tracing of individual elements of an argument to different periods of time seems to be more common in DA than CA, but one could imagine adapting CA methods to accommodate this concern.

### Power

The last issue to consider in the difference between DA and CA is the way that each addresses issues of power and hierarchy. The way in which power relations structure, constrain, and produce systems of meaning is a fundamental concern of DA. Laffey and Weldes' concept of interpellation specificallyaddresses this through the investigation of subject positions, i.e. identities and power hierarchies. Similarly, in outlining DA methodology, Crawford argues that researchers must identify specific beliefs of dominant actors for a particular context. All other contributors to the DA discussion similarly note the importance of power considerations in DA. This concern should be acknowledged as a core contribution of DA, but we may still question whether power is exclusively the concern of DA, or whether power considerations could be integrated into CA and other types of qualitative or quantitative methodologies.

### Conclusion

It is clear, by virtue of their detailed responses to our unstructured initial query, that many of our contributors have thought quite a bit about the questions of the fundamental natures of CA and DA and which relationships might exist between them. We are happy to be able to offer their collected thoughts on the subject in the hopes that they will enlighten, provoke, and produce further discussion

### Notes

[1] We are grateful to Karin Fierke, Will Lowe, and Jutta Weldes for comments on an earlier draft. Errors of fact or interpretation remain our own.

[2] When faced with the prospect of rendering the kinds of statements about the world that DA produces in statistical terms, one might reasonably wonder what the point of such an exercise would be. There are, we think, two answers. The first, simply, is to permit generalization from a representative sample to a larger population. The second, elaborated below, is to take advantage of a substantial statistical literature on threats to inference, many of which might very well apply across methods.

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## Discourse Analysis and Content Analysis: Two Solitudes?

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In this essay, we outline the key features of discourse analysis, contrast it with content analysis, and then consider the extent to which these two methods can be seen as either complementary to, or in conflict with, each other. Our underlying premise is pluralist in that while we recognize that these two methods are based in very different philosophical camps and play very different roles in social science research, we also believe that they can be seen as complementary and even mutually supportive in the exploration of social reality. Furthermore, given the recent "linguistic turn" in social science and the related increasing interest in the study of texts of various kinds, the contrast between these two methods provides a particularly useful context in which to discuss assumptions about the nature of language and the role of linguistic methods in social research.

### Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a methodology for analyzing social phenomena that is qualitative, interpretive, and constructionist. It explores how the socially produced ideas and objects that populate the world were created and are held in place. It not only embodies a set of techniques for conducting structured, qualitative investigations of texts, but also a set of assumptions concerning the constructive effects of language (Burman & Parker, 1993). Discourse analysis differs from other qualitative methodologies that try to understand the meaning of social reality for actors (e.g. Geertz, 1977) in that it endeavors to uncover the way in which that reality was produced. So, while it shares a concern with the meaningfulness of social life, discourse analysis provides a more profound interrogation of the precarious status of meaning. Where other qualitative methodologies work to understand or interpret social reality as it exists, discourse analysis tries to uncover the way that reality is produced (Hardy, 2001; Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

Discourse analysis also presupposes that it is impossible to strip discourse from its broader context (Fairclough, 1995). Discourses have no inherent meaning in themselves and, to understand their constructive effects, researchers must

locate them historically and socially. The meanings of any discourse are "created, supported, and contested through the production, dissemination, and consumption of texts; and emanate from interactions between the social groups and the complex societal structures in which the discourse is embedded" (Hardy, 2001: 28).

Discourse analysis is thus more than a method: it is a methodology (Wood & Kroger, 2001) based on two primary assumptions. First, discourse analysis is founded on a strong social constructivist epistemology. Social reality is not something that we uncover, but something that we actively create through meaningful interaction. The study of the social thus becomes the study of how the objects and concepts that populate social reality come into being (Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, forthcoming).

Second, discourse analysis grows out of the belief that meaning, and hence social reality, arise out of interrelated bodies of texts – called discourses – that bring new ideas, objects and practices into the world. For example, the discourse of strategy has introduced a series of new management practices over the last fifty years (Knights and Morgan, 1991); the postwar discourse of human rights has brought about the contemporary idea of a refugee with rights to asylum (Phillips and Hardy, 1997); and the discourse of AIDS has empowered groups of patient-activists (Maguire et al., 2001). Discourses are thus "concrete" in that they produce a material reality in the practices that they invoke. Accordingly, a discourse is defined as a system of texts that brings objects into being (Parker, 1992). From this perspective, social science becomes the study of the development of discourses that support the myriad of ideas that make social reality meaningful. And, since discourses are embodied in texts (Chalaby, 1996), discourse analysis involves the systematic study of texts to find evidence of their meaning and how this meaning translates into a social reality (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

### Highlighting Similarity; Recognizing Difference

Content analysis, as it is traditionally employed, differs from discourse analysis quite profoundly even though it is similarly concerned with the analysis of texts. Most importantly, it adopts a positivistic approach – the fundamental activity is hypothesis testing using statistical analysis (Schwandt, 2001). At a practical level, it involves the development of analytical categories that are used to construct a coding frame that is then applied to textual data. Content analysis as a mode of textual analysis is characterized by a concern with being objective, systematic, and quantitative (Kassarjian, 2001: 9): objective in the sense that the analytic categories are defined so precisely that different coders may apply them and obtain the same results; systematic in the sense that clear rules are used to include or exclude content or analytic categories; and quantified in the sense that the results of content analysis are amenable to statistical analysis. Underlying this concern is the belief that the meaning of the text is constant and can be known precisely and consistently by different researchers as long as they utilize rigorous and correct analytical procedures (Silverman, 2001). Content analysis is the study of the text

itself not of its relation to its context, the intentions of the producer of the text, or the reaction of the intended audience.

While discourse analysis and content analysis are both interested in exploring social reality, the two methods differ fundamentally in their assumptions about the nature of that reality and of the role of language in particular. Where discourse analysis highlights the precarious nature of meaning and focuses on exploring its shifting and contested nature, content analysis assumes a consistency of meaning that allows for occurrences of words (or other, larger units of text) to be assumed equivalent and counted. Where discourse analysis focuses on the relation between text and context, content analysis focuses on the text abstracted from its contexts. On the surface, the difference between the two methodscould not be more stark (see Table 1). While discourse analysis is concerned with the development of meaning and in how it changes over time, content analysis assumes a consistency of meaning that allows counting and coding. Where discourse analysts see change and flux, content analysts look for consistency and stability.

It is, however, worth pointing out that there are forms of content analysis that look much more like discourse analysis (Gephart, 1993). More qualitative forms of content analysis that do not assume highly stable meanings of words but, rather, include a sensitivity to the usage of words and the context in which they are used are compatible with discourse analysis and can, in fact, be used within a broad discourse analytic methodology in the analysis of social reality. In Table 2 we provide an indication of how content analysis might be used in a way that is compatible with discourse analysis. As one moves from simple counting to more complex interpretation, the two forms of analysis become increasingly compatible, although at the expense of positivist objectives. For content analysis to form part of a discourse analytic methodology, it is necessary to weaken the assumption that meaning is stable enough to be counted in an objective sense. From a discourse analytic perspective, all textual analysis is an exercise in interpretation and while clear exposition of the methods used to arrive at a particular interpretation is a hallmark of good research, it cannot remove the necessity for interpretation. With this proviso, content analysis can, through its focus on being systematic and quantitative, play a potentially useful role in expanding our understanding of the role of discourse in constructing the social.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, while discourse analysis and content analysis come from very different philosophical bases, they can be complementary. Traditionally, the differences mean that they provide alternative perspectives on the role of language in social studies. In this regard, they are complementary in terms of what they reveal despite conflicting ontology and epistemology, which is most easily seen in the focus in content analysis on reliability and validity, contrasting sharply with the focus on the interpretive accuracy and reflexive examination that characterizes discourse analysis. More interpretive versions of content analysis also complement discourse analy-

*Table 1: Differences between Discourse Analysis and Content Analysis*

| | Discourse Analysis | Content Analysis |
|---|---|---|
| **Ontology** | Constructionist - assumes that reality is socially constructed | Realist - assumes that an independent reality exists |
| **Epistemology** | Meaning is fluid and constructs reality in ways that can be posited through the use of interpretive methods | Meaning is fixed and reflects reality in ways that can be ascertained through the use of scientific methods |
| **Data Source** | Textual meaning, usually in relation to other texts, as well as practices of production, dissemination, and consumption | Textual content in comparison to other texts, example over time |
| **Method** | Qualitative (although can involve counting) | Quantitative |
| **Categories** | Exploration of how participants actively construct categories | Analytical categories taken for granted and data allocated to them |
| **Inductive/Deductive** | Inductive | Deductive |
| **Subjectivity/Objectivity** | Subjective | Objective |
| **Role of context** | Can only understand texts in discursive context. | Does not necessarily link text to context |
| **Reliability** | Formal measures of reliability are not a factor although coding is still justified according to academic norms; differences in interpretation are not a problem and may, in fact, be a source of data | Formal measures of intercoder reliability are crucial for measurement purposes; differences in interpretation are problematic and risk nullifying any results |
| **Validity** | Validity in the form of "performativity" i.e., demonstrating a plausible case that patterns in the meaning of texts are constitutive of reality in some way. | Validity is in the form of accuracy and precision i.e., demonstrating that patterns in the content of texts are accurately measured and reflect reality |
| **Reflexivity** | Necessarily high - author is part of the process whereby meaning is constructed. | Not necessarily high - author simply reports on objective findings. |

*Table 2: Using Content Analysis within a Discourse Analytic Approach*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Dealing with Meaning** | There is no inherent meaning in the text; meanings are constructed in a particular context; and the author, consumer, and researcher all play a role. There is no way to separate meaning from context and any attempt to count must deal with the precarious nature of meaning. |
| **Dealing with Categories** | Categories emerge from the data. However, existing empirical research and theoretical work provide ideas for what to look for and the research question provides an initial simple frame. |
| **Dealing with Technique** | The categories that emerge from the data allow for coding schemes involving counting occurrences of meanings in the text. Analysis is an interactive processs of working back and forth between the texts and the categories. |
| **Dealing with Context** | The analysis must locate the meaning of the text in relation to a social context and to other texts and discourses. |
| **Dealing with Reliability** | The results are reliable to the degree that they are understandable and plausible to others i.e. does the researcher explain how s/he came up with the analysis in a way that the reader can make sense of? |
| **Dealing with Validity** | The results are valid to the degree that they show how patterns in the meaning of texts are constitutive of reality. |
| **Dealing with Reflexivity** | To what extent does the analysis take into account the role that the author plays in making meaning? Does the analysis show different ways in which this meaning might be consumed? Is the analysis sensitive to the way the patterns are identified and explained. |

sis in that they may be usefully com-bined in a single study: the more structured and formal forms of discourse analysis are compatible with the more interpretive forms of content analysis. Research is, from this perspective, an exercise in creative interpretation that seeks to show how reality is constructed through texts that embody discourses; in this regard, content analysis provides an important way to demonstrate these performative links that lie at the heart of discourse analysis.

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## *Understanding Discourse: A Method of Ethical Argument Analysis**

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In 1862 Bismark said, "The great questions of the age are not settled by speeches and majority votes . . . but by iron and blood. (Quoted in Shulze, 1998: 140)" While beautifully evocative, Bismark's reasoning raises more questions than his formulation answers. What are the great questions of an age? How do those preoccupations arise? If political argument is meaningless, or nearly so, why do actors engage in it? And if some issue is settled by force, what led individuals and nations to sacrifice their blood and treasure, their sons and daughters? Realists generally say that one of two factors typically explains the preoccupations of an age and the resort to force; humans are motivated by either material interests or the drive for the power necessary to secure their interests. We need look no deeper.

Yet there are obviously cases where actors disagree about their "interests," don't know their interests, or act contrary to a wish to enhance their power. For example, realists would have predicted that Great Britain keep its preeminent position as the world's largest slave trader in the 18th and 19th Century; yet the British ended their own participation in the trade in 1807 and spent millions in treasure and thousands of lives in blood over the next decades to suppress the trans-Atlantic slave trade. How did the slave trade and slavery, once taken for granted as good, just, virtuous and right for *both* master and slave, become stigmatized and eventually abhorred as illegitimate and human institutions? Such questions are about the meanings individuals and groups attach to practices and how those meanings change. Discourse analysis can help uncover the meanings that make the "great questions of an age" and underpin the dominant relations of power. Discourse and argument analysis can also help us understand how those meanings, and the social practices associated with them, change.

### Aims and Varieties of Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis assumes that discourse — the content and construction of meaning and the organization of knowledge in a particular realm — is central to social and political life. Discourses set the terms of intelligibility of thought, speech, and action. To understand discourses then is to understand the underlying logic of the social and political organization of a particular arena and to recognize that this arrangement and the structures of power and meaning underpinning it are not natural, but socially constructed. For example, contemporary western science is a discourse which assumes certain facts about the physical world and how we should come to both know it and manipulate it. That under-