

BOOK REVIEW

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Derek Hook. 2007. *Foucault, Psychology and the Analytics of Power*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 301. ISBN 978-0-230-00819-9.

This exciting new text by Derek Hook represents a much needed elaboration of the application of Foucault's analytics of power for use within the discipline of psychology and the social sciences more broadly. Hook provides the reader with a thorough working through of Foucault's account of power, his formulation of subjectivity, and applies this to the development of a broadly outlined research method which he uses to examine issues such as those relating to racism, paedophilia, psychological practice and gated communities. Importantly, Hook appears to write neither for nor against Foucault. Instead, he writes with and through Foucault to develop his own account of subjectivity that represents an important extension of Foucault's work through a critical engagement with psychoanalysis, and through a consideration of the affective elements of subjectivity.

Hook's work has long been central to my own formulations of the 'psychic life of colonial power', and in the remainder of this review I focus on engaging with Hook's outline of power and subjectivity to draw attention to the productive aspects of his book for those working in the field of critical race and whiteness studies. In so doing I emphasise two particular aspects of Hook's work: his references to what might be termed the 'metaleptic effects' of power (ie., the

substitution of cause for effect), and the production of subjectivities in particular racialised social contexts.

In regard to the first aspect, Hook emphasises (both implicitly and explicitly) Foucault's understanding of power, and the ways in which the operations of power necessitate a series of manoeuvres that often substitute cause for effect, or which obfuscate the temporal ordering of power, subjectification and subjectivisation. As Hook elaborates, Foucault's aim in so doing is to highlight how attempts at tracking routes of power 'back to their source', or attempts at finding 'base causes' for any given subject position fundamentally fail to comprehend the point, later made by Butler (1997), that neither power nor people are antecedents of one another: they are mutually constituted in ways that serve to further prop up both the seeming naturalness of power relations, and the seeming naturalness of subject positions.

Hook examines this substitution of cause for effect in at least two ways. First, and most explicitly, he outlines—in an excellent chapter on using Foucault's theory as a guideline for research methods in the field of discourse analysis—a notion of 'reversal' as the intentional act of analysis aimed at refuting assumptions about notions of 'origins'. Second, and as an implicit thread running throughout the book, he indicates moments in Foucault's theorising where he apprehends the metaleptic effects of power. For

example, and as Hook suggests when outlining disciplinarity, it 'may be said to engender its own deviance, thereby enabling and justifying its own recovery systems' (p. 39). Further on in the first chapter, Hook also highlights how power always produces metaleptic effects, where power projects itself backward to produce subjects that are seen as always already marked by power. In so doing, he suggests, power disguises the instability (and contingency) of its foundations by claiming foundationality within subjects. This circularity and contingency of power is something that Hook returns to throughout the early chapters of the book as he negotiates some of the limitations of Foucault's work (or more precisely the opacity of some of his thinking) in order to more fully develop an account of power that is opened up to a broad range of applications.

To this end, Hook's text is at its strongest if we (and indeed when he) apply his elaboration of Foucault's work to consider how subjects are produced as always already racialised in particular social contexts. In my reading, this appears most clearly in the formulation, following Foucault, that whilst there is no sovereign figure animating particular racialised power networks, such networks are nonetheless enacted through the bodies of subjects identified as occupying subject positions marked as privileged. In this sense, and whilst it is important to note how race circulates in ways that exceed the intentions of individuals actors, it is nonetheless also important to note how it functions as an *investment*, even if those invested in it are not fully aware of its operations. By making particular subject positions intelligible, race as an organising mode of power operates through bodies to reinforce its normative status despite

ongoing resistances to it as a legitimate category of differentiation.

Yet despite what may seem like a rather deterministic account of racialised power, Hook goes to considerable length, and in some ways writing against Foucault, to elaborate how resistance to hegemony functions. Rather than simply suggesting that resistance occurs at the points where power fails to assert itself as *a priori*, Hook outlines in later chapters how power is never one and the same thing: it functions in differing ways and to differing ends depending on the context and often despite the intentions of those who seek to wield power.

And this brings me to perhaps the only limitation of Hook's text. Whilst, as the book progresses, Hook clearly outlines how race and sexuality (amongst other points of difference) function to discursively produce particular intelligible subject positions, the book would have been stronger still had the functioning of race (in particular) as an organising principle (in all its varied forms and contexts) been applied to the theories of Foucault outlined in the first chapter. As Greg Thomas (2007) outlines in his cutting analysis of the field of sexuality studies, Foucault is always already talking about a *white* history of sexuality, using the tools of critique developed by *white* theorists. Whilst, as Thomas acknowledges, Foucault is in specific moments aware of this fact, in general he speaks as though the histories he recounts are universal. Hook's text thus would have been further strengthened by an engagement with the racialised power and forms of disciplinarity wielded in Foucault's writing. Importantly, and as I suggested at the beginning of this review, Hook doesn't simply write in support of Foucault — he often engages in critical

examination of Foucault's presumptions—yet this could have been pushed even further by examining the position from which Foucault wrote and thus the limitations that arise from this.

To conclude: this is an exciting text that extends Foucault's own work in important ways, and which offers new modes of analysing a range of social issues, most especially in relation to race and whiteness. Hook's close reading of Foucault's work demonstrates an in-depth knowledge of what is often a very dense body of work, and as a result he renders Foucault's key ideas in ways that are both highly readable and stimulating. The book will definitely be of interest to those working in the field of critical race and whiteness studies who are looking to draw upon the work of Foucault to conduct their own research, and will also provide a useful springboard for those wishing to further critique the functions of racialised power, both within Foucault's work and beyond.

Author Note

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References

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