point of view that sees women as exploited, devalued, and often oppressed, and that is committed to changing their condition. To do feminist scholarship in the world of sport is to recognize that female athletes and sportswomen are devalued, often exploited, and very often oppressed (Hall, 2002, pp. 12-13).

Yet, feminist research is not only research about women and for women; men do research on men from a feminist standpoint (e.g., Curry, 2002; McKay, Messner, & Sabo, 2000). When one adopts a feminist standpoint in research, one assumes that feminist ideals for an egalitarian society are desirable (Curry, 2002). Research guided by this assumption “will contribute a deeper understanding of the costs and the privileges of masculinity and may help build a more just and egalitarian world” (p. 172).

My pilot study (Cruz, 2002) and the literature (Curry, 2002; Theberge, 1993) have shown that female coaches are devalued through the perception that male athletes and male coaches are of greater importance. This devaluation has caused exploitation by the way of differences in workloads, salaries, benefits, and facilities (Inglis, Danylchuk, & Pastore, 2000; Pastore, Inglis, & Danylchuk, 1996). These unequal circumstances, in turn cause the weighty feeling of oppression, especially when the coaches believe themselves powerless to bring about change.

I used feminist theory to develop my study on female coaches and will continue use it throughout the research process. As Lather (1992) contended ten years ago, I contend today that “feminist research assumes that ways of knowing are inherently culture bound and that research values permeate inquiry” (p. 91). It is my belief that the culture of sport socially constructs gender and places female coaches at a disadvantage. I used this belief to construct my theory of gender games played by female coaches through the micro-competitions of their professional lives (Cruz, 2002). I carry this cultural belief into my current study as I work to uncover the hidden consequences gender games have on the participants’ sense of themselves as coaches.

I believe that when doing feminist research, one is engaged in her topic, developing a relationship with the question, the participants, the data, and the findings. Feminist research is not a method; it is a commitment, a commitment to redressing unjust social attitudes, actions, and beliefs. This commitment to social justice makes feminist research personal with the personal manifesting itself in the topics feminists choose to study. Consequently, choosing topics that are personal magnifies the loss of separation between researcher and researched, between analysis and feelings, and between the academic and the personal. Feminist research is not meant to find answers; it is concerned with hearing and then broadcasting marginalized voices, awakening the oppressed and the oppressors to the hidden realities of lives. This awakening or awareness is an initial step toward change, the ultimate goal of feminist research because feminist researchers, by dint of their beliefs, are agents of change.

#### Discursive Practices: Engaging the Listening Guide with a Feminist Perspective

The Listening Guide, a guide or pathway into the relationships of the participant, asks the researcher to encounter the participant’s narrative several times, each time listening for



different voices, each voice telling different narratives of relationship (Brown, 2001; Brown & Gilligan, 1991, 1992; Gilligan et al., 2003). This voice sensitive method artfully transforms the act of reading the interview into the act of listening to the participant speak by listening to the audio of the interview while reading it (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). As such, the Listening Guide consists of four or more listenings of the interview (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, Brown, & Rogers, 1990; Raider-Roth, 2000; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995). Each distinct listening helps the researcher to hear and sort through the different voices of the participant's narrative. While the Listening Guide escorts me through the analysis process, feminist theory focuses my thinking.

### The First Listening

The first listening of the Listening Guide gives the listener a view of the landscape of the interview, an overview of the participant's experiences. I think of it as the unpacking,<sup>5</sup> sorting, and noting of data, really just down-to-earth, getting-to-know the interview. Important elements of the first listening that should be unpacked are the narrator's stories or the "plot" (including the who, what, where, and when of the stories), emotional resonance (the emotional ups and downs), repeated phrases, information that jumps out at the researcher, plus contradictions, omissions, and revisions (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Raider-Roth, 2000; Taylor et al., 1995; Way, 1998). All unpacked elements are carefully traced and recorded, helping the researcher follow not only what is significant to the research, but just as important, what is meaningful to the participant.

Also, during the first listening the researcher records all personal reactions to the interview, referred to as the "listener's response" (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 160). When doing research that follows a feminist philosophy, one should examine personal assumptions so to

know what counts as evidence (Yllo, 1994). The documenting of the listener's responses is kept separate from all other documentation. This participant/researcher separation is important because feminist research asks the researcher to give space to the voice of the participant, avoiding the diminution of the participant's narrative with her/his own powerful voice (Way, 2001). While personal experiences shape feminist research (Reinharz, 1992), personal agendas can inhibit the listening process (Anderson & Jack, 1991). Documenting the responses helps the researcher stay close her own reactions to the story and to the her experience of listening to the interview (Raider-Roth, 2000). This documentation effort requires that the researcher, the person in a position of power, reflect on and reveal personal circumstances (Taylor et al., 1995). Personal agendas are realized through this process and not ignored. As a feminist researcher my listener responses are realized, noted, and used to help me understand why I am hearing what I hear and to lend a strong voice to my participant.

During the first listening, as I listen to and read through the transcript, I use one color to mark repeated phrases and words and things that jumped out at me. I note, on a separate paper, stories, themes, discrepancies and contradictions. I keep my responses to the listening in a journal. After finishing the listening, I re-write the underlined notations and themes, including my responses and write a summary of this first listening. This summary includes an introduction to the participant and the interview setting, keeping the data alive.

### The Second Listening

Feminist research is meant to empower the participants (Yllo, 1994). As such, the second listening focuses solely on the self-voice of the participant; how she speaks about herself (Brown & Gilligan, 1992), listening to the participant speak in her own terms (Way, 1998). What is she saying when she refers to herself? How does she describe herself? These references

to self are often expressed by the use of “I,” “me,” and “you.” By following the self-statements of the participant, one can listen for her “thoughts, desires, wishes, needs, conflicts, and silences” that are articulated in the self-voice (Raider-Roth, 2000, p. 47). The “sense of I” is the “Psyche” of the individual that she brings to the interview, to each question (Gilligan et al., 1990, p. 97). What is she really saying/thinking? The researcher learns how the narrator speaks about herself and gets to know her on narrator’s own conditions (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). This analysis process allows the researcher to respond to the interviewer both emotionally and intellectually. In other words, as the researcher develops a relationship with narrator’s self-voice, the researcher becomes an empathic and responsive listener. As is typical in feminist research, the distance between the knower and the known diminishes and sometimes disappears (Yllo, 1994). Also important in the second listening is who the participant believes she is not, because “much of our sense of who we are arises from who we believe we are not” (Brown, 2001, p. 89)<sup>6</sup>.

During the second listening, I again listen to the tape and read the transcript. I use a colored pencil (different than that used in the first listening) to underline phrases with “I,” “me,” “you,” and “we.” Upon completion of the listening, I re-write each of the phrases in order of appearance, creating poems from each of the stories, analyzing for how she speaks about herself (critical are shifts in voice and emotional resonance), and noting observations in the margins. This analysis culminates with a summary of what I found during the listening.

#### The Third and Fourth Listeners

Because relationship is a way of knowing and thus a conduit for discovery, the third and fourth listenings of the Listening Guide attend to how the participant discusses her relationships (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). The listenings are meant to give the researcher insight into how the

narrator attends to her expressed experiences (Gilligan et al., 2003). These two listenings are directly connected to the research question(s). During the listenings the researcher listens and reads for two themes of the narrative that react with each other. The two thematic elements many times are in tension with each other (Raider-Roth, 2000), such as in conflict, harmony, or resolution with each other (Gilligan et al., 1990). The tension or weaving of the two themes is referred to as “contrapuntal” or “counterpoint” (Gilligan et al., 1990, p.115). Brown and Gilligan (1992) listened for how their participants addressed the issues of care and justice. I listen for elements of comparing and pressure, the two predominant signs of micro-competitions.

“Feminist research also assumes that an individual's words cannot be separated from the cultural context in which they are embedded” (Way, 2001, p. 114) and places gender at the center of the study (Morawski, 2001). My study on female coaches takes place within the culture of sport. As I examine the themes of comparing and pressure, I consider gender-related biases and perspectives of this culture and how they influence the participants' stories. I become a resisting listener (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) “listening for signs of self-silencing or capitulation to debilitating cultural norms and values” (p. 30). To hear the signs of self-silencing I use Rogers' et al. (1999) “languages of the unsayable” (p. 79). As such, I look for what is unsaid along with what is said; I push myself to “hear’ silence when it occurs,” believing that the unsaid may be unsayable due to fear, denial, and/or refusal to acknowledge (p. 89).

During the third and fourth reading, I again listen to the tape and read the transcript as I underline phrases that relate to either of the two contrapuntal themes. I then re-write all that is

underlined, analyzing as I write and making notes in the margins. The analyses and notes from the two readings are compared and summarized.

When doing the various listenings, colored pencils are used to mark and separate the different aspects of the interview for each of the listenings. After each reading, the pertinent data are carefully recorded, creating a clear “trail of evidence” (Raider-Roth, 2000; Taylor et al., 1995). One transcript is used for all four readings. The four listenings transform the transcript into a multi-colored transcription. Heavily colored areas are evidence that close attention is needed for that portion of the narrative. All four readings are analyzed together and synthesized to present the findings of interview.

### Conclusion

While the Listening Guide is based on many theories, for me it is most effective and useful when grounded in the discursive theory of feminism. From its inception, feminist research assumed that women words were not valued and many times completely lost to dominant male voices. To fill the many holes of male-as-the-norm research, feminists developed a philosophy that allows us to create studies that incorporate our experiences into the study while we uncover and broadcast voices that do not proclaim truth, absolute solutions, or definitive answers, but are “voices we believe are worth listening to” (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 7) and have great and intuitive statements to communicate. The Listening Guide, as a voice-centered methodology, allows me to hear those voices; feminist theory guides my listening empowering my discursive research practices.

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Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Central participants in the collaboration that rendered the Listening Guide included “Dianne Argyris, Jane Attanucci, Betty Bardige, Lyn Mikel Brown, Elizabeth Debold, Andrea Doucet, Carol Gilligan, Dana Jack, Kay Johnston, Matasha Mauthner, Barb Miller, Dick Osborne, Pamela Pleasants, Annie Rogers, Amy Sullivan, Mark Tappan, Jill Taylor, Deborah Tolman, Janie Ward, Grant Wiggins, and David Wilcox” (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003, p. 158).
- <sup>2</sup> Gilligan et al (2003) cite Fairbairn (1944), Mitchell (1988), and Winnicott (1960) for the psychoanalytic theory.
- <sup>3</sup> Brown and Gilligan (1992) cite Fetterley’s (1978) resisting reader theory for the resisting listener theory.
- <sup>4</sup> See Raider-Roth (2000), Tolman (2001), and Way (1998) as examples of studies using the Listening Guide.
- <sup>5</sup> Riessman (1986) refers to the “unpacking of structure that is essential to interpretation” while transcribing interviews (p. 58).
- <sup>6</sup> Brown (2001) cites Campbell (1987) for the theory of knowing who we are by who we are not.

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