

## ESRC National Centre for Research Methods Review paper

### Discourse Analysis: Varieties and Methods

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## **Discourse Analysis: Varieties and Methods**

### **Abstract**

This paper presents and analyses six key approaches to discourse analysis, including political discourse theory, rhetorical political analysis, the discourse historical approach in critical discourse analysis, interpretive policy analysis, discursive psychology and Q methodology. It highlights differences and similarities between the approaches along three distinctive dimensions, namely, ontology, focus and purpose. Our analysis reveals the difficulty of arriving at a fundamental matrix of dimensions which would satisfactorily allow one to organize all approaches in a coherent theoretical framework. However, it does not preclude various theoretical articulations between the different approaches, provided one takes a problem-driven approach to social science as one's starting-point.

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## 1. Introduction

In this paper we sketch out and discuss six approaches and techniques to the study of discourse:

- (1) Political Discourse Theory (PDT)
- (2) Rhetorical Political Analysis (RPA)
- (3) Discourse Historical Analysis (DHA) in Critical Discourse Analysis
- (4) Interpretive Policy Analysis (IPA)
- (5) Discursive Psychology (DP)
- (6) Q Methodology (QM)

We will say more about these approaches later, but for now it is worth noting how discourse has taken on a vast array of meanings over the last century or so, ranging from natural language, speech, and writing, to almost anything that acts as a carrier of signification, including social and political practices, to discourse as an ontological horizon. For some theorists the fact that discourse has become a key signifier is linked to fast-paced and ongoing social, economic, and political changes since the industrial revolution, whose intensity and reach means that fewer and fewer aspects of our lives can be taken for granted (Laclau 1990). In this view, the discursive and constructed character of the world becomes increasingly visible, presenting itself as an obvious object of study.

Analysts attribute to discourse varying degrees of importance and significance. This leads to the problem of how to classify different approaches in discourse analysis. There are at least three dimensions along which we can think about different approaches to discourse analysis:

- (1) Ontology
- (2) Focus
- (3) Purpose

The dimension of ontology aims to capture the relative importance explicitly attributed by advocates of a discourse analytical approach to its ontological presuppositions, for example, concerning the nature of subjectivity and agency, the nature of social relations and structures, or the nature of their interaction. These sorts of considerations, in turn, have a bearing on what different approaches understand by discourse, on how they delimit their objects and levels of analysis, on how linguistic and non-linguistic elements are treated, and so on. Political discourse theory and critical discourse analysis, for example, devote considerable space to such ontological reflections.

Focus, on the other hand, pertains to the level of analysis linked to the objects of study typical of the approach. Along a micro/macro axis we could ask if it focuses on a single interaction or text, a whole practice, or a regime of practices. Along a linguistic/non-linguistic axis we could ask if it focuses on speech, text, images, or sounds, and so on. Critical discourse analysis and some versions of discursive psychology, for example, often focus on the micro-detail of text and interaction, while political discourse theory tends to train its sights on a much wider canvas. Finally, the dimension of purpose aims to capture

the central motivation animating the research of the discourse analyst. Is it primarily explanatory or is it primarily critical? Are critique and explanation articulated in the practices of research, or do they operate separately? While critical discourse analysts are usually more explicitly critical in their motivations, and while Q methodologists are primarily driven by concerns linked to description and validation, interpretive policy analysts, rhetorical political analysts, and political discourse theorists incorporate both elements in different combinations.

What all the above discourse analytical approaches share, however, is an overriding concern with questions of meaning and the centrality attributed to subjects in the construction and apprehension of meaning. It is this concern with meaning and subjectivity that drives the selection of different methods or techniques in the study of discourse, whether these are qualitative, quantitative, or some combination of the two. Of course much still depends on how each of the above approaches conceptualize subjectivity, the structure of meaning, and the processes that produce that meaning. But even if we acknowledge these dependencies the task of individuating the approaches and then constructing typologies is not easy or unproblematic.

In fact, what such classification exercises reveal, if anything, is the difficulty of arriving at a fundamental matrix of dimensions which would satisfactorily allow us to organize all approaches neatly and without remainder. As we will argue in the conclusion, however, there is a very precise reason for this, namely, that dimensions such as focus and purpose are intimately linked to the way the research problem is constructed in the first place, and how it is reconstructed during the course of research. Indeed, while ontological presuppositions often function as the 'hard core' of an approach, we would argue that even these cannot be said *a priori* to be immune from contestation, though of course the degree of such contestation would very much depend upon the extent to which researchers adopt what Connolly (2002: xx) calls an ethos of 'presumptive generosity'.

In our view, taking problem-drivenness as our basic starting point changes the terrain of debate between advocates of different discourse analytical approaches. Oftentimes comparisons and contrasts between different approaches are conducted at a fairly abstract level, whether from the point of view of ontology, epistemology, or methodology. Such discussions tend to focus on their respective views of agency or structure, the nature of their knowledge claims, or how they would treat individual texts or speech interaction. We believe, however, that refocusing the debate around common *problem* areas instead allows us to treat the boundaries between different approaches as a lot more porous and

thus subject to rearticulation. While this may be frustrating from the point of view of analytical compactness, we think it presents us with an opportunity to advance such debates in very material and mutually productive ways. This is not to say that differences do not remain. It is simply to suggest that what we find in practice is that ontological presuppositions do not always act as the rigid barriers to inter-approach conversations that they are often made out to be, these barriers being subject to productive articulation when the problem areas are more explicitly foregrounded.

Our concluding section will return to these themes, discussing in more detail such comparisons and contrasts between discourse analytical approaches. In order to better contextualize that discussion, however, we now present an overview of the six approaches to discourse analysis. In each section we say something about its origins, its internal complexity, its main intellectual sources and assumptions, and we consider how these considerations impact upon the methods and techniques employed. As we will see, while there is considerable variation at the level of methods and techniques deployed, the approaches all conceive of themselves as responses to positivist and essentialist approaches that privilege causality over understanding and laws over contingency.

## 2. Political Discourse Theory

The last few years have brought an enormous interest in new forms of discourse analysis. These approaches reflect the different theoretical *starting-points* of the theorists involved, as well as the conceptual *resources* they draw upon. Political Discourse Theory (PDT) stems initially from attempts by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe to use the work of Gramsci and Althusser to tackle problems of class reductionism and economic determinism in Marxist theory, that is, the problem of *essentialism*: the idea that a society, human subject, or the objects that we encounter in social life, have fixed essences that exhaust *what* these entities are (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). As against essentialism, discourse theorists draw upon the writings of Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, and Žižek to stress the contingency and historicity of objectivity, as well as the primacy of politics and power in its formation.

But *what* is discourse in this approach? Let us begin by recalling some of the opening remarks of the *Philosophical Investigations*, in which Wittgenstein asks us to imagine a builder A and an assistant B building with assorted stones: A calls out the words 'block', 'slab', 'beam' and 'pillar', and B passes the stones to A who inserts them into the building or wall. Wittgenstein calls this 'whole', consisting of both 'language and the actions into which it is woven' a 'language-game' (Wittgenstein 1967: 4). In a microcosmic form, what Wittgenstein calls a 'language game' more or less corresponds to what we call a 'discourse' or a 'discursive structure' (see Laclau and Mouffe 1988). We can flesh out at least four features of this idea.

First, as John Dryzek suggests, 'discourse is a shared way of apprehending the world', which 'enables those who subscribe to it to interpret bits of information and put them together into coherent stories or accounts' (Dryzek 1997, p. 8). Each discourse rests on certain assumptions, judgments, and contentions that provide the basic terms for analysis, debate, agreement and disagreement about an object. Natural, physical and cultural objects are thus understood and acquire meaning in discourses. More technically, they are 'discursively constructed'. In short, whilst objects clearly 'exist' independently of any particular discourse, their meaning and significance for situated subjects - and how they are engaged with - depends on these discursive articulations.

But, secondly, discourse is not *only* about representations and systems of meaning, where the latter are understood in purely cognitive or ideational terms. This is because discourse is also an *ontological* category in PDT that captures something about the *character* of the objectivity and social relations. Hence the idea of a language game highlights the fact that discourses are *relational configurations* of elements that comprise agents (or subjects), words and actions. These elements are individuated and rendered intelligible within the *context* of a particular practice, namely, the activity of constructing the wall. Each element acquires meaning only in relation to the others. To put this point in more formal terms, drawing on Saussure and structural linguistics more generally, a discourse consists of a system of signifiers without positive terms, in which the identity of each element depends on its differences with others. The meaning of the word 'father' in the English language depends on its difference from terms like 'mother', 'son', 'daughter', and so forth (Saussure 1993).

When formalised, a third feature of the concept of discourse is that the relational and differential character of language holds for *all* signifying or meaningful structures. Here the work of linguists like Louis Hjelmslev and the Copenhagen School of Linguistics are of particular importance. This does not mean that everything *is* language, but rather that the properties of language hold for all meaningful structures. Institutions like states or governance networks can be conceptualized as more or less sedimented systems of discourse, that is, partially fixed systems of rules, norms, resources, practices and subjectivities that are linked together in particular ways.

Finally, drawing on Derrida and Lacan, proponents of PDT stress the *radical contingency* and *structural undecidability* of discursive structures. This arises because they assume that all systems of meaning are in a fundamental sense lacking. And this absence or negativity prevents the full constitution of discursive structures. In their jargon, every



structure is thus dislocated. This 'out of joint-ness' is evident in particular *events* that show their incompleteness. In short, then, objects of discourse are radically contingent constructs, not essential; they can be interpreted and understood in many different ways.

But this emphasis on the ontological import of discourse theory should not come at the expense of more epistemological and methodological questions, and it should not lead to the neglect of particular techniques of discourse analysis. How do proponents of PDT study discourses? How do they describe, explain, criticise and evaluate? In exploring these questions PDT adopts a *problem-driven* approach to political analysis. It thus involves the construction of particular problems in specific historical contexts. Yet its supporters do ask some general questions. What are the origins of particular discourses and policies? How can they be characterised? How and why are they sustained? When and how are they changed? And, finally, because PDT is a species of critical theory, how can discourses be evaluated and criticized?

The answer to these questions is captured by the phrase *logics of critical explanation* (Glynos and Howarth 2007). Taking its cue from the work of Ernesto Laclau (Laclau 1996; 2005), the turn to 'logics' in political discourse theory responds to at least two challenges in contemporary social science. The first challenge is to think beyond the *causal law* paradigm, in which the ideals of prediction and deduction are overemphasized and historical context is underemphasized, while the second is to go further than the two main responses to the causal law paradigm. The latter consist of those approaches that focus either on *contextualized self-interpretations* (deriving from hermeneutical thinkers such as Winch (1990), Taylor (1985), Bevir & Rhodes (2004, 2005)), but which overemphasize the particularity of historical context, and those that emphasize the role of *causal mechanisms* (which arise from the neo-positivist or critical realist traditions, and theorists such as Elster (1989), Bhaskar (1998), Shapiro (2005)), but which do not escape the shadow of the causal law paradigm.

The appeal to logics, then, seeks to carve out a space defined by its opposition to causal laws, and its deconstruction and reworking of causal mechanisms contextualized self-interpretations (see Glynos & Howarth 2007: Chapters 2 & 3). Taking its principal objects of investigation to be *practices* or *regimes of practices*, the aim of PDT is to critically explain their transformation, stabilization, and maintenance. In this perspective, discourse functions as an ontological horizon, and this means that practices -- and any other object which can be qualified as meaningful -- are by definition discursive in character. Moreover, drawing inspiration from Heidegger, Lacan, and Laclau & Mouffe, but also drawing on Foucault, Wittgenstein, and Derrida, PDT is premised upon a negative ontology that foregrounds the radical contingency of social relations. By this is meant that any system or structure of social relations is constitutively incomplete or lacking for a subject. From this perspective, practices are governed by a dialectic defined by incomplete structures on the one hand, and the collective acts of subjective identification that sustain or change those incomplete structures on the other.

In conducting studies of such practices and their transformation, PDT presents a picture of social science research comprising the *problematization* of empirical phenomena; the *retroductive explanation* of these phenomena; and the *persuasion* of – and *intervention* into – the relevant community and practices of scholars and lay-actors. More specifically, a logics approach to political theory & analysis can be broken down into five basic elements: problematization, retroduction, logics, articulation, and critique. The appeal to problematization simply flags the fact that this approach is a species of *problem-driven*, rather than *method-* or purely *theory-driven* research. If method-driven approaches are motivated more by the techniques of data-gathering and analysis than by a concern with the empirical phenomena under investigation, theory-driven research aims ‘to vindicate a particular theory’ rather than illuminate a problem that is specified independently of the theory’ (Shapiro 2002: 601). At the same time, PDT should not be confused with *problem-solving* research. This is because problem-solving research tends to take for granted the existence and nature of certain social structures or rules, as well as the assumptions of the dominant theories of such reality, and then operates within them (Cox 1981: 129–30; cf. Popper 1999).

By contrast, PDT considers an object of study to be *constructed*. This means that a range of disparate empirical phenomena have to be constructed as a problem, and the problem has to be located at the appropriate level of abstraction and complexity. Thus this approach shares a family resemblance with Foucault’s practice of problematization, which in his view synthesized the archaeological and genealogical methods of analysis (see Howarth 2000). It concerns ‘a movement of critical analysis in which one tries to see how the different solutions to a problem have been constructed; but also how these different solutions result from a specific form of problematization’ (Foucault 1997: 118-9).

This brings us to the second and third elements of a logics approach in PDT, for in relation to the identified problematization, retroduction offers us a way to think about the *form* of an explanation, and logics offers us a way to think about the units comprising the *content* of that explanation. Although Aristotle has been credited with its original identification, retroduction has been insightfully developed and applied in the philosophy of science by Charles Sanders Peirce and Norwood Hanson. In contrast to induction and deduction, retroduction implies that the single most important criterion for admitting a hypothesis, however tentatively, is that it *accounts* for the phenomenon or problem at stake. More specifically, retroductive reasoning takes a three-fold form. To begin with, a surprising, anomalous, or wondrous phenomenon is observed (P). This phenomenon ‘would be explicable as a matter of course’ if a hypothesis (H) were true, and so there is good reason

to think that H is true (Hanson 1961: 86). In other words, the hypothesis is not inferred until its content is already present in the explanation of P. This contrasts with inductive accounts which 'expect H to emerge from repetitions of P' and with Hypothetico-Deductive accounts which 'make P emerge from some unaccounted-for creation of H as a "higher-level hypothesis"' (Hanson 1961: 86).

In conjunction with the process of problematization and its fundamental ontological premise of the radical contingency of social relations, PDT seeks also to understand discursive practices and phenomena in terms of logics (see Glynos & Howarth 2007). Logics here are of course understood to be the PDT *content* of the retroductive *form* of explanation, in contrast to other possible hermeneutical or naturalist contents (such as contextualized self-interpretations or mechanisms). In general terms, the concept of a *logic* has a very particular meaning, intended to capture *the purposes, rules and ontological presuppositions that render a practice or regime possible, intelligible, and vulnerable*. So an understanding of the logic of a practice aims not just to characterize it, but to capture the various conditions which make that practice 'work' or 'tick'. More fully, a three-fold typology of logics is deployed for the purpose of conducting critical explanations: social, political, and fantasmatic logics.

Social logics help to characterize a practice or regime. Consider, for example, the attempt to characterize a particular audit practice in terms of *logics of atomisation*. These logics would describe patterns of discursive articulation that individuate institutions and persons as independent entities, isolating them from each other, while abstracting from them their virtues, skills, and other attributes. In this way, logics of atomisation downplay the social or structural aspect of success and failure in the self-understanding of persons and institutions, viewing themselves as individually responsible for their successes and failures.

But if social logics assist in the task of characterizing practices and regimes, then political logics focus on the more dynamic aspects of a practice or regime. Drawing on Laclau and Mouffe, political logics capture the linking together of demands into wider political projects and forces – this is the logic of equivalence – or the decoupling of demands into discrete and more manageable elements – this is the logic of difference. Political logics thus help to explain the way regimes or practices emerge, are contested, and/or are transformed. They speak to those processes of collective mobilization that are precipitated by the dislocation of social relations, and which involve the construction, defence, and naturalization of new social divisions or political frontiers. But they also enable us to grasp those processes that seek to disrupt or break up the drawing of frontiers.

A further explanatory and critical layer is added to the process of accounting for change or continuity with *fantasmatic* logics. If political logics furnish us with the means to show how social practices come into being or are transformed, then fantasmatic logics disclose the way specific practices and regimes *grip* subjects. More specifically the logic of fantasy aims to capture the manner in which subjects are rendered complicit in covering over the

radical contingency or unevenness of social relations. The role of fantasy in this context is not simply to set up an illusion that provides a subject with a false picture of the world. Instead, fantasies 'teach' us how to desire by incorporating references to features which are societally prohibited, or which tend to resist public-official disclosure. Typically, this involves the construction of a narrative that promises a fullness-to-come once a named or implied obstacle is overcome – the beatific dimension of fantasy – or which foretells of disaster if the obstacle proves too threatening or insurmountable: the horrific dimension of fantasy. Images of omnipotence or of total control often represent the beatific dimension, while images of impotence or victimization frequently represent the horrific dimension of fantasmatic attempts to cover over the radical contingency of social relations. Consider the political practices and struggles that eventually resulted in the UK's *Criminal Justice and Public Order Act* of 1994. In explaining what made possible the legitimation of its draconian anti-nomadic character, Lewis has shown how the passage of the Bill through Parliament in 1992 was accompanied by an outpouring of virulent and often irrational attacks on 'New Age Travellers' in the tabloid press (Lewis 2005: Ch. 3). New Age Travellers were constructed as an (horrific) obstacle to the (beatific) morally upstanding communities of the British nation, and a threat to Tory promises of a healthy economy and a harmonious society.

According to PDT, key to thinking about the relation between theoretical categories (such as logics) and empirical phenomena is the concept of articulation. In this respect it is important that practices of articulation are situated at an ontological level – not an epistemological or narrowly construed methodological level. Articulation is invoked by Laclau and Mouffe primarily to understand concrete social practices in which social actors 'articulate' discursive elements along the axes of what they call equivalence or difference. However, in line with the 'double hermeneutic', which is characteristic of social science practice, articulation is a concept that can be invoked to understand the practices being studied, *as well as* the practices of social scientists *themselves*. As a mode of explanation, the concept of articulation is invoked primarily to reflect upon and better understand social scientific practice. Here the aim is to avoid the temptation to subsume particular empirical phenomena under an over-arching lawlike generalization, and to resist an eclecticism that would simply combine without alteration (potentially) incommensurable elements. This insight applies with equal force to the question of methods and techniques. Clearly the choice of methods and techniques will be governed to a large extent by the way the empirical domain has been problematized. At the same time, however, it is essential that these methods and techniques are deployed in a way that is in dialogue, and thus articulated, with the ontological presuppositions of PDT.

Finally, the place and role of critique in a logics approach to social and political research can be understood in relation to the fundamental commitments of our social ontology. Critique takes place along two dimensions in this view: an ethical and a normative dimension. Ethical critique demands detailed analyses of the kinds of fantasies that underpin our social and political practices, and explorations of the ways in which fantasmatic objects can be destabilized or modulated. By contrast, questions of normativity are directed at the concrete relations of domination in which subjects are positioned. Normative questions thus require the analyst to identify and characterize social relations as relations of domination, which can be challenged in the name of alternative values or principles. Two elements come into play here: first, there are the values that are brought to any interpretation by the theorist – for example the values associated with the project of a radical and plural democracy – as well as the accompanying tasks of continually clarifying and modifying them. Second, there is the task of pinpointing and remaining attentive to those new values and identities encountered in the practices themselves but which have an incipient status that demand to be articulated explicitly: what are called *counter-logics*, which stand opposed to the identified social logics of domination. Counter-logics of a plural and democratic community can thus oppose and problematize those discursive articulations and social logics characterized as normatively suspect.

### **3. Rhetorical Political Analysis**

We now turn to the second identified approach to discourse analysis outlined in the introduction, namely Rhetorical Political Analysis (RPA). Rhetorical political analysis forms part and parcel of the broader 'turn to language' that has inspired a range of methods and theories of discourse analysis, over the last decades. It focuses specifically on the nature and character of rhetoric and its place in political analysis. As is the case with other discourse analytical approaches, RPA includes both theoretical reflection on the role of rhetoric and its relation to reason, and development of practical tools for the analysis of rhetoric. In both these areas, recent work draws on a range of sources, including ancient Greek texts, particularly the categories derived from Aristotle; developments in contemporary linguistic philosophy, particularly speech act theory and its variants; and post-structuralist political theory. This clearly is an extensive terrain and it would be fair to say that RPA draws on and reworks insights from these different domains by starting from interpretive and post-structuralist approaches to politics. Hence, RPA is narrower than these constituent terrains precisely insofar as it seeks to articulate an approach to the analysis of political discourses from a broadly interpretive and post-structuralist viewpoint.

A key feature of RPA consists in its rehabilitation of rhetoric as a legitimate focal point of political analysis. The historical reasons for this are clear. RPA works against the grain of a long philosophical tradition that has denigrated rhetoric as manipulative, purely instrumental and strategic, as opposed to reason that works - it is claimed - in search of truth. For instance, in the domain of policy analysis Gottweis argues that much of the

analysis in the Habermasian, discourse ethics tradition ‘reduces argumentation to the operation of *logos* rather than a tendency to integrate *pathos* and *ethos* into argumentation.’ Countering the negative view of rhetoric as in essence manipulative necessitates the reevaluation of *ethos* and *pathos* (Gottweiss, 2006: 239). In a similar vein, Finlayson argues that rhetoric draws our attention to ‘forms and arguments that exceed the strictures of the syllogism yet manifestly operate and function in real-world contexts of argument.’ In fact contemporary theorists working from an interpretive and post-structuralist viewpoint seek to recuperate the dimensions of rhetorical activity that are lost where reason is exclusively prioritized and opposed to rhetoric in simplistic fashion (cf. Grassi 2001; Finlayson 2007; Gottweis 2006; Laclau 1998; and Norval 2007; as well as Majone (1998), Meyer 1994; Toulmin 1958; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, as well as more broadly, speech act theory-inspired theories of performativity)) As a consequence, rhetorical political analysis seeks to provide a general overview of the conceptual tools that can be used to analyse arguments, as well as, importantly, the character of argument itself. Drawing on speech act theory, attention is given to the analysis of rhetorical situations in which argument takes place (Finlayson 2007), the constitution of various speaking positions/ positions of enunciation in the speech situation, (Austin 1986; Foucault 1972) as well as the constitution of the addressee of an argument. Finally, in contemporary democracies, rhetorical political analysis should also offer us means to analyse and think through what makes an argument and a rhetorical situation ‘democratic’ (Norval 2007; Finlayson 2007; Chambers 2009). We now turn to a close consideration of each of these dimensions and the range of tools available for their analysis.

If rhetorical analysis in politics is concerned with argumentation – conceived here beyond the rationalistic strictures imposed on it in the Habermasian, rationalistic tradition – then one needs to be clear about what constitutes an argument, both formally and in terms of contents. Drawing on Roman rhetorical theory, Finlayson here suggests a useful characterisation, adapted here to include the broad spectrum of concerns of RPA.

Type of Argument	Object of argument
Conjecture	Facts
Definition	Naming (Skinner, Laclau)
Quality	Nature of an act (Beiner, Ferrara, Zerilli)
Place	Boundaries /Staging (Rancière)

Hence, rhetorical analysis, in the first instance, draws attention to the types of argument, each of which delineates an object of argument. In the case of arguments of conjecture, what is in dispute is factual, whether or not something is the case (Finlayson 2007: 554) Arguments of definition concern the naming of things. Here the analytical techniques such as the analysis of *paradiastole* (Skinner 1996) and *catachresis* (Laclau 2005) enter the picture. Arguments of quality ‘concern the nature of an act, and calls for judgment. Here one needs to take account of the recent revival of work on the character of political judgment (Beiner 1983; Zerilli 2005). Arguments of place are, according to Finlayson ‘attempts to set the boundaries of political argument’, and the ontological features of this process of ‘staging’ of arguments have been analysed by the French political theorist Rancière (1999).

The analysis of the particular content of an argument – whether it is concerned with, for instance, education, health policy or foreign policy – is done with regard to the manner in which certain objects are emphasized/de-emphasized. In this sense, RPA echoes the emphasis in Freedman’s morphological approach to the analysis of political ideologies, which suggests that political ideologies ‘decontest’ key political terms; that is, they limit in particular ways the usage and meanings of key political terms (Freedman 1996) In this sense, the analysis of the content of arguments cannot be done without reference to the broader ideologies of which they form part (Norval 2000). This facet of the analysis of argumentative content further also echoes the post-Saussurean account of the meaning of signifiers as relational in character (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 113).

Rhetorical style concerns the ‘arrangement of the narrative’. Specific political events may throw up very specific narratives, ‘but there are also broader and subtler narratives’ that stand in need of analysis. Here again RPA echoes wider concerns in the analysis of rhetorical styles in politics, in particular the classical writings of Hirschman (1991) on the rhetoric of reaction. RPA, however, also seeks to build upon its Aristotelian roots to furnish

us with a picture of different styles of political argumentation as featuring differing combinations of *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos*. Hence, drawing on classical rhetoric, but without the *a priori* privileging of *logos*, it delineates three modes of rhetorical appeal: ethos-centric, pathos-centric and logos-centric. In politics, logo-centric analysis, it is argued, relies not on syllogisms, but on enthymemes or quasi-logical arguments based on premises that are probable rather than certain. Drawing on Skinner's work on classical rhetoric, Finlayson notes that in politics enthymemes often rely on what Cicero has called commonplaces (Skinner 1996), which are either activated or deactivated (Finlayson 2007: 558). For Finlayson (2007: 558) this means that one of the tasks of RPA is to 'identify how commonplaces become accepted and employed in the reasoning processes of political actors and in the arguments they then employ with others.' In logos-centric argumentation, such as in Parliamentary debates, central arguments are emphasized, weighed up and evaluated, not from a personal but from a 'factual' point of view (Gottweis 2006: 246).

Ethos-centric styles of argumentation refer to and rely on the character of the speaker or on their authority, as for instance, 'when someone claims expertise, experience or qualifications to be well-situated to address a particular issue; (Finlayson 2007: 558); or relies on trust respect, authority, honesty, credibility (Gottweis 2006: 243). In poststructuralist terms, this echoes Foucault's concern with the enunciative position of a speaker. For instance, Presidential speeches may too be ethos-centric, meaning that 'the speaking subject will adopt the role of authority and will often perform this role connected to his position or function in the institutional hierarchy of the state' (Gottweis 2006: 246). Pathos-centric styles of argumentation function to move the speaker, and concerns empathy, sympathy and sensibilities (Gottweis 2006: 243). This is a particularly potent form of argument in a media-age and, hence, one which is treated with a fair degree of circumspection by analysts. In a pathos-centric mode, emotions play a central role, e.g. public hearings where interested parties present their views (e.g. public hearings where 'sufferers' are presented)

From the foregoing, it is clear that RPA must not only be able to identify and analyse particular genres of appeal, but must also give attention to what genre is dominant in a particular situation or case. In this respect, Gottweis (2006: 245) suggests that we can distinguish between different models of argumentative performativity or argumentative orientation 'depending on their emphasis on pathos, ethos, or logos in argumentation.' He calls them different 'scenographies' depending on the dominant genre of argumentation: etho-centric, patho-centric and logo-centric forms, which can also produce a number of subforms or combinations of the three foregoing forms.



The constitution of the subjectivity of the addressee as well as of the speaker is often analysed in post-structuralist-inspired analyses that take up insights from speech act theory. Against essentialist understandings of meanings and of the nature and character of political identities, post-structuralist RPA emphasizes the constitutive character of rhetoric/discourse. Hence, attention is given not only to the content and styles of argumentation, but also the ways in which different subject positions are constituted in the very process of political argumentation. This is true both for the constitution of the identity of the addressee as well as of the speaker (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Zerilli 2005, Norval 2009a, 2009b).

Finally, it is worth noting how the opening up of the very space of argumentation, of course, presupposes that the truth is not given and that we are in the realm of the probable rather than in that of certainty. However, analysts of political rhetoric differ widely and passionately about the consequences of this emphasis on 'contingency', with some regarding it as almost co-extensive with democracy, while others suggest that contingency needs to be overcome in the search for a higher good, be that consensus or truth.

#### **4. Discourse Historical Approach in Critical Discourse Analysis**

We now turn to the third approach outlined in the introduction: Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) in Critical Discourse Analysis. The Discourse-Historical Approach is a type of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Unsurprisingly, therefore, much of the theoretical and methodological framing of DHA draws on CDA (see Reisigl & Wodak, 2009; De Cillia, Reisigl, and Wodak 1999; Wodak, & Meyer, 2009; and Krzyżanowski 2008). In CDA, social practices imply a 'dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and...situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s)' (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258). Discursive events are identified as being constitutive of and constituted by social context (situations), by objects of knowledge (institutions) and the social identities of (and relationships between) people and groups (social structures). By considering the discursive event in this dialectical context, CDA regards discourse as constituted primarily through power relations and social structures.

DHA, however, emerged as a response to criticisms levelled at CDA, especially concerning the latter's determinist tendencies linked to power and social structure and its concomitant neglect of the subject. For example, Johnstone (2008) states that the focus in CDA is 'on ways in which people's discursive behaviour is less the result of free choice and more the result of external socio-political pressures' (Johnstone 2008: 267). While maintaining the structural components of CDA, DHA details a need to draw from a social-psychology informed reading of the subject, in order to shed light on processes of interaction between text and context (and to acknowledge the influence of context upon possible readings of text). The key DHA argument is that a focus on objective social variables, such as gender, class, or ethnicity cannot sufficiently demonstrate the influence

of social context on language variation and discourse. The interaction between social structures and discourse structures is mediated, van Dijk argues, by the cognitive (social-psychology) context. Wodak and Meyer (2009) develop this argument and state that it is not objective social situations (determined by social structures) that influence language variation but rather it is the “subjective definitions of the relevant properties of these communicative situations that influence talk and text,” (Wodak and Meyer, 2009, 14). These subjective definitions are determined by the social-psychological contexts of the relevant actors. DHA highlights the need to include this context within the analytical process. It offers insight into the interplay between social structures and individual actors, and offers a way to reconceptualize subjectivity and agency in more cognitivist terms.

This primary concern is further iterated in DHA’s conceptualization of discourse (see, for example, Reisigl and Wodak 2009). Again, there is a degree of overlap with CDA approaches. Consonant with CDA, DHA defines discourse as context-dependent linguistic practices that are located within fields of social action. However, and in addition, DHA also imbues the need for memory into this definition, describing discourse as structured forms of knowledge and the memory of social practices (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001). This focus on memory of practices makes the historical aspect of DHA project explicit. Within DHA, history (and by implication memory) is understood as a relevant context that needs to be taken into account. This functions to imbue contingency, as different historical contexts allow for or enable different contingencies in terms of the mediation between objective social structures and subjective social actors (i.e. the historical context requires the analyst to address the influence of different historical contexts on the subjective understanding of social inequalities).

Moreover, though both CDA and DHA are problem driven approaches, DHA has a broader framework within which problems might be identified and delimited. This is partly because DHA is linked to a notion of ‘context dependent argumentation about validity claims such as truth and normative validity involving several social actors who have different points of view’. The object of problematization is subtly different. CDA does not necessarily challenge or problematize the nature or structure of the inequality it investigates, but rather the ways in which these inequalities are perpetuated. DHA on the other hand, calls into question much more the normative validity claims these discourses make, through a focus on cognitively mediated historical contexts. This latter qualification offers DHA another way to address the criticism often levelled at CDA, namely, that its analytical frame is overly constrained by predetermined social structures. In fact, the appeal to normative validity

claims can be read as an attempt by advocates of DHA to highlight the Habermasian -- rather than simply the critical realist -- dimension of their project.

Relatedly, a crucial element in DHA is the role of 'critique'. Reisigl and Wodak (2009) typify three key elements of critique within the discourse-historical approach. These are discourse immanent critique, socio-diagnostic critique and prospective critique. Drawing on Adorno, immanent critique enables the analyst to discover contradictions, paradoxes and dilemmas in the text or discourse. Socio-diagnostic critique understands ideology to be a property of everyday beliefs, and the task here is to identify the conceptual metaphors that disguise the ideological function of these everyday beliefs. Finally, influenced especially by Habermas, prospective critique is concerned with processes of communication, and the possibility of improving such communication. This prospective critique comes directly from critical theory and the idea that social theory should be concerned with critiquing and changing society, rather than just explaining it.

Linked to this critical task is the process of how the object of study is delimited, and DHA does this with reference to four criteria. These are (i) discourse; (ii) text; (iii) genre; and (iv) fields of action. First, DHA focuses on identifying patterns and commonalities of knowledge and structures; this is regarded as the delimitation of discourses. Secondly, DHA identifies text as a specific and unique realisation of a discourse.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, a genre is identified 'as a socially ratified way of using language in connection with a particular type of social activity' (Fairclough 1995: 14). In this context, genres subsume texts. The fourth criterion, fields of actions, draws from the work of Bourdieu. Fields of action capture the broader structural context in which the discourse, text and genre are located. Discourses are instantiated in specific texts, which are constitutive of and constituted by specific genres, which in turn are located within different fields of practices. Ways of talking about immigration (discourses) can be observed in government documents about immigration (texts) that can be taken to comprise a delimited set of linguistic practices (policy genre) within a broader socio-cultural field of action (such as a political campaign).

Related to this process of object-delimitation is the following staged process of relating text to context. Within DHA, the relationship between text and context can be typified by four key stages, the first two are primarily linguistic (and more text related) and the latter two are primarily extra-linguistic (and more context related). The primary linguistic level is the identification of text. Here, as already iterated, text is regarded as a specific and unique realisation of a discourse. Text is the base unit of analysis and the point of departure for the analyst. The second level can be characterised as the intertextual, whereby the analyst becomes concerned with inter-relations and overlap between utterances, discourses, texts, and genres. This process focuses on identifying linkages between these different criteria as a means of bridging from the more micro focussed level of the text up to the more macro focussed level of the extra-linguistic. This level of the inter-textual

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<sup>1</sup> For Wodak, conceptions of text are theory dependent, and she draws from the seven criteria for the definition of text, as proposed by de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981). These criteria are cohesion, coherence, intertextuality, intentionality, acceptability, informativity and situationality.

mediates between micro and macro levels of analysis and functions to enable elaboration on a middle-range (or problem based) theory about the topic of investigation. This middle range theorising is characterised by the extra-linguistic, what Wodak and Meyer (2009) have described as the 'context of situation'. It is at this level that the social-psychological can be seen to operate, mediating between the more macro socio-political contexts above and the more micro linguistic contexts below. It is at this level that subjectivity emerges in relation to the contingency of social context. It is also at this level that the text comes to be considered in light of broader social, psychological and institutional frames and structures. The text and the intertextual come to be regarded in light of these contexts (or more accurately, they come to be regarded in light of these contexts specifically in terms of the nature of the problem under investigation). It is from this middle range context that the analysis then moves to consider the text within a broader context again, informed by questions of the socio-political and the historical. The analysis of texts, the intertextual, and the extra linguistic is extended into contexts that consider the relatedness (at a macro level) of the identified discourses, in order to fully understand the structural context of the analysis, and to maintain a critical agenda.

Given this process of object delimitation, it is clear that there is no iron rule by which cases are selected or data gathered. DHA identifies text as a specific and unique realisation of a discourse. In fact most CDA approaches focus on 'typical texts', though the argument around what is, and what is not a typical text, is one that the researcher is at liberty to make. While there is an emphasis on existing texts, such as organisational documents or mass media communications, as opposed to generated data or interactional texts, such as dialogues, DHA research also often incorporates fieldwork and ethnography to elaborate the identified social problem, (given this collection of data, DHA can be said to operate within an inductive paradigm, rather than the more deductive one characteristic of other strands of CDA.) The aim, however, is to collate corpora of data across all relevant discourse, texts, genres, and fields of action. This is because DHA is concerned first and foremost with the field of politics, and historical analyses within this field, in order to develop historically informed conceptual frameworks for analysing political discourse.

## **5. Interpretive Policy Analysis**

The last few years have brought a growing challenge to orthodox models of policy analysis, and the emergence of new approaches, such as a growing interest in discursive approaches to the field of policy studies. A range of theorists have stressed the

importance of notions like narratives, storylines, framing, discourse coalitions, interpretation, argumentation, and meaning to critically explain the initiation, formation, implementation, and evaluation of public policies in various contexts and settings. The emergence of this family of approaches is complex and varied, but there are some general factors that can be pinpointed.

On the one hand, these approaches reflect a growing disenchantment with the mainstream positivist models of policy analysis that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, especially in the USA (Fischer 2003). Not only have these models been challenged for failing to provide compelling and substantive accounts of the policy process, and for neglecting to provide alternative normative stances that can improve the impact of public policies on the lives of citizens in democratic societies, but many policy researchers (and practitioners) have also questioned the underlying picture of (social) science that governs mainstream models. For the most part, mainstream positions have been 'held captive' by positivist and empiricist pictures of science and method. They have thus sought to develop lawlike explanations of social phenomena, and have remained committed to a sharp separation between questions of fact and questions of value. As we shall argue, discursive policy analysts have taken issue with these positivist presuppositions, and have placed themselves firmly on a postpositivist or postempiricist terrain.

But the intersection between discourse and policy analysis also reflects the growing interest in the concept of discourse and the methods of discourse analysis in the social sciences more generally. As we have intimated, discursive policy analysis comes in many different shapes and sizes, ranging from those that seek mainly to supplement positivist viewpoints to those who wish to break radically from positivist perspectives. The concept of Interpretive Policy Analysis (IPA) tries to capture this plurality and so embraces those who see it as a more generic notion that encompasses a range of postpositivist approaches to the study of public policy, as well as those who see it as a particular orientation within such a family of approaches. Either of these meanings is in our view legitimate, though it is important to be clear which one is being used in any particular context.

At whatever level it is pitched, however, an affinity is felt with those who emphasize the role of interpretation in developing an antipositivist programme of policy analysis. It is well documented that interpretivism comes in many forms, reflecting its hermeuneutical and analytical origins: Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Charles Taylor and Hubert Dreyfus, Isaiah Berlin, Peter Winch, Stuart Hampshire and more recently Donald Davidson. Dvora Yanow, Henk Wagenaar, Mark Bevir and Rod Rhodes draw upon hermeneutic insights to explore what a policy means, rather than to provide causal explanations of their emergence and sedimentation. Along with theorists like Frank Fischer and Maarten Hajer, these proponents of IPA also emphasize the importance of non-technocratic forms of policymaking that encourage greater citizen participation and deliberation (Fischer 2000). In this way, the practices of policy formation and implementation can be made more accountable and democratic (Hajer and Wagenaar

2003). But these theorists have also developed innovative methods to analyse the production and contestation of meaning in policy (e.g. Fischer and Forrester 2003).

Yet despite these convergences IPA exhibits considerable internal variation, which is reflected in the different inflections that the concept of discourse receives: from beliefs and cognitions, to social meanings and practices, and finally to the centrality of contingent and incomplete structures in the production of meaningful practices. Some draw on the work of Habermas and his theory of discourse; others draw upon Charles Taylor's account of intersubjective or common meanings; whilst another group draws more heavily on Michel Foucault. This internal differentiation also results from the different emphases placed upon particular disciplinary and intellectual sources. For example, while Yanow and Wagenaar share much with Bevir & Rhodes's model of interpretive analysis, and both are rooted in hermeneutics and phenomenology, their approaches draw more upon sociological and anthropological theories, whilst Bevir and Rhodes develop themes in post-analytical philosophy to capture the beliefs and desires of individual actors (Bevir & Rhodes 2004; 2005). Yanow and Wagenaar have given much attention to setting out and developing the methodological implications of IPA, especially the development of qualitative methods of data collection and analysis (e.g. Wagenaar 1987; 2004; Yanow 2000). They have also contributed substantive empirical applications of IPA that embody their anthropological and ethnographic orientations (Yanow 1996; 2003).

Dvora Yanow's *Conducting Interpretive Policy Analysis* (2000) provides a firm methodological stance for IPA, which share some features with Foucault's archaeological method of analysis. Yanow suggests four connected steps in IPA. First, the analyst must identify the artefacts (language, objects, acts) which form the relevant vehicles of meaning for a given policy issue, where the latter is understood by policy-relevant actors and discourse communities. Second, the researcher should identify the appropriate policy community in question. Third, the analyst must identify the relevant discourses – the specific meanings being communicated through particular artefacts and their imports - involved in the issue. And, finally, the interpreter must locate and specify the points of conflict and their conceptual sources - affective, cognitive, and/or moral – that reflect opposed interpretations by different actors and communities (Yanow 2000: 22).

In *Reframing Public Policy*, Frank Fischer fleshes out and modifies Yanow's initial model. He argues that one way of operationalizing the first step is to identify and individuate the 'policy community' in a particular 'policy space'. Only then can the researcher specify and identify the artefacts through which meanings are generated and transmitted, and then

construct an archive of documents and texts (Fischer 2003: 147). Having accomplished these first two steps, the third and fourth steps become matters of analysis. Here most proponents of IPA employ the primary methods of interviewing, observing, and document analysis for collecting empirical data (Fischer 2003: 149). The analysis of a range of primary documents – media representations, transcripts of committee hearings, and so on – coupled with open-ended interviews, are not only essential for collecting relevant data, but they also enable the researcher to test her assumptions about the limits of the policy community, the significance of the gathered artefacts, and the meaning of the narratives and storylines gathered.

The gathered information provides the means to construct an interpretive context within which to understand and analyse the social and political actions studied. This contextualization and familiarization is a product of ethnographic and participant-observation techniques. But an important dimension of this approach is also to locate points of disagreement, defamiliarization, and difference. Especially important in this regard are the differences between the actions and linguistic utterances of the various actors and policy communities in question, as well as the differences between the researcher's expectations and assumptions, on the one hand, and what is 'found' in the policy spaces that are investigated on the other (Fischer 2003: 149). Indeed, it is often the puzzling mismatch between assumptions and discoveries that opens the door for greater understanding and critical explanation. For example, the growing familiarity with the situation investigated can often induce a growing 'alienation' from one's initial theoretical assumptions and empirical expectations. Yet rather than being a cause for concern such estrangements can be the source of new insights and understandings (Yanow 2000: 8).

The reconstruction of this data furnishes the resources for a Geertzian 'thick description' of events and practices. Here advocates of IPA seek to 'triangulate' the range of conflicting voices, relevant meanings, and interpretations to construct credible and acceptable syntheses of human interactions (Fischer, 2003 151). This means that the ultimate aim of such research is not to produce objective facts or causal explanations, but to articulate well-founded interpretations of policymaking that presume the judgements and values of the researcher involved. Objectivity and credibility are not abandoned, but they are conditional upon certain social meanings and theoretical assumptions, and their contestability and fallibility is foregrounded. This view is shared by advocates of PDT, for example, who stress the need to 'pass through' the contextualised self-interpretations of relevant actors and subjects, but who do not concede to such interpretations the final interpretive word (Glynos & Howarth 2007). Critical explanations arise from these encounters and engagements.

Yanow and other interpretivists also contribute particular methods of analyzing language in search of policy meanings (Yanow 2000: 41). Maarten Hajer and Dvora Yanow have incorporated the role of metaphors and storylines to account for the formation of discourse coalitions, and for the justification, legitimation and implementation of policy decisions (Hajer 1995). For example, in developing his argumentative discourse analysis, Maarten

Hajer stresses the role of values and not just beliefs or interests. He thus challenges those approaches that understand discourse simply as systems of belief, or who prioritise preferences, interests, or given values. In this respect, their work extends Donald Schön's concept of 'generative metaphors', which are defined as often implicit or even unconscious figures or tropes that structure the way in which policy problems are seen and tackled. For example, images and talk of 'urban decay', which connect poor housing and neighbourhood infrastructure to the idea of 'tooth decay', evoke certain associations about a phenomenon that both makes possible the characterization of a problem, whilst prescribing solutions for its remedy. Both are rooted in the idea of human well-being.

Alongside her analysis of metaphors is Yanow's concern with the role of categories in the making and implementing of public policy (Yanow 2003). In *Constructing "Race and Ethnicity" in America: Category-Making in Public Policy and Administration*, she probes a striking paradox in US public administration and policy-making: the disjuncture between a growing awareness about the variable and contested character of categories like 'race' and 'ethnicity', and yet the persistent usage of these categories in policy and administrative practices. Here her concern is to show how apparently self-evident categories, such as 'race' and 'ethnicity', which seem to be natural and efficient instruments for policymakers, are themselves constituted and used for political and ideological purposes within the policy process. *In nuce*, they are social and political names that are enmeshed in the essentially political enterprise of making policy and administration look scientific, truthful, and legitimate. Drawing on hermeneutics and phenomenology, as well as various sociological approaches to the study of public policy (such as symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology), Yanow endeavours to expose the way this logic of naming and category-making works, whilst also exploring the manner in which official categories acquire their force and subjective 'grip' by concealing their own contingency. Categories of race and ethnicity thus emerge in this analysis as the collective identity stories of groups and individuals (Yanow 2003: 6-8). But when these categories are created by the state, and embodied in public policies, their function is to reinforce ideas about essentially fixed, unchanging and neutral categorizations of social difference, which at the same time reifies categories and suppresses historical inquiry into various forms and practices of governance (Yanow 2003: 207-10).

Finally, in keeping with their problem-driven orientation, different proponents of IPA generally accept that the selection of texts and concrete objects of analysis depends on the construction of particular research questions. Most display a catholic attitude to their potential sources: they can be textual or documentary, or involve interviews, ethnographic



research, the use of visual data, and so forth. With respect to their methods and techniques of analysis, IPAs exhibit similar diversity. Some are happy to use quantitative methods of data collection and analysis, especially those who focus on discourses as beliefs, whilst others are deeply sceptical of methods that do not require a passage through the self-interpretations of social actors. Most, if not all, are happy to employ a range of analytical techniques. These include various forms of textual analysis, such as metaphor, narrative and category analysis, as well as deconstruction, archaeology, genealogy, and techniques drawn from psychoanalysis.

## 6. Discursive Psychology

Discursive psychology draws on a wide range of intellectual sources, including conversational analysis, ethnomethodology, Wittgenstein's later philosophy, psychoanalysis, and ideology critique. Developed in the 1990s, it put into question conventional psychological and social psychological thinking by eschewing talk about 'inner' processes, whether these inner processes are conceived in terms of beliefs, memories, attitudes, cognitive features, predispositions, or some such (Billig 1997a, b; Harré 1995; Parker 1992, 2004; Edwards 1994, 1997; Edwards & Potter 1992; Potter & Wetherell 1987, 1995; Hepburn & Wiggins 2007). Instead, phenomena that are usually treated as inner mental processes by mainstream theories of psychology are seen to be constituted through discursive practice. In other words, psychological language entails outward, not inner, criteria, implying that psychological entities like emotions are socially constructed. So if one wants to understand feelings, 'psychologists should be paying attention to what people are doing when they claim to have feelings' (Billig 1997a: 141). This implies that psychology ought to be construed as more action-centred, and thus more dynamic and culturally specific (Hepburn & Wiggins 2007: 11).

One very important consequence of taking seriously the need to focus upon the outward criteria for inner states is that individuals are dethroned from the privileged position usually ascribed to them vis-à-vis their self-interpretations. What justifies talk of 'unconscious' or 'repression', for example, is not any access to 'inner' states, but rather the 'outward' appearance of what Freud calls the *parapraxes* of everyday life, namely, slips of the tongue, bungled actions, and so on. In other words, 'because language is socially shared, there must be public criteria for the use of psychological words' (Billig 1997a: 142). Far from implying the existence of a separate causal domain which is independent of subjectivity and society, these failures demonstrate the *social* dimension of their constitution. In reference to studies of politeness, for example, Billig notes how

[t]he temptations of impoliteness do not stand outside the dialogic process, but are constituted within it. The desires to be rude, to contradict, 'to speak one's mind', to have done with the constraints of politeness are formed within dialogue. Such desires cannot antedate, nor stand outside, the constrictions of politeness. In this respect, it makes sense to talk of the unconscious being dialogically constituted (Billig 1997a: 151).

The argument here is that detaching psychological propensities from interactional context is rendered problematic from a discursive psychological point of view because 'inner' states have 'outward' criteria.

Of course discursive psychology is internally variegated, this variation being a function of the different emphases advocates place upon different intellectual sources. Thus, discursive psychologists such as Hepburn and Wiggins (2007) might share more in common with conversational analysis, whilst others manifest a greater concern with wider power and ideological issues (e.g., Parker 2004). The first can be named the CA variant of DPs, whereas the latter can be named the IC variant. We could try to map these different discursive psychological approaches by focusing on how each view context and structure.

At one end of this spectrum, structures and institutions are understood to be constructed. In this view, speakers act with certain expectations and responsibilities, revealing how 'the institutionality of the interaction... is produced within the talk itself' (Hepburn and Wiggins 2007: 38). Thus psychological categories like attitudes or personality traits, and sociological categories like gender or class are avoided. Instead categories are invoked and relied upon only to the extent that participants themselves invoke and identify with them. In this view, only when this criterion of relevance has been satisfied can one begin to ask which of these categories or identities have consequences (Hepburn and Wiggins 2007: 7; see also Schlegoff 1997). Thus in a study conducted to determine how Child Protection Officers (CPOs) at the *National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children* deal with callers who cry, the researchers focused on the raw data produced in the interactions themselves, comprising observations and transcriptions of those interactions (Hepburn & Potter 2009). While previous studies had shown a range of CPO tactics are possible, their analysis aimed to elucidate more fully the operation and function of one type of response, namely, CPOs' use of a particular mode of questioning (what they call 'tag questions') to cope with this challenging situation.

At the other end of the spectrum, structures and institutions are understood as having a role in shaping the interaction between actors. Advocates representing this pole of discursive psychology even go so far as to explicitly caution against moving down the conversational analysis path for fear of ending up in an acritical empiricism and redemptivism (Parker 2004: 91). In this view, a 'turn to discourse' sensitizes us to how language and meaning positions us within a wider web of power relations and that the immediate interaction cannot be understood without reference to this broader discursive

field. For example, in order to understand fully the nature and significance of contemporary interpersonal interactions and events involving intense emotional responses, it is essential to situate this in relation to dominant and dominating modes of therapeutic, consumer, and economic discourses (Parker 2008). This is not to say that such wider structures have a simple determining effect on the interactants. While they are understood to carry a certain force and power to exclude, structures and institutions are not treated here as uniform, univocal, or free from tensions or contradictions.

So while both strands of discursive psychology reject the psychologizing tendencies of orthodox psychology and social psychology, they do tend to be motivated by slightly different sets of concerns. These similarities and differences carry practical research consequences, including how we should understand discourse, how we should understand the role of the researcher, and how we should treat different sources of evidence. One important similarity concerns aspects of a practice we ought to include as part of discourse. For example, both strands of discursive psychology canvassed here attach considerable importance to non-linguistic features: from all sorts of non-verbal cues accompanying actors' talk all the way to more general patterns of practices, including images, sounds, and the organization of physical space.

One important difference, however, concerns the empirical sources regarded as legitimate. Those discursive psychologists who lean toward conversational analysis tend to view interviews and other sociological and anthropological methods of data gathering with suspicion, preferring to focus instead on what are sometimes called 'naturalistic' materials. This is because the methods which yield such empirical material, such as observations and recordings of practices, are said to introduce much smaller perturbations into the data than other methods. More specifically, '[i]nterviews and other research-generated techniques such as questionnaires disrupt... [many interactional features] in complex and hard to identify ways' (Hepburn and Wiggins 2007: 20; see also Potter and Hepburn 2005). In contrast, a focus on naturalistic data is 'able to work with high quality digital records of people acting and interacting in everyday and institutional settings, which can be stored, replayed, cut and pasted, anonymized, coded and searched', as well as combined with transcription techniques that 'capture talk as it is hearably relevant to the participants' (Hepburn and Wiggins 2007: 23).

This tendency to bracket the researcher stands in stark contrast to another orientation which views discursive psychology as a form of 'radical research' (Parker 2004: 89). In this view, not only are interviews embraced as a key component of one's investigative efforts, not only is the person being interviewed treated as a co-researcher, but the interview itself is conceived as a 'text-in-process' in which tensions and contradictions are made visible, confronted, and transformed. Since discourse is here conceived as a way of organizing language 'into certain kinds of social bond' (Parker 2004: 88) this understanding of discourse analysis can thus readily be considered to be a form of participant action research (Parker 2004: 97).

## 7. Q Methodology

Starting with the self-interpretations of individuals, Q methodology helps researchers identify patterns of discourse that characterize the narratives of collective subjects about an event or topic. Q methodology thus shares with the first strand of discursive psychology the desire to discover patterns from the 'bottom up'. Using the subjects' interactions and responses as the raw data Q methodologists deploy their techniques and interpretive faculties to discover regularities. It differs from this first strand, however, because these interactions and responses are artificially induced by confronting subjects with a problem-solving exercise. For example, one might pose direct questions to people about partnership love (Watts and Stenner 2005b); or one might probe the self-understandings of public managers about network governance and democracy (Jeffares and Skelcher 2008). Q methodology emphasizes the active role of subjects in the generation and appropriation of meaning, but offers a quantitative way to make this sort of research systematic and its findings as robust and reliable as possible. Some also characterize Q methodology as a *critical* method (Watts and Stenner 2005a: 70).

Like discursive psychology, Q methodology emerged as a reaction to more conventional psychological approaches (Stephenson 1953, 1983, 1988/89), and like discursive psychology, the insights of Q methodology are not bound by the disciplinary boundaries of psychology, its ideas spreading widely from the 1990s onwards. For example, Q methodology has been used to elucidate a wide range of substantive topics in political and social studies generally, as well as in human geography and health more specifically (Brown 1980, Jeffares and Skelcher 2008, Raje 2007, De Mol and Busse 2008, Eden, Donaldson and Walker 2005, Baker 2006, Baker, Thompson, and Mannion 2006, Stenner, Cooper, and Skevington 2003).

However, while discursive psychology tends to react more strongly to the 'internalizing' tendencies of psychology, Q methodologists see their enterprise more as a reaction to the 'scientific' tendencies of psychology. (Of course these are not incompatible concerns, but there is a distinctiveness in their respective emphases.) In contrast to the pride of place given to hypothetico-deductive forms of reasoning and testing in orthodox psychology, Q methodology emphasizes the exploratory aspects of the discovery process, as well as the semantic and qualitative dimensions of research (Stephenson 1953: 151, Watts and Stenner 2005a: 75). Nevertheless, Q methodologists do not reject quantitative techniques,

sometimes giving rise to slightly awkward expressions, such as ‘qualiquantological’ (Stenner and Stainton Rogers 2004).

According to Q-methodologists H-D methods entail the *a priori* imposition of meaning upon variables in order to get the measurement process off the ground. In contrast, Q-methodologists seek to build the interpretive capacities of subjects into the measurement process in two ways: from the perspective of the participants and from the perspective of the researchers. First, ‘it asks its participants to decide what is “meaningful” and hence what does (and does not) have value and significance from their perspective’ (Watts and Stenner 2005a: 74). Second, these self-interpretations are themselves subjected to interpretation by the researchers, thereby yielding a form of contextualized self-interpretations. In this view, the meaning and significance that researchers attach to the participants’ self-interpretations are ‘attributed *a posteriori* through interpretation rather than through *a priori* postulation’ (Brown 1980: 54). The term ‘retroduction’, introduced earlier in our discussion of PDT, could be said to capture certain dimensions of the contrast Q methodologists wish to draw with deductive modes of reasoning.

More specifically, Q methodology relates to, and combines two key aspects of any research: data collection and data analysis. Each of these, in turn, has two aspects. Data collection comprises generating a Q set and Q sorts, while data analysis involves Q factor extraction and Q factor interpretation. In line with the emphasis advocates place on the dynamic aspects of this methodology, and once a research topic or question has been delimited, the subjects of the study have a role to play at both data collection and data analysis stages.

The Q set is the set of 40-80 signifiers to which a group of 40-60 subjects are asked to respond. A signifier here is understood to be a kind of stimulus that triggers the subject’s search for meaning and that can take any form, linguistic or non-linguistic. Though it is more common today to use statements, the originator of Q methodology, William Stephenson, did use vases and fragrances in his early studies. The important thing is that a Q set must be broadly representative of the relevant opinion domain and the sorts of things with which people could come into contact. There are many ways of achieving this goal, some of which entail engaging with the subjects themselves in pilot studies. But while the Q set comprises the raw materials of the study, the Q sort calls on the participants to respond to them in a very specific way: subjects are asked to order or ‘sort’ these signifiers relationally with reference to the intensity of their response along a particular axis: agreement/disagreement, characteristic/uncharacteristic, like/dislike, attractive/unattractive, approval/disapproval, and so on. In line with their critical engagement with H-D methods, Q-methodologists argue that the Q set ‘is not considered to possess any specific meaning prior to the sorting process’ (Watts and Stenner 2005a: 76). Moreover, though some thought must be put into how the group of participants are selected, a central tenet of Q methodology involves allowing ‘individuals to categorize themselves on the basis of the item configurations they produce’ (Watts and Stenner 2005a: 80). Through subjects’ own drive to ascribe meaning to the presented stimuli, this

sorting exercise generates a configuration of signifiers for each subject, thereby foregrounding the holistic aspect of Q methodology. In other words, Q methodology emphasizes the *pattern* of interrelations between elements, and this pattern is irreducible to its constituents. Importantly, subjects' signifying configurations are supplemented with further empirical data, comprising follow-up interviews asking after reasons for and comments about the construction process. This set of Q sorts thus comprises the raw materials for the data analysis stage of the study.

Q factor extraction inverts the standard so-called R factor analysis characteristic of orthodox psychology. As Stephenson puts it:

Factor analysis... is concerned with a selected population of  $n$  individuals each of whom has been measured in  $m$  tests. The  $(m)(m-1)/2$  intercorrelations for these  $m$  variables are subjected to... factor analysis. The technique, however, can also be inverted. We begin with a population of  $n$  different tests (or essays, pictures, traits or other measurable material), each of which is... scaled by  $m$  individuals. The  $(m)(m-1)/2$  intercorrelations are then factorized in the usual way (Stephenson 1936: 344-5)

Q factor extraction is normally conducted with the assistance of dedicated software packages, enabling the researcher to generate portraits of shared configurational patterns called factors. It does this by grouping individuals together who make sense of the Q set in similar ways and generating a small number of 'merged' relational patterns which 'represent' each factor and from which one can extract the descriptive or normative aspects of each shared view. Even so, this process cannot take place without the introduction of judgement on the part of the researcher, not only regarding the choice of software, but also the choice of options offered by each piece of software. They are decisions which are properly understood to be dependent upon 'the nature of the data and upon the aims of the investigator' (Brown 1980: 238). Finally, and as the name implies, Q factor interpretation involves the researcher's further judgement concerning the interpretation of each of the identified factors. It is an interpretation which, however, can be used to elicit the reaction of participants -- a process that yields further evidence concerning the reliability and robustness of Q factor extraction and interpretation processes. Q methodology, however, is not concerned with the diachronic or temporal unfolding of patterns or views. Rather it shows us how subjective input can produce objective discursive structures that are relatively stable over time. Thus Q methodology's relation to other discursive approaches to the study of social and political phenomena is sometimes conceived as a function of complementarity:

In enabling a cartography of social semantics, Q methodology is in a relation of complementarity with more thematic or 'individual' approaches..., and also with methods like conversational analysis that focus on the micro processes of situated interaction. Using Q methodology... entails a focus on subjectively expressed, socially organized semantic patterns, whether these are subsequently grasped as 'discourses', 'representations' or as 'fields of the sayable and the seeable'. (Watts and Stenner 2005a: 86)

## **8. Concluding Discussion**

This paper has delineated and briefly discussed six different approaches and techniques of doing discourse analysis in the social sciences. Along the way, we have discussed their various ontological assumptions; their delimitation of analytical objects; their different conceptions of discourse, especially their understanding of the distinctions between the linguistic and non-linguistic elements; the way they distinguish between texts and contexts; the different roles of agency and subjectivity in these approaches; and their different levels of analysis. It is evident from our delineation that the different approaches and techniques are internally heterogeneous and complex: to capture the essence of any one perspective is impossible. Nevertheless, it is possible to provide some ideal typical characterizations that can help us to map their relationships and develop their possible connections. These different characterizations are displayed in Figure 1. It goes without saying that these categorizations are contingent and revisable: indeed, one of the future tasks that arises from our investigations is the need to refine these judgments and allocations.

Figure 1

Fundamental Tenets						
Discourse Analysis Type	Ontology/ Typifications of Discourse	Objects of Analysis	Linguistic/ Non-Linguistic Parameters	Distinctions between Text and Context	Role of Agency/ Subjectivity	Levels of Analysis: Macro/Micro
PDT	Discourse as Ontological Horizon	Change & Stabilization of Discursive Practices	Linguistic & Non-Linguistic Internal to Discourse	Analytical & Not Ontological	Subject as Discourse Position; Subject as lack; Subject as Enjoying	Macro (with Micro Analyses of Texts)
CDA / DHA	Realist Semiotic as a Dimension of Social Relations	Political Discourses	Linguistic = Text; Non-Linguistic = Social Context of Text	Text is Objective; Context is Historical & Subjective	Cognitive	Micro (with Macro Analysis of Social Structures)
IPA	Hermeneutic	Meanings Practices Policy Discourses	Linguistic = Text; Non-Linguistic = Social Context of Text	Analytical & Not Ontological	Expressive Subjectivity Subject of Meaning	Macro (with Micro Analyses of Texts)
RPA	Discourse as Ontological Horizon	Argument Persuasion	Traverses Divide with Emphasis on Pathos and Ethos	Texts = Arguments; Contexts = Discourses	Subject Positions	Micro (with Macro Analysis of Ideologies)



DPs	Personal Traits Constructed through Discursive Interaction	Emotions & Ideology	Traverses Divide	Analytical & Not Ontological	Cognitive (CA Strand) Split Subjectivity (Ideology Critique Strand)	Micro (CA) Macro (IC)
QM	Ontology Bracketed	Identification of Shared Discourses	Traverses Divide	Textual	Self-Interpretations	Micro

Key to Figure 1

- PDT: Post-structural Discourse Theory
- CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis (discourse historical approach)
- IPA: Interpretive Policy Analysis
- RPA: Rhetorical Political Analysis
- DPs: Discursive Psychology
- QM: Q Methodology

One convenient way to start this comparison is with the respective ontological assumptions of these approaches, for they strongly shape the other fundamental tenets of an approach or technique. One immediate distinction to be drawn here is between those approaches that eschew the role of ontology altogether and those that regard an ontological turn as essential. For example, as a technique of discourse analysis, Q methodology does not presume any particular ontological commitments, so that its supporters can link its techniques to different theoretical orientations. Q methodology is best viewed as a useful technique of discourse analysis that can help us to map discursive structures and to pinpoint subjectivities and identities. Its focus is on texts and it tends to operate at the micro level, though wider pictures of organizations and groups can be constructed from the analysis of data.

On the other hand, supporters of PDT, RPA and the IC variations of DPs tend to stress an explicit set of ontological presuppositions, which are assumed in any empirical investigation. They articulate a clear distinction between the ontological and ontical levels of analysis, where the former consist of the basic categories and concepts that constitute a domain of objects, whilst the latter is focused on the phenomena that arise in a particular domain of objects, which is specified by the former designations. In these approaches, discourses are generally conceptualized as relational systems of meaningful practices and objects, which include both the epistemological and ontological dimensions. The discursive terrain thus forms the ultimate horizon for the constitution of social objectivity. Within this terrain, they seek to critically explain the production, transformation and

sedimentation of practices or regimes. Here the distinction between the linguistic and non-linguistic is internal to discourse, and the relationship between context and text is relational and differential, rather than regional or essential. Although the meanings of practices and regimes are central in this perspective, attention is also directed at the forces that construct such meanings, as well as the incomplete structures that make such constructions both possible and impossible. Subjectivity in these approaches is a complex phenomenon, in which the subject is positioned in discourses; can act or identify in situations of dislocation; and procures enjoyment from its various identifications and modalities. The primary focus of PDT and the IC variants of DPs is a macro level analysis of practices and regimes, though this investigation usually requires the analysis of particular texts or phrases at the micro level. Proponents of RPA and the CA variant of DPs tend to focus more on the micro level, though they contextualize their work by adducing macro level considerations.

Proponents of CDA/DHA and IPA tend not to dwell on their ontological presuppositions, though they clearly draw sustenance from critical realism and hermeneutics respectively. These ontological commitments shape their choices of research objects and constrain the different ways in which they conduct their studies. CDA and DHA draw upon theorists like Roy Bhaskar, Bob Jessop and Pierre Bourdieu to furnish them with accounts of social relations and processes. The latter retain a distinction between the semiotic and material dimensions of social practices, where they stress the role of social structures and their intrinsic causal mechanisms in determining outcomes. Theorists like Fairclough and Wodak thus focus on the analysis and critique role of political discourses. In so doing, they retain a distinction between the linguistic and non-linguistic dimensions, where the latter correlate with the division between text and context. Much of the research in this tradition operates at the micro level, though there are efforts to connect the analysis of statements and documents to wider social structures and changes. In this approach, subjects are positioned within discourses, though at the macro level they are related to social structures in a dialectical fashion: structures strongly constrain human agency and set limits on their possibilities.

Advocates of IPA, on the other hand, draw on hermeneuticists like Taylor and phenomenologists like Husserl and Schütz to emphasize the role of intersubjective meanings and practices as their primary objects of research. In this approach, the role of subjective meanings is central, though actions, practices, and institutions are conceptualized as 'text-analogues'. IPAs thus draw an analytical, rather than ontological distinction between texts and contexts, in which 'texts' can be understood in terms of a

wide range of documents, media representations, and so on. As its name suggests, the focus is on policymaking broadly construed – the formation, implementation and evaluation of policy – and its impact on wider social relations and social identities. This means that IPA seeks to understand processes at the macro level, but its advocates also investigate texts and actions at the micro level in order to develop their critical interpretations. They also accept that in order to explain broad social change they must also explain shifts at the micro level: what Foucault has called the microphysics of power, for instance, or particular technologies of the self.

This set of comparisons emphasizes the differences between these approaches and techniques. But it should not be read as definitive and it should not come at the expense of the similarities between the approaches. Obviously, they are all concerned with the analysis and interpretation of discourse and provide ways of doing this. But they also share a commitment to problem-driven approaches to discourse analysis, in which the problematization of social phenomena constitutes an important starting-point in any research strategy. Yet over and above these initial observations it is still possible to say a little more about the overall relationships between the approaches.

Mark Lichbach has argued that social science is populated by three groups of responses to opposing perspectives or 'foils'. He calls them 'competitors', 'pragmatists' and 'lumpers' (Lichbach, 2003: 4-7). Competitors stress irreducible conflict between different perspectives; pragmatists tend to ignore differences in the name of conducting normal science; and lumpers are synthesizers who seek to integrate all perspectives into one centre. Each of these orientations carries dangers and hopes: the first tend to exacerbate difference, though they also strive to maintain the integrity of perspectives; the second group ignores dispute, but they may close-off their perspective from sources of renewal; and the third seeks to monopolize debate around one centre, though they may also construct useful connections between conflicting approaches.

Each of the different approaches we have considered exudes these responses to difference. For example, some proponents of PDT would like to orient discourse theory solely around its ontological assumptions, and the same is true of some supporters of other approaches. Some advocates of Q methodology see it as a neutral technique that is compatible with any orientation, whilst others are skeptical about its scientific and reductionist connotations. Sometimes supporters of CDA/HAD clash with proponents of IPA or PDT over the strong realist tendencies exhibited in CDA/HAD. The realism of the latter is often understood to be incommensurable with the constructionist or discursive ontological starting-points of other perspectives. The more cognitive conception of subjectivity in the CA variation of DPs differs from the more split conception of the IC variant.

How then to deal with this complexity? One response is to acknowledge this complexity and to encourage diversity. Let a hundred flowers blossom! But this pragmatism is also a recipe for relativism, particularism, and the ghettoization of research programmes. Another

is to bring order and science around a paradigmatic core. Yet this would negate valued diversity. Is a form of synthesis without imperialism possible? The task is tricky and fraught with dangers for any solution emanating from a particular perspective can be immediately called imperialistic. And yet one thing that emerges from our investigations is that each of the approaches can in principle be combined in some respects: different yet compatible methods and techniques of analysis; different yet compatible levels of analysis; different ontological presuppositions, but common critical and empirical concerns; and so on.

It is our contention that the notion of articulation is helpful in this regard. As we noted in our discussion of PDT, Laclau and Mouffe use the category of articulation to develop a political theory of hegemony that involves the linking together of contingent social demands into political projects or coalitions that can bring about social change. They characterize the practice of articulation as 'the construction of nodal points' which partially fix the meaning of various social elements. Meaning is only partial because of what they call '*the openness of the social*, which in turn is made possible by the '*constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity*' (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 113). But in addition to its use in developing a theory of politics, the notion of articulation can also provide resources to rethink the linking together of different theoretical perspectives without falling into the traps of eclecticism or theoretical subsumption. The concept can also help us to develop a logic of linking together contingent theoretical and empirical elements in the practice of problematization, explanation, and critique. Both practices presuppose a mutual modification of elements, and both presuppose that the elements that are articulated are stripped of any essentialist connotations. In short, the practice of articulation, accompanied with a suitable ethos of presumptive generosity, means that diversity and difference can be retained and foregrounded alongside the benefits of unity and universality. In our view, this practice and ethos offers the prospect of a future research agenda in new forms of discourse analysis.

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