

DECONSTRUCTIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: EXTENDING THE METHODOLOGICAL CONVERSATION

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Abstract

Discourse analysis is increasingly becoming a methodology of preference amongst qualitative researchers. There is a danger, however, of it being viewed as a bounded and uncontested domain of research practice. As discourse analysis is inextricably linked with theoretical issues, it is a dynamic practice that is constantly in a process of revision. In this paper I reflect on some of the conceptualisations undergirding the notion of discourse – conceptualisations that have important implications in terms of how the practice of discourse analysis proceeds. I highlight some of the dualisms that may plague discourse analysis, and offer some solutions to these. Finally, I outline the deconstructive discourse analysis that I utilised in my doctoral work. The purpose of the latter is not to provide a recipe of methodology, but to illustrate how elements of various theorists' work (in this case Foucault, Derrida and Parker) may be profitably drawn together to perform specific discourse analytic work.

Discourse analysis is becoming a relatively popular qualitative research methodology in psychology in South Africa. Take, for example, the *South African Journal of Psychology*. In the years 1995 to 2000 the authors of twelve articles utilised some form of discourse analysis in their research, while the authors of six debated or discussed the relation of psychology with the discursive paradigm¹. Compare this to the previous five years (1990 to 1994) in which only one article relating to discourse analysis appeared². A quick preview of the above-mentioned pieces of work indicates that there is diversity in approach to discourse analysis in South Africa (including hermeneutically informed (e.g. Stevens, 1998), feminist (e.g. Macleod, 1995; Wilbraham, 1996) and politically engaged deconstructive (e.g. Hook & Harris, 2000) analyses).

Given the space limitations of an article, authors using discourse analysis are often unable to elucidate much on the methodology used. Shefer, Strebel and Foster (2000), for instance, note that their ‘analysis of text is framed within a feminist discourse analysis drawing on key works of this nature in social psychology and feminism, including Burman and Parker (1993), Hollway, (1989), Parker (1992), Potter and Wetherell (1987), Wetherell and Potter (1992)’ (p. 12). However, the five texts listed, while having commonalities, are divergent in many respects. Shefer, Strebel and Foster (2000) do not explicate which aspects of which texts were drawn on, and why. The danger of this type of summarised methodological discussion is the unintended implication that discourse analysis is an uncontested methodology that can be applied in an uncontested manner.

Forms of discourse analytic work range widely, including linguistic and conversational analyses, as well as ethnomethodological, semiotic, Althusserian, Gramscian, social constructionist, psychoanalytic and post-structuralist variations. The methodological texts used most commonly

in psychology are Potter & Wetherell (1987), Parker (1992), Hollway (1989), and Fairclough (1992). The commonalities in these authors' approaches centre around the significance of language in structuring and constraining meaning, and their employment of interpretive, reflexive styles of analysis (Burman, 1991). However, there are differences in terms of styles of analysis and underlying theoretical orientation. For example, Potter & Wetherell (1987) develop their model from ethnomethodology, speech act theory, analytical philosophy and semiotics. Hollway (1989), while drawing on Foucault, takes a more Lacanian, psychoanalytic approach. Fairclough (1992) sets himself the task of developing a method of analysis which is both 'theoretically adequate' and 'practically usable', by drawing together social theory (including Foucault) and linguistically-oriented discourse analysis. Parker's (1989; 1990a; 1992) approach is most closely aligned to the Foucauldian project, although he does differ with 'fervent foucauldians or derisive derrideans' (Parker, 1989, p. 4) in his retention of the term 'ideology' for political purposes.

My purpose in this paper is not to obfuscate discourse analysis, or to imply that it is difficult, and therefore only for the initiated. Rather, I wish to emphasise that there is no definitive method of discourse analysis, and that therefore any methodological discussion or practice contributes to the constant construction and re-production of the intellectual and research activity called 'discourse analysis'. In this paper I join the academic conversation surrounding the nature of discourse analysis by (1) discussing notions which underlie discourse analytic work (viz. conceptualisations of the meaning of discourse, text, context, the extra-discursive, and discursive and social practices), (2) exploring some of the traps which face discourse analysts (viz. the potential dualisms that may (inadvertently) be created between text and context, discourse and the 'real', discursive or social practices and discourse), and (3) elucidating the methodology used by myself

in my doctoral work (Macleod, 1999). I called the latter deconstructive discourse analysis as it drew on elements of Foucault's and Derrida's work.

CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF DISCOURSE, TEXT AND THE EXTRA-DISCURSIVE

Clarifying conceptualisations around the notion of discourse, and the associated terms of text, discursive practices and the extra-discursive, is important as they have implications in terms of how the actual analysis proceeds. I have chosen the word 'conceptualisations' advisedly in this context, as 'definition' gives the impression of definitive closure. The conceptualisation of 'discourse' is linked to theoretical issues, and thus is in a constant state of re-appraisal and re-working.

The following illustrates attempts by various authors to grapple with the nature of discourse.

Discourse has variously been described as:

- 'any regulated system of statements' (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1984, p. 105);
- 'a system of statements which constructs an object' (Parker, 1990a, p. 191);
- 'a particular network of meanings, their heterogeneity and their effects' (Hollway, 1989, p. 38);
- 'discernible clusters of terms, descriptions, common-places and figures of speech often clustered around metaphors or vivid images and often using distinct grammatical constructions and styles' (Potter, Wetherell, Gill & Edwards, 1990, p. 212 [these authors prefer the term interpretive repertoires]);

- ‘a form of social practice, rather than a purely individual activity or a reflex of situational variables’ (Fairclough, 1992, p. 3);
- ‘products and reflections of social, economic and political factors, and power relations’ (Widdicombe, 1995, p. 107);
- a ‘group of statements that belong to a single system of formation’ (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 107);
- ‘socially organised frameworks of meaning that define categories and specify domains of what can be said and done’ (Burman, 1994, p. 2);
- ‘historically variable ways of specifying knowledge and truth’ (Ramazanoglu, 1993, p. 7);
- ‘a multi-faceted public process through which meanings are progressively and dynamically achieved’ (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 47).

Various features emerge from the above conceptualisations, viz.: (1) an underlying regularity; (2) the constructive effects of discourse; and (3) implications in terms of meanings and practices.

The underlying regularity of discourse

A discourse presents a coherent system of meanings (Parker, 1990a): it forms a ‘regulated system of statements’ (Henriques *et al.*, p. 105) or a ‘single system of formation’ (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 107). The positive regularity has to do with how ‘truth’ is formulated (Dant, 1991). In other words, the statements in a discourse cluster around culturally available understandings as to what constitutes a topic. The regularity of discourse is found amid variability. It is located between a ‘system of dispersion’ (Foucault, 1972, p. 38). This dispersion has a temporal aspect

as discourses are historically variable (Ramazanoglu, 1993, p. 7). They are progressively and dynamically achieved over time and within particular contexts of power relations.

There is some debate over the advisability of focussing too closely on the regularity of discourse, however, as evidenced in the exchange between Parker (1990a, 1990b) and Potter *et al.* (1990). Parker (1990a) believes that Potter & Wetherell's (1987) use of the word 'repertoire' has uncomfortable resonances with behaviourism (especially when one is looking for systems of terms that are used recurrently). Potter *et al.* (1990) reply that the use of the prefix 'interpretive' obviates this association, and continue to find it more useful than the term 'discourse'. They go on to state that Parker's (1990a) approach is limited as 'discourses ... become formed as coherent and carefully systematized wholes which take on the status of causal agents for analytic purposes. ... the processes of interest are seen as those of a (abstract) discourse working on another (abstract) discourse.' (p. 209). Parker (1992) acknowledges that talking of discourses as though they were things can lead to abstraction and reification, but believes that the risk is worth taking as 'it is crucial that we hold to some conception of the difference between discourses and show how contests between different structures of meaning operate as part of the architecture of society' (p. 33).

The constructive effects of discourse

Discourses are seen as constructive as they do not simply describe the social world, but are the mode through which the world of 'reality' emerges. They contain subjects and construct objects (Parker, 1990a) as well as knowledge and truth (Ramazanoglu, 1993). Parker (1990a) points out

that a strong form of the argument would be that discourses allow us to focus on things that are not 'really' there, but once these have been circumscribed by discourses it is difficult not to refer to them as though they were real. However, this is an untenable linguistic realist position which separates discourse from the real, a dichotomy which discourse analysis would attempt to transcend.

Fairclough (1992) distinguishes three aspects of the constructive effects of discourse, viz. the construction of: (1) 'social identities', 'subject positions', or types of 'self'; (2) social relationships between people; and (3) systems of knowledge and belief. Fairclough calls these the 'identity', 'relational' and 'ideational' functions of language. While this split may be somewhat artificial as the three levels intersect in multiple ways, it is also heuristic.

Discourse is constructive, but it is also restrictive, as Young (1987) points out. It has a dual character, simultaneously constructing and restricting what can be known, said or experienced at any particular socio-historical moment. It is this duality 'through which action and understanding are simultaneously enabled and constrained, that links knowledge to power' (Young, 1987, p. 114). This duality extends further, however, as '[D]iscourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it' (Foucault, 1978, p. 100). Discourse conceived in this way allows for shifts and flexibility, as a tension is constantly created between the constructive and restrictive, productive and undermining aspects of a discourse.

The duality of discourse is also glimpsed in Derrida's conceptualisation of the absent trace. Discourse excludes what is simultaneously exterior and interior to it. 'A' relies on 'not-A', 'being' on 'non-being', 'presence' on 'absence' for their meaning, while at the same time

subordinating the second term (not-A, non-being, absence). As Parker (1992) points out, a discourse accounts for other discourses through the contradictions contained within the discourse. Thus, while discourse excludes subordinate or contradictory discourses, it simultaneously refers to them, creating the conditions for modification, for the undermining of its presence.

Implications in terms of meanings and practices

Discourse analysts differ in terms of the emphasis they give to the meaning construction aspect of discourse versus its effects in practice. Hollway (1989), for example, using her conceptualisation of discourse as a particular network of meanings, aims in her discourse analysis to understand the conditions that produce accounts and how meaning is to be produced from them. The emphasis on meaning gives lie to her more Lacanian bent. The deconstructive discourse analysis that I used in my research was Foucauldian in approach. While, in this approach, one also examines the conditions that make the emergence of certain discourses rather than others possible, and one does not deny the meaning aspect of discourse, the focus is on the social and power/knowledge effects of discourse. Foucault wished to restore to discourse its character as an 'event' (Dant, 1991). This recognises discourse as a social practice and not as the revelation of essence. Deconstructive discourse analysis implies undermining the revelation of essence, de-stabilising meaning as presence, and disrupting dominant, taken-for granted notions of a subject.

Fairclough (1992) conceptualises a discursive 'event' as simultaneously a piece of text (this will be discussed in the next section), an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice. He explains the latter two dimensions as follows: the 'discursive practice' dimension

concerns the nature of the processes of text production and interpretation (e.g. which discourses are drawn upon and how they are combined); the ‘social practice’ dimension refers to the institutional and organisational circumstances of the discursive event and how that shapes the discursive practice. This conceptualisation is preferable, I believe, to Young’s (1987) argument that states that discourse is a field of statements, while discursive practices are the rules and institutional arrangements through which discourse statements are produced and communicated. This risks dichotomising practice and discourse (which borders on the real/discourse dilemma), allowing mutual (or one-way) causal effects to discourse and practice. Fairclough’s (1992) explanation of the discursive event allows for practice (including the social) to be saturated by discourse and vice versa, while at the same time avoiding the attribution of ontological status to either discourse or practice. It thus escapes setting up an abstract, reified and disembodied notion of discourse, of which various authors have been critical (Potter *et al.*, 1990; Widdicombe, 1995).

Discourse and text

Within linguistics, ‘discourse’ is used to refer to extended samples of either spoken or written language, while ‘text’ is regarded as one dimension of discourse: the written or spoken product (Fairclough, 1992). I follow Parker (1990a) in taking a broader, less bounded approach. He posits that discourse is realised in texts, which are ‘delimited tissues of meaning reproduced in any form that can be given interpretive gloss’ (p. 193). Thus, although the emphasis is on language and linguistic texts, it is appropriate to see discourse as realised in other symbolic forms such as visual images and spatial arrangements. This leads to what Parker (1990a) calls the post-

structuralist maxim, which is contained in Derrida's (1976) statement, 'There is nothing outside the text' (p. 158). However, this does not lead to gross linguistic realism where nothing is seen to exist outside the text, a charge laid by psychologists coming from the experimental camp (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). As Parker (1992) points out, when something can be interpreted (and thus becomes text), it does not lose its object status. Things can '*both* be inside and outside of texts.' (Parker, 1992, p. 34).

This conceptualisation of text allows for discourse analysts to do away with the distinction between text and context, a distinction that Potter *et al.* (1990) retain in their work. They see what they call interpretive repertoires as abstractions from practices in context; they state that analysis should be attentive to what they call the local geography of contexts. From a Foucauldian perspective, the emphasis on the localised is not problematic, as Foucault studied power as it installed itself in capillary ways. However, Potter *et al.*'s approach risks creating the dualisms of context/text and social practice/discourse, while attributing transcendental originality to practice and context.

The extra-discursive

There is some debate over the status of the extra-discursive. Hollway (1995) argues for a recognition of the extra-discursive in terms of the theorisation of emancipatory practice. For example, she believes that emancipatory heterosexual practice is possible even though an emancipatory discourse of heterosexual sex does not exist (according to her). This emancipatory practice may result from, *inter alia*, an extra-discursive space concerning heterosexual sex,

provided by the private realm within which so-called normal sex is practised. Wilkinson & Kitzinger (1995) agree with Hollway (1995), viewing the extra-discursive as social practices and their material effects, as well as the 'interior' world of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. I argue, however, along with Wetherell (1995), that a distinction between the discursive and the extra-discursive is problematic, both methodologically and epistemologically. Firstly, it denies the central role of discourse in constituting social relations and subjectivity; secondly, it risks sliding into a cause-effect dualism; and thirdly, it creates the untenable position of constantly having to decide what is discursive and what is extra-discursive. I contend that Fairclough's (1992) conceptualisation of the discursive event, which integrates discursive and social practices, circumvents these problems, while at the same time allowing a space for the emancipatory practice referred to by Hollway (1995).

DECONSTRUCTIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

In this section I describe the research practices in which I engaged in my doctoral studies on teenage pregnancy. I focussed in this research on expertise surrounding adolescents and their sexual and reproductive behaviour. The data consisted of South African scientific literature on teenage pregnancy (the technologies of representation) and transcriptions of interviews with service providers at the Youth Health Centre, the Ante-Natal Clinic, the Termination of Pregnancy Clinic, the Social Work Services and the School Health Services of a regional hospital regarding their interactions with and practices in relation to adolescents (the technologies of intervention). My aim in this section is not to present a definitive methodology of discourse

analysis but rather to indicate how theoretical and methodological insights from a variety of sources (in my case Foucault and Derrida and Parker) may be integrated to form a coherent set of research practices.

Reflexivity in the research process

Discourse analysts emphasise the importance of reflexivity in the process of research. Two major themes emerge, that of: (1) exploring the researcher involvement and effects, i.e. a recognition that the 'knower is part of the matrix of what is known' (Wilkinson, 1986, p. 13); and (2) rendering discourse analysis itself accountable by scrutinising the interpretive resources and processes as well as the constructive effects of the 'discourse' discourse, i.e. drawing attention to the discursive construction of discourse analysis' own theoretical position and its 'data' (Parker, 1992).

The first of these does not refer to the positivist attempt to reduce or minimise investigator effects, but rather to acknowledge them as part of the practice of research. Shotter (1992), for example, speaks of research as a process of both 'finding' and 'making'. He admits that this view of research is very difficult to accept, as '[f]or all kinds of reasons, not just the history of philosophy, but also because of our socialization into the official communicative practices of academic life, we are still committed to an Enlightenment image of knowledge as being both *systematic* and *unitary*.' (p. 63). This type of reflexivity is not intended merely to enrich the account, but also to question relations of power in the research. Bhavnani (1990) delineates two (interwoven) aspects of power in the research relationship that should be considered. Firstly, there is the power of the researcher in the position of

expert vis-à-vis the 'subject'. For example, in my interviews with service providers I decided on the framing questions and my analysis of their talk holds scientific legitimacy. Secondly, there are what she calls the 'socially ascribed characteristics', such as race and gender, of the participants (both researcher and 'subjects'). My interactive positioning (the discursive positioning assigned to me by others - see Davies and Harré, 1990) as a 'middle-class, well-educated white woman' potentially has paradoxical effects, given the racial, class-based and gendered politics of South Africa. For example, 'whiteness', on the one hand, carries powerful legitimisation in terms of 'scientific' endeavours, as it remains equated with notions such as 'competent', 'cultured', 'educated'. On the other hand, in a time when there is increasing 'Africanisation' both within educational institutions and elsewhere, 'whiteness' becomes equated with 'imperialism' and 'oppression'. In my interviews with service providers, only one of whom is 'white', the racialised positionings of myself as 'white' and the majority of service providers and patients as 'African', 'Black' or 'Zulu' seemed to translate into a space for the invocation of culture as an explanatory tool. Virtually all the service providers utilised phrases equivalent to 'in our culture', or, in the case of the 'white' practitioner, 'in Zulu culture' in describing teenagers' and their parents' behaviour (see Macleod & Durrheim, in press, for an analysis of racialisation in the scientific literature on teenage pregnancy).

While there is a clear rationale for investigator reflexivity, there are dangers associated with it as well. In the first instance, a focus on the construction of the account by the researcher rather than what is being accounted for can be problematic – 'There is something odd going on when the connection between the individual and the social is made in terms of "reflexivity" instead of political practice' (Parker, 1992, p. 80). Secondly, there is a danger of the exercise slipping into a personal confession either of the reflexive positionings (the discursive positionings assigned to

him/herself by an individual - Davies and Harré, 1990) of the researchers or of their emotional investments. For example, Soal & Kottler (1996) declare their positionings as ‘white, middle-class women with an investment in progressive and feminist discourses’ (p. 125), and Burman (1996) states that their book is an expression of ‘our feminist anger with injustice’ (p. 12). While not wishing to de-legitimate these statements, I believe that we should take note of Squire’s (1995) warning that reflexivity may lead to a ‘dizzying regress to residual, difficult-to-comprehend factors like repression and desire’ (Squire, 1995, p. 157). Furthermore, over-emphasis on self-referentiality may attribute ‘fictive’ status to the research, as the ‘subjectivity’ of interpretation is made prominent, thus detaching the analysis from ‘reality’ (Parker & Burman, 1993). The question, thus, is how to maintain the crucial aspect of researcher reflexivity while avoiding the dangers. Firstly, I believe, a researcher’s reflection of self in the research process needs to be explicitly linked to political practice. Secondly, researcher reflexivity should address the interactional, relational and power dynamics of the research at hand, rather than focussing on a confession of emotional or discursive positionings of the individual researcher. The former may, of course, invoke the latter, but the latter should not be the primary focus of attention.

The second major theme, that of rendering discourse analysis itself accountable refers to the fact that there is no necessary connection between discourse analysis and a progressive or critical politics (Parker & Burman, 1993). In fact, the reflexivity required in discourse analysis can work contrary to political engagement by subordinating the ‘real’ to discourse (Burman, 1991). The solution suggested by Burman (1991) is the strategic appropriation of the discourse analytic framework by, in this case, feminism. This, I believe, sounds too opportunistic, and is open to revocation. I would argue rather for a *saturation* of discourse analysis with progressive political

issues. It is this that rescues discourse analysis from the criticism that Potter *et al.* (1990) level at the Parkerian approach, viz. its permeability to unexplicated common sense (a criticism which is actually unfounded regarding Parker's work, as he is quite clear about the political nature of his work, although this may not be as purposefully spelt out in Parker (1990a) as it is in Parker (1992)).

This connection between discourse analysis and progressive or critical politics is important in the light of the debate concerning the relevance of the discursive paradigm in the South African context. Van Staden (1998), for example, accuses the 'new discursive paradigm' of being 'mostly complacent elitist work' (p. 44), and characterises it as a 'European import'. Painter and Theron (2001) assert that 'discursive social psychology reproduced many Western assumptions' (p. 6). Terre Blanche (1998) and Durrheim (2001) provide comprehensive replies to these concerns, which I shall not repeat here. Nevertheless, the need to render discourse analysis itself accountable remains. This accounting will take different forms depending on the form of discourse analysis used, and the purpose of the research. For example, Burman, Kottler, Levett and Parker (1997), introduce their edited book, *Culture, power and difference: discourse analysis in South Africa*, as indicating how discourse analysis 'can provide a facilitating framework for *critical* intervention and *radical* political engagement' (p. 2, emphasis in the original). This is achieved by the topics covered by the contributors (including racial oppression, gender, power, subjectivity) as well as by critical reflection on the link between political activism and discourse analysis, in which it is noted that politics is not simply a matter of method (De la Rey, 1997). In my own research I spent some time exploring the tensions and commonalities between feminism and a Foucauldian-based discursive approach, as well as the implications of a

post-structuralist feminist framework for local feminist politics. Space does not allow a full explication of this discussion here; interested readers are referred to Macleod (1999) and Macleod and Durrheim (under review). Ultimately, of course, the progressive nature of discourse analysis must be judged on the basis of the effects that it produces.

Research questions

As mentioned, my research drew on elements of Foucault and Derrida's theory. For Foucault, the target of analysis is practices, with the 'aim of grasping the conditions which make these acceptable at a given moment' (Foucault, 1991, p. 75). Practices are conceptualised as 'places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted, meet and interconnect' (Foucault, 1991, p. 75). Analysing 'regimes of practice' involves analysing their prescriptive effects regarding action (what Foucault(1991) calls effects of 'jurisdiction'), and their codifying effects concerning the known (effects of 'veridiction').

Derridian deconstruction, on the other hand, is an approach to discourse that attempts to destabilise it. It aims neither at destroying the text nor assessing it as to its truth value. Instead, it questions discourses by exploring (deconstructing) them in terms of their claims of presence, and their dependence on absences (Dant, 1991). Thus, deconstruction focuses on dominance, contradiction and difference. In so doing, it enables us to envisage ways of disrupting the dominant discourse, and to construct positions of resistance (Burman, 1990).

One of the strengths of discourse analysis is that it allows for the re-formulation of traditional research questions (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). There is a change in emphasis from the position

of researchers as expert 'knowers' or 'measurers' of human beings and their behaviour, to one in which researchers are 'experts not necessarily in answers but in the range of questions we can formulate, and interpretations we can access' (Billington, 1995, p. 38). For example, in my research I was not engaged in a search for the causes of teenage pregnancy, nor for a solution to the 'problem'. My project was to step outside of the tradition that treats teenage pregnancy as a historically static, universally valid category, with its implications of transcendental personhood and structures. My aim rather was to elucidate the range of discursive events (dynamic, contradictory and constantly reproduced) emerging in the South African scientific literature and service provider practices surrounding teenage pregnancy. I examined the construction of the category of teenage pregnancy and the power relations emanating from the complex process of that construction. I explored the production, circulation and authorisation of 'truths' regarding adolescent (hetero)sexuality and reproduction, and the related categories of the family, mothering, race and economic activity. Put in another way, I viewed, in Foucauldian terms, the 'regimes of practices' (the discursive and social practices) surrounding the notion of teenage pregnancy and their prescriptive effects regarding how adolescents, parents and service providers should act as well as their codifying effects regarding what is known about adolescent sexuality and reproduction. My aim, furthermore, was to 'inhabit' the text in a Derridian sense, showing how what it says is systematically related to what it does not say. I wished to illustrate how teenage pregnancy operates as a category of exclusion that aids in the construction, production, circulation and refinement of its absent trace (normal adolescent sexual behaviour, correct family formation, good mothering, proper economic activity, etc.).

Text collection

In discourse analysis, the notions of statistical sampling and generalisation are abandoned as this 'does not address the complex conditions of people and their conduct, either in their uniqueness or their commonality' (Hollway, 1989, p. 15). The choice of text is guided rather by theoretical principles, purpose and relevance. The boundaries placed around text are based purely on pragmatic considerations, as it is recognised that meaning is never achieved within the boundaries of a work, sentence, or even an extract, but rather in an infinite network of text (Hollway, 1989). However, selections of texts should ensure diversity and avoid homogenisation (Fairclough, 1992). In my research I had two types of text, one 'ready-made' (scientific literature on teenage pregnancy) and the other transcribed (interviews with service providers). Various transcription conventions exist, with most emphasising readability and ignoring nuances of pronunciation, speed and intonation. The latter because 'artefact(s) of transcription reflecting interpretation of the material on the part of the researcher [can be seen as] windows through which we may divine the true intentions of the speaker(s)' (Parker, 1992, pp. 124-125). Nevertheless, the process of transcription is always one of translation, requiring decisions concerning where to place a full stop, a comma, a pause, inverted commas, etc. so as to reflect as closely as possible what I as listener hear, so that you as reader may 'hear' the same thing when reading the material. Clearly, differences in translation are possible, and there is no one single correct version of a transcription of verbal material.

An important warning in terms of text collection is sounded by Widdicombe (1995). She cautions against treating texts as though they are produced in a social interactional vacuum.

Accounts are produced to address the interactional business deemed relevant to the particular circumstances. In my research, the professional literature that I collected was created to convince other professionals of the scientific validity of the hypotheses generated and investigated in the research concerning the nature of teenage pregnancy. While the action of research text production appears to be an isolated one (the researcher on his/her own or perhaps with a team in an office), it is actually intensely interactional in the process of scientific legitimation. The interviews with the service providers were more clearly interactional. In this respect, I was, as researcher, not a neutral, impartial collector of text. Instead, in the activity of discussion, I and the participants were involved in a mutual process of constructing versions of social reality.

Analysis

The deconstructive discourse analysis that I used to analyse expertise surrounding teenage pregnancy in South Africa drew on elements of Foucault and Derrida. Foucault employed the methodologies of archaeology and genealogy. The archaeological method (Foucault, 1972) involves studying the regularities of discourses. In his *Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault attempts to divorce discourse from its social setting and to discover the rules of its self-regulation, its autonomy and discontinuous transformations. His treatment of discourses in this methodological treatise comes close to structuralism (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). He later moved beyond this and utilised the genealogical method that allowed him to ‘thematize the relationship between truth, theory, and values and the social institutions and practices in which they emerge’ (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. xxv). Genealogy is concerned with the operation of

power, of the dynamics that orient regularities. It is a history of the present, in which components of present day political technologies are traced back in time. However, the archaeological method was not abandoned; it was used as a technique to serve genealogy, and to allow certain genealogical questions to be asked. The introduction of power into the analysis of discourse allowed Foucault's analysis to become transgressive (Dant, 1991), or deconstructive (Parker & Shotter, 1990) as he uncovered particular, local, irregular and discontinuous operations of power relations, thus undermining the abstract principles and universal laws (or theory) of history.

Derrida's (1976, 1978) approach to language is one of deconstruction. He critiques 'Western metaphysics' which has always been structured in terms of dichotomies or polarities: truth versus error; being versus nothingness; science versus myth. Through his device of *sous rature* (under erasure), Derrida attempts to discover the opposite or trace within the meaning of a single term. In other words, A is simultaneously A and not-A. Meaning is a function of presence (the written or spoken) and absence (the chain of suppressed signifiers upon which the meaning of the present is based).

The deconstructive discourse analysis discussed here is not genealogical. However, just as Foucault used archaeological methods as a basis for his genealogical enquiries, so discourse analysis may be used as a basis for a deconstruction of the discursive practices and the power/knowledge nexus surrounding psychologised notions. Discourse analysis itself is not necessarily deconstructive, and may in fact be quite structural. Undertaking deconstructive work, on the other hand, implies having in some way performed an analysis of discourses.

The first step in the analysis of my material was to sort the text into thematic chunks. I read and re-read the material, after which I made rough thematic notes, giving each theme a key (1a. 1b,

2a, 2b, etc.). I then re-read the text marking keys next to pertinent chunks of text. I made copies of the material and cut out the marked bits of text. These were then sorted into piles according to the keys. The act of coding, while separate from the business of discourse analysis and deconstruction, is informed by the specifications of discourse and the deconstructive method elaborated upon below. The actual analysis required my reading and re-reading the piles of text pieces, all the while engaging in the conceptual work required in deconstructive discourse analysis. My reading of the coded text, and my analysis of the material, changed over time, particularly as I started to write up the analysis chapters, and as I continued to engage in reading related to the broad areas covered in the thesis.

In order to perform the initial discourse analysis, I relied chiefly on Parker's (1992) seven basic criteria, and Foucault's (1972) archaeological specifications. Parker's (1992) seven criteria for distinguishing discourses are that a discourse: is realised in text; is about objects; contains subjects; is a coherent system of meanings; refers to other discourses; reflects on its own way of speaking; and is historically located. Foucault (1972) delineates various levels of discursive formation, viz. the formation of (1) objects; (2) enunciative modalities; (3) concepts; and (4) strategies.

The first of Parker's (1992) criteria has been dealt with under the section on discourse and text. The second is that discourses are about objects. There are two levels of objectification, firstly, where objects are constituted through discourse (the simple use of a noun gives an object reality), and, secondly, where a discourse refers to itself or other discourses as if they were objects. Foucault (1972) delineates three steps in the identification of the formation of objects: (1) map the first surfaces of their emergence: 'show where these individual differences which ... will be

accorded the status of disease, alienation, anomaly, dementia, neurosis or psychosis, degeneration etc. emerge, and then be designated and analysed' (p. 41); (2) describe the authorities of delineation; and (3) analyse the 'grids of specification' (p. 42). These are the 'systems according to which the different [for example] 'kinds of madness' are divided, contrasted, related, regrouped, classified, derived from one another as objects of [for example] psychiatric discourse' (p. 42). A simple example of a discursive object in my research is the pregnant teenager. She is 'contrasted, related, regrouped' and differentially classified with respect to, *inter alia*, the adult parent, the responsible teenager, the innocent child. The surface of emergence of this object is traced by Arney and Bergen (1984) in their genealogical study. They indicate that the pregnant teenager first became visible in the late 1960s, early 1970s when she was separated from and began to replace the unwed mother and bearer of illegitimate children.

The third criterion is that discourses contain subjects. A discourse allows a space for a certain type of self - 'it addresses us in a particular way' (Parker, 1992, p. 9). This criterion links up with the idea of interactive and reflexive positionings made by Davies & Harré (1990). Interactive positioning is where one person positions another within a particular discourse, while reflexive positioning is where a person positions him/herself. Something that is accorded object status may also have subject status within a discourse. Thus, the pregnant teenager is not only an object but also a subject. She is allowed certain subject positions (e.g. as an inadequate mother, as an irresponsible user of contraception, etc.).

Parker's (1992) third criterion has some similarities with Foucault's (1972) enunciative modalities in that one of the characteristics of enunciative modalities is that 'the positions of the subject is specified by the situation that it is possible for him [sic] to occupy in relation to the

groups of objects' (p. 51). However, Foucault extends the enunciative modalities to specify: (1) Who is speaking? Who is 'qualified' to use this sort of language? and (2) the institutional sites from which the person speaks, e.g. the hospital or school. In defining the scientific reality of teenage pregnancy, for example, it is the expert (the researcher, the trainer, the health service provider, the teacher) who is qualified to make pronouncements, from the institutional settings of the university, the hospital, and the school, concerning the nature of the pregnant teenager, and the correct methods of intervention.

The fourth criterion relates to discourses presenting a coherent system of meanings. They map a picture of the world and include ways of dealing with objections to that view. This corresponds to Foucault's formation of concepts, which are rules operating within the discursive level itself. Foucault puts forward a description of this regularity quite different from the traditional account of the internal rules for constructing concepts available to the psychological subject (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). He showed that concepts shift, overlap and reorder without recourse to an immanent rationality. Instead, his analysis turns to the system of discursive practices to account for the continuity and discontinuity of concepts (see earlier discussion of the regularity of discourses within variability).

The fifth and sixth criteria are linked in that they define the boundaries or limits of a discourse. The fifth criterion is that a discourse refers to other discourses. A discourse will 'presuppose other discourses to the extent that the contradictions *within* a discourse open up questions about what other discourses are at work' (Parker, 1992, p. 13). The sixth criterion is that a discourse reflects on its own way of speaking. This is where the terms used within the discourse are commented upon, for instance 'for want of a better word', or 'don't get me wrong'. Derrida's

notion of absence and presence refers here in that the written or spoken word always contains traces of its complement or absence. Foucault (1972) recognises this: language, he states, ‘always seems to be inhabited by the other, the elsewhere, the distant; it is hollowed by absence’ (p. 111). This criterion means that implicit themes suggested by the absence of certain terms should be analysed.

Foucault’s (1972) formation of strategies broadly relates to criteria five and six. At this level of formation one needs to determine the possible ‘points of diffraction’ (p. 65) of a discourse. These points are characterised, firstly, by points of incompatibility, and, secondly, as points of equivalence. These are linked into points of systemization: ‘on the basis of each of these equivalent, yet incompatible elements, a coherent series of objects, forms of statement, and concepts has been derived (with, in each series, possible new points of incompatibility)’ (Foucault, 1972, p. 66). Furthermore, one studies ‘the economy of the discursive constellation to which the alternatives which have been realised (not all alternatives are realised) belong’ (p. 68). These alternatives are the discourses to which a discourse will refer (Parker’s fifth criterion). The field of psycho-medical research, discussion and debate concerning psychologised objects (such as the pregnant teenager) is a prime example of these criteria. There are several areas of incompatibility with heated argument being conducted concerning, for example, the role of socio-economic status, race, family background, psychological features, etc. in teenage pregnancy. And yet, a coherence around an assumption of teenage pregnancy as a ‘real’ term and the need for investigation and intervention remains.

Parker’s final criterion is that a discourse is historically located. A discourse is not timeless, but is constituted by discourses in the past. A discourse ‘poses the problem of its own limits and

transformations, the specific modes of its temporality; it does not suddenly irrupt in the midst of the complicities of time' (Foucault, 1972, p. 118).

The application of Parker's seven criteria represents the more structural component of the analysis. The deconstructive aspect of the process relied on Parker's (1992) three additional criteria, Derrida's deconstructive method and Foucault's analytics of power and governmentality evidenced in his genealogical works, lectures and interviews. Although the processes are written up as if they were linear, this was not the case in the actual analysis. While performing the identification of discourses, I was constantly involved in deconstructive work, and vice versa. The two processes inform and feed on each other.

Derrida's (1976, 1978) process of deconstruction turns oppositions into supplements, highlighting the absent, undermining the stability of the text and allowing for alternative readings. His device of *sous rature* has been formulated by Parker (1989) as follows: (1) identify an opposition, and show how one of the terms is dominant in the truth stakes over the other (e.g. teen mother = inadequate mother in opposition to adult mother = good mother, with good adult mother dominant over good teen mother); (2) subvert the opposition between the two terms by demonstrating that the privilege the dominant term enjoys can be made untenable (e.g. by demonstrating that the definition of 'good mother' relies on historically specific taken-for-granted assumptions concerning the nature of mothering); and (3) sabotage the conceptual opposition. The third step can be accomplished by extending the meaning of the term (e.g. mother) to include what we commonly label the opposition (e.g. teen/adult or good/bad mother). Alternatively we could employ a different term (e.g. primary caregiver) which would prevent the opposition from reasserting itself.

Johnson (1972) highlights that deconstruction does not mean ‘textual vandalism designed to prove that meaning is impossible. If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not meaning but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another.’ (p. xiv). Deconstruction does not attempt to point out the weaknesses and stupidities of the author, but rather how what s/he does not write/speak is systematically related to what s/he does write/speak. In deconstruction one locates

the text's ‘navel’, as it were, the moment that is undecidable in terms of the text's apparent system of meaning, the moment in the text that seems to transgress its own system of values ... which harbors the unbalancing of the equation, the sleight of hand at the limit of the text which cannot be dismissed simply as a contradiction ... a moment that genuinely threatens to collapse that system (Spivak, 1976, p. xlix and p. lxxv).

Deconstruction is not a critique of the text from a certain perspective:

The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them *in a certain way*, because one always inhabits and all the more when one does not suspect it (Derrida, 1976, p. 24).

However, there is a danger in deconstruction, as it can turn into an attempt to reappropriate the text, showing it what ‘it does not know’. As Spivak (1976) puts it, ‘the critic [may] provisionally forget that her own text is necessarily self-deconstructed, always already a palimpsest’ (p. lxxvii).

On the other hand, deconstruction deconstructs deconstruction, thus providing ‘a way out of the closure of knowledge ... the lure of the abyss as freedom ... the pleasure of the bottomless’ (Spivak, 1976, p. lxxvii).

The question thus arises as to where erasure ends, as the erased sign is brought to a new level of presence. The answer, it appears, is that deconstruction is never complete; it is interminable, unless terminated by the practical analyst. Furthermore, while a concept may be deconstructed, it may be necessary to continue to use it, as there may be nothing with which to replace it. However, the usage is in a detotalised, deconstructed form; the concept can no longer operate within the paradigm in which it was originally formed (Hall, 1994).

In the Foucauldian aspect of the deconstructive analysis, I utilised an extended version of Parker's (1992) three additional criteria, and the theoretical insights of the feminist oriented Foucauldian approach outlined in Macleod (1999). Parker's first additional criterion is that discourses support institutions (e.g. youth health centres, ante-natal clinics, and universities); they validate certain institutional discursive practices while attacking or marginalising others. His second is that discourses reproduce power relations. Parker suggests analysing which categories of people would gain and which would lose from invoking a particular discourse, and who would want to promote the use of the discourse and who would want to discourage it. The problem with these propositions is that categories of people threaten to take on rigid or real status. There is a danger of a slippage into the transcendental subject. The contradictory nature of subjectivity is suppressed. For example, I may want to promote a certain discourse, say feminism, in certain instances but not in others. While the analysis of power relations is, of course, essential in a Foucauldian project, I believe we would be more in line with a Foucauldian approach if we identified: (1) what it is that people stand to gain (e.g. research grants, funding for additional staff for a youth health centre, the description of expert regarding adolescent sexuality and reproduction, etc.) by invoking certain discourses, or by engaging in certain discursive practices at

particular socio-historical moments; and (2) the construction of the type of person (the ‘researcher’, the ‘pregnant teenager’ etc.) who would seek to promote or, alternatively, would seek to discourage the use of a certain discourse. Furthermore, the analysis should extend to investigating what relations of power are operating, and how these produce, regulate and normalise the subject. We need to look at how certain forms of subjectivity are validated while others are marginalised. This type of analysis needs to focus on power in its multiplicity. Resistant and dominant discourses should not be represented as taking bipolar positions but rather as operating in a ‘net-like organisation’ (Foucault, 1980, p. 92).

Parker’s (1992) final additional criterion is that discourses have ideological effects. Parker retains the use of the word ideology as opposed to Foucault’s ‘regimes of truth’. He discusses the traps that can ensnare us in using the word ideology, but believes that its retention is important in terms of its progressive political effects. There is not sufficient space to engage in a debate around the notion of ideology here (see Eagleton’s (1991) thorough analysis). However, it appears that in his elucidation of the ‘steps’ required in performing this criterion, Parker describes a distinctly Foucauldian project. He posits that one should show how a discourse connects with other discourses that sanction oppression, and how discourses allow dominant groups to ‘tell their narratives about the past in order to justify the present’ (p. 20). Thus, while Parker may find the notion of ideology useful, it does not appear to be essential.

CONCLUSION

Discourse analysis is becoming more and more popular amongst qualitative researchers in South

Africa because of its potential to provide new and innovative insights into new areas of investigation as well as into the tired old domains of psychology. Part of its strength has been the recognition by its users of the inseparability of theory, practice and politics. This, however, contributes to its slipperiness. Because theory is a contested domain which is constantly re-formulated in argument and discussion, so too is the practice of discourse analysis. Because research is inextricably linked to politics, so there is a need to make discourse analysis accountable to the local political issues in South Africa. Contestation concerning the relevance of discourse analysis in South Africa, and of the methodological and theoretical practices embarked upon is essential to the efficacy and refinement of discourse analysis, as well as to the recognition that different formulations of discourse analysis may be used for different research and political purposes. What is vital in this process is that discourse analysts continue to reflect on and write about their research practices. This paper is offered as a contribution to this process.

Conceptualisations around the notion of discourse, its underlying regularity, its constructive effects, and the implications in terms of meaning and practices have important effects in terms of how the actual analysis proceeds. There are various dualistic tendencies (discourse/real; practices/discourse; text/discourse; text/context; discourse/the extra-discursive) that may (inadvertently) creep into discourse analytic work. In attempting to avoid these dichotomies, I have followed Parker (1990a) in positing: (1) that discourse is realised in text (anything that can be given interpretive gloss); (2) there is nothing outside the text; and (3) objects can simultaneously be inside and outside of texts. Also, Fairclough's (1992) conceptualisation of the discursive 'event', which is simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice and an instance of social practice, is useful, as it allows for a saturation of practice with discourse and

vice versa. In my doctoral work I utilised a methodology that I termed deconstructive discourse analysis. Some structuralist work was undertaken in terms of the identification of discourses surrounding teenage pregnancy. However, this was constantly infused with deconstructive work that relied on Foucault's analytics of power, and Derrida's method of *sous rature*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the Johan Jacobs Foundation for financial assistance, Prof Kevin Durrheim, my PhD supervisor, for the constructive pedagogy of his comments on my work, and the anonymous reviewers for comments that have improved this paper.

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1. Ironically, these tend to be published in special editions (Black scholarship, Gender and Psychology and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission editions), perhaps indicating a continuing level of marginalisation of this form of research.
 2. While this may have something to do with changes in Editorship as well as the amalgamation of PASA and OASSSA into PsySSA, I believe that the dramatic increase in the number of articles broadly related to discourse analysis does indicate a shift in research practices.