On being there to help: A critical reflection on discourse and something postmodern for the social inclusion of refugee communities

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Abstract

Analyzing discourses is potentially a very powerful method for social research, and any such analysis should have a powerful voice, but to be truly powerful it must be able to have something to contribute towards policy. In this paper I reflect on discourse analysis broadly and how it might engage policy makers more fully. The paper suggests why policy-makers in Western nations might not listen to, or resist the demonstration of how discursive forces shape their experiences and indeed their understanding of the plight of refugees. This problem can be traced to Western society's reliance on a discourse of modernism which conflicts with policy-makers need to critically examine issues of inclusion, racism and integration as a result of large refugee intakes. As analysts we need to make sure we too move to something postmodern, and rather than a broad attack on policy-makers we need to find a way to engage new inclusive discourses to unpack discursive instances in local settings in a collaborative fashion and allow a space for policy-makers to not only read and act on the discursive research findings, but engage in the very tenets of social 'constructionism'.

'He has the right to criticise, who has a heart to help' Abraham Lincoln

Introduction

Our own ways of talking and writing in research must be understood as key elements of our social world. One advantage of discourse analysis is its inherent reflexivity. Discourse analysis suggests all texts are up for analysis, for deconstruction, including our own. When we look at our own research efforts as a collected discourse, we must always ask whether, despite our best efforts, we have been successful in interrupting the flow of the negative discourses affecting the plight of refugees through our discursive research. Indeed, many argue that that the marginalization of refugee groups particularly based on their race is as ubiquitous today as ever. Harper (1996, p.252) in respect of research on poverty suggests:

'[the] problem is a startling lack of curiosity about what effects and functions these kinds of explanations [about poverty] might have… what is lacking in such accounts is a clear understanding of the role of ideology in structuring our views of the world, since explanations have ideological effects'.

The present paper suggests not much has changed since Harper's comment. We need discursive analyses to help us explain ideological forces that structure poverty of refugee communities, with a particular focus on the discourse resources that deny their plight. But to achieve action to mitigate that plight we need policy makers to understand the structure of their own discourse. From this point we can work together to rebuild our explanations with a different ideological premise, one which can better direct resources to support the

communities through design of better services and supports.

Discourse as action

For this shift to new discourses to occur clearly we must view discourse as more than 'just words'. Rather, words 'do things' (Guilfoyle, 2000; Guilfoyle & Walker, 2000). They have power to both create and nullify action. For example, the discourses of the Howard government in Australia worked so effectively against social inclusion of asylum seekers. But if some discourse can be shown to have negative effect, by definition another discourse can be shown to have positive effect. Either way for good or bad discourse will create action (Guilfoyle, 2000). The aim is to institute new discourses with theoretically positive effect. We have to try and replace negative discourses because even if we say nothing we are having an effect. By this act of saying nothing we not simply maintaining stasis, we actively contribute to and create a situation of stasis, which is bad for refugees:

> The alternative to philosophy is not no philosophy, but bad philosophy (Collier, 1994, p. 17)

Often critiques of social construction suggest that all we do is identify potential constructions, as one woman muttered in a nearby seat at a conference I once attended – "it's just a talk fest". The fest includes offering alternatives for sure, but the task for the discursive analyst is not to leave talk as reconstituted talk. Cleary we must have something to say, but that is not all we can do. Particularly if we are to influence policy, the research art, is to connect words with their consequential actions first; then to work hard to undo those words and their actions. To move beyond a festival of talk, our job is first to show these connections, by deconstructing the text, and then but only to reformulate the discourse into a new text that creates more potential for inclusion for asylum seekers.

Thus as discourse analysts our first role is to observe where negative discourse exists and we do this by linking these discourses to their negative effects; then we ask what systems of power construct these discourses, how are they being maintained, managed what supports them and makes them large and thus perpetuates them? We can search for the 'action' that is potentiated or denied by any discourse by examining the structure and function of a text. A newspaper article that describes asylum seekers as 'illegal immigrants'; functions to build a social construction that works to suggest that people are choosing to come to Australia via illegal avenues for their own personal motivations. This construction warrants new law and tougher penalties for those who break these new laws. Further, bumper stickers popular in Australia in 2008 and 2009 with a discourse of 'Fuck off were full' has a rather blatant attempted effect of making large, popular and normative, acceptable a social identity of - refugees are not wanted or welcome and indeed are taking away our resources, jobs, houses and breathing space, ironically food.

It is good to point out these insidious effects. But that is no more than the starting point and should never be the stopping point for us as social researchers. We should illustrate these negative constructions only in order to argue for alternative constructions. We need to need to create a new space and transfer into the mainstream discourses such as reports by the Human Rights Commission that describe asylum seekers as 'genuine refugees'; this social construction works to suggest that these people are genuinely seeking protection from some level of threat in their own country and implies that this group of people are entitled to specific moral treatment as per international law.

The problem of commonsense

We need to make new discourses, like these, that stick in the hearts and minds of our communities and as I will argue that it are those in our community who ultimately shape policy. An analysis of every discourse is aimed at replacing its acts/effects with better discourses, and new acts/effects/outcomes. The problem is this is not an easy or trivial aim. It is more difficult unfortunately than the personal act of a attaching a bumper sticker; Asylum seekers are genuine refugees. This is because discourses pervade our society, they are always shared, as a common sense recognized by all and often our battle is against the societies very own entrenched commonsense. But when one discourse dominates it becomes abstract or reified and it powerfully constructs most of our social worlds and our assumed realities – it becomes the commonsense. Thus words become ideologically imbued meaning, that is, given a meaning the ideology, culture shares and supports, promotes or broadcasts and re-presents. Such that this construction becomes even more solid and common sense too. One definition of 'refugee' takes hold, as the dominant and powerful way to construct refugee (that is the person not the word), and that is then the one that most will see and therefore assume is true. Discourses powerfully support the common sense mainstream view of any society. But it is a (hermeneutical) reflection on power however that some words construct the commonsense acceptable political views of a society, while on the other hand other words, are supported by the mainstream commonsense politics of a society. For example driving a car with the bumper sticker "Fuck off were full" might not actually draw any much ire from other road users. I am not sure one which has "asylum seekers are genuine refugees" would leave its driver safe from verbal, scornful, or physical, attack. Why, because the latter sticker clashes with the prevailing commonsense, and indeed the would-be assailant might feel safe to act against it within the mainstream commonsense. Bonding to powerful commonsense notions often "allow(s) the un-sayable to be said" (Augoustinos, Tuffin & Every, 2005, p. 316). Thus discourses which are mainstream and seen as commonsense act in that they warrant other rhetorical actions and work against others.

Policy-makers power

It is typically those with the most power, in any society, who are best able, best positioned, to promote their own commonsense and undermine the alternative social constructions that others might posit (they can override the claims of those with less power!). The powerful can claim their versions are right, true, common sense and indisputable, indeed universal. The elite, the makers of policy for example, or media who debate it, will shape and support whatever is the common sense mainstream view. Often this is because by fact of being in power they have the means and resources to distribute and perpetuate their own versions. See any media Barron or Prime Minister! Ultimately then, what discursive analysts would claim about an event, such as the reporting of a news story, is that various powerful people are constructing versions of this event through the performance of actions, for example editing, or writing press releases, and it is these actions that not only relate to, but often work to rhetorically undermine, alternative constructions. By so doing, indeed they make themselves even more powerful:

> "although the struggle over different stories or constructions is undeniable, the fact that these do not take place in an ideal speech community where everyone has equal voice or ability to speak demonstrates not only

the power of construction, but also the importance of power and the relation of power to material interests. One reason why not 'everything goes' is therefore arguably because of the tendency and constraint imposed by social realities, which support some constructions more than others" (Reicher, Spears & Parker, 1996, in Spears, 1997). So as discursive analysts we often feel we must fight on all fronts including at the level of changing community discourses of commonsense, but I would suggest our research must convert the commonsense discourse of those in power, to have greatest effect. This attempted conversion has occurred traditionally though analysts critiquing the discourses of the powerful and one of the theoretical frameworks supporting discursive work is critical theory.

Critiquing policy

Apple (1983) suggests "…the act of criticism is essential to enable us to act in ethically and politically just, to say nothing of intellectually honest, ways"; The critical realist edge of discursive researchers (see for example Burman & Parker, 1993; Parker, 1992) is to deconstruct and reveal, the texts which contribute to social exclusion of asylum seekers. This critical work is the broader assault on the very discourses by which asylum seekers are excluded, marginalized and oppressed. Many critical theorists have traditionally viewed the world as comprising of diverse groups who each compete for scarce resources. Resources include access to power, privilege, money, self-esteem, and credibility. Refugees are struggling for recognition and legitimacy, equity, because they cannot easily access the host societies scare resources, thus are marginalised.

Many discursive analysts are driven by their deep seated roots in this critical approach. They accept the harsh reality of poverty that many face and want to address these by creating a more socially just society where there is less poverty. They argue for the presence of 'conscience' both in the individual and in the collective, valuing the role of subjectivity, and recognition of the constructive nature of history and culture (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). They reject any and all theories that seek social harmony while ignoring the basic issues of domination and power (Foucault, 1972). Discourse analysis from a critical perspective demonstrates the existence of this marginalisation, showing it is evident or present in the language and texts of a policy. Essentially, the motive for a discourse analysis from this position is to make an analysis of what should be rather than what is and this analysis should be situated in our compassion as humans for the suffering endured by others (Giroux, 1983) but with the emphasis firmly on a social change agenda.

Research, from the critical perspective, is viewed as a tool that can be used by either the dominant to resist any change to patterns of exploitation in society or subordinate groups to promote change in these (Albee, Joffe & Dusenburg, 1988). As researchers, we are drawn to it because it is a path to addressing the hidden issues of power and privilege and names the oppressive systems that much research serves to legitimise. The first premise for a critical analysis is to view research (any knowledge production) as being value laden rather than value free – after all values and biases impact all humans in all our interactions; and given that researchers are also human we too are subject to the same values and biases that affect others. Clearly the critical researcher sees research as very different from the positivist research base, it assumes research is not and cannot be a neutral and objective process – rather it is value laden and sees the subjective reality

of the individual as equally as important as the objective often quantifiable reality.

So too in our research – our worldview shapes the type of research we do and how we do it. We turn to qualitative, in particular discourse analysis, based on our values of promoting the position of refugees within a society. Indeed any process of research which does not have the same aim; is considered oppressive. A large part of this paper suggests us being effective means we must convince policy makers to similarly take up this critical and reflective position too – to critically examine their own outputs and reflect on how these can better assist refugee communities. Without policy makers achieving these, there is no possibility for any positive change! It is a big call we might say, but one that is necessary and thus achievable I believe. The caveat is, if our aim is to reveal hidden issues of power and privilege and name the oppressive systems supporting these – does that critical aim interrupt our ability to create the policy based reflexivity required for change. I return to this point below, but for now we need to explore the idea of reflexivity itself a little further.This leads to a second theoretical position which discursive analysts draw from (an epistemological shift from the critical position, but ironically with much the same research aims) - that of social constructionism.

Social construction of policy

Under social constructionism the aim of discourse analysis is more than demonstrating the presence of marginalization, but showing how it is constructed in the texts and language of the society. Discursive work shares (emerges from) many similar characteristics with social constructionism (Berger & Luckman, 1966), particularly in regards to language. The basic contention of many discursive analysts, is that reality is socially constructed by, and between, the persons that experience it (Burkitt, 1999; Burr, 1995; Foucault, 1972; Gergen, 1999; Soper, 1991). Therefore much discourse analysis sits within the epistemological position of constructionism (or social constructionism). The social constructionist view proposes that the ways in which people understand and categorise everyday life, are not a reflection of a universal world, but rather they are the product of historically and culturally specific understandings. From this position, our research purpose is one of understanding the processes by which individuals come to make sense of, understand, describe and explain the world in which they live, and indeed explain their positions within it. It is a powerful and reflexive research purpose!

Within this framework reality is a consequence of the context in which the action occurs and is shaped by the cultural, historical, political, and social norms that operate within that context and time. Therefore, reality can be different for each person or group based on their unique, but is often contextually shared, understandings and experience of the world. Although there is no one key feature, or description that is totally representative of a social constructionist approach, basic principles developed from the foundations of Gergen's (1985) four key assumptions underlying social constructionism are regularly embraced. For example, in much of the current literature on social constructionism four main premises loosely outline this approach. Burr (1995) suggests the following:

A Critical Approach to taken-for-granted knowledge

Premise one asserts that the knowledge we have of the world should not be understood as an objective truth that is merely conceptualised as a reflection of an external reality. Rather our representations of the world should be

understood as both products of our ways of categorising the world, and of our language. As such, a social constructionist position argues for a critical approach towards assumed conventional knowledge.

Historical and Cultural Specificity

Premise two emphasises that our ways of understanding our world and ourselves are both historically and culturally relative. As Gergen describes, our views and our knowledge are both products of our interactions between people, and as such are situated in both the period of history and the culture in which we live. Ultimately then, our ways of understanding are also contingent on the dominant social, political, and economic contexts that prevail within a given culture and period.

Link between Knowledge and Social Processes

Premise three asserts that our ways of knowing and understanding the world are constructed and maintained through our daily social processes. It is during our social interactions of all kinds, but particularly through our language exchange, that our versions of knowledge are not only constructed but also compete for the position of truth. Truth is therefore not seen as something that is objectively observable in the world, but rather a product of our social interactions with others.

Link between Knowledge and Social Action

Social constructionism is based on the assumption that the knowledge we construct and the actions we undertake are inextricably linked. Ultimately this premise argues that our socially constructed knowledge claims have real social consequences, that not only result in different social actions but that also work to "sustain and support certain social patterns to the exclusion of others" (Gergen, 1985, p. 268).

Drawing from a social constructionist position, discursive work highlights language as the primary form of communication, and key to our understanding our everyday realities. Language is not merely a reflection of pre-existing reality, but rather it is seen to contribute to the very construction of that reality. This does not mean that reality itself does not exist. What we understand is that our meanings and representations are real at any one particular time. For example physical assault is real, but only gains meaning through our language or discourse. Is physical assault of an owner of a 'were full' sticker the same as assault of a 'genuine refugees' sticker owner. Much would depend on how the media would construct that assault.

Beyond modernist policy

In one sense the impact of reapplication of discursive analytical techniques to date from either a critical and social constructivist position, or something in between, has been to identify, construct, refugees as one more disadvantaged group. It is by large a unified battle against the dominant modernist discourse argues that poor sections of the community facing historical and situational oppressions; such as Aboriginal, diverse migrant communities generally, should not receive any form of special treatment, to resource them, compensate them or otherwise consider and privilege their needs in achieving their desired place in society. The rhetoric too often is, to offer special treatments erodes our own rationality, the neo-liberalism, individualism, meritocracy, democracy, and catch phrase 'fair go for all', or (see John Howard) very idea of being 'Australian', that we and our democracy must rely on. The shared aim of much discursive work therefore is a general attack on the perpetuation of these modernist discourses, to deconstruct these and replace them with something, postmodern.

Thus from a critical or social constructionist position, using

methodologies of discourse; in many ways researchers can variously argue against the prevailing modernist discourse in policy. In the extreme, this pitched battle we fight is against a discourse which suggests we cannot have such specialized services; on that prefers to cast the entire responsibility of inclusion onto the individual refugee and thus constructs him or her as the poor self-motivator whose role is to perform and contribute to on-going development of community, and by extension society. Modernism is the discourse of 'victim blame'. By emphasizing the individual minus their context, the modernist view fails to acknowledge the political and social structures that impact on the person in a collective domain (Gergen, 1999). The modernist orientation of society in itself can be conceptualised as a barrier to the success of the refugee communities. It is a system that fails to give credence to the differences between the social, cultural, economic, and political backgrounds of refugees and how this relates to their engagement with the community.

A key point for modernism based social policy argues that we should ignore a person's 'historical and cultural specificity' from determining their needs for new services – we should treat all as equals. It is despite any enduring impassioned critical plea, for many in the community and those making policy, the argument of equality remains commonsense, faultless and difficult to contest. When we remove all culturally historic and specific contexts, there is no need to acknowledge the fundamental difference between equality and equity. Policy-makers can argue, and build a commonsense too that, in treating all in our communities as equal we can be equitable as it assumes that everyone is the same – that there is a level playing field upon which each person competes (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002) and this field should never be upset.

Of course this policy view matches the rhetorical base of 'modern' racism (also known as subtle, symbolic, aversive, under the skin, latent, everyday, or new racism (see Guilfoyle, 2006 for a review). Modern racism is this very same neo-liberal ideal egalitarian (discourses) of equality (i.e. Balibar, 1991; Barker, 1982; Billig, 1988; Essed, 1991; Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986; Obeng, 1997; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Reeves, 1983; van Dijk, 1992; Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Wiegal, & Howes, 1985). The claim departs from a blatant, overt us and them rhetoric and expression of racism. An old form is a personal denigration of them, to make them separate from us as much as possible. The modern form is far less crass, it is subtle relies on and perpetuates a 'we are not racist, but'. The commonsense assertion is we have no problem about refugees personally, of any race, but then the but a conditional inclusion; they can be like us if indeed they start acting just like us and don't disrupt our values etc and next to that; we can't help them uniquely, as that would be unfair to the rest of society. Indeed we should not make them stand out by providing them with something special, and rather encourage them to get on and be responsible for themselves just like everyone else. As Bobo (1988) suggests by protecting values such as egalitarianism new racism protects the privileges of the dominant culture. All said then, policy makers who borrow from modernism can be accused of being modern racists!

Postmodernism for the new policy agenda

In contrast to modernist policy, a postmodernist would argue that while the refugee needs to be responsible for his or her actions and responses, there is a context surrounding these that provides salience to those actions and responses (Gergen, 1999); we need to consider their social, historical, political, cultural, context. As discourse analysts we work

towards a collective deconstruction/reconstruction of the situation of the refugee, as someone needing special support, and thus to develop policy through a different underlying premise. Thus for sometime now essentially many discourse analysts have worked to try and undermine the prevailing dominant modernist discourses and replace these with their something, - 'postmodern'. Can that work, has that worked?

In theory, (critical or socially constructive) discourse analysis, as a genuine postmodern qualitative social research methodology, should work. Creating a new discourse of social inclusion of refugees into a (Australian) society is a research agenda which connects with all the strength claims of qualitative research. Qualitative research strengths are historically and variously reported. They are premised on researcher assuming a critical often subjective/interpretative, social constructivist rather than objective ontological position. They contend with the very possibility of multiple realities bearing on any issue and the local context in which realities are being built and flexibility in method to access these contingent realities in populations defined by culture, marginality, and vulnerability. Our aim is to explore local conditions, and allow the possibilities of new realities to surface. For example, using Participatory Action Research (Guilfoyle, Guilfoyle & Reynolds, 2009, in press; Guilfoyle et al., 2008) we can aim to get close to the local realities of social exclusion and open up a conversation, a relationship with the local participants and capture the full voice of participants through a subjective, immediate, hot, rather than objective, distanced, cold or removed stance. Qualitative research prioritizes the 'evaluative rigour' (see for example Kitto, Chester & Grbich, 2008) of acknowledging own research values, what we are trying to achieve in our research and what shapes this

including explicit aims to create change and in this reflexively examine ourselves and what we are constructing in our research; our own position and ability to influence through research. Each of these strengths applies to research into refugees' social inclusion. But we need to reflect then on what then prevents discourse analysis from reaching its strong agenda potential.

I suggest it is a contradiction that often, this same epistemic power that discursive research holds, to fully explore multiple realities, is often to be resisted by ruling policy makers. The very premise of a socially constructed nature of the evidence means to take that 'multiple realities' position and it requires policy makers who can tolerate research which might uncover local realities which compete with and undermine their own position. For policy makers, who are only human, they risk losing control and quantitative research, whether it be experimental, correlational, descriptive research provides commissioning agents with hypotheses that moot possible outcomes of the research through structured questions, and the response formats which nicely, predictably, bind the results, findings, discussions, impetrations and conclusions. They might consider, a tweaking of their own position maybe, but are less enthused by evidence which confronts them with an undesired possibility of alternative reality. Discourse analysts cannot offer the same reassuring restrictions. When we explore a discourse we do just that, we unpack it for all it is worth, and we are not quite sure what we might find until we really look. We cannot guarantee that we won't uncover awkward or 'inconvenient' truths about policy, or how awkward and inconvenient these might be. Indeed in most part the interest of discourse analysts when they enter into a text is that they are already sensing something that needs some pulling back and something that needs to be revealed which is at this point

obscured. If the research proceeds and reveals a community full of clear and rich dissatisfaction with existing policy and arguments for change; the power shifts, the policy maker, less refugee community, becomes a little vulnerable.

Modernist policy makers or those stuck in a form of modernism; and who are modern racists, will be those most suspect of our discursive research aims. To commission discourse analysis, they assume, means that a bunch of researchers will aim directly at deconstructing their own policy. Why should they fund us if the risk, the powerful risk, is we might just need to undermine the very construction of their policy, discourses and identify the need for deep seated, paradigmatic, changes, creating equity for bettering the life of refugee communities? Paradoxically, what I want to suggest is we shouldn't be too critical though, and focused on analyses of discourses of policy makers that despite the clear links above, end up framing them as racist. This doesn't help us win a place in their hearts and minds from which we can undermine their policy. We must aim for them to reflect on and reconsider the power of modernist rhetoric, but we cannot achieve that by falling into the modernist rhetorical trap of labeling others as this or that, rather we need to shift the premise of the debate entirely, and this where we begin to find something truly postmodern.

Socially de-constructing of policy

The hearts and minds of the community must be won, yes, but let's not forget the hearts and minds of those in power. Clearly we need to shift the mainstream commonsense of policy makers. In considering this we must note that any text, though authored/spoken/drawn by an individual or agency is shared and so is responsibility for it. It is the end product of work which has been carefully put together from many sources and exists as a collaborative explanation of our social world that

functions not just for the individual author but for the society, community, or agency they represent, and that 'organization'. From a postmodernist point of view, we don't have to blame the individual author/s of any discourse whether they are policy maker, media writer, or everyday speaker, for example. Indeed targeting authors for policy analysis falls into the very trap of itself being modernist, worse at times we develop them as an out-group, and an old fashioned prejudice against 'them'! If we can suspend the idea of authored, intended negative effects of a discourse, we can focus on the discourse per se. The research focus is on how – and here is the key - intentionally or not - a discourse does lead to marginalization or the continued impoverishment of refugee communities as they aim for inclusion within a society. If we rely on postmodernism to support our research, we have to act postmodern, if we work off the premise of social construction than we must assume policy makers are subject to social construction, and work to undo the discourses that are constructing them too – but not target them as the problem. Thus ironically despite the claims of many critical analysts drawing form realists positions, we must actually let go of the author, intentions of text, in order to get ourselves into a position to undermine negative discourses.

Thus there is much to lose in focusing our research at labeling others in our communities, including policy makers, as racist, bigoted, exclusionary, etc. For one, it reduces the very topic of racism or bigotry to the mental process of (some) individuals. This simply scapegoats this or that person or group as the problem. But does it really do anything to work through the problem or solutions? It focuses solutions in on de-contextualized mental states, and as we have argue above the real power of discourse analysis- the analysis of the processes

of social interaction not people per se, more likely language as a form of social interaction, the discourse that happens between research, communities and policy makers, rather than what is happening inside a policy makers' head. Anyways, well over 100 odd years of social research shows it is hard to change someone who is prejudiced, but if we can replace their discourse of prejudice, that might just work. No doubts there are bigots in our community, and this includes in and out of our elected governments, but it is a focus on the whether a particular discourse such as a policy, is racist or prejudiced, not the person/s per se that will be useful. Even if we believe we as researchers we must personally target the perpetuators of racist discourses in the hope of helping refugee communities; the latter closes down the dialogical conversation and puts peoples back up, and works to exclude them from our research efforts, rather than open up a conversation in which we can negotiate a new space and new discourses. We need social research to examine the discourses of society that perpetuate racism, not target people as racist (Guilfoyle, 2000).

I am not being romantic here; all social researchers know the real contingencies to be considered in interacting with policy makers, whose primary motive is gaining and maintaining political power, However in a general sense, together, researchers and policy makers need to shift to a new ontological, epistemological and methodological base. We must urge those with power over development of new policy to see their discourse as a social construction, which can be undone if negative, but for which we won't attribute personal blame. It is because they are stuck in such a deep seated modernist position – they are apt to see their world from the modernist lens and take any attack personally, as authors or distributors of, or being irresponsible; simply not acting

effectively enough against, potentially harmful, discourses affecting refugees. The problem shifts to one of making policy makers believe that we are not aiming at them; but at their discourse. Thus ensure we don't fall into a modernist discourse while critiquing others for their modernisms; this shift is after all the postmodernism agenda. We need to argue with them, convince them about the aspects of their political discourses, polices, which are not effectual in aiding the plight of refugees, even that they inadvertently do harm even when they are designed to do well. Thus deconstruct and show just how they marginalize and oppress, if we believe they are – not deconstruct them. We can convince them that their current discourse is but one constructed, multiple, reality and to build a different discourse and different realities; only if we can convince them to share our ontological position. Critiques from afar only serve to force others to retreat into their trenches. It is not letting go of personal accountability but asking people to fully account for their position, and thus each other, in one place. For this we need to go very local.

In going local, we need to collect the storied experiences of refugees and, of course, we need to present these through publishing our reports and distributing them into journals to peers, students, and policy makers, media if we can, create a rallying critical mass. But not talk fests. We need to speak out about overt, blatant discourses when we find them. But in the latter to mix a few metaphors, the odd angry shot at authors of discourses, is much like snipping flowers off a rose bush, we need to attack the root structure; we need to undermine the discourses which feed the stems, branches, systems. Thus when we find the discourses are more subtle and modern and underlying, we need to adjust our approach to something more subtle and develop an approach that is postmodern, dialogical. To do this we need to reach into and create

new political spheres, share the very same political space as those with power over social discourses, not impose our discourses onto others as some new moral order, and thus assault their own beliefs, rather actualize new discourses from within by creating a truly shared ontologically appropriate dialogical space, not a contested space, a contest-able space. And to emerge from this with a new discourse which is not something that is easily identifiable as ours or theirs. From here we share a power situation to effect policy change, and undo any deep seated discourses which are blocking social inclusion.

I don't have the space to illustrate the methodological processes which can help achieve this aim here; it is for another time and place (see Guilfoyle, 2009, in press). Whatever we do, given the plight of refugee communities, we must connect our work with a call for action towards social inclusion, and this means setting up a space between policy maker's refugees and researchers in which each can interpret the discourse of each other, and through this process begin to fully understand the context which supports their discourse. There are already many good examples of this participatory inclusive approach in our midst too, which can be showcased. The point here has been to suggest rather the basic premise, that a dialogue, systematic process of consultation in which we facilitate dialogue, a local ground up meeting of groups, rather than broader annoyance, is needed before, and indeed in which, we can fulfill our discursive research aims of undoing any negatively ubiquitous, modern, and racist, policy which has become entrenched as common sense.

Conclusion

Within this paper I have aimed to overview of the philosophical position of postmodernism, the relationship between language use, and discourse and suggest we need to find new ways

in which it can be constructed and utilized during social interaction between policy makers and researchers. If our concern is refugee inclusion, we cannot avoid the nuances of discourse and how it effects, and those effected by, the emergence of refugees and asylum seekers as a major issue in Western or developed nations. Coming to terms with the power of discourse to dismantle negative discourses, and build anew, means disseminating this power as a viable and non threatening resource to the political audience is critical to future research and policy development vis-a-vis refugees in Western nation.

I have argued that words do things, and sometimes those words, and the very things they do, need to be undone, and replaced. In the case of creating social inclusion, in many ways most discursive the work converges on a critique of modernist policy. But the only way to replace modernism is to become fully postmodern researchers. We must design research that does not confront funders or policy makers, but which can work through them, and in so doing all the while open up inclusionary discourses. This is often an uneasy task. To achieve anything, I believe we need to try. Spears (1997), in reference to the postmodern writer Lyotard, has suggested if you are going to get out the Lyotard you must be prepared to wear it. Perhaps if we share that awkward humanity, we might realize more starkly just how we are here to help each other, and help the 'other'.

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