



An Introduction to Social Psychology

Discursive Analysis

NARRATOR (VO):

One of the aims of discursive psychological research is to look closely at the kind of talk people produce in groups.

DR BIANCA RAABE:

I first started using discourse analysis to look at the ways in which we sort of discursively produce our identities through talk.

I was interested in looking at the ways in which young people talk about themselves, talk about their relationships. And I think what was particularly interesting were in the group discussions where you had, you know, young women and young men. And the ways in which the process of trying to negotiate their identities, it wasn't a straight forward process of this is who I am, it was a process of discussion of negotiation, of drawing on different kinds of ideas or discourses in order to frame their identities.

Specially filmed discussion

GIRL:

... cos I was gonna say, I think people are paying more, less interest in what for example, their neighbours, like this is anyone, what they're doing. Like today I was on the bus and these two boys were at the back of the bus and they were talking about: oh getting a cigarette, oh, here's one, and this man who sat next him, he said, he was reading his paper and he just looked up and said: Are you old enough to do that?

DR BIANCA RAABE:

It was a very active process between them, and sometimes it was a very challenging process because people challenge each other in talk. It isn't passive process. It's about challenging and establishing identities, but those identities are shifting as that process and negotiation takes place.

Specially filmed discussion

YOUNG MAN:

Who is more likely to get mugged round this table? Well it isn't even these two, it's gonna be me or him, you know what I mean?

GIRL:

Well I think it's more us, to be honest. They're more likely to go for a girl, to grab their bag than to go for ... Cos I mean we, I mean you can see straight away where our goods are.

Interpretative Repertoire

DR BIANCA RAABE:

Interpretive repertoire is one of the main ways in which discourse analysts approach their text. So an interpretive repertoire is really the common sense ways in which we make sense of our social world. The terms we use, the metaphors we draw on, and they're already available in our culture, they're part of our society, part of the way in which we talk about particular things.

Specially filmed discussion

GIRL:

I was saying to my dad the other day, you know, I wonder ... they were talking about buying a pint on the radio and how cheap it was, and I said to him: how much was it like 30 years ago for you to buy a pint? And he said I could buy a round in the pub for like 50p. And I was like ...

GIRL:

... it's not possible. And he's like, honestly. That's how ...

DR BIANCA RAABE:

They were drawing on particular repertoires, ways of talking about living in London.

Specially filmed discussion

YOUNG MAN:

I think that you have to be really more careful in London about the choices that you make. And those choices will have a big impact on your life if you don't make the right one. I think there's a lot of pressure to do that. I feel a lot of pressure to do that.

YOUNG MAN:

Well you can fall through the cracks so easily in London. Where as I was saying, you know, smaller towns ...

Subject Positions

DR BIANCA RAABE:

We can also see the ways in which subject positions get taken up within those repertoires. So a subject position is about the availability of ways of categorising, ways of understanding the particular position you can take up within an interpretive repertoire.

Specially filmed discussion

YOUNG MAN:

The last time I saw someone get the crap kicked out of them was about you know, four or five months ago.

GIRL:

I don't think the sense of community is there any more. Like if ... that would have happened many many years ago, they'd be: Oi, stop that! And someone would run over and you know, break it up and find out what's going on. Now, they just, oh, staring. And sometimes you're a bit frightened to look as well.

YOUNG MAN:

I don't know though, like, see I've a problem with something. I think it's very easy to turn round and go oh, you know, the world's falling apart and it wasn't like that in the good old days. It was.

Ideological Dilemmas

DR BIANCA RAABE:

The notion of ideological dilemmas comes out of this idea that interpretive repertoires, although they're part of the common sense ways of talking about things, they can also be contradictory. And that when we speak about things, we draw on particular arguments and descriptions but they don't always remain consistent. We don't stick to a particular way of talking about something irrespective of the context in which we're talking about it. And so as a consequence, what you can find is that we shift within the repertoire that we're using.

Specially filmed discussion

GIRL:

Like at the same time I find London really hard, like, work for me, cos it's really busy at the time and when you're alone and while you find friends and, you can go out, but it's nice cos you got lots of opportunities and choices and, it's great.

DR BIANCA RAABE:

That consistency isn't a problem of the individual. It's the nature of the way in which we use interpretive repertoires in relation to the context of the conversation or the broad base context in which we find ourselves.