

Catherine Campbell**Foucault, psychology and the analytics of power by Hook, Derek. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007 [book review]****Article (Submitted version)
(Pre-refereed)****Original citation:**

Campbell, Catherine (2008) Foucault, psychology and the analytics of power by Hook, Derek. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007 [book review]. [Journal of community & applied social psychology](#), 18 (6). pp. 645-646.

DOI: [10.1002/casp.994](https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.994)

© 2008 [John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.](#)

This version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/24964/>

Available in LSE Research Online: October 2009

LSE has developed LSE Research Online so that users may access research output of the School. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LSE Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain. You may freely distribute the URL (<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk>) of the LSE Research Online website.

This document is the author's submitted version of the journal article, before the peer review process. There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

Foucault, Psychology and the Analytics of Power

Hook, Derek. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, pp. 301.
ISBN 978-0-230-00819-9

Power and resistance are core concerns for social and community psychology, as is the need for greater critical reflexivity by psychological practitioners and researchers. Foucault is widely regarded as one of the 20th century's leading social theorists in both these areas. Despite this, 20 years after his death his work is surprisingly neglected by many critical psychologists – probably because his writings are so dense, contradictory and hard to follow. Within this context, Hook's brilliant, wide-ranging and provocative text provides a welcome and timely 'users' guide' to Foucauldian theory and methods.

At the same time as grappling with the complexity of Foucault's ideas and methods, Hook's path-breaking monograph sets up the basis of further dialogues between Foucault and an array of critical thinkers – most notably Vygotsky and Fanon. In the process he develops an enthralling and complex debate about the possibilities of a truly critical psychology, one not limited to the critique of the Psy-complex, but aware also of the potential of psychological concepts in political analyses. The critical psychology which emerges is hence less embroiled in wider social projects of 'discipline and punishment'. It takes account of both the social and 'the psychic life of power', attempting to generate innovative intersections between Foucauldian and a variety of more radical psychological (psychoanalytic, postcolonial, antiracist) projects of critique.

Drawing both on Foucault's standard works, and well as a series of lesser known writings, the first goal of the book is to use Foucault's genealogical writings as a way of critically reconceptualising psychology as a form of power-knowledge that is part and parcel of the disciplinary and corrective practices of modern relations of control. Notions such as 'the individual' and 'subjectivity' are understood as the by-products of particular forms of disciplinary power, rather than as natural and given. An interesting illustration of these ideas is provided in a series of empirical examples derived from Hook's study of the 'micro-analytics of power' in the psychotherapeutic encounter. In developing this general critique, Hook emphasises the importance of the historical and political dimensions of Foucauldian work, explaining and illustrating why an analysis of power is a key factor in understanding any human or social phenomenon.

The second goal of the book is to use Foucault's thinking as a way of grounding a series of radical research methods. Hook explores Foucault's potential methodological contribution to the study of 'how power works', providing a clear account of these contributions without any loss of philosophical complexity. He pays particular attention to four analytical frameworks derived from his careful reading of Foucault's texts. Each of these approaches provides a different set of methodological injunctions for investigating unequal power relations.

As Hook reminds his readers, Foucault's goal was not to provide a grand theory of power. Rather he sought to provide different intellectual strategies for identifying and revealing its underlying logic and mechanisms. These strategies serve both as useful alternative approaches for qualitative psychologists, and as productive analytical frameworks for those seeking to explore issues such as psychological deviance and abnormality, social identity and racism.

The first framework is critical discursive analysis. In his incisive critique of the way in which discourse analysis is most often used in psychology, Hook shows how Foucault's understanding of discourse points more towards an analysis of knowledge, materiality and power than language (Chapter 3). He argues that the omission of these dimensions from discourse analysis as outlined by Parker (2004) and Potter and Wetherell (1987) substantially reduces the explanatory power and political potential of their work.

The second framework he illustrates is that of genealogy, illustrated through his work on the genealogy of paedophilia in South Africa (Chapter 4). The third analytical framework is heterotopia – the analysis of spatio-discursive power – which Hook illustrates with his study of the dynamics of power and exclusion inherent in South African gated communities (Chapter 5). Finally he presents an interesting attempt to extend Foucault's concepts of governmentality and technologies of the self to understanding David Blunkett's efforts to stir up nationalistic sentiment in the UK (Chapter 6).

Whilst Hook is obviously deeply committed to Foucault and his writings, this is not a blind devotion. On the one hand he is in strong agreement with Foucault's view that the psychological subject, and subjectivity, come into being as a byproduct of disciplinary power. However he argues that Foucauldians 'throw the baby out with the bathwater' if they insist that it is possible to explain how power works with no recourse to psychological concepts at all. He introduces the notion of 'technologies of subjectivity and self' as a way of starting to interrogate the interchange between the influence of social structure and micro-practices of selfhood. Here Hook raises the challenge of talking and thinking about the psychological processes through which disciplinary power might take its hold – in a way that avoids the potential pitfalls which Foucault identifies at the heart of psychological discourses that claim to be liberatory and anti-repressive.

Hook argues that social phenomena such as racism cannot be understood without attention to affect, or what he calls the 'affective dimensions of governmentality'. He cites Fanon's cautious strategic use of psychoanalytic terms to build a 'psychopolitical' critique of white racism. For Hook a key challenge facing critical psychologists is that of cautiously rescuing certain psychological concepts from their wider depoliticising context, and using them to show how the psychological is not merely an outcome of disciplinary power, but also crucial to understanding the mechanisms through which power really takes hold. He argues that psychoanalysis provides a framework for a suitably historicised and critical notion of the role of affect in shaping social phenomena such as racism and nationalism, for example.

This is a difficult and wide-ranging book, but well worth the effort of reading. The clear and schematic introductory chapter provides a clear conceptual map of the book as a whole. Since the book is a collection of essays, it is possible for readers to dip in and out of various chapters according to their particular interests. Incisive section headings and discussion boxes punctuate the often lengthy chapters in user-friendly ways. In my view, chapters 3 and 6 will be of greatest interest to JCASP readers. Chapter 3 is notable for its compelling critique of the way concept of discourse is used in psychology, and for sketching out an alternative approach which avoids the reductionism of the popular 'turn to language' in so-called critical psychology. Chapter 6 is interesting for its audacious efforts to argue that psychological considerations lie at the heart of the Foucauldian project, despite Foucault's determined efforts to shake them off.

This final chapter leaves the reader waiting for more. This is the inevitable outcome of a book which aims not only to introduce Foucault's work to a psychological audience, but also to propose new ways in which his ideas might be extended to open up new and analytically productive ways of understanding and practicing subjectivity and personhood. This ground-breaking text cries out for a sequel that extends many of the fascinating dialogues that Hook sets up between Foucault and writers such as Judith Butler, Fanon, Paul Gilroy, Zizek and Vygotsky. Hook, with his evident enthusiasm for his topic and his exceptional erudition, is well-placed to write such a sequel.

Catherine Campbell
London School of Economics