

Academic Writing from Research to Publication

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Enacting the Scholar Role

Definition of scholar role

- Coming up with ideas
- Sharing them with others through writing

Incomplete-scholar roles

- Housekeeper
- Patient
- Model employee
- Good student
- Proxy critic

Writing regularly

- Write on a schedule
- Reconceptualize how scholarship fits into your day
- Work on a 40-minute cycle
- Record how many hours you write each week
- Check in with a phone call
- Develop a reverse calendar
- Use available resources
- Stop when you've put in your hours

Developing a Research Program

Formula for framing your research program

- Name your topic: "I am studying _____"
- Imply your question: "because I want to find out

who/how/why"

- State the rationale for the question and the project: "in order to understand how/why/what"

Conceptualizing New Research Projects

Question

Promise file

Curious data

Serendipity

Conceptual conversation

Achieving Alignment in Research Design

Research question

- Identification of theoretical construct
- Suggestions of recognizability of theoretical construct
- Transcendence of data
- Identification of contribution to understanding of theoretical construct
- Capacity to surprise
- Robustness

Data

Method of data collection

Method of data analysis

Areas of literature to review

Significance of the study

Selecting a Journal

Nature of your article

Developing a list of possible journals

- Personal experience
- Colleagues' experiences
- Online search
- Subject librarian
- *Ulrich's Periodical Directory* (<http://ulrichsweb.serialssolutions.com/>)
- Citation index such as *Scopus*, *Journal of Citation Reports*, or *Science Citation Index*

Factors to consider

- Length of time for review process
- Capacity to publish tables, figures, or photographs
- Maximum length of manuscripts

Submission options

- More prestigious to less prestigious journal
- Less prestigious to more prestigious journal

Matching the structure of the journal

- Word count of manuscripts accepted
- Style conventions
- Number and nature of subsections of articles
- Number of words in each section

Submitting the manuscript

- Have colleagues review manuscript
- Prepare manuscript according to instructions
- Write brief submission letter
- Inquire if no reply within promised timeframe

Responding Effectively to Reviews

Possible responses

- Reject
- Revise and resubmit
- Accept

Revising a manuscript

- Make a list of all suggestions and decide which ones to implement
- Make the revision roughly in the manuscript
- Edit after all revisions have been made
- Write a letter explaining how you dealt with the reviewers' comments

Reasons why manuscripts are rejected by editors

- The paper is not relevant to the journal's readers.
- The paper does not make a contribution to new knowledge.
- The paper does not meet established ethical standards.
- The paper is poorly written.
- The paper has not been prepared according to the journal's guidelines.

Reasons why manuscripts are rejected by reviewers

- The paper does not have a clear purpose.
- The paper does not make a clear contribution to the discipline.
- There is no answer to the research question.
- There is a lack of alignment among the key pieces

of the study—research question, method, categories of the literature review, etc.

- Problems with the writing
 - Overwriting: Providing too much detail
 - Underwriting: Not providing enough detail
 - Poor grammar and punctuation
 - Inaccurate or missing notes
 - Lack of conformity to the journal's style sheet

Managing Literature

Purpose of the literature review

Identifying the literature to review

Coding the literature

Creating a conceptual schema for your literature review

Writing it up

Fast Writing and Slow Revising

Fast writing

- Benefits of a spew draft
- Keep moving
 - Turn off your screen
 - Use notes to yourself
 - Use headings to guide you
 - Skip one section and work on the next
 - Use free writing
 - List points in a section
 - Talk it out loud

Slow revising

- Editing
 - Make several passes, focusing on one thing each time
 - Move from large concerns to small concerns
 - Remove unnecessary information
 - Rearrange essential pieces into best order
 - Add missing information
 - Review and adjust paragraphs
 - Review transitions
 - Review and adjust sentences
 - Review and adjust individual words
 - Review and adjust spelling and punctuation

Proofreading

- Set the draft aside for a few days
- Make several passes, looking for only one thing each time
- Use a personal style sheet
- Use computer tools
 - Spell checker
 - Grammar checker
 - Find and replace
- Proof a hard copy
 - Read draft aloud
 - Point at each word as you read it
 - Separate text into individual sentences
 - Use highlighters to mark alternative sentences
 - Circle every punctuation mark, citation, or footnote

whether agency can be absent

power and agency

relationship between freedom and agency

psychological mechanisms of agency

liberatory agency

victim stance

suppliant stance

originator stance

agentic orientation

definition of agency

origins in external world

origins in individual

origins in both world and individual

mechanisms for agency

outcomes for agency

don't know.

definition of agency

relationship between freedom and agency

liberatory agency

Perspectives on origin of agency

origins in external world

origins in individual

origins in both world and individual

mechanisms for agency

psychological mechanisms of agency

agentic orientation

originator stance

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supplicant stance

outcomes for agency

power and agency

In line with recent theorizing on the communicative constitution of organizations, this project seeks to expand the notion of agency within organizations to include human and nonhuman agents. The formulation of problems and solutions is examined as an ideal discursive site in which organizational participants negotiate the role of various agencies in organizational action. The authors' thesis is illustrated through a discourse analytic examination of a university faculty senate's discussion of a problematic decision made during a budget crisis. This analysis illustrates how problem formulation can be conceptualized as an interplay between various agents including human, textual, and other nonhuman agents. Implications are discussed more generally regarding the role of human and nonhuman agents in the construction of organizational realities.

Keywords: hybridity; agency; problem formulation; communication; organization

In their account of the communicative constitution of organizations (CCO), Cooren and Fairhurst (in press) argued that the organizational world consists of various types of agency (technological, human, textual, etc.). What is at stake in this proposal of organizational agency as hybrid and variable is an understanding of how social actors communicatively constitute organizations while taking into consideration material conditions. The purpose of this article is to apply and extend Cooren and Fairhurst's line of reasoning by examining the different types of agencies that can be invoked by human participants during problem formulation.¹ We assume Schön's (1983) view that social actors construct problems. Problem formulation is a key organizational activity because it usually consists of (a) collectively assessing if there are problems that need to be addressed by the organization, and once identified (b) negotiating the nature of these problems.

Problem formulation involves the issue of agency in that it includes identifying who or what caused the problem and who or what may do something about it. The accounts literature is a relevant area for understanding the negotiation of agency. In providing various types of accounts (i.e., excuses, justifications), social actors negotiate agency by determining who or what might be held responsible for what is happening. Although we do not focus our analysis on accounts, this area provides one starting point for considering the communicative constitution of agency during problematic situations. Therefore, problem formulation is an appropriate discursive site for illustrating our thesis that the organization is

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a hybrid world comprising various types of agencies that operate relationally.

In this article, we examine hybridity through a case study of a university senate's discussion of an acting dean's problematic decision. There are three main contributions we wish to make through this project. First, we seek to contribute to the understanding of problem formulation by highlighting how this activity can be viewed as a debate of selection in a chain of agencies. Second, we wish to contribute more generally to theorizing on the communicative constitution of organizations by showing that organizational scholars need to acknowledge the variety of agents (human, textual, and nonhuman) who participate in the mode of being of organizations. Third, we seek to expand the notion of agency in how organizing is conceptualized. Nonhuman agency is not only constitutive of organizations but also participatory in the activity of organizing.

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In the following sections, we provide a framework by discussing recent conceptualizations of agency. Second, we address current theorizing on problem formulation by focusing on the contributions of Weick's (1979, 1995) sensemaking approach and the accounts literature. Finally, we analyze a case study of a university senate's discussion of a resolution dealing with a past university problem.

VARIABLE AGENCIES AND THE COMMUNICATIVE CONSTITUTION OF ORGANIZATIONS

Putnam and Pacanowsky's (1983) book can be identified as the first systematic attempt in our field to spotlight human agency. Against the functionalist dogma that was so pervasive at that time, the scholars who contributed to this volume insisted on the possibility (or even necessity) to start from members' interpretations and actions to study organizational reality. Garfinkel (1967), Goffman (1959, 1967, 1974), and Weick (1979) were, in many respects, the heroes of this paradigmatic shift, which led to the deployment of a

rich program of ethnographic and qualitative studies (Eisenberg, 1990; Eisenberg, Murphy, & Andrews, 1998; Holt, 1989; Koch & Deetz, 1981; Murphy, 1998; Robichaud, Giroux, & Taylor, 2004; S. J. Tracy, 2000; Trujillo, 1985; Trujillo & Dionisopoulos, 1987). Although this program is not beyond criticism (Miller, 2000), it is today very alive if we consider that organizational members' sense-making activities and interactions tend to be used as the traditional starting point of reflection in contemporary research (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004).

For the past 5 years, a growing body of studies has been devoted to an extension of the concept of agency. The reasoning that led to this extension is as follows: Starting from agency is indeed the right way to investigate the organizational world; however, focusing only on human agency is not enough because this tends to leave aside other entities that appear to compose and structure this world—machines, documents, organizations, policies, architectural elements, signs, and procedures, to just name a few. Some solutions have been proposed, like Giddens's (1984) duality of structure; however, this type of elucidation tends to reintroduce from the back door the action-structure gap that nobody seems able to bridge (Cooren, 2001; Putnam & Cooren, 2004; Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Drawing from Latour's (1994, 1996) actor-network perspective, our proposed solution is to acknowledge that things indeed do things; that is, we live in a world filled with agencies of many different sorts, and we, as analysts, should try to account for their articulation and variety. This view is in line with the increased attention to the role of objects in organizations (Engeström & Blackler, 2005); however, the argument advanced here focuses on the agentic characteristics of objects, texts, collectives, and of course, humans.

Although we recognize that speaking of nonhuman agency can, at first sight, appear quite hubristic, we contend that this position makes sense, theoretically speaking and practically speaking. Theoretically speaking, by *agency*, we are referring to the capacity to act, that is, a capacity to make a difference. This means that given their capacity to make a difference, entities as diverse as texts (e.g., "This document confirms his participation in the conference"), machines (e.g., "The computer indicates that the battery's level of energy is very low"), signs (e.g., "These arrows will lead you to her

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office”), or even collectives (e.g., “IBM has just decided to downsize its operations”) have agency (see Cooren, 2000, 2001, 2004b).

A counterargument to our definition is that action and agency imply intentionality, which is a characteristic of human beings (and other animals). Because texts, machines, signs, or collectives do not have intentionality, they cannot be said to display agency. This argument, which represents what is called the internalist thesis, as defended by Searle (1980a, 1980b, 1984), can be refuted by the externalist thesis, as defended by Peirce (1955), Ryle (1949), or Wittgenstein (1953). According to this latter position, intentionality is a relational phenomenon, which means that there is as much intentionality in a text, a tool, or a machine as there is in the human brain (see Cooren, 2004a; Descombes, 2004; Robichaud, in press).

According to this thesis, when we say that our computer indicates that the battery’s level of energy is very low, we orient to this event knowing that human beings design computers and that this signal was expressly meant to warn us of an imminent shortage of power. So we could have as well said that it is the designers who are warning us of this shortage, or even that this action of warning could be attributed to the company that produced this computer. Our point is that it is a chain of agencies that compels certain actions. Attributing agency to a computer, a text, a sign, or even a collective is a way to recognize the activity of a delegation or representation by human beings. However, recognizing these activities of delegation or representation does not mean that we should be forbidden from ascribing agency to things or collectives because this would amount to saying that these entities do not contribute anything, that is, do not make any difference.

What does this mean, practically speaking? It simply means that whenever we observe the way humans speak, write or behave, especially in an organizational context, we can highlight how they explicitly or implicitly mobilize various types of agency in their discourses and actions. As an illustration, let us focus on the way a secretary—called fictitiously Olivia—speaks about her work in an interview conducted by one of the two authors during fieldwork at a real estate agency in Manhattan. In this very short excerpt, Olivia speaks about a document called the Capital Improvement Certifi-

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Starhawk's theory has pointed Third as well, to the particular kind of ethics embedded in Burke's rhetorical theory. His is a human-nature perspective on ethics, rooted in what he sees as the uniquely human capacity to use symbols. In this system, communication USE "RHETORIC" INSTEAD? is ethical to the degree that it enhances symbol-using capacity. He makes this notion the center of his definition of the human being, in fact. Further, he might say that this symbol-using capacity is enhanced by rhetoric that creates identification or moves toward identification with and cooperation with others. (SEE JOHANNESSEN 32-35 FOR MORE) When rhetoric leads to division, war, or genocide, as Burke analyses a process Burke analyzes in his essay on Hitler's rhetorical strategies (note), he seems to suggest that such rhetorical strategies, while abhorrent, are mistakes, are mis-uses of symbols and he seems almost to shy away from ethical judgments. The ethical perspective offered by Burke is foregrounded against the different ethical system inherent in Starhawk's theory. The basic ethic in her system is love for "[l]ove for life in all its forms" (26 SP) The rhetor's responsibility ethical in her theory is to honor and respect all living things and to serve the life force. This does not mean that While the rhetor sometimes must kill in order to survive, life is never taken needlessly and is never squandered or wasted, and seeks to preserve the diversity of life. The rhetor, in Starhawk's system, also is responsible for her rhetoric in ways that she is not in Burke's theory. In Starhawk's life-affirming system of inherent value, justice is not administered by some external authority; it is an inner sense that each act brings about consequences that must be faced responsibly. Because all beings are linked in the same social fabric, interdependent and interrelated, an "act that harms anyone harms us all." (27 SP)

Such actions or “structural strategies” (Omar 4 Survival new pile) are aimed at “proliferating points of power, maximizing incentives for intergroup cooperation, breaking up ethnically grouped units, encouraging the formation of alignments and identifications on other than an ethnic basis, and distributing resources so as to reduce disparities among groups.” (Omar 4 Survival new pile) ARE THESE JUST OTHER EXAMPLES OF ACTIONS AND NOT RESULTS? ARE THESE HIGHER ORDER OR MORE SOPHISTICATED? OR DOES THIS OMAR QUOTE BELONG IN THE “SYMBOLIC ROLE” SECTION?

Collective Action

SHOULD THIS BE COMBINED WITH THE “ACTION” SECTION?

In this paradigm, change “is the result of collective effort.” (Omar 2 Survival new pile) There is “a collectivity of people acting together; the shared goal of collective action is some change in their society, defined by participants in similar ways.” (Sztompka 275-76) CHECK— IS HE TALKING JUST ABOUT SOCIAL MOVEMENTS HERE? Social movements, of course, are a primary way in which collective action is taken. Stompka characterizes social movements as “one of the chief ways in which societies are remade. Some even see them as the primary agents of social change.” Sztompka 274) The strategies involve collective participation in protesting, striking, picketing, and rallying. “While individuals clearly have agency, politics occurs mainly at the level of the collective. Each individual is too weak and is often distracted by self-serving pressures to work for the common good.” (13 Omar On Power new pile) “Our most serious problems, both the public ones and those that seem most personal, can only be solved through common efforts.” (Loeb 7) CHECK—STARHAWK SAYS SOMETHING ABOUT COLLECTIVE ACTION, TOO

Role of the Symbolic/Form of Communication

A

Affect / Effect

The ARROW AFFECTED the AARDVARK

The EFFECT was EYE-popping

A = verb (most of time) E = noun

T

Their / There / They're

there has "here" in it; talks about a place

they're can be replaced by "they are" and keep meaning

their is about people; can be replaced by his or her in some cases

Research Program Formula

A. Name your topic:

I am studying _____

B. Imply your question:

*because I want to find out who/
how/why* _____

C. State the rationale for the questions and the project:

*in order to understand how/why
/what* _____

A. I am working on analyzing
the film *Run Lola Run*

B. Because I want to discover
the various options for agency
it presents

C. In order to understand the
relationship between com
munication and agency

This formula was adopted from *The Craft of Research* by Wayne Booth, Joseph Williams, and Gregory Colomb, 2nd ed., 2003.

Assessing Research Questions

Identify the problems you see (if any) with the following research questions and re-word them so that they meet the six criteria for good research questions of:

- It clearly identifies the theoretical construct you are studying.
- It contains some suggestion of recognizability of the theoretical construct.
- It usually transcends your data.
- It identifies your study's contribution to an understanding of the theoretical construct.
- It has a capacity to surprise.
- It can produce robust results.

Examples

1. Are minority mentoring programs effective in mentoring minority undergraduate students?
2. What is the history of public education in Washington, D.C.?

3. How do climate-driven changes in the biophysical environment of the Great Lakes region affect the sustainability of wetlands?

4. What factors affect the motivation of individuals to initiate changes in their personal exercise habits?

5. How do Amish parents ensure that their children actively contribute to the survival of the Amish community?

7. What happens when motivational techniques from the business world are applied to nonprofit arts organizations?

6. How does the Starbucks chain engage in oppressive practices toward consumers?

Alignment Worksheet

What is your research question?

How will you collect your data?

What are the categories of your literature review?

How will you analyze your data?

What are your data?

What is the significance of your study?

Determining the Deep Structure of a Particular Journal's Articles

	Article One		Article Two		Article Three		Article Four		Article Five	
	word count (inches)	% of total	word count (inches)	% of total	word count (inches)	% of total	word count (inches)	% of total	word count (inches)	% of total
Introduction										
Literature Review										
Method										
Results										
Discussion										
Conclusion										

1. Collect about five sample articles from the journal.
2. If the sections of the articles don't have headings, mark the beginnings and endings of the sections (i.e., introduction, literature review, method, results, discussion).
3. Measure the length of the total article (the whole article might be, for example, 20 inches long).
4. Measure the length of each section (the introduction, for example, might be 5 inches long).
5. Divide the section length by the total length (5 divided by 20 = .25), which gives you an estimate of what percentage of the article's words is devoted to each section. In this case, the introduction is 25% of the article.
6. Add the section averages for all the sample articles together and divide by 5 (or however many articles you are reviewing). This gives you the general distribution of words across sections for a particular journal.
7. If you have access to electronic articles, you can use word counts instead of physically measuring the sections of the articles to determine the distribution of words across the sections.

	Total for 5 articles	
	word count (inches)	% of total
Introduction		
Literature Review		
Method		
Results		
Discussion		
Conclusion		

Writing the Literature Review

There are two problems scholars tend to encounter when surveying the literature for a new research project: One is that the literature review seems overwhelming because there is so much literature to cover that you have no idea how to begin. A second problem is keeping track of everything you have read so that you can synthesize it all. You may find that you have highlighted passages or post-it notes on virtually every page of your books and articles with no system for bringing it all together. The following system will make writing the literature review efficient, manageable, and concrete. It can be used either before or after you have developed the research question for your project.

Step 1: Coding the Literature

You have at least a vague sense of the literature you want to review, and you've gathered it—you have your books and articles. Sit at your computer. Take each book or article in turn. Read it, looking for the following:

- Ideas that will help your thinking about your project
- Ideas that have a direct bearing on your project
- Claims and findings that support or disagree with your ideas
- Definitions of terms
- Calls for follow-up studies relevant to your study
- Ideas for working out or refining your method
- Gaps you notice in the literature.

When you find such an idea, take notes about it on the computer. Type in single space either a direct quote or a summary of the useful idea. Include the source and page number for each passage or each note. Double or triple space between notes.

If you are not a fast typist, an alternative method is to mark the relevant passages with a pencil and then photocopy them. In the margin of each photocopied passage, write the page number and source.

Using this system, a book might take 45 minutes to read and code. How is this possible? Do not read every word. Use all the clues the book or article provides to discover what is relevant for you—table of contents, chapter titles and headings, and the index. For each chapter that seems relevant to your project, ask: “Is this chapter relevant for my study?” If it is not, skip it.

When you come upon a relevant chapter or article, go heading by heading and subheading by subheading and ask: “Is this section relevant for my study?” If it is not, skip it. When you find something relevant, type it into the computer.

Do not read or type in the complete *oeuvre* of someone or the entire history of a theory or all of the critiques of a theory—type only those ideas that are relevant to the project you have conceptualized.

This is what you do **your first time through** a book or an article. Do not read it first and then do this kind of reading and coding.

Step 2: Creating Piles

Print out two copies of the notes you took during the coding of the literature. Keep one as it is (for future reference). Cut the notes on the other copy apart. Each note will be on a separate

slip of paper. If you are using photocopies, cut out each relevant passage so that it is one slip of paper.

Sort the slips of paper into piles according to topic. Put everything that is about the same topic in the same pile. For example, you might put slips of paper in one pile that have to do with power and those that have to do with gender in another. If a slip (or photocopied passage) contains information that might fit into more than one pile, make a duplicate slip and put it in both piles. Do not make a judgment at this point about what is going to happen to these piles and topics. Just sort.

After everything is sorted into piles, check to see if all the slips of paper in each pile are relevant to the topic of that pile. Throw out the tiny piles. Combine piles that need to be combined because they are about the same topic. When you are convinced that what you have in front of you are, in fact, the piles, give them names or labels that express what all the things in that one pile are about.

Step 3: Creating a conceptual schema for the literature review

Make a list of the pile names or labels on a separate piece of paper. Cut the items in that list apart. Play around with the items to see how they might be organized into a conceptual schema for the literature review. This is easy to do because you can physically rearrange the items in many different ways.

Each literature review is different, but you might find that your conceptual schema is organized around principles such as:

- Less important to most important
- Hypothesis to revised hypothesis
- Agreement-disagreement
- Factors that contribute to a particular phenomenon

The substance of the literature review isn't your idea, but how the literature review is presented and the connections among the pieces of the literature review are your ideas. The purpose here is for you to discover those connections. The conceptual schema is an explanation for what you see in the piles.

Creating the conceptual schema for the literature review this way insures that you do not organize the literature in the way in which you may be inclined—chronologically. It forces you to organize according to how the pieces of the literature are talking to one another, which helps make a more accessible, more readable presentation.

Step 4: Writing the Literature Review

Write your way through the piles. Take each pile in the order in which it occurs in your conceptual schema and sort the notes/strips of paper within that pile. Take each slip of paper in turn and write about it, filling in with transitions and connections.

You will not use everything in every pile. You will throw some things out. You will move some things from one pile to another pile. You might even decide that you need to refine the schema. That is easy to do—you simply move the slips of paper from one pile to another.

When all the piles are gone, you have finished the literature review.

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Foucault suggests a number of rules that govern the discursive formation. One category of rules controls the fact that something is able to be talked about and governs the appearance of objects of discourse. Rules in this category include, for example, prohibitions against talking about certain things—rules that silence certain dimensions of experience simply by not recognizing them as objects of discourse.²⁵ In the Victorian Age, for example, children's sexuality simply was not an object of discourse, so children's sexuality was not discussed and that aspect of children's experience was repressed.

Some rules that govern objects of discourse concern the function of institutional bodies in creating such objects. Particular institutions may be recognized as the ones with the authority to name and thus distinguish one object from another. One such authority was nineteenth-century medicine, which distinguished madness from other concepts and became the major authority that established madness as an object. Educational experts currently recognize and diagnose children with attention deficit disorder, for example, thus making it a condition that can be perceived and about which individuals are able to speak.

A second category of rules concerns not what is talked about but who is allowed to speak and write. Such rules dictate that individuals listen to certain people and reject the discourse of others. The discourse of those who are not heard is considered null "and void without truth or significance, worthless as evidence, inadmissible in the authentication of acts or contracts." Their words are "neither heard nor remembered."²⁶ Only those deemed qualified by satisfying certain conditions are heard when they engage in discourse. Among the conditions are legal requirements that give the right to speak in certain ways. Lawyers, for example, must pass the bar examination in order to practice law. Other such rules involve criteria of competence and knowledge. Individuals listen to medical doctors speak about issues involving health because discursive rules attribute competence to them in this area, while the discourse of alternative medicine generally is not heard because its practitioners have not fulfilled the conditions for competence established for speakers of medical discourse.

Another condition imposed on those whose speech is heard is the production of certain kinds of discourse, formulated in certain ways. Those who wish to speak in the academic world, for example, must produce certain types of statements and use certain forms to be allowed to participate in scholarly discourse. An academic paper or article must evidence particular forms of argument and particular kinds of language, put together in complex ways. It also must contain citations to other scholarly articles, and these citations must follow the form of an established style manual such as that published by the Modern Language Association.

Other rules that govern the nature of the speaker defines the gestures, behaviors, and circumstances, that must accompany speakers as they talk. The wearing of particular clothing and the enactment of behaviors such as genuflection, for example, often must accompany religious discourse of the

CPR
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CPR
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Greene wants to abandon communication as a political model for imagining rhetorical agency. 198 Rhetorical agency as political communication suspends dialectically between structures of power and the possibility of social change. 198 Greene

It is commonplace to describe rhetorical agency as political action. From such a starting point, rhetorical agency describes a communicative process of inquiry and advocacy on issues of public importance. As political action, rhetorical agency often takes on the characteristics of a normative theory of citizenship: a good citizen persuades and is persuaded by the gentle force of the better argument. Greene 188

Agency may be defined as the capacity (in persons and things) through which something is created or done. If so, a rhetorical approach to agency would afford opportunities to inquire after the place of rhetoric in the capacity to act. Clark 1

For most participants, the question of how to amend the concept of rhetorical agency in order to address the ideology of agency was central. Some of the most interesting advances appear to be coming when rhetoricians go beyond traditional political contexts. Indeed, developments on two fronts suggest that the concept of rhetorical agency may be on the cusp of a major rethinking. The first has concerned itself with describing how rhetorical agency functions in subaltern social groups that have not had access to mainstream public forums. . . . Instead of characterizing rhetors in terms of what they lack, these scholars seem to be moving us toward a richer understanding of rhetorical agency by examining how rhetors without taken-for-granted access do, nevertheless, manage to exercise agency. 10-11 Geisler

Rhetoricians need to go beyond studies of those whose agency is taken for granted, and attend as well to the ever present complications of who has access to rhetorical agency and how rhetorical agency is obtained. Geisler 10

The central problem with the traditional notion of rhetorical agency is its assumption of a public capable of hearing the speaker and of a speaker capable of gaining access to relevant public forums. Many potential agents including women, foreigners, and racial or ethnic minorities have been excluded from the only forums that could make a difference to their place. One should not, however, assume that the only form of rhetorical agency is that observable in the public sphere. In every culture agency has many faces, voices, forums and genres. Campbell 1

I have grappled with the question from the particular position of one interested in learning how certain people who at particular historical moments are denied access to political power use symbols to attempt to gain political power, Zaeske 1

Any politics of transformation or change is a good bit more complicated than the direct application of political power to particular identities. Instead, transformation or change is predicated on the reconfiguration of context or, put differently, the articulation, disarticulation, and rearticulation of surfaces of emergence. Biesecker 1

In line with recent theorizing on the communicative constitution of organizations, this project seeks to expand the notion of agency within organizations to include human and nonhuman agents. The formulation of problems and solutions is examined as an ideal discursive site in which organizational participants negotiate the role of various agencies in organizational action. The authors' thesis is illustrated through a discourse analytic examination of a university faculty senate's discussion of a problematic decision made during a budget crisis. This analysis illustrates how problem formulation can be conceptualized as an interplay between various agents including human, textual, and other nonhuman agents. Implications are discussed more generally regarding the role of human and nonhuman agents in the construction of organizational realities.

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Problem formulation involves the issue of agency in that it includes identifying who or what caused the problem and who or what may do something about it. The accounts literature is a relevant area for understanding the negotiation of agency. In providing various types of accounts (i.e., excuses, justifications), social actors negotiate agency by determining who or what might be held responsible for what is happening. Although we do not focus our analysis on accounts, this area provides one starting point for considering the communicative constitution of agency during problematic situations. Therefore, problem formulation is an appropriate discursive site for illustrating our thesis that the organization is

a hybrid world comprising various types of agencies that operate relationally.

In this article, we examine hybridity through a case study of a university senate's discussion of an acting dean's problematic decision. There are three main contributions we wish to make through this project. First, we seek to contribute to the understanding of problem formulation by highlighting how this activity can be viewed as a debate of selection in a chain of agencies. Second, we wish to contribute more generally to theorizing on the communicative constitution of organizations by showing that organizational scholars need to acknowledge the variety of agents (human, textual, and nonhuman) who participate in the mode of being of organizations. Third, we seek to expand the notion of agency in how organizing is conceptualized. Nonhuman agency is not only constitutive of organizations but also participatory in the activity of organizing.

In the following sections, we provide a framework by discussing recent conceptualizations of agency. Second, we address current theorizing on problem formulation by focusing on the contributions of Weick's (1979, 1995) sensemaking approach and the accounts literature. Finally, we analyze a case study of a university senate's discussion of a resolution dealing with a past university problem.

VARIABLE AGENCIES AND THE COMMUNICATIVE CONSTITUTION OF ORGANIZATIONS

Putnam and Pacanowsky's (1983) book can be identified as the first systematic attempt in our field to spotlight human agency. Against the functionalist dogma that was so pervasive at that time, the scholars who contributed to this volume insisted on the possibility (or even necessity) to start from members' interpretations and actions to study organizational reality. Garfinkel (1967), Goffman (1959, 1967, 1974), and Weick (1979) were, in many respects, the heroes of this paradigmatic shift, which led to the deployment of a

rich program of ethnographic and qualitative studies (Eisenberg, 1990; Eisenberg, Murphy, & Andrews, 1998; Holt, 1989; Koch & Deetz, 1981; Murphy, 1998; Robichaud, Giroux, & Taylor, 2004; S. J. Tracy, 2000; Trujillo, 1985; Trujillo & Dionisopoulos, 1987). Although this program is not beyond criticism (Miller, 2000), it is today very alive if we consider that organizational members' sense-making activities and interactions tend to be used as the traditional starting point of reflection in contemporary research (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004).

For the past 5 years, a growing body of studies has been devoted to an extension of the concept of agency. The reasoning that led to this extension is as follows: Starting from agency is indeed the right way to investigate the organizational world; however, focusing only on human agency is not enough because this tends to leave aside other entities that appear to compose and structure this world—machines, documents, organizations, policies, architectural elements, signs, and procedures, to just name a few. Some solutions have been proposed, like Giddens's (1984) duality of structure; however, this type of elucidation tends to reintroduce from the back door the action-structure gap that nobody seems able to bridge (Cooren, 2001; Putnam & Cooren, 2004; Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Drawing from Latour's (1994, 1996) actor-network perspective, our proposed solution is to acknowledge that things indeed do things; that is, we live in a world filled with agencies of many different sorts, and we, as analysts, should try to account for their articulation and variety. This view is in line with the increased attention to the role of objects in organizations (Engeström & Blackler, 2005); however, the argument advanced here focuses on the agentic characteristics of objects, texts, collectives, and of course, humans.

Although we recognize that speaking of nonhuman agency can, at first sight, appear quite hubristic, we contend that this position makes sense, theoretically speaking and practically speaking. Theoretically speaking, by *agency*, we are referring to the capacity to act, that is, a capacity to make a difference. This means that given their capacity to make a difference, entities as diverse as texts (e.g., "This document confirms his participation in the conference"), machines (e.g., "The computer indicates that the battery's level of energy is very low"), signs (e.g., "These arrows will lead you to her

office”), or even collectives (e.g., “IBM has just decided to downsize its operations”) have agency (see Cooren, 2000, 2001, 2004b).

A counterargument to our definition is that action and agency imply intentionality, which is a characteristic of human beings (and other animals). Because texts, machines, signs, or collectives do not have intentionality, they cannot be said to display agency. This argument, which represents what is called the internalist thesis, as defended by Searle (1980a, 1980b, 1984), can be refuted by the externalist thesis, as defended by Peirce (1955), Ryle (1949), or Wittgenstein (1953). According to this latter position, intentionality is a relational phenomenon, which means that there is as much intentionality in a text, a tool, or a machine as there is in the human brain (see Cooren, 2004a; Descombes, 2004; Robichaud, in press).

According to this thesis, when we say that our computer indicates that the battery’s level of energy is very low, we orient to this event knowing that human beings design computers and that this signal was expressly meant to warn us of an imminent shortage of power. So we could have as well said that it is the designers who are warning us of this shortage, or even that this action of warning could be attributed to the company that produced this computer. Our point is that it is a chain of agencies that compels certain actions. Attributing agency to a computer, a text, a sign, or even a collective is a way to recognize the activity of a delegation or representation by human beings. However, recognizing these activities of delegation or representation does not mean that we should be forbidden from ascribing agency to things or collectives because this would amount to saying that these entities do not contribute anything, that is, do not make any difference.

What does this mean, practically speaking? It simply means that whenever we observe the way humans speak, write or behave, especially in an organizational context, we can highlight how they explicitly or implicitly mobilize various types of agency in their discourses and actions. As an illustration, let us focus on the way a secretary—called fictitiously Olivia—speaks about her work in an interview conducted by one of the two authors during fieldwork at a real estate agency in Manhattan. In this very short excerpt, Olivia speaks about a document called the Capital Improvement Certifi-



Power and agency



Whether agency can be absent



Origins in individual



Mechanisms for agency



Agentic orientation

Greene wants to abandon communication as a political model for imagining rhetorical agency. 198 Rhetorical agency as political communication suspends dialectically between structures of power and the possibility of social change. 198 Greene

It is commonplace to describe rhetorical agency as political action. From such a starting point, rhetorical agency describes a communicative process of inquiry and advocacy on issues of public importance. As political action, rhetorical agency often takes on the characteristics of a normative theory of citizenship: a good citizen persuades and is persuaded by the gentle force of the better argument. Greene 188

Agency may be defined as the capacity (in persons and things) through which something is created or done. If so, a rhetorical approach to agency would afford opportunities to inquire after the place of rhetoric in the capacity to act. Clark 1

For most participants, the question of how to amend the concept of rhetorical agency in order to address the ideology of agency was central. Some of the most interesting advances appear to be coming when rhetoricians go beyond traditional political contexts. Indeed, developments on two fronts suggest that the concept of rhetorical agency may be on the cusp of a major rethinking. The first has concerned itself with describing how rhetorical agency functions in subaltern social groups that have not had access to mainstream public forums. . . . Instead of characterizing rhetors in terms of what they lack, these scholars seem to be moving us toward a richer understanding of rhetorical agency by examining how rhetors without taken-for-granted access do, nevertheless, manage to exercise agency. 10-11 Geisler

Rhetoricians need to go beyond studies of those whose agency is taken for granted, and attend as well to the ever present complications of who has access to rhetorical agency and how rhetorical agency is obtained. Geisler 10

The central problem with the traditional notion of rhetorical agency is its assumption of a public capable of hearing the speaker and of a speaker capable of gaining access to relevant public forums. Many potential agents including women, foreigners, and racial or ethnic minorities have been excluded from the only forums that could make a difference to their plight. One should not, however, assume that the only form of rhetorical agency is that observable in the public sphere. In every culture agency has many faces, voices, forums and genres. Campbell 1

I have grappled with the question from the particular position of one interested in learning how certain people who at particular historical moments are denied access to political power use symbols to attempt to gain political power, Zaeske 1

Any politics of transformation or change is a good bit more complicated than the direct application of political power to particular identities. Instead, transformation or change is predicated on the reconfiguration of context or, put differently, the articulation, disarticulation, and rearticulation of surfaces of emergence. Biesecker 1

Conceptual Conversation

Definition

- A conversation to work out the plan for a new study

Time period

- Allot 4 hours of uninterrupted time initially
- You may have to schedule subsequent sessions
- Hold the meeting in a place where you won't be interrupted

Your partner's responsibilities

- To ask questions that prompt you to identify your interests
 - Interests within the field
 - Personal experiences that were particularly significant
 - Coursework that was exciting to you in graduate school
 - Theories and ideas to which you are attracted
 - Theories and ideas you want to avoid
 - Resources to which you have access
 - Kinds of methods with which you enjoy working
 - Kinds of data with which you enjoy working
 - Specific texts or artifacts you want to use as data
 - Bodies of literature that intrigue you
- To ask follow-up questions
 - Defining questions: "What do you mean by?"
 - Doubting questions: "Why do you think that's the case?"
 - Connecting questions: "What connection do you see

between x and y?"

- Probing questions: "Can you elaborate on what interests you about that theory?"

- To listen carefully
- To record the conversation if possible
- To take notes as completely as possible
- To note the ideas that seem most important to you
- To stop any evaluating or sorting of ideas

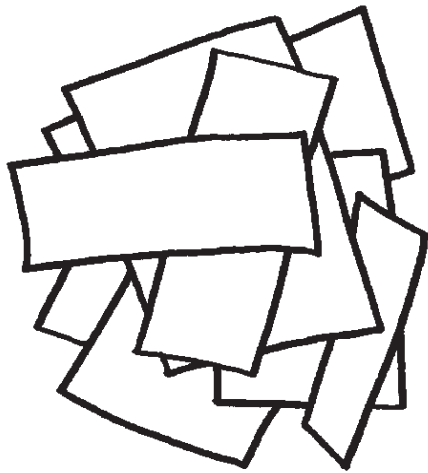
Developing and assessing key pieces of the study

- Together, identify any key pieces for a study that emerged in the conversation
 - Research question
 - Data
 - Method of data collection
 - Method of data analysis
 - Areas of the literature review
 - Significance of the study
- Fill in any missing key pieces to create a complete plan for the study
- Assess the plan

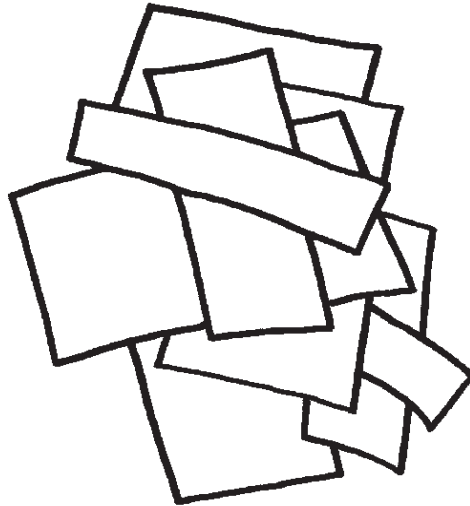
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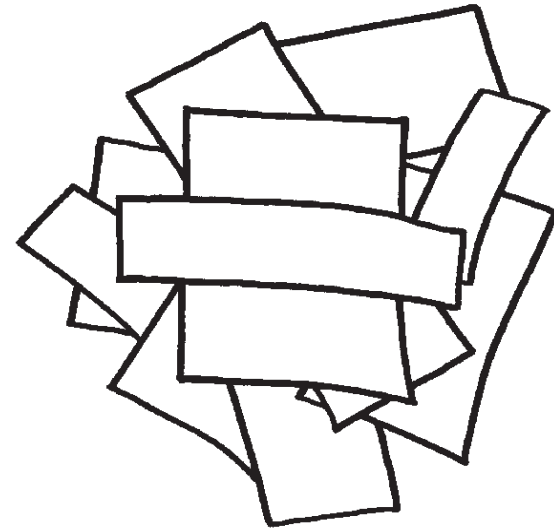
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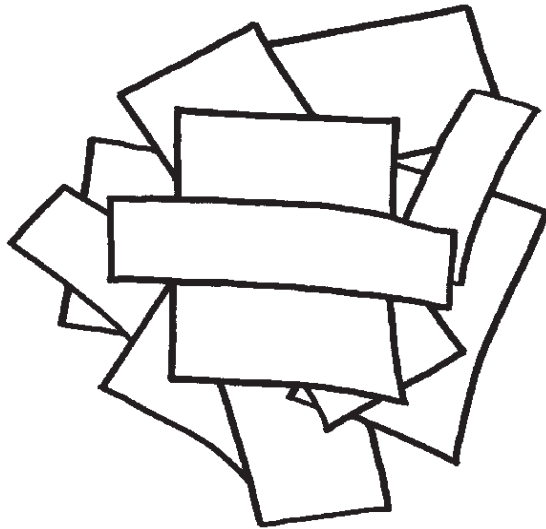
Power & Agency



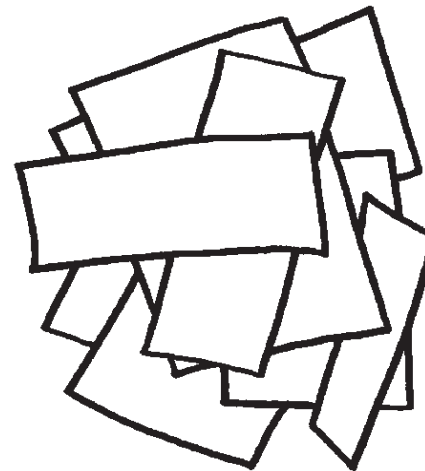
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