# Doing Discourse Analysis

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## Abstract

My hope in writing this chapter is to generate enthusiasm for geographical research employing discourse analysis. My intention is to provide some advice on doing discourse analysis to facilitale the design of research. I first outline why some geographers have been inspired by this approach. I suggest how Foucauldian discourse analysis is a break from other critical methods applied to textual analysis, including content analysis, semiology, and iconography. The theoretical underpinnings of the method provided by Michel Foucault, a French poststructuralist philosopher, is a key source of difference. I therefore condense Michel Foucault's contribution to discourse analysis by sketching out his key theoretical concepts and their methodological implications. To discuss the methodological implications 0f doing discourse analysis I draw upon the advice of feminist geographer Gillian Rose and linguist Norman Fairclough. I provide a list of questions to help implement a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis and illustrate their implications lor 'doing' geography by drawing upon examples. This chapter should therefore be read only as an appetiser as there are many forms of discourse analysis. The suggested readings provide a much larger selection of the theoretical and methodological possibilities.

## Keywords

Doing, Discourse, Analysis

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Life Sciences | Physical Sciences and Mathematics | Social and Behavioral Sciences

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## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1  Why are open questions more suited to qualitative research than closed questions?
2  Why is the choice of the mode of questionnaire distribution specific to the nature of the sample and the nature of the research topic?
3  Why should we avoid 'closing' open question responses for the purpose of reporting findings?
4  What are the limitations of the use of questionnaires for qualitative research?

## SUGGESTED READING

Babbie, E. 2001, *The Practice of Social Research*, 9th edn, Wadsworth, Belmont, CA, chapters 9 and 13.
de Vaus, D. A. 1995, *Surveys in Social Research*, UCL Press, London, chapter 6.
Hoggart, K., Lees, L. and Davies A. 2002, *Researching Human Geography*, Arnold, London, chapter 5.
Parfitt, J. 1997, 'Questionnaire design and sampling', in R. Flowerdew and D. Martin (eds), *Methods in Human Geography. A Guide for Students Doing a Research Project*, Addison Wesley Longman, Harlow, pp. 76–109.

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

My hope in writing this chapter is to generate enthusiasm for geographical research employing discourse analysis. My intention is to provide some advice on doing discourse analysis to facilitate the design of research. I first outline why some geographers have been inspired by this approach. I suggest how Foucauldian discourse analysis is a break from other critical methods applied to textual analysis, including content analysis, semiology, and iconography. The theoretical underpinnings of the method provided by Michel Foucault, a French poststructuralist philosopher, is a key source of difference. I therefore condense Michel Foucault's contribution to discourse analysis by sketching out his key theoretical concepts and their methodological implications. To discuss the methodological implications of doing discourse analysis I draw upon the advice of feminist geographer Gillian Rose and linguist Norman Fairclough. I provide a list of questions to help implement a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis and illustrate their implications for 'doing' geography by drawing upon examples. This chapter should therefore be read only as an appetiser as there are many forms of discourse analysis. The suggested readings provide a much larger selection of the theoretical and methodological possibilities.

## INTRODUCTION: GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE AS AN EXPRESSION OF HUMAN IDEAS

We must not imagine that the world turns towards us a legible face which we would have only to decipher. The world is not the accomplice of our knowledge; there is no prediscursive providence which disposes the world in our favour (Foucault 1981, p. 67).

Many geographers are constantly challenged by the writings of the French philosopher Michel Foucault to reflect upon geographical knowledge. Challenges for both what is geographical

knowledge and how it is produced are posed by his argument that people only have access to comprehend the world about them through linguistic description. In other words, there is no geographical knowledge other than the ordering that people impose on the world through their linguistic description of the world. In doing so Foucault is not rejecting the materiality of their linguistic description of the world. In doing so Foucault is not rejecting the materiality of events, nor the existence of a reality that pre-exists humans, as alleged by some of his critics (see Taylor 1984). Yet, he is arguing that it is often not easy for people to understand the world about them (what is a plant, a human, or an animal), who they are (self) and what they *do* with, and their *attitudes* towards, other people and the bio-physical environment outside of the linguistic structures available to them.

This recognition that the social, how people act, think, and perceive, is actually constituted within linguistic description not merely revealing or reflecting it thrills many geographers (Anderson 1995; Boyle and Rogerson 2001; Costello and Hodge 1998; Dunn and Roberts 2003; Jacobs 1993; McManus 2000; McFarlane and Hay 2003; Mee 1994; Shaw 2000; Suchet 2002; Waitt 1997). First, enthusiasm arises from the fact that no longer is geographical inquiry framed within the positivist or Marxist search for truth, generalisations, or **essentialism** of 'the real'. Moreover, the subjects and objects that comprise geographical analysis are no longer uncritically accepted as given, uniform categories, sometimes referred to as stable referents, such as 'wilderness', 'nature', 'class', 'ethnicity', and 'gender'. Instead, the work of language is argued to *constitute* these categories for a particular audience. Second, excitement stems from how Foucault's **constructionist approach** challenges conventional disciplinary boundaries of geography by enabling a demarcation that includes the voices of those people formerly excluded, including the indigenous, disabled, elderly, queer, lesbian, gay, and bisexual. Finally, many geographers turn to the work of poststructuralist writers, such as Foucault, to examine how particular geographical knowledges have social effects on what people perceive, think, and do. Consequently, a constructionist approach has been employed to investigate processes of social marginalisation and the denial of basic human rights (Dunn 2003), to explore the relationship that tourists have with the bio-physical environment and the people they encounter while on holiday (Lane and Waitt 2001), as well as the effectiveness of environmental management.

Influenced largely by the work of Foucault the term discourse is now in wide circulation in human geography (see Lees 2004 for a comparison between a Gramscian and Foucauldian understanding of discourse analysis). Foucault, however, does not use the conventional linguistic meaning of the word 'discourse'; that is, as passages of connected writing or speech. Instead, he conceptualises discourse within a theoretically informed framework that investigates the rules about the production of knowledge through language (meanings) and its influence over what we do (practice). Yet, providing a clear-cut definition of this term is complicated by the multiple and interchangeable ways Foucault (1972) employs the term. At least three overlain explanations of discourse can be identified in his work: (i) all meaningful statements or texts that have effects on the world; (ii) a group of statements that appear to have a common theme that provides them with an unified effect; and (iii) the rules and structures that underpin and govern the unified, coherent, and forceful statements that are produced. Despite this complexity, clarification is provided on what are the aims and objectives of discourse analysis. Clearly, **discourse analysis** becomes: (i) to explore the outcomes of discourse in terms of actions, perceptions, or attitudes rather than

the simply the analysis of statements/texts; (ii) to identity the regulatory frameworks within which groups of statements are produced, circulated, and communicated within which people construct their utterances and thoughts; and (iii) to uncover the support or internal mechanisms that maintain certain structures and rules over statements about people, animals, plants, events, and places in existence as unchallengeable, 'normal', or 'common-sense' rather than to discover the 'truth' or the 'origin' of a statement.

In this chapter I use examples primarily from tourism geographies and the geographies of sexuality to illustrate how some human geographers have actioned discourse analysis in their research. This choice is not accidental. These examples clearly illustrate how a particular discursive-grouping (the academic discipline of geography) also operates to determine what can be said, what is worthy of study, and what is regarded as factual. Research addressing tourism and sexuality were often shunned and avoided in the discipline as almost taboo subjects not worthy of geographical analysis until the 1990s (Binnie and Valentine 1999). Their exclusion illustrated how discursive structures operate to limit what geographers can say. There is nothing intrinsic to sexuality or tourism that makes them more difficult for geographers to study than, say, ethnicity or car manufacturing. What made it seem self-evident that these were topics to be avoided by geographers was in part the range of methodologies that the discipline drew upon to think about what constituted geographical knowledge. Sexuality was avoided because positive thinking produced a subject assumed to be sexed at birth. Homosexual people in particular were avoided because in the views of 'rational' science they were thought of as seemingly 'deviant'. Tourists were avoided as they were positioned as seemingly only engaged in leisure pursuits. Analysis of people having fun, regardless of their social impacts, was not as respectable a topic as, say, the kudos that could be achieved from examining the social relationships of those people working in those industries positioned as 'industrial heartlands': the steel, textile, coal, or automobile industries.

## FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AS A BREAK WITH PREVIOUS TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Perhaps one of the most helpful ways of thinking about how to conduct discourse analysis signalled by poststructuralist theory is to become aware of how the method is a major break with previous views of the use in geography of qualitative data (including films, photographs, brochures, postcards, fiction, travel guides, novels, newspapers, spoken words, and so forth). Before discourse analysis there were a number of 'tools' used by geographers to conduct qualitative research and interpret these sources so as to clarify their importance as a vehicle of communication about the world and form of representation of the geographical imagination. This task of interpreting the meaning in language, texts, and visual representations is known as **hermeneutics**. In the humanities' 'hermeneutic tool bag' geographers had found helpful a number of methodologies, including content analysis, **semiology**, and **iconography**.

In each case these methods conceptualise the stretch of text or representation as transparent and simply as a vehicle of expression. Emphasis in these methods is given to analysis of the qualitative data itself as a mechanism of communication rather than as a practice, a system operating within its own regulations and checks. In contrast, the priority in discourse

analysis is upon the *effects* of a particular cultural text on what an individual may do or think by unravelling its production, social context, and intended audience. The methodological strength of discourse analysis lies in its ability to move beyond the text, the subtext, and representation to uncover issues of power relationships that inform what people think and do.

For example, semiology studies representations and written texts for dominant codes or groups of **signs**. For semiologists the basic units of language for analysis are conceptualised as signs rather than a discourse that produced something else. Let us say for example the word 'alien'. In the terminology of semiology the object that the sign refers to is termed the referent. Consequently semiology is sometimes referred to as a referent system. According to theories of semiology language, signs operate through two mutual relationships. The first is between the sign and the **signified** (the concept or object, let's say 'a person born overseas'). The second is between the sign and the **signifier** (the sound or image attached to a sign, in this case the word 'alien'). However, the important theoretical point that semiologists make is that there is no given or stable relationship between the signifier and signified. The same signifier can have many meanings. 'Alien' can also be an extraterrestrial being, or a term to describe unusual behaviour as well as a term to stereotype social differences between people. Instead, whatever stability is fixed between a signifier and signified is reliant upon the difference between the sign 'alien' and other signs such as 'foreigner', 'migrant', 'tourist', 'temporary resident', 'guest worker', and so on (see Barthes 1973; Burgess and Wood 1988; Hall 1980; Hodge and Kress 1988; Williamson 1978).

Iconography is also a method of interpreting symbols and the imagery of visual texts. This method first relies upon a process of familiarisation with the meanings of historically and geographically specific symbols that would have circulated among the text's intended audience. This necessitates the use of relevant historical sources to provide insights into the symbolic meanings of a visual text, its use of colour, and the various objects, postures, and fashions depicted (Daniels and Cosgrove 1988; Panofsky 1957). This method then relies upon a process of peeling away levels of meanings through a process of visual interpretation. According to the art historian, Erwin Panofsky, there are three levels:

1  primary, natural or pre-iconographic
2  secondary, conventional or iconographic
3  intrinsic, symbolic or **iconological**.

To illustrate these levels of interpretation we can consider the postcard in Figure 11.1 'The Essential Australia', Bungle Bungle Range (Purnululu National Park), printed by Fiona Lake and purchased in Kununurra, Western Australia in 2002. This postcard is one example of how the physical environment has been turned into a tourist commodity in Western capitalist societies. At the primary or pre-iconographic level the postcard depicts a bird's eye view of a dry river-bed in a gorge of the Bungle Bungle Range. At the secondary level this physical environment, devoid of any human inhabitants, stands for the possibilities of discovering an alternative or 'real' self through a transformative encounter with the hostile Australian environment. A clue to this interpretation is provided by the text 'The Essential Australia'. The final level of interpretation, the iconological, is an examination of cultural conventions that underpin the symbolic qualities of the image. This requires drawing on other sources that help the target audience decode the symbolic qualities of the Bungle Bungles. For example,
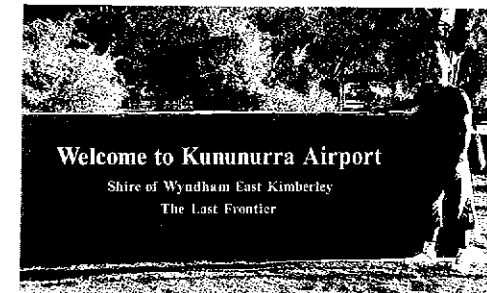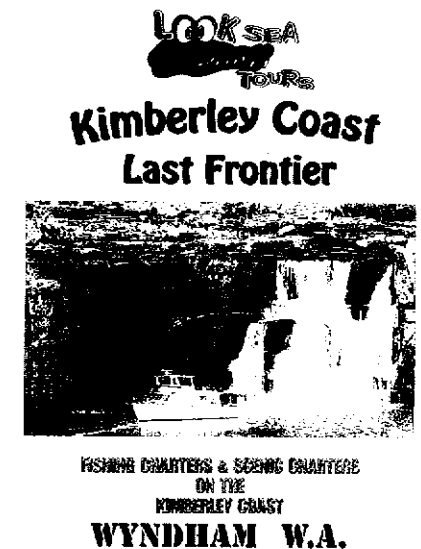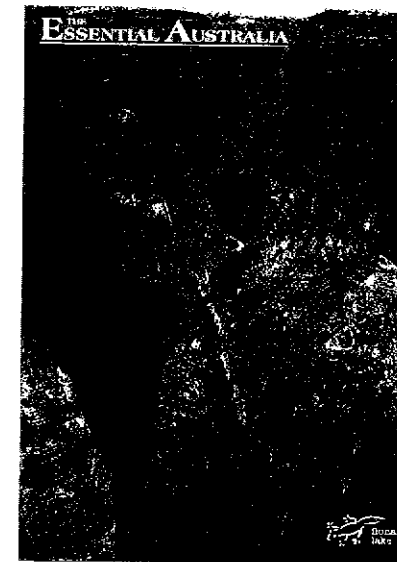


**Figure 11.1**  A selection of tourism industry texts portraying The Kimberley, Australia, as the frontier

Consider in what ways these different texts operate individually and together to either challenge or reproduce particular geographical knowledge of the Kimberley as a frontier?

Postcard titled 'The Essential Australia', Bungle Bungle Range (Purnululu National Park). (Source: Fiona Lake, Somerville, Richmond, North Queensland 4822, Australia.)
Look Sea Tours Brochure. (Source: Look Sea Tours, lookseatours@bigpond.com.)
Last Frontier sign at Kununurra Airport. (Source: Gordon Waitt 2003.)
Interpretation sign of Aboriginal rock art, Keep River National Park, Northern Territory. (Source: Gordon Waitt 2003.)
Postcard titled 'Kimberley Vision'. (Source: Kimberley Vision.)

the 'true-self' interpretation relies on popular Western myths of the transformative role of travel that were circulating when the first Europeans encountered the extreme and unique physical environment of Australia. Such transformational encounters have played an important role in the Australian nation-making project, differentiating European Australians from other nationalities. Continued circulation of these ideas in popular culture is apparent in the works of novelists such as Mary Durack (see her 1986 book *Kings in Grass Castles*), films such as *Crocodile Dundee,* the Australian Tourism Commission's travel campaigns that brand Australia (Waitt 1999), and the work of historians such as Ward (1958). These authors all draw on the frontier thesis, which suggests that people encountering the harsh environmental conditions of the 'outback' are stripped of their cultural pasts. In the case of national narratives the encounter recasts colonists with the characteristics of European Australians: battlers and larrikins who valued independence and mateship. For the tourism industry the encounter provides tourists with a potential makeover—an opportunity to discover an alternative self through acts of adventure and exploration in the Australian 'outback'.

Finally, content analysis also often examines text as something that exists in itself, which is apparently transparent and therefore can be analysed in isolation. Therefore, content analysis proceeds by coding and then quantifying the priorities of identified and emergent themes within texts (Lutz and Collins 1993). This is also discussed by Meghan Cope in chapter 14.

At a practical level there are some methodological similarities between discourse analysis and both iconography and content analysis. Both iconography and discourse analysis rely upon **intertextuality**, a term often used to refer to the way in which meanings are sustained through mutually related verbal, written, and visual texts. As Jay Ruby (1995) says in the context of analysing visual images, 'the study of images alone, as objects whose meaning is intrinsic to them, is a mistaken method if you are interested in the ways in which people assign meanings to pictures'. Both iconography and discourse analysis rely upon drawing from a number of related qualitative sources to examine how meanings are (re)produced and circulated.

In regards to discourse analysis and content analysis, both methods require the research to perform the operations of familiarisation, coding, and indexing. Indeed, Rose (2001) offers the structured framework of content analysis as a productive way for the novice to begin discourse analysis through the identification of embedded themes. Yet, at a conceptual level, discourse analysis does not emphasise 'peeling away' the meaning of texts. Rather than uncovering processes operating beneath the surface of texts that operate at the level of the sign, discourse analysis examines how discourses are constituted and circulated within texts and representations, which in turn function to produce a particular understanding or knowledge about the world that is accepted as 'truth' (Foucault 1980).

How discourse analysis can be conceptualised as a break from previous qualitative methods is reliant upon its focus, to identify and to understand how particular ideas are privileged as 'truth'. According to Foucault, this requires careful investigation of **discursive structures**. These are the unwritten conventions that operate to produce some kind of authoritative account of the world, be it the physical environment, an economic process, or social difference. A discursive structure can be detected because of how it demarcates the boundaries within which people think or behave. For example, geographers investigating questions pertaining to sexual citizenship have noted how politicians opposed to same-sex political rights

often draw upon an evolutionary narrative to constitute as degenerate people who engage in same-sex acts. The evolutionary narrative positions same-sex attracted people as non-citizens who belong to primitive societies, a remnant of an earlier period of primitive human development (see Hoad 2000). Consequently, same-sex attracted people are positioned as a threat to civilised societies. Geographers have demonstrated how these arguments are widely employed to prevent legislation that prevents discrimination for sexual orientation. Waitt et al. (2000) provide another example. They illustrate how the discourse of globalisation voiced by the 'neo-liberalism' of the New Right restricts the way government economic policy can negotiate the global economy. Neo-liberalism asserts the claim that national economies must be highly competitive in order to survive. Economic globalisation, in political narratives of neo-liberalism, is positioned as inevitable, a natural law. In the evolutionary narratives of neo-liberalism, competition is essential for the national economy to survive. In the face of this global force the only government and industry responses are practices of deregulation. In this way governments help to render as 'natural' free trade and industrial policies that have resulted in, for example, higher prices for certain medicines, threats to jobs in the Australian film and television industry, and the introduction of genetically modified crops.

In terms of thinking about discourse as having support structures that maintain certain rules, McFarlane and Hay (2003) illustrate how the discourses of neo-liberalism are assisted through the mass media. From their analysis of a major Australian newspaper, the *Australian,* they demonstrate how this newspaper scripted the subjectivities of those people who protested in Seattle on 30 November 1999 against neo-liberal policies endorsed by the World Trade Organisation as stupid, actors, fringe dwellers, and/or demons. The media positioned protestors as clueless and undermined their political arguments or belittled them as myths or conspiracy theories. Protestors were also portrayed as actors in a carnival of fun, entertainment, and amusement. Through media focus on appearances—hairy chests, buzz cuts, swimsuits, piercing, and bare-breasted women—protestors were portrayed to the *Australian*'s readers as 'abnormal' people. Finally, scripted as demons, protestors were linked to social chaos through a battle script that emphasised violence, lawlessness, and anarchy. In contrast, suited officials from the WTO were reported to communicate commonsense order and norms provided by globalisation.

Rendering neo-liberalism policies as 'commonsense' or shaping any other political narratives as 'true' or 'natural' can be seen to be constructed through the operation of discursive structures. The organisation of discourse is a process instilled and negotiated within a number of intricate, complex, and utterly social processes. Writing geography informed by the ideas of discourse analysis is concerned with troubling, exposing, and unsettling the 'truth' (Bonnet 1996; Jackson and Penrose 1993). In terms of thinking about discourse as having effects by maintaining particular ideas as 'commonsense' it is therefore critical to consider how discourse analysis draws upon its own theoretical framework found in Foucault's discussions of power, knowledge, and truth.

## INTRODUCING DISCOURSE

Important methodological implications arise from investigating some of Michel Foucault's theoretical terminology. Although far more comprehensive reviews of Foucault's theoretical

arguments are given elsewhere (see Cousins and Houssain 1984; Hall 1997; McNay 1994; Mills 1997), before discussing the methodological implications of doing discourse analysis I briefly summarise some of his conceptual tools including discourse, episteme, discursive structures/formations, genealogy, and regime of truth.

Discourse is central to Foucault's theory and methodology. Foucault's (1972) theories of discourse demonstrate how the mutual relationships between a group of statements within different cultural texts generate the meaning of a specific item that is understood to construct 'truths' about the social and material worlds and to inform practice. For example, for Foucault the meaning of 'homosexual' is not found by looking up this word in a dictionary. Instead, the homosexual is constituted socially in the utterances, representations, and written publications of medical, religious, and political institutions as well as those of same-sex attracted people. This process was envisaged as a 'privileging' one. That is, processes of exclusion operate on discourse to restrict what can be said. Particular meanings are favoured, often being counted as knowledge, while others are excluded and silenced, reduced to hearsay or folk-law.

Returning to the example of the subjectivity of the homosexual: in nineteenth-century Europe, North America, and Russia, privilege was given to the medical institutional narrative that made same-sex attracted women invisible by constituting sex as a penetrative act. Similarly, a lethal mix of fundamental Christian morals and evolutionary narratives of science were applied to explain social difference that positioned homosexual men as primitive, degenerate, diseased, and sinful. Although there were limits placed on what could be said about same-sex attracted women and men and both were alienated from mainstream society, they did not vanish. The official or hegemonic narrative that masked sexual differences through casting the subject of the homosexual as taboo and passing laws to criminalise sodomy only helped to construct a national closet that operated to conceal and confine same-sex desires. Same-sex venues for men were always present in nineteenth-century New York, London, Paris, Berlin, and Moscow. More is known about the lived experience of white men because of privileges accrued by their ethnicity, class, and gender in a patriarchal society. For example Duberman, Vicinus, and Chauncey (1990) provide evidence of how closeted-spaces operated in very homophobic societies to provide a sense of self, pride, and pleasure. Yet, it is important to remember that such important insights would have never been considered knowledge or worthy of academic publication in the nineteenth century. At this time normative methodologies of science had classified the homosexual as a diseased subject, thus self-evidently only worthy of study to find a medicinal cure. Poststructuralist approaches that examine the lived experience of same-sex attracted men would never have been counted as knowledge. This is illustrative of what Foucault (1972) called the **episteme.** This term refers to how thinking is structured about a particular subject and how certain methodologies produce a particular subject. In this way, discourse consequently operates to limit what can be said, what can become objects of our knowledge, and what is accepted as knowledge. That is, although material objects and social practices exist outside language, they are only 'brought into view' by language. Consequently, as Foucault (1972, p. 32) says, 'nothing has any meaning outside of discourse'. In turn, discourse governs how a topic can be meaningfully explained. It controls how ideas are put into practice. In addition to its power to name and temporally 'fix' particular understandings, discourse also refers to the

way people respond to that particular way of thinking (Foucault 1972). Thus, discourse can be used to regulate the lives of people (for example, the denial of lesbians in nineteenth-century Britain, the closeting of sexual minorities in twenty-first-century Egypt and Jamaica).

Returning to the example of same-sex desires but within the context of Conservative Party policies of Margaret Thatcher's Britain in the 1980s, let us again reflect on the important point of how processes of exclusion operate through discourse to limit what can be said and establishing imagined social collective boundaries. Although having decriminalised same-sex acts, Britain was still imagined in the 1980s to be a heterosexual nation underpinned by the heterosexual family. Consequently, same-sex acts positioned the homosexual outside the imagined community of the state. The 'queer' was portrayed as the enemy within the state (Cooper and Herman 1995). Only the 'good homosexual' would be tolerated. Smith (1994) has argued that Conservative political narratives constituted the 'good homosexual' as disease free, and who remained closeted, controlled their sexual desires, and knew that their place was on the secret margins of society rather in Pride Parades or in positions of authority. To further limit what can be said about homosexuality the state introduced legislation that prohibited teaching about same-sex desires within the school curriculum through s 28 of the Local Government Act 1988. In doing so, the subject of homosexuality once again became taboo in the state school curriculum. The effect of such an institutional imposed limitation only helped to make it seem self-evident that homosexuality is a difficult subject that should be avoided and also helped to make homosexual people invisible.

## Discursive structures/formations

The inclusions/exclusions I have illustrated in the above two examples from the geography of sexuality are reliant upon the operation of structures and rules of discourse, what Foucault (1972) termed 'archaeology'. These discursive structures or formations refer to a relatively rule-bound set of statements that impose limits on how we construct our thoughts and statements (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002). Discursive structures inform our understanding of objects and events. Discursive formations set limits that make, say in my examples of sexual citizenship, the nation appear to be 'real' and heterosexuality appear to be 'normal'.

The meaning of an object, say an animal or plant; an event, say a fun run, an opening ceremony, or Pride Parade; or a place, for example a resort or nation, is fashioned through a pattern of discursive structures repeated across a number of statements, pictures, books, and magazines (texts), including sets of ideas, practices, rules, subject positions, processes, and attitudes. In the context of discourse, meanings cannot only be confined to a single word, sentences, or particular text, but depend on the outcome of relationships between texts, intertextuality. Individually, texts are not meaningful. Texts are made meaningful through their interconnections with other texts, their different discourses, consumption, circulation, and production. Accordingly, discourse analysis must refer to collections of texts. For example, valuable sources to examine in the context of the emergence of counter-hegemonic resort spaces for same-sex attracted people that have emerged in non-metropolitan centres such as the Florida Keys USA), Mykonos (Greece), or Port Douglas (Australia), include statements made by local and national politicians, brochures of the gay tourism industry, interviews with tour operators, local residents, and tourists as well as gay pornography. Therefore, embedded within

gay tourism destinations but also gardens, backyards, streets, suburbs, zoos, beach, cities, national parks, rural areas (the outback or the countryside), and the nation are particular interpretations of place, people, the bio-physical environment, and so on that are contingent on other texts as well as the particular culture, time, and place in which they are produced.

Discursive structures set limits to how people can think and act at a specific historical conjuncture. They impose a solidity and normality beyond which is often very hard to reason and behave. However, meanings are temporally 'fixed' only to achieve a particular purpose within a specific historical context. Again this can be clearly illustrated in the transformation in sexual citizenship of same-sex attracted people in Britain following the election of Tony Blair in 1998 and ideologies of the 'Third Way', 'New Labour', or 'New Britain'. In her discourse analysis of the Blair government's ideology Levitas (1997) identified six rule-bounded sets of statements that New Labour employed to differentiate itself from Conservative politics and 'traditional' socialist policies. These were: social inclusion, rights and responsibilities, community, family, multiculturalism, managerialism, and the law. From an analysis of parliamentary discourse Stychin (2003) argues that the political narratives developed around each of these themes is in some ways 'progressive' in widening and deepening an idea of sexual citizenship from the Thatcherite Conservative discourse. Yet, he acknowledges simultaneously how these themes operate to discipline and normalise same-sex identities through a rhetoric of community, nation, family, and morality. As Stychin points out, what gave many lesbian and gay activists concern is the strong Christian underpinning that can be identified in the Blairite ideology (see Bell and Binnie 2000; Durham 2001; Wilkinson 1999). This example illustrates the key point that the meaning of discursive structures are not stable but regulated through practice (Foucault 1972). Discursive structures are forms of discipline over thought, action, and social outcomes that differ radically from period to period. Foucault therefore conceptualised discourse pragmatically rather than metaphysically. Discursive formations are understood as a tool, an 'action' used by specific people to coordinate their social relationships for a specific purpose during a particular period. The discursive structures of (homo)sexuality impose boundaries upon sexual citizenship; that is, which sexual practices are thought of as normally present within the territorial boundaries of the state.

## Genealogy

Another key theoretical point illustrated by the examples is what Foucault terms 'genealogy'. Foucault (1980) uses this term in his writing that challenged conventional ideas about social identities and subject positions, particularly ideas of a homogenous self, underpinned by a stable, cohesive ego. Following Foucault (1982), people 'take up' subject-positions produced through discursive structures rather than subjectivity being a simple expression of an individual self. Foucault chose to ignore approaching subjectivity through notions of a pre-existent subject, such as 'British', 'American', 'Italian', 'mother', 'father', 'adult', 'teenager', 'youth', 'straight', 'homosexual', 'gay', 'queer', 'feminine', or 'masculine', upon which rules for thought and behaviour are imposed. Instead, he chooses to investigate how discursive structures constitute meanings and actions that frame a particular subjectivity. For example, Foucault (1978) interprets the invention of the homosexual as a type of person in the

eighteenth century to have been the result of a number of changes within Western knowledge about the nature of sexuality, rather than the expression of the sexual preference of an individual self. Homosexuality does not have a single meaning, but depends on a wide range of features provided by the historical and geographical social context, for its interpretation and effect. Importantly, all subjectivities are conceptualised as actively working out their subject-position and role in the process of negotiating discursive constraints, rather than casting subjectivities as passive victims of discursive structures.

In summary, Foucault understands human subjectivity as constructed through an individual engagement with discursive processes. A person's particular sense of self is obtained through a negotiated rather than imposed process of acculturation into social practices. Subject positions are actively worked out by individuals and associated with reasons of a particular period and location. Foucault argues that through a subject-position a person communicates a particular understanding about the world through their use of language, comportment, dress, attitudes, and actions. In this way Foucault challenged conventional Western notions of the subject as an autonomous and sovereign entity, an individual who is fully endowed with consciousness and independent source of meaning. Instead, following poststructuralist thinking, the subject cannot exist outside discourse. That is, people take up particular social identities through their own particular gendered, classed, sexualised, and ethnic subject-positions produced within discourse. Therefore, for example, homosexuality becomes something that you do, rather than something to which you are you are subject. Furthermore, social identities are also unstable given their discursive quality, which leaves them open to acts of reinterpretation and refashioning. Consequently, homosexuality does not have a single meaning, but depends on a wide range of contextual features. In short, individuals are conceptualised as actively taking up their subject-positions and roles in a process that involves negotiating discursive constraints for themselves. In doing so, people are positioned as actively aware that the adoption of a certain subject-position is a type of action that has effects.

## Power

**Power** was of central concern to Foucault given that the meanings of items, including subject-positions (for example, femininity, sexuality, and ethnicity), were not conceived as stable but negotiated through discourse. Foucault challenged the ways power has been conventionally conceptualised in the humanities, including human geography, through examining the relationship between discourse and power. Conventionally scripted, power belongs to particular agents such as individuals, the state, or groups with particular interests. Power was a means by which groups or individuals were able to achieve their aims against the will of others. Usually, power was conceptualised as confining (power over: the heterosexuals *versus* homosexuals, masculine *versus* feminine, employers *versus* employees) and in the context of binary power blocs of the core and the periphery (the 'have nots' and the 'have lots'). But following Foucault, power is not conceptualised as a repressive, hierarchical, top to bottom force that comes from a specific source. Instead, power is everywhere. It circulates through negotiated social practices in all levels of social existence. Foucault (1980) suggests that both oppressors and oppressed are each, to some degree, caught up in its circulation through a

process of negotiation of discursive norms. Furthermore, power need not only be conceived in negative terms (control, repressive, restraining, and so on), but was also crucial in enabling oppressed groups to establish their own identity. Foucault (1977a, p. 95) claims that: 'where there is power…there is resistance…a multiplicity of points of resistance'. As I demonstrated earlier, in many nineteenth-century cities, including Moscow, New York, Paris, and London, closeted spaces opened up the opportunities for secret locations that were the source of great pleasure for many same-sex attracted men. Homosexual men are not positioned as simply dupes of heteronormative discursive structures. Rather, these men are understood as having agency through actively constructing a social position for themselves in relationship to the discursive norms against which they assume other individuals or groups perceive their subject position to be abnormal. These men then express this agency or effect by actively creating secret locations in which to meet. Consequently, power is also productive; power produces discourse, knowledge, bodies, and subjectivities (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002). As Foucault says:

> What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it does not only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole of social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression (Foucault 1980, p. 119).

In summary, Foucault conceptualised power not as monopolised by one centre and imposed onto individuals. Instead power is conceptualised to operate through discourse in which social relationships between individuals are negotiated. It is these negotiations of how the individual is positioned to the discursive norms that has the potential to be disempowering through compliance, or empowering through resistance. It is to investigate the effects of how individuals weigh up their own position in relationship to these discursive norms displayed through their actions and attitudes, or the conditions of possibility in power, that geographers have turned to discourse analysis.

## Regime of truth

Conceptualising the meanings of animals, plants, places, and subjectivities as a negotiated process in relationship to discursive norms raises the important question about the mechanisms that exist to keep certain discourse in circulation as 'normal' or 'true'. In other words, whilst there is not one but many discourses that contend with each other, a particular discourse is always maintained as 'true'. For example, different 'truths' about same-sex desire may often compete for ascendancy. But a particular discourse often becomes dominant in a particular time. Foucault argued that the ascendancy of a certain discourse relies upon two mutually reinforcing social forces: (a) the source of the statement (often the authoritative voices of scientific, medical, religious, or state institutions with coercive powers such as the police, schools, asylums, or prisons); and (b) assertions of what counts as absolute truth, based upon socially agreed methods as to what constitutes knowledge. The historically and spatially contingent grounds within which a discursive formation sustaining truth is asserted comprise what Foucault termed a **'regime of truth'**. Examples include the Thatcherite

Conservative discourse and the Blairite New Labour discourse around 'homosexuality'. The historical rules of a particular regime of truth lies at the heart of processes of exclusion/inclusion that delimits not only what can be said but also what can be done and to whom. In these case studies, the regimes of truth governed the exclusion of same-sex attracted people from the same rights of citizenship as experienced by heterosexual people. Accordingly, to understand discourse and their effects, it is imperative to understand the social contexts in which they arise. Knowledge does not operate within a social void.

Integral to a regime of truth is the mutually interdependent relationship between power and knowledge. Foucault positions this relationship as indistinguishable from regimes of truth. Foucault (1980, p. 131) argues that: 'Truth isn't outside power…Truth is a thing of this world; it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power'. Hence for Foucault (1980) questions about the 'truth' of knowledge were fruitless for truth is unattainable. Instead, he focused on questions addressing the effectiveness of sustaining knowledge (truth effects). In what ways are effects of truth created in discourse? Which discourses give the impression that they represent the truth? For these questions he coined the analytical term **'power/knowledge'**. Thus, 'there is no power relations without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations' (Foucault 1977a, p. 27). Knowledge is formed within the practices of power. Furthermore, knowledge is constitutive of the establishment and modification of new techniques of power. Consequently, knowledge operates in each academic discipline within a particular regime of truth to assure that a particular interpretation informed by an agreed method has the power to make itself 'true' over another. This point can be illustrated by drawing upon the work of Neville Hoad (2000) who pointed out how in the nineteenth century new 'scientific' beliefs were employed by social scientists to explain the apparent prevalence of homosexuality in non-Western countries, what Richard Burton (1886) called the 'Sotadic Zone'. Drawing on Darwinian evolutionary theory, Victorian anthropologists writing in the 1800s positioned 'homosexuality' as a moral problem spreading from non-Western nations (see Symonds 1896). Generally, at this time, anthropologists explained homosexuality in terms of hierarchical sequence of humanity. Homosexuality was naturalised as belonging to an earlier phase of human development and spatialised as belonging to 'primitive' societies. Constituted as a practice belonging to 'savages', the presence of same-sex desire was portrayed as a spectre on 'civilised' societies. 'Homosexuals' were therefore categorised as degenerative. In this way the power/knowledge of 'science' contained in Darwinian evolutionary theory was employed to naturalise the alleged superiority of 'heterosexuality'—as well as men, masculinity, whiteness, and the middle class.

## DOING FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND WRITING GEOGRAPHY

A Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis offers human geographers opportunities for investigating how discursive formations articulate regimes of truth that naturalise particular 'ways of seeing' social difference (gender, ethnicity, class, or sexuality), places, or bio-physical

environments. One helpful **metaphor** to conceptualising discourse analysis is perhaps to think about it in terms of unravelling how an individual is woven within a social fabric held together by power relationships, where particular discursive formations comprise its threads. Discourse analysis is a process of unravelling how the producer of a particular text is woven into this fabric. Through conducting discourse analysis, concern lies in revealing the effects into this fabric as practice that makes specific accounts appear 'real', or 'natural' through particular regimes of truth. Consequently, discourse analysis is also concerned with issues of power, expressed through cultural politics. In geography, the Foucauldian strand of discourse analysis can tend to problems that require investigating the social effects of discourse through investigating the consequences of how specific sources (institutions, subject-positions) produce particular subjectivities and meanings about the social relationships between objects, people, and places. Such analysis matters not only to illustrate how particular understandings about the world are privileged but also to demonstrate questions of social justice by identifying how processes of inclusion/exclusion operate through discourse.

Expanding Foucault's methodology from his works, however, is not a straightforward task (Hoggart et al. 2002). He was a prolific writer. His ideas altered as his research focus changed. His methodological legacy is thus multifaceted and dispersed. Furthermore, the trust placed in Foucault's work within his interpretative communities did not stem from explicit methodological statements. Barret (1991, p. 127) described his methodological statements as vague. So, whilst the methodology outlined below adheres to the Foucauldian notion of discourse, I draw upon the work of feminist geographer Gillian Rose (1996; 2001) to outline a guide to discourse analysis.

## What sources are required for discourse analysis?

Before starting a discourse analysis it is essential to think systematically about what kinds of sources you require. Discourses are expressed through a wide variety of written texts, visual representations, and practices (speech acts, dress, choice of holiday destination). Any or all of these are legitimate resources. Indeed, intertextuality demands the use of a wide range of sources. This may mean adopting a range of research practices to collect your range of sources including archival sources, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation. The breadth of source materials required is again underscored by recalling that discursive formations emerge from a coherent pattern of statements that can be identified across a range of sources.

Kevin Dunn (2001) used a diversity of written texts and semi-structured interviews to make his case for how local opponents to the construction of mosques in Sydney in the early 1990s drew upon discursive constructions of what constituted a 'local resident' and 'community' and negative Western stereotypes of Islam that have for centuries depicted Muslims as fanatical, intolerant, militant, fundamentalist, misogynist, and alien. He positioned local resistance to mosques in suburban Sydney as an example of how racism and vilification can become accepted as natural. This opposition relied upon an accumulated Western heritage of what he termed 'Islamaphobia'. Drawing on academic texts he illustrated how Islamaphobia has been born of the recurring theme of Orientalism that relies on a West/East

opposition. To investigate the conventional 'discourses of opposition' he used national, regional, and local daily newspapers and a data set compiled from the archives of local authorities (including development applications, planner's reports, campaign leaflets, and correspondence to local authorities from resident objectors). Whilst identifying a counter discursive construction within these sources he also analysed Islamic guidebooks and other introductory material for converts for other sources of geographical knowledge. In his conclusion he reflects upon the importance of intertextuality in writing geography. Dunn (2001, p. 292) says, 'The local is not simply a repository for the expression of meanings constructed from above…[Instead,] the local and national discourses [are] knitted together in a symbolic web'. Dunn provides a reminder of how mutual relationships sustain local, national, and international discourses.

Sources can include a variety of genres (for example, home movies, commercial films, travel writing, official reports, science fiction, scientific reports). The producer (journalists, travellers, academics, medics) is addressing a particular audience. Each source will be produced, circulated, and displayed employing a particular technology (such as printing, painting, photography, hand-writing, and email). Your initial problem will most likely be the breadth of potential source materials. Identifying initial sources from which to begin your analysis is an essential research task. The following questions are designed to help you identify your initial sources:

- *Which sources are likely to be particularly helpful?* Remember you are not concerned with selecting sources based on questions of accuracy or validity. Instead, your focus is on selecting sources that enable you to establish rigour in your research through Lincoln's and Guba's (1981) criteria of credibility (see chapter 5). Claims of credibility in your results will necessitate you demonstrating that each source is a meaningful one in the context of your research aim.
- *Which sources are likely to provide counter discourses?* It may be necessary to conduct interviews with a range of informants and draw from council records and media reports to, say, investigate the conflict over a particular urban development proposal.
- *Which sources are going to be particularly interesting?* This may be a case of thinking about whose geographical knowledge has not been previously investigated. For example in a project investigating 1900–45 'beach-making' activities in the Illawarra, Australia, this included use of surf-life saving documents, beach-inspector reports, council by-laws, state-rail, and bank records.
- *Which sources are going to be qualitatively rich?* Given your analysis is reliant on 'unpacking' the meanings that constitute a particular understanding of the social or physical word it is important to avoid, for example, transcripts that have only 'yes'/'no' answers. Sources such as in-depth interviews, oral histories, parliamentary discussion papers, political documents, television programs, propaganda materials, advertisements, tourist souvenirs, and movies will almost always provide qualitatively rich materials.

Once you have identified your initial key sources the research process is best understood as a continuing building process in which new sources to analyse are added as the research proceeds, rather than being collected during a single period of 'data collection'. Gathering new

sources typically takes a good deal of time. Important leads are often found by consulting reference lists in texts published by researchers working on the same or similar research questions. Alternatively texts may be discovered in the archives of local community organisations, libraries, banks, or corporations. In turn, the people who work within these places often can suggest other sources that are likely to be particularly productive; for example, private collections of photographs. Equally, you may wish to conduct interviews (see chapter 6) or ask respondents to take photographs. The later method is termed photo-elicitation, where informants take photographs following instructions of the researcher (see Banks 2001). These photographs can then be employed as source for discourse analysis, as prompts during an interview, or both.

Once you have begun to widen your data collection process your next question undoubtedly will be: how many texts are required for discourse analysis? As Bradshaw and Stratford explain (chapter 5), there are no hard and fast rules for sample size in qualitative research design. Drawing from Patton (1990) they point out that the validity of qualitative research depends on information-richness and the analytical skills of the researcher rather than validity brought by numbers. Tonkiss confirms this important point. 'What matters', she argues, 'is the richness of textual detail, rather then the numbers of texts analysed'

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**BOX 11.1  QUESTIONS TO HELP LOCATE SOURCES FOR DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

Imagine your project was to investigate the ways Sydney has been positioned as the 'gay capital' of the South Pacific. What might your initial starting point be? How might how widen your search? What sources produce visual or written texts that socially construct Sydney as a 'gay and lesbian capital'? Who may you wish to interview? Could photo-elicitation provide a rich textual source? In what ways could the work of Markwell (2002), which investigated the role of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in the refashioning of Sydney as a 'gay capital', help you?

This project raises a number of interesting methodological and theoretical questions. The discursive practices of both the (New) Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras organisations and the gay and lesbian tourism industry are perhaps the most powerful in constructing Sydney as a 'gay and lesbian capital'. In what ways could possibly competing discourses be constructed? How can you get access to these particular discourses? What about the role of the gay and lesbian media? What about international gay guides and the marketing campaigns of New South Wales Tourism or the former Australian Tourist Commission (now Australia Tourism)? Who is portrayed in the marketing campaigns? Do the adverts show both gay men and lesbians? Or is the fact that usually only clean-cut, white same-sex attracted men are visualised in gay tourism marketing also important? In tourist campaigns, is the invisibility of 'lesbians', 'gay men of colour' and sub-culture same-sex attracted groups such as 'bears' or 'leathermen' a relevant issue to examine? Equally, is it important that 'gay events' appear in adverts targeting a straight audience? How might you find out how same-sex attracted residents or tourists construct Sydney?

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(Tonkiss 1998, p. 253). As the researcher you must justify the matter of the texts used to sustain your work.

## What strategies are helpful to scrutinise the structure of discourse?

Research rigour requires practitioners to discuss their methodologies. However, interpretation activities are often masked by complex, if not impenetrable, language. For example Elizabeth Edwards (2003) discussed her approach to discourse analysis as 'dense context'. That is, she endeavours to explain:

> a dynamic and dialogical shape of broader discourse which constitute the whole cultural theatre of which the photographs are part…'Dense context' is not necessarily linked to the reality effect of the photograph in a direct way, indeed to the extent that it is not necessarily *apparent* what the photograph is 'of'. Often it is what photographs are *not* 'of' in forensic terms which is suggestive of a counterpoint. 'Dense context' has, literally, a density, opacity and three-dimensional volume (Edwards 2003, pp. 262–3, emphasis in original).

Foucauldian concepts of regimes of truth and discursive formations underpin her methodology, yet the actual interpretation of discourse is never made transparent. Furthermore, several handbooks for qualitative methods in the social sciences are hesitant to give formal guidelines (Phillips and Hardy 2002; Potter 1996). Instead, discourse analysis is positioned as a 'craft skill' (Potter 1996, p. 140), the researcher's ability 'to customise' (Phillips and Hardy 2002, p. 78), 'rigorous scholarship' (Gill 1996, p. 144), or 'human intellect' (Duncan 1987, p. 473). The maxim is 'learning by doing'. Through practice, discourse analysis is typically held to become intuitive. Scholarly passion seemingly underpins critical textual analysis. The methodology is often left implicit rather than made explicit. Undermining the very basis of discourse analysis is research that is too systematic, mechanical, and formulaic (Burman and Parker 1993).

In practical terms, such counsel is not especially helpful for those seeking advice on how to do discourse analysis! While mindful that successful interpretation requires careful reading and passionate engagement with texts, Rose (2001) is concerned by the lack of explicit advice given to students. To fill the void she identified in qualitative research method handbooks, she offered seven axioms for interpreting the linguistic structure of discourse (see Box 11.2). These axioms were not suggested with the intention to straight-jacket, mute, stifle, or deaden your interpretation. Instead, they are offered to enliven, encourage, and assist students who are particularly hesitant with how to interpret texts critically. Consideration of these axioms in your research design will also help you to justify your interpretation within the context of the hermeneutic research circle. Such a justification is important given that the underpinning premise of qualitative research is precisely the interpretation of cultural texts and not the discovery of their 'truth'. The assessment by your interpretative community will be in part reliant upon the justification of the strategies that underpin your interpretation. I now turn to briefly elaborate on each of the strategies.

## BOX 11.2  STRATEGIES TO SCRUTINISE THE STRUCTURE OF DISCOURSE

Seven strategies for the interpretation of the linguistic structure of discourse:

1  Suspend pre-existing categories: examine your texts with fresh eyes and ears.
2  Familiarisation: absorb yourself in your texts.
3  Coding: identify key themes to reveal how the producer is embedded within particular discursive structures.
4  Persuasion: investigate within your texts for effects of 'truth'.
5  Incoherence: take notice of inconsistencies within your texts.
6  Active presence of the invisible: look for mechanisms that silence.
7  Focus on details.

Adapted from Rose (2001, p. 158).

### Suspend pre-existing categories: examine your texts with fresh eyes and ears

Reading, listening, or looking at your text with fresh eyes and ears is regarded by Foucault (1972) as an essential starting point given that the objective of discourse analysis is to disclose the 'naturalness' of constructed categories, subjectivities, particularities, accountability, and responsibility. Foucault (1972) pointed out that all preconceptions:

> must be held in suspense. They must not be rejected definitively, of course, but the tranquillity with which they are accepted must be disturbed; we must show that they do not come about by themselves, but are always the result of a construction the rules of which must be known and the justifications of which must be scrutinized.

Foucault's request to attempt to suspend yourself when approaching your analysis from everything you have experienced or learnt is an impossible task. Yet, his call for a highly reflexive researcher is possible to implement in a number of ways. First, this can be achieved by demonstrating that the categories that you allocate arose from the data rather than being taken-for-granted categories from elsewhere that you imposed on your results. Furthermore, the process of categorisation itself must be considered provisional. All categories must be constantly given reflexive attention (Wood and Kroger 2000). Second, as a reflexive researcher you will have to discuss how you are embedded into the research project. You will have to give careful consideration to a reflexive statement that discusses how your position within the project has changed through its design and implementation.

### Familiarisation: absorb yourself in your texts

Equally, familiarisation with your texts is essential. Familiarisation enables you to identify the key themes that will enable you to examine the relationships between statements, groups of statements, and different texts. This is a time-consuming and reiterative process of looking, listening, and/or reading. Only through absorbing yourself in your texts will key themes (descriptive labels or categories) become apparent. Make a list of these themes and note

where they occur in your texts. You have begun to code your texts (see chapter 14 for a more detailed discussion). Return to coding your texts again and again. Interpretation becomes an on-going process that can proceed through many cycles and reclassifications. During this coding process think about how the theme is given meaning through the relationships between words (word clusters), and connections between word clusters in different texts (genres and authors). Insights to what particular kind of knowledge is produced may be revealed through investigation of these relationships and connections.

Goss' (1993) discussion of how the tourism industry writes a particular geography of the Hawai'ian Islands illustrates the productivity of discourse in the creation of place meanings and subjectivities. To investigate the effects of marketing the islands as a vacation destination his analysis focused on the recurring images and words employed that portray indigenous Hawai'ians, the plants, the volcanoes, the location, and the climate. To explore the 'official' image of the islands Goss collected thirty-four advertisements commissioned by the Hawai'i Visitors Bureau (HVB) and published between 1972 and 1992 in various North American magazines and newspapers. He identified how the social discourse of these advertisements reinvented the Hawaiian tourist through the depiction of the life-styles and vacation activities.

In the early advertisements (1972–84) tourists were portrayed as exclusively white, middle-aged, heterosexual couples. An HVB report stereotyped couples as wearing Hawai'ian outfits, sandals, and black knee-socks. Since the mid-1980s the target group shifted to younger heterosexual couples. The transformative powers of an encounter with the Hawai'ian environment or social traditions were also emphasised. Slogans employed in the 1989–92 campaigns invited readers to 'Come to life in Hawaii', claiming 'A few days in Hawaii and you'll be a new person'. The theme of these campaigns was the discovery of the 'real' self in Hawai'i. To enable this sense of personal emancipation of the Self repressed by civilisation Goss notes five themes of a spatial discourse that located the Hawai'ian Islands outside the 'normal' construction of North American geography. The paradise status was signified by verbal and visual reference to beaches, palms, waterfalls, tropical gardens, and exotic flowers. By virtue of its position on the periphery of United States' territory the islands are constructed as a place on the social, temporal, and geographical frontier. Hawai'i becomes a timeless location, a portal to the past. A trip to Hawai'i is discovering that, 'time and tide are much the same as in the 1800s'. In this timeless place, people are freed from the repressive regulations of contemporary everyday life. Through the process of discovery Hawai'i becomes feminised and through the use of sexual metaphors the physical environment is eroticised. For example, Kauai has 'distractions spread throughout her verdant valleys'.

The final part of the tourism narrative was the erasure of historical and present socio-economic deprivation and oppression of the Hawai'ian people through a tourist encounter framed by *aloha*. A tourist–host relationship informed by *aloha* casts all Hawai'ians as 'friendly natives': innocent, naive, primitive, and naturally sexually promiscuous. Goss thus identifies five persistent themes of the spatial discourse in the advertisements: earthly paradise, marginality, liminality, feminity, and *aloha*. He argues how their persistence in advertisements depends on intertextuality; in other words, the pre-existence and repetition of these selective themes in a wide range of Western movies, books, songs, and holiday narratives. Finally, Goss acknowledges the contradictions within the advertisements through

visual and verbal presence of the familiar and the modern. He argues these are present to reassure tourists, reducing the potential fear or threat posed by an unfamiliar place.

### Coding: identify key themes to reveal how the producer is embedded within particular discursive structures

One key objective of coding is to identify how the producer of your source material is embedded within particular discursive structures. You may wish to follow a more systematic coding method to help you start with identifying themes and coding your text. The following questions may help you begin:

- What coding categories are suggested by the research question?
- What effects of discursive structures are you coding for: attitudes, experiences, perceptions, or actions?
- Are the outcomes of the discursive structures specific to a particular place?
- What coding categories are suggested by the broader empirical and theoretical literature from which the research question has been derived?

Whether you devise your coding categories through a process of familiarisation with the material or from the relevant literature it is essential to remember that they must have analytical significance to your discourse analysis. Through examining textual detail you allow the research materials to 'speak'. Do not impose categories in a top-down manner. Always be open to the unexpected and unusual. (See also the discussion in chapter 14.)

### Persuasion: investigate within your texts for effects of 'truth'

While you are investigating how a particular kind of knowledge is produced you should also assess your texts for effects of 'truth'; that is, how is a discourse considered to have both validity and worth. In other words, what devices are used to make claims that people are 'speaking in the true'? Identifying such mechanisms is important as they act to exclude from consideration other knowledges that might have been possible. A number of strategies of conviction may be used to keep certain discourses in circulation including the notion of calling upon an academic discipline (science), a 'trustworthy' method (statistics, photography, mapping), a commentary by a key spokesperson, or textual (printed word versus spoken word, quotation of voices versus feelings). Their purpose is to present an argument about an item that is accepted by most people as 'common sense', unproblematic, unquestionable, and apparently 'natural'. They maintain in circulation discourses that are repeatedly commented on by others, thus becoming considered to have both worth and validity. Consequently, texts aimed at settling opposition to particularly controversial claims of certainty are those that most clearly employ these strategies of conviction (Tonkiss 1998).

An example of how photography provides a seemingly accurate depiction or copy of external reality of tourist destinations is the picture postcard. Postcards' apparent realism or 'in the true' relies upon photography being regarded in Western societies as a science (Waitt and Head 2002). Light reflected from the photograph object is etched into chemicals. The result possesses the objectivity of technology. Photographs appear to be a true representation of the physical world and to involve no subjective intervention. Decisions about lighting, colouring, cutting, cropping, etching, and cloning are 'forgotten'. The 'effect of truth' of the

postcard is further derived from many viewers commenting that photographs themselves are an actual reflection of the physical world, concealing the opportunities for modification by the photographer for commercial purposes (Jackson 1999).

In her work on representations of sex work in the Philippines over three decades from 1970, Lisa Law (2000) provides an example of how maps also act to embed particular knowledge as 'in the true'. She notes not only how different maps of prostitution there legitimise competing claims about prostitution, but how the official health map of the commercial sex industry drawn by the Health Department of Cebu helps to materialise part of the city as a homogenous 'red light district'. The effect of truth maintained by the Health Department's map of registered sex establishments is to help embed ideas that the sex industry is a distinct, bounded, mappable reality that lies outside 'normal' moral/healthy behaviour. Furthermore, Law points out how this cartography attached a particular identity to women. Those women present in the 'red light district', particularly in the evenings, were marked as 'bad girls'. Furthermore, the notion that HIV/AIDS is contracted from foreigners resulted in the tourist 'red light district' becoming the epidemiological centre and the women working in the sex-industry being understood to be 'dirty', 'diseased', 'polluting', and 'sick'. Consequently, given that the role of the Health Department is to control and manage sexually transmitted disease, HIV prevention strategies were put in place that attempted to discipline the sex workers through compulsory HIV testing and enrolment in HIV/AIDS education activities.

### Incoherence: take notice of inconsistencies within your sources

Having coded your data and considered the effect of truth, expect to identify inconsistencies within the discursive structures/formations of your sources. You will recall that discursive structures/formations are the relatively rule-bound sets of statements that impose limits on what gives meaning (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002). Yet, discursive structures/formations are often organised incoherently and inconsistently within texts. Indeed, a discursive formation may rely upon the irregularities provided by many different points of view.

For example, Law's (2000) research on Philippines' sex workers demonstrates how from the 1970s to the early 1990s the Philippine media, human rights activists, and academics were embedded in a rule-bound discursive structure that constituted prostitutes as victims of a 'flesh' industry. Prostitutes' subjectivity was imposed on women, first, by forces of neo-colonialism, including US military bases, and second, during President Marcos' rule through the institutionalisation of international sex trafficking, and sex tourism. Law demonstrates how three non-governmental agencies (NGOs) (End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism, the Women's Centre of Cebu, and the Visayas Primary Health Care Services) drew upon the prostitute constituted as victim to position prostitution as a social problem borne out of capitalist social relationships. Yet, in 1993, the 'Brunei Beauties' scandal over high-class prostitution disrupted this portrayal that all women are economically deprived and forced into prostitution borne from capitalist social relationships. An inconsistency became evident in the knowledge that all sex workers were victims of an oppressive social system.

Further inconsistencies were introduced in how some Filipinos constituted prostitution during the 1990s when the community-based AIDS education program of a health organisation, called Kabalikat, appealed to the international discourse on HIV/AIDS prevention

to unsettle the 'victim' stereotype. Community-based HIV/AIDS intervention projects are designed to require the active involvement of women involved in sex work in designing and implementing HIV/AIDS prevention policies. Yet, in pointing out this shift Law (2000) warns against neatly categorising this NGO articulating the 'agent' paradigm. She noted how Kabalikat representatives seemingly voiced contradictory statements that situated the prostitute as both 'agent' and 'victim'. She suggests that perhaps within the tensions created by the victim/agent debate that new identities are constituted.

### Active presence of the invisible: look for mechanisms that silence

Finally, discourse analysis involves exploration of the active presence of absent items (Thiesmeyer 2003). As Rose (2001, p. 157) says, 'absences can be as productive as explicit naming; invisibility can have just as powerful effects as visibility'. The silences of texts are not necessarily meaningless. On the contrary, silences are very important. They often help to underscore the social differences between people through the erasure of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and physical ability. Silences also operate to help maintain and heighten understandings of the bio-physical environment constituted as 'pristine', 'wild', or 'untouched' nature. Common sense assumptions about who or what should be present in particular places are often sustained through absences in particular texts. Through the active presence of absent items, nations, cities, or streets, for example, may be maintained as 'heterosexual' (Munt 1998) or National Parks imagined as 'pure' nature, a site apparently removed from human interference (Head 2000).

How silence operates in producing geographical knowledge is illustrated clearly in discursive formations of the frontier (see Turner (1920) for North America, and for Australia see McGregor (1994), Schaffer (1988), and Ward (1958)). Colonial projects of nation-making have often employed the concept of the frontier to erase the presence of indigenous people, or at best, cast them as 'primitive' people. The effectiveness of frontier myths in erasing indigenous people relies on representing the frontier as a place suspended in time (Rose 1997). As a timeless land the frontier was understood as not being owned. In Australia this understanding became law (*terra nullius*). History, brought by European occupation, was yet to begin. Suspended in time, indigenous people are portrayed as an earlier phase of human evolution, people still to evolve from their bio-physical environment. The frontier is depicted not as the home of indigenous people, but as a wild, untouched, and unknown place. The regime of frontier truths that silences the presence of indigenous people draws upon linear interpretations of history that employ evolutionary narratives to demarcate the colonisers as bringing civilisation, domestication, and productivity. In doing so excluded from consideration are indigenous peoples, their knowledges, and issues pertaining to land rights.

Waitt and Head (2002) note how within the contemporary Australian tourism industry the selective discursive formations of the frontier that cast indigenous people as stone-age people still enjoy widespread currency. For example, the Kimberley, a north-west region of Australia, is sold as the 'last frontier'. One brochure for a local airline pitches the Kimberley as 'a mysterious, ancient land. So remote, so immense, so rugged—it challenges you to discover it...the Last Frontier' (Slingair tourist brochure (nd)). Waitt and Head (2002) are not surprised at the selectiveness of the advertising strategies. Potential tourists are offered a

portal to a timeless land to fulfil specific market demands, including: to discover the 'real' Australia, imagined as the outback, to experience the bio-physical environment constituted as wilderness; to gaze upon the bio-physical environment portrayed as sublime 'natural' beauty; and/or to explore an extreme bio-physical environment for an adventure setting. The key point is that the commercial value of the imagined frontier geographies to marketing the Kimberley to a primarily urban and Australian audience is one mechanism that has kept this evolutionary discourse in existence. The tourist industry has helped to maintain 'the true' evolutionary narratives about indigenous Australians. Furthermore, the tourism industry and the commentaries it produces may also help exclude, particularly from some tourists, consideration of other knowledges about the Kimberley that challenge and are inconsistent with the frontier discourse, simply because they provide fewer meaningful categories upon which to establish a regional marketing campaign. For example, challenging the absence of humans as a central tenet of frontier discursive structure is the Miriuwung-Gajerrong's (the local indigenous people's) knowledge that this place is their 'home'; named, known, and cared for over tens of thousands of years. Equally, on a Kimberley's cattle station the locality is constructed by Anglo-Celtic Australian pastoralists as a 'workplace' inscribed through personal labour. These alternative geographical knowledges are excluded from consideration in the pitching of Kimberley as the 'last frontier'.

Identifying how discursive structures operate to privilege particular knowledge over other knowledge often has important political implications. For example, discourse analyses of the Native Title policies by geographers and anthropologists assisting Aboriginal land claims suggest that rights to land are also based on the construction of indigenous Australians as an unchanging, timeless people through their continuing 'traditional' associations with land, community structures, and maintenance of 'traditional' religion (Edmonds 1995; Merlan 1996; D. Rose 1996a). In the process of Native Title itself, discourse analysis offers an insight into how 'traditional' cultural forms are given priority over hybrid forms. Indigenous Australians constituted as a 'traditional land-owning group' works to eliminate people whose life paths have distanced them from 'country' and culture (D. Rose 1996a).

## What strategies are helpful for investigating the social circumstances in which discourse is produced?

**BOX 11.3  TWO STRATEGIES FOR INVESTIGATING THE SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH DISCOURSE IS PRODUCED**

1  Identification of the subject position of the author.
2  Identification of the intended audience of the text.

It is important to investigate authorship of cultural texts (Box 11.3) as part of discourse analysis because authorship is often used to invest texts with authority (Wood and Kroger 2000). For example, for most academics writing geography in the 1920s, the written publications of historians such as Fredrick Jackson Turner would have been invested with greater

authority than say the oral histories of the Miriuwung-Gajerrong people discussed in the previous section. Authorship is linked directly to the production what is considered true within a particular social context. To help examine the social context of authorship you may begin by asking a number of rather obvious questions that include *when, where, how,* and *why* a text was produced. These questions will help you establish the originating context of your document, anchoring it within a particular time and place. Next, you may wish to consider exploring the subject positions of the author. What are the author's gender, class, sexuality, and ethnic subject positions? These questions will help you think about the ways in which the author and their subject position is linked to establishing and maintaining realisms (effects of truth) through the production and circulation of texts. The visual and verbal texts produced by authors endowed with authority—through, for example, membership of socially and institutionally powerful organisations—rather, may be more effective in the process of constructing 'truths' and privileging particular knowledge than those produced by socially marginalised groups.

It is important to investigate the assumed audiences of cultural texts as part of the social context of how discourse is produced. How an item is portrayed will, in part, depend on its audience (television, film, art gallery, video, DVD, Internet, greetings card, and so on). In other words, the interpretative context of each audience produced by different media is likely to affect the meanings of texts. In this way audiences can be conceptualised as co-authors of a text. Foucault did not conceptualise audiences as passive recipients of texts. Instead, if we accept that power is everywhere, it is evident that an audience can produce alternative interpretations to those that might have been intended by the 'author'.

Kathleen Mee and Robyn Dowling (2003) illustrate how one audience, film-reviewers, as cultural intermediators, actively reworked the intended meanings of an Australian film called *Idiot Box*. Filmed in the western suburbs of Sydney, this is a fictional film about a bank robbery. The planning and implementation of the unsuccessful bank robbery by the key characters, Mick and Kev, was—according to the writer-director David Caesar—intended to challenge common-sense assumptions about young, unemployed, suburban, working-class men. Yet, Mee and Dowling (2003) argue that film-reviewers interpreted the representations of social difference depicted in *Idiot Box* through the familiar, stereotyping lens rather than as confronting them as intended by the director. In this way film-reviewers sustained a particular fictional geographical knowledge about western Sydney as 'truth'. The events and characters of the film became rendered as 'natural' through an interpretation that understood young working-class men as 'yobs' and suburbia as 'boring'. Clearly, audiences play an important role in discourse analysis. Important insights can be gained into how particular geographical regimes of truth remain privileged through examining questions pertaining to the audience. As Mee and Dowling (2003) illustrate, pre-existing categories and subjectivities circulating in Sydney at the start of the twenty-first century about young working-class men living in its western suburbs operated to curtail challenges to what is considered true.

## Reflecting on the method

My aims in this concluding section are twofold. The first is to draw together and summarise in a checklist the various key aspects of doing Foucauldian discourse analysis introduced in

this chapter. The second is to reflect on the effects of writing geography that employs these criteria as a checklist.

Interpretation through discourse analysis is a complex process. Partly this complexity arises from the different aspects of our checklist (Box 11.4). The number of judgements that have to be made further compounds the complexity. For example, do the ways in which authors are writing, speaking, or drawing accord with a particular social or institutional context? Were the authors sincere about their claims? Why did the authors circulate ideas in a particular way? What did the authors intend? In short, discourse analysis involves a large amount of thinking about what is meant.

While not objecting to a checklist, Rose (2001, p.161) encouraged researchers to 'ask a Foucauldian question of them [the items in the checklist]: what are the effects of these criteria?' The effect of writing geography that employs these criteria is inevitably selective. My

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**BOX 11.4 A CHECKLIST FOR DOING DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

1  Assumptions
    a   What pre-existing categories or value assumptions are made?
2  Coding
    a   What discourses are drawn upon in the text?
    b   How are discourses textured together?
    c   Is there a mixing of discourses?
3  Coherence: are there any incoherencies within the discourse of your texts?
    a   Are there any incoherencies in relationship to previous research?
    b   Are there any incoherencies in the analysis itself?
4  Persuasion
    a   What types of statement are there (fact, predictions, hypothetical, evaluations)?
    b   How are the statements communicated (orally, encyclopaedia, maps, photographs, statistics)?
5  Inclusions/Silences
    a   What elements of represented social events are included or excluded?
    b   Which people are represented and how?
6  Focus on details
    a   What is/are the genre(s) of the text?
    b   Is the text part of a series of texts?
    c   Which other texts are included/excluded?
    d   Whose voices are included/excluded?
    e   Are voices directly reported (quoted), or indirectly reported?
7  Focus on social contexts
    a   What social event or chain of events is the text a part of?
    b   Within what social network are the events framed?
    c   Who is the audience of the text?

Based on Fairclough (2003, pp. 191–4), Rose (2001, p. 161) and Tonkiss (1998, pp. 258–60)

checklist offers a partial analysis. Geographers who have chosen to ask these types of questions while conducting their discourse analyses have done so because they are most likely motivated by the belief that texts have political, material, social, and moral effects and outcomes (Dunn 1997). My checklist is integral to writing a critical geography that may help address moral and political questions about contemporary societies. In particular when geographers have conducted discourse analysis they have often given voice to how texts operate in processes of social and spatial marginalisation. The outcomes are expected to enhance the quality of lives of people denied access to possibilities and resources. Equally, the outcome of particular research may not have the outcomes that were either intended or expected, particularly if (re)interpreted by the media (see Hay and Israel 2001). In doing so, these geographers are not attempting to prioritise and privilege their claims as truth. They make no claims of offering an 'objective' analysis of cultural texts. Rather, they recognise that their analysis is inevitably partial and limited by expressing, rather than erasing, the motivational and institutional context of the research. Doing discourse analysis always requires critical reflexivity (see chapter 2).

## KEY TERMS

constructionist approach
critical reflexivity
discourse
discourse analysis
discursive structures or formations
genealogy
episteme
essentialism
hermeneutics
iconography
iconology

intertextuality
metaphor
power
power/knowledge
regime of truth
rigour
semiology
sign
signified
signifier
texts

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

Consider the photographs in Figure 11.2 that were taken whilst I was backpacking around Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1991. These are just three of many millions of photographs taken by backpackers each year on a circuit around that country. The touristic photographs were taken with the intention of displaying them in an album to help reopen the happy, memorable experiences of this vacation to friends and family back home.

These photographs, or the ones taken on your own vacations, could become a source for a project that aims to examine how tourism helps constitute a particular geographical knowledge about a destination at a particular time, in this case Aotearoa/New Zealand in the late twentieth century. Use the following questions to help review the material in this chapter as if you were to begin a discourse analysis of these photographs, those from your own collection, or indeed other written or visual sources about travel. These questions are designed to assist you focus on what you are required to do to conduct a discourse analysis, rather than seeking specific answers. The aim of these questions is to open out research issues that you may have to address while doing discourse analysis.



**Figure 11.2** Backpacking snapshots from Aotearoa/New Zealand, 1991.
Summit of Ben Lomond, Queenstown. (Source: Gordon Waitt 1991.)
Road to Arthur's Pass. (Source: Gordon Waitt 1991.)
Aoraki/Mount Cook. (Source: Gordon Waitt 1991.)

## Questions about the social setting in which the discourse of the source material is located

*Questions about the maker*

1    What are the social identities of the maker of the source material?

2    What is the social relationship between the maker, owner, and the subject of the source material?

*Questions about the audience*

3    Who comprises the original audience of the source material?

4    How is the source material displayed, stored, and circulated?

5    What are the social conventions of the audience's engagement with your source material?

6    Has the source material been used for an audience other than the one for which it was originally intended? Have the social conventions of engagement changed for this new audience?

*Questions about the general ideological context*

7    What is the general ideological context within which your source material is located? For example, in the case of my touristic photographs they are embedded in wider ideological contexts of the transformation of the bio-physical environment into an aesthetic landscape, and the transformation of the bio-physical environment into wilderness.

## Questions about textual analysis

*Questions to help you scrutinise the source material in terms of its effects*

8    What are your positions within the research? How has your position changed in respect to the source materials? (See Moss 2001.)

9    How is your source material embedded within the social relationships of its production and reflect the social identities of its makers? In the case of my snapshots, the source material clearly is a reflection of my own social identities, given they were taken on vacation to show friends and family back home. Careful consideration of this question is required in the context of conducting semi-structured interviews where a mixed-up set of social relations and positions is generated (see Herod 1999; and Hughes 1999).

10   What technologies did its maker depend upon for the sources' production, circulation, and display? Say, for example, in conducting semi-structured interviews you will rely upon recording technologies.

11   How did these technologies of production, circulation, and display operate upon audiences' interpretation of the source material? In my example, photography is one way that the source material becomes considered true for its intended audience. Garlick (2002), Markwell (1997), and Nicholson (2002) provide helpful discussions on how the science underpinning film and snapshot production maintains them in what is considered as true representation of the world.

12   What discursive structures can you identify within your source material? In written texts you will have to carefully scrutinise the grammar, text structure, and vocabulary. In visual texts your attention will turn to the components of the image, how they are arranged, the use of colour, the vantage point of the image, and where the eye is drawn to in the image.

13   Are there inconsistencies in the discursive structures within your source material?

14   What other source materials are relevant in keeping the discourses that you are investigating in existence?

## SUGGESTED READING

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