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CONSTRUCTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTRIBUTION: STRUCTURING INTERTEXTUAL COHERENCE AND “PROBLEMATIZING” IN ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES

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Examining a sample of journal articles, we develop a grounded theory of contribution that shows how organization studies theorists textually construct opportunities for making contributions to the field. The analyses reveal two major processes and the associated rhetorical practices that texts invoke in establishing opportunities for contribution. The study's findings point to the richness of contribution by illuminating how uniqueness claims are textually produced and legitimated in the context of science. The construction of contribution in organization studies is more complicated than has been assumed.

What constitutes a scientific contribution in the field of organizational studies? How do authors construct contribution in their written work? Despite the centrality of the notion of contribution to the institution of science and the evident interest practitioners of science have in that notion, no empirical work has examined how scientific contribution in organizational studies is “inscribed” in written texts.

In this article, we begin the empirical investigation of how contribution is constructed in organizational studies. In doing so, we seek to develop a grounded theory of contribution by integrating and extending the traditions of others in the social sciences who have investigated scientific texts, especially those in the constructivist stream of the sociology of science (cf. Davis, 1971, 1986; Knorr-Cetina, 1981; Latour & Woolgar, 1979) and those who have incorporated a rhetorical perspective in the analysis of scientific texts (cf. Gephart, 1986, 1988; Gusfield, 1976; McCloskey, 1994). The present study focuses on the “situated” microprocess of language use in journal articles, the location of crucial public discourse among researchers (Winsor, 1993; Yearley, 1981; Zuckermann, 1987). It addresses three questions: (1) How do texts establish opportunities for contribution? (2) How do texts

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signify the importance of a proposed contribution? and (3) What rhetorical practices are invoked to support the constructed opportunities for contribution? The analyses seek to uncover key processes that authors use in texts to establish opportunities for contribution.

CONTRIBUTION

Contribution in Organizational Studies

Over the years, organizational theorists have pointed to the importance of contribution and have focused primarily on novelty or uniqueness as a major component of what comes to be regarded as contribution (cf. Astley, 1985; Weick, 1989). A study by Mone and McKinley (1993) provided evidence that a “uniqueness value” does exist in organizational studies and that this value influences behavior. Defining the uniqueness value as a prescription that “organization scientists should attempt to make unique contributions to their discipline” (1993: 284), those authors showed how words such as “newness,” “innovation,” and “difference” are present in both archival materials—published editors’ comments and review materials for journals and conferences—and articles that examine organizational studies. In particular, Mone and McKinley showed how these words are integrated into a variety of editorial comments that urge innovation (Weick, 1995), suggested that the number one question of reviewers about a work is, What’s new? (Whetten, 1989), and encouraged the submission of manuscripts that “loosen the normal science straightjacket” (Daft & Lewin, 1990: 7).

There is also growing evidence to support the idea that a relationship exists between the uniqueness value, or novelty, and publication in organizational studies journals. Building on a major area of work in the sociology of science examining what influences the selection process in journal reviews, researchers have found that publication in organizational studies journals is more likely when novelty is present in manuscripts (Beyer, Chanove, & Fox, 1995; Cole & Cole, 1967; Crane, 1965, 1967; Zuckerman, 1987). For example, Kerr, Tolliver, and Petree (1977) found that manuscripts had a greater likelihood of publication when they provided significant tests of authors’ new theories or developed content that was different from that traditionally published in the journal to which they were submitted. Recently, Beyer, Chanove, and Fox (1995) found evidence that, during the final decision-making stage of the review process, reviewers positively viewed articles when they were clearly written and, most interesting for our purposes here, when authors made explicit claims of novelty, disconfirming evidence, or both. In addition, the findings of this same study indicate that “the most important predictor of reviewers’ recommendations was how they rated manuscripts’ significance to the field, which was partially defined by originality” (Beyer et al., 1995: 1253).

Contribution is clearly important to the field of organization studies, and what counts as a contribution is that which is perceived as unique or novel in light of the extant literature. But, despite the attention paid to

establishing that contribution matters in scientific work, relatively little attention has been paid to what contribution means in practice, in the language used in written texts. How is contribution constructed in scholarly writing? How do texts create the opportunity for contribution? How does the uniqueness value get translated into practice through the writing of scientific texts? How is the case made that a given text provides something important?

Contribution as Socially Constructed

Focusing on the “how” of contribution is grounded in two major assumptions: the socially constructed nature of scientific knowledge and the active agency accorded texts. Recent work from quite different traditions provides evidence supporting these two assumptions. That scientific knowledge is socially constructed is an increasingly accepted idea among sociologists of science, especially those working in the constructivist stream (Knorr-Cetina, 1981; Latour, 1982; Latour & Woolgar, 1979; Zuckerman, 1987), as well as among some researchers in organizational studies (Astley, 1985; Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Daft, 1983; Weick, 1989). A socially constructed view of science suggests that knowledge cannot be known separately from the knower, because the content of knowledge is influenced by social practices and interactions, and because the determination of what ideas count as knowledge is a meaning-making activity “enacted” in particular communities. This view contrasts with an alternate view of science suggesting that knowledge is an objective entity that exists independent of the knower and whose import is self-evident (Knorr-Cetina, 1981; Winsor, 1993). In this view, the world is composed of facts, and the goal of knowledge is to provide a literal account (Knorr-Cetina, 1981) of that world in plain, unvarnished language (McCloskey, 1994).

The importance of this distinction for the present study is that in the latter view, the constituted character of knowledge and contribution remains unproblematic and taken for granted. In contrast, adopting a constructionist perspective “problematizes” contribution and renders it accessible to investigation. Accordingly, adopting this perspective implies seeking a reflexive understanding of science in which scientists not only inscribe findings, but also “accomplish the meaning of this accomplishment” (Knorr-Cetina, 1981). And this meaning—the import and relevance of the inscribed findings—is situated within the knowledge of the scientific community and, in particular, within the extant literature of the topic under investigation.

An idea becomes a contribution, then, when it is constructed as important by the members of a scholarly community, relative to the accepted knowledge constituted by the field’s written work. That scientific contribution embodies novelty, and even surprise, vis-à-vis accepted knowledge was first noted by Davis (1971), in his classic work, “That’s Interesting.” Davis proposed that the “objective truth” of a theory has less to do with its impact than whether or not the theory is found interesting. His empirical analyses of “famous sociological theories” disclosed that interesting propositions de-

nied or negated accepted propositions by asserting that what seemed to be X was in reality non-X or that what was accepted as X was actually non-X. Similarly, in organizational studies, Weick noted that "the contribution of social science does not lie in validated knowledge, but rather in the suggestion of relationships and connections that had previously not been suspected" (1989: 524).

According active agency to texts is the second assumption of the present study. To accord agency is not to suggest that texts are independent actors. Rather, we assert that the intentions and meanings available in texts can be disclosed through examination (Gross, 1990; Winsor, 1993). Disclosing these meanings and specific textual practices is accomplished through rhetorical analysis.

Rhetoric is a traditional, language-based discipline concerned with logic, composition, argument, and style (O'Connor, 1996a, 1996b). The specific stream of research most relevant here is known as the rhetorical analysis of scientific texts (cf. Gephart, 1986, 1988; Gross, 1990; Gusfield, 1976; McCloskey, 1994; Selzer, 1993; Simons, 1990). In this work, rhetoric is most broadly construed in the Aristotelian tradition, as honest argument intended for an audience (McCloskey, 1994). This definition implies that as soon as scientists frame ideas for presentation to an identified audience, they are engaging in rhetoric.

Those conducting rhetorical analyses of science view scientific texts as data for examining the arguments or claims the texts make, including claims of contribution. The analyses incorporate not only the content of the claims, but also how they are supported and rendered credible in the texts. A central focus of this work is the identification of textual features and rhetorical practices that help to support the validity of the claims. For example, work has examined how rhetorical practices such as "next stepping" (Gephart, 1986, 1988), the implied authority of the scientist (McCloskey, 1994), "commonplaces" in arguments (Davis, 1986), "dramatism" (Gusfield, 1976, 1981), and arrangement in scientific articles (Knorr-Cetina, 1981) support and enhance the credibility of the arguments developed in texts. Furthermore, some work (Gephart, 1988; Gusfield, 1981; McCloskey, 1985, 1994) has used ironic analysis to illuminate how texts construct the appearance of realism or objectivity in conveying truth through their rhetorical practices.

The empirical analyses of science conducted within the constructivist and rhetorical streams of work offer insights that are relevant to the present study. First, these analyses place center stage the idea that scientific contribution is a constructed phenomenon. Second, the meaning of contribution emerges not from the presentation of brute facts (Gross, 1990; McCloskey, 1994), but rather from the development of honest claims to convey knowledge intended for academic audiences. In addition, scientific texts seek to persuade readers to view phenomena in a particular, and different, way. And finally, texts must relate to extant knowledge, negate accepted propositions, and invoke rhetorical practices to support their validity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Sample

To examine how opportunities for contribution are constructed, we went to two of organization studies' established, mainstream, and highly regarded journals, the *Academy of Management Journal* (AMJ) and *Administrative Science Quarterly* (ASQ). Both of these outlets have reputations for being very selective in their acceptance decisions and thus, we reasoned, they would also be selective in adjudicating what constitutes contribution. We selected one population of empirical work for analysis, qualitative case studies.

Between January 1976 and September 1996, 21 articles whose data and analyses were wholly qualitative were published in the *Academy of Management Journal*. We took January 1976 as our starting point because the *Academy of Management Review* was created as a separate journal in 1976, following a 1975 decision by AMJ's editorial board to publish only empirical work in the *Academy of Management Journal*. During the same two decades, 61 such qualitative works were published in *Administrative Science Quarterly*. These 82 case studies¹ constitute our sample, and they reflect much of the variety in epistemological orientations and methodological approaches that fall under the compendious rubric of qualitative methods. For example, there are manuscripts reflecting philosophical orientations ranging from positivism (e.g., Ross & Staw, 1993) to postmodernism (e.g., Boje, 1995). Research approaches are similarly varied; they include critical hermeneutics (e.g., Phillips & Brown, 1993), semiotics (Barley, 1983), historical analyses (Kieser, 1989), and even use of a grounded theory approach for theory testing (e.g., Ross & Staw, 1993).

As Knorr-Cetina (1981), Latour and Woolgar (1979), and Medawar (1964) have pointed out, in a formal publication, opportunities for contribution are developed in its introductory paragraphs and pages—regardless of when during the research process the work's relationship to the existing body of work was specified. It is also in the introduction that the theoretical traditions in the form of extant literature are integrated most fully into the text. Accordingly, we focused on each article's introduction, which we defined as beginning with the first line after the abstract and continuing up to the methods section. Where no formal methods section existed, we considered the introduction as ending with the beginning of the empirical presentation. This sample's introductions ranged in length from 1 to 13 pages; on the average, they were 4½ pages long. In total, our data comprised 353 pages of published text.

Building the Theory

To develop the conceptual framework, we followed the procedures for building grounded theories outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and sub-

¹ Table 5 lists the studies; full references for the sample are available from the first author.

sequently refined by them and by other scholars (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser, 1978; Martin & Turner, 1986; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Turner, 1981, 1983). Since our research focus was examining how formal scientific papers constructed opportunities for contribution, we began the process of building conceptual categories by inspecting the texts' introductory pages with an eye toward identifying their specific textual acts (Myers, 1993) and the rhetorical features associated with those acts.

Following the principle of constant comparison, as soon as we formulated a provisional textual act and its preliminary rhetorical practices, we compared the examples of the rhetorical practices in order to clarify the textual acts. At the same time, conceptualizing textual acts directed us to further examine the manuscripts for rhetorical practices that might be relevant and related to those acts. Finally, we grouped related acts and their practices into categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1996); for instance, the textual act of creating discord and the associated practices of making contentious characterizations and dichotomizing were grouped and labeled as "structuring noncoherence." As was the case with the formulation of textual acts, the creation of a category led us to further scrutinize the manuscripts in order to refine that category's properties and relationships. A key act in assigning meaning to these rhetorical practices was the explication of tiny details of language, such as the use of a particular word.

As we started grouping textual acts, we wrote theoretical memoranda, free-flowing, theorizing write-ups about emerging categories, textual acts, rhetorical practices, and their relationships to each other and to the question of contribution. These interpretive memos helped us to make sense of the complex of emerging practices and often pointed to areas where further analysis of the complete sample was needed (Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987; Turner, 1983). One early memorandum explored similarities and differences in rhetorical practices captured by acts that were then characterized as "legitimizing"; this category's inability to adequately organize all the examples being coded indicated a need to reexamine how each of the manuscripts configured existing literature. Further, in an aside, the memo referred to "two things" the papers "do." A later theoretical memorandum articulated the "two key processes" that formed the cornerstone of our existing theory. This articulation again resulted in our returning to all the manuscripts to refine these processes, including the textual acts and rhetorical practices associated with them.

At the same time as we pursued theory building, we continued reading broadly to help us gain insights into the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Turner, 1982, 1983). In this way, existing scholarly work was integrated with the developing model. For example, the concept of "inter-text" (Bazerman, 1993; Culler, 1982; Kristeva, 1980) helped us think about how texts located themselves vis-à-vis existing works, and the concept of complication in literary studies helped us consider how texts established the significance of their proposed contributions.

Throughout the theory-building process, we spoke together frequently

to discuss the emerging textual acts, rhetorical practices, and categories, and their possible implications for contribution making. Differences of opinion invariably led us back to the manuscripts to clarify the textual acts and rhetorical practices that composed our categories and to resolve their properties.

CONSTRUCTING CONTRIBUTION OPPORTUNITIES: A GROUNDED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

How do organization researchers construct adequately justified opportunities for making contributions to knowledge? More particularly, how, through the medium of language, are such opportunities crafted? The framework we developed explicates two key processes manuscripts enact in order to construct claims that contribution opportunities exist and are warranted.

Our analyses disclosed that, in order to establish contribution, organization studies manuscripts first must re-present and organize existing knowledge so as to configure a context for contribution that reflects the consensus of previous work. The presence of existing knowledge legitimizes a research area by underscoring the intellectual resources devoted to it and, at the same time, provides a theoretical orientation for present investigations. Second, our analyses disclosed that manuscripts must in a sense turn on themselves, subverting or problematizing the very literatures that provide locations and *raison d'être* for the present efforts. Showing that existing scholarly and research efforts are wanting in some respects opens up opportunities for advancing knowledge about topics of investigative concern.

These two processes speak to the tension between, on the one hand, authors' needing to relate present works to existing research programs so that the works' importance and relevance to the organization studies community are established and, on the other hand, needing to demonstrate that the works identify occasions for original contribution.

The First Process: Constructing Intertextual Coherence

The articles studied crafted networks of existing studies to constitute "literatures," as publications in reputable journals are expected to do. Each such network is conceptualized as an intertextual field. Describing an intertext as a "mosaic of quotations," Kristeva (1980: 66) and others (Bazerman, 1993; Culler, 1982; Gephart, 1993) underscored the embedded quality of texts, which means that a variety of other texts (and discourses) are reconstituted in any existing work. In this study, an intertextual field refers to the complex of other, related texts that constitute the literatures referenced by each article in our sample. Going beyond the embedded references, such an intertextual complex points back to the individual and collaborating researchers whose work is noted as relevant to a given study. These intertextual fields, then, are the publications' own reconstructions of appropriate literatures (Bazerman, 1993), including the ways in which particular cited works relate to each other and to the proposed studies. Following this logic,

we can say that each research study places itself in an intertextual field of its own making.

The cited works embedded in this sample's intertextual fields were linked together in particular ways, each reflecting the importance of consensus in constructing opportunities for contribution. Specifically, the articles revealed three intertextual coherences, which we variously characterize as synthesized coherence, progressive coherence, and noncoherence. Table 1 provides examples of each of these intertextual fields in our sample articles' introductions.

Synthesized coherence. Manuscripts display synthesized coherence when they cite and draw connections between works and investigative streams not typically cited together to suggest the existence of undeveloped research areas. Texts that synthesize coherence hint that researchers working in different domains are unmindful that their work points to common ideas that have not been explored. Existing studies and research programs are "written as" making available general ideas that, though present in the broad literature, have not been explicitly recognized and pursued. Thus, synthesized intertextual fields are organized to bring to attention to, and invent or reinvent as topics for inquiry, subjects that are implicit in other works. The intertextual fields accomplish this through three textual acts: (1) formulating overarching ideas that articulate and constitute the research areas, (2) constructing congruent relationships among different research domains to create common ground, and (3) reinterpreting previous work to show underlying consensus about the configured investigative ground.

We see the three textual acts and the associated rhetorical practices that synthesize research topics in the intertextual fields constructed in the quotations from Barley [1983]² and Rafaeli and Sutton [1991] presented in column 1 of Table 1 (T1). Barley's excerpted text begins with the construction of congruent relationships among various research domains. As the lines "despite discrepant pragmatic aims . . . family resemblance" (T1: 2–5) show, the introduction first constructs congruency within a heterogeneous organizational culture literature. Using terms that underscore connection, such as "*family resemblance*,"³ is a key rhetorical practice in the construction of congruent relationships among studies that otherwise might be viewed as unrelated. This practice is repeated when congruency is constructed between culture studies and work on organizational symbolism. The text characterizes studies in these two literatures as "intellectually *akin*," and it further pulls these two bodies of work together by describing them as a "*collection of texts*" (T1: 28, 34).

At the same time that Barley's introduction constructs congruent rela-

² We use brackets to distinguish the articles that are part of our sample from all the other cited works in this section. Where an excerpt in a table is cited, the numbers after a colon are line numbers. Where a publication year is cited, the numbers after the *second* colon refer to lines on the page being cited.

³ All emphases are added.

TABLE 1
Structuring Intertextual Fields: Examples of the Three Types of Coherence^a

Synthesized Coherence	Progressive Coherence	Noncoherence
Barley [1983: 393; ASQ] Despite discrepant pragmatic aims, and regardless of nuances in definition, organizational theorists who write about organizational cultures repeatedly employ key terms that bear a family resemblance. Martin (1982), Siehl and Martin (1981), Wilkins (1980), Pettigrew (1979) and Dandridge, Mitroff and Joyce (1980) all suggest that culture is embodied in and transmitted by "stories," "myths," and "symbols" and urge researchers to scrutinize such vehicles more closely. Schein (1981, 1983) and Dyer (1982) look for culture in patterns of "assumptions" that they hold to underlie symbolic vehicles, while Schwartz and Davis (1981) prefer the term "expectations." Van Maanen (1976, 1977, 1983) and Louis (1983) frequently write of culture as a set of shared "understandings" "interpretations," or "perspectives" by which members of a group are able to articulate contextually appropriate accounts. From the observation that this family of terms is repeatedly associated with the notion of culture, one may infer that in organization studies "culture" is somehow implicitly tied to notions of social cognition and contextual sense making. The growing interest in organizational cultures should not be seen as . . . a small movement Rather, from a thematic point of view, the topic is intellectually akin to a simultaneously growing literature that does not speak of "culture" per se, but that nevertheless ponders how members of organizations symbolically create an ordered world (e.g., Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Pondy, 1978; Morgan, 1980; Mitroff and Mason, 1981; Pfeffer, 1981). As a collection of texts, both bodies of work, and even the rising popularity of the term "culture" itself, seem to signify readiness on the part of scholars and the public alike to	Bartunek [1984: 355; ASQ] Organizational theory addressing the causes of organizational structure has traditionally focused primarily on the organization's size, technology, and environment (cf. Ford and Slocum, 1977; Hinings, 1979; Bobbitt and Ford, 1980). Considerable attention has been paid to ways these features directly determine organizational design. Recently, it has been argued that size, technology, and environment do not have a direct effect on structure. Rather, these features affect structure through the mediation of powerful organization members who perceive and enact them in various ways and then translate them into structure decisions (Montanari, 1978; Bobbitt and Ford, 1980; Ranson, Hinings and Greenwood, 1980; Draft and Weick, 1984). The focus of this approach has been more on organization members' understandings than on external organization factors themselves. For example, Bobbitt and Ford (1980) suggest that an administrator's decision to restructure depends on the administrator's cognitive and motivational orientations; size, technology, and the environment act primarily as constraints. Ranson, Hinings, and Greenwood (1980) proposed that one of the factors that most affects an organization's structure is powerful organizational members' "interpretive schemes" and the expression of these in "provinces of meaning." The relationship between interpretive schemes and structure, and especially between changing interpretive schemes and restructuring, is the focus of this paper. Mintzberg and Waters [1982: 465; AMJ] In the literature, strategy always has been defined in terms of intentions, guidelines for the future—essentially in terms	Langton [1984: 330; ASQ] Bureaucracy has become, within the last century or so, 'the primary institutional characteristic of highly complex and differentiated societies' (Landau, 1972: 176) If "bureaucracy . . . epitomizes the modern era" (Blau & Meyer, 1971: 10) and if "the bureaucratization of life" has been in fact "the greatest revolution of all" (Lindblom, 1977: 244, 27–29), then explaining the rise and proliferation of bureaucratic organizations can be regarded as perhaps the central task confronting social scientists. Unfortunately the relevant literature offers contradictory assessments of the ability of the social sciences to account for these phenomena. On the one hand, we are told that "Max Weber was the first to consider bureaucracy as the problem of industrial society" (Jacoby, 1973: 147), that he articulated the "classical theory of bureaucracy" (Blau, 1970: 14), and that this theory . . . remains the dominant paradigm for the study of administration" (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1979: 195; Ouchi, 1980: 401–402). All this clearly conveys the impression that Weber's work on bureaucracy constitutes, as Landau (1972: 154) explicitly argued, "a paradigm in Kuhn's sense." On the other hand, this same literature contends that all theories of bureaucracy, including Weber's, are "underdeveloped" (Heiskanen, quoted in Abrahamson, 1977: 36). Indeed, many analysts (e.g., Haas and Drabek, 1973) have suggested that the study of bureaucracy and formal organizations exhibits precisely the eclectic and unfocused character of a field of inquiry that has failed to produce a dominant paradigm, in Kuhn's sense.

TABLE 1 (continued)

Synthesized Coherence	Progressive Coherence	Noncoherence
consider the proposition that organizations are speech communities sharing socially constructed systems of meaning. Rafaeli and Sutton [1991: 749-750; AMJ] The view that organization members routinely use expressed positive emotions as tools of social influence is ubiquitous in organizational behavior. This theme is implicit . . . in literature on considerate leaders (Bass, 1981), charismatic leaders (Conger, Kanungo, & Associates, 1988), social support (House, 1981), and ingratiation (Kipnis, 1984; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1983). It is explicit in recent work on expressed emotions as role requirements. Despite wide variance in the perspectives these authors have taken there is (albeit often implicit) agreement that expressed positive emotions are a tool of social influence because encounters with a friendly person are positively reinforcing. A more modest body of evidence suggests that organization members sometimes use expressed negative or unpleasant emotions as tools of social influence . . . Research on strong influence tactics has indirectly examined the use of negative emotions to influence others. These tactics include expression of hostility and irritation (Kipnis, 1984; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1983). Popular business periodicals have reported that some leaders routinely express negative emotion in their efforts to motivate subordinates, providing further indirect evidence.	of plans. Chandler's definition is typical: "the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals;" (1962, p. 13).	Yan and Gray [1994: 1478-1479; AMJ] International joint ventures are a rapidly growing organizational form that has received increasing interest from researchers. . . . Previous studies have reported high failure and instability rates among joint ventures (Franko, 1971; Harrigan, 1986; Kogut, 1989; Levine & Byrne, 1986), and the factors predictive of successful venture performance remain unclear (Geringer & Herbert, 1991; Parkhe, 1993a). In addition, the empirical studies that have been done to test existing conceptual models have either produced contradictory results or been difficult to compare because of differences in how variables were measured. This study adopts an interpartner negotiations perspective on joint venture formation . . . According to the negotiations perspective, the relative bargaining power of each joint venture partner shapes the pattern of management control that a venture adopts. In addition, parent control is hypothesized to be a critical factor that determines performance. Although previous researchers have empirically investigated the first relationship (Blodgett, 1991; Fagre & Wells, 1982; Killing, 1983; Lecraw, 1984), the studies are difficult to compare because they have measured both variables differently. Research findings on the relationship between control and performance offer conflicting results (see Geringer and Herbert [1989] for a review). Lecraw (1984) noted that the relationship between parent control and performance generates continuing controversy in the international joint venture literature.

^a ASQ = *Administrative Science Quarterly*, AMJ = *Academy of Management Journal*.

tionships, it formulates the topic of concern identified in its complex of studies in general terms. Rhetorically, the practice of characterizing these literatures in thematic terms ("from a *thematic* point of view" [T1: 27]) helps the text to present itself as surfacing a general idea for investigation. Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, this introduction synthesizes an intertextual field by demonstrating as yet unexpressed consensus as to the presence of a topic in existing scholarly efforts. This is accomplished through the rhetorical practice of reinterpreting that work to surface underlying congruencies in findings or theoretical perspectives. Barley thus writes of the organizational symbolism literature that although it "does not speak of 'culture' per se . . . [it] nevertheless ponders how members of organizations symbolically create an ordered world" (T1: 29–31).

Rafaeli and Sutton's [1991] opening sentences (T1: 41–44) clearly initiate the formulation of a general idea about compliance and the expression of contrasting emotions via thematic characterizations of the studies that follow. A coherent idea is suggested through phrases like "the *view*" and "this *theme*." The text then goes on to construct two major groups of cited articles, one that demonstrates latent consensus as to the influence wrought by the expression of positive emotions and another that underscores underlying agreement about the influence brought about by the display of negative emotions. In this introduction, the presented studies are repeatedly reinterpreted to highlight that they reflect this consensual position. For example, the excerpt's first paragraph notes that this subject is "*implicit*" in three different literatures (T1: 44–48). In the second paragraph, the authors again create unexpressed consensus by pointing out that "despite wide variance in the [three] perspectives . . . there is (*albeit often implicit*) agreement that expressed positive emotions are a tool of social influence" (T1: 50–53). This rhetorical practice continues in the third paragraph, where consensus as to the influencing impact of negative emotions is traced in studies that concerned other issues: "Research on strong influence tactics has *indirectly* examined the use of negative emotions" (T1: 58–60).

Although Rafaeli and Sutton's introduction does not explicitly draw connections between divergent streams of work, congruency between various streams is suggested by juxtaposing them. For example, literatures on leadership, social support, and ingratiation are set in relationship to each other within a single sentence (T1: 44–48). And experimental investigations of strong influence tactics and the popular press's accounts of certain leaders are embedded together under the general idea that negative emotions bring about compliance (T1: 58–65).

The construction of synthesized coherence in manuscripts' intertextual fields is thus achieved through a number of rhetorical practices: *Forming thematic characterizations* is the first of these rhetorical practices. Like the examples discussed above, other texts point to potential fields of study through the use of such thematic characterizations as "We employed the *idea* that organizations have identities . . . that influence how individuals interpret issues [Dutton & Dukerich, 1991: 518: 21–23] and "The *notion* that

organizations have strong norms . . . is the central *theme* of an emerging body of research" [Sutton, 1991: 245: 1–3]. This practice supports the notion that a text is suggesting that a general idea is available for consideration from available works.

Making connections between divergent literatures is the second rhetorical practice that constructs synthesized coherence. The textual practice of linking different investigative streams or varied studies helps a text assert that a coherent investigative domain can be identified. Further illustrations of how articles achieve this are the following: "Family theorists and therapists and organizational theorists and consultants *share* many concepts. *Each field* has been profoundly influenced by. . . *Each is* interested in. . . *Both* have developed. . ." [Hirschhorn & Gilmore, 1989: 18: 11–18] and "*Many scientists see the world dualistically, as did C. G. Jung . . . the viewpoint goes back to Chinese Taoism . . . to Goethe with his idea of polarities and . . . to Hegel's dialectic method*" [Broms & Gahmberg, 1983: 484: 5–11]. Words such as "share," "each," "both," and "as did" textually create coherence amongst the disparate streams presented.

Reinterpreting existing work to show underlying consensus is the third synthesized coherence practice. Time and time again, the intertextual fields that structured synthesized coherence reinterpreted existing studies to demonstrate unrecognized consensus. By doing so, they supported the articles' assertions that sufficient evidence existed to warrant investigation of a phenomenon. Examples of the rhetoric of reinterpretation are seen in comments such as "Caregiving organizations may be understood in terms of . . . This frame *makes explicit what is implicit* in the job burnout literature" [Kahn, 1993: 540: 28–34], "Existing writings hint that such an integration might be useful" [Elsbach & Sutton, 1992: 701: 3], and "In both [studies] authors *were primarily interested in. . . Nevertheless both studies are of considerable interest to the student of intermediary organizations*" [Lammers, 1988: 441: 36–41]. The point is not that these introductions fraudulently re-present existing studies. Rather, the reinterpretations written into their introductions suggest that although there is not a recognized body of work on the topics of interest, a critical mass of evidence and arguments can be gleaned to legitimately configure the topics for investigation.

Before we conclude this section, it is worth noting that there are two patterns of synthesized coherence. One pattern involves the organization of quite discrepant references. It is exemplified in the Rafaeli and Sutton [1991] and Brohms and Gahmberg [1983] excerpts already discussed. It is also clearly expressed in Sutton's [1991: 246: 45] introduction, which characterizes its intertextual field as reporting "*bits and pieces* of evidence" on how organizations try to maintain the expression of desirable emotions in light of actors' inner feelings.

The second pattern entails the creation of intersecting areas between two or more acknowledged and developed research programs. Illustrations include Barley's [1983] integration of studies of culture and symbolism, Elsbach and Sutton's [1992] blending of institutional theory and impression

management literature, and Hirschhorn and Gilmore's [1980] combination of references on structured family therapy and organizational change.

Progressive coherence. Whereas synthesized coherence points to researchers, working in disparate domains, whose works contain as yet undisclosed points of intersection, progressive coherence indicates networks of researchers linked by shared theoretical perspectives and methods working on research programs that have advanced over time. Thus, two acts—the depiction of cumulative knowledge growth and the construction of consensus among researchers—point to developed and focused lines of inquiry. And various rhetorical practices support each of these acts.

Column 2 of Table 1 provides examples of progressively coherent intertextual fields in Bartunek [1983] and Mintzberg and Waters [1982]. Bartunek's introduction begins with the construction of two consensual positions among researchers as to the cause of organizational structure. The first paragraph points to researcher commitment to external organization factors, and the second, to organization members' sense-making. The practice of using dense citations to support the two research focuses, the size, technology, and environment position (T1: 3–6) and the member understanding position (T1: 15–17), indicates that these are widely shared perspectives on organizational structure.

At the same time that Bartunek's text constructs consensus among researchers, it presents cumulative progress in the study of this topic. For example, Bartunek's opening statements suggest cumulative progress via three rhetorical practices. First, the text explicitly references the time devoted to this domain: "Theory addressing the causes of organizational structure has *traditionally* focused. . . . *Recently*, it has been argued" (T1: 2–9). Second, by serializing studies or groups of studies (noting the external factors studies, then the sense-making studies), the text invokes a sense of advancement in the study of causes of organizational structure. Serializing is also evident in the presentation of the sense-making perspective. Beginning with "for example, Bobbit and Ford (1980) suggest" (T1: 19–24) and moving on to "Ranson, Hinings, and Greenwood (1980) proposed" (T1: 24–29), Bartunek's text portrays one development after another in the investigation of the phenomenon. In this way, successive researchers are shown contributing to a growing understanding of the relationship between interpretive schemes and structure. Finally, in addition to supporting the construction of consensus, the practice of citing densely also hints at progress by emphasizing that significant research efforts have been devoted to a topic.

Even though the progressive intertextual field constructed in Mintzberg and Waters [1982] is rather terse, it nevertheless displays rhetorical practices that invoke the construction both of cumulative progress and of consensus. For example, time is indexed in the statement "In the literature, strategy *always* has been defined" (T1: 34). "Always" is a long time, and the word suggests considerable work on this topic. In addition, characterization of Chandler's definition as "*typical*" (T1: 36–37) makes a case for strong agree-

ment among researchers as to the nature of strategy because it is depicted as representative of other definitions.

The construction of progressive coherence in manuscripts' intertextual fields, then, is achieved by a number of rhetorical practices that work to suggest that the complex of cited studies represents ongoing and cumulative progress in an investigative domain and that the domain reflects a high degree of researcher consensus. Cumulative progress is suggested by these rhetorical practices: *Referencing time devoted to a topical area* is the first. Indeed, as the examples above suggest, the introductions of scholarly articles often "write time into" their presentation of the literature. Often, time appears in phrases prefixing the discussion of literatures. "Over the past 15 years" [Ross & Staw, 1993: 702: 4], "In recent years" [Burgelman, 1993: 223: 5], and "Although early studies" [Prasad, 1993: 1400: 3]. At other times, time is woven throughout the presentation of literature to create a history of the topic. The following excerpt is exemplary:

The premise that many relationships are important to development has a *long and rich history* (Neugarten, 1975; Storr, 1963; Sullivan, 1953). *Over the years*, social psychologists have enriched the idea that. . . . *Most recently*, Levinson et al. (1978) developed a concept of the life structure [Knorr & Isabella, 1985: 111: 30–38].

In this way, the texts present existing work as showing the development characteristic of established research domains.

Serializing contributions is a second rhetorical practice promoting progressive coherence. The practice of serializing contributions signals maturity and development in an area by implying a history of studies that constitute the development of a field. Consider this example:

Researchers have attempted to identify the stimuli that trigger adaptive behaviors and have seen change as a product of such influences as organizational structure (Hummon, Doreian and Teuter, 1975), growth and aging (Labovitz and Miller, 1974), technological innovation (Bell, 1973), environmental changes (Sherwood, 1976), constituency changes (Mazmanian and Lee, 1975), leadership style (Meyer, 1975), and the dissatisfaction of the deprived (Benson, 1973) [Biggart, 1977: 410: 3–11].

Note how this example invokes maturity and progress by showing the complexity and variety of influences that research has identified on the triggers of organizational change behavior.

Constructing dense citations is the third progressive coherence rhetorical practice. Development and maturity in a field are also suggested by the practice of constructing dense citation lists. By listing study after study, the following examples emphasize the intellectual resources that have been devoted to a topic:

[Organizational theorists] have actually examined the order and structure or specific interpretations through cognitive maps, prototypes, and scripts (Blackburn & Cummings, 1982; Bougon, Weick, & Binkhorst, 1977; Jolly, Reynolds, & Slocum, 1988;

Lord, Foti, & DeVader, 1984; Walker, 1985; Walton, 1986) [Isabella, 1990: 9: 9–16].

A substantial literature has emerged on the relationships between strategy, structure, degree of diversification and economic performance in the divisionalized firm (Chandler, 1962; Williamson, 1970; Wrigley, 1970; Galbraith and Nathanson, 1979; Caves, 1980) [Burgelman, 1983: 223: 5–10].

In addition to cumulative progress, the textual construction of consensus among groups of researchers is also necessary to achieve progressive coherence. Rhetorically, this is supported by the practice of *stating agreement*. As was evident in the Mintzberg and Waters [1976] example, explicit agreement among researchers is portrayed in phrases like “Theorists largely agree that individual power” [Biggart & Hamilton, 1984: 540: 1], “Scholars have converged on a *common* vision of how American managerial thought has evolved” [Barley & Kunda, 1992: 363: 31–33], and “Virtually *every* empirical study of management time allocation draws attention to” [Gronn, 1983: 2: 7–8]. Of course, the widespread use of qualifiers intimates that this agreement, though “large,” may not be unanimous.

Using citations to indicate the existence of shared perspectives also supports progressive coherence. In addition to making explicit statements that agreement exists, using multiple citations to support theoretical positions achieves the presentation of consensual positions. The textual fact that many researchers hold a view highlights the security of understanding that an area of inquiry has achieved. The following excerpt further makes the point:

Adherents of the . . . approach see it as fundamentally an individualistic factor lodged in the personal costs, benefits, and intrinsic rewards inherent in work (Canter, 1968; Porter and Steers, 1982; Buchanan, 1974; Locke, 1976; Kalleberg, 1977; Mowday, Porter and Steers, 1982; Oliver, 1984; Lincoln and Kalleberg, 1986) [Adler & Adler, 1988: 401: 26–31].

Like synthesized coherence, progressive coherence indicates a variation in patterning. We do not see only the linear lines of inquiry evident in such articles as Bartunek [1984], Thomas [1993], Crozier and Thoenig [1976], and others. Interestingly, a few of the manuscripts embed in their intertextual fields lines of inquiry that are framed in divergent terms, perhaps warranting further nominal specification as progressive-divergent. For example, quite divergent approaches to the study of succession are embedded in Gephart’s [1978] intertextual field. They are construed in the following way:

Organizational succession can be studied using a *variety* of theoretical perspectives and research methodologies. Such perspectives are often *complementary*, with each theory and/or method shedding light on specific aspects of succession. These studies can be typified in terms of *two rather distinct approaches*.

The more common approach involves . . . testing hypotheses relating to . . . correlates of organizational succession.

This approach has generated numerous insights. However, . . . it has certain limitations.

A second approach to the study of succession involves analysis of specific cases, focusing on the effects of succession on the organization. Studies included in this approach are those by Christensen (1953), Gouldner (1954) . . . [Gephart, 1978: 554–555: 12–6].

In the above excerpt, then, we find the construction of two lines of inquiry, one consistent with a more situated ethnomethodological analysis of the sense-making practices that produce succession and a second concerned with identifying the factors that correlate with succession using more quantitative methods. Although the clear distinctions between the two investigative streams could be construed as an intertextual field approaching non-coherence, they remain consistent with progressive coherence because they are presented as divergences that are “complementary,” as bringing requisite “variety” to an investigative arena, and they are not constructed in opposing terms. Similarly, Ross and Staw’s introduction begins its presentation of the literature in the following terms: “In recent years, three *rather independent* lines of research have addressed the issue of whether (and under what circumstances) individuals become overly committed to escalation situations” [1986: 274: 36–38]. This divergence then points to branching lines of inquiry or complexity within particular investigative domains.

Noncoherence. In noncoherent intertextual fields, we find referenced works that are presented as belonging to a common research program but as linked by disagreement. In contrast to the previous two intertextual fields, in which the construction of consensus is figural, here the key textual action is the construction of discord, albeit among researchers who agree on the importance of a research domain. In column 3 of Table 1, we provide examples of introductions in which noncoherent intertextual fields are constructed in the introductions by Langton [1984] and Yan and Gray [1994]. The presentation of discord is achieved through a number of rhetorical practices that work to depict a contentious and, by implication, confused body of research and group of researchers.

Look at how Langton’s introduction achieves the depiction of discord. After highlighting the importance of bureaucracy in its opening paragraph, the text explicitly characterizes the state of understanding of this domain in contentious terms, claiming that “the relevant literature offers *contradictory* assessments” (T1: 12–14). It then depicts disagreement and challenges among researchers in its second and third paragraphs: “*On the one hand, we are told* that. . . . *On the other hand, this same literature contends* that” (T1: 14–27).

Yan and Gray’s text also uses these two practices to construct dissent in the understanding of international joint ventures. Both paragraphs in their excerpted introduction portray internal challenging, asserting that “empirical studies . . . have either produced *contradictory* results or been difficult to compare” (T1: 43–47) and “Research findings on . . . control and perfor-

mance offer *conflicting results*" (T1: 59–61). And this introduction ends by suggesting ongoing contention in the investigative area by noting that there is "*continuing controversy*" in the literature (T1: 63–65).

In summary, noncoherent intertextual fields are achieved through the construction of discord, with the body of work relevant to investigative domains presented as contentious and disjointed. This construction is achieved by several rhetorical practices: *Making contentious characterizations* is the first practice supporting noncoherence. Research domains in the noncoherent articles we examined were characterized in contentious terms by phrases like "*rather than producing a consensus*" [Meyerson, 1994: 628: 22–23], "*non consensus*" [Holm, 1995: 398: 2–7], "*competing explanations*" [Bills, 1987: 202–203: 37–2], "*major controversy*" [Gersick, 1995: 10: 31], and "*depressing disputes*" [Riley, 1983: 414: 23–24]. Such language clearly invokes general images of investigative discord.

Differentiating internal challenges, the textual practice of portraying organization scholars as pitted against each other, is expressed in a variety of terms. Gersick's [1995] study constructs "*opposing camps*" of researchers on the organizational adaptability issue, locating a group of researchers in each: "One camp associated with theorists such as. . . Theorists such as . . . anchor an opposing camp, arguing. . ." [1995: 10: 31–42]. Similarly, in their introduction Wiewel and Hunter wrote this: "A hypothesis has been confirmed empirically [Carroll and Delacroix, 1982; Freeman, Carroll, and Hannan, 1983]" [1985: 482: 25–33], only to follow that up with "Meyer and Webster (1983) [raising] *questions*" [1985: 482: 25–33] about their findings. Contention is emphasized by naming the specific scholars or groups of scholars that disagree.

In addition to the above two practices, the construction of discord is achieved by negating findings, the practice of recording researchers' outright negation of existing findings and approaches. Thus, statements like "Legal scholars have provided compelling arguments that the initial separation of ownership and control was *not* the inevitable consequence of large-scale enterprise, as portrayed by Berle and Means" [Davis & Thompson, 1994: 141: 35–37] portray researchers nullifying each other's work. Similarly, Gregory asserted that "applying this anthropological approach in corporations leads one to study . . . *not only* myths" [1983: 359: 20–28]. And Anderson's introduction states "In this view, organizational action is *not* the result of the intellectual processes implicit in the task description" [1983: 201: 25–27].

Finally, the rhetorical practice of *dichotomizing theoretical perspectives* in an area of study is a fourth way in which discord among researchers is constructed. Dichotomizing underscores dissent by identifying researchers' views as diametrically opposed. This practice is reflected in comments such as "Although the *dichotomy* is not exact, two major research traditions are emerging, the *functionalist* approach and the *interpretive* approach" [Riley, 1983: 414: 25–27]. Perhaps the most interesting examples of this practice are provided by those texts in which the textual process of creating the dichotomy is visible. For example, Pinfield's [1986] introduction in the do-

main of organizational decision making begins by noting a qualified difference between two perspectives but ends by labeling a dichotomy:

Mintzberg and his colleagues (1976) argued that completed strategic decision processes follow a structured process. . . . In *partial contrast* to the above perspectives is that of Cohen, March, and Olsen [Pinfield, 1986: 366: 4–9].

After describing the perspectives as “in *partial contrast*” to each other, the text then goes on to establish the dichotomy thus: “The first of these views will be labeled the ‘*structured*’ perspective . . . the second view will be labeled the ‘*anarchic*’ perspective” [Pinfield, 1986: 366: 40–43]. The introduction then proceeds to elaborate on the differences between the “structured and anarchic perspectives.” In a similar fashion, Pentland’s text on organizational knowledge characterizes as a “*mind-body*” dichotomy researchers’ various focuses on “cognition in particular domains” and on “organizational routines” [1992: 527].

Table 2 summarizes the textual acts and associated rhetorical practices that create each of the three forms of intertextual coherence we have discussed in this section.

The Second Process: Problematizing the Situation

The process of structuring an intertextual field sets the scene for a contribution to be made through the interplay of an extant literature and a current study. In this respect, the process situates the opportunity for contribution within a particular construction of an intertextual field. The second process both relies on and complicates this scene. That is, the process of problematizing the situation calls into question the particular intertextual field that is established to locate a work. Through the process of problematization, then, a text attempts to signify how much the offered contribution matters. And, in doing so, it seeks to establish the contribution’s importance and relevance to readers.

The analyses of the sampled publications disclosed three ways to problematize an intertextual field, which we conceptualize as incompleteness, inadequacy, and incommensurability. We use the prefix “in-” intentionally to express the negation, even subversion, of some aspect of the extant intertextual fields. Seeing the three means of problematizing as a continuum, as we move from incompleteness through inadequacy and on to incommensurability, we find increasing negation and upheaval. Table 3 provides examples from our sample of each of the three different ways of problematizing a literature. We incorporate and analyze these excerpts in the following discussion of problematization. In addition, we refer to Table 4, which details the textual acts and particular rhetorical practices associated with the three ways of problematizing.

Incompleteness. When problematizing a literature as *incomplete*, a text claims both that the extant literature is not finished and that the present study will further specify it. An incompleteness problematization assumes that a contribution can be made to an extant intertextual field by developing

TABLE 2
Process 1: The Textual Acts and Rhetorical Practices That Construct Intertextual Coherence

Form of Intertextual Coherence	Textual Acts	Rhetorical Practices
Synthesized coherence	Formulate general ideas (<i>by</i>)	forming thematic characterizations (<i>e.g., the notion</i>).
	Construct congruent relationships (<i>by</i>)	writing connections between divergent literatures (<i>e.g., literature 1 and literature 2 share many concepts</i>).
	Demonstrate latent consensus (<i>by</i>)	reinterpreting work to show underlying consensus (<i>e.g., implicit in the literature</i>).
	Construct cumulative progress (<i>by</i>)	referencing time devoted to a topical area (<i>e.g., during the past decade</i>), serializing citations to imply time devoted to a domain (<i>e.g., author 1 found that . . . author 2 extended this work by . . . author 3 discovered</i>), citing densely to underscore effort devoted to a domain (<i>e.g., a substantial literature [multiple cites]</i>).
Progressive coherence	Construct consensus among researchers (<i>by</i>)	stating agreement (<i>e.g., there is considerable agreement</i>), using citations to indicate existence of shared perspectives (<i>e.g., the literature . . . in general suggests . . . [multiple cites]</i>).
		making contentious characterizations (<i>e.g., a major controversy</i>), differentiating internal challenges (<i>e.g., one camp . . . an opposing camp</i>), negating findings (<i>e.g., organizational action is not the result of</i>), dichotomizing approaches (<i>e.g., it has been treated either as an objective or subjective phenomenon</i>).
Noncoherence	Construct discord among researchers (<i>by</i>)	

it further; the problematizing identifies where further specification is needed. Thus, the textual act of specifying the gap emerges as the hallmark of an incompleteness problematization.

The examples excerpted from Turner [1976] and Kram and Isabella [1985] in column 1 of Table 3 (T3) illustrate how texts specify gaps in an extant literature. The text by Kram and Isabella [1985] situates itself in the mentoring literature (T3: 2–12). It then (T3: 12–13) complicates this literature by incorporating the notion of “*other* adult relationships,” implying that a mentoring relationship is but one of many relationships in work settings important for individual growth. Near the end of the introduction, with the sentence “Yet . . . life and career” (T3: 17–21), the text fully specifies the gap in understanding about relationships. In this one sentence, and through the use of the conjunction “yet,” the text not only situates the present work and problematizes the situation, but also foreshadows what the study will be about. Finally, the text discloses the study’s proposed contribution when it suggests that “a first step” in examining these other relationships “is a systematic study of the nature of relationships with peers” (T3: 23–26). Note how the text conveys the contribution with humility in the phrase “a first step” and also signals that the study will comply with scientific norms through the use of the word “systematic.”

The text by Turner [1976] situates itself in the broadly defined literature of “organization and environment” and the study of “uncertainty” (T3: 30–36). The problematizing of this literature then occurs:

The central difficulty . . . lies in discovering which . . . problems facing an organization are prudent to ignore and which should be attended to, and how an acceptable criterion of safety can be established as a criterion for carrying out this exercise (T3: 37–42).

The text then simultaneously relies on and extends Wilensky’s insight about “failures of foresight” and thereby foreshadows what this study concerns (T3: 42–50). The text will “take up” Wilensky’s suggestion to examine the conditions that foster the failure of foresight and use official inquiries into British public disasters to do so. Finally, near the end of the first section, the text completes the specification of the gap:

The main purpose of the present research, however, is not to produce a general theory of such disasters . . . , but to use them as a paradigm for understanding organizational failures of insight, which also in their way are disastrous (T3: 53–58).

This text also conveys the offered contribution with humility yet signals the importance of the subject.

What is interesting about these examples is that the textual act of “specifying the gap” includes, but does not stop with, invoking the rhetorical practice of identifying lacunae in the extant literature. If the main textual act is to specify the gap, then the way texts accomplish this act includes, but goes beyond, simply identifying lacunae. The above examples also foreshadow how the study will fill the lacunae, politely address extant literature,

TABLE 3
Problematising Situations^a

Incompleteness	Inadequacy	Incommensurability
Kram and Isabella [1985: 110–112; AMJ] Both adult development and career theorists have described the mentoring relationship as having great potential to enhance the development of individuals in both early and middle career stages (Dalton, Thompson, & Price, 1977; Hall, 1976; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978). Studies of this relationship suggest that it can be instrumental in supporting both career advancement and personal growth (Clawson, 1979; Kram, 1985; Levinson et al., 1978; Phillips-Jones, 1982). The purpose of this paper is to consider how other adult relationships in work settings—relationships with peers—can offer both similar and unique possibilities for personal and professional growth. Yet, while we know the general importance of relationships, we know little about adult relationships other than the mentoring relationship that directly encourage, support, and contribute to progress in life and career. A first step in the investigation of other developmental relationships in organizations is a systematic study of the nature of relationships with peers.	Prasad [1993: 1400–1402; AMJ] Altogether, a substantial body of research now offers insights into how computers change organizations and into the problems and issues associated with the implementation of computer technology. Yet, some writers (Barry, 1989; Hennesstad, 1987) remain dissatisfied with previous work, which they have characterized as incomplete and inadequate. For the most part, they suggest that researchers . . . have neglected the symbolic dimensions of computerized work (Hennesstad, 1987; Turkle, 1984). I attempted to fill some of these lacunae by looking at the symbolic processes contained in technological change. Symbolic interaction, an underutilized methodology, has immense potential to augment scholarly understanding of organizations. Although I adopted the methodology for studying the implementation of technological change . . . It is hoped that my demonstration of the application of this approach will provide readers with insights into its use in other organizational situations. More recently, a theoretical recognition of the symbolic nature of computers and information technology has gained strength. . . . Despite this . . . recognition . . . very few empirical studies have systematically documented it or explored how it can influence organization-level action. . . . Such a perspective, could, however, clearly offer considerable insights into the processes of computer implementation in organizations.	Boje [1991: 106–109; ASQ] In organizations, storytelling is the preferred sense-making currency of human relationships. . . . People engage in a dynamic process of incremental refinement of their stories of new events as well as on-going reinterpretations of culturally sacred story lines. . . . Even in stable times, the story is highly variable. . . . These are complex aspects of storytelling in organizations that have been ignored in previous approaches to story analysis. Stories in previous laboratory, history and questionnaire research generally have been wrenched from their natural performance contexts and treated as objectified social facts (Ritzer, 1975), mere texts, with little empirical attention given to the natural linguistic context in which the stories are being performed. Text research does not capture basic aspects of the situated language performance. . . . In case history studies, researchers have relied on second- and third-hand accounts of a story, rather than examining a storytelling event in process. An example of the text-as-social-fact paradigm would be the IBM rule-breaking story analyzed by Martin et al. (1983). . . . The story is literature and its plot and characters are indeed interesting, but is it the way IBMers tell stories to one another in real time? . . . Valid and insightful as these assumptions may be, can we be assured that this story is really a reflection of the IBM culture? In the case of lab study research performance skills are not a consideration. . . . Story-text studies . . . have also ignored performance behavior . . . In the case of surveys, the textual content, rather than the storytelling event is the focus of study. . . . Stories can therefore be correctly interpreted only to the extent that the researcher grasps the story in situ.

Turner [1976: 378–379; ASQ]

Administrative organizations may be thought of as cultural mechanisms developed to set collective goals and make arrangements to deploy available resources to attain those goals. Given this concern with future objectives, analysts have paid considerable attention to the manner in which organizational structures are patterned to cope with unknown events—or uncertainty—in the future facing the organization and its environment (Crozier, 1964; Thompson, 1967; Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967).

TABLE 3 (continued)

Incompleteness	Inadequacy	Incommensurability
The central difficulty, therefore, lies in discovering which aspects of the current set of problems facing an organization are prudent to ignore and which should be attended to, and how an acceptable level of safety can be established as a criterion for carrying out this exercise. Wilensky (1967) has suggested that to deal with such situations, one must discover how to recognize high-quality intelligence about the problem in hand. Taking up this suggestion, this article considers the manner in which such an approach (focusing on failures of foresight) could be used to identify, as Wilensky (1967: 121) puts it, "the conditions that foster the failure of foresight;" British public inquiries into major public disasters offer sets of information about some aspects of the intelligence failures that led up to them. . . . The main purpose of the present research, however, is not to produce a general theory of such disasters, although one may emerge incidentally, but to use them as a paradigm for the understanding of organizational failures of foresight, which also in their way are disastrous, although they may lack the public impact produced by a major loss of life.	the silver crisis of 1980, are socially constructed. The traditional phase structure of speculative bubbles . . . (Kindleberger, 1978) is reframed as a process of organizing. . . . The model of market process developed here reflects economic behavior that is strategic, political, and embedded in institutional structure. Recent work in economic sociology has focused on how market contexts influence the action of economic agents. A new awareness of how economic action is embedded in social relations has supplemented the neoclassical emphasis on economic actors as atomized agents. . . . Our model emphasizes that structure constrains actions and that action, in turn, shapes institutional structure. This view contributes a process perspective to the recent work on markets. The emphasis here on the social organization of speculative bubbles contrasts with the attention to the irrationality of crowd behavior that characterizes the recent models of both Minsky (1977) and Kindleberger (1978). Whereas Kindleberger emphasized how price movements influence people, we focus on how market participants strategically organize price movements. He assumed an atomized and disorganized crowd of market actors (1978: 28-41), whereas we concentrate on the purposive actions of powerful coalitions. According to Kindleberger, speculative bubbles pass through three phases. . . . In this paper, we emphasize that these phases result from and in turn influence three related processes: the actions, attributions, and regulatory efforts of powerful market participants.	Eisenhardt (1989: 543-545; AMJ) Yet, although decision speed seems to affect performance in such environments (Bourgeois & Eisenhardt, 1988) and is a key characteristic differentiating strategic decisions (Hickson, Butler, Gray, Mallory, & Wilson, 1986), there has been little research on fast strategic decision making. This article explores the speed of strategic decision making. . . . The results reported here are a set of propositions challenging traditional views of strategic decision making. The evidence suggests that fast decision makers use more, not less, information than do slow decision makers. They also develop more, not fewer, alternatives. In contrast to current literature, this study found that centralized decision making is not necessarily fast, but a layered advice process, emphasizing input from experienced counselors, is fast. The findings also indicate that conflict resolution is critical to decision speed, but conflict per se is not. Finally, integration among strategic decisions and between decisions and tactical plans speeds, not slows, decision making. Such integration helps decision makers cope with the anxiety of high-stakes decision making. Overall, fast decision making allows decision makers to keep pace with change and is linked to strong performance. A pattern of emotional, political, and cognitive processes that are related to rapid closure of major decisions emerged from this research. The empirical grounding of those ideas is the subject of this article.

^a *ASQ* = *Administrative Science Quarterly*; *AMJ* = *Academy of Management Journal*.

and portray the study's proposed contribution somewhat tentatively and with humility. Moreover, we found throughout our sample that texts constructing incompleteness problematizations did so by specifying gaps and invoking these four rhetorical practices. Table 4 identifies the rhetorical practices that work to specify gaps. Below, we examine representative examples of each of these rhetorical practices.

Identifying lacunae, the first practice, is exemplified by these excerpts:

Institutional theory provides a useful, but incomplete, view of how organizations cope with conflicting, inconsistent demands [Elsbach & Sutton, 1993: 700: 39–40].

While the existing literature on institutionalization relies heavily on the role of myths . . . it is sketchy about the origins of such myths [Ritti & Silver, 1986: 9: 1–3].

Note how the texts explicitly identify the lacunae through the use of phrases such as “useful, but incomplete” and “existing literature . . . is sketchy.” They paint a picture of the extant literature as headed in the right direction, but needing further elaboration.

Foreshadowing how the study fills lacunae is a second relevant practice. It is not enough to identify the lacunae; the text must also foreshadow in its introduction how the study fills the lacunae. Here, we show how the two texts profiled above accomplish this:

Thus, a greater understanding . . . may be gained by blending institutional and impression management perspectives. . . . This article is an initial step toward such an integration. We propose a process model (Mohr, 1982) describing how institutional conformity of structures and procedures and the decoupling of illegitimate activities from legitimate structures set the stage for the use of impression management tactics [Elsbach & Sutton, 1992: 700–701: 46: 1–2, 16–20].

The purpose of this paper is to increase our knowledge about the myths themselves and the processes that aid in their development. The case history . . . is used to examine how myths arise and are fostered, how they are dramatized in the context of interorganizational relationships . . . only later evolving into institutional solutions to institutional problems [Ritti & Silver, 1986: 29: 3–12].

In the first example, the integration of impression management with institutional theory is used to address the gap in the theoretical understanding of “how organizations cope with conflicting, inconsistent demands.” In the second example, a study of myths themselves—their origin, development, and evolution—is undertaken to better explain their role in institutionalization.

Politely addressing extant literature also supports incompleteness problematizations. Texts are polite when addressing lacunae in an extant literature. They often establish alliances, but never create enemies.

We subscribe to Scott's argument that the interorganizational field context is the appropriate level of analysis for understand-

TABLE 4
Process 2: The Textual Acts and Rhetorical Practices That Problematize the Intertextual Situation

Form of Problematizing	Textual Acts	Rhetorical Practices
Incompleteness problematization	Specify gaps (<i>by</i>)	identifying lacunae (<i>e.g., we discover a surprising gap</i>), foreshadowing how the study fills lacunae (<i>e.g., This article is an initial step toward such an integration</i>), politely addressing extant literature (<i>e.g., previous systematic research . . . has not clearly distinguished</i>), portraying own contributions tentatively and with humility (<i>e.g., we offer a contribution to the field of . . .</i>), framing oversights and pointing out how an alternative perspective can redress oversights (<i>e.g., research has neglected . . . need to consider a different view</i>), foreshadowing how study addresses oversights (<i>e.g., in this article, we offer . . . as one way to address these issues</i>), portraying own contributions directly, yet with humility (<i>e.g., this study was designed to present a new model, not to refute an old one</i>), referencing literature support for an alternate perspective (<i>e.g., we took seriously the assertions that . . . [cites]</i>), introducing a partisan viewpoint, sparingly and tentatively (<i>e.g., to date, we have developed only the most rudimentary conceptual tools to investigate</i>), conducting a head-on challenge of an extant perspective (<i>e.g., the dominant view ignores</i>), replacing an extant perspective with own view (<i>e.g., rectifying these . . . warrants a different interpretation</i>), portraying own contribution directly, yet with humility (<i>e.g., this paper offers a different approach</i>), using provocative language and linguistic devices (<i>e.g., are strategies not also enacted?</i>).
Inadequacy problematization	Illuminate oversights (<i>by</i>)	
Incommensurability problematization	Advocate for alternate thesis (<i>by</i>)	

ing the interplay between a field's structural evolution and change in its institutional practices [Leblebici, Salancik, Copay, & King, 1991: 333: 11–15].

Previous systematic research of internal corporate venturing has not clearly distinguished between new product and new business developing [Burgelman, 1983: 223: 27–29].

The first example explicitly creates alliances by identifying the specific writings used to develop the present study. Although the second example does not create such alliances, it is nevertheless polite in its discussion of the extant literature through the construction of a neutrally identified lacuna, “has not clearly distinguished.”

Portraying their own contributions tentatively and with humility is another rhetorical practice in texts with incompleteness problematizations:

In this article we offer a contribution to the field of organizational change by borrowing theory and practice from family theorists and therapists [Hirschhorn & Gilmore, 1980: 21: 3–5].

My goal was to place another stone on the path toward improved service by offering a close examination of the role of service employees and their interactions with customers [Rafaeli, 1989: 246: 36–38].

The use of phrases like “offer a contribution,” “place another stone on the path,” and “should promote” rhetorically convey humility and the tentative proffering of a contribution.

Together, the textual act of specifying a gap and the four associated rhetorical practices problematize an extant literature as incomplete. Regarding this literature as providing valuable understanding, incompleteness problematizations offer to enrich the area of study by filling in details. They point out only what is missing in the literature, not what is wrong with it. Consequently, these texts specify gaps—both in terms of lacunae and how the current studies will fill them—by politely addressing extant literatures and portraying contributions tentatively and with humility.

Inadequacy. When problematizing a literature as inadequate, a text claims that the extant literature does not sufficiently incorporate different perspectives and views of the phenomena under investigation. That is, it claims that work in the extant field has overlooked perspectives relevant and important to better understanding and explaining the phenomena. An inadequacy problematization assumes that a contribution can be made to extant literature by pointing out the oversight and introducing alternative perspectives, frameworks, or both. Thus, the textual act of illuminating oversights emerges as the hallmark of an inadequacy problematization.

The excerpts from Prasad [1993] and Abolafia and Kilduff [1988] depicted in column 2 of Table 3 show how texts illuminate oversights and introduce alternative perspectives. Prasad's text claims that the literature on computerization and change has overlooked the symbolic perspective on computerization. This text identifies the oversight (T3: 6–12) by referencing authors who “remain dissatisfied with previous work” and in particular

with how that work has “neglected the symbolic dimensions of computerized work.” In this same section, the text also positions itself with other authors cited as dissatisfied with the extant literature.

Although this text frames the oversight (T3: 2–12, 24–29), foreshadows how the study will address the oversight (T3: 12–18), and portrays its contribution directly yet with humility (T3: 18–23), it distinguishes itself, and the inadequacy problematization, by introducing a partisan perspective. That is, it argues for an alternative perspective. For example, when the text points out how the alternate perspective can redress the oversight, it does not simply suggest this and move on. Rather, it argues strongly for the benefits of adopting such a perspective. Accordingly, the text announces (T3: 17) that this perspective has “*immense potential*,” not merely potential. Further, this perspective could not just add to the literature, it “could . . . *clearly offer considerable insights*” (T3: 30–31). Finally, when citing literature as support for the proposed perspective, the text once again invokes descriptors that move away from neutrality. Thus, we see supporting research as representing a “*theoretical recognition* of the symbolic nature of computers” that “*has gained strength*” (T3: 24–26). Although the tone remains polite, a partisan viewpoint is nevertheless explicitly introduced by arguing the need for an alternate perspective.

Abolafia and Kilduff’s [1988] text claims that the economics literature has overlooked how economic action is socially constructed. This text frames the oversight and points out how an alternate perspective redresses the oversight (T3: 43–49) and portrays its contribution directly yet with humility (T3: 46–49, 50–51, 61–64). But, as with the text by Prasad [1993], what is most interesting is how this text builds a strong case for the proposed alternative perspective through the insertion of a partisan viewpoint. In this case, the text uses explicit contrast to disclose the partisan viewpoint: It juxtaposes the present study’s focus on social construction with “recent work” (T3: 41–48). It then quickly narrows the contrast to that between the present study and the work of one researcher. The structuring of this contrast emerges as follows:

The emphasis here on the social organization of speculative bubbles contrasts with the attention to the irrationality of crowd behavior that characterizes the recent models of both Minsky (1977) and Kindleberger (1978). Whereas Kindleberger emphasized . . . we focus on. . . . He assumed . . . whereas we concentrate on. . . . According to Kindleberger. . . . In this paper, we emphasize that (T3: 50–61).

In this short excerpt, the text contrasts the view it represents with prior research four times. Even though the tone remains polite, the four contrasts introduce support for the alternate perspective.

The examples disclose that the construction of an inadequacy problematization incorporates the textual act of illuminating oversights and five rhetorical practices: framing oversights and pointing out how alternative perspectives can redress them; foreshadowing how the present study will

address the oversights; portraying the study's contribution directly, yet with humility; citing literature as support for the alternate perspective; and introducing a partisan viewpoint. Table 4 identifies both the textual act and these rhetorical practices. Below, we develop representative examples of each rhetorical practice from other texts in our sample.

Framing oversights and pointing out how an alternative perspective can redress them is evident in these examples:

A focus on issues as a starting point for interpretation and action in organization charts a different course for seeing patterns of organizational action than a traditional decision-making view. . . . Typically, researchers define a decision and trace backward from that point to find interpretations. . . . In contrast, a focus on issues begins with an issue or a collective construction . . . that is of concern for an organization and then proceeds forward from this recognition point to find relevant actions and interpretations . . . an issue focus underlines the importance of attention allocation and sensitivity to context [Dutton & Dukerich, 1991: 519: 7–9, 14–21].

Institutionalist analysis must include all types of behavior, including those driven by interests and power (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). This can be achieved if we take seriously the insight that institutions, while they are products of action, also constitute action. To handle both sides of this equation I propose that institutions be seen as nested systems, drawing a distinction between actions guided by the established order, on the one hand, and actions geared toward creating new or changing old institutions, on the other [Holm, 1995: 398–399: 35–36, 1–8].

Note how the excerpts above differentiate the extant perspectives from the ones they offer. In the text by Dutton and Dukerich, phrases such as “a focus on issues . . . charts a different course,” “typically researchers,” and “in contrast, a focus on issues,” both frame the oversight in the extant decision-making literature and present the alternative focus on issues to redress the oversight. This is also the case in the excerpt by Holm, in which the extant view that institutions are products of action is differentiated from the offered view that institutions also constitute action. Neither text seeks to overthrow the extant literature but rather, both seek to validate the insights gained from taking an alternative perspective.

Foreshadowing how the study will address the oversights, the second rhetorical practice supporting an inadequacy problematization, can be seen in these excerpts:

Management scholarship faces a crisis of representation (Marcus & Fischer, 1986). A variety of documents and texts, ranging from newspaper articles to government inquiry transcripts and reports, describe organizational events at a level of detail not otherwise available. Yet, it is difficult to incorporate such accounts into systematic empirical research. In this article, I offer the textual approach to qualitative research (Gephart, 1988a; Gephart & Wolfe, 1989) as one methodological means to address

such representational difficulties in management research [Gephart, 1993: 1466: 20–27].

It can be argued that major organizational decisions to persist or withdraw from a course of action are far more complicated than the . . . literature often implies. . . . Thus . . . we proposed [a model]. . . . Because the temporal model of escalation was essentially based on [one] case study, our two propositions have not yet received an independent test. The case study described herein . . . was designed to provide such an independent test . . . as well as an exploration into exit processes not addressed by the temporal model [Ross & Staw, 1993: 702: 14–16, 19; 703: 32–42].

The text by Gephart, which points out the inability of organizational research to incorporate documents detailing organizational events, foreshadows a “textual approach to qualitative research,” offered to address the identified oversight. To address the oversight, the text by Ross and Staw offers a case study as an “independent test” and further “exploration” of organization-level dimensions of escalation of commitment.

These excerpts illustrate a third rhetorical practice supporting inadequacy, *portraying the study’s own contribution directly, yet with humility*:

This study was designed to generate new theory, not to test existing theory, and the paper is organized to present a new model, not to refute an old one [Gersick, 1988: 12: 7–9].

Because our efforts to understand deck operations got us thinking about the possibility that performance is mediated by collective mental processes, we use these operations to illustrate that thinking, but the processes of mind we discuss are presumed to be inherent in all organizations. What may vary across organizations is the felt need to develop these processes for more advanced levels [Weick & Roberts, 1993: 3358: 5–12].

This practice is similar to how texts constructing incompleteness problematizations portray their contributions. The difference is that these texts convey the contributions more directly, with less tentativeness.

Citing literature support for an alternate perspective also supports an inadequacy problematization:

Numerous writers suggest that the major function myths, corporate legends and cultural patterns fulfill is to provide a system of uniting that which would otherwise be fragmented (Burke, 1954; Benne, 1961; Becker, 1973; Dunphy, 1974). . . . It . . . follows that we can see, lurking within or beneath the myth, the cleavages threatening the organization as a whole that might erupt were the myth not present. This, we argue, is one substantive reason why organizational psychology should become more attuned to the functions of myths [Smith & Simmons, 1983: 377: 1–4, 8–13].

Texts constructing inadequacy problematizations legitimate their alternate perspectives by building on knowledge in other literatures—prior work on myths, in the above excerpt.

Introducing a partisan viewpoint, but sparingly and infrequently, is exemplified in these excerpts:

After decades of research, we still know little about . . . [Donnellon, Gray, & Bougon, 1986: 43: 1].

Despite the many contributions theoreticians have made to understanding conflict, the issue of how conflict moves remains unexplored. To date, we have developed only the most rudimentary conceptual tools to investigate the processes by which conflict moves [Smith, 1989: 3: 22–26].

The partisan support for the alternative perspective emerges in the critique of prior work. Note how certain words in the above excerpts convey partisanship: “after decades of research,” “despite the many contributions,” and “only the most rudimentary conceptual tools.”

Together, the textual act of illuminating oversights and the five associated rhetorical practices problematize literatures as inadequate. Regarding extant literature as lacking essential perspectives, texts constructing inadequacy problematizations seek to redress oversights by providing alternative viewpoints or frameworks. This problematization stops short, however, of arguing that an extant intertextual field is wrong, instead allowing the proposed alternative framework to coexist with the extant field.

Incommensurability. When problematizing a text as incommensurate, an article suggests that the extant literature not only overlooks different and relevant perspectives, but also claims this literature is wrong. That is, the extant field is presented as displaying a misguided perspective or as having moved in the wrong direction. The assumption is that a contribution can be made to the extant literature by pointing out and correcting this error. Thus, the hallmark of texts that construct incommensurability problematizations is their direct advocacy of alternative theses that they regard as superior to those put forth in extant literatures.

The examples excerpted from Boje [1991] and Eisenhardt [1989], depicted in column 3 of Table 3, illustrate how texts construct incommensurability problematizations. Arguing that stories examined in previous research on storytelling have been “*wrenched* from their natural performance contexts” (T3: 12–13), Boje advocates the alternative thesis that storytelling be studied as a dynamic process occurring within a specific performative context. Clearly, the word “wrench” is not neutral. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it denotes forcible movement; in this case, the forcible movement of storytelling out of its natural performative context.

The text does not begin with the word “wrench” and the head-on challenge to the extant literature. Rather, it first asserts the advantages of seeing storytelling as a dynamic process in context. The text moves immediately to that natural context rather than to the literature about storytelling. In fact, for the first 51 lines of the actual article, and beginning with the first two words, “in organizations,” the natural context of storytelling is highlighted. Note how in the sentences, “In organizations, storytelling . . . is highly variable” (T3: 2–8), the text depicts the elements of dynamic process and depicts the performance of stories in an organizational context as crucial to the proffered alternative perspective.

The text next marshals prior literatures—other than the one challenged—to support the alternative thesis and argue that “these are complex aspects of storytelling in organizations that have been ignored in previous approaches to story analysis” (T3: 7–9). Then (T3: 11–36), through use of the word “wrench,” questions challenging the reality of prior research results, continual juxtaposition of prior research and the proposed alternative, and frequent insertion of the words “situated,” “real,” “in situ,” “natural,” “performance,” and “context,” this text mounts a direct challenge to the extant literature and strongly advocates its own, alternative thesis. It doesn’t want to just coexist with that prior work—it wants to overthrow it and replace it with the proposed perspective. Indeed, the text concludes as follows: “Stories can therefore be correctly interpreted only to the extent that the researcher grasps the story in situ” (T3: 34–36).

The text by Eisenhardt is another example of an incommensurability problematization. Arguing that prior research on rapid strategic decision making does not deal with “two key realities,” this text advocates an alternative thesis bolstered by empirical findings that challenge the traditional literature. Specifically, the text suggests that “extant views may inaccurately describe how executives make rapid decisions” [Eisenhardt, 1989: 545: 33–34].

Once again, this text does not begin with the challenge, but rather builds up to it as the introduction unfolds. The article begins with a story of failed decision making in a context demanding speed and indicates that this story is “not unusual.” Then, the text identifies an oversight in the prior literature (T3: 38–43), ending with the statement “There has been little research on fast strategic decision making.” In addition, the text develops the proposed contribution of this study: “This article explores the speed of strategic decision making. . . . The empirical grounding of those ideas is the subject of this article” (T3: 44–45, 64–66). This contribution is portrayed matter-of-factly, humbly, and neutrally, in line with scientific norms (Gephart, 1988; Knorr-Cetina, 1981). However, sandwiched between these neutral sentences is the essence of this text’s incommensurability problematization. In lines 45–60 of the Eisenhardt excerpt in Table 3, the text directly challenges *five* existing positions on fast strategic decision making: fast decision makers *use more, not less information . . . integration speeds, not slows* decision making, and so forth.

This text, too, directly challenges the extant literature and strongly advocates its own thesis. Through the constant and densely situated contrasting of prior and proposed research, the text most actively provokes and advocates its own thesis. It does not want to coexist with that prior work; it wants to overthrow it and replace it with the proposed perspective. However, because the challenge is sandwiched in between neutral-sounding statements and because it rests on “findings” and “evidence,” the challenge is cast politely.

To accomplish the textual act of advocating an alternative thesis, these texts rely on four rhetorical practices: head-on challenging of extant per-

spectives, replacing extant perspectives with their own views, portraying their own contributions directly and with humility, and using language and linguistic devices to provoke. Table 4 identifies the textual acts and rhetorical practices used to construct a coherent incommensurability problematization. Below, we provide representative examples of each of these rhetorical practices from other texts in our sample.

Head-on challenging of extant perspectives is demonstrated in these excerpts:

The dominant view posits a succession of phases. . . . During the first phase . . . managerial discourse sought to legitimate coercive shopfloor practices. . . . By the turn of the century, consolidations had set the stage for a second phase during which . . . rational theories of management dominated managerial discourse. . . . The Depression is widely held to mark the beginning of the third phase (Bendix, 1956; Wren, 1972) . . . managerial discourse began to emphasize normative control. . . . Although the thesis of a progressive shift toward normative control has considerable elegance, it rests on a reading of history that underplays events in the late nineteenth century and that ignores streams of thought that gained prominence after World War II [Barley & Kunda, 1992: 364: 1–21, 32–36].

The study of organizational culture thus becomes translated into the study of the informal or “merely” social or symbolic side of corporate life. In anthropology, where the concept is most fully developed, culture concerns all aspects of a group’s social behavior. . . . Applying this anthropological approach in corporations leads one to study participants’ views about all aspects of corporate experience. These would include the work itself, the technology, the formal organization structure, and everyday language, not only myths, stories or special jargon. That some researchers select these for special emphasis says more about the culture of the researchers than the researched, for whom all culture is equally taken for granted [Gregory, 1983: 359: 9–13, 23–30].

These texts identify prevailing perspectives and then assert the ways in which those perspectives are misguided. The first text notes the “dominant view” as having “considerable elegance” and then critiques that view as resting on a “reading of history that underplays events” and that ignores other “streams of thought.” The second text asserts that culture research in organizations is viewed as the study of the “merely social or symbolic side of organizational life.” Critiquing that perspective, the text suggests the decision to study only these dimensions of life says more about the “culture of the researchers than the researched.”

Replacing extant perspectives with own views is demonstrated in these quotations:

Rectifying these oversights warrants a different interpretation of the historical record [Barley & Kunda, 1992: 364: 36–37].

I began this research with the assumption that knowledge in a software support hot line was best thought of as a kind of data-

base. . . . The database metaphor separates the knowledge from the machine. . . . Six months of participant observation in two hot lines forced me to reconsider this perspective. I began to see organizational knowledge in terms of members' performances [Pentland, 1992: 528: 28–39].

Not only do these texts challenge prevailing perspectives; they also position their own perspectives as better. Note how the first excerpt suggests that the proffered perspective will rectify oversights. And the second text, by sharing the process undergone by the researcher, contrasts the extant and emergent perspectives. In doing so, it argues for the new, emergent perspective, explaining that the data “forced [the researcher] to reconsider” the prevailing perspective.

Portraying their own contributions directly and with humility promotes an incommensurability problematization in these excerpts:

We propose and find preliminary support for a theory that combines cultural constraints and material forces [Barley & Kunda, 1992: 363: 14–16].

The purpose of this paper is to suggest a way to overcome this dualism in organizational research [Pentland, 1992: 527: 23–33].

Despite directly challenging the extant perspectives and attempting to replace those perspectives with the proffered ones, the texts constructing incommensurability problematizations are nevertheless humble as they directly portray their own contributions. In this regard, even this problematization maintains a degree of adherence to the scientific norm of straightforwardness and humility.

Finally, *using language and linguistic devices to provoke* is demonstrated by these excerpts:

Are strategies not also enacted? . . . Is there not a need for a definition of the word that encompasses the “strategies” actually pursued by organizations? And, if so, is it not then conceivable that organizations may sometimes not succeed in pursuing the strategies they intended, indeed that they may end up pursuing strategies they never intended? The authors believe that the answers are yes [Mintzberg & Waters, 1982: 466: 1–4, 19–20].

That so many organizational theorists suddenly have begun to bandy about what suspiciously appears to resemble an interest in contextually shared meaning should give one pause. While occupational sociologists in the tradition of the Chicago School have long been concerned . . . organizational theorists have been conspicuously silent on the matter until quite recently. Where, then, does one turn if one seeks to build a theory of how groups of people construct systems of meaning? If culture is an interpretive framework, what course should we take in ascribing ontological status to culture? By what principles do systems of meaning operate? Should cultures be studied *sui generis*, as systems of meaning in and of themselves? Or, is it better to study cultures as a set of discrete symbolic entities that can be used as variables to explain other properties of organizations? Or should we do both? [Barley, 1983: 393: 37–44; 393: 1–12].

As these excerpts show, texts constructing incommensurability problematizations often rely on questioning to provoke readers into critiquing extant views and adopting proffered views.

Together, the textual acts of advocating alternative perspectives or theses and using the four associated rhetorical practices problematize literatures as incommensurate. Regarding prevailing views in the literatures as misguided, these texts seek to replace them with alternatives.

CONSTRUCTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTRIBUTION

The 82 articles that we examined indicate that two textual processes, structuring intertextual coherence and problematizing the situation, form the foundation for constructing opportunities for contribution to organization studies. Further, the variation in and interplay between these two processes make it possible for journal articles to textually invoke contribution in many different ways. Table 5 locates our sample of publications according to the forms of intertextual coherence and problematization they craft.

How, then, do these two processes support scholarly publications in textually making the case that they offer something important to the organizational studies community? In constructing intertextual fields, texts take the necessary first step toward this end by licensing a theoretical trajectory for contribution. They accomplish this through the construction of agreement among those scholars and researchers whose work has come before. Specifically, we found that license is granted through the presentation of (1) underlying agreement about unrecognized and undeveloped investigative areas, (2) long-standing, widely held, and explicit agreement about advancing research domains, and (3) inability to achieve consensus in investigative arenas that researchers agree are important. In the case of synthesized coherence, construction of an agreed-to but as yet unexamined theoretical area invites its exploration and development. The straight-line trajectory of progressive coherence encourages continued development and refinement of understanding in previously outlined theoretical frameworks. And the conflicting trajectories of noncoherence appeal for resolution of the discord. The textual achievement of each of these trajectories invokes contribution by inviting further investment of intellectual resources in the configured research topics.

Whereas in structuring intertextual coherence, texts authorize and shape opportunities for contribution, in problematizing that coherence, texts carve out larger or smaller spaces in, and signify the degree to which they propose to assert themselves into, those intertextual fields. With regard to space, as texts move from problematizing intertextual fields as incomplete, through problematizing them as inadequate, and on to problematizing them as incommensurate, the texts shape larger opportunities for contribution. An incompleteness problematization focuses on gap specification, or “next stepping” (Gephart, 1986, 1988), and acts rhetorically to create a small space in which to further specify. This construction only slightly complicates an

TABLE 5
Constructing Contribution Opportunities^a

Process 1: Structuring the Intertextual Field	Process 2: Problematising the Situation					
	Incompleteness		Inadequacy		Incommensurability	
	ASQ	AMJ	ASQ	AMJ	ASQ	AMJ
<i>Synthesized coherence</i>	Turner, 1976	Harris & Sutton, 1986	Broms & Cahmberg, 1983	Dutton & Dukerich, 1991	Barley, 1983	Eisenhardt, 1989
	Hirschhorn & Gilmore, 1980	Sutton & Callahan, 1987	Smith & Simmons, 1983	Gephart, 1993	Boje, 1995	
	Sutton, 1987	Rafaeli & Sutton, 1991	Martin et al., 1983	Phillips & Brown, 1983		
	Lammers, 1988	Eisbach & Sutton, 1992	Cole, 1985			
	Sutton, 1991	Browning, Beyer, & Shelter, 1995	Donnellon et al., 1986			
	Kahn, 1993		Abolafia & Kilduff, 1988			
			Weick & Roberts, 1993			
			Nelson, 1993			
	Crozler & Thoenig, 1976	Kram & Isabella, 1985	Edstrom & Galbraith, 1977	Kram, 1983	Boje, 1991	Mintzberg & Waters, 1982
	Sebring, 1977	Rafaeli, 1989	Biggart, 1977	Isabella, 1990	Barley & Kunda, 1992	
<i>Progressive coherence</i>	Burgelman, 1983		Gephart, 1978	Ross & Staw, 1993		
	Bartunek, 1984		Stern, 1979			
	Biggart & Hamilton, 1984		Gronn, 1983			
	Helmer, 1985		Ross & Staw, 1986			
	Dunbar & Wasilewski, 1985		Adler & Adler, 1988			
	Ritti & Silver, 1986		Boisot & Child, 1988			
	Kieser, 1989		Covaleski & Dirsmith, 1988			
	Vaughan, 1990		Smith, 1989			
	Leblebici et al., 1991		Henderson & Clark, 1990			
			Nee, 1992			
<i>Noncoherence</i>	Jenkins, 1977		Thomas, 1993			
	Alexander, 1979		Barker, 1993			
	Wiewel & Hunter, 1985		Fine, 1996			
	Finlay, 1987		Anderson, 1983	Kimberly, 1979	Gregory, 1983	
	Pinfield, 1986		Riley, 1983	Gersick, 1988	Pentland, 1992	
	Sackman, 1992		Langton, 1984	Prasad, 1993		
			Bills, 1987	Gersick, 1994		
			Larson, 1992	Yan & Gray, 1995		
			Meyerson, 1994			
			Holm, 1994			
			Davis & Thompson, 1994			

^a Full references for these articles can be obtained from the first author. The sample also included two additional articles, Kmetz [1984, ASQ] and Weick [1993, ASQ] that did not conform to any of the nine ways of constructing contribution identified in this table.

extant literature, seeking primarily refinement and ongoing development. In contrast, both the inadequacy and incommensurability constructions create larger complications in an extant literature by proposing alternative perspectives that need to be addressed.

The degree to which a text proposes to insert itself into a configured intertextual field concerns how, and to what extent, it negates or challenges that field. Although all scientific texts criticize, a norm of politeness guides scientific writing (Myers, 1993). Thus, with a few rare exceptions, scientific texts “make friends to define enemies” rather than the other way around (Myers, 1993: 258). In our sample, the texts with inadequacy problematizations momentarily insert partisanship for the perspective being proffered; those with incompleteness problematizations criticize only implicitly—through the exclusion, or writing out, of enemies. Both of them adhere to norms of politeness by negatively evaluating an extant literature only indirectly and by implication. However, those texts constructing an incommensurability problematization do so by directly and negatively challenging alternate perspectives; in some cases, alternate perspectives are portrayed as rivals whose privileged status must be shattered. Although this is a rare textual voice, evidenced by only eight texts in this sample, its rareness nevertheless illuminates what perhaps lies beneath most scientific writing. Through the cracks in the “scientistic style” of writing (McCloskey, 1985, 1994), we can discern a tension and struggle involving authors’ human commitments as scientists and their adherence to particular philosophical ideas. If that is the case, then the challenge embodied in the incommensurability problematization signifies those human concerns as fundamental, even for scientific writing. For these concerns become the problematizing foundation on which opportunities for, and the meanings of, contribution are constructed.

Through the interaction, then, of licensing a theoretical trajectory, carving out space, and inserting themselves into intertextual fields, the introductions we studied textually create opportunities for contribution. Furthermore, texts are authorized to make contributions by the consent and form of previous work. Ironically, as texts seek to offer something to organization studies, they (and their authors) are very much bound by the past. For example, in the construction of a contribution opportunity that is progressively coherent and incomplete, the texts supplement (Harari, 1979) what already exists. Even those texts with incommensurability problematizations need an extant literature to challenge and displace.

A less constrained view of textual contribution also emerges from examining the interaction of the processes. That is, for all of the objectivity and control conveyed through such features of “windowpane prose” (Culler, 1982; Gusfield, 1976; Rorty, 1978) or the scientistic style (McCloskey, 1994) as use of the passive voice and “objectification” of “data” and “evidence,” texts have room to creatively construct opportunities for contribution. Texts can accomplish this by reinterpreting existing work, shaping intertextual fields, creating space, and advocating their perspectives. For example, as the

reinterpretation activities that accompany synthesized coherence clearly show, the consent that licenses textual contribution is, in no small part, of writers' own making.

Consider also the creativity associated with the unusual pairing of progressive intertextual coherence with an incommensurability problematization. Progressive coherence asserts the presence of long-standing consensus among researchers about a well-developed topic. What we expect to have coupled with this type of intertextual field is an incompleteness problematization seeking to specify the gap, not one that directly challenges and seeks to replace the dominant thinking. Yet three texts in our sample did create the opportunity for contribution in this way [Barley & Kunda, 1992; Boje, 1991; Mintzberg & Waters, 1982]. According to Davis (1971), this construction itself is interesting because it acts to substantially negate an established line of thought. That texts negate such literatures, his work suggests, is enough to make the texts interesting. However, our findings suggest that much more is in play. Coupled with the fact that these texts *do* negate an established literature is *how* they negate, a dimension that Davis (1971) overlooked. They not only take on the extant literature, but also orchestrate a dramatic buildup that plays on the long-established field [Barley & Kunda, 1992], tenacious and persistent undermining of the extant thought [Boje, 1991], and immediate and concise oppositions [Mintzberg & Waters, 1982].

Finally, another possibility for creating opportunity for contribution emerges from two texts that do not demonstrate the prevailing ways of creating opportunities for contribution we have detailed. Implicit in constructing intertextual fields is the idea that sufficient existing work to provide a trajectory must be written into a text to create an opportunity for contribution. Most of the texts in our sample fulfill this requirement, but two do not. These two texts, Kmetz [1984] and Weick [1993], construct introductions in which the presentation of previous work is noticeably absent. We could try and explain the exceptions away by noting Kmetz's early publication date or Weick's strong reputation in his field. However, these texts, by virtue of not writing in some form of intertextual field are, by their constitution, novel and unique. Following the logic of grounded theory, such exceptions are cause for further investigation.

CONCLUSIONS

Our study extends the organizational literature on scientific contribution by providing the first empirical analysis of how texts actually construct opportunities for contribution, detailing those specific textual acts and rhetorical practices through which such opportunities are textually achieved. By examining the situated microprocess of language usage in these texts, the study discloses a complex picture of contribution in organizational studies, and in qualitative work in particular, and underscores a number of key points.

First, if the textual constructions of journal articles' contributions that

this study has disclosed constitute what we in the community of organization studies scientists understand to be a uniqueness value, then at the very least, the achievement of uniqueness is a far more complicated process than previous discussions of this value have indicated.

Davis (1971, 1986), one author who addressed uniqueness, built his constructions of the “interesting” and “classic” on the examination of “famous” sociological texts. Unlike Davis, we included both the famous and the not-so-famous. We did not intentionally seek to have a different sample than Davis had. However, during our analyses, we began to identify texts that did not fit into Davis’s definition. These texts often had incompleteness or inadequacy problematizations with progressive or synthesized constructions of intertextual fields. In discussing our reactions, we realized that Davis’s sample would construct opportunities for contribution that lay somewhere in the four outer cells of Table 5—that is, the three incommensurability and two of the three noncoherence cells. Are all the studies that fall in the other five cells uninteresting and nonunique? Are they not important?

Second, the complexity and variety of contribution indicated by these textual processes challenges the extent to which uniqueness constitutes contribution. Certainly uniqueness or novelty is intimated in a number of ways: by portraying what has to date gone unrecognized (synthesized coherence) or by mounting a head-on challenge to existing work. But a lot more is happening in these texts than is suggested by the term “uniqueness.” This study suggests that rather than being a defining characteristic, uniqueness is an attribution that organization scholars make to works that they understand to be important to the community. It is shorthand scholars use to indicate a work of value.

Third, this study underscores the importance of examining knowledge-bearing texts and frames a number of possibilities for future work. First, future work might examine whether and how the construction of contribution changes over time within a specific research domain. Is there a “processual” model of writing extant literature as research streams are invented, specified, and challenged? Second, we focused on the articles’ introductions in order to better understand and explicate how texts create opportunities for contribution. However, each part of a text—the beginning, middle, and end—has a potentially different discourse function and presumably constructs contribution in different ways. Thus, future work needs to investigate how studies show their contributions (in their middle sections) and argue that they have indeed made contributions (in their endings).

Fourth, by examining the final textual outcomes, we have knowingly excluded the many active agents who play roles in their creation. Although the study of texts themselves is important for the reasons articulated in this article, to more completely understand the properties of texts, we must examine the relationship between texts and the social realities in which they originate (Knorr-Cetina, 1981) and to which they travel (Winsor, 1993). Future work might, therefore, examine how written works both change and remain the same from first draft to final published version. In addition, after

a text is published, it travels to a variety of audiences and is used in a variety of ways (Winsor, 1993). How does a text travel, relative to its construction of contribution?

And, finally, this study focused on one population—texts published in mainstream, established, American journals and using wholly qualitative data. Future work needs to examine the construction of contribution in texts using other types of data, such as quantitative data and qualitative-quantitative combinations. In future work, samples need to be drawn from established journals outside the United States, such as *Organisation Studies*, the *Journal of Management Studies*, and *Human Relations*. Finally, it would also be interesting to examine the construction of contribution in those journals that have been explicitly created to be nontraditional, such as the *Journal of Management Inquiry* and *Organization*.

At a broader level, our findings underscore the importance of understanding the rhetorical dimension of scientific work—the crafting of arguments whose function is to persuade an intended audience (McCloskey, 1994). The analyses show that the written work of organization studies scholars consists of much more than the presentation of data that speak for themselves; texts do not simply array “facts” and evidence logically. Rather, persuasive practices are woven into texts, even as they structure the coherence of the intertextual fields. At this general level, then, this study joins others that have deconstructed the pretense of objectivity in organizational studies devoid of authorial influence; yet at the same time, it preserves the idea of scientific knowledge. The result is an attempt to develop an approach to the construction of knowledge that is sophisticated, insightful, reasoned, and creative.

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