What’s involved in doing research in organizational discourse? In this chapter we attempt to answer this question by using five phases of the research process, as identified by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), to guide an examination of the sub-fields of organizational discourse analysis (ODA) (see Table 9.1). Our first aim is to help those new to discourse analysis in organization studies to get started in this field. We also want to encourage researchers who are already using ODA to clarify their own positions and consider a wider repertoire of approaches. The chapter is organized into five sections that address each of Denzin and Lincoln’s five choice points in the research process. At each point we interrogate how one of the sub-fields of organizational discourse undertakes this part of the research process. So, for example, the second choice point involves adopting a theoretical frame or position. Here we discuss frames or positions available in narrative research. In relation to the third choice point – adopting a strategy of inquiry – we discuss strategies used in Foucauldian discourse analysis. As this is a handbook, and not a textbook, we are attempting to strike a balance between helping researchers and engaging critically with the published work itself. In pursuing these aims we have been forced to be highly selective. While we make no apology for this, we would ask the reader to bear this in mind. ‘Organizational discourse’ is not a homogeneous field. It is a series of sub-fields linked together by a substantive concern with language and practice in organizations and organizing. In this chapter we provide particular kinds of ‘snapshot’ of research practice in four of these sub-fields: deconstruction, narrative, linguistic and Foucauldian discourse analysis (see Table 9.1).

A key feature of research practice in Denzin and Lincoln’s approach, and one that we strongly support, is developing a reflexive understanding of the context in which researchers find themselves. This practice not only enriches the research practice, it also provides much of the ‘between the lines’ knowledge that can lead to successful research outcomes. The opening section of the chapter – the first choice point – addresses this issue directly. We also open each section with a narrative that profiles the work of different fictional researchers, each named Andy Andrews, as they tackle a different phrase of the work.
Table 9.1  Character map of organizational discourse analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice Point 1. Who am I? Locating the Researcher</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Foucauldian</th>
<th>Linguistic</th>
<th>Deconstruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choice point 2: What theoretical frame?</td>
<td>Critical and Interpretive</td>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>Positivist, interpretive and critical depending on field</td>
<td>Philosophical/critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice point 3: What research strategy</td>
<td>Case-specific textual analysis</td>
<td>Historical archival, practice analysis</td>
<td>Samples from large corpus</td>
<td>Textual analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice point 4: What form of data gathering and analysis</td>
<td>Spoken and written texts</td>
<td>Documentary research in historical and contemporary archives, also ethnographic analysis of practice</td>
<td>Spoken and written texts analysed against theoretical/conceptual frameworks</td>
<td>Key texts, organizational texts, theoretical texts, experimental texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice point 5. So What? What form of presentation and effect of research?</td>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong>: To improve understanding of others</td>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong>: Political engagement, public critique</td>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong>: Accumulation of knowledge</td>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong>: Academic critique of established knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong>: Research report and paper</td>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong>: Public debate and writing, academic papers, books</td>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong>: Academic paper</td>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong>: Public academic texts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first question to ask, in approaching research in organizational discourse analysis (ODA), is about you. One needs to develop a reflexive awareness of the conditions and circumstances in which one finds oneself. What positions are available for you to do the research? In this section we explore the influences on possible researcher positions for doing ODA.

The researcher position is not simply an intellectual stance drawn from a community of researchers, a school of thought or particular research conversation through which we must position or frame research vis-à-vis the relevant research audience (Booth et al., 1995; Huff, 1999). The researcher position resides in a physical body that requires physical space, sustenance, an income to support ongoing effort and to pay for computer, paper and access to electronic databases. Researcher positions are constituted through a web of intellectual, institutional, economic and political relations. Important aspects would include the opportunities to develop and train in the skills required to write theses that will be accepted, the opportunities to publish, and regional and disciplinary differences in intellectual tradition and organizational practices.

ODA usually places the researcher in the business school, rather than the linguistics, sociology, psychology or social work department. The researcher position within the business school also strongly influences the likely publication outlets, conferences to attend and publishers to consider. Most business schools find themselves embedded in universities that require significant revenue from the business school and question the academic respectability of business research. Thus the researcher position is enmeshed in heavy demands for teaching many students, demands for high quantity and quality publications, and often contract research and executive education duties as well (Near, 1996; Willmott, 1995). Balancing this, income and support are generally better than in, say, a cultural studies department. Research students are likely to benefit from the better financial position of the business school. For non-tenured faculty (North America and Canada) or staff (UK/Australasia), pressures are likely to be at the most intense. However, with tenure, more space to explore alternative perspectives and time to develop new skills may be available.
The location of the business school will make a difference as well. North American business schools are dominated by positivist approaches to science. Here, ODA will be an interesting but marginal, even odd, approach to the study of organization. Training, senior faculty support and co-authors may be hard to come by. In the absence of exposure to qualitative research training, one may feel too insecure to proceed, or one can suffer the hubris of assuming that anyone who can talk and read can do discourse analysis. In the UK and Europe, ODA fits well with the more mainstream interpretive and critical traditions. In Australasia, ‘refugees’ from North American and UK systems mix with Kiwis and Aussies in more intellectually diverse departments.

All of the non-US researcher positions must relate to the American domination of the intellectual field, hierarchical ranking of journals, etc. (Clegg & Linstead, 2000). And then there are the non-anglophone schools with their own situations. French and German institutions have been the source of much of the theoretical and empirical work in linguistics (see Wodak & Meyer, 2001) and poststructuralism that English-speaking ODA draws on. Personal biography, that is a nationality, mother tongue, family background, education, work experience, intellectual interests and moral commitments, project us into one of these researcher positions (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Once we are occupied by or fill the researcher position, a range of choices are already made for us, while other choices open to us.

Some of this positioning may well be experienced as constraint. However, though constitutive of the researcher position, much of it is simply not consciously experienced at all. Our upwardly mobile, intellectually curious, Auckland-based Andy Andrews above is unlikely to conceive even the possibility of pursuing a course in cultural studies. The business school is the place to be. She knows that her studies need to guarantee economic security. But if we ‘morph’ Andy into the following:

Andy Andrews is an impressive figure. Son of two New York accountants he studied sociology and psychology at Oberlin (an elite liberal arts college in the Midwest). For the next few years, Andy worked for a major multinational corporation on a series of corporate office projects as the personal assistant to a family friend. An MBA from the Kellogg GSM at Northwestern University followed. On graduation, he went to work in the Big Apple as a junior account executive with a multinational marketing and promotions firm. He made senior account executive in mid-2001 but late that year, following the bombing of the World Trade Center, he quit his all consuming job to take care of his two young children. He and his partner now job share an arts promotion post in his hometown. He recently signed on for a master degree in organizational analysis with …

This ‘WASP’ Andy has a choice. He will consider a range of possibilities, especially as he continues to reflect on the true meaning of life. Consider the question of which university to attend. WASP Andy will clearly attend a top-10 graduate school in the USA. Nothing else is conceivable to him. There is no experience of
constraint. Our NZ-based Andy will likely receive advice from her mentors suggesting overseas study. Traditionally, the universities of the UK would be the destination. But now the intellectual and financial inducement of the US or Australian universities beckon. Or, she could continue on to doctoral work at Auckland (she may qualify for a Pacific Island scholarship). In any case, she will have to choose.

Andy’s differing experiences will unfold in different researcher positions. Both Andys may receive a good training but they will be exposed to different disciplines, different intellectual traditions and they’ll have different resource spaces available to them. Our WASPy Andy will attend the annual Academy of Management and will experience organizational discourse as an intriguing, exotic and slightly odd alternative approach. For New Zealand-based Andy, on the other hand, the understanding of organization as a set of discursive practices may be central to her developing work.

The importance of these reflections is the effect that knowing ‘my’ place and choosing ‘my’ position has on the character of the subsequent research practice. For example, writing from the margins (New Zealand and Australia, for instance) for a US management journal will require more emphasis on the explicit rigour of analysis. European reviewers will be less concerned about this aspect of the manuscript. Re-location may be possible, but it is time- and energy-consuming. If you are struggling for tenure against the standard of top-rated US journals, starting a family and settling in a new community, it may not be realistic.

### CHOICE POINT 2: THEORETICAL FRAMES

‘But what is this research for?’ Andy had been explaining the tensions between the interpretive and critical traditions in organizational discourse analysis during a guest lecture for honours students. ‘That’s a great question!’ said Andy, and the student went on: ‘With all due respect, I’m just wondering how this relates to the real world?’ Andy skipped her usually derisive comments about the ‘real’ and went straight to an example. ‘OK, so you’re sitting around a table at work. The accountant is talking rate of return, the HR bloke is doing a line on developing a learning culture and the strategy person is pressing home the importance of “competitive advantage”. Your project, the one you so passionately want to be supported, is caught at what seems like a discursive crossroads. Discourse analysis can help. How can it help? Well … Andy hesitated briefly then decided to go with her strongest pitch. ‘It depends if your aim is to control, understand or emancipate your colleagues from their various discursive blinders.’

The second question to ask is how will we frame the study. What theoretical framework will we use? Framing is about connecting to an intellectual community. One way to explore this question is to consider the purpose of the study (Stablein, 1996). At a broad level, and at the risk of some simplification, we follow Habermas (1971) and suggest that the organizational sciences are built on three core purposes: a technical interest in control, a practical interest in action-oriented meaning-making, and an emancipatory interest in human autonomy and responsibility. Pursuit of these diverse purposes produces the three traditions or frames from which to undertake research: the positivist, interpretive and critical traditions,
respectively. The critical tradition always depends on research in the positivist and interpretive traditions, but adds the important corrective of attention to power relations. The positivist and interpretive traditions tend to accept existing power relations.

Critical scholars have found that exploring the power relations involved in the construction of meanings, and in the connection of meanings to organizational practices, provides valuable insight. While in the sections below we will present some examples of content analysis that draw on the positivist tradition, organization discourse as a field draws almost exclusively on the interpretive and critical traditions (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Heracleous & Hendry, 2000; Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

Framing is an important choice point. The dimensions discussed above powerfully shape such a choice. As the stories of our Andy character make clear, one’s choice of frame will be shaped by institutional, disciplinary and geographic contexts and biographical concerns. The particular research community will play a part here.

Research communities tend to be reproduced by key authors. Such authors may be on the advisory boards of key journals and regular speakers and guests at conferences. Their work carries with it some authority to speak and some resources through which to speak. These provide researchers facing the somewhat bewildering variety of potential framings with established intellectual positions to appropriate. By way of illustration we discuss below the frames provided by three prominent authors working with narrative resources in the field of organizational discourse.

Research positions in narrative discourse analysis

Narrative analysis forms a sub-field of organizational discourse (OD) studies. The substantive focus of research varies widely across a range of organizational topics and issues, for example, strategic management (Barry & Elmes, 1997), organizational change and innovation (Deuten & Rip, 2000; Feldman, 1990), and managerial practice (Ng & de Cock, 2002). Positionings are, as Davies and Harré identify (1990), sets of discursive practices. In this case, such practices include the researcher ‘voice’, the background theoretical resources, the substantive research topic, one’s orientation to research subjects, and relations with one’s audience. Narrative analysis in organization discourse studies includes at least three strong positionings in these terms. We briefly discuss these positions via well-cited examples produced by three prominent authors in this field, namely, David Boje, Yiannis Gabriel and Andrew Brown.

STORY LIBERATOR – BOJE David Boje’s path-breaking case study of Disney Corporation provides a strong positioning for the critical narrative analyst in organization discourse. Published in the Academy of Management Journal, the article institutes a researcher’s position that regards work organizations as being oppressive and exploitative structures. Their central features are practices, including storytelling practices, that deny and marginalize the skills and efforts of the many for the benefit
of the few. Drawing on archive and secondary literature sources, Boje’s article moves between official company discourse, non-official commentaries and theoretical texts to detail the various controlling practices (including particular kinds of storytelling) used to institute, shape and reproduce the Disney Empire. For example, Boje discusses Walt Disney’s paternalist narrative of the firm as a ‘family’ while at the same time paying workers below market rates (Boje, 1995, p. 1014). Theoretical support for this critical positioning is drawn from a wide range of sources, and Boje provides a brief biographical sketch of his own ‘conversion’ from functional organization researcher to sceptical critical analyst:

As the analysis proceeded … I began to see how the stories I grew up accepting about Walt Disney and his Magic Kingdom were being resisted by marginalized accounts. I therefore began to shift from a ‘functional’ analysis (how stories sell) to a more sceptical one (how one side of a story masks another). (1995, p. 1008)

Through his work Boje provides an entry point for researchers to do narrative-based discourse analysis where power, inequality, oppression and exploitation are the substantive subjects of studies in organizational discourse.

STORY THERAPIST – GABRIEL While not necessarily at odds with Boje’s work, Yiannis Gabriel’s psychoanalytic-leaning critical narrative research (1995, also 1991) provides an alternative positioning. Rather than explore the interdependence of power and organizational storytelling, Gabriel’s work highlights the subversive, resistive and downright unmanageable character of storytelling in organizations. Storytelling here is a particular practice that rebuffs, momentarily at least, rationalization, organizational control, oppression and exploitation. The researcher’s positioning is with ‘the people’, who, by dint of their ability to gossip, dream and appropriate story resources, are never far from turning management practice into objects of amusement and cynicism. While we might identify Boje’s positioning as one of critical organizational conscience and story liberator, Gabriel’s position is more therapist, confidante or voyeur. The position’s emancipatory interests are in supporting workers and managers by celebrating the pleasure of subversive storytelling.

The researcher may become a fellow-traveller on a fantasy, sharing its emotional tone, seeking to expand it, enrich it, and ultimately sustaining its disengaged, wish-fulfilling qualities. This is the approach of one eager to appreciate a good story and willing to free-associate around it. It is the approach which I adopted. (1995, p. 401).

In terms of theoretical resources, the strength of Gabriel’s researcher position – and where it also differs from that provided by Boje – is its use of folkloric, literary and psychoanalytic traditions. For Gabriel, stories are not everywhere, but rather they constitute very specific forms of organizational discourse. Their value is largely therapeutic. While Gabriel’s researcher position is one of story celebrant, he also retains a residual role as organizational therapist. Here stories and dreams (1995) become material for the therapist craft of attempting to change people’s attachment to, and identification with, destructive organization practices and relations.
STORY ANALYST – BROWN There are some important points of contrast between Boje and Gabriel’s positionings and that provided by our third author, Andrew Brown. As a point of difference, Brown’s work with narrative draws on the social psychology of Karl Weick (1995). The upshot is that Brown’s reading of narrative is less directly political than Boje’s and draws from a different psychological tradition from that of Gabriel. Narratives for Brown are the form that people’s cognitive sense-making takes as they individually and collectively struggle to understand and successfully enact the complex situations in which they find themselves. Narratives do carry forward particular interests and extend or defend the hegemonic positions of particular groups (Brown, 1998). But this is a latent rather than a deliberate strategy or tactic and more likely an effect of routinized and habituated modes of making sense.

In a series of papers that explore sense-making and narratives in particular organizations (Humphreys & Brown, 2002), public inquiries (Brown, 2000; Brown & Jones 2000) and change processes (Brown, 1998), Brown and his collaborators assert an interpretive analyst’s position. The purpose here is to contribute to our understanding (note the difference from Gabriel and Boje) of how narratives are produced and used. Such a positioning has some similarities with those found in positivist science. For instance, the narrative analyst tends to be removed from the ‘action’ and speaks from ‘above’. Yet such a position is not entirely secure. Recent challenges to positivist science, and the importance of researcher reflexivity, prompt Brown to make the following notes in a section of one paper in which he analyses the Report of the UK Allitt Inquiry (2000). It provides useful insights into the problematics of researcher positioning in narrative analysis. Brown identifies the Allitt Inquiry Report as an artful text designed to persuade readers of a particular narrative. He argues that such a narrative seeks to absolve Allitt’s medical colleagues of blame and maintain the legitimacy of the medical profession. In the methodological section of the paper, Brown makes the same claim for his own text: ‘It is explicitly acknowledged that this paper is an artful product designed not just to inform but to persuade, and that the illusion of objectivity is not more than an authorial strategy, i.e. illusory’ (2000, p. 50).

Brown follows this with comments that highlight some tensions over what is required to perform the interpretive analyst’s position:

That an acknowledgement of this effect has now become a condition (at least in certain European journals) for a scholarly audience to received interpretive work as authentic and credible (Jeffcutt, 1994), is an interesting symptom of how conventions governing the representation of qualitative research have altered in recent years. (2000, pp. 50–1)

Brown’s comment identifies some loss of security or legitimacy over the interpretive analyst’s position. The issue is one of equivalence. If the researcher claims that the targets of analysis are artfully-produced political documents that seek to defend particular interests, then equivalence would demand that we ask what interests artfully-researched documents defend or serve. In his article Brown offers little to guide us at this point. But his broader response might be that the authorities that support research at least attempt to guarantee ‘a minimum of counter-intuitive and counter-conventional theory’ (Brown, 2000, p. 67).
In sum, we have identified the taking up of a researcher position as a core practice in the doing of research. Such positions are created afresh when we begin research work. Taking a researcher’s position involves taking up one or a mix of what we have termed theoretical perspectives, interpretive frames or paradigms. These are made available to us in the work of prominent scholars in a particular field of inquiry. We have argued that even within a sub-field, such as narrative analysis in OD, multiple and variably contradictory positions are available for the doing of discourse analytic research in organization studies.

**CHOICE POINT 3: STRATEGIES OF INQUIRY**

‘I don’t know how you can read that stuff’, said Michelle, grimacing as she pointed to Andy’s copy of Discipline and Punish (Foucault, 1991), ‘public disembowelling and all that. What has all that historical stuff got to do with politics now? How can you relate it to what you’re doing on anti-racism in Aotearoa?’ ‘OK’, agreed Andy, ‘Yes it is revolting. But how come at that time everyone thought disembowelling was OK, and now we mostly would think it was grotesque and completely unjustifiable? How come people used to think slavery was OK, or think that seizing Maori land is OK or that racism is OK? Foucault is trying to figure out how we can analyse what is happening in these situations, how we come to see certain truths as self-evident. What is it we are taking for granted now about “race” and racism? How does it affect our strategies to change organizations?’ ‘Right, but that’s history isn’t it?, asked Michelle. ‘Are you doing history? I thought you were looking at racism now.’ ‘Yes, well I am, I’m interviewing people. But I’m still trying to analyse how come we take certain ideas for granted, and how that affects our strategies.’

At this third choice point a researcher must generate a research strategy. According to Denzin and Lincoln, this involves a ‘flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms first to strategies of inquiry and second to methods of collecting empirical material’ (2000, pp. 21–2). This phase of the research process is also described as methodological as it ‘anchors’, in Denzin and Lincoln’s words (2000, p. 22), the researcher’s question, standpoint, epistemology and theoretical framework in specific empirical sites. Decisions are made here about what we could call ‘operationalizing’ research questions, deciding on a field of inquiry and on methods of collecting and analysing data.

In conducting discourse analysis, it is critical at this juncture to be clear about how ‘discourse’ will be defined and treated. A wide range of types of research use ‘discourse’ as data – that is, they use verbal and visual material, such as interview transcripts or organizational documents. In such research ‘primary’ data (e.g., interview transcripts) are typically distinguished from ‘secondary’ data (e.g., organizational documents). In many types of discourse analysis, this distinction is problematized. ‘Secondary’ data (e.g., organizational documents) may be treated as of primary interest, or they may be treated as on the same plane with ‘primary’ data (e.g., interview transcripts), where both are regarded as examples of organizational discourse. A research strategy for ‘discourse analytic’ research (Burman &
Parker, 1993) will foreground the discursive element to the study, looking at discourse as a phenomenon in itself, as a form of meaning-making or as communication. Another possibility is to theorize ‘discourse’ in ways that completely re-frame the way it is used to carry out research – as in Foucauldian research, discussed in this section.

Michel Foucault’s work has been hugely influential in triggering the new interest in discourse in organizational studies, and has informed a wide range of work that draws on a Foucauldian idea of discourse to theorize phenomena. Foucault’s work has pushed the boundaries of what we take to be ‘discourses’: they go beyond the idea of ‘language’ to include forms of knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations inherent in this knowledge. These social practices include language but they go beyond the verbal or linguistic.

It is not easy to operationalize ‘discourse’ in the Foucauldian sense (Sawyer, 2002). In his earlier work, discourses are relatively narrowly conceived, based around official writings and records (Foucault, 1972, 1991). In later work, as in the History of Sexuality (Foucault, 1978) and in later seminars and interviews (Foucault, 1988, 1996), discursive practices are framed in a much more open way as ‘technologies of the self’, so that discourses are the condition for all social experience.

Foucault saw discourse analysis as the ‘exercise of a perspective’ in ‘analysing sociopolitical relations’. This is rather different from simply applying discourse analysis ‘methods’ or seeing discourse as a kind of data.

By comparison with other interpretive, semiotic or broadly social constructionist approaches to organizational analysis, Foucault specifically refuses ‘analysis couched in terms of the symbolic field or the domain of signifying structures’ in favour of an analytic model of war or battle: ‘relations of power, not relations of meaning’ (Foucault, 1980, p. 114). Foucault is interested in questions of what discourse does rather than what it means. The implication for organization scholars is that an analysis of organizational discourse is inseparable from an analysis of power relations.

Roy Jacques’ study, Manufacturing the Employee (1996), is akin to Foucault’s classic historical studies (Foucault, 1970, 1978, 1994) in that he takes a particular discursive formation – ‘American management discourse’ (1996, p. xii) – and tracks it over time. To carry out an ‘archaeology’ of this ‘archive’ (Foucault, 1972) means collecting samples that will make up the data set. Jacques relates his research design to his experiences as a management practitioner, student and academic in the USA. For him, the samples are historical management texts, more specifically texts emerging from ‘industrial-era US values’ (1996, p. xiii). His
genealogical work, like Foucault’s, creates a ‘history of the present’ (Foucault, 1991) which shows ‘contemporary management knowledge’ to be – rather than a set of universal best practices arrived at through progress in organizational science – ‘a culturally and historically specific way of thinking about work and society’ (Jacques, 1996, p. vii). The critical issue is not to produce new historical material, but to organize the archive ‘in a way that may contribute to thinking differently about problems’ (1996, p. x). This strategy has several implications: Jacques argues that seeing this discourse in historical context shows how limited it is, for managers as well as academics, for confronting issues of the present. He also argues that ‘contextualizing the history of management as culturally bound up with the Euro-American tradition’ (p. xiv) allows us – from inside and outside this tradition – to produce ‘many localized stories’ of management in the place of ‘one cultural system’ (p. xv).

A Foucauldian archive strategy tends to focus on broad discourse formations in which ‘official’ knowledges and truth regimes are implicated along with associated organizational practices (Hollway, 1991; Townley, 1994). Joanna Brewis has also used management texts as her archive in studying ‘knowledge on sexual harassment’ (Brewis, 2001, p. 37). Like Jacques, her strategy is to position her archive – contemporary harassment knowledge – as ‘no more and no less than a historical artefact, rather than some kind of enduring truth about modern organizational life’ (2001, p. 38). The difference is that she ‘historicizes’ her archive by an analysis of her texts within the wider contemporary discourse of sex, considering how identities and power relations are discursively constituted by ‘the particular way sexual harassment is spoken, written and thought about within harassment knowledge’ (p. 37). Brewis strongly emphasizes the distinction between a Foucauldian approach to analysing the archive, which sets out to problematize the truth regimes within which we ourselves are implicated, and a more traditional critical stance, where intellectuals considers themselves to be in a privileged position to comment on the archive and to uncover its ‘truth’. In arguing that harassment knowledge may reproduce the very positions of harasser and recipient that practitioners may be setting out to abolish, Brewis resonates with feminist Foucauldian scholars who set out to upset identities – especially gendered identities – through discourse analytic work, often turning the focus on feminist discourse itself by way of auto-critique (Butler, 1990; Weedon, 1987).

A key aspect of Foucault’s radical idea of discourse is to extend analysis from language to bodies, practices, identities and subjectivities. In Foucault’s own work, the discursive construction of the body can be studied from the historical archive but, more recently, ethnographic case studies have been used to include contemporary data such as in-depth interviews and observation in the research design. Pei-Chia Lan’s study of the body in cosmetics retailing compares two ethnographic case studies of service workers (Pei-Chia, 2001). Her work exemplifies the importance of the theoretical context for Foucauldian work. Arguing that a Foucauldian theory of ‘the microphysics of labor control in regards to constructing workers’ bodies’ (2001, p. 83) is required for an adequate theoretical and empirical analysis of the labour process, she explicitly splices labour process
theory (LPT) with Foucauldian theory in her research design. Setting out to challenge the ‘blindness to the body’ in LPT, Pei-Chia selected case studies based on service workers because typically they ‘interact with customers via their bodily performances’ (2001, p. 83). By choosing cosmetic retailers, she intensifies still further the focus on the body, as this work explicitly revolves around the physical appearance of both customers and workers. She draws on Foucault’s theory of self-discipline, integrating it with studies of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) to depict workers who ‘voluntarily exploit their own bodies’ (Pei-Chia, 2001, p. 91, original italics).

Foucauldian methodologies have also been developed to include life history research (Middleton, 1993), extended ethnographic case studies (Kondo, 1990) and studies based on interviews and or observations of specified populations (Austrin, 1994; Tretheway, 1999). Careful attention to power relations and broader discursive contexts, and the use of radical conceptions of discourse to de-naturalize contemporary knowledges, distinguish these as Foucauldian strategies of discourse analysis.

**CHOICE POINT 4: METHODS OF COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

Andy Andrews felt apprehensive as she looked around at the unfamiliar audience. She wondered if she wasn’t a bit of an impostor at the discourse analysis seminar. Everyone else there was from the arts faculty, and they had quite a different take on ‘discourse’. As she listened to the first presenters, she started to get interested. These linguists had some great techniques for collecting data. They were analysing actual conversations for instance, interactions in their organizational contexts. They were recording meetings and putting microphones on factory workers to track their conversations over a day. This was much more specific stuff than you usually found in management research. And their analysis was detailed too – right down to who interrupted who, and the kinds of words they used. It was amazing how much they could explain about work relationships out of analysing one short exchange. Hmmm – her mind started to spin with speculations. This seemed to be quite positivist, realist stuff – could the techniques be used for analysing discourse from a more interpretive perspective? Was she going to have to study linguistics or could she just appropriate some methods? Would that be cheating?

At this choice point the researcher decides on methods of collecting and analysing empirical materials. Although in Denzin & Lincoln’s research process model this is presented as one point (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, pp. 20–1), in practice both data collection and analysis may be iterative and emergent. New sites or types of data may open up, and early forms of analysis may suggest incorporating new analytic methods later on to make sense of emerging data patterns. Denzin and Lincoln take the position that ‘data’, rather than pre-existing for the researcher to discover and ‘collect’, is created by the researcher through interaction with sites and through interactive practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 633). The choices of data types and analytic techniques in ODA requires careful thought. Key questions include
how data is defined or framed as ‘discourse’, what ‘discourse analysis’ may involve in terms of commitments to theories of discourse, and what is its relationship to other social phenomena such as organization, identity and power.

Some genres of discourse analysis are traditionally associated with various specific types of data and data analysis – content analysis, for instance, is strongly associated with published texts, and the collection of organizational stories frequently provide data for narrative analysis. However, innovations in ODA are frequently being produced by new combinations of data and analytic methods. For example, Anne Opie has collected transcripts of teamwork discussions, which would traditionally be analysed using some form of linguistic and conversational analysis, and has instead used a foucauldian approach in tracing the interaction of professional discourses and their professional and political consequences (Opie, 1997, 2000).

‘Organizational discourse analysis’ has two main ‘perspectives’ on data collection and analysis:

• theorizing all social practices as discursively constituted and thus as potential data for discourse analysis (as in foucauldian perspectives); and
• taking a new interest in discourse in its more traditional sense – as language use in organizational contexts.

While the two perspectives may be combined, our focus in this section is on the second – on discourse as text. This may be on writing, perhaps transcription of spoken language, less frequently visual imagery. Language has been a traditional focus of research in fields such as linguistics and communication studies, which provide a depth of expertise in both theorizing and analysing language. In these fields, specific analytic techniques pay close attention to texts as language in use, as opposed to the more broadly interpretive use of texts as data in qualitative research. Here we discuss data collection and analysis from two of the most influential perspectives on language in organizational research – content analysis and critical discourse analysis.

**Content analysis**

In organizational studies the term ‘content analysis’ is sometimes used in a very wide sense. Traditional content analysis looks at the communicative aspects of texts, setting out to systematically and objectively identify their characteristics (Titscher et al., 2000). In other words, content analysis seeks to reveal what is ‘there’ in a text – to describe its ‘manifest content’ (Berelson, 1952, also cited Titscher et al., 2000, p. 57). This kind of content analysis is a realist project by which the contents of published materials – usually media texts or organizational documents – are assessed through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. On the most basic level, it determines the presence of certain words and contents in texts.

The ‘classical’ form of content analysis is the quantitative version (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, pp. 785–6). But there has been a more recent proliferation of
‘qualitative content analyses’ that are difficult to separate from other forms of text analysis. Content analysis could be stretched to include any methods ‘which somehow approach texts by means of categories’ (Titscher et al., 2000, p. 55). It refers to the coding of ethnographic material, for instance, in a study of the culture of oil rigs (Collinson, 1999), and to the analysis of interviews in a study of how welfare supervisors cope with stress (Erera-Weatherley, 1996). In the latter case, content analysis is described as a variant of ‘open coding’, a term originally associated with the first stage of grounded theory analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and now used as a more general term for coding of qualitative data.

A distinction can be made between content analysis in the sociological tradition, which ‘treats text as a window into human experience’, and the linguistic tradition, which ‘treats text as an object of analysis in itself’ (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p. 769). In the context of ODA, it is the linguistic tradition we draw on. For example, the content analysis research carried out by Carmelo Mazza and Jose Luis Alvarez (2000) on the business press lies within this linguistic tradition. It sets out to analyse the communicative effects of the texts. It uses both quantitative and qualitative content analysis to look at a specific management issue: ‘how the business press creates, diffuses and legitimates management theories and practices’ (2000, p. 574). The preliminary data set consists of all articles on human resource management (HRM) from two key Italian business newspapers in the period 1988–96.

Quantitative analysis, presented in graphed formats, provides evidence for conclusions on questions such as the sources of HRM knowledge in the media. Peaks in frequency of articles on HRM are related to ‘the wider debate on corruption’ in Italian organizations, both by reference to ‘well-known’ recent public events that coincided with fluctuations in the publication of HRM-related articles, and via a reading of the articles themselves (2000, p. 577). Qualitative analysis of the data ‘focuses on the relations between the words in a text’ (p. 576) and ‘reconstructs’ (p. 578) the legitimization of HRM methods by showing how they are linked in the media texts with business success.

‘Content analysis’ of organizational data is attractive to many organizational researchers and audiences because it can be carried out within a familiar positivist research framework, and need not require re-theorizing of either discourse data or of discourse analysis. And because many media and organizational texts are now easily accessible in electronic formats, computer-based forms of analysis of very large data sets is now much more feasible and correspondingly seductive.

**Critical discourse analysis**

Within the field of linguistics itself, new uses of discourse analysis are being hotly debated. While traditional analytic methods are criticized for their failure to couple close linguistic analyses with social theory, on the other side of the spectrum there is criticism of ‘studies which pronounce on the nature of discourses, without getting down to the business of studying what is actually uttered or written’ (Billig, 1999, p. 544) – a challenge which can be made to current trends in ODA. Linguistic approaches offer a wide range of methods for ‘getting down to the business’ of
analysing the data of workplace interaction (Stubbe et al., 2000), and linguists are increasingly taking an interest in workplace data (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) offers a range of methods that can be used to collect and analyse data in organizational research. Norman Fairclough, the most prominent exponent of CDA, argues that ‘discourse analysis should best be regarded as a method for conducting research into questions which are defined outside it’ (Fairclough, 1992, p. 226), and that CDA is ‘critical’ in the sense of a ‘commitment to progressive social change’ (Fairclough, 2001, p. 230). Fairclough’s own micro-analyses of a wide range of discourse – interviews, pamphlets, advertisements, mass media, packaging, and policy documents (Fairclough, 1992, 2001) – are placed within the context of changes in the broader discursive formations of contemporary Britain: the commodification of educational discourse (Fairclough, 1992); the discourse of New Labour (Fairclough, 2001); and the language of the new capitalism (Chiapello & Fairclough, 2002; Fairclough, 2000).

In his discussion of data collection, Fairclough uses the linguistic concept of a ‘corpus’, a series of discourse samples which can give adequate information about the ‘archive’ (Fairclough, 1992, p. 227). Using his example of research into quality circles, the corpus might consist of video recordings of meetings, audiotaped interviews and organizational documents. Because the corpus is usually extensive and linguistic analysis is often very detailed, careful selection of examples from the corpus is critical. Fairclough advocates a focus on ‘moments of crisis’ which problematize or de-naturalize discursive practice, spotlighting points of change or power struggle (1992, p. 230).

Fairclough draws on a range of analytic methods related to linguistics, distinguished by close and detailed analysis at a number of levels of discourse, from defining social problems to paying close attention to lexical items (see his exemplary analysis of a government green paper on work, Fairclough, 2001). While analysis at all these levels is not required in any one discourse analysis project, Fairclough’s work offers not only a menu of possible methods but an insistence that the researcher must be aware of the complex relationships between language and social processes in collecting and analysing discourse as data.

**CHOICE POINT 5: PRODUCING RESEARCH TEXTS**

Andy’s knees were knocking. He nodded to the chairperson thanking her for the invitation to speak. He stood up, cleared his throat a little and started, quietly at first, then slowly building the volume until his voice filled the small room. His song, a waiata learned from friends and colleagues, opened his conference paper. It seemed to make statues of his fellow conference goers. He sang two lines and as he began the third his colleagues at the rear of the room stood and joined him. Curving their voices into one, their song spoke of home, family and the pursuit of knowledge.

Doing of research involves a complex set of often highly embodied practices (as our Andy narrative above suggests), including the creation of what Denzin calls
the ‘public text’ (2000, p. 23), that is reports, papers, theses, presentations and performances. Such texts may seek to make their contribution to the welfare of clients and sponsors and may be for their eyes and ears only. Academic research texts are grounded in the ethic of public contribution to a field of knowledge where publication is in the public domain.

Producing and deconstructing the public text

The making of a public (research) text is both a creative and political process, particularly in a relatively new field such as organizational discourse (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). The substantive foci of the research in the field remain relatively broad, and methodological debates are ‘in-process’ (Oswick et al., 2000). Some disorder and conflict is inevitable as contributors draw on a range of analytical resources, some of which feature competing or conflicting assumptions and practices. The published research text can be regarded as a site where the ‘appropriate’ conventions are supported, and what ‘counts’ as research is established. The major cleavage in OD is between the critical and interpretive research traditions (Heracleous & Hendry, 2000). A key tension between these fields is the extent to which critical reflexivity over the production of knowledge becomes a textual feature of the public text. Some of the features of this are highlighted below with respect to work that draws on deconstruction.

Deconstruction, as Marta Calás and Linda Smircich (1999) note is centrally concerned with reflexive and critical investigation of the practice of knowledge production. While not a method of research as such, deconstruction can be regarded as a form of textual, philosophical and political analysis that attempts to identify how texts function in ways that stabilize meanings and practices in the face of the ‘messiness’ of organizational life and the more general instability of the process of meaning-making. Writings that take up this mode of analysis explicitly use the public research text as the site of engagement, and are involved in attempting to challenge and intervene in established knowledge.

While the ‘taxonomy urge’ (Chia, 1995) is a frequent target of deconstruction, we can nevertheless identify two forms of writing that draw on deconstruction. Each takes a different approach to the question of whether the public text should include an engagement with its own textuality.

Far and away the largest group of works that ‘apply’ deconstruction in organization studies take the field’s canonical studies texts or particular organizational texts such as policies, speeches and stories as their target (Farmer, 1997; Learmouth, 1999; Martin, 1990; Mumby & Stohl, 1991; Peterson & Albrecht, 1999; Rhodes, 2000). A compelling example here is Dennis Mumby and Cynthia Stohl’s deconstruction of a organizational story about the different treatment received by male and female secretaries in a US bank:

With female secretaries he [the manager] dealt in a crisp professional manner, softened with banter and jokes; with me [the male secretary] he pretended that I wasn’t really a secretary at all. It wasn’t as if he ignored me; every half hour or so he would emerge from his office to talk sports with me and exchange dirty jokes. (Mumby & Stohl, 1991, p. 325)
Mumby and Stohl argue that deconstruction can show how people’s effort to ‘make sense’ in organizations, which has some very real material effects (e.g., the different treatment of men and women), is ordered by a system of absence and presence. In this case:

The ‘male secretary’ presents organizational members with a simultaneous presence (male [executive]) and absence (female secretary) which cannot both have meaning (*make sense*) and preserve the ongoing system of privilege and marginality characteristic of contemporary organizations. (Mumby & Stohl, 1991, p. 326)

The boss’s over-attention to the man’s masculinity – the half-hourly sports and dirty jokes sessions – is then a way of alleviating anxiety over this simultaneous presence and absence.

Despite this, the work does not extend analysis to its own textuality and thus, from a critical position, the text can be said to harbour an inconsistency. Deconstruction, read from within an interpretive frame, involves ‘helping the reader to understand the extent to which the [target] text’s objectivity and persuasiveness depend on a set of strategic exclusions’ (Kilduff, 1993, p. 15). But read from within a critical frame, deconstruction would also challenge the reader to explore the strategic exclusions that produce the analytical text itself. While some might regard this as simply an issue of genre, the critical impulse is to explore the *significance* of genre differences.

What does this difference tell us? Some might say that the interpretive tradition, with its liberal humanist accompaniments, has extracted deconstruction’s critical purpose – domesticated deconstruction. If we were looking to deconstruction for a radical renegotiation of the familiar positivist-influenced textual formats of organization studies, then the ‘encounters’ to date are disappointing. Such works use conventional normalizing practices. These tell us what we *must* learn to do in presenting research and the voice – the familiar authorial/legislative voice (Bauman, 1987) – in which this should be done (see Chia, 1994; Kilduff, 1993; and Noorderhaven, 1995 for examples of work on canonical texts). This all too familiar authorial position remains untroubled by the content of the research. There is no acknowledgment that such a voice is itself an effect of a system of strategic exclusions.

There are deconstructive works where non-conventional textual features appear. These probe the limits of traditional textual production and point towards the fragility in the authorial position (see Burrell, 1992, 1993, 1996; Calás & Smircich, 1991; Game, 1994; Jacques, 1992; Letiche, 1996; O’Doherty, 2002; Rhodes, 2000). In some cases such features have been ‘smuggled in’ once the familiar textual practices have been rehearsed. What we learn from this textual ‘geography’ is that producers of public texts must affirm (sedate?) the eye/ear of a journal’s accepted audience position, and then tempt, provoke or seduce that eye/ear with other ‘pleasures’: a poem (Chia, 1994), a fictional piece of dialogue (Calás and Smircich, 1991; Jacques, 1992), or a biographical aside.

In Joanne Martin’s (1990) celebrated and well-cited deconstruction of the CEO’s comments on an employee’s calendared caesarean section, this is done in an intriguing fashion. Martin tells readers of the journal article of her indecision over including some features in the text. She advises readers to skip the section if they are uncomfortable with psychosexual topics:
The analysis below discusses sexuality in an overt manner quite alien to the usual forms of organization discourse. Readers uncomfortable with this approach may find this section of this paper particularly inappropriate or ill-founded. I was tempted, therefore, to delete this material rather than risk dismissal of the entire paper. However, resistance may well be a natural reaction to the discussion of a taboo topic. I decided to include this section because any resistance experience may be conceptually germane and potentially a useful source of insight into the ways sexual taboos operate in the context of organizational discourse. (Martin, 1990, pp. 349–50)

This is cleverly written. It ruefully affirms the appropriate sensibilities of the journal’s ear/eye, but then tempts the reader out of this position with recourse to the heroic scientific subject position. Here knowledge is pursued beyond disgust or discomfort.

Ann Game’s short autobiographical deconstruction of her position as head of her university department (Game, 1994) locates her as the object and subject of her text. She describes her new positioning by her colleagues as ‘mother’. The piece neatly contrasts with Mumby and Stohl’s paper (1991), discussed above. In contrast, Game’s text might seem rambling and confused. This is just the point! It is a disruptive text. Taking the licence offered by the invitation to write in this way, the article moves back and forward between organizational problem, philosophical position and personal experience. It seeks to show both how the structure of meaning is folded into each of these spaces and practices, and how the deconstructive approach challenges this process through the use of non-conventional textual practice. For example, Game concludes her piece with this kind of gesture. In the last paragraph of the paper she writes: ‘Organizations are stories. I told a story [in the paper] about the organization of my work, a story which is itself an organization of this particular piece of academic work’ (Game, 1994, p. 50). This might have been the last sentence of the article, but then she returns and adds a postscript (a practice normally reserved for more informal discourse). This offers a disruptive reading of her own paper. She suggests that even with non-conventional formats established systems of thought reappear as the desire for a ‘clever end’ or for ‘a safe theoretical conclusion’, and that even if she would wish to undo such practices she has not ‘left behind the position of pure academic’ (Game, 1994, p. 50).

In sum, we have argued that the production of the public research text is a critical ‘choice point’ in the doing of research. Producing such texts involves learning the appropriate disciplinary practices. As a way of illustrating this learning we have discussed the limits of experimentation and change in the format of the public text. Even within the sub-field of ODA identified by the term ‘deconstruction’, only on very rare occasions have scholars effectively ‘dropped their tools’ (Calás & Smircich, 1999, p. 664, quoting Weick, 1996).

BRINGING IT ALL BACK TOGETHER

We opened this chapter by posing the seductively simple question ‘What’s involved in doing research in organizational discourse?’ Our response has been to follow Denzin and Lincoln’s phases of research practice, and engage each by
discussing research work from a sub-field of ODA. Through this process we hoped to ‘show’ as well as ‘tell’ what’s involved in research in the field. A key feature of Denzin and Lincoln’s approach, and a key reason for drawing on it, is the emphasis it places on contextualizing the researcher. For us, reflection on the institutional, geographical and academic context in which research takes place is a crucial feature of research practice, and developing this ‘between the lines’ knowledge is crucial to the task of doing successful research. The disciplinary practices and conventions of academic writing tend to guard against the inclusion of such understandings in finished texts. But developing an engaged and constructive understanding of how this context already shapes research practice enriches such practice and provides a sound basis for critically interrogating the boundaries, limitations and assumptions of work produced by others.

At the same time we recognize that the approach taken above has a number of limitations. Readers may regard Denzin and Lincoln’s format as overly stylized and unrealistic (2000, p. 12). We would agree. Any typology of research practice is but a set of headings for organizing material and does not necessarily identify research practice as it is played out. Other readers may question the overly tidy way we have ‘packaged’ our discussion of the purpose of research. Again, we agree. Such purity is analytically useful but may limit the development of research practice. Some readers may wonder if the sub-fields we discuss are indeed those most representative of ‘organizational discourse analysis’. We would regard this as an empirical question that we did not set out to answer. Instead, our choice of sub-fields was driven by our concern to show some of the diversity of research approaches available in organizational discourse. In turn, readers may challenge our selection of work drawn from the sub-fields we have chosen. Our aim was not to provide a balanced review of work in a particular sub-field, but to choose works that offer readers a snapshot of the field as it relates to a particular ‘phase’ of research practice.

For those new to research in organizational discourse, the field’s rich diversity can seem confusing and anxiety-invoking. At this point we can only hope that this chapter in this Handbook has been of some assistance in addressing this. Another response, which Victoria Grace neatly encapsulates below, is to treat this ‘unsettledness’ as space for creativity and exploration:

The need to develop a method for each specific project … is an extremely creative part of the research process, involving a hermeneutic engagement simultaneously with the research questions, the theoretical agendas, the politics of the research context, and understandings of ‘discourse’ and what one is doing in text. (Grace, 1998)

In other words, what counts as methodology in ODA is not ‘settled’. The excitement of epistemological instability is one of the features that has drawn some researchers to discourse analysis in organization studies. Another attraction is the conceptual promise of the field itself, as it has provided an invigorating means of engaging some of the endemic theoretical puzzles of organization studies: the qualities of change, identity, communication, control, power and hierarchy. The burgeoning of higher education and the explosive growth in business education has also played a part in the development of ‘organizational discourse analysis’.
Scholars from ‘outside’ conventional business education have brought discourse analysis theories ‘in’ to business schools.

Some of the promise of ‘organizational discourse’ is to be found in its provision of space to raise these issues about the context of research work (Hardy et al., 2001). As we have noted, the first question to ask as a researcher is ‘who am I?’ Such questions locate us as historical, political and socially situated subjects, and begin to raise our awareness of the way our ‘choice’ of interpretative frame, research strategy, the method of data collection and analysis, and the form of research presentation is already shaped (and can be contested).

Our engagement with the various moments that make up the doing of research in organizational discourse has highlighted the somewhat unnerving but nevertheless creative state of the practice of research in this field. Such a state of affairs invites and, we suggest, requires reflexivity in the practices of doing research.

NOTES

1 One of the distinctive features of the organizational discourse is that to varying degrees (depending on the ‘sub-field’) it raises the issue of how particular genres of academic writing are intimately connected to the production of certain effects, e.g. claims as to the validity of statements. We include our ‘Andy Andrews’ narratives here to illustrate this point. ‘Organizational discourse’ also provides some space for the incorporation of unconventional genres into academic studies of work and organization, and following the path-breaking efforts of colleagues in previous handbooks (Calás & Smircich, 1996; Ellis & Bochner, 2000) we include these short narratives here to support this tradition.

2 The public inquiry investigating the deaths and injury of 13 children while at Grantham and Kesteven General Hospital in 1991. A junior nurse, Beverley Allitt, was convicted of charges of murder in relation to these deaths.

3 This sentence is quoted from a 1997 pre-publication version of Grace’s paper, but has been edited from the final version.

REFERENCES


