

## DEBATE: THIS THING CALLED DISCOURSE

### What difference a discourse makes

#### Review

Levett, A, Kottler, A, Burman, E & Parker, I (eds) (1997) **Culture, power and difference: Discourse analysis in South Africa**. London & New Jersey: Zed Books; Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press. ISBN 1-919713-08-5. Pbk, 210 pages.

*Peter du Preez*  
*Department of Psychology*  
*University of Cape Town*  
*Cape Town*

Perhaps the best way to start this review is to examine the first and last chapters, written by the editors and providing the frame of the book. What's discourse analysis about? Briefly, it's about the performances of power as revealed in texts. These performances get interpreted in new performances of power by discourse analysts.

At the end of a reading of the first and last chapters, we know that discourse analysis is not a method, can reveal no facts or truths, and is mainly about detecting performances of power in language. Its reductive focus on power reminds me of the focus on pleasure in hedonism (or modern versions such as utility maximisation). We can explain everything we do by positing that it's all done for pleasure (or utility). If you smoke, it's for pleasure (or utility); if you jump off buildings, it's for pleasure (or utility). Similarly, if we want to understand your book on **The child's conception of number**, the best way to analyse it is to see what role it plays in the economy of power.

There is a modest response to this, which would explain why discourse analysis has so little to do with truth. The response is that discourse analysis is simply interested in one aspect of utterance: power. Other aspects there are, but they are not the concern of the discourse analyst. If there is truth in the text, that is not the analyst's concern. What the analyst wishes to know is the role of that "truth" in that performance of power.

There is nothing wrong with studying performances this way. We can study conjuring, surgery, or copulation as performances of power, just as we can study praying, marrying, fighting, or eating as economic transactions. This sometimes sheds an interesting and unexpected light on them, but often the light is very little indeed. Similarly, a discourse analyst looking at a paper in **Nature** and a letter to the editor of **Femina** might uncover this and that about them as performances of power, but might

miss the point about the ways they grapple with truth - or carry out other language functions.

Let's take a casual invitation on page 200 to open up things as fictions rather than as facts. Since the discourse analyst doesn't mind living in a factless world and utters no warnings about when this might be a bad idea, we might be tempted. The sheer wonderful recklessness of it! Restore the world of childhood! "But wait!" the grumpy old parent figure - moralist - Scotch empiricist - nasty bastard says, intervening in the psychocomplex: "Doesn't the analyst care about survival?" The discourse analyst sees two formulae on two bottles, the one for water and the other for sulphuric acid. "Jolly good!" he says. "Two fictions." He disregards them and takes a swig because the bottles look the same and the formulae are tiresome bits of writing masquerading as facts.

Then there's the invocation of difference. Following Foucault, we are difference, reason is the difference of discourses, history is the difference of time, self is the difference of masks. This is a kind of ritual. Suppose we said: "We are similarity, etc". Would it make any more or less sense? Apart from deadening the mind, this kind of repetition has no function. The important question is: What's the difference? And what's the similarity? If I observe two actions, I may wish to know what differences (or similarities) they signify. What I may be observing is two actions with the same intention, as when there are two moves in a game which are both intended to force a checkmate. Or they may indeed be different. One may be intended to throw away the game, the other to win. In analysing the different ways in which power is produced in discourse, I am demonstrating their similarity. Similarities of identity between two or more persons may be based on their difference from a third. This is obvious. Why this repetition of a fatuous formula?

For those who don't like the introduction of subjectivity into the account above, let's take a logical approach to the question of whether difference is enough for a science of meaning or reasoning. Imagine a group of hominids with three words: "apple", "orange" and "banana". They commence lunch with an orange and a banana, but would like to have an apple as well. They send Foucault to find an apple and he returns with a poisonous fruit. "Apple!" he exclaims. "No!" shout the others. "It must be!" Foucault retorts, "It's different from the others! It's different from an orange or a banana, so it must be an apple." Is this a case where they might have benefitted from a bit of the straightforward "realist" tale that is regarded as so uninteresting? The stubborn hominid Foucault is lost to posterity because he follows his theory of meaning to the bitter end, against the advice of his less philosophical companions.

The analysis of discourse can be of very great theoretical interest, if one overcomes one's distaste for truth and learns the difference between an hypothesis and a fiction. Hypotheses carry commitments which fictions do not carry. If one sets out as a writer of fictions then rules such as "We who live to please must please to live", may be important. If, on the other hand, one sets out to write theory, then the commitment is to seeing whether one's explanation fits the boring old facts of the world.

But is it possible to test hypotheses using discourse analysis? Let's try to imagine one. The hypothesis is advanced that after Stalin, communism ceased to be ideological. Martin Malia argues against this on the grounds that the confidential deliberations of the Politburo were conducted in the same ideological language of ubiquitous class struggle as was used in *Pravda*. Here is what we understand as rational argument, an

attempt to test hypotheses by observing facts. The facts are difficult to determine for a variety of reasons, but they do not have the same status as fictions. This also suggests studies of the National Party in South Africa. To what extent did it preserve its language to the end, in confidential discussions? Some very interesting questions which might involve hypotheses and even truth can be asked about discourses. Is it possible to identify operational codes which run through sets of discourses, as Leites did in analysing the codes of Soviet politics? What are the functions of such codes? How do they limit the capacity of the users to construe alternatives? Do the codes change when action changes?

The first and last chapters of the book under review are good examples of propaganda, since they use the technique of the sneer quote and differentiate between discourse analysis and other approaches to psychology by caricaturing them as collections of facts (p199). Which other psychologies are they referring to? And why use the pejorative "collections" with its implication of triviality? Who could argue with this contention, since we are not given examples of the other psychological approaches? Are they referring to evolutionary psychology? To neuropsychology? To psycholinguistics? One could find collections of facts, but discourse analysis is lifted out of the mass by innuendo rather than by reasoned demonstration. The defender of the unspecified inferior brands is left with the task of trying to imagine what is wrong with them and the risk of making a fool of him or herself by naming them. These chapters are apt illustrations of the thesis that discourse is about the production of power and it hardly requires a sophisticated analysis to expose the manoeuvre.

There is much to interest the reader in the various chapters, but a recurring problem is the desire to squeeze something mysterious out of commonplace utterances. Are there any rules of interpretation? Or even any guidelines? To illustrate the problem, consider a gripping and often provocative chapter by Kevin Durrheim on peace talk and violence. He analyses an extract from an address by Nelson Mandela in which Mandela says the "forces of peace are far more powerful ..." Durrheim comments that "peace is portrayed as possessing a strange mixture of human and natural qualities. Peace is framed in the language of the natural sciences - in terms of forces, causes and effects. Peace is a force which has power ..." (pp31-32). Durrheim reverses the statement "forces of peace" and treats it as the equivalent of "peace is a force". Now, this is very mysterious. If someone speaks of "the dogs of war" is he saying that war is a dog? Or does "the women of Potchefstroom" mean that Potchefstroom is a woman? Or does the "forces of peace" mean "peace is a force?" The fact is that "of" has a variety of linguistic functions which even a discourse analyst should respect. Durrheim goes on to say, "I argue that while peace is a form of resistance against violence, violence is also a form of resistance against peace"(p32). These abstractions ("peace" and "violence" which both "resist") are far stranger than anything Mandela says. It is Durrheim who frames peace in the language - not of the natural sciences - but of mysticism.

The uneasiest authors in this book are those who are concerned with the relation between discourse and the world. Anna Strebel in her work on Aids prevention expresses some of the frustration with discourse analysis that many have felt. "While excited by the potential power of the approach ... I was struck by the relative silence about how this might transform practice"(p119). Talk is heavily invested in practice and changing talk is difficult enough but changing practice is even more so. Nevertheless, she concludes that there are opportunities, since women recognize that men have to be

brought into the discussions. Kelly and van Vlaenderen are concerned with getting a grip on the real in their chapter on dialogue and intersubjectivity. They present it as part of a broader study, "the purpose of which was to explore the relational dynamics of participation in a community health development project" (p159). Their problem is how to create a "discursive environment" in which people will feel free to participate. They identify measures which will improve such an environment, such as educating service providers to assist the transition from service provider to partner, and modes of participation (what we might paraphrase as "roles"). Only by analysing these modes of participation can we understand the social network. In an interesting chapter on political activism and discourse analysis Cheryl de la Rey wrestles with the problem of what research we should do. She endorses "liberatory research", which will contribute to both knowledge and to change in favour of the powerless within any society, and is then troubled by the question of whether discourse analysis will contribute to such a programme. Where the most pressing problems are "housing, water and jobs - an emphasis on discourse in the research done by psychologists may seem politically inappropriate" (p191). However, discourse analysis can "draw attention to the politicized nature of what has often been taken as the norm or has been invisible" (p192). When it comes to devising policy, though, we have to engage with other realities.

The chapters by de la Rey and other activists in the book are important because their concerns force us to recognize that language is only one domain of reality among others and that the study of discourse does not give us a privileged access to the others. You can't study the physical world by studying only what other people have said about it, or illness by studying only what other people say about it, or the effects of childhood sexual abuse only by studying the talk of unspecified women. It's important to take away the pretensions and the lazy assumption that discourse analysis is a new keyhole to reality. This confusion is as old as scholasticism and as counterproductive.

How do we shape ways of talking? Amanda Kottler and Caroline Long convey the turbulence of the process of forming a way of talking - in this case about racism - by taking the sanitized UCT definition of racism as their starting point and submitting it to colleagues at the Discourse Analysis Working Conference. It's a struggle. The question of what the definition *is for* and what the group is supposed to be *doing* becomes more and more important. The institution has its purposes and hence its silences - how these are formed and destroyed is the really interesting question - and the working group has its puzzles and confusions. Is the main function of the institutional definition that it enables the institution to appear to talk about something that cannot be spoken of? If the conclusion is that "racism will not go away regardless of how many policies are in place" (p60), then we can understand the need for heavy doses of sanitized speech. But can anything more be done? The authors of this excellent chapter make one think uneasily and hard.

There are interesting chapters by John Dixon (discourse and racial partition), Lindy Wilbraham (psychologization of monogamy, Blumberg and Soal (talk about sex), Jane Foress Bennett (rape survivor's testimony), Ann Levett and Amanda Kottler with Nomfundo Walaza, Pindile Mabena, Natalie Leon, and Nomsa Ngqakayi-Motaung (child sexual abuse), Martin Terre Blanche (psychiatry and the discourse of discourse analysis) and Anthony Collins and Trevor Mulder (theory-trip to utopia). There are interesting themes in all of these papers, but a common thread is the relation between

power, truth, and action. One of the ways in which discourses make action possible is by structuring the world in such a way as to justify the things we do.

Discourse analysis will often expose the justifications for construing reality in one way rather than another by showing who is interested in maintaining that construction and looking at the strategies they use. But this tells us little about the truth or falsehood of the propositions in a discourse. These have to be investigated in other ways - often involving a logical analysis, or the carrying out of an experiment or some form of empirical study. In different historical periods, different justifications are regarded as decisive. Does a truth advance our knowledge of God? Or is it useful (to someone or other)? Or profitable? Or does it simply increase knowledge? Or power? Does this particular truth benefit the least privileged? The justifications of one age are the useless baggage and downright danger of another. Sometimes the justifications are confused, and much valuable work can be done in dissecting them. Such a clarification of justifications can be important political work.

Yet a different kind of analysis is required to find out whether propositions are true or false and such an investigation is indispensable to the discourse analyst. It should be part of the methodology of discourse analysis to indicate clearly what kind of study is being undertaken and how it will be done, because in spite of the statement that discourse analysis is about power, its relevance to truth is often assumed. The argument goes this way. The truth of a belief is not a necessary explanation of its being generally believed (or presented as a fact in discourse), since we would otherwise never believe anything false. Discourse analysts can show us some of the strategies by which untrue beliefs are maintained and true beliefs are rejected. However, it does not follow that since an analysis of power sometimes explains why we adopt beliefs (false or true) it always explains why we adopt a belief. Sometimes, a belief is based on good evidence. A discourse analysis which cannot distinguish between beliefs that are based on good evidence and those that are maintained by various forms of power is incomplete. In other words, a monocausal explanation of why we believe anything (or present it as a belief in discourse) is reductive - an unjustified hypothesis. And it is this monocausal approach to discourse and a neglect of truth which led a learned journal, **Social Text**, to publish a deliberately nonsensical article by Sokal in April 1996.

In spite of disclaimers to the contrary, discourse analysis is often advanced as though it were a kind of complete methodology. We see this repeatedly in the contrast between the mere "facts" of other kinds of study and the revelations of discourse analysis. Inflation is bad for any kind of currency, and it's certainly bad for the currency of discourse analysis, because it leads people to throw it away too easily. That would be a pity, because it's often a good way of analysing justifications and rhetorical strategies. What is needed is some modesty and the recognition that it will get many of its analyses systematically wrong if its limitations are not firmly delineated. Furthermore, because discourse analysts are not well equipped to investigate many kinds of truth - such as the truth of empirical propositions - it will be a disaster if psychology students are taught that discourse analysis is a superior methodology and that they can despise empirical methodology. Worst of all is the kind of subterfuge which teaches that it is not a methodology (and that analysts are therefore under no obligation to supply methodological rules) while making it do all the work of a methodology. By all means, teach it as an interesting field of inquiry, but a relatively minor one. Methodological

imperialism is not the prerogative of the number crunchers. It's a plague in psychological inquiry.

It should be reasonably clear that I dispute the territorial ambitions of some discourse analysts and would encourage them to live modestly in their own domains. Don't be so pushy! I hope it is also clear that I found this collection to be valuable for stimulating much critical reflection.

## **A discourse makes a very big difference: Reply to Peter du Preez**

*Amanda Kottler  
Child Guidance Clinic  
University of Cape Town  
Chapel Road  
Rosebank 7700*

Du Preez's review of our book **Culture, Power and Difference** disappointed me mainly because it did not do the book justice, but also because du Preez made important contributions to my own academic development and, indirectly, to my interest in discourse analysis. I recall a comment he made on a second year essay I handed in for Psycholinguistics in 1986, which was profound: "An excellent essay, with one defect which we seem to foster in our undergraduate work ... we train people to do a good demolition job (very exciting!) but science does not live by demolition alone. The practice of science is problem-solving. Please take the next step and become the first-rate scientist you clearly can become ..."

This had an enormous impact on me and I did exactly what he advised, but obviously not by taking the route du Preez expected me to take. My problem-solving took me into feminist and postmodern theory, discourse analysis and more recently into developing strands of psychoanalytic theory (Self Psychology and Intersubjectivity Theory).

My essay (An evaluation of Turton's exploration of the universality of colour naming with particular reference to "the Mursi cattle naming model") began:

"'There is no such beast' a Mursi informant exclaimed when experiencing difficulty in deciding what colour term to apply to a stimulus card (Turton, 1980:322). Ichkari women requested to divide colours into groups respond with 'it can't be done', or 'none of them are the same, you can't put them together' (Luria, 1976:27). These kinds of phenomena have raised a range of questions: Is it that humans speaking one language are unable to perceive the differences (say between green and blue)? Or is it that their particular customary social practices have not necessitated a distinction through the use of labels to name the discrimination between the hues? Are there categories of colours which are universally recognised? If so, why do colour lexicons in different languages vary so greatly?"

At the time, whilst these questions were important, looking back, what I was struggling with here were differences in perception between people speaking *different* languages. However, the problems I later wanted to "solve" were more complicated. As I continued with my studies I became increasingly aware of the multiple and contradictory meanings attributed to the same words and categories used by people speaking the *same* language, and the resultant complexities of particular aspects of social behaviour related to issues of identity (gender and race). The inadequacies of the psychological theories available became more and more evident. However, by drawing on feminist and post-modern theory in order to make sense of my own and other's daily lived experiences, I, and others who have begun to work within these models, are attempting to take the next step du Preez wisely advised - to "problem solve".

Parker's excellent response (see below) to the review deals succinctly with du Preez's criticisms of discourse analysis and the content of the book. There is no point in repeating the significant points he makes. However, sharing his general argument, it feels important to note how du Preez's demolition of discourse analysis, and therefore his own attempts at problem-solving, merely serve to re-produce, as Parker argues, the mistaken assumption that life is actually quite simple and that the problems we encounter can be understood and explained through systematic and objective research and debate. Du Preez seems to believe that this can and will lead to a shared knowledge about what is ultimately the "truth", if only we approach the apparent complexity with the logic which is provided by a particular theoretical lens. This is his version of how things should be and what constitutes good psychological research.

Interestingly, this was the academic world I thought I was entering back in the 1980s. I envisaged smoke-filled, coffee-drinking, debates with fellow students / colleagues late into the night using words and logic in order to solve many of the problems and chaos life presents. I was fascinated by the very kind of discussions incorporated in du Preez's review, the play with words and manipulation of arguments with reference to what I too thought of as ordered, logical enquiry. However, it soon became apparent that there was little that was logical about human behaviour and that there were potentially as many ways of approaching a problem as there are people involved in the process. This is nowhere more apparent than in the practice of contemporary psychoanalytically informed psychotherapy, as opposed to the earlier classical versions of psychoanalysis, to which I no longer subscribe, for many of the same reasons that I no longer subscribe to the positivist and self contained individualist ideals to which du Preez clearly adheres. In both, the "researcher" takes no account of the variable views of the participants (or subjects) from whom research data was derived.

I am reminded of another quote which had a profound impact on me and which I came across early in my discovery of Kohut (1984:93-4) (the originator of Self Psychology): "... if there is one lesson that I have learned during my life as an analyst, it is the lesson that what my patients tell me is likely to be true - that many times when I believed that I was right and my patients were wrong, it turned out, though often after a prolonged search, that *my* rightness was superficial and *their* rightness profound".

Whilst this comment is problematic in that it also suggests that there are certain truths to be found, it is a good place to start and goes a long way towards saying something about what a researcher or therapist thinks they know about the problem to be solved.

What is missing from this quote is the fact that whenever there is a need to understand a set of problems or issues which are raised by a group of people, a person or a social institution, the historical context and preferred frame of reference of the researcher has to be taken into account. In each encounter there is an emerging and changing sense of both (or all) participants. Understanding is at least triadic: according to Orange (1995:24) there exist two subjectivities and the emerging understanding that contains and understands them. This occurs in what Intersubjectivity Theory describes as an "intersubjective field" (Stolorow, Atwood & Brandchaft, 1994). In this field the complexity of causality and influence *if acknowledged*, yields elements of emergent novelty and surprise. Thus as Gadamer argues, if we "undergo the situation with the other" in a dialogue of difference, an emerging and changing sense of the "we" occurs. This is something that du Preez has not apparently been prepared to consider and something which I hope readers of our book will. No one reading the book is likely to experience it in the same way. As Ogden (1994:1-2) notes: "Reading is not simply a matter of considering, weighing or even of trying out ideas and experiences that are presented by the writer. Reading involves a far more intimate form of encounter. You, the reader, must allow me to occupy you, your thoughts, your mind, since I have no voice with which to speak other than yours ... The conjunction of my words and your mental voice does not represent a form of ventriloquism. A more complex and interesting human event is involved. A third subject is created in the experience of reading that is not reducible to either writer or reader ..."

He goes on to say that the process of "understanding" is not simply a matter of consumption and digestion (as du Preez suggests it is) but should involve transformation and destruction, ideas are shifted and some may be abandoned or not recognisable after the engagement, because reading (like psychotherapy) is the "experience of doing battle with one's static self-identity through the recognition of a subjectivity that is other to oneself".

Thus, to problem solve, we need to take time to try to "understand", by attempting to enter the subjective space of the patient / researched and by monitoring our own responses to the encounter, before offering any comment on the narrative material which is unfolding. Premature judgements or explanations are ones which arise from impatience, irritation, or anxiety; they are inadequately processed. They have much to do with the issues or needs of the therapist / researcher, often reflected in an emotional investment in a theoretical framework and therefore a refusal or inability to modify it, and little to do with the concerns or needs of the patient / researched.

For whatever reason, Du Preez's comments are clearly based in a theoretical framework that cannot provide a useful perspective on a book in which the authors are mainly concerned with the inseparability of social life from personal emotional investment. Levett and I felt strongly that du Preez's review indicated that he does not understand (does not want to understand) discourse analysis in the ways it is presented in our book. His review was saturated with a particular frame of reference. In itself, given what I have said above, this is not a problem. What is problematic, however, is that he does not seem to be aware of it. Levett comments that, dismissive of Foucault's widely influential opus, du Preez fails to recognise its links with contemporary psychoanalytic insights which insist on taking account of the irrational elements of life in modern socio-political thought, and the fluxes of human subjectivities. Apparently confident in his own discourses about what power or research

can be, he adopts the role of the authority as if there are only certain narrowly defined conventional ways to understand human behaviour, and only one kind of power, or logic, or philosophy, which provides insights of value to the psychologist. This is partly what disappointed me about his review. In my experience, du Preez is not a rigidly positivistic empiricist but both Levett and I wondered if this is perhaps a position of retreat for him at times when confronted with "difference" and challenges to liberal individualism, something which deliberately focused discourse analysis offers.

There is another possible explanation. Du Preez enjoys debates and is inclined to present an argument simply for the sake of an intellectual battle that might follow. In accepting this challenge, since this is what we do as academics, it feels important to comment that many of the points du Preez raises as criticisms in his review are irrelevant to the general aims of the book as discussed by the editors and multiple authors. Points which have relevance for the concerned researcher are addressed at some length in Chapters 1 and 14 of the book. We are careful to state that discourse analysis (in its many forms) makes no claim to be the panacea for the ills of all psychological research, nor to be a specially elevated approach to social phenomena. Our claims in the book *are* modest and we do not claim that it is a kind of complete, or superior, methodology, but nor do we see it as a relatively minor one. Taking this position is not evidence of "territorial ambitions" nor of "methodological imperialism" of discourse analysis at the University of Cape Town. Much of the research included in the collection was conducted and authored by Honours and Masters level postgraduate students. Each had taken up the challenge of self reflective styles of teaching and research, and had, as I was once encouraged to do by du Preez, appropriately grappled with the conventional ideas offered in much of the main stream psychological literature in attempts to find ways of solving some of the problems these produced.

The work represented in our book is steeped in an awareness of the possibilities, but also the limitations, of the renegotiation of meanings, ideas and beliefs, as is found in the kind of contemporary psychotherapeutic encounters I have described above. The reader needs to be prepared to be receptive to these differences and to manage the emotional challenges which might be involved, whether or not they feel drawn to discourse analytic approaches. Levett comments "collisions of subjectivities" (Ogden, 1994) can transform and inform future work in a range of methodological approaches. And, Du Preez was right - psychological enquiry does not live by demolition alone. Healthy self-reflective ways of enquiring into the problem presented can and does, as we feel is demonstrated in our book, offer us the possibility of creative problem solving.

## REFERENCES.

- Kohut, H (1984) *How does analysis cure?* Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Luria, A R (1976) *Cognitive development: Its cultural and social foundations*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Ogden, T H (1994) *Subjects of analysis*. London: Karnac Books.
- Orange, D (1995) *Emotional understanding: Studies in psychoanalytic epistemology*. London: The Guildford Press.

Stolorow, R, Atwood, G & Brandchaft, B (1994) *The intersubjective perspective*. Jason Aronson Inc: New Jersey.

Turton, D (1980) There's no such beast: Cattle and colour naming among the Mursi. *Man*, 5(15), 320-338.

## **Making a difference: A reply to Peter du Preez**

*Ian Parker*  
*Discourse Unit*  
*Bolton Institute*  
*Deane Road*  
*Bolton BL3 5AB*  
*England*

Peter du Preez's review of **Culture, power and difference** rather surprisingly rehearses again some arguments that traditional psychology levels against discourse analysis. These arguments reveal rather more of the mistaken assumptions underpinning psychology's understanding of what lies outside its domain than they clarify what should be done to put discourse analysis right or why psychologists seem to feel that it must be put in its place. There seems to be a three-fold pattern of argument at work here.

There is, first, an appeal to real science (whatever that is) and to the commonplace fantasy in the discipline that there could be a realm of empirical investigation which was not inhabited by discursive processes that we could then dispassionately examine. If only we could find phenomena that were so "commonplace" that nothing more need be said about them! It is difficult to believe that du Preez really thinks that there is "truth" in a text which is independent of cultural assumptions about what that "truth" might look like and how it might function. Even the natural sciences do not operate in the way that psychologists imagine them to, and discussions of peace and violence anywhere in the world do not for sure.

The way discussion of peace and violence (an example here because Durrheim's chapter on this theme is singled out for abuse by du Preez) operates in a culture as if it were "commonplace" is itself very mysterious, and the insistence of cultural members that it is only commonplace more mysterious still. What discourse analysts must do (and what Durrheim does so well) is to make the commonplace strange, to make it different to us so that we are then able to ask what is going on.

The second rhetorical move in du Preez's argument is to suggest that we must refuse to have anything to do with others who aren't like us, make them different to us so that we may then more easily refuse to hear what they are saying. This is to perform discourse analysis, actually, but in reverse; attending to variation precisely in order to silence it. Psychology would not work if it did not have fairly efficient procedures for screening out critical reflection on its own activities, and these include the

fragmentation of the discipline into discrete sub- areas. Often these are defined by virtue of specific mental or behavioural processes (such as "development", "learning" or "motivation"), but they also, bizarrely, are often also defined in terms of theoretical or methodological frameworks.

This means that it is considered tolerable to let colleagues and students engage in "different" kinds of research - whether that means using experimental procedures that dehumanize people or feminist consciousness-raising collective work which challenges that dehumanization; whether it means psychometric testing or participant action research with those who are usually the objects of psychometric testing. What these different psychologists do is then simply seen as "different" (but often not, when empiricists rule the roost, equal) and we can then all get along nicely.

In this context it makes sense then to complain that colleagues should restrict their "territorial ambitions" when they seem to step out of place. The trick is to ensure that they are only safe when they are in their different places. This third rhetorical move made by du Preez functions to protect the self-enclosed empiricism of psychology, and serves to reinforce the mistaken supposition that there is an area of inquiry into action and experience that is value-free, uncontaminated by messy usually mysterious ideological processes.

These three elements lock psychologists - and, more perniciously, students of psychology who try to make sense of the way the discipline continually betrays the hopes they had that psychology might make a difference in the world -- into an ideological pattern of discourse that is suffused (dare we say it) with power.

It is only possible to challenge this by being very "pushy", or at least risking being told that we are treading where we should not. Contributors to **Culture, power and difference**, unlike many other politically disinterested exercises in discourse analysis (the kind that psychologists are prepared to tolerate), make it clear that studies of discourse must also be studies of material (racialised, sexualised) contexts in which that discourse is deployed - and this is why they have described studies of power in culture that are designed to make a difference.