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Author

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Publication Date

2017-08-01

Peer reviewed

Discursive Approaches to Race and Racism

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Summary

In the wake of what has been called the “discursive turn” or “linguistic turn” in the social sciences, research at the intersection of language and communication and race and racism shifted from being largely dominated by quantitative and experimental methods to include qualitative and particularly discursive approaches. While the term “discursive” potentially encompasses a wide range of modes of discourse analysis, discursive approaches share in common a focus on language use as social action, and as a constitutive feature of actions, events and situations, rather than as merely a passive means of describing or transmitting information about them. When applied to the study of race and racism, such approaches have examined ways in which language functions to construct, maintain and legitimate as well as subvert or resist racial and/or racist ideologies and social structures.

Research in these areas has made use of a range of empirical materials, including “elite” texts and talk (media texts, parliamentary debates, academic texts, etc.), individual interviews, focus groups and group discussions, “naturally occurring” talk-in-interaction from conversational and institutional settings, and text-based online interactions. Although these different data types should not be seen as strictly mutually exclusive, each of them serves to foreground particular features of racial or racist discourse(s), thus facilitating or constraining particular sorts of discourse analytic findings. Thus, different data sources respectively tend to foreground ideological features of racial discourse(s) and their intersection with power and domination,

including examination of “new” racisms and the production and management of accusations and denials of racism; discursive processes involved in the construction and uses of racial subjectivities and identities; interactional processes through which prejudice and racism are constructed and contested; and the everyday interactional reproduction of systems of racial categories, independently of whether the talk in which they occur can or should be considered “racist”.

Keywords: race, racism, discourse, interaction, identities, categories, subjectivities, intergroup communication

Introduction

What has been called the “discursive turn” (e.g., Harré, 2001) or “linguistic turn” (e.g., van den Berg, Wetherell, & Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2003b) in the social sciences is characterized by a recognition of the importance of language as a central feature of and resource for human social activity. This recognition was influenced by, and is reflected in, a range of different perspectives that began to emerge around the 1950s, including philosophy of language, ethnomethodology, semiology and post-structuralism, critical theory, and psychoanalysis. In varying ways, and to varying degrees, these perspectives influenced the development of a number of approaches to the empirical analysis of discourse, which have developed within disciplines including linguistics, sociology, and psychology, but have increasingly become multidisciplinary and are now used by scholars across the social sciences.

The ways in which the term “discourse” (or, in some approaches, “discourses”) is defined varies

considerably across different approaches, with commonly used definitions including discourse(s) as language use in a broad sense, as extended or multi-sentence talk or texts, and as broader social practices with ideological characteristics, referred to, for example, as “discourses of racism” (Schiffrin, Tannen, & Hamilton, 2001b, p. 1). As would be expected given the range of variation in their definitions of their object of analysis, different discourse analytic approaches vary on other dimensions relating to their assumptions about proper analytic foci. For example, Alvesson and Kärreman (2000, p. 1129) identify two such dimensions, the first relating to “the connection between discourse and meaning” (whether meaning is transiently constituted in specific situations versus being more durable across situations) and the second concerned with “the formative range of discourse” (referring to the distinction between a locally situated, close-range view of discourse versus an historically situated but more universal set of vocabularies).

This range of possible variation in approaches to discourse analysis prompted Potter and Wetherell (1987, p. 6) to remark that it is “a field in which it is perfectly possible to have two books with no overlap in content at all”. In light of this, it should not be surprising that a number of lively, perhaps intractable, debates have arisen with respect to the relative value and/or rigor of the range of stances available to discourse analysts, relating to questions such as,

Should discourse analysis be “emic” or “etic” in approach? Should discourse analysts, in other words, restrict themselves to the categories used by the participants, or should analysts also use theoretical categories to understand the discourse in question? How relevant is the wider social and institutional context? Is it relevant at all? Where do discourses end and the rest of “the social” begin? Should discourse analysts take a critical

stance? Should discourse analysis, for example, be primarily oriented to the production of knowledge, or should it take into account political goals, such as supporting groups in their struggle for liberation and social equality? (van den Berg, et al., 2003b, p. 3)

Despite the debates around these and other questions, discourse analytic approaches generally share in common a view of language as a vehicle for social practices and actions, and a constitutive feature of the actions, events, and situations it describes, rather than merely a means of transferring information (see, e.g., Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). As such, analysis is concerned not with the truth or falsity of texts or utterances, nor with their face-value content, but rather with what is accomplished by using language in particular ways, in particular contexts. Discursive approaches also focus on actual instances of language use, in contrast to the use of invented or hypothetical examples commonly used by many linguists (cf. Heritage, 1984; Potter & Wetherell, 1987), while providing qualitative, contingent and context-sensitive alternatives to quantitative, causal, and aggregated models of language use that had historically dominated social scientific research on language use (Harré, 2001). These shifts facilitated ways of dissolving traditional “macro versus micro” dichotomies, providing resources for consideration of the ways in which “macro” structures become observable in, and are reproduced or resisted through uses of language at the “micro” level. Thus, when applied to examinations of race and racism, discursive approaches have offered insights into the use of language to construct, maintain and legitimate, as well as subvert or resist racial and/or racist ideologies and social structures.

In the remainder of this essay, I examine the range of different types of empirical data on which

discursive research on race and racism has been based, focusing on the different affordances and foci associated with them. These types of data include “elite” texts and talk, individual interviews, focus groups and group discussions, “naturally occurring” talk-in-interaction, and online texts and interactions. While there is some blurring of the lines between these categories, and they should thus not be seen as strictly mutually exclusive, I suggest that they offer a useful way of exploring how particular materials serve to foreground particular features of racial or racist discourse(s), thus facilitating or constraining particular sorts of discourse analytic findings.

It should be noted that, although the use of these data sources does partially intersect with temporal developments in discourse analytic research, with those I discuss first being more prevalently used in earlier periods and those I discuss later being taken up more recently, all of them are currently widely in use in contemporary discursive research examining race and racism as well as other topics. As such, while partially reflecting chronological developments in the field, the arrangement of the sections that follow should not be taken to imply a hierarchical ordering in terms of their relative value within the overall body of research to which they contribute. Instead, their value lies in the affordances of each for facilitating understandings of the discursive operation of race and racism, with all of them offering, in different ways, important contributions in this regard.

“Elite” Texts and Talk

Many early discourse analytic studies of racism focused on what van Dijk (1993) calls “elite discourse”, which includes media, educational and academic texts, corporate discourse, and political talk and texts. The logic behind focusing particularly on these data sources is that they

hold a particularly central place in sociopolitical power structures, and thus exercise an influential role in shaping public discourse (van Dijk, 1993, 1995). Furthermore, the power and influence wielded by elites is such that they wield a disproportionate ability to implement legislation or other institutional actions that serve negatively affect a range of material outcomes in the everyday lives of minority groups (Wodak & van Dijk, 2000). Consistent with this view, racism in everyday (“non-elite”) settings is assumed to be shaped by or “pre-formulated” in elite discourses, although it may appear in more subtle and complex forms in the latter settings (e.g., van Dijk, 1987; Wodak & Matouschek, 1993) As a result, whether actively (e.g., through blatant or explicit targeting of racially oppressed groups) or more subtly (e.g., through implicitly negative portrayals of particular racialized groups), these forms of discourse can be particularly important vehicles for the reproduction of racism (van Dijk, 1995).

The explicit focus on power in this research converges with its attention to racism specifically, as opposed to race more generally (see the following sections for further discussion of this distinction). That is, the examination of racist discourse among elites contributes to understandings of the mechanisms through which fluid and flexible racial ideologies and rhetoric underpin and reproduce more durable racist power structures. A prominent argument underpinning many of the studies in this body of research concerns what has been called “the new racism” (Barker, 1981). This relates to the ways in which contemporary forms of racism are oriented to norms of tolerance, democracy, enlightenment, and the like, such that open expressions of unjustified negative views of out-groups are treated as social taboo in many contexts (Billig, 1988; Van Dijk, 1992). As a result, in contrast to the openly racist discourses that were previously commonly treated as acceptable, analyses of modern racist discourses

(particularly among elites, for whom reputational issues tend to be an especially salient concern) emphasize their markedly more subtle forms and their recurrent packaging in the form of denials of racism (for reviews of research in this regard, see e.g. Augoustinos & Every, 2010; Every & Augoustinos, 2007).

The availability of these data sources as archival materials, in some cases going back many decades, provides for the possibility of conducting historically sensitive analyses. For example, Waters' (1997) analysis of how discourses of “‘dark strangers’ in our midst” deployed by post-World War II British writers on race relations served to “shore up definitions of essential Britishness” (pp. 208) illustrates the social functions that racist discourses may serve in particular historical periods; Richardson and Wodak's (2009) examination of political leaflets, images and quotes relating to employment and nativism in Austria and the United Kingdom demonstrates relatively long-term continuities between fascist ideologies of the past and contemporary mainstream political discourses; Stevens' (2003) analysis of South African academic texts between 1990 and 2000 (a period during which the country underwent a transition from apartheid to democracy) shows how changes in social conditions over relatively short periods of time may be associated with marked shifts in discourses of race and racism; and Bowman's (2010) genealogy of how the pedophile became a figure of social threat in apartheid-era South Africa demonstrates the role of racial discourses in the historical emergence of other objects of research and intervention.

The forms of data analyzed in these studies typically consist of one or more of a wide range of texts – including materials that are produced from the outset in textual format (e.g., newspaper

articles, educational textbooks, and so on), talk that has been converted into textual format through institutional processes occurring prior to the researchers' use of them (e.g., official written records of parliamentary speeches and debates), talk that is converted into text during the course of the research process, and visual materials that are analytically treated as texts. As a result, although they allow for consideration of some of the gross content and audience-oriented or interactional features of the discourse(s) at hand, these materials do not lend themselves to fine-grained attention to potentially significant features of the spoken production of racial discourse, including their immediate uptake by their audiences (e.g., Verkuyten, 1998; Whitehead & Stokoe, 2015).

In addition, as Condor (2006, p. 3) notes, while these studies offer a range of sophisticated linguistic analyses of the ideological features of the texts they examine, their focus on elite discourse results in the use of data that represent "finished products" that have been crafted over extended periods of time, often with the assistance of other parties such as speechwriters and researchers. As a result, they may constitute particularly polished and carefully considered versions of racial discourse than those that might be produced in more spontaneous settings. Moreover, the "top down" focus and assumptions of these studies have also been criticized for their tendency to treat people as passive recipients rather than active (and thus morally accountable) producers of racial discourses, while assuming rather than empirically examining the impacts of elite discourse on uses of language in everyday settings (Verkuyten, 1998). This also relates to a tendency to assume that racism as an object of inquiry can be defined *a priori* and that instances of it can be unproblematically identified in the texts being examined, such that "[r]acism and processes of racialisation are seen as flexible and situationally contingent, but the

meaning of racism is not” (Verkuyten, 1998, p. 149), and analysts’ definitions of racism are privileged over participants’ own orientations and understandings (McKenzie, 2003; Verkuyten, 1998).

Individual Interviews

The popularity of individual interviews as a data source for qualitative research in general (Potter & Hepburn, 2005; Silverman, 2004) has been somewhat less marked in discursive approaches, with the epistemological assumptions and research foci of such approaches leading in many cases to the pursuit of other forms of talk and texts as data sources. Despite this tendency, however, discursive researchers have been able to make effective use of interview data in a number of ways in examining phenomena relating to race and racism.

A major advantage of interviews in conducting discursive research on race and racism is that they enable the researcher to carefully construct a set of questions designed to elicit discourses relating to specific topics or issues, as well as providing opportunities to probe or pursue particular lines of talk produced by the interviewee, thereby ensuring the production of data that is thematically relevant for the purposes of the research aims and questions (see, e.g., van Dijk, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). The flexibility of interviews in these ways has facilitated insights into the ways in which speakers may adapt or tailor their talk in accordance with the particular demands of the questions they have been asked, while also considering the broader discourses around race and racism they produce and reproduce in doing so. Speakers’ talk can thus be examined for a range of discursive features including ambiguities and dilemmas in racial ideologies that become apparent through speakers’ unscripted responses to questions in

interviews (e.g., Billig et al., 1988), the production of apparently contradictory racial discourses at different times during the same interview (e.g., Edwards, 2003; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), and the links between everyday, common-sense racial knowledge and broader socio-historical patterns of power and dominance (e.g., Pascale, 2008).

A further advantage of interviews is their usefulness in eliciting discourses from a wide range of sources, including both the political and social elites discussed above and participants from other, more ordinary or everyday sectors of society. Studies based on interviews with such participants have thus been able to extend and deepen the findings regarding the discursive features of “new racism” described in the previous section with respect to denials of racism (e.g., Nelson, 2013; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), “color blind racism” (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Carr, 1997), and the persistence of problematic racial ideologies even in settings characterized by anti-racist norms and practices (e.g., Hughey, 2007; Zajicek, 2002). These features of interviews have also been used to examine the ways in which speakers discursively construct and manage racial identities (e.g., Bucholtz, 2010; Burkhalter, 2006) with the flexible one-on-one format of interviews facilitating the elicitation of identity-related talk from members of particular purposively sampled groups of interest.

Interviews also offer potential opportunities to engage with participants in naturalistic social settings in which the race-related phenomena being talked about in the interviews are simultaneously unfolding in the setting in which they are located. This provides for potential analytic links between the discourses produced by speakers and the physical and social environments in which they are produced, thereby contributing to addressing difficult questions

faced by discursive researchers regarding links between discursive and embodied or material aspects of race and racism (see, e.g., Sims-Schouten, Riley, & Willig, 2007). For example, Durrheim and Dixon's (2005) analysis of interviews with holidaymakers on a recently-desegregated beach in South Africa considers the ways in which the participants discursively constructed the desegregated space around them by invoking material features of the beach setting and pointing out the patterns of movement at various times of day of people identified as members of particular racial categories (also see Durrheim, Mtose, & Brown, 2011).

A consequence of the degree of control the researcher is able to exercise in using interviews for purposes such as those described above is that the data produced are shaped by researchers' agendas in terms of sampling participants, designing the questions they will be asked, and by other contingencies associated with interview-based interactions (see, e.g., Potter & Hepburn, 2005). As a result, while interviews offer a valuable means of capturing race-related discourses produced by ordinary people, it is typically the interviewer who introduces race as a topic of discussion, whether as a pre-specified basis of the interview and/or of the selection and recruitment of participants, or in the design of particular questions during its course. Interviews thus tend to be ill-equipped to examine how racial discourses are invoked and managed in interactions that are not driven by research agendas (Whitehead, 2011). Moreover, despite some exceptions (e.g., Wetherell & Potter, 1992), interviewers tend to operate on the basis of building rapport with participants while also maintaining an appropriately detached position with respect to the views they express, thus working to allow them "space" to speak while seldom either explicitly agreeing with or openly challenging what they say (Condor, 2006; Koole, 2003). Thus, although a number of interview-based studies have included fine-grained analyses of the

interactions between interviewers and participants (see, e.g., a number of the contributions to van den Berg, Wetherell, & Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2003a), interview data (similarly to the elite talk and texts discussed above) offer limited utility for examining how racial discourses may be responded to or resisted.

Focus Groups and Group Discussions

While focus groups and related group discussion-based approaches to data collection are sometimes seen as merely a more efficient means of interviewing that allow responses to be elicited from multiple participants at the same time, the crucial feature that distinguishes them from one-on-one interviews is the possibility of interactional engagement between the participants, rather than between the interviewer and a single participant (see, e.g., Kitzinger, 1995; Puchta & Potter, 2004). Research based on focus group data has thus been able to add a more strongly interactional focus to the examination of themes similar to those discussed above, including new racisms and the denial of racism (see, e.g., Augoustinos, Tuffin, & Every, 2005; Goodman & Burke, 2010). Particularly noteworthy in this regard are Condor's (2006) analysis of how participants interactionally collaborate in the production of subtly racist talk, and the extension of previous analyses of denials of racism to consider not just how denials can be produced by a speaker on his/her own behalf, but also how other speakers may deny racism on behalf of others, and may collaboratively suppress potentially racist utterances (Condor, Figgou, Abell, Gibson, & Stevenson, 2006). In addition, studies focus group data have examined how racial and ethnic identities are interactionally constructed and managed, particularly in the context of talk in which matters of race and racism are explicitly at stake (e.g., Verkuyten, 1997, 2003).

The interactional features of focus group data have also been used to address the abovementioned tendency to privilege researchers' definitions of racism over those of participants, examining how participants can interactionally construct particular definitions of racism to address specific interactional contingencies, and how other participants may align with or contest these definitions at different interactional moments (e.g., Condor, et al., 2006; Whitehead & Wittig, 2004). Similarly, focus group data have facilitated analyses of how racial or racist discourses may be responded to by other participants in either aligning or resistant ways, and how the original producers of discourses may maintain their positions or back down in the face of challenges from others (e.g., Verkuyten, 1998).

Despite the recognition that the higher potential degree of interactivity is the primary feature distinguishing focus groups from individual interviews, there is tendency for studies based on focus group data to under-analyze the interactional features of their data. While this is a contingent problem (cf. Potter & Hepburn, 2005) in the sense that analysts can (and in many cases do) pay adequate attention to interactional phenomena, it is not uncommon for analyses to be based on quotes from individual participants without giving readers any access to the unfolding interactional sequence in which the talk was produced, and for transcripts (even when a greater degree of interactional context is supplied) to lack many of the fine-grained details that may be crucial in analyzing interactional features of racial discourse (cf. Potter & Hepburn, 2005; Wilkinson, 2006).

While focus groups are frequently advocated as a means for producing data that more closely

(particularly compared to individual interviews) approximates the talk and interactional processes that occur in naturalistic conversational settings, it is nonetheless acknowledged that (as is the case with individual interviews) the interactions that take place in them are unavoidably shaped by the contingencies associated with the research setting. Even when focus group discussions are structured in such a way as to minimize the involvement of the researcher and facilitate the production of talk that is as naturalistic as possible, and although in some cases the participants rather than the researcher “spontaneously” introduce race or ethnicity as topics of discussion (Verkuyten, De Jong, & Masson, 1995, p. 256), the abovementioned practices for sampling and recruitment of participants, the role of the researcher in (even minimally) facilitating the discussion, and the participants’ overall awareness that their interactions are being produced for the researcher’s benefit mean that the data cannot strictly be considered “naturalistic” (Augoustinos, et al., 2005).

“Naturally Occurring” Talk-in-Interaction

Conversation analysts have long advocated the use of what have come to be called “naturally occurring” interactions as data sources (see Sacks, 1984a for an early articulation of the argument in favor of such data). While this term has been a matter of some contestation (see, e.g., Potter, 2002; Speer, 2002), it is widely used to refer to interactions that would have taken place independently of the researcher’s use of them as data sources, thereby enabling the examination of interactional features that were not produced in the service of a research agenda (see, e.g., Schegloff, 1993). This distinguishes these data sources from interviews and focus groups, which, as noted above, virtually unavoidably involve participants being recruited on the basis of their membership in particular categories, and the interaction being to a greater or lesser degree

controlled, shaped, or at least initiated by the researcher's specific concerns.

This type of control over the agenda of research interviews has traditionally been seen as a necessary practical measure or even a strength of interview data relative to potential naturalistic sources, based on the assumption that it serves as the only way of ensuring that sufficient quantities of participants' talk about the topic of interest will be captured. For example, while acknowledging the potential value of naturalistic conversations for studying racial discourse, van Dijk (1987, p. 119) suggests that it is not feasible to "simply go into the field and observe how, when, where, and with whom people talk with others about ethnic groups. We would need hundreds of researchers and thousands of situations to record enough relevant data." In addition, van Dijk (1987, p. 119) raises issues of access in the collection of naturally occurring interactions, suggesting that "researchers (with recorders!) usually have no unobtrusive access to natural communicative events, such as family conversations, talk during parties, or to other dialogues in a large variety of interpersonal situations" and suggests that in light of these considerations "[f]inding data, in such a case, would amount to a search for the proverbial needle in the haystack."

Despite these concerns, a number of more recent studies have demonstrated the payoffs of navigating the process of securing access to naturally occurring interactions, or using sources that are in the public domain and are thus easily accessible, and of searching potentially large quantities of such data for the "needles in the haystack" to which van Dijk refers. While talk about the specific topic of race and ethnicity may be relatively sparsely distributed in such interactions, close examination of when and how racial or ethnic categories are mentioned has

provided insights into some ways in which they may be produced and reproduced as “by-products” of the everyday interactional business in which participants are engaged, even if they are not a direct or explicit topic of discussion. For example, building on pioneering analyses by Sacks (1984b, 1986), Whitehead & Lerner (2009) examine a set of interactional mechanisms through which the otherwise typically “invisible” category of whiteness can be exposed and disturbed as a result of everyday interactional processes. Other studies based on naturally occurring interactional data have examined how racial and ethnic categories can be used and thus reproduced in institutional settings such including formal meetings (Hansen, 2005; Shrikant, 2015) and talk radio (Whitehead, 2012, 2013a), and how they are interactionally produced as officially recognized categories of people for institutionally relevant purposes (Kameo & Whalen, 2015; Wilkinson, 2011).

Given the abovementioned tendency for talk about race and ethnicity to be relatively sparse in naturally occurring interactional data, such materials tend to be best suited to the examination of comparatively short-lived and mundane surfacing of racial and ethnic categories, as opposed to the more sustained and explicitly ideological discourse considered in some of the research described in the previous sections. As a result, research based on data of this sort has often taken the interactional organization and reproduction of racial and ethnic categories as its primary focus, independently of whether they are associated with phenomena around self-understanding or “selfhood” that typically characterize research grounded in the concept of “identity” (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000), and independently of whether the talk being examined can or should be considered “racist”. This focus allows for the examination of the social-structural features of racial and ethnic category systems, and the interactionally situated use and self-administration

thereof, without assuming that the participants involved identify with or are invested in them (Whitehead, 2009), while addressing some of the difficulties in defining and using the concept of racism associated with some of the approaches discussed above. Moreover, as Whitehead and Lerner (2009, p. 614) note, although “racist discourse is certainly a crucial object of study, such discourse depends upon the availability of the racial categorization of persons as a resource”, and the social organization of racial categories “underpins not just racist discourse, but also any other form of discourse in which race is used, including anti-racist discourse” (Whitehead & Lerner, 2009, p. 614). As such, the interactional reproduction of racial and ethnic categories constitutes an important object of study, independently of the examination of specifically racist discourse. However, a number of studies based on naturally occurring interactions have focused on phenomena relating to racism (while approaching it as a participants’ rather than an analysts’ category), including studies of denials of racism (Barnes, Palmary, & Durrheim, 2001) reports of racist insults (Stokoe & Edwards, 2007) and responses to and resistance of racism (Robles, 2015; Whitehead, 2015).

Online Texts and Interactions

The relatively recent emergence of the wide availability of the Internet has resulted in a proliferation of social scientific research using online texts as data, with research on race and racism being no exception. Much of this research has focused on blatantly racist discourse in online texts, emphasizing the ways in which the relative anonymity afforded by the Internet provides for unrestrained expressions of racism of the sort that had been assumed to have become less prevalent as a result of the contemporary anti-racist norms discussed above (see, e.g., Coffey & Woolworth, 2004; Steinfeldt et al., 2010). These studies have thus considered the use

of online platforms to propagate crudely racist discourses, whether directly, through the coordinated rhetoric of far-right political organizations and hate groups (e.g., Atton, 2006; Daniels, 2009a) or individual contributions to news sites and other online forums (e.g., Cleland, 2013; Erjavec & Kovačič, 2012), as well as more indirectly under the guise of humor, on sites devoted to the sharing of racist jokes (e.g., Billig, 2001; Weaver, 2011).

Hughey and Daniels (2013, p. 333) note that the proliferation of racist discourse in settings such as online news sites where users are able to comment on stories “have adopted a variety of strategies to deal with vulgar and offensive comments, including turning ‘comments off,’ not archiving comments, and adopting aggressive comment moderation policies.” This results in potential methodological difficulties for researchers wishing to examine racist discourses in these settings as moderation processes may hide the racist expressions that would otherwise be available for study (Hughey & Daniels, 2013). However, the resulting content of these sites can nonetheless be examined for the ways in which “coded language” can be employed to convey covert racialized meanings while avoiding the type of moderation practices applied to overtly racist posts (Hughey & Daniels, 2013), thus offering extensions of the research on more subtle forms of racism discussed above. In addition, some studies have provided evidence that even on some non-moderated sites participants may produce racist discourse in more restrained ways than had previously been documented (e.g., Daniels, 2009b; Malmqvist, 2015), and that participants may deny or contest racism in similar ways to those documented by the research based on offline settings described above (e.g., Goodman & Rowe, 2014).

In addition to their implications for racist discourses, the features of online settings are also

potentially consequential for discursive displays and constructions of racial identities. As Burkhalter (1999) notes, participants in text-based online interactions lack the visual access to the physical characteristics associated with racial identities that would be available in face-to-face interactions, and hence are less able to use their own and others' racial identities as resources for acting and for interpreting the actions of others in these interactions. However, rather than making racial identities irrelevant, this can result in participants making use of the textual details of their posts to display their racial identities or to read racial identities off the details of others' posts, thereby "establish[ing] a racial world online that resembles the offline world" (Burkhalter, 1999, p. 63; also see Hughey, 2008). The non-visual features of online settings also provide for the possibility of "identity tourism" (Nakamura, 2002), whereby participants claim and perform racial identities that differ from those with which they would be identified in offline settings. Online data sources thus offer potential insights into the ways in which the discursive construction and uses of racial identities can be adapted to the affordances and constraints of different media, with both recognizable similarities to their discursive uses offline, or with features specifically provided for by the nature of online settings (cf. Hughey, 2008).

More explicitly interaction-focused (especially conversation analytic) approaches have also been adapted for the analysis of online data. Although the text-based and frequently asynchronous nature of these data sources results in the absence of some of the potentially significant details available to analysts of real-time talk-in-interaction, it has nonetheless possible for some central conversation analytic principles to be applied to such data (for a recent review, see Paulus, Warren, & Lester, 2016). Studies using this approach to examine the sequential unfolding of

online interactions (e.g., Cresswell, Whitehead, & Durrheim, 2014; Durrheim, Greener, & Whitehead, 2015) have shown how race and racism can become relevant during the course of interactions, how participants can deploy them as interactional resources, and how others may align with or resist their use as such. It is also noteworthy that the virtually limitless quantities of online interactions available to researchers, along with the ability to efficiently search for specific types of content, make online sources a potentially attractive alternative to searching for the “needles in the haystack” discussed in the preceding section for researchers with an interest in the interactional features of racial discourse.

Conclusion

Over the past three decades, discursive research has had a profound impact on social scientific understandings of race and racism, particularly with respect to examining discursive and interactional mechanisms through which “macro” or social-structural features of race and racism are reflected and reproduced through “micro” or everyday uses of language. These approaches, and the findings they have produced, have thereby challenged conventional thinking across the social sciences, as well as contributing to lively debates between proponents of different discourse analytic approaches. As the foregoing sections demonstrate, the various forms of data that have been widely used in this body of research have facilitated the production of findings that are in some ways partially overlapping or complementary while in other respects serving to address and inform the critiques and debates reciprocally produced by representatives of the various discourse analytic perspectives. Thus, examinations of data sources conceptualized as “elite discourse” have facilitated analyses focusing primarily on ideological features of racial discourses and their relationships to broader dynamics of power and oppression; analyses of

individual interviews have allowed for similar foci while affording attention to a wider range of ordinary or everyday participants' discourses; focus groups have offered a more explicitly interactional focus and thereby a greater privileging of participants' rather than analysts' orientations; "naturally occurring" talk-in-interaction has provided for the examination of race-relevant interactional phenomena produced in everyday, non-research settings; and online texts and interactions have provided a wealth of readily-accessible data that have facilitated examinations of the role of new technologies in the production of racial discourse and to which the approaches developed for use on other traditional data sources can be applied or adapted. Research drawing on these approaches, and across all of these data sources, continues to develop, and will no doubt provide further important insights on race and racism in the years to come.

Discussion of the Literature

A central theme in much of the early discursively oriented research on race and racism was that of "the new racism" (Barker, 1981), which is rooted in observations of the ways in which crude or blatant ("old-fashioned") racism has, relatively recently (particularly post-World War II), become broadly socially unacceptable and associated mainly with extreme fringe elements who operate outside of mainstream social norms. However, rather than disappearing altogether in the face of these normative shifts, racism is seen to emerge in covert or subtle and more sophisticated forms, with denial as a central feature. This has led to extensive literature on discursive features of denials of racism (Augoustinos & Every, 2007a, 2007b, 2010; Van Dijk, 1992, 1993), with analyses of related phenomena including the replacement of biological discourses of race with cultural discourses (Durrheim & Dixon, 2000; Wetherell & Potter, 1992) ideological dilemmas with respect to race (Billig, 1988; Billig, et al., 1988), rhetorical features of

racial discourse (Billig, 1988, 1991; Verkuyten, de Jong, & Masson, 1994), and modern racial ideologies such as “color-blind racism” (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Carr, 1997) also being prominent. While the literature in these areas has been enduring and cumulative, questions have been raised about how “new” the discursive features associated with “new racism” actually are. For example, Leach (2005) argues that blatant racist discourse was no more prevalent before *de jure* racial equality than it is in more recent times, and that denials of racism and subtle forms of racist discourse were prevalent in both institutional and everyday discourse for many decades before they became objects of social scientific attention. There may thus be more historical continuity in racial discourses than studies grounded in theories of “new racism” typically assume (Leach, 2005).

Discursive research on racial subjectivities, identities and categories proceeding from a range of theoretical and analytic perspectives has, unsurprisingly, tended to be framed primarily in relation to racism and anti-racism (e.g., Goldberg, 1993; Hughey, 2007, 2008; Lewis, 2004; Robles, 2015; Verkuyten, 1997; Verkuyten, et al., 1995; Whitehead, 2015; Zajicek, 2002). Partially in response to the tendency for much social scientific research to focus on those on the receiving end of racism rather than its perpetrators, whiteness and white identities, including white anti-racist identities, have been a strong focus of many studies in these areas (e.g., Bucholtz, 2010; Hughey, 2007; Lewis, 2004; Nuttall, 2001; Whitehead & Lerner, 2009; Zajicek). Some studies have, however, focused on people of color (e.g., Hughey, 2008), or on racial or ethnic categories and identities more generally (e.g., Durrheim, et al., 2011; Hansen, 2005; Verkuyten, 2004; Whitehead, 2009, 2012, 2013a, 2013b).

Debates are likely to continue over definitional matters, and with respect to whether and how analysts' definitions and agendas or participants' orientations should be privileged in analyzing racial discourse (see discussion in Durrheim, et al., 2011). Debates have also persisted regarding the relationship between discursive and material or embodied aspects of race and racism, with approaches that focus solely on discourse criticized for not attending to the material contexts and implications thereof (e.g., Durrheim & Dixon, 2005), while those that attempt to combine attention both discourse and the material world raise difficult questions about which phenomena should be defined as discursive and which as material at any given time (e.g., Speer, 2007). In addition, questions with respect to the relationship between "inner psychological" and discursive phenomena have recurrently been raised. While some discourse analytic researchers (e.g., Wetherell & Potter, 1992) have argued that psychological matters are best analyzed as discursive resources deployed by participants' in their talk, others (e.g., van Dijk, 1984) have worked to include theories of cognition in their discourse analytic approaches, and still others have advocated for complementing discursive approaches to race and racism with psychoanalytic theories of subjectivity (e.g., Hook, 2006).

Primary Sources

A number of primary sources and collections represent the various influences on the development of different forms of discourse analysis. In the philosophy of language, key influences include Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose works are available in electronic edition of *The Collected Works of Ludwig Wittgenstein* published by Past Masters, and J. L. Austin, whose works are collected in *Philosophical Papers*. With respect to ethnomethodology, a foundational collection is Harold Garfinkel's *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, and a collection of key

ethnomethodological studies included in Roy Turner's *Ethnomethodology: Selected Readings*. In semiology and post-structuralism, key texts include Roland Barthes's *Elements of Semiology*, Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, and Ferdinand de Saussure's *General Course in Linguistics*. Important influences in critical theory can be found in collections of the work of Louis Althusser (*Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*), Michel Foucault (*The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow), Antonio Gramsci (*Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*), and Jürgen Habermas (*The Habermas Reader*, edited by William Outhwaite). In psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan, a collection of whose works is available in *Ecrits: A Selection*, has been particularly influential.

Influential and widely used approaches to discourse analysis have been developed by authors from a number of social scientific disciplines. Critical discourse analysis, developed within linguistics, is described in Norman Fairclough's *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* and in other collections, including Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer's *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. Ian Parker's *Discourse Dynamics* represents a critical psychological approach, while a discursive psychological approach is developed in Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell's *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour*. The original collection representing the conversation analytic approach is J. Maxwell Atkinson and John Heritage's *Structures of Social Action*. One of the most wide-ranging collections available, representing a comprehensive set of discourse analytic approaches, is available in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, edited by Deborah Schiffren, Deborah Tannen and Heidi Hamilton.

In addition to the primary sources and collections recommended in the following section below,

some significant primary sources examining racial discourse include Jan Blommaert and Jef Verschueren's *Debating Diversity: Analysing the Discourse of Tolerance*, Frank Reeves's *British Racial Discourse: A Study of British Political Discourse about Race and Race-Related Matters*, Geneva Smitherman-Donaldson and Teun van Dijk's edited collection, *Discourse and Discrimination*, Teun van Dijk's *Prejudice in Discourse* and *Racism and the Press*, and Ruth Wodak and Teun van Dijk's edited collection, *Racism at the Top: Parliamentary Discourses on Ethnic Issues in Six European Countries*. A recent special issue of the *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* (volume 21, issue S1), edited by Hilary Parsons Dick and Kristina Wirtz, examines discourses that perform covert racializing functions without using explicit mentions of race.

Further Reading

David Theo Goldberg's *Racist Culture* provides a critical theoretical approach to racialized discourses and subjectivities. Influential studies of racist discourse using a critical discourse analytic approach are provided in Teun van Dijk's *Communicating Racism: Ethnic Prejudice in Thought and Talk* and *Elite Discourse and Racism*, while an influential discursive psychological treatment of racist discourse is available in Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter's *Mapping the Language of Racism: Discourse and the Legitimation of Exploitation*. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* offers an influential sociological treatment of discourses of "color-blindness" in relation to racism, and Jane Hill's *The Everyday Language of White Racism* provides a linguistic anthropological treatment of everyday racist language. Harry van den Berg, Margaret Wetherell and Hanneke Houtkoop-Steenstra's edited collection, *Analyzing Race Talk: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Interview* includes a number of excellent examples of different approaches to

analyzing a common set of interviews from Wetherell and Potter's (1992) study. Wide-ranging studies of racial and ethnic identities are available in Mary Bucholtz's *White Kids: Language, Race, and Styles of Youth Identity* and Maykel Verkuyten's *The Social Psychology of Ethnic Identities*, which also includes an effort to reconcile discursive approaches to ethnic identities with more traditional or mainstream treatments. Kevin Durrheim, Xoliswa Mtose and Lindsay Brown's *Race Trouble: Race, Identity and Inequality in Post-Apartheid South Africa* represents a relatively recent effort to draw on and extend the use of discursive theorizing and research on race and racism, in producing an analysis of continuing "race" trouble in a context (South Africa) of profound transformation with respect to race.

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