

Editorial FQS 8(2): From Michel Foucault's Theory of Discourse to Empirical Discourse Research

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This issue outlines the foundations and the various strands of FOUCAULTian discourse analysis in existence today. The diverse contributions give insight into theoretical and methodological aspects of the FOUCAULTian concept of discourse. They work out the research practices of discourse analysis and concrete developments in this field. Such a discussion seems to be necessary because of the growing presence and influence of discourse analysis within the field of qualitative social research. Further, with this approach, the combination of a structuralist view with a praxeological perspective on society can be reflected upon. [1]

The FOUCAULTian notion of discourse describes a certain kind of practice that is to be conceived as a collective—rather than an individual—reality. This discursive practice is located in social areas or fields and it results in the construction of collective orders of knowledge as supra-individual realities. FOUCAULT himself argued that discourses also have a strong impact at the individual level: individuals "as subjects" are discursively constructed and constituted. Therefore the FOUCAULTian concept of discourse is—on the one hand—analysed at the meso- or macro-level from where it influences socialised individuals and interactions in social situations, while this concept is—on the other hand—also analysed at the micro-level. Here the analysis focuses on the discursive constitution of the subject, i.e. its subjectivation/subjectification and the relationships between discursive and non-discursive practices. Recently, combinations of these two perspectives have been attempted and here the FOUCAULTian concept of *dispositif* possesses a strategic role. All these topics provide a starting point for the articles in this issue about methodological developments in the field of FOUCAULTian discourse analysis. [2]

One might say, then, that FOUCAULTian discourse analysis is not (or is no longer) just a theoretically informed "position" or another "perspective" in the area of qualitative social research. Many researchers in the last few decades have become more and more aware that the socio-historical analyses of FOUCAULT and his methodological considerations about archaeology and genealogy have laid the groundwork for a new methodological area for empirical research. It follows that discourse research has to reflect on the coherence of the research practice and its integration with the theoretical notions of FOUCAULTian discourse theory. Therefore, there are (or have to be developed) specific forms of research design, modes of explanation, methodological standards and quality criteria for the evaluation of FOUCAULTian analysis—as the published articles in *FQS 8(2)* demonstrate. The articles also demonstrate that discussions are still active about questions such as: does FOUCAULTian discourse analysis include or prescribe certain methods, research tools and instruments, their design and use in the practice of discourse analysis? how can other approaches and

paradigms be combined with FOUCAULTian discourse research? This collection of articles demonstrates that there are different strands of FOUCAULTian research and that FOUCAULTian discourse analysis is not integrated in the way that one could speak of a FOUCAULTian paradigm but, rather, in the way that one could speak of an emerging field in qualitative social research. [3]

This issue does not only include articles but also reports from different research groups working with the FOUCAULTian approach—especially from Germany, but also from France and Spain. We want to give an insight into these research activities and provide some information about research institutions. We cannot claim to deliver an exhaustive description of the field, but we can claim that the various groups identified are the source of multiple dialogues (of which this issue is itself one result) and have identified common methodological agendas. Here new perspectives for a FOUCAULTian methodology emerge, as concepts such as "interdiscourse", "dispositif", "materialities" (as techniques, bodies, visual materials, media), events, other forms of practices and performativity produce questions about the consequences of adequate methodological adaptation. [4]

We think that the issue will give an insight into the state of the art in FOUCAULTian discourse research as an emerging field of qualitative social research and will have an impact on its ongoing internationalisation. An extended introduction to the international field of discourse analysis as well a survey of the articles published in this journal is presented in the article [The Field of Foucaultian Discourse Analysis: Structures, Developments and Perspectives](#). [5]

Citation

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