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## **ORGANIZATIONAL DISCOURSE: DOMAINS, DEBATES AND DIRECTIONS**

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### Abstract

Interest in the analysis of organizational discourse has expanded rapidly over the last two decades. In this article, we reflect critically on organizational discourse analysis as an approach to the study of organizations and management highlighting both its strengths and areas of challenge. We begin with an explanation of the nature of organizational discourse analysis and outline some of the more significant contributions made to date. We then discuss existing classifications of approaches to the study of organizational discourse. These fall into two main categories: classifications by level of analysis and classifications by type of method. We then argue that both of these approaches are inherently problematic and present an alternative way to understand the varieties of approaches to the analysis of organizational discourse based on *within* domain and *across* domain characterizations. We conclude with a discussion of the challenges that remain in the development of organizational discourse as an area of study and point to some of the opportunities for important and unique contributions to our understanding of organizations and management that this family of methods brings.

Following the linguistic turn in the social sciences (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000a), “organizational discourse has emerged as a prominent area of analysis in management and organization studies” (Oswick, 2008, p. 1052). Early evidence of the growing interest among management scholars in the discursive analysis of organizations can be seen in the proliferation of special issues and themed sections in a number of different journals exploring the nature and potential contribution of organizational discourse (e.g., Boje, Oswick, & Ford, 2004; Grant & Hardy, 2004; Grant & Iedema, 2005; Grant, Keeney, & Oswick, 2001; Iedema & Wodak, 1999; Keeney, Oswick, & Grant, 1997; Keeney, Marshak, Oswick, & Grant, 2000; Oswick, Keeney, & Grant, 1997, 2000a). In addition, a number of special issues have also appeared considering the topic in conjunction with specific areas of organizational inquiry, including identity and discourse (Ybema et al., 2009); discursive perspectives on organizational change (Grant, Michelson, Oswick, & Wailes, 2005; Oswick, Grant, Michelson, & Wailes, 2005; Oswick, Grant, Marshak, & Wolfram-Cox, 2010); organizational texts and agency (Putnam & Cooren, 2004); discourse and epistemology (Oswick, Keeney, & Grant, 2000b); discourse and practice (Oswick et al., 2007); discourse and time (Sabelis, Keeney, Oswick, & Ybema, 2005); the social construction of leadership (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010); and discourse and organizational resistance (Putnam, Grant, Michelson, & Cutcher, 2005). More recently, as organizational discourse analysis has become more developed as a method, the topic has become increasingly common in the top journals in the field with more than 30 articles published on the topic in *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, and *Organization Science* in the last decade (e.g., Green, Lee, & Noria, 2009; Hardy & Maguire, 2010; Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004).

The study of organizational discourse encompasses a range of approaches that share an interest in the role of discourse in the constitution of organizational life. Organizational discourse analysis “highlights the ways in which language constructs organizational reality, rather than

simply reflects it” (Hardy, Lawrence, & Grant, 2005, p. 60). A discourse, in turn, is a structured collection of texts (Parker, 1992) along with associated practices of textual production, transmission and reception. Through the production and dissemination of texts that accrete to form a discourse, organizational elements are brought into being, are modified, or disappear.

The nature of organizational discourse, how the texts which make them up are produced, and why some texts are more influential than others, are the sorts of general questions that are of interest to researchers who study organizational discourse. It is this focus beyond simple language-use that differentiates organizational discourse analysis from other forms of language-based inquiry, such as the “study of vocabularies” (Loewenstein, Ocasio & Jones, forthcoming). At its most basic, the study of organizational discourse is about understanding the processes of social construction that underlie the organizational reality studied by researchers using more conventional methodologies (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Organizational discourse studies are not therefore replacements for more traditional approaches, but are, rather, complementary to them.

Although increasingly popular, organizational discourse has nevertheless been criticized for overshadowing other perspectives on organizations and organizing (Cunliffe, 2008; Reed, 2000). It has also been claimed that it is poorly defined and encompasses too many concepts and approaches (Iedema, 2008) and that it is too focused on language at the expense of context (Deetz, 2003). In their recent review of the field, Alvesson & Kärreman (2011a) are critical of the contribution of “organizational discourse analysis” and they contend that “discourse continues to be used in vague and all-embracing ways” (p. 1121). In this article, we will explore the nature of organizational discourse analysis, outline the boundaries of what can sensibly be called discourse analysis, discuss some of the main contributions to date of this approach, summarize the criticisms of organizational discourse analysis, and point to the significant additional work that needs to be done for this method to fulfill its potential.

Through a critical examination of the growing field of organizational discourse analysis we accomplish three important tasks. First, we provide an accessible introduction to organizational discourse analysis for individuals who have had little exposure to this family of methods, explain why a researcher might want to use these methods, and provide examples of some of the excellent work that has been done to date. Second, we highlight the problems with existing ways of categorizing approaches to organizational discourse analysis and outline an alternative framework for understanding forms of discourse that we believe avoids many of the limitations of existing approaches. Finally, we highlight some potential future areas of contribution and the challenges that must be overcome before organizational discourse analysis can reach its potential.

### **Organizational Discourse Analysis**

Interest in the analysis of organizational discourse has grown out of a broader acceptance of social construction (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Gergen, 1999) as a legitimate epistemological perspective in the study of organizations and management (e.g., Morgan & Smircich, 1980). The linguistic turn that swept across social science focused attention not simply on language as an important research topic, but more specifically on the role of language in the constitution of social reality. The result in organization and management theory has been an increasing willingness to see organizational phenomena as the result of processes of social construction carried out through the production and dissemination of texts of various kinds. This process of social construction in and around organizations is the focus of organizational discourse analysis.

We would, in fact, argue that some sort of weak form of social constructivism is now the most common philosophical position in the field. More importantly, this new epistemological position underpins a number of the most important and active areas of research in organization and management theory including institutional theory, studies of sensemaking, and much of the work on organizational identity. The recognition of the importance of meaning and the

constructed nature of organizational reality (Morgan & Smircich, 1980) has led organization and management scholars to a new appreciation of the role of social constructs like identity and institution in organizational life and resulted in large bodies of research exploring how these sorts of social objects come into being, change, and disappear. It is in understanding these processes that organizational discourse analysis has proven to be most useful and to provide important and novel insights.

This is, of course, a dramatic change from the positivism that dominated the field prior to the 1980s. A look back at the literature shows an intense struggle as the hegemony of positivism and the quantitative methods that it championed were challenged in the 1970s and 1980s. By the late 1980s, this struggle was more or less over and the two opposing epistemological perspectives in management research had reached an uneasy but workable peace. While the odd tussle continued to appear in the literature (e.g., Donaldson, 1996), most of the field seemed willing to live and let live and the major journals became much more open and flexible in terms of what constituted acceptable methods and epistemological perspectives.

It was the appearance and acceptance of this alternative view that drove an increasing interest in qualitative methods more generally, and organizational discourse more specifically. While any interpretive approach has as its foundation the belief that the social world is intrinsically meaningful and therefore more appropriate for interpretation than counting (Winch, 1958), forms of organizational discourse studies focus directly on disentangling the processes through which the social world of organizations is constituted. The result of this has been an increased interest and appreciation for organizational discourse analysis in organization and management studies.

In this section we will consider the ramifications of this fundamental change in our field. We will begin by considering social constructionism as an epistemology in order to highlight the very different perspective that entered the field at this time. We will then discuss the nature of

organizational discourse analysis as an important method in the exploration of processes of social construction. We will conclude the section with a discussion of some of the important empirical studies that have been conducted and highlight the contributions of these studies.

*The Linguistic Turn in Organization and Management Scholarship*

As we mentioned above, in the humanities and social sciences the twentieth century heralded a radical departure from views of language as a simple mirror of nature (Rorty, 1979). The linguistic turn, at its most basic, was a radical challenge to the idea that language is merely a conduit for communicating information. Instead, language (defined broadly) was recognized as being fundamentally implicated in the production of social reality. That is, “[t]he linguistic turn suggests discourses produce and mediate organizational and social phenomena” (Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, 2011, p. 1247).

Traditionally, language had been seen as a passive descriptor of pre-existing objects resulting from the development of appropriate labels to facilitate effective communication about them. Language from this viewpoint is “true” when it correctly reflects reality and “false” when it does not. Reality is therefore always the arbiter of claims to truth in this view. A number of philosophers spent considerable time and effort developing philosophical frameworks that explained this relation of language and reality. This view reached its zenith in the 1920s and 1930s with the development of logical positivism by the group of European philosophers referred to as the Vienna Circle. Work in this vein also led to Karl Popper’s work on falsificationism (Popper, 1959), the perspective that has had arguably the greatest impact on organization studies.

But the post-war era saw a decisive shift in focus with language increasingly seen as performing a very different role: rather than just reflecting a pre-existing reality, it began to be understood as having a profound role in the actual constitution of what we experience as a pre-existing and independent social reality. From this point of view, we do not encounter a pre-

organized reality to which we attach labels, but rather actively construct reality through meaningful interaction. As Deetz (2003, p. 422) succinctly explains:

The ‘turn’ as a possibility grows out of the birth of social constructionism and ‘perspectivalism’—the recognition of the constitutive conditions of experience and the de-centering of the human subject as the center or origin of perspective. ... [S]pecific personal experiences and objects of the world are not given in a constant way but are outcomes of a presubjective, preobjective inseparable relationship between constitutive activities and the ‘stuff’ being constituted. Thus, the science of objects was enabled by a prior but invisible set of practices that constituted specific objects and presented them as given in nature. And, the presence of personal experiences as psychological required first a constituting perspective, invisible and prereflective, through which such experiences were possible. A social/historical/cultural/intersubjective ‘I’ (a point from which to view), constituting activity in relation to the world, thus always preceded either the objects of science or the psychological ‘I’ of personal experience.

Meaningfulness is a characteristic of human action, not a characteristic of reality itself. This fundamental change in understanding initiated a new era in the social sciences where social reality is understood as being dynamically constructed through human action.

The work of linguistic philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein played a key role in this radical shift. Of particular note is his seminal volume *Philosophical Investigations* published posthumously in German in 1953 (Wittgenstein, 2009). In it, he addresses the conceptual complexity of language and semantics. Wittgenstein engages the reader in a series of “thought experiments” whereby linguistic meaning is shown to be inherently variable. Other influential early work that highlighted the role of language as constitutive of social reality include writings by Shutz (1967), Berger and Luckmann (1967), and Winch (1958). All of these writings continued the development of a theory of social construction based on this new view of language.

The analysis of the role of language in social construction was particularly influenced by various versions of structuralism that became prevalent beginning in the 1960s (see Sturrock, 2003). Structuralism emphasizes the way in which systems of meaning, such as those inherent in language, emerge from the relationships among words. Thus words are bound up in webs of other words that infuse them with meaning and the linguistic value of words is determined by their relationship to other words and to more complex texts; meaning emerges from the structural



connections among concepts and words. The impact of these ideas is still being felt in organization and management theory (Lounsbury & Ventresca, 2003).

Based on this understanding of the emergence of meaning from systems of words, various forms of structural analysis were developed to study these patterned connections. For example, the structural linguist de Saussure (1983) was highly influential in the development of a structuralist approach to semiotics. This understanding of language and meaning also provided a foundation for post-structuralists (or “superstructuralists”) in the 1960s and 1970s such as Foucault (Burrell, 1988), who has been identified both as a structuralist and a post-structuralist, and Derrida, who developed the method of deconstruction to demonstrate the irreducible textual ambiguity that exists in any text due to the existence of multiple meanings and interpretations (Kilduff, 1993).

While the effects of the linguistic turn took some time to find their way into organization studies (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000a), they have now had a very significant impact on thinking about the nature of organizations. Organizations are no longer objects to be measured and counted, but also social constructions to be interpreted and deconstructed. Linguistic methods in organizational studies reflect the basic premise that organizations are linguistically created and shaped and therefore draw on the whole range of available forms of language-based analysis.

In organization and management theory, this led to an appreciation and interest in the social construction of organizations and in all of the related issues of power, knowledge, and meaning that lie at the core of organization studies. Instead of a view of language as a conduit for communication, language becomes something much more complex and dynamic. It becomes an arena where organizational members communicate, while simultaneously providing a space for the processes of organizing upon which organizations depend. As Putnam and Cooren (2004: 324) describe, “the construction of social and organizational reality involves the production of oral, written, and even gestural texts, which participate in the constitution of organizations”.

The influence of scholars such as Wittgenstein, Foucault, and Derrida have now found their way into the most prestigious journals (e.g., Mauws & Phillips, 1995; Townley, 1993; Kilduff, 1993), and the basic ideas that they promoted are taken for granted by many organizational scholars. Linguistic approaches to organizations focus attention on the socially constructed and processual nature of organizations, and on the actual processes through which organizations are produced, maintained, and sometimes disassembled. Given this complexity, language warrants particular attention within organization studies and has received ever-increasing attention as researchers explore this important aspect of organizational phenomena.

At the same time, some scholars are expressing concern that the focus has moved from organization as an object to be measured to the narrow study of language in an organizational context while missing the primary lesson of the linguistic turn:

Most of these studies look at texts and talking rather than looking through discourse to see the specific ways the world is produced. The problem of language as the ‘mirror of nature’ that preoccupied the positivists was replaced by simply focusing on the ‘mirror’ as an object. The central ‘turn’ issues of how different worlds emerge, the power relations in this emergence, and the mechanisms of protection, got lost. (Deetz, 2003, p. 423)

In other words, some scholars feel that organizational discourse analysis may have overshot and become too concerned with language at the expense of retaining a clear focus on organizing and its effect. We will return to this problem in a later section.

### *Organizational Discourse Analysis*

In attempting to define discourse analysis, it is helpful to start by defining what we mean by the term “discourse”. Unfortunately, like many of the fundamental concepts in social science, the meaning of discourse is highly contested and ambiguous. Van Dijk, in the first chapter of his two-volume introduction to discourse analysis, explains the problem as follows:

It would be nice if we could squeeze all we know about discourse into a handy definition. Unfortunately, as is also the case for such related concepts as ‘language’, ‘communication’, ‘interaction’, ‘society’ and ‘culture’, the notion of discourse is essentially fuzzy. (Van Dijk, 1997, p. 1)

Our challenge, then, is to develop an understanding of discourse that is useful in understanding organizational discourse analysis out of this essentially “fuzzy” construct. Fortunately, while the problem still remains, some progress has been made in developing an agreed upon definition at least in the context of organizational discourse analysis.

Part of the difficulty, of course, is that discourse is a term that is commonly used in everyday speech. When used in this way, it has two different meanings. First, it can refer to “language in use” and where it is more or less synonymous with “conversation” or “dialogue”. The focus in this usage is generally on public speech, or on spoken language more generally, and it highlights the interactive interchanges that occur when people communicate directly with one another.

But the term “discourse” is also used in a broader sense in common usage. In this second sense it refers to interrelated sets of ideas and the ways of expressing them such as the “discourse of democracy” or Habermas’ use of the term in the title of his book “The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity”. The focus here is not so much on the specifics of the language used, but more on the coherence of the underlying concepts and ideas contained in a particular set of texts and their evolution through time. In other words, this usage focuses our attention on the fact that a certain concept or idea appears in a number of texts and they share a role in explaining the concept. Furthermore, when used in this way discourse often refers to written texts rather than talk and to the cumulative meaning of a number of such texts.

Organizational discourse analysts combine and extend these commonsense definitions. While they are interested in language in use (generally both talk and text), it is language in use *in an organizational context* that interests researchers. And while they are interested in sets of texts that are linked together by their shared focus on a particular idea as in the second commonplace usage, they are also interested in how these ideas came to be constructed in texts and how they affect the context in which they occur. Discourse analysis “therefore involves analysis of

collections of texts, the ways they are made meaningful through their links to other texts, the ways in which they draw on different discourses, how and to whom they are disseminated, the methods of their production, and the manner in which they are received and consumed” (Phillips et al., 2004, p. 636).

The texts that embody discourse come in a wide variety of forms, including written documents, speech acts, pictures, and symbols (Grant, Keenoy, & Oswick, 1998; Taylor & Van Emery, 1993). Texts are the “symbolic forms of representation (e.g., documents, books, media accounts, interviews, speeches, committee reports, etc.) that are inscribed by being spoken, written, or otherwise depicted” (Maguire & Hardy, 2009, p. 150). They thereby take on “material form and becoming accessible to others” (Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, & Robichaud, 1996, p. 7). At the same time, discourse has an existence beyond any individual text from which it is composed (Chalaby, 1996; Phillips et al., 2004). Heracleous and Barrett describe the relationship between texts and discourse as analogous to that between action and social structure: “Just as the structural properties of social systems are, according to Giddens, instantiated as social practices, so the structural properties of discourse are instantiated in daily communicative actions” (2001, p. 758). The implication of this interrelationship is that discourse analysts must examine sets of texts that describe and constitute organizational realities, as well as the complex relationships among texts and among discourses (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

The concept of discourse in this more technical sense therefore has three main dimensions (Fairclough, 1992): pieces of talk or text, the collection of texts that gives them meaning, and the social context in which they occur. In other words, discourse in this sense includes pieces of talk or text as they affect and are affected by the social context in which they appear, and by the texts and ideas they draw on and influence in turn. Discourse analysis therefore shares the concern with the meaningfulness of social life that characterizes all qualitative approaches (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Unlike more traditional qualitative methods, however, discourse analysis adopts a

different but complementary focus. It does not take the social world as it is and seeks to understand the meaning of this world for participants like, for example, ethnography. Instead, it tries to explore the ways in which the socially produced ideas and objects that populate the world come to be, or are enacted, through discourse.

This focus on the process of social construction is the most important contribution of discourse analysis. Where other qualitative methodologies work to understand or interpret social reality, discourse analysis, by focusing on interrelated sets of texts and their role in constituting concepts, endeavors to uncover the ways in which it was produced. It examines how language, broadly defined, constructs social phenomena rather than working to reveal its meaningfulness. In other words, the unique contribution of discourse analysis is that it views discursive activity as *constitutive* of the social world and focuses on understanding the processes through which the social world is produced and through which it changes.

The process of discourse analysis therefore begins with texts. Discourses are embodied and enacted in a variety of texts, but exist beyond the individual texts that compose them (Chalaby, 1996). Texts are thus both the building blocks of discourse and a material manifestation of it.

Texts are the sites of the emergence of complexes of social meanings, produced in the particular history of the situation of production, that record in partial ways the histories of both the participants in the production of the text and of the institutions that are “invoked” or brought into play, indeed a partial history of the language and the social system. (Kress, 1995, p.122)

Texts may take a variety of forms, including written texts, spoken words, pictures, symbols, artifacts, etc (Grant et al., 1998). What is interesting from a discourse analysis perspective is how they are made meaningful – how they draw on other texts and other discourses, how and to whom they are disseminated, and the ways in which they are produced, received and consumed – and what effect collections of texts have on the social context in which they occur.

But discourse analysts often use the word “discourse” in another sense. In addition to talking about discourse as a general category of phenomena, discourse analysts talk about “the discourse” or “a discourse”. When used in this way, researchers are generally referring to a particular collection of texts. More specifically, when used in this sense, they mean an inter-related set of texts, and related practices of production, dissemination, and reception, that brings an object into being (Parker, 1992). The addition of this level of analysis is one of the important differences that differentiate discourse analysis from other forms of interpretive linguistic methods.

For example, the collection of texts of various kinds, and the related discursive practices, that make up the discourse of psychiatry brought the notion of an “unconscious mind” into existence in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century (Foucault, 1965). Prior to the appearance of this discourse, there was no concept of the unconscious that could be used to understand and explain human mental processes. Since the appearance of this discourse, it is widely taken for granted (in Western countries at least) that humans have something called an unconscious and our idea of how the human mind functions has therefore fundamentally changed. The discourse of psychiatry constituted a particular social object, the unconscious, and made it available as a resource for social action. Furthermore, “Discourses that are more coherent and structured present a more unified view of some aspect of social reality which becomes reified and taken for granted” (Phillips et al., 2004, p. 644). In other words, the more coherent and structured the discourse the more reified and taken for granted the resulting social reality will be.

Discourse analysis, therefore, is the study of discourse and the collections of texts and contexts in which they occur. More formally, this “involves analysis of collections of texts, the ways they are made meaningful through their links to other texts, the ways in which they draw on different discourses, how and to whom they are disseminated, the methods of their production, and the manner in which they are received and consumed” (Phillips et al., 2004, p. 636).

Discourse analysis therefore generally involves some form of textual analysis, some sort of structured investigation of the broader discourse of which the focal texts are a part, and an investigation of the social context in which the texts appear melded together to produce useful insights into the social world.

Discourse analysis provides a useful theoretical framework, and a practical methodological approach, for organizational researchers interested in understanding the constructive role of language in organizational and interorganizational phenomena. As a theoretical framework, discourse analysis is grounded in a strong social constructionist epistemology that sees language as constitutive and constructive of reality rather than reflective and representative (Gergen, 1999). As a method, it provides a set of techniques for exploring how the socially constructed ideas and objects that constitute the social world are created and maintained. Where more traditional qualitative methodologies work to interpret social reality as it exists, discourse analysis attempts to uncover the way in which it was produced and is held in place. Discourse analysis is therefore complementary to other forms of qualitative inquiry used in organization and management theory, but adds a useful focus on processes of social construction (Munir & Phillips, 2005).

#### *Studies in Organizational Discourse*

Organizational discourse analysis “has become an increasingly popular method for examining the linguistic elements in the construction of social phenomena . . . [and] has been increasingly adopted by organization and management scholars” (Vaara, Kleymann, & Seristo, 2004, p. 3). In this section, we will discuss some of the areas where organizational discourse analysis has been most commonly applied and highlight the core contributions of the studies conducted to date. In particular, we will focus on four areas of empirical inquiry where we feel that discourse analysis has made a particularly significant contribution to our understanding of organization and management: identity, institutions, strategy, and organizational change.

In each case, the contribution of organizational discourse analysis is to highlight and explicate the ways in which important organizational phenomena are constructed. By employing a strong social constructionist epistemology to sensitize researchers to processes of social construction, and by utilizing various methods of textual analysis to unpack the discursive dynamics on which this social construction depends, organizational discourse analysis opens up and explicates the processes through which various aspects of organizational life are constituted in discourse.

*Identity.* The ways in which individuals fashion and negotiate their identities in an organizational context has been the focus of extensive attention in management research (e.g. Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This rapidly expanding body of literature grows out of an increasing recognition of the central importance of identity at work and of the complex relationship between work and non-work identities. The concept of identity has also been applied with increasing frequency to discussions of organizations themselves (e.g. Corley et al., 2006; Hatch & Schultz, 2004), resulting in a large body of work on organizational identity and on the interactions between organizational and individual identities (e.g., Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000).

Interestingly for our discussion here, research into identity has itself been subject to something of a linguistic turn in recent decades (Brown, 1997; Brown, 2001) with organizational discourse analysis being applied to a range of sub-themes in this area. These include social identity (e.g. Creed, Scully, & Austin, 2002), organizational or corporate identity (e.g. Martens, Jennings, & Jennings, 2007), national identity (e.g. Jack & Lorbiecki, 2007), and individual identity (e.g. Brown & Lewis, 2011; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). As a result, discussions of identity in organization and management research have moved from more static and essentialist definitions of identity towards conceptualizations where identity is subject to change and reformulation through discourse (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010).



In an early article, Phillips & Hardy (1997) examined the UK refugee system and focused on the discursive struggle that occurred there over the constitution of individual identities, reflecting a complex dynamic of power among different interest groups. Their empirical work used organizational discourse analysis to show that an objectively rational process being used to frame the determination of refugees as “genuine” or otherwise in fact concealed a more ill-defined process of discursive construction of multiple and competing refugee “identities”, each of which has important ramifications should it be accepted. Furthermore, they showed the role that multiple actors play in the determination of refugee status through their discursive practices. Different organizations were found to mobilize different and competing refugee identities that furthered their interests. For example, the government deployed categories of “political” refugee fleeing persecution versus “economic migrant” in search of better economic prospects. On the other hand, refugee organizations worked to discursively construct refugees as willing and able individuals who could play an equal and dynamic part in British society. These various refugee identities thus exposed different organizational interests and power effects.

Building on this work, Hardy and Phillips (1999) studied the Canadian refugee system in order to expand this focus and elaborate upon the ways in which refugees’ identities were not only produced by discourses occurring within the refugee system itself, but were also affected by broader discourses operating at a macro societal level. Therefore, broader societal discourses in Canadian society around human rights, sovereignty, paternalism and empowerment played an important role in the discursive struggles within the refugee system. They analyzed a sample of editorial cartoons to show how the societal immigration discourse contributed to the constitution of the concept of refugee. Their analysis involved categorizing the objects represented in the cartoon (i.e. the refugee, the government, the immigration system and the public) and analyzing how each cartoon worked to constitute these objects in particular ways.

There are many other important and interesting studies in this stream of research. For example, Alvesson's (1994; 2002) research into advertising executives provides rich illustrations of the way in which work-based identity is discursively constructed. In addition, the work by Anderson-Gough et al. (1998; 2000) shows how language is used as a device to control, socialize and discipline new trainee accountants into colleague-defined roles so that they go on to assume specific ideas about their professional make-up. Similarly, in a study of graduate trainees, Fournier (1998) highlights the way in which two different groups of graduate trainees at a large service sector organization used divergent identity tactics and discursive mechanisms. In a related study, Maguire, Phillips, and Hardy (2001, p. 285) explore the role of discourse and identity in the constitution of trust and control by examining "the dynamics of trust and control among members of pharmaceutical companies and community organizations in the HIV/AIDS treatment domain in Canada".

In all of this work, the contribution of organizational discourse is to highlight the enacted and constructed nature of identity and to provide tools to explore this process in different settings. In addition, the connection between identity and other constructs like control and trust are highlighted as is the interested nature of much of the activity that occurs as actors of various sorts engage in purposeful attempts to manage the processes through which identity is constructed at both the individual and organizational level. It also provides the tools to explore how the broader societal context plays a role in the construction of identity.

*Institutions.* Institutional theory has become one of the dominant theoretical perspectives in organization and management studies (e.g., Greenwood, Oliver, Suddaby, & Sahlin-Andersson, 2008). It is also one of the areas where organizational discourse analysis has been applied the most frequently as institutions "are more than persistent material practices and structures; they are also accompanied by systems of signs and symbols that rationalize and legitimize those practices" (Green et al., 2009, p. 11). This shared social constructivist

epistemology provides a clear link with organizational discourse analysis and it is therefore unsurprising that a substantial stream of studies has been carried out by scholars working in this area.

This is also an area where the theoretical connection between organizational discourse and an existing area of research has been the most clearly developed. Phillips et al. (2004) provide a foundation for empirical work in the area by presenting a discursive view of institutions and institutionalization. They argue that institutional research has “tended to focus on the effects rather than the process of institutionalization, which largely remains a ‘black box’” (Phillips et al., 2004, p. 635). They present a model of the relationship between institutions and actors that highlights the role of texts and discourse in mediating between action and institutions. They argue strongly for a perspective that recognizes the discursive construction of institutions and for a much greater attention to the texts upon which organizational reality depends.

Khaire and Wadhvani (2010) extend this argument and investigate the production of new market categories. They argue that these institutions are of particular importance to the functioning of markets and examine the process of category emergence through an original and interesting study of the emergence of the category of “Indian art”. They argue that “discourse analysis revealed how market actors shaped the construction of meaning in the new category by reinterpreting historical constructs in ways that enhanced commensurability and enabled aesthetic comparisons and valuation” (Khaire & Wadhvani, 2010, p. 1281).

Maguire and Hardy (2009) also pick up this argument but focus on deinstitutionalization. They examine the deinstitutionalization of the use of DDT as a taken-for-granted practice and the critical role of particular texts, and particularly Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, in the discursive processes that led to deinstitutionalization. Green et al. (2009, p. 11) focus on the opposite institutional process and “argue that rhetorical theory, which emphasizes a direct relationship between the language/cognition and action of actors, may help scholars to develop a symbolic or

cognitive conception of institutionalization”. They study the discourse of TQM within the American business community and apply organizational discourse analysis to unpack the rhetorical processes through which TQM came to be institutionalized. Zilber (2006, p. 281) also applies organizational discourse to institutional phenomenon and examines “the case of Israeli high tech to explore how institutional meanings are related to broad sociocultural frameworks, and how meanings are institutionalized over time and in different institutional spheres”.

Lawrence and Phillips (2004) also contribute to our understanding of the relationship between broader sociocultural frameworks and how meanings are institutionalized at a field level in their study of the emergence of the field of whale-watching on Canada’s West coast. They discuss “how changes in macro-cultural understandings of the nature of whales – from Moby Dick to Free Willy – provided the critical institutional preconditions for the development of a commercial whale-watching industry in North America” (Lawrence & Phillips, 2004, p. 690).

In all of these papers, discourse analysis provides an epistemological foundation and a methodological approach for exploring the processes of social construction that underlie institutions and institutionalization. Where much of the literature in institutional theory examines the effects of institutions on organizations, or the connections between different levels of institutions (i.e., society, field, or organization), discourse analysis adds an explanation of the processes through which institutions come into being, change, and disappear. The contribution of discourse analysis is to open up the “black box” of institutionalization and deinstitutionalization in a way that other methods of empirical investigation cannot. This is a significant addition to our understanding of institutions and provides an excellent example of the sort of contribution that discourse analysis can make to existing fields of study.

*Strategy.* Strategy was one of the earliest areas of study in which organizational discourse was applied. The focus in this stream of research is on understanding the construction of the strategy discourse, “a complex set of meanings constituting [strategy as a] body of knowledge”

and related “organizational praxis” (Mantere & Vaara, 2008, p. 341). How the discourse of strategic management came to be, which actors played which roles, and the effects of this important and highly developed discourse are the focus of organizational discourse analysts working in this area.

Much early work in this research stream was from a critical perspective (e.g., Hardy, Palmer, & Phillips, 2000), with researchers studying strategy and power using organizational discourse analysis. Knights and Morgan’s (1991) contribution is perhaps the most well-known and cited, and has led to a number of critiques of rational and objectivist accounts of strategy from an organizational discourse perspective (e.g., Ezzamel & Willmott 2004, 2008; Hendry 2000; Lilley, 2001; Pye, 1995; Knights, 1992; Jones, 1998). Knights and Morgan (1991, p. 262) “considered how strategic discourse has become dominant over the last thirty years in business schools and organizations” based on a historical account of the development and dissemination of the discourse of strategic management from its early roots in the US.

By studying the development of strategy as a discourse, Knights and Morgan are able to reveal some of what they refer to as its “power effects”. Their paper highlights how strategy is infused with masculinity and rationality, and is inextricably connected to the discourses that legitimate market economies. It is not therefore surprising that strategy has become a powerful signifier of good management practice worldwide and that all types of organizations have embraced it. They answer an important question: how did it come to be that “every organization must have a strategy” (Knights & Morgan 1991, p. 251)?

Knights and Morgan continue their discussion of strategy in a second paper focusing on the effects of strategy discourse (Knights & Morgan, 1995). They illustrate their arguments “at the sectoral level by examining the development of strategic discourse in banks and insurance companies and at the organizational level by providing some case study material on IT strategy in a life insurance company” (Knights & Morgan 1995, p. 191). Here, the discourse of strategy’s

claim to universal applicability is challenged. In fact, Knights and Morgan's work shows that it can only be thinkable under certain market conditions and within certain cultures. In their case, as the life insurance market changed, the firm was unable to follow its IT strategy and instead was forced to constantly re-align with broader market forces. By looking at the local and negotiated meanings attached to "corporate strategy" in the workplace, Knights and Morgan demonstrate the way strategy is far from a homogenous and concrete set of ideas, but instead exists as a heterogeneous, fragile and fractured discourse.

More recently, Ezzamel and Willmott's (2008) longitudinal study of "StitchCo" continued the exploration of the constitutive role of organizational discourse in strategy. More specifically, they examined the disciplinary and power effects of strategic and accounting discourses and show how the production and dissemination of strategic discourse is enacted, for example, in the use of new accounting technologies and the introduction of teamworking. Their findings show how discursive practices served to reconstruct StitchCo and its employees through the introduction of new accounting metrics and teamworking, paying attention to expressions of shop-floor resistance as well as the opposition mounted by senior StitchCo staff.

In another more recent paper, Mantere and Vaara (2008) examine the question of participation in strategy from an organizational discourse perspective. They first pose an important question from the perspective of the traditional strategy literature: what are the reasons for the lack of participation that is so common in strategy work? They then reframe this in terms of organizational discourse analysis and ask what "kinds of discourses impede participation in strategy processes" and, conversely, what "kinds of discourses can then promote more widespread participation" (Mantere & Vaara, 2008, p. 341)? In order to develop an answer to this question, they study "organizational strategizing" in 12 professional organizations based in the Nordic countries and identify three discourses that discourage participation and three discourses that encourage participation.

In the growing body of literature examining strategy from a discourse perspective, much of the focus to date has been on the way in which the discourse of strategy has developed and the effects of the resulting discourse of strategic management on organizations and individuals. The contribution of organizational discourse analysis in explicating the role of strategy discourse is threefold. First, it provides a counterbalance to the tendency to see strategy as a natural and unavoidable organizational activity. Instead, it highlights the constructed and enacted nature of strategy. Second, it reframes the discussion of strategy to include a discussion of the role of power in the constitution of strategic discourse and the power effects of that discourse. The highly rationalistic discourse of traditional strategy research and practice often obscures the important power effects of discourse. Finally, it connects the discourse of strategy to the sets of practices that are associated with and support this important discourse.

*Organizational Change.* Connecting organizational discourse analysis to an organizational change perspective highlights how the production and dissemination of texts influences the way in which organizational change takes place (Ford & Ford, 1994; Sackmann, 1989). From this perspective, studying organizational change becomes the study of “how managers ‘construct’ meanings (i.e., interpretations of an organization) and disseminate them to others in an effort to influence those others about a new strategic direction” (Sonenshein, 2010, p. 477). Given the general acceptance of the importance of communication in organizational change, it is not surprising that a significant body of work therefore exists using discourse perspectives to investigate issues of organizational change (see for example Morgan & Sturdy, 2000; O’Connor, 1995, 2000).

A good example of this sort of research can be found in a recent study by Sonenshein (2010). In this study, he contributes to the substantial literature that builds on Lewin’s (1951) classic three-stage theory of organizational change where change is posited to occur through unfreezing, change, and refreezing. However, he argues that existing work examining the role of

meaning in this process has important limitations for two reasons: first, “it studies only certain *types* of meanings constructed by managers and employees” and, second, “it overlooks the perspective and responses of *recipients* of change” (Sonenshein, 2010, p. 478). In order to avoid these problems, the author takes a different approach:

By broadening investigation of the types of meanings actors construct during strategic change to extend beyond simply positive and negative, and by accounting for a wider range of actors constructing meaning (managers *and* employees), I reexamine critical assumptions in change implementation research. (Sonenshein, 2010, p. 479)

More specifically, he conducts a field study of a *Fortune 500* retailer implementing strategic change. The results affirm many of the insights of existing research but also highlight a number of unexpected results. In particular, he found that not only do managers need to produce new discourses to unfreeze the existing organization, they must also maintain existing discourses in order to maintain stability.

In an interesting example of research that combines a concern with both institutions and change, Suddaby and Greenwood (2005) study a merger between an accountancy and law firm using organizational discourse analysis. They focus on “profound institutional change” by examining the competing organizational discourses that were deployed in each firm and that resulted in competing “institutional vocabularies” – that is, key identifying words and referential texts that conveyed the competing “institutional logics” of what it means to be a professional in each of the respective firms. This was augmented by a study of the politically contested development of different theorizations of how the merger should proceed.

In order to examine the authoring and dissemination of the change strategy, Suddaby and Greenwood studied the transcripts of testimony to the American Bar Association Commission to Study Multi-Disciplinary Practice and to the Securities and Exchange Commission Public Hearings of Auditor Independence. In the first stage of the analysis, the researchers focused on “manifest content” – that is, the explicit vocabularies present in the text. The second stage focused on classifying “latent content” – that is, the implicit meaning – using a range of



contemporary and classical rhetorical categories that indicated the source of the texts' persuasive force. It is important to note that these formalized texts were taken to be proxies for the rhetorical strategies that were played out in the merging professional firms.

Heracleous and Barrett (2001) provide an interesting example of a discourse approach combining both action and structure. In their article, they look at discourses as dualities involving both action and structure and the role of discursive "deep" structures in facilitating or hindering organizational change. They do so by exploring the characteristics of discourses of various stakeholder groups and the ways in which these discourses shape organizational change brought about by the introduction of electronic trading in the London Insurance Market over a five-year period. By deep structures they refer to:

[R]hetorical enthymemes that guide actors' interpretations and actions. By virtue of this influence, they are thus central for gaining a deep understanding of the trajectory and success or otherwise of intended and actualized change processes. (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001, p. 755)

Applying discourse analytic techniques to data collected as part of a longitudinal, interpretative case study, they examined interview transcripts, media reports, market publications, memorandums and strategy plans, and transcribed ethnographic observations as texts. Their methods of discourse analysis included the exploration of texts for central themes and intertextual analysis. For the authors, intertextual analysis is applied not only within, but also across, texts "arising from the hermeneutic concern of searching for emergent patterns through continual movement between part and whole" (p. 761). Their approach to discourse uses rhetoric and hermeneutics to illustrate the importance of context and temporality in change processes.

Their findings reveal discursive shifts at both the communicative action and deep structure levels. Different stakeholder groups engendered different discourses. For example, brokers and underwriters were found to resist the change initiative of electronic trading championed by the market leaders. Their research presents a view of organizations as comprising fragmented, competing discourses with complementary discourses arising only infrequently. This

is reflected by discursive conflict between stakeholder groups concerning the change processes, where even when fragile agreement to the change was presented at the communicative action level, this did not yield results and meaningful cooperation as it was based on potentially conflicting deep structures.

While there are a variety of ways in which organizational discourse analysis has been used in the study of organizational change, the general contribution is similar. While the traditional change literature highlights the importance of meaning and narrative in change processes, existing approaches have no way to explore the processes of meaning construction and reconstruction that underlie change. Organizational discourse analysis provides the tools to explore this aspect of organizational change and therefore has the potential to provide important additional insight into this important area of management.

### **Types And Forms Of Organizational Discourse Analysis**

The variety of approaches to organizational discourse analysis found in the literature has been categorized in a number of ways. For some, the focus has been upon different levels of analysis ranging from localized micro-episodes of real-time interaction to macro-level grand narratives (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000a; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). For others, organizational discourse is better delineated on the basis of the focal point of analysis (such as identity, strategy, or power relations) or the particular method of discursive investigation employed, e.g. critical discourse analysis, conversation analysis, or narrative analysis (Heracleous, 2006; Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Phillips & di Domenico, 2009). In this section we provide a critical review and synthesis of the extant classifications and offer a new way of framing discursive contributions to the field that highlights what we believe needs to be done to move this area of research forward.

First, and most commonly, it is possible to think of organizational discourse “as operating at different, but non-competing, levels ranging from a micro-focus on the ‘fine grain’ use of language (e.g. situated talk or a close reading of a single text) through to a macro-emphasis on the

‘big picture’ of perspectives and ideologies (i.e. grand narratives and meta-discourses such as feminism and neo-liberalism)” (Oswick, 2012). This approach to categorization is the most common and has had a profound effect on how researchers think about the variety of approaches to organizational discourse. In particular, this level-based delineation has proven useful in helping researchers to clarify their discursive focus and articulate their point of discursive emphasis by reflecting upon whether they are interested in the study of detailed and narrowly prescribed phenomena (e.g. specific language-use *in* organizational settings) or more broadly framed forms of inquiry (e.g. general language-use *about* organizations) (Oswick & Richards, 2004).

Potter and Wetherell (1987) have deployed the notion of levels in their classification of four versions of discourse analysis: (1) the micro-discourse approach; (2) the meso-discourse approach; (3) the grand discourse approach; and, (4) the mega-discourse approach. Similarly, Boje et al. (2004) draw a distinction between the micro-level (focused on the analysis of interactional episodes or extracts of written material), the meso-level (e.g. the exploration of discursive patterns or stories across accounts or events within organizational settings), and the macro-level (broader meta-based institutional and social themes and trends derived from a relatively abstract level of engagement).

The extremes of organizational discourse are captured in Alvesson and Karreman’s (2000b) distinction between discourse analysis with a small “d” and discourse with a big “D” where “discourse” with a lower case “d” is characterized as being “myopic” (i.e. a close-range interest in a local-situated context) and “Discourse” with a capital “D” is described as “grandiose” (i.e. a long-range interest in a macro-systemic context). More recently, “small d” and “big D” have been re-positioned as “text-focused studies” and “paradigm-type discourse studies” (Alvesson & Karreman, 2011a). Johnstone (2008) has developed a similar level-based dichotomization of discursive work. She distinguishes between “discourse” in the singular

(which she refers to as  $d^s$ ) and “discourses” in the plural (referred to as  $d^p$ ). In effect,  $d^s$  equates to small “d” inasmuch as both are concerned with the study of local language use (i.e. text-focused analysis) while  $d^p$  can be characterized as being concerned with wider patterns of language and is therefore synonymous with big “D” or “paradigm-type studies” (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2011).

An alternative way of conceptualizing organizational discourse analysis is to divide it up on the basis of methods (Dick, 2004; Grant et al., 1998; Grant, Hardy, Osrick, & Putnam, 2004; Grant, Hardy, & Putnam, 2011; Boje et al., 2004). When viewed in this way “organizational discourse” can be seen as simply an umbrella term for a range of discursive methods (Phillips & di Domenico, 2009). The different methodological emphases employed have included: conversation analytic approaches (Fairhurst & Cooren, 2004); rhetorical analysis (Cheney, Christensen, Conrad, & Lair, 2004); narrative analysis (Boje, 2001); deconstruction (Kilduff, 1993; Kilduff & Kelemen, 2004); intertextual analysis (Allen, 2000; Keenoy & Osrick, 2004); and, critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992, 1995).

The reason for this methodological variety is simply that the approaches that make up organizational discourse analysis have evolved from an array of different disciplinary traditions (Grant et al., 1998). It has been suggested that the inherent methodological variance exhibited within the field of organizational discourse analysis can be “attributed to its theoretical and disciplinary antecedents emanating from the broader domain of discourse analysis: discourse analysis is informed by a variety of sociological, socio-psychological, anthropological, linguistic, philosophical, communications and literary-based studies” (Grant et al., 2004: 1). So, for example, conversation analytic approaches (Psathas, 1995) can be traced back to the ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967) which itself was nested within micro-sociology. Equally, forms of intertextual analysis (Allen, 2000) are derived from Bakhtin’s work in literary studies (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986) and, as the naming suggests, Foucauldian discourse analysis (Arribas-

Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008) originates from Foucault's work which draws upon history, philosophy and social theory (Foucault, 1972, 1980, 1984).

For some commentators the variety of methods deployed and the diverse disciplinary origins of organizational discourse analysis are problematic because they inhibit the coherent development of the field (see for example: Van Dijk, 1997). By contrast, and as we will demonstrate later, we believe that the diverse and diffuse nature of the field is in fact a source of strength which has the potential to be further exploited. Furthermore, the separation of organizational discourse on the basis of levels and methods is misleading. We contend that the two are inextricably linked insofar as the level of analysis largely dictates the methodology employed and vice versa. Moreover, we would posit that four categories of "level-based methodological approaches" (i.e. at the micro-level, the meso-level, the macro-level and the multi-level) have dominated the discursive analysis of organizations and organizing in an unhelpful way.

At the micro-level (or small "d"), doing discursive work has predominantly manifested itself as a form of conversation analysis (Psathas, 1995; Silverman, 1993) and when applied to the study of organizations this has tended to involve treating organizing as an accomplishment of real-time interaction (Cooren, 2001; Llewellyn & Hindmarsh, 2010). A particularly popular variant of this "organizing *as* situated interaction" approach is the study of strategy via the interrogation of processes of micro-strategizing in the meetings of senior managers (Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Cooren, 2007).

At a meso-level, the discursive study of organizational phenomena has largely relied upon the application of narrative analysis (Reissman, 1993). Here discourse is primarily seen as constituted through the accounts of events offered by organizational stakeholders rather than the observation and interpretation of real-time interaction. In effect, stories are the unit of analysis. Narrative-based versions of organizational discourse analysis have proven to be very popular (see

for example: Czarniawska, 1997; Gabriel, 2004). In particular, narrative analysis has been used to investigate aspects of worker identity, managerial identity and professional identity (Brown & Humphreys, 2006; Watson, 2009; Ybema et al., 2009).

At the macro-level, discursive work tends to draw heavily on philosophy, politics, history and social theory. The most popular form of inquiry being what has been termed “Foucauldian discourse analysis” (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). Foucault’s body of work (e.g. Foucault, 1972, 1980, 1984) has been extensively deployed in organization studies (see for example: Alvesson, 1996; Cunliffe, 2008; Deetz, 1992; Dick, 2004; Knights & Morgan, 1991; Townley, 1993). This form of analysis focuses on the study of “discursive formations” (Deetz, 1992), considers the broader abstract and semantic aspects of discourse(s), and “how discursive practices constitute both objectivities (social institutions, knowledge) and subjectivities (identities and actions)” (Cunliffe, 2008, p. 81). In this regard, Foucauldian-style analysis is consistent with “paradigm-type discourse studies” (Alvesson & Karreman, 2011a) insofar as it is concerned with “discerning the rules which ‘govern’ bodies of texts and utterances” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 123) rather than the detailed analysis of a specific text or an episode of real-time interaction.

Multi-level discursive work attempts to overcome the problematic delineation of the macro, meso and micro-levels of analysis. A good example of a multi-level approach is Phillips and Brown’s (1993) use of “critical hermeneutics” that examines five aspects of text (i.e. the intentional, referential, contextual, conventional, and structural) using three phases of interrogation (i.e. social, textual, and interpretive). However, the method most typically used to integrate levels is “critical discourse analysis” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2010; Fairclough, 1992, 1995, 2005; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 1993). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) starts from the premise that “a piece of discourse is embedded within sociocultural practice at a number of levels; in the immediate situation, in the wider institution or organization, and at a societal level” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 97). And, as such, a discursive event can be

simultaneously interpreted as “a piece text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 4). Based on these three different levels, undertaking CDA involves: (i) the examination of the language in use (*the text dimension*); (ii) the identification of processes of textual production and consumption (*the discursive practice dimension*); and, (iii) the consideration of the institutional factors surrounding the event and how they shape the discourse (*the social practice dimension*). In addition to incorporating different levels of discursive analysis, CDA foregrounds the interrogation of the hegemonic and contested nature of discourse(s) with respect to privileged and marginalized accounts and perspectives (Keenoy et al., 1997). It is this “critical” element of CDA that has made it a popular approach among organizational scholars interested in studying power and power relations (Hardy & Phillips, 2004; Leitch & Palmer, 2010; Mumby, 2004).

A summary of the four level-based approaches is provided in Table 1. In addition to highlighting the connection between levels and methods, this table offers some insights into the common areas of organizational engagement (i.e. the emphasis and focus of analysis). It is important to stress that the methodological approaches, data sources, and organizational foci discussed should be regarded as the predominant examples of method, process and point of application. For example, there are other methods available – such as intertextual analysis as a multi-level approach (Allen, 2000) – that are far less commonly used by organizational researchers (Broadfoot, Deetz, & Anderson, 2004). Equally, some of the methods identified can be applied in less conventional ways. So, for example, narrative analysis can take the form of “auto-narrative analysis” (Ellis, 1997) where the source of data is oneself rather than an interview respondent or pre-existing written material.

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Having stratified discourse into method-based levels of analysis we would contend that this form of delineation is problematic in two ways. First, it fails to adequately acknowledge the way in which the different levels are mutually implicated to the extent that they are difficult to meaningfully disentangle. This arises because localized forms of language-use (either verbal interaction or written texts) are simultaneously informed, shaped, enabled and constrained by the macro-discursive landscape in which they occur (Keenoy & Oswick, 2004). Equally, it is the aggregation and accumulation of situated workplace interaction (via informal conversations, interviews, meetings, briefings and presentations) and the production and consumption of local texts (e.g. emails, minutes, newsletters, circulars, guidance notes, and operating procedures) that collectively shape, inform, and even constitute, “big D” or paradigm-type discourses. Hence, the “macro-discursive” is embedded in the “micro-discursive” and vice versa (Oswick & Richards, 2004). Moreover, the discursive accomplishment of organizing is multi-faceted and multi-layered (Boden, 1994; Cooren, 2001) and it is therefore difficult to separate into discrete levels of analysis.

The second, and related, problem with the categorization of organizational discourse based on levels is that it encourages an unhealthy preoccupation with the dichotomization of “small d” and “big D” (see for example: Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011a, 2011b; Bargiela-Chiappini, 2011; Iedema, 2011a; Mumby, 2011). This has constrained the forms of discursive analysis that have been undertaken to the degree that researchers have tended to focus their attention on either fine-grained analyses (i.e. “small d”) or big picture analyses (i.e. “big D”) at the expense of work which meaningfully engages with both.

It is possible to argue that CDA, as a multi-leveled approach, overcomes the problem of working with discrete levels by simultaneously engaging with micro and macro-discursive phenomena. However, there are two significant limitations on the utility of CDA to the study of organizations. First, although CDA has been widely applied in organizational research, the



emphasis has tended to be on micro-level engagement (i.e. language-use within organizations) rather than on the macro-level (i.e. the wider social practices which inform discursive events). In particular, the macro-discursive part of CDA has typically involved a rather brief and cursory treatment of context. There is also relatively little agreement on what constitutes the “context” in CDA (Hardy, 2001). This problem is exemplified in Leitch and Palmer’s (2010) analysis of 55 empirical studies published on CDA in organization studies since 2000. They comment: “By examining a database of CDA studies of organizations we found 16 different uses of the central concept of *context*, covering five broad groupings (context as *space, time, practice, change* and *frame*)” (p. 1210).

The second, and related, constraint on the multi-level credentials of CDA is the fact that it is a single approach applied to different levels. In effect, it only directly analyzes discourse in one way and from one overarching perspective (i.e. a critical stance) albeit that there is a shift of levels. In this regard, it is less ambitious than, and not as potentially valuable as, the simultaneous application of different approaches across levels. An example of going beyond the multi-level application of a single method is Barry, Carroll, & Hansen's (2006) analysis of a single piece of text which attempts to combine and synthesize the outcomes of a “close literary reading” by one author with the “context-oriented analysis” of another author. We will consider this example in greater depth later, but for now it offers an illustration of two different approaches that are applied independently, and at different levels, and then brought together.

Leitch and Palmer (2010) have claimed that there is “a confusing array of studies claiming some degree of CDA status” (p. 1094). Their response is to argue for more definitional clarity and they propose a series of nine methodological protocols aimed at introducing greater rigor and consistency into the application of CDA. This approach has been challenged by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (2010) who posit:

... the way forward for CDA in organization studies should be less towards tight definitions of context or rigorous methodological protocols and more towards stronger

conceptual links between discourse, power, and other ‘moments’ of the social process that emerge as theoretical and empirical problems within organizational studies, as well as towards more versatile and porous methodologies that make space for novel, interdisciplinary research designs in the field. (p. 1214)

We find ourselves in broad agreement with the views expressed by Chouliaraki and Fairclough. Moreover, we contend that the debate regarding the future direction of CDA can be seen as a microcosm of wider concerns in organizational studies regarding discourse analysis where there have been calls for more definitional specificity, the eschewing of overly broad concepts, and a narrowing down of the range of methods which constitute organizational discourse analysis (see for example: Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011a; Iedema, 2008; Reed, 2000). In order to deepen and strengthen its contribution to the study of organizations, we believe that we need to “open up” rather than “close down” the scope and remit of organizational discourse analysis.

The process of opening up organizational discourse can be done in two ways. First, there is a need to challenge the parochialism that exists within the organizational discourse community and develop work that is both multi-level in orientation and multi-method in approach. In effect, pursuing this line of inquiry requires the development, extension and integration of different discursive methods (a “within discipline” agenda). The second way forward involves embracing a “beyond discipline” agenda and requires scholars to address the existence of a wider form of discursive isolationism (i.e. a preoccupation with the study of discourse to the exclusion of considering other forms of organizational activity and events). This latter approach involves moving beyond the comfortable and familiar territory of social constructivism and paying serious attention to aspects of materiality. We consider the twin challenges of parochialism and isolationism in the next two main sections.

### **Rethinking Discursive Inquiry: Beyond Parochialism**

There is a considerable amount of work undertaken at different levels of discursive analysis. However, beyond CDA, there is limited work that traverses the levels. Arguably, the main reason for this is that researchers are rather parochial in terms of the scope of their engagement insofar as they tend to purposefully concentrate their efforts on one level of analysis. This can be demonstrated if we look at several prominent discourse-oriented scholars. So, for example, Llewellyn's work is primarily concerned with the analysis of real-time interaction (i.e. micro-level engagement) of organizational actors using a conversation analytic approach (see for example: Llewellyn, 2008a, 2008b, 2011; Llewellyn & Burrow, 2007, 2008; Llewellyn & Hindmarsh, 2010); Brown undertakes meso-level work via the deployment of narrative analysis (e.g. Brown, 1998, 2006; Brown & Humphreys, 2002; Currie & Brown, 2003; Humphreys & Brown, 2008; Sillince & Brown, 2009; Thornborrow & Brown, 2009); and, Burrell has offered macro-level insights into the discursive constitution of organizations and organizing (e.g. Burrell, 1988, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2006; Cooper & Burrell, 1988). This tendency to focus on one level to the exclusion of others can, at least in part, be explained by researchers selectively drawing from different disciplinary traditions (e.g. micro-level analyses are extensively informed by socio-linguistics and ethnomethodology while macro-level analyses more typically draw upon philosophy, history and social theory).

The segmentation of discursive inquiry by methodological commitments and the disciplinary orientations of researchers is further compounded by issues of epistemology (i.e. what I study) and identity (i.e. who I am). Preferences based on identity and focus of study are inadvertently revealed in Jian, Schmisser, & Fairhurst's (2008) discussion of the differences between "organizational discourse" and "organizational communication". They comment: "Some organizational discourse scholars who study communication do not admit to it, and some organizational communication scholars find the multifarious meanings of discourse to be

confusing and ambiguous” (Jian et al., 2008, p. 299). In effect, different identity groups are being constructed around subjects and subject positions.

Beyond this, we would argue that there are two discernible sub-groups within the organizational discourse community. The subgroups can be distinguished on the basis of whether they foreground the “organizational” or the “discourse” part of the organizational discourse analysis (i.e. an emphasis on organizational analysis or discourse analysis). Put differently, there are communication/discourse scholars who do organization(s) and organization/management scholars who do discourse. The self-imposed delineation and compartmentalization of discursive modes of inquiry by organization scholars and communication scholars has undoubtedly constrained the development of level-spanning contributions.

Given the dominance of single-level, single-method discursive approaches, we believe that if organizational discourse analysis is to make further progress as a worthwhile area of organizational inquiry it is essential that scholars utilize multi-method approaches. The viability of combining methods has been debated by discourse analysts outside of management and organization studies, particularly within the fields of discursive psychology and socio-linguistics. Hammersley (2003) has argued for methodological eclecticism in the application of discursive methods. Focusing on “ethnomethodological conversation analysis” (Garfinkel, 1967) and “socio-psychological discourse analysis” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), Hammersley (2003) contends that “these forms of analysis should be treated as *methods* – to be used by social scientists when appropriate for the problem being investigated” (p. 751), but they are, however, often inappropriately treated “as *paradigms* – as exclusive and self-sufficient approaches to investigating the social world” (p. 751).

In a response article, Potter (2003) argues that Hammersley’s call for the mixing of methods is ill judged. He claims that there are “important sources of incoherence that can arise when mixing discourse analytic and more traditional methods” (Potter, 2003, p. 783). In

particular, he argues that discourse analytic methods have developed in a manner that is concerned with the active use of language and, as such, “mixing them with methods that presuppose a very different view of discourse is a recipe for incoherence” (Potter, 2003:785). To illustrate this, Potter discusses the limitations of attempting to combine attitudinal measurement and discourse analysis. Using the example of food and eating, he contends that attitudinal measures assume an unproblematic relationship between language and attitudes (i.e. discourse is largely unambiguous, directly represents the object/subject described, and meaningfully captures an attitude) and that as a result “particular distinctions (e.g. between ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ assessments of food – ‘I loved that pizza’/‘that pizza is lovely’) can be highly consequential and yet are blurred together in standard measures of food attitudes” (Potter, 2003, p. 785).

For us, Potter’s case against multi-method approaches is partial, decidedly conservative and ultimately not very persuasive. We would accept that some methodological combinations are potentially problematic (e.g. attitudinal measures and discourse analysis) and there are others that may be totally incompatible or incommensurable. Nevertheless, there are also many permutations that are well aligned and offer real synergistic research potential. Furthermore, we would posit that a certain amount of “incoherence” between methods is actually a good thing because it suggests that the process of triangulation is highlighting interesting discrepancies and subtleties within and across the data. In short, simply because some discursively-oriented methodological combinations are not useful is not a valid reason for completely rejecting good ones.

#### *Towards New “Within Domain” Approaches*

We have previously identified a connection between levels of discursive inquiry and methodological orientation (see Table 1). We have also established scholars’ predilection for using particular discursive methods and the existence of sub-communities (i.e. “organization/management scholars who do discourse” versus “discourse/communication

scholars who do organizational discourse”). This pervasive compartmentalization of the field is dysfunctional. We need to bridge the methodological and disciplinary delineation that exists within the field. This requires further collaboration and dialogue to promote multi-level work (e.g. connecting the micro-linguistic and macro-philosophical perspectives) and multi-method research (i.e. which integrates different discursive methods). Adopting this strategy offers the potential to transcend level-restricted forms of analysis, re-align discipline-based cliques, and generate richer organizational and discursive insights.

An excellent example of multi-level, multi-method work is provided by Barry et al (2006). They provide an analysis of event staged by a communications company specializing in organizational theater. The thrust of their contribution is methodological insofar as it demonstrates the benefits of combining an “endotextual” approach (a focus on the close reading of a text) with an “exotextual” approach (a wider context-oriented reading). Their contribution effectively spans the micro (or “small d”) and macro (or “big D”) levels. On the surface, this might appear to be remarkably similar to the prevailing multi-level approaches, such as critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992, 1995). However, the novel aspect of this work is that the three authors (referred to in the article as authors A, B and C) undertake different readings using different methods to analyze a discursive event. The authors explain the process as follows:

A and B did a generic literary close reading, focusing on structural, syntactical, metaphorical, thematic, and rhetorical elements. C worked closely from his field notes and took a more critical discursive line of inquiry by exploring issues of voice, positioning, power, status, and contestation. Once the different analyses were completed and exchanged, we had an extensive (and at times uncomfortable) discussion about similarities and differences. (Barry et al., 2006, p. 1098)

There are two significant facets of Barry et al.’s contribution that we would like to highlight. First, it involves different agents, with differing areas of expertise, applying different methods to a focal text or discursive episode. Second, the insights derived from the analyses are brought together through discussion, or perhaps what might more accurately be described as a process of “generative dialogue” (Gergen et al., 2004). We believe that Barry et al.’s approach

provides a template for future “within discipline” work insofar as it foregrounds the development of multi-level, multi-method insights and encourages organizational discourse scholars from different disciplinary traditions with different methodological preferences to work together.

### **Rethinking Discursive Inquiry: Beyond Isolationism**

In addition to the problems of parochialism, a significant impediment to the further development of the field of organizational discourse analysis is an enduring tendency towards isolationism (i.e. an unwillingness to engage with phenomena beyond discourse). In particular, organizational discourse analysts have been criticized for not paying sufficient attention to the material aspects of organizational life (Fairclough, 2005; Iedema, 2007; Reed, 1998, 2000). Indeed, Reed (2004) has noted: “Much of the intellectual inspiration and drive for the development of discursive forms of analysis in social science and organization studies has come from an avowedly anti-realist ontology and epistemology” (p. 413). Drawing upon an earlier polemic on a “descent into discourse” (Palmer, 1990), Conrad (2004) enlists the term “discoursism” to represent the tendency to focus on discourse in organization studies to the exclusion of any consideration of material reality.

The fundamental problem with ignoring aspects of materiality is that the accounts and inferences that are derived offer uni-dimensional, partial or incomplete insights into the organizational phenomena being researched. This is reinforced by Shaw’s (2010) work on leadership where he observes that “...in authentic leadership materiality has been abstracted to such a degree that it is at best a space that can be controlled, and at worst, it is elided, ignored or denied” (p. 91). He argues that the material and the social have become disconnected within research on authentic leadership and that this “disconnection is effected through a displacement of materiality; a displacement from the signficatory space of the primary order material self (the bodily self), to that which is after the fact (the over-determined space of authenticated action)” (2010:92).

Although the role of materiality has been underplayed in discursive treatments of organizational phenomena in the past, there is some evidence to suggest that it has been acknowledged and addressed in more recent work (see for example: Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009; Grant, Iedema, & Oswick, 2009; Grant et al., 2011; Leonardi & Barley, 2010; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008).

A common feature of the work that bemoans the absence of materiality in the discursive analyses of organizations, along with work that promotes the importance of realist engagement, is the rather undifferentiated way in which the relationship between discourse and materiality is handled. It is one thing to call for discursive work to embrace materiality, but what underlying assumptions are being made about the nature of “the social” and “the material” and their relative status? More specially, to what extent are discursive and realist approaches complementary or contrasting ways of exploring organizational phenomena? Or, are they mutually implicated to the point of being intertwined elements in the study of organizational objects, subjects and concepts? We propose that there are four positions that can be taken in terms of the incorporation of the material into discursive work (see Table 2).

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In effect, the “discourse *not* materiality” and “discourse *or* materiality” perspectives (see Table 2) both distance themselves from the issue of materiality as an aspect of discursive inquiry. By contrast, the “discourse *and* materiality” and the “discourse *as* materiality” perspectives seek to embrace materiality albeit to varying degrees.

We would contend that much of the early work on organizational discourse adopted the “discourse *not* materiality” position outlined in Table 2 (see for example: Grant et al., 1998, 2001; Keenoy et al., 1997; Oswick, Keenoy, & Grant, 2000a; 2000b). We would posit that this



strong privileging of discourse arose because organizational discourse analysis emerged as a response to the prevalence of positivist approaches that were predisposed to favouring the concrete and material aspects of organizations and organizing. In order to establish legitimacy and challenge the prevailing orthodoxy of realism and positivism, organizational discourse scholars took an oppositional stance and engaged in counter-hegemonic positioning which entailed privileging and promoting discursive perspectives while dismissing and debunking material perspectives. Against this backdrop the adoption of a “discourse *not* materiality” position is perhaps understandable.

However, we would argue that now that the discursive analysis of organizations has gained considerable traction within organization studies this position is no longer tenable. The same is true for the “discourse *or* materiality” position. In effect, both the *not* and the *or* positions serve to reinforce an isolationist agenda and this avowed non-engagement with materiality constrains the formation of innovative approaches to undertaking discursive research and ultimately limits the richness of insights that can be derived. In short, and somewhat controversially, we assert that organizational discourse scholars need to be less precious about discourse and more open and receptive to alternative ways of thinking, especially regarding the non-discursive aspects of organizations.

Although there has been some recent work that has treated discourse and materiality as connected (see for example: Barry et al., 2006; Fairclough, 2005; Grant et al., 2011; Reed, 2004) and, to a lesser extent, as co-constituted (e.g. Cooren, 2004; Iedema, 2007), the volume of work is still very limited and much of it is conceptual rather than applied. The study of “discourse *as* materiality” may be a philosophical imperative, but it is extremely difficult to achieve at a practical and pragmatic level. Not least because in order to study the nature of the co-constitution of discourse and the material one has to attempt to disaggregate them for the purposes of understanding the nature of their relationship and co-constitution. One recent study which offers

glimpses of a way forward for organizational discourse scholars has been provided by Askins and Pain (2011). Using an adapted version of Allport's (1954) work on 'contact theory' (i.e. the idea that conflict and discrimination between different social groups can be reduced through increased everyday contact), Askins and Pain's research focused on a group of young people of African and British heritage in northeast England. They created what they referred to as a 'contact zone' which brings together members of the different groups to produce community-based art. Employing process of participatory action research (Whyte, 1991), the researchers observed that "the material 'art' objects appeared to intercept and mess with the usual, dominant social relations within the group of young people, through processes in which materiality and social relations were being mutually constituted" (Askins and Pain, 2011:814). They went on explain: "Through the mediation of material objects, the young people enacted relationships of difference along ethnic and age lines, *as well as* relationships of similarity in which they were *doing the same* things, whether representing themselves and their identities, and appreciating the difficulties involved in the task, or painting on their hands and playing sword fights with the paintbrushes" (p.815). In effect, the conditions created within a contact zone facilitated the study of the co-located and mutually implicated aspects of discourse and materiality as an indivisible whole. Although undertaken within the field of human geography, this work highlights the potential for organizational scholars to explore aspects of co-constitution (i.e. discourse *as* materiality).

While the study of discourse *as* materiality may be inherently attractive a more immediate and pressing need is for more applied work that takes a "discourse *and* materiality" stance (i.e. combining and blending discursive and non-discursive research methods). In our view, the "*and*" approach has the potential to produce new and rich organizational insights and will provide an important platform for understanding, and the subsequent interrogation of, the "discourse *as* materiality" perspective.

*Towards New “Beyond Domain” Approaches*

Having earlier identified the potential for combining different discursive methods (within-domain approaches), and in order to progress a “discourse *and* materiality” agenda, we believe that there is considerable scope for using discourse analytic methods in combination with other non-discursive approaches (e.g. interviews, observational techniques, sociograms, and so on). The concurrent application of discursive and non-discursive methods has the potential to move the field beyond the traditional “constructivist domination” and “discursive isolationism” that has constrained the formation of multidisciplinary approaches and connect organizational discourse analysis more firmly to the material world of organizations.

Hansen (2006) has provided a good example of a “beyond domain” methodology. He has developed what he refers to as an “ethnonarrative” approach which “seeks to combine ethnographic methods and narrative methods in conducting hermeneutic analyses of narratives and stories, shifting not only between texts and contexts, but texts within a context of construction” (Hansen, 2006, p. 1049). In highlighting the benefits of enlisting ethnography, Hansen observes, “ethnographic methods are especially attuned to making observations and interpretations regarding the context in which texts are produced” (2006, p. 1049). More generally, combining narrative analysis, which is somewhat abstract (i.e. a “non-situated” focus on stakeholder accounts or samples of texts), with the “material groundedness” of ethnography (i.e. in-situ observations and participation), shows genuine synergistic potential. This arises because the conjunction of the approaches facilitates a meaningful consideration of the correspondence and interplay between the unfolding interaction, the embedded materiality of the actual social situation, the wider temporal landscape of events, and the accounts of social actors.

A further example of a “beyond domain” methodology is provided by Foot and Groleau (2011), through an extension of Engeström’s (1999) notion of CHAT (i.e. cultural-historical activity theory). Drawing upon case study research carried out on a non-government conflict

monitoring network covering the former Soviet Union, Foot and Groleau have developed what they refer to as a form of CHAT-based analysis which examines interaction and activity through the analysis of levels of contradiction. More specifically, their work explored the development of the non-governmental network “as an activity system which was driven by shifts, disruptions, and remediations in participants’ engagement with their evolving object” (2011:15). As Foot and Groleau (2011) explain, CHAT-based analysis is “a robust theory grounded in interaction and materiality, that accounts for multiple actors’ perspectives in explaining disruptions and changes as collective practices emerge, coalesce, and evolve” (p. 15). This study presents a useful way of integrating the analysis of interaction (i.e. the discursive) with the analysis of activity (i.e. the material).

While there is much more work to be done to develop new methodological approaches in this vein, we believe there are a number of potentially fruitful methodological pairings involving discursive and non-discursive approaches. In particular, there is considerable scope for the deployment of a rich array of social science-based, qualitative methods. For example, the conjugation of discourse-based approaches with: “social network analysis” (Scott, 1992) that emphasizes *agency* through a consideration of *relationships*; “stakeholder analysis” (Goodpaster, 1991) with its focus on *agents*; “sequence analysis” (Abbott & Tsay, 1990) that considers issues of *ordering* and *patterns* of phenomena; and, “event history analysis” (Yamaguchi, 1991) that addresses temporal *events* and their *material outcomes*. Just like “within domain” approaches, the utility of “beyond domain” approaches is likely to be maximized if undertaken on a collaborative basis between researchers with different disciplinary interests and expertise (i.e. a generative dialogical process involving discursive and non-discursive scholars).

This will be, we realize, a major challenge for organizational discourse analysis as a field. It will require a significant shift from an intense focus on linguistic methods of research to include a range of methods and approaches which are unfamiliar at best, and actively distasteful

at worst. But at the same time, organizational discourse analysis is beginning to reach the limit of its contribution working from the narrow methodological perspectives that have been so useful up to now. The problem is not just the need to work across levels that has been so often discussed, but also working across epistemological positions to move to a position that embraces the “discourse *and* materiality” and the “discourse *as* materiality” positions. By widening the methods used and bringing together methods that focus on the discursive and the material, organizational discourse analysis can make much more of a contribution to our understanding of organizations and organizing.

## **Conclusions**

Following the linguistic turn that reverberated across the humanities and social sciences, it was no longer enough to simply study social reality as if it somehow existed independently of human communicative action. It became equally important to understand how the social reality experienced by individuals came to be constructed in the first place. Organizational discourse analysis is the result of these concerns appearing in organization and management studies. By the time the linguistic turn washed up on the shores of our field, however, much work had been done in developing methods and philosophical positions from which to carry out this work. Organizational discourse analysis is the result of these methods and arguments being brought into the field and adapted to the interests and political realities of the field.

In this article, we have explored the nature of organizational discourse analysis and surveyed the broad range of empirical studies and theoretical discussions that have appeared. In mapping out the current state of the field we hope we have provided a useful resource as well as underlined the point that this is a developed and important perspective.

We have also pulled together a number of frameworks that have been suggested to categorize the diversity of approaches in the field. Many writers on organizational discourse have argued for some form of levels of organizational discourse analysis. Other writers have suggested

some sort of typology of types of method used. We feel that both of these approaches, while having value, are fundamentally flawed and we present an alternative that we think both helps us to understand forms of organizational discourse analysis but also moves the discussion to a new level. We discussed the problems arising from the prevalence of “discursive parochialism” (i.e. the tendency of scholars to engage with discourse on a uni-level and uni-method basis) and “discursive isolationism” (i.e. the tendency of discursive scholars to exclusively focus on discursive phenomena). In terms of the future, we have challenged researchers to think about the scope for new “within domain” approaches to doing organizational discourse analysis (i.e. combining different discursive methods) and the opportunities for “beyond domain” studies (especially the further development and integration of “discourse *and* materiality” approaches). Both are valid and important forms of research but both require researchers to move beyond the narrow confines within which many currently work and beyond the familiar methodological foci that characterizes much of the work.

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**Table 1 – Summary of Discursive Analyses of Organizations and Organizing**

<b>Level of Discursive Analysis</b>	<b>Dominant Methodological Approach</b>	<b>Primary Discursive Focus</b>	<b>Organizational Emphasis</b>	<b>Typical Data Sources</b>	<b>Prevalent Organizational Foci</b>
Micro-level	Conversation Analysis	Analysis of real-time interaction	Interaction as organizing	Observation of meetings, interviews and presentations	Micro-strategizing and decision making
Meso-level	Narrative Analysis	Interpretation of stakeholder accounts	Organizations as storytelling arenas	Interviews with key respondents or the analysis of a sample of selective texts	Identity work and sensemaking
Macro-level	Foucauldian Discourse Analysis	Study of discursive formations	Institutions as governing and constituting bodies	Historical interrogation of bodies of texts and practices	Knowledge, subjectivities, and control
Multi-level	Critical Discourse Analysis	Connecting local texts and wider social practices	Organizational events as contextually-implicated	Analysis of a piece of text (or interaction) combined with contextual synthesis	Ideology, power and power relations

**Table 2 – Perspectives on Engaging with Materiality in Discourse-based Organizational Research**

Position of Discourse in relation to Materiality	Underlying Framing and Orientation	Articulations in the Extant Organizational Discourse Literature	Implications for Discourse-oriented Organizational Research
Discourse/Constructionism <i>NOT</i> Materiality/Realism	<b>Competing</b> – the two perspectives are mutually exclusive	'Discoursism' (Conrad, 2004), 'hard constructionism' (Mumby & Clair, 1997) or 'extreme versions of social constructivism' (Fairclough, 2005) where "organization has no autonomous, stable or structural status outside of the text that constitutes it" (Westwood & Linstead, 2001, p. 4).	Exclusive focus on discursive approaches while robustly challenging socio-material and critical realist work
Discourse/Constructionism <i>OR</i> Materiality/Realism	<b>Complimentary</b> – the two perspectives are discrete, but not competing	"Organization is both discursive and real, and privileging either is an epistemological category mistake" (Parker, 2000, p. 537). According to Tsoukas (2000): "social reality is causally independent of actors (hence realists have a point) and, at the same time, what social reality is depends on how it has been historically defined, the cultural meanings and distinctions which have made it this reality as opposed to that reality (hence constructivists also have a point)" (p. 531).	Primary focus on advancing discursive approaches while acknowledging the legitimacy of realist and materiality-based contributions
Discourse/Constructionism <i>AND</i> Materiality/Realism	<b>Connected</b> – the two perspectives are interpenetrating	Reed (2004) argues for a "realist-based approach to the analysis of organizational discourse" (p. 416). Fairclough (2005) similarly advocates 'realist discourse analysis' whereby "discourse analysis is consistent with a realist approach to organizational research which distinguishes organizational process and agency from organizational structures, and focuses research on the relations and tensions between them" (p. 935).	Utilizing discourse-based methods and approaches in combination with a realist approach (including using existing non-discursive methods)
Discourse/Constructionism <i>AS</i> Materiality/Realism	<b>Co-constituted</b> – the two perspectives are part of an indivisible whole	Using the notion of 'textual agency', Cooren (2004) suggests that "what constitutes an organization is a hybrid of human and non-human contributions" and "humans are acted upon as well as acting through the textual and physical objects that they produce" (p. 388). Moreover, it has been posited that: "matter and discourse are mutually constituting" (Iedema, 2011b, p. 335); meaning and materialities are co-articulated through 'intra-action' (Barad, 2003); and, "intra-action confirms that it is unwise to regard discourse and matter as independent, (pre-)given moments" (Iedema, 2007, p. 936).	Further theoretical elaboration which informs the development and application of new and novel integrated methods and approaches