

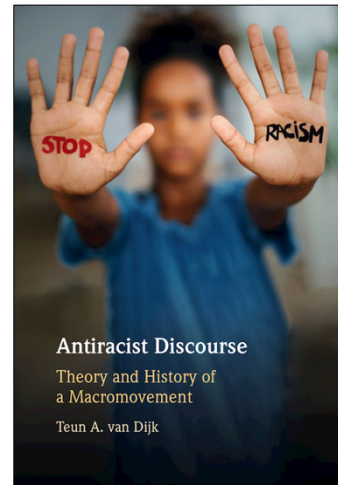
Teun A. van Dijk, **Antiracist Discourse: Theory and History of a Macromovement**, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021, 298 pp., \$115.00 (hardcover), \$69.49 (ebook).

Reviewed by

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As a leading theorist and one of the founders of critical discourse studies, Teun A. van Dijk has impressed academia with his abundant achievement in discourse studies, of which racist discourse is one of his primary subjects. But this time, with **Antiracist Discourse: Theory and History of a Macromovement**, the author tries to make a study of the antiracist movement instead. To him, it is a socially complex global and historical movement of resistance and solidarity that deserves its own book. Like racism, antiracism is a system of domination that involves both “discrimination” as social practice and “prejudice and ideologies” (p. 2) as social cognition.



The book is an extension of the author’s committed pursuit of racist discourse studies since his first publication on this topic, *Prejudice in Discourse* (1984), and others later, including *Racism and Press* (1991) and *Elite Discourse and Racism* (1993). This work, however, is most relevantly connected with and derived from his previous research in *Antiracist Discourse in Brazil* (2020).

Chapter 1 serves an array of explanatory topics for this study. It starts by demarcating itself from the usual critical discourse studies, which often examine how power is implemented and abused through discourse as social practice. This research is complementary to van Dijk’s earlier research on discursive racism in areas such as politics, media, and education. He aims to “develop a new theory of antiracism as a social movement of resistance and solidarity” (p. 1) and to “systematically study some of the properties and the history of antiracist discourse in the USA and in Western Europe” (p. 1).

In chapter 2, van Dijk first describes antiracism, conceptually and analytically, as a global (macro)movement. Next, he summarizes the theoretical framework that defines antiracism as a system of resistance, “not only as a social and political practice itself but also as the source, expression and communication of antiracist cognition, which in turn is the basis of all antiracist practice” (p. 15). These elaborations on antiracism also include an account of antiracist theories throughout history.

Discussions in chapter 3 sum up the antiracist discourse from antiquity to antislavery periods, beginning with the 16th century, about the treatment of slaves but not necessarily always suggesting the abolition of slavery as a system. This, diachronically, connects to more focused arguments and rhetoric in favor of abolition in the 19th century and even later discourses on antiracism.

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Chapter 4 concentrates on some typical examples of abolitionist discourse of the most prominent Quakers in their antislavery and antiracism campaigns from the particular text of petitions to more generalized opposition, and later with more parallels to political abolitionism. It also takes into consideration the speaker's identity in the discourse, noting, for example, how Quaker men were predominant in the early period, and then the rise to prominence of certain Quaker women in the 18th century and politicians later that century (after 1787). In addition, van Dijk points to French philosophers, such as Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau, who also inspired antislavery efforts.

Chapter 5 reviews the history of Black resistance against slavery and discrimination and the corresponding discourses that arose from it, surveying several well-known African American advocates in the early days of civil rights, as well as nonelite discourses. Antiracist discourse developed from "detailed descriptions of the cruelty of white slave owners" (p. 129) to "accounts of the even more deadly violence against free blacks" (p. 136).

Chapter 6 serves as a summary of the civil rights movement, stressing that "no protest action speaks for itself" and that "all nonverbal resistance can only be understood and can only reach its goals if discursively framed" (p. 140). The understanding of the movement and its discourse, furthermore, is inextricable from historical and social context. In advancing civil rights, as the author notes, it is necessary to recognize the value of the speech act as a credible threat as well as counter-violence.

Chapter 7 addresses the discourse history of antisemitism that gave the form of antiracism in the 20th century, particularly from the Middle Ages to the Age of Enlightenment, and later the discursive struggle against antisemitism in Germany and France. The chapter focuses primarily on the Jewish intellectual discourse against antisemitism, which provided the basis for the formation of theories of antisemitism and arguments against discrimination as well as the critical analysis of those theories.

Chapter 8 reviews the postwar antiracist discourse from UNESCO to the very recent Black Lives Matter movement, including UNESCO conferences and statements, the intellectual debate on "race," etc. The chapter also brings in discussions on European organizations in the struggle against racism. As of today, however, Europe is still not free of right-wing populism, as nationalist policies and xenophobic and Islamophobic parties still hold their ground. Likewise, the so-called postracial United States is just a myth, as the Black Lives Matter movement testifies to.

As mentioned in chapter 9, this book represents the first study ever to "present a general theory and history of such discursive resistance [against racism]" (p. 228). Such an antiracist discourse is engaged by not only the targets of racist abuse but also individuals, social movements, parties, and organizations that oppose racism. The study of antiracist discourse can be approached from micro or macro levels, and local or global perspectives, with "antiracism" viewed as a historical, social movement, and therefore a crucial form of antiracist social practice. Equally necessary for such a theory is a "systematic account of the historical development of such discourse" (p. 232), which features the general properties of discourse at the general level, and semantic and epistemic features at the specific.

To van Dijk, discourse plays a “central and crucial” role in such a theory, “both as a pervasive social practice, as well as the source of the very acquisition of both racist as well as antiracist social cognition” (p. 247). The study of discourse, from a theoretical and historical view, thus has offered insight not just in the form of resistance but more fundamentally in its underlying attitudes and ideologies and the ways that racist structures may be transformed into more democratic ones.

In general, this book supplements other disciplinary studies of the humanities and social sciences on racism and antiracism, such as anthropology, sociology, political science, education, cognitive and social psychology, history, linguistics, and discourse studies. But in its own right, with a concentration on antiracist discourse, it offers a holistic study on the issue of racism in which racist and antiracist discourses actually intertwine and integrate. Indeed, it works as a discursive roadmap of the antiracism movement. Needless to say, this study adds to the author’s scholarly influence in critical discourse studies in general, and (anti)racist discourse studies in particular.

Compared with discourse studies about racism, studies on antiracism discourse are less developed. Of the latter type of studies, most focused on a smaller aspect or a special antiracist issue (Benson, 2016; Cheng, 2017; Howard & Sefa Dei, 2008; Lentin, 2004; Lloyd, 1998; van Dijk, 2020). This book, however, examines antiracist discourse of a more “general” scope, with a broader historical reference to the United States and Western Europe. It also stands out from the others by adding to antiracism theory and providing a systematic and historical account of antiracist discourse. For these reasons, the findings and claims of this book are justifiably more convincing regarding the essence of antiracism and its discursive impact.

As a study of a multidisciplinary issue, this book would benefit readers from the above-mentioned humanities and social science areas, as well as conventional discourse analysts. It is a must-read for those with an interest in racist and antiracist discourse studies about theory, epistemology, or methodology.

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