

# **Investigative Discourse Analysis**

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CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS  
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

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ISBN: 0-89089-569-4  
LCCN: 94-70062

**Carolina Academic Press**  
700 Kent Street  
Durham, North Carolina  
(919) 489-7486  
FAX (919) 493-5668

Printed in the United States of America

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# Introduction

*The pen is the tongue of the mind.*

—Cervantes

*“Understandest thou what thou readest?”*

*“How can I, except some man should guide me?”*

—Acts, 8:30-31

The concept of investigative discourse analysis can best be compared to the concept of processing a crime scene. An individual who has not had an opportunity to learn the techniques involved in processing crime scenes can wander through the scene and see absolutely nothing of value. But to the individual trained in the systematic search-and-process procedure of a crime scene, that same crime scene will offer a wealth of information. The trained individual can work back from what he discovers to determine what happened and then work forward to decide what must be accomplished with regard to the investigation.

The written text of some occurrence, whether a list of events, a description of a process or a transcript of an interview, can also be thought of as a scene to be subjected to systematic examination. Some individuals, through their discourse, will provide this particular form of a “scene” accurately or truthfully, while other individuals will construct their “scene” deceptively. By knowing how to systematically “walk through” the “scene” of a written text, the skilled investigator can better determine whether the text under examination is a truthful or a deceptive scene.

The examination of a crime scene may require the investigator to pick up a shell casing and examine it in order to learn more. Investigative discourse analysis requires the investigator to “pick up” words, phrases, or sentences for examination. The discourse analyst should recognize what is there for what it is and should notice what is missing that should be there.

Within our examination of investigative discourse analysis, we will utilize a variety of forms of discourse. Some of the narratives are graphic, as were the circumstances of the crimes they describe. The names, unless the notoriety of the case would make it superfluous, have been

changed. The terms and concepts presented will be demonstrated using actual texts. The exercises within and at the end of the chapters will allow the reader to immediately relate the material to its practical application. Chapter by chapter, we will lay down our learning foundation and build upon it. Investigative discourse analysis is not difficult; it is just different. Like any new skill, whatever is different requires some effort to incorporate. Let me assure you that the benefits are worth the effort.