

NO STRINGS ATTACHED:

**A CASE STUDY OF INNOVATIVE METHODOLOGY IN
ORGANIZATIONAL DISCOURSE**

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FOREWORD: CONTEXT AND CONVERSATION

There's a reason why one popular way to study organizations is through discourse—set up some interviews, grab your tape recorder, and all you have to do is listen. With any luck your interview subjects will be voluble, your transcription software will never crash, and you'll always have a backup set of tapes.

The data in conversations between people in organization is dense with meaning, coated with nuance and rich with the flavor of culture and relationships. But how best to understand organizational language? How can we analyze the language of an organization to capture all the subtleties of metaphor and miscommunication, strategy and subterfuge?

As with many things in research, there is no simple answer. However, this book outlines the design and use of an innovative methodological tool for qualitative discourse analysis, the *linguistic thread*. It lays down the basics of research methodology, showing how linguistic threads expands the range of options to use when studying discourse in organizations.

The case study in Chapter Three is an example of a specific phenomenon using linguistic threads: the interaction of power and language in relationships between nonprofits and business. As a domain for researching organizational communication, intersectoral collaboration is a useful platform for the exposition of qualitative methodology and linguistic threads. The final chapter sums up findings from four additional case studies plus a media analysis conducted as part of a larger body of research.

Linguistic threads are a versatile, focused tool for understanding organizational discourse. They combine seemingly disparate views about language, offer flexibility of domain and can be applied to any qualitative research arena using conversation and documents as primary sources of data.