

From cognitive processes to discursive practices: Taking a critical discursive psychology approach to refugee and asylum seeker integration

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Abstract

Much of the research in social and cultural psychology on refugee integration or acculturation has tended to adopt a socio-cognitive approach which assumes this to be a 'process' with a defined outcome that can be measured as successful or not. Such approaches tend to overlook the rhetorical function of talk about integration and in this article I show how research from a critical discursive psychology perspective in relation to refugees and asylum seekers has typically focussed on media, political and lay discourses about refugees. However, more recent research has focussed on analysing the talk of refugees themselves which I will show points towards the importance of shifting how refugee integration is considered and that taking a critical discursive psychological approach suggests that, in the context of research focusing on integration, a shift from 'processes' to situated 'practices' is useful where meaning is at stake.

KEYWORDS

acculturation, asylum seekers, critical discursive psychology, critical social psychology, integration, refugees

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1 | INTRODUCTION

In 2023, the then Conservative UK government passed an Act of Parliament that would make it possible for those entering the UK to seek asylum, and particularly those arriving on small boats from France via the English Channel, to be sent to Rwanda to have their asylum cases decided following the agreement of a deal with the Rwandan government in 2022 (Adamson & Greenhill, 2023). Under the terms of the Illegal Migration Act 2023, before the scheme was scrapped by the current Labour government in 2024, this would have marked the first time that a UK government had offshored its asylum responsibilities to another country, following in the footsteps of countries such as Australia that have engaged in such offshore processing practices previously (e.g. Freyer & McKay, 2021; Matera et al., 2023). Since the deal with Rwanda was first announced by then Home Secretary Priti Patel in 2022, the policy generated significant debate and discussion around the rights of refugees, the role of governments in supporting and “integrating” refugees and the use of language in talking about refugees and asylum seekers in such cases. In this article I focus on the concept of integration and acculturation and will argue that research in psychology should move away from traditional conceptions of integration that see it as a cognitive “process” and that recent research taking a critical discursive psychology approach points towards a need for a re-framing of integration in terms of discursive “practices”.

In making the case for considering integration and acculturation as discursive practices, it is first necessary to review the ways in which psychologists have traditionally theorised these concepts. Indeed, acculturation has a long history in the field of cross-cultural psychology in particular and has tended to approach this from a socio-cognitive perspective. John Berry's work and models of acculturation (1997) are the predominant way in which migrants adaptation in their host societies have been conceptualised. This suggests that migrants have a choice of four acculturation strategies depending on the extent to which they wish to take up the new culture and the extent to which they wish to maintain their heritage culture (Berry, 1997). So, for example, if a migrant wanted to maintain their heritage culture and take on and have relationships with members of the host culture, this is referred to as a strategy of integration, which Berry (2005) also suggests is the optimal acculturation strategy. The three remaining strategies are referred to as assimilation, separation and marginalisation, with the latter two leading to higher levels of what Berry (2005) refers to as acculturative stress. However, Berry (2005) importantly highlights that it is not sufficient to solely consider the strategy of the acculturating individual, as if they are free to decide which strategy they wish to follow, but that it is necessary to also consider the strategy that is promoted by the host society. As such, Berry (2005) also outlines four strategies that the host society can adopt, also based on the degree to which they promote relationships between cultures and value maintenance of heritage cultures, which are multiculturalism, melting pot, segregation and exclusion. Thus, it is assumed that if a migrant wished to pursue an individual acculturation strategy of integration it would rely upon the host country adopting a multiculturalism approach. Whilst this approach is useful in classifying acculturation types, and analysis shows that integration is the favoured approach of most acculturating individuals and the most successful one (Berry & Sam, 1997), it tells us less about how acculturating individuals construct the process of integration. Therefore, in the remainder of this paper I will argue that recent research taking a critical discursive psychology approach highlights the importance of understanding refugees' discourse about integration and that integration (and acculturation) may be better understood in terms of discursive practices rather than a socio-cognitive decision-making model. I begin by briefly outlining the critical discursive psychology approach before reviewing research which has taken this approach to talk *about* refugees and asylum seekers. I then move on to look at more recent research that has extended this approach to the analysis of talk *by* refugees and asylum seekers themselves and argue that this body of research points to a need for a reframing of integration from processes to practices.

2 | CRITICAL DISCURSIVE PSYCHOLOGY: OVERVIEW AND CORE ASSUMPTIONS

The discursive psychological (DP) approach (e.g. Potter & Wetherell, 1987) has developed an approach to language and cognition that is fundamentally different to how it is viewed in much of mainstream psychology, and which challenges the dominant cognitive approach in particular. Instead of viewing language purely as a way of accessing

inner cognitions, DP sees it as something that is social and that such talk-in-interaction has an action orientation. As such it is underpinned by constructionist principles and suggests that language can be used in different context to construct particular versions of reality and to achieve specific functions or goals within that talk. More critical forms of DP (e.g. Wetherell, 1998) do not focus solely on the minutiae of talk in interaction but also bring in a focus on wider social practices as part of the analysis. In this way critical discursive psychology is often referred to as a 'synthetic' form of discourse analysis (Wetherell, 1998) that combines the micro focus of DP and conversation analysis with some of the broader macro focus of approaches like Critical or Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. Kirkwood et al. (2016, p. 28) therefore argue that this "focus on language, and its properties of construction, action and rhetoric, brings particular advantages in examining the journeys of asylum-seekers and refugees in the UK, and their experiences of the asylum system and relations with the host community". As such, a *critical* discursive analysis of talk about integration focuses on identifying and evaluating the power relations within discourse and the ways in which they might legitimise inequality, discrimination and other forms of social exclusion. To demonstrate these advantages, in the next Section 1 begin by reviewing several studies that have taken a broadly critical DP approach to talk about refugees and asylum seekers to begin to demonstrate the ways in which this approach offers potential new insights into the concepts of integration and acculturation.

3 | TAKING A CRITICAL DISCURSIVE APPROACH TO FORCED MIGRATION

In recent years there has been a growing body of research (see Kirkwood et al., 2016) that has taken a critical discursive perspective and investigated talk and other discourses about refugees and asylum seekers, which has tended to support the view that political, media and lay discourse about this group of migrants is constructed in ways that is both negative and which problematises them as a group. In the sections which follow I provide an overview of research in each of these three areas to demonstrate the application of critical discursive psychology to talk about refugees and asylum seekers. Following this, I move on to consider more recent research which focuses on the analysis of discourses by refugees and asylum seekers themselves and suggest that this may offer new ways to understand how integration and acculturation are understood and spoken about by refugees in comparison to more traditional socio-cognitive models.

3.1 | Political discourses

One of the key areas where critical discursive psychologists have offered insights in relation to refugees and asylum seekers has been through the analysis of political discourses on refugees and migration more broadly (e.g. Every & Augoustinos, 2007, 2008; Figgou et al., 2018; Goodman & Kirkwood, 2019; Parker & Cornell, 2024; Sambaraju et al., 2017). Early research, such as Every and Augoustinos (2007) focussed on the ways in which Australian politicians constructed their opposition to asylum seekers in parliamentary speeches in ways that denied such opposition was racist (a finding that is seen in similar research e.g. Durrheim et al., 2018). In a related study, Every and Augoustinos (2008) show how political advocates for asylum seekers oppose the rhetoric of them being a threat by re-categorising asylum seekers as potential refugees and constructing Australia as needing to meet its legal and moral obligations to provide protection to those seeking asylum. Parker and Cornell (2024) have also shown how similar discourses were present in UK parliamentary debates where politicians justified or resisted the government's plans for the offshore processing of asylum seekers in Rwanda. Interestingly, they show how similar interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) of safety and border protection were drawn on by politicians to both justify and resist the policy and suggest that this limits alternative discourses being available to construct an alternative set of actions. Figgou et al. (2018) analysed constructions of "crisis" in Greek parliamentary debates in relation to the movement of refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea from Turkey to Greece in 2015 and showed how for both the government and opposition politicians this was constructed in terms of a conflict between ways of

life and values. For the opposition this was a conflict in values between 'Islamic terrorism' and Western values which constructed refugees as a security concern, but for the government it was a conflict between humanistic and xenophobic values that was constructed as a threat to Western liberalism.

Whilst much of what I have discussed so far focusses on the ways in which critical discursive psychologists have demonstrated that political talk about refugees has mostly been negative and functioned to dehumanise refugees, other research has shown how constructions of refugees can be more humanising. For example, Kirkwood (2017) shows that UK politicians, when debating the "European refugee crisis", often drew on the human qualities of both refugees and British people as a way of making the government and nation morally accountable for protecting refugees. Similarly, Kirkwood (2019) suggests that politicians invoke prior histories of supporting refugees as a way of legitimizing support for refugees during the "crisis" and to criticise political actions. Moving beyond a focus solely on political talk about the arrival or acceptance of refugees, Goodman and Kirkwood (2019) have analysed the ways in which politicians (and the media) construct accounts of refugees' integration in the UK. They identify a number of dilemmas in this discourse that can be used to warrant the inclusion or exclusion of refugees. These dilemmas were found to include constructing integration as something that is positive and necessary, but challenging and that host communities are welcoming but limited in the support they can give. Importantly their findings also highlight that in media and political discourse it is refugees who are constructed as being responsible for integration, which might imply a one-way conception of integration, but that host communities also need to provide support to facilitate this, suggesting a more two-way conception of integration. If this is the case, it raises the question of whether refugees themselves construct integration in the same way and this is something that I return to after reviewing the findings of critical DP research into media and lay discourses about refugees and asylum seekers.

3.2 | Media discourses

Critical discursive psychologists have also paid close attention to the ways in which refugees and asylum seekers are constructed in the media and the functions that these constructions have (e.g. Esses et al., 2013; Goodman & Kirkwood, 2019; Goodman & Narang, 2019; Parker, 2015; Sambaraju & Shrikant, 2023). The media, like talk about refugees by politicians, has been a key site for discourses about refugees and asylum seekers, particularly since the start of the 21st century, and particularly in countries such as the UK and Australia. Parker (2015) analysed the ways in which refugees were discursively constructed in UK and Australian newspapers and identified a number of interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) that functioned to position refugees as "unwanted invaders". In Parker's (2015) research and others (e.g. Esses et al., 2013; Pickering, 2001) it is shown that dehumanisation is a key feature of the ways in which the media constructs refugees and draws on ideas that refugees spread infectious diseases, are "bogus", and a security threat. What is interesting is that these constructions in the media have remained broadly similar in relation to different "crises" over the past 10 years. Reviewing media reporting of the "migrant crisis" in Europe in 2015, Goodman et al. (2017) demonstrated how these constructions evolved over the course of a few months and what was achieved with these constructions. From a "Mediterranean migrant crisis" to a "Calais migrant crisis" and then use of a "European migrant crisis" the authors show how use of the word "migrant" and the geographical flagging construct a changing and ongoing threat to particular regions or to the whole of Europe. Within this period, they also demonstrate how photographs of a drowned child led to a shift to a "refugee crisis" (rather than "migrant crisis") in which refugees were presented in a humane and sympathetic way (See also Parker et al., 2018). Goodman et al. (2017) demonstrate that this sympathetic turn was short-lived and that refugees reverted to migrants (and a threat) once more when terrorist attacks were linked with the crisis.

More recently Parker et al. (2022) analysed UK media reporting of the so-called "small boats crisis" or "Channel migrant crisis" and identified a number of similar interpretative repertoires to earlier research including "secure the borders" and "smuggling is immoral" repertoires which they suggest positions the UK's borders as being at risk and that it is smugglers who are to blame for the current 'crisis'. In contrast to earlier work, they also identify a "desperate people" repertoire which they suggest works to position refugees crossing the English Channel as

vulnerable and in need of protection, but also as people who will engage in risky behaviours. Following the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Sambaraju and Shrikant (2023) analysed UK media reporting of the first four weeks of the invasion. In contrast to other research reviewed here, including UK media reporting about other groups of refugees (e.g. Parker et al., 2022), they suggest that Ukrainian refugees are constructed as “contingent refugees” (Sambaraju & Shrikant, 2023, p. 1728); that they are vulnerable and their actions can be treated as reasonable given the situation they find themselves in. These more recent studies suggest that the media has the potential to offer more positive and nuanced constructions of refugees than perhaps have been shown in the past, but that this may apply to particular groups of refugees only. The extent to which these discourses are also represented in lay talk about refugees has also been of interest to critical discursive psychologists and I briefly review these findings in the next section before moving on to suggest that integration and acculturation should be understood as discursive acts in much the same way as discursive psychologists have argued for a re-specifying of other psychological phenomena.

3.3 | Lay discourses

In an early discursive study Lynn and Lea (2003) analysed letters that members of the British public had written about asylum seekers that were published in UK newspapers. This was a time when the arrival of asylum seekers was starting to become a political issue and more frequently discussed in the media. They found that members of the public constructed asylum seekers in a mostly negative way through reconstructing and positioning the social order of other groups in society so as to position the asylum seekers as outside of society. Leudar et al. (2008) carried out a discursive analysis of newspaper reports about refugees which identified a number of “hostility themes” (Leudar et al., 2008, p. 187): that refugees are an economic drain, unable to care for their children and are potentially criminals or carriers of disease. In later interviews they found these “hostility themes” were also similarly drawn upon in discussions about refugees by local people in Manchester.

Goodman and Burke (2010, 2011) have also discursively analysed data from focus groups conducted with students about whether it is racist to oppose asylum seeking. They highlight that their participants had to manage their talk carefully to avoid accusations of racism and often engaged in rhetorical strategies such as discursive racialisation when making their points so that opposition to asylum seeking was presented on economic grounds or a perceived lack of ability for asylum seekers to integrate. The concept of integration is also a key focus in Kirkwood et al.'s (2015) study of accounts of integration success and failure in Scotland. In their discursive analysis, whilst finding that some of their participants spoke positively about refugees, they also show that these accounts of integration ‘success’ may in fact function to reinforce assimilationist policies or to construct refugees as being unwilling or unable to integrate. Conversely, accounts of integration ‘failure’ were found to construct integration as a ‘two-way’ process while still functioning to blame refugees for any perceived lack of integration. Nightingale et al. (2017) by contrast, in their analysis of Irish radio phone-in conversations about the “refugee crisis” found that callers expressed sympathy towards refugees, but at the same time were tentative about offering unambiguous and explicit inclusive political solidarity with asylum seekers in Ireland. These findings also support those of Goodman and Kirkwood (2019) discussed earlier, that highlight the nuance that is sometimes observed when taking such a critical discursive approach to talk about refugees and asylum seekers, and further suggests the need to think of acculturation and integration as discursive practices.

4 | MOVING BEYOND SOCIO-COGNITIVE MODELS OF ACCULTURATION

In the context of refugees and asylum seekers, I discussed earlier how the majority of the research using a critical discursive psychology approach has focussed on political, media and lay discourses, and highlighted the ways in which they were often, but not always, dehumanised within this discourse (e.g. Figgou et al., 2018; Parker & Cornell,

2024). However, a smaller body of research using this approach has begun to apply this analysis to the discourses of refugees themselves (e.g. Clare et al., 2014; Goodman et al., 2014; Kirkwood et al., 2013a, 2013b; Parker, 2018, 2020; Parker & Cornell, 2023), providing new insights into how they construct acculturation and the ways in which refugees use their talk about integration to achieve particular purposes. Ager and Strang (2004) devised a framework for integration consisting of 10 domains that has been highly influential in UK government approaches to refugee integration. One of these domains highlights the importance of the absence of racism and discrimination for successful integration and some critical discursive psychologists have analysed the ways in which refugees in the UK talk about discrimination and what this achieves in terms of their integration discourse. Parker (2018), in his analysis of the ways in which refugees and asylum seekers talk about racism and discrimination in the context of their integration experiences, shows that his participants minimised experiences of racism and constructed them as “trivial”. Parker (2018) suggests that this minimisation functioned to construct the refugee participants as uncritical of the help and protection they had received in Wales. Kirkwood et al. (2013a), found similar minimisation, in their analysis of refugee and asylum seekers’ account of racially motivated violence in Scotland. They too suggest that this may play important functions in terms of justifying their position in the host society by not wanting to appear overtly critical of members of that society (see also Colic-Peisker, 2005; Verkuyten, 2005). In this sense then, downplaying racism and discrimination in the context of talk about integration, suggests that refugees themselves are doing more than simply describing the feelings that would otherwise lay within their minds and begins to support the argument for seeing integration as discursive practice rather than solely as a socio-cognitive “process”.

Drawing on the concept of place-identity (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000), Kirkwood et al. (2013b) show that both local people and refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland construct their countries of origin as dangerous, and by contrast, Scotland as comparatively problem-free, which functions to construct refugee identities as legitimate and to justify the presence of refugees in the host society. They argue that the presence of refugees and asylum seekers could be legitimised or delegitimised (by local people as well as refugees) using specific constructions of place (e.g. ‘community’) that were either compatible (e.g. ‘families’) or incompatible (e.g. ‘drug abusers’) with specific identity categories (Kirkwood et al., 2013b, p. 463). Although the research here is framed as being about place-identity and belonging, in many ways what the researchers suggest here can be broadly considered as relating to acculturation and integration. Thus, like Di Masso et al. (2013), who have called for a reframing of place-identity as a form of discursive practice, Kirkwood et al.’s (2013b) findings also lend support for a reframing of integration as a form of discursive practice.

Goodman et al. (2014) interviewed asylum seekers in the West Midlands and found that, like Parker (2018) and Kirkwood et al. (2013b), their participants described being unhappy but downgraded this so that they did not appear to be ungrateful for help they had received or to undermine their asylum claim in anyway. Importantly, in terms of integration, they found that participants’ criticisms of the host country were directed towards the asylum system itself, rather than to people or the country more broadly. As with the other research discussed in this section, these findings again point to the importance of understanding integration in terms of discursive practices and the functions that such discourses achieve.

More recent research (Parker, 2020; Parker & Cornell, 2023) has focussed on other discursive practices that relate broadly to the concept of integration, which highlight other ways in which the utility of viewing integration as a discursive practice can be seen. Parker (2020) looks at the ways in which his interview participants constructed a sense of belonging that was contingent upon being able to contribute economically to the host society. In this way, Parker (2020) shows that the sense of belonging constructed in the talk of his participants goes beyond notions of purely belonging to a geographic location or of place-identity (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000) and shows how integration as discursive practice positions belonging as contingent on rights and citizenship. Indeed, he shows how participants constructed accounts of ‘just eating and sleeping’ to describe their life in the UK asylum system as not being able to contribute to the economic life of the country, or of more total restrictions that positioned themselves in a state of liminality. Parker and Cornell (2023) looked at the ways in which refugees and asylum seekers spoke about their relationships with their neighbours, which similarly highlights the importance of viewing integration as a discursive

practice. They show that talk about not having any relationship with their neighbours, or minimal relationships where they “just say hi”, which with process-focussed models of integration would likely be taken as a “failure” to integrate, instead can be seen as functioning to position themselves as good neighbours who respect normative urban neighbouring practices. Such talk could similarly be seen as refugees drawing attention to the lack of opportunities they have for meaningful contact and interactions with the host community and therefore also limited opportunities for viable integration. In terms of belonging, they suggest that describing their relationships with neighbours as “just saying hi” has the rhetorical function of being “both banal and ordinary, making “them” everyday and normal, just like “us”” (Parker & Cornell, 2023, p. 8). This work draws attention to the need to focus on refugees' everyday practices, which Zisakou et al. (2024) have also studied in relation to integration and urban citizenship. Like I have argued here, and like the research discussed previously on place-identity, they argue for the importance of seeing refugee integration and belonging as a practice that is constructed in talk. In doing so, they theorise integration as “an urban and local strategy, rather than as a linear process of moving from the country of origin to a receiving country” (Zisakou et al., 2024, p. 229), which dominates theories and models of acculturation. In related work, Zisakou and Figgou (2021, p. 7), again arguing against the “unidimensional approach to migrant integration that characterises acculturation typologies”, suggest that critical social psychologists should instead focus on ‘urban citizenship’, which they suggest emphasises the everyday discursive practices that refugees use to construct both themselves and local residents and can be seen as the groundwork for redefining integration based on local experiences and connections within urban networks.

5 | CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In this paper I have suggested that taking a critical DP approach suggests that, in the context of research focusing on integration, a shift from ‘processes’ to situated ‘practices’ is useful where meaning is at stake. Whilst the argument for this is most clearly seen in the research that I have reviewed here that explores the talk of refugees and asylum seekers themselves, it can also be seen in talk *about* refugees and asylum seekers too. In both cases, taking a critical approach has become important due to the increasingly politicised nature of talk about migration in general, and refugees and asylum seekers specifically, not only in the UK but an increasing number of countries globally. In such cases, analysing the talk of refugees and asylum seekers themselves, and not just what others say about them, is particularly important in ensuring that this critical focus reflects the ways in which refugees construct integration.

As I have demonstrated here, there has been an increasing amount of critical discursive psychology research that does now focus on talk by refugees and asylum seekers themselves and which offers new insights into how they construct processes of integration, which go beyond measuring this as a process that can be successful or a failure. Thus far this has tended to focus on a limited range of integration topics, such as discrimination and racism (Kirkwood et al., 2013a; Parker, 2018), interactions with local residents (Kirkwood et al., 2013b; Parker & Cornell, 2023) and talk about the asylum system (Goodman et al., 2014). If Ager and Strang's (2004) Indicators of Integration model is taken into account, which contains 10 domains of integration, this suggests that there remains several key areas of integration that remain unexplored from a critical discursive perspective. One key area, which Ager and Strang (2004) include as the foundation level of their model, is that of citizenship. Thus understanding how refugees construct citizenship could be an important future application of the critical discursive approach that I have described here and which could extend Zisakou et al.'s (2024) focus on urban citizenship to a broader consideration of citizenship practices and the relevance of this in the lives of refugees.

The approach I have advocated for here also builds on and addresses some of the critiques of the dominant models of acculturation in psychology (e.g. Berry, 2005). For example, Bhatia and Ram (2009, p. 140) argue that Berry's model is “fixed, invariant and apolitical”. Taking a sociological, rather than psychological standpoint, they further suggest that “rather than proceed from the assumption of a fixed, stable, unified cultural self that goes

through various acculturation trajectories, we call for a more fluid and politicized understanding of migrant identity. Such an approach brings in the broader sociological landscape that produces material and structural conditions that situate both the acculturation process and migrant identity and is open to continuous engagement and negotiation" (Bhatia & Ram, 2009, p. 143). As such, the critical discursive psychology approach described in this article would appear to address these critiques, particularly in viewing migrant identities in a more fluid and politicised way than socio-cognitive models tend to assume. A focus on how refugees themselves construct integration also allows for a focus that takes a decolonial approach, more fully taking into account historical and cultural contexts, and which does not assume preconceived ideas of what integration means to refugees or that further enforces Western ideas of what the desired outcome should be. In this sense, the variability seen in talk about integration, often neglected in process-driven approaches, is seen as crucial when integration is considered as a discursive practice.

The arguments that I have put forward here advocate for a focus on the talk of refugees and asylum seekers themselves and the ways that they discursively construct issues relating to integration. In keeping with the critical perspective I outlined at the start of this article, the aim of this approach goes beyond simply ensuring that refugee voices are heard in research on this topic, but also seeks to bring about social change. However, in taking such an approach to research there are a number of important ethical and methodological issues that must be considered to ensure that refugee research participants are not exploited or further marginalised. Firstly, a key consideration of such research should be to avoid (re-)traumatising refugee participants in anyway, particularly if they are being interviewed about their integration experiences. Whilst discussing experiences in the country they have sought asylum could be seen as less likely to cause harm than asking questions about their reasons for leaving their home country or their experiences of being on the move, research shows that many refugees experience significant harms in the country in which they are integrating (e.g. Goodman et al., 2014). However, at the same time, to exclude refugee voices from discussions about integration would also fail to acknowledge the agency that they have and further disempower and marginalise this group. Secondly, and relatedly, the relationship between researcher and the researched needs careful consideration here, so that refugees feel they have a stake in the research and are not just having their stories taken by researchers who do not have a refugee background or do not fully understand the community they seek to study. As such, research in this area could consider employing refugee community researchers (see Pincock & Bakunzi, 2021). In the context of the type of critical discursive research I have advocated for here, researchers employing such an approach would need to consider how this interactional context differs from research where the interviewer does not have a refugee background. Such an approach could offer further insights into how refugees talk about integration and further extend the findings of the research I have discussed in this paper that have to-date been primarily conducted by researchers without a refugee background.

Whilst more process-focussed approaches to integration have some utility, particularly in informing government approaches to integration (e.g. Ager & Strang, 2004; Strang & Ager, 2010), as Bowskill et al. (2007) highlight, there is a danger that talk about integration may actually mean assimilation, or lend support to views that integration is a one-way process that is the sole responsibility of refugees. Indeed, as Bennett (2018) has argued in analyses of UK immigration policy, this tends to take a normative and neoliberal focus that constructs refugees as deficient and requires them to act in specific ways to remedy these deficiencies. Again, this highlights where the discourses of refugees themselves are often absent from government policy, and where taking an approach that focuses on integration as discursive practice could be influential in this area. This is of course not to say that DP work cannot have important policy implications (e.g. see Finlay et al., 2008; Potter & Hepburn, 2003) but future research may also benefit from more closely incorporating discursive approaches and findings such as those reviewed in this article.

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