frustration, and loss (Mauthner, 2002; Nicolson, 1998, 2001; Oakley, 1980). This research reveals that although mothering can be a joyous and rewarding experience, it also involves hard and relentless work as well as significant changes to women's lives and identities. For example, the experience of depression following childbirth has been described as a form of bereavement in response to a series of losses: loss of self, occupational status, autonomy, physical integrity, time, sleep, sexuality, and male company (Nicolson, 1998, 2001; Oakley, 1980). However, the hegemony of the motherhood ideal serves to silence women's grief, struggles, and sadness and ultimately compounds their distress and isolation (Mauthner, 2002; Nicolson, 1998, 2001). Further, the discrepancy between women's expectations and experiences of motherhood has been found to be a source of women's depression (Mauthner, 2002). Striving to be a "perfect" mother inevitably results in exhaustion, disappointment, and guilt and shame, and these effects are in turn readily constructed as personal inadequacy (Mauthner, 2002). At the same time, *not* striving to be a "perfect" mother also invokes moral judgments (Lafrance, 2009). Consequently, motherhood has been described as a precarious identity position for women, which is both taken for granted and rigidly surveilled (Ussher, 2006), and is physically taxing in its production (Stoppard, 2000). Rather than relying on medication to help depressed mothers, feminist scholars have advocated for radical shifts toward valuing and supporting the role and work of caregivers, including gender equity in childcare and extended structural supports (Lafrance, 2009; Mauthner, 2002).

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Post-structuralism

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Introduction

Post-structuralism is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous collection of theories which emerged in twentieth century France. It is among the lesser utilized strands of critical theory in the field of critical psychology. The development of post-structural work in the discipline has largely been confined to European scholarship (see, for instance, Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1984; Parker & Shotter, 1990), although there have been important contributions from South Africa (see, for instance, Hook, 2007) and limited attempts to incorporate it into the North American critical psychology literature as well (Prilleltensky, 2008). Post-structural inquiry is largely concerned with the interrogation of both discourse and its supporting social institutions; it seeks to "unmask" the manifestations of power associated with knowledge-generating practices (Angelique, 2008).

Definition

At its broadest level, post-structuralism can be defined as an approach that seeks to push the focus of inquiry beyond knowable structures in the study of social behavior. It brings to the fore the importance of knowledge systems and their power in limiting the breadth of human thought and action. Rather than drawing causal links between structures (be they economic, social, linguistic, or otherwise) and human behavior, post-structuralism seeks to interrogate the forms of knowledge, the logics, and the assumptions that underlie our actions and – for the purposes of critical psychology – our interventions on the social.

Keywords

Subject/subjectivity; discourse; deconstruction; genealogy; power/knowledge

History

Post-structural scholarship in critical psychology emerged in England in the 1980s. Willig (2008) contends that the first post-structural text to emerge within critical psychology was Henriques et al.'s (1984) work *Changing the Subject*. These authors used the ideas of Foucault and Derrida to critique psychology. This critique claimed that psychology fortifies the dualism between the individual and society and serves as a new technical knowledge that reinforces processes of social regulation. Here we see that in highlighting the effects that the knowledge created by psychology has, the authors effectively undermined the emancipatory narrative of the discipline.

Potter and Wetherell's (1987) development of discourse analysis marked a prominent and important "turn to language" that coincided with the emergence of post-structuralist critiques of psychology. It should be noted that this framework has sharp disjunctures with post-structuralist theory and draws quite heavily on John Searle's speech act theory. This qualitative method was developed as a critique of cognitivism and directly challenged the idea that it was possible to gain access to subjective experience through language. Central to this critique is the notion that language helps to construct our understanding of reality and thus cannot objectively represent the world around us. The work of Potter and Wetherell was important insofar as it represented a well-articulated critique of the role of language in psychology and marked the rise in popularity of "the turn to text" within critical psychology. This laid the foundations for further post-structuralist works within the discipline.

English critical psychologist Ian Parker has made among the most significant contributions to the inclusion of post-structuralist modes of inquiry in critical psychology to date. Parker has published several important works that have made productive use of Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan to interrogate the epistemology of mainstream psychology. Parker has developed specific techniques of both discourse analysis and deconstruction that draw on the injunctions of both Foucault and Derrida. These techniques have been influential insofar as they have introduced post-structural ideas to critical psychology and have attempted to link knowledge production with power.

More recently, an important literature has emerged outside of critical psychology that utilizes the tools of post-structuralism in its attempt to interrogate the epistemology and social practices of the psy- disciplines. Drawing extensively on the work of Michel Foucault, Nikolas Rose (1990, 1998) has published two important works that chronicle the rise of the psy- disciplines and show how they have reshaped the terrain on which we understand human experience. A literature adjacent to critical psychology – largely stemming from critical sociology and anthropology – has likewise made use of Foucault to interrogate psychological constructs such as memory (Hacking, 1998) and post-traumatic stress disorder (Fassin & Rechtman, 2009; Leys, 2000; Young, 1997). Another recent author who has made a valuable contribution to the development of post-structuralist methodologies in critical psychology is Derek Hook (2007).

Hook's work marks a bridge between the more sociological work of Rose and the more accessible work of Parker. Hook is concerned with drawing more concretely from Foucault's methodological injunctions and employing these techniques towards a critique of psychology. We will discuss Hook's methodology in more detail below.

Traditional Debates

Post-structuralist critiques of mainstream psychology, whether internal to the discipline (Hook, 2007; Parker & Shotter, 1990) or external (Hacking, 1998; Rose, 1998), have largely been ignored by mainstream psychology. Parker, arguably the most well known and influential of critical psychologist to utilize post-structuralist modes of enquiry, has only fielded critical responses from other critical psychologists concerned with discourse analysis. There has not been any prominent rebuttal by mainstream psychology to post-structural critique. Debate surrounding post-structuralist modes of enquiry is limited to a niche group of academics and tends to center on methodology. We will present these debates in some detail in the following sections.

Background Debates

Post-structuralism emerged in critical psychology as a tool to respond to three interrelated points of tension: (a) the use of language and discourse in psychology; (b) the ways in which this language, which is underpinned by the knowledge-generating practices of psychology, creates a terrain for social intervention, and; (c) the production of particular forms of subjectivity which are contingent upon (a) and (b). In this section we will briefly show the way in which post-structuralist critique differs from other modes of critical psychology and highlight the contribution that it has made to the discipline.

Post-structuralist critique diverges sharply from the modes of inquiry traditionally favored by critical psychology, particularly the scholarship that emanates from North America. This scholarship, drawing on structuralist social theory, tends to view the social as being made up of knowable and inequitable systems of production and consumption and positions psychology either as a facilitator of these systems or as an emancipatory force (see, for instance, Fox, Prilleltensky, & Austin, 2009). While these modes of inquiry have been quite important to critical psychology, they do not give us tools to reflexively understand how psychological knowledge itself shapes, in a very fundamental way, how we understand the world around us. Stated plainly, traditional critical psychology has a simplistic understanding of power that does not deviate from the commonplace oppressor/ oppressed dualism. Post-structuralism, on the other hand, seeks to show how the knowledge created by psychology is powerful insofar as it shapes the logic on which our supposedly "emancipatory" interventions are based.

Within the field of critical psychology, we can see two main departures from the traditional structuralist critical psychology described above. Firstly, there is a literature that stems largely from the work of Foucault, which seeks to link psychological knowledge to power. Secondly, there is a literature that builds off of the work of Derrida and is concerned with interrogating the role of language in psychology. It should be noted that there is substantial overlap between these two poles (as is evident in the work of Parker).

Post-structuralist inquiry that draws on Foucault's knowledge/power thesis seeks to show how psychology has been important in creating new ways of understanding human experience and behavior. Psychology, in this reading, opens up and makes intelligible new surfaces of intervention commensurate with new ways of understanding human behavior and experience. The "discovery" of disorders, for example, facilitates the creation of new expertise, new areas of inquiry, and new terrains of intervention that make logical things which would have previously been seen as absurd. Inherent in this approach is the assumption that to study a given area – be it trauma, psychotherapy, or otherwise – one must have knowledge of not only the "truths" surrounding the topic but also the systems of knowledge that made these truths rational.

Central to the project of Foucauldian analytics is an interrogation of the epistemological foundations of psychological knowledge. Foucault and the scholars that have followed him have developed a set of tools that serve to undermine discourses such as "madness" (Foucault, 1988), "the individual" (Rose, 1998), "trauma" (Leys, 2000), and pedophilia (Hook, 2007). Central to these projects of epistemological destabilization are an account of the contingency of these categories, the material conditions that made them possible, and the history exterior to text that has rendered the specific modes of knowing intelligible at a given moment in time (Hook).

Post-structuralist inquiry deriving from Derrida's critical reading techniques departs from structuralist critical psychology in its focus on language and discourse. This framework is largely concerned with epistemology, pointing out that psychological knowledge is communicated through language that is itself loaded with values and contradictions (Parker & Shotter, 1990). Language makes certain things both knowable and possible while simultaneously silencing other modes of knowing. The aim of this project is to point out binary oppositions and uncover the knowledge that might be silenced or hidden as a result of them. A well-executed example of this analysis is the work of Parker, Georgaca, Harper, McLaughlin, and Stowell-Smith (1995) who employ a technique called "practical deconstruction." This framework calls into question the validity of psychopathology and the various forms of social oppression that result. This work is explicitly social constructionist and maintains that language constructs psychopathology. The authors show how the discourse and knowledge practices of the psy- disciplines produce truth claims that create notions of "normality" and "abnormality" – often pathologizing along gendered and racialized lines – which are at odds with the ethos of tolerance in liberal democratic society. The authors contend that the professional discourses of these "sciences" conceal this social oppression and that the discourses of psychopathology are contingent upon their own linguistic description for validity; one cannot speak intelligibly about the experience of anxiety or depression unless they are culturally accessible through discourse. The authors contend that since oppression and domination are enacted through language, we might productively use language to disrupt the truth claims of the psy- disciplines.

While post-structuralist critique has proven an effective tool for de-masking the power inherent in truth-creating disciplines such as psychology, it has been called into question for its failure to create a new, more progressive framework by which we can analyze and intervene upon society. If one accepts that the supposedly progressive truths that we base emancipatory interventions upon are merely the result of historical coincidence and non-intentional discursive constellations, then the famous question of "what is to be done" becomes very difficult to answer. Foucault himself even suggested that the main reason people criticized his work was because he wasn't interested in "constructing a new schema, or in validating one that already exists" (Foucault, Burchell, & Gordon, 1991).

Perhaps the most fruitful way of dealing with this critique is to suggest that post-structuralism makes us reconsider what is meant by resistance. If power is not simply held by some and longed for by others, but rather emanates from the way we imagine and make sense of our world, then resistance can very easily be seen as any attempt to destabilize the truth systems that make possible oppressive interventions. Critique, in this understanding, can serve to shake up the current configuration of power and push disciplines, researchers, and practitioners into radical reflexivity. This can serve to broaden the conditions of possibility within which these systems of truth develop and arm critics with tools necessary to make change happen.

Critical Debates

The prominent debates within critical psychology about post-structuralist methodologies center around the work of Parker. There are at least two critiques of this work that specifically discuss his use of post-structural tools. The first emanates from Potter, Wetherell, Gill, and Edwards (1990)

and concerns discourse analysis. The second comes from Hook (2007) and deals with his development of Foucauldian analytics.

The heated critique of Parker by Potter et al. (1990) relates to the theoretical foundations underpinning discourse analysis. Potter and colleagues draw on speech act theory and are concerned to read text as social action. As such, they levy three charges against Parker's injunctions: (a) Parker treats ideas as objects which tends towards overgeneralization and systematization of discourse, (b) his analytics tend to abstract text from the context of social practice, and (c) he assumes that discourse is homogenous and laden with "common sense" understanding. Put another way, Potter and colleagues allege that Parker's variant of discourse analysis reifies discourse and is dismissive of social practice. Underpinning these charges is a refutation of Parkers reading of Derrida and Foucault.

Hook's (2007) critique is not dissimilar to that of Potter et al. (1990), although it should be noted that he critiques Potter and Wetherell's (1987) variant of discourse analysis as well. Where Hook is concerned with the abstraction of discourse from broader structures of history, materiality, and knowledge practices, he contends that both Parker (1992) and Potter and Wetherell have developed techniques of critical reading that are not well positioned to incorporate the importance of extratextual dimensions of discourse. Hook suggests, specifically in reference to Parker, that if we are to understand the operation of knowledge/power, we should subsume discourse analysis within a larger genealogical project capable of showing the broader structures that make a given discourse comprehensible.

International Relevance

Outside of Western Europe and North America, post-structuralist modes of enquiry with regard to critical psychology have not been well developed. This should be unsurprising given the relatively limited proliferation of post-structuralism within critical psychology even within North America and Western Europe.

An important caveat to this trend is the work of Hook (2007), a South African psychologist who now teaches in the UK. Hook's own background growing up during the end of apartheid has influenced his work, which has sought – to some degree – to explain the proliferation of racism in the absence of the apartheid state and has made valuable contributions to both post-structuralist inquiry and critical psychology particularly in his concern to connect constellations of discourse to subjectivity in regard to racism.

Practical Relevance

Post-structuralism offers analytic tool sets that can be put to productive use as means of linking power, modes of knowing, and resistance. These tools are powerful because they help us to destabilize the status quo and shed light on the power-laden intellectual terrain that disciplines like psychology create. Within critical psychology, examples of how post-structuralism has been concretely taken up include Parker et al.'s (1995) "practical deconstruction" and, as discussed above, Hook's (2007) genealogical injunctions.

Parker et al. (1995) present an analytical framework termed "practical deconstruction" which draws heavily on Derrida and, to a lesser extent, Foucault. It is worth noting that this framework is primarily a technique of "critical reading" and can be classified within the semiotic or linguistic stream of post-structuralist inquiry. Derrida's conception of deconstruction, according to this reading, actively identifies binary oppositions and seeks to recover the exclusions of these binaries while drawing attention to the exclusionary nature of discourse. To this end, its strength is primarily in the interrogation of text. "Attending to politics and power when you do a critical reading, and thinking through the effects of your critique on institutions and forms of knowledge is what we term *practical deconstruction*" (Parker et al., p. 3). The authors develop this framework on the basis of three propositions: (a) a critical account of the psy-disciplines must account for the disciplines use

of language or discourse, (b) discourse must be connected to its broader institutional context, and (c) we need to account for the modes of knowing that are excluded by a given constellation of discourse. While the authors highlight the importance of the political and institutional configurations that render text meaningful – deploying the more political-economic post-structuralism of Foucault – the authors fall short of fully developing a proper tool set for this sort of inquiry.

The injunctions of Hook (2007) are overtly Foucauldian and diverge from the linguistic post-structuralist tools of Derrida. Hook is explicitly concerned with the larger arrangements of knowledge, history, and materiality that render discourse intelligible in a given context. His work attempts to flesh out how we might think of performing discourse analysis while at the same time including tools that incorporate and interrogate extratextual dimensions of discourse such as broader political-economic shifts or changes in the needs of governance. To this end, Hook takes up and develops Foucault's genealogy as a technique for understanding knowledge/power while at the same time displacing the subject as the focal point of analysis.

Hook contends that discourses are like symptoms and are best understood within the dynamic matrices of the histories of systems of thought that make them possible. Genealogy is a specific and concrete technique for unpacking the arrangements of history, knowledges, and material circumstance that render a given discourse intelligible within a specific context. To this end, genealogy subsumes discourse analysis as part of a larger theoretical project that makes sense of discourse through the broader institutional context that renders it intelligible. It is important to note that genealogy is not concerned with veracity of truth claims, but rather is concerned with unmasking the assumptions implicit in the logics that make these claims possible.

Future Directions

The future of post-structuralist analytics in critical psychology may very well lie in the development of concrete tools that make critique productive and actionable while maintaining its rigor and intelligibility. Hook's (2007) work represents an important contribution in this direction insofar as he pushes discourse analysis towards a theoretically rigorous alternative to current practices and at the same time concretely grounds his framework within the work of Foucault. In addition, there are definitely opportunities within the discipline to elaborate the ways in which this type of inquiry may be helpful as a tool of resistance.

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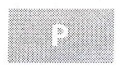
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Online Resources

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

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Introduction

As far back as 490 BC, the Greek historian Herodotus described the psychological impact of exposure to traumatic events in his accounts of soldiers' reactions to the horrors of war. However, not until the nineteenth century would the sequelae associated with what today is called Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) gain scientific attention. Beginning with British doctor John Eric Erichsen (1818–1896), "trauma syndrome" was identified in survivors of train accidents and attributed to organic causes. The German neurologist Hermann Oppenheim (1858–1919) renamed the syndrome "traumatic neurosis" and similarly identified organic changes in the brain as the origin of unexplainable reactions to horrifying and life-threatening events (Van Der Kolk, McFarlane, & Weisaeth, 1996).

Not until the research and clinical work of psychiatrist Pierre Janet (1859–1947) would traumatic stress responses be rigorously described as symptoms of a psychological disorder. Janet viewed post-traumatic reactions as evidence of the failure to psychologically and physiologically integrate memories from a traumatic event with otherwise normal mental and physical functioning. He identified the primary symptoms of psychological trauma as the uncontrollable sense of reexperiencing a traumatic event, combined with defense reactions against such repeated recall (Ogden, Minton, & Pain, 2006). Along with Janet, Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893), Alfred Binet (1857–1911), Morton Price (1854–1929), Josef Breuer (1842–1925), Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), and Sándor Ferenczi (1873–1933) were some of the first to theorize the psychological impact of traumatic events (Leys, 2000).

Almost a hundred years passed before PTSD became an official psychiatric diagnosis. Mimicking the oscillation between absorption in memories of past trauma and their avoidance, recognition of the psychological impact of traumatic events has also fluctuated. Interest in the impact of traumatic events typically gained more attention during wartime when large numbers of veterans became overwhelmed by traumatic stress. During World War I, English physician Charles Samuel Myers (1873–1946) coined the term "shell-shock" to identify the psychological impact of battlefield experiences. However, when Myers discovered soldiers lacking combat produced the same symptoms, he asserted war-related neuroses were primarily emotional disturbances. Myers also observed similarities between war neuroses and hysteria, a diagnosis primarily given at the time to women with suppressed histories of sexual abuse. Both war neurosis and hysteria were typically seen as character flaws rather than as responses to life-threatening or horrifying experiences (Van Der Kolk et al., 1996).

Interest in traumatic stress waned only to reemerge as a topic of interest following the