

# Changing the Scholarly Conversation: What it Means, Why it Matters, and How to Approach it in Micro Research

Mark P. Healey<sup>a</sup>, Hannes Leroy<sup>b</sup>, Corinne Post<sup>c</sup> and Kristina Potočnik<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Manchester; <sup>b</sup>Erasmus University; <sup>c</sup>Villanova School of Business; <sup>d</sup>University of Edinburgh

**ABSTRACT** Academics often assess contributions to management research in terms of their influence on the scholarly conversation. At *JMS*, we aspire to publish papers that significantly change scholarly conversations in productive ways. However, precisely what it means and what it takes to change a scholarly conversation is not entirely clear, especially in micro research in the management field where contributions are often framed in incremental terms. Accordingly, in this editorial we examine what distinguishes papers that significantly change the scholarly conversation on a topic and analyse the functions of such conversation-changing papers, focussing on research in the micro domain. Based on an inductive analysis of exemplar conversation-changing micro papers, we propose a typology that identifies how scholars substantially alter an existing conversation or stimulate a new conversation. For each type of conversation-changing contribution, we identify its attributes and functions and discuss exemplars. We conclude with guidance and tips for authors, reviewers, and editors seeking to develop papers that reshape scholarly conversations. With this editorial, we hope to inspire more conversation changing papers, especially among micro scholars, and position *JMS* as a natural home for such papers.

**Keywords:** management theory, organizational behaviour, research impact, scholarly conversation, theoretical contribution

## INTRODUCTION

As editors at the *Journal of Management Studies* (*JMS*), when we assess a new paper we often invoke the idea of the scholarly conversation. We ask to whom the paper is speaking, which conversations it is seeking to enter, and whether it is merely repeating an existing conversation or might reshape the conversation and move it in a constructive new

*Address for reprints:* Mark P. Healey, Alliance Manchester Business School, University of Manchester, Booth Street West, Manchester M15 9PB, UK ([mark.healey@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:mark.healey@manchester.ac.uk)).

The authors contributed equally, and authorship is alphabetical.

direction. Crucially, we actively look for papers that shape the scholarly conversation in significant ways. *JMS* is not the only leading management journal to employ this criterion. As stated in the call for the *Academy of Management Journal's* Special Research Forum on joining societal conversations: ‘When a manuscript is submitted to *Academy of Management Journal* (AMJ), editors and reviewers frequently ask: *Does the study define a new conversation (theory/lens/paradigm) or divert an existing conversation into a meaningfully different area?*’ (Tihanyi, 2020a, italics in original). Indeed, several recent editorials adopt the lens of changing the conversation when discussing the nature of scholarly contributions (Hideg et al., 2020; Rockmann et al., 2021; Tihanyi, 2020b).

Despite this, however, we have little clarity on exactly what it means to change the scholarly conversation, how papers achieve this, or what functions such changes serve. Accordingly, our goal in this editorial is to examine how researchers can change scholarly conversations in valuable and productive ways. Previous analyses adopting a conversational lens have tended to focus on how to identify and enter scholarly exchanges (Huff, 1999; Patriotta, 2017), largely by conforming to the conventions of academic writing. In contrast, we seek to examine the substantive features that enable researchers to either actively shape an existing conversation in a beneficial way or stimulate a productive new conversation, i.e., our focus is on how papers can *change* the scholarly conversation. By doing so, we hope to position *JMS* as a space for bold and challenging conversations among management scholars and invite authors to submit papers that substantially change the scholarly conversation on their topic or stimulate a new conversation.

We focus here on micro-level research in the management field, by which we mean research that focusses on the individual and team/group level of analysis (Aguinis et al., 2011), as opposed to the macro-level focus on the behaviour of organizations (or the networks, institutions, or societies in which they are embedded). We use the term micro research rather than organizational behaviour (OB) since it is more inclusive, taking in OB but also encompassing research that falls outside the normal boundaries of the OB field, including research on the microfoundations of strategy and organization theory, the microfoundations of CSR, and the micro studies of entrepreneurship and HRM, among others. We argue that building a clearer picture of what it takes to change the scholarly conversation in micro research can help scholars fight against what Alvesson and Sandberg (2013, p. 129) described as the ‘total dominance of incremental gap-spotting research within management studies’. Ashkanasy (2011, p. 819) noted that this problem is particularly rife in organizational behaviour, where ‘the peer review process at journals like *JOB* [*Journal of Organizational Behavior*] tends to be so very conservative’, which “limits scholars’ ability to generate new and interesting theory’.

These observations reflect our own experience handling micro papers at *JMS*. Many micro papers submitted to *JMS* are framed in terms of gap filling, where it is less than clear why the gap identified matters or to whom, and how addressing this gap contributes to important conversations in management studies and beyond. We often reject such papers on the grounds that they do not make a strong theoretical contribution (see the [JMS Author Guidelines](#) on publication criteria). The norms and methods of micro research seem to incline researchers to think in terms of variables and models depicted in box and arrow diagrams. The gap to be filled usually turns out to be the recombination of known variables or the addition of a new variable or a new interrelationship, often

through the incremental identification of a moderator or mediator, or both. Moderation and mediation are vital tools for the accumulation of knowledge. By establishing boundary conditions for important effects and identifying the causal mechanisms through which these effects operate, they help us answer questions of whether, if, how, and when (Hayes, 2018). But, in the absence of a theoretical narrative, it is difficult to interpret patterns in empirical observations (Whetten, 1989). It is theory that explains and predicts (Sutton and Staw, 1995) and theory that inspires, engages, and persuades (Weick, 1995).

This is not to say that theory is all that matters. As many commentators have recently argued, an obsession with theory for theory's sake has created a situation within management studies where, in some leading journals at least, theoretical innovation has long been prized above all else (Hambrick, 2007; Mathieu, 2016). The problem here is not so much theory per se but what Suddaby (2014) has termed fetishistic theory (see also Birkinshaw et al., 2014). In fetishistic theory mode, 'new theory tends to be derived, not from trying to explain phenomena in the sensory world, but rather by exploring and exploiting ever-narrowing gaps in existing theoretical categories' (Suddaby, 2014, p. 449). The consequences include increasing detachment from real-world phenomena and the world of practice (Pfeffer, 2014).

So, we face a dilemma, one that is particularly acute in micro research: How to retain a strong emphasis on theory while also connecting deeply to questions and problems that matter to research users trying to solve pressing societal problems (see Aguinis et al., 2022; Tsui and McKiernan, 2022). We believe that thinking in terms of the scholarly conversation can help. Two important features of research as scholarly conversations are the lively exchange of ideas (Huff, 1999) and connecting people to ideas and evidence by talking about things that matter. Shifting scholarly conversations from small talk to big talk – deep, meaningful conversations about important issues (see Gurteen, 2022) – promises to better connect management research to wider conversations in business and society. In his book on combating racism, Livingstone (2021) makes the point that if social problems are absent from organizational conversations, they will never be properly recognized, understood, or addressed. The same is true for scholarly conversations. This is an important reason why, as editors, we often turn to the idea of the scholarly conversation when assessing contributions to research. A perennial question for *JMS* editors (and we suspect authors, reviewers, and readers) is what distinguishes a *JMS* micro article from those published in other management journals, including specialist organizational behaviour journals. True, a *JMS* micro article must appeal to a wide audience of management scholars; and yet this seems a necessary but insufficient criterion. More precisely, we look for papers that productively change the scholarly conversation.

Our editorial proceeds as follows. We first elaborate on the idea of research as conversation and the concept of a conversation-changing paper, building on previous works that have adopted the lens of research as conversation (e.g., Huff, 1999; Patriotta, 2017). We argue that thinking in terms of changing the conversation is a valuable way of assessing scholarly contributions, a way that is complementary to but distinct from thinking in terms of making a theoretical contribution, being interesting, or filling gaps. We also contend that a clearer understanding of the attributes of conversation-changing papers and the functions such papers serve might help editors, reviewers, and researchers better understand the value and benefits of potential contributions to a field. Next, we report results from an inductive content analysis of

influential micro articles that fit our emerging definition of conversation changers. From this analysis, we derive a typology that identifies key features of conversation-changing papers. Our analysis reveals five ways to change the scholarly conversation, from introducing new concepts that allow researchers to describe hitherto neglected phenomena, to enabling smoother conversations by imposing order on fractured understandings, to opening-up new vistas by challenging extant assumptions or dogmas. Next, we discuss the implications of our findings for a richer understanding of conversation-changing papers. Finally, we provide guidance for micro researchers who want to change the scholarly conversation in their area and position *JMS* as a welcoming home for papers that seek to do so.

## RESEARCH AS CONVERSATION

The idea of research as conversation builds on the idea that science is a social process (Kuhn, 1996). At a basic level, even the most ground-breaking scientists must show how their work builds on or departs from what scholars have done before. And, as the history of science shows, the benefits of scientific endeavours are not fully realized until they are communicated to other researchers and knowledge users. Accordingly, we adopt the view that science progresses through interactions among scholars within and between scientific fields (Kuhn, 1996). The written exchanges that occur in scientific journals are a key form of such interactions and are where much of the formal scholarly conversation takes place in management studies as well as in other disciplines.

The idea of research as a conversation is of course not new. Huff (1999) developed this idea and examined the ground rules for and the components of effectively written scholarly conversations among management researchers. According to Huff (1999, p. 4), conversations involve ‘ongoing dialogue that has the potential not only to add to each participant’s store of information but to alter participants’ opinions and priorities’. Conceived thus, scholarly conversations are more than an exchange of information. They involve interactions that locate scholars in a place or among other scholars where the author can influence the actions of others, including how scholars see the world (i.e., the perspectives they take and which issues they value), how they approach problems (i.e., the questions they ask and the methods they use), and how they understand phenomena (i.e., the theories and concepts they use). The written word is the means by which scholars participate in conversations, not only in the sense that written works such as journal articles and books are repositories of past and current findings but also that ‘through the subject matter covered, the methods used, the reviews written, the arguments and agreements presented, writing in journals and other outlets defines a field and shapes its future’ (Huff, 1999, p. 5).

Huff (1999) makes the point that at any time there are multiple different conversations taking place, even in a relatively small field. A given conversation is typically conducted by identifiable participants who are asking similar questions, using similar language and concepts, and drawing on similar sources and frames of reference. Moreover, conversations differ. Some conversations are well developed, with many accepted assumptions and established facts, whereas others are more embryonic, with assumptions, ideas, and findings still emerging. Being aware of the development and evolution of a given

conversation is important not only for joining the conversation but also for understanding significant shifts in the conversation.

Others have taken a somewhat narrower view of the scholarly conversation. For instance, Rockman and colleagues (Rockmann et al., 2021, p. 173) equate it to ‘a stream of literature’. In contrast, a wider view of scholarship as conversation takes in the role of people as active participants, recognizes that perspectives drive conversations, and that conversations are rooted in time and place. A useful articulation of this view comes from the field of information literacy, where the scholarly conversation is viewed in terms of:

Communities of scholars, researchers, or professionals engage[d] in sustained discourse with new insights and discoveries occurring over time as a result of varied perspectives and interpretations. Research in scholarly and professional fields is a discursive practice in which ideas are formulated, debated, and weighed against one another over extended periods of time. (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2015, p. 20)

Here, scholarship as conversation is contrasted with alternative framings of scientific research, including research as inquiry. Seeing research as conversation emphasizes that complex problems may not have discrete answers but may be approached from competing perspectives as scholars come together to negotiate meaning. Developing familiarity with the sources of evidence and the methods and discourse associated with a given conversation can make it easier for novices to enter a conversation. But, established power and authority structures can privilege particular voices and preclude others from participating in the conversation. We address this in more detail in the discussion section, where we provide advice on producing conversation-changing papers.

This view of the scholarly conversation aligns with rhetorical analyses of science (e.g., Gross, 1990; McCloskey, 1998). Locke and Golden-Biddle (1997, p. 1026) drew on rhetorical analyses of science to examine how management researchers construct opportunities to contribute to a field. In their view, this approach has three key principles:

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.

Our approach aligns with this view of the scholarly conversation but departs from previous discussions of management research as conversation in two important ways.

Prior analyses of management research as conversation have tended to focus on how scholars can enter an established conversation, including Huff’s (1999) book. Similarly, Patriotta (2017, p. 747) examined novelty and convention in academic writing to understand how authors ‘engage in conversations with other scholars and establish the baseline for a contribution’. The focus of these analyses has been on understanding norms and implicit rules to enable the researcher to gain a foothold in the conversation and get their

message across. In contrast, our focus is on how scholars *change* the scholarly conversation – either substantially shifting an existing conversation in a beneficial way or stimulating productive new conversations – and in so doing reshape a field of research. We suggest that the means through which scholars change the conversation, which is the focus of this editorial, are different from the means of entering and sustaining an ongoing conversation.<sup>[1]</sup>

Furthermore, rather than focus solely on the rhetorical strategies that researchers use to frame their research and persuade others – on ‘how to do things with words’ (McCloskey, 1994, p. 38; see Locke and Golden-Biddle, 1997) – we focus on the substantive features of conversation-changing papers, including both *how* researchers’ contributions alter the scholarly conversations (e.g., challenging dominant assumptions or providing a new perspective) and *what functions* such changes serve. Precisely how scholars change the conversation has received scant attention. One exception is the recent editorial by Rockman and colleagues (Rockmann et al., 2021), which suggests that different journals seek to change the conversation for different reasons (e.g., ‘to motivate conversations, especially across disciplines, that result in novel questions, perspectives, and insights for management scholarship’, ‘to broaden or deepen the conversation’, or to publish work that ‘substantially moves or changes the conversation’ (p. 169)). While this shows that journals specialize in publishing different types of conversation-changing papers, it does not help to identify the features or functions of what, as of yet, is an implied (but not developed) typology of conversation-changing papers.

Before we proceed with our analysis of conversation changers, we address two questions that might have occurred to the reader by this juncture. First, readers may wonder how the idea of changing the scholarly conversation is different from making a theoretical contribution (Corley and Gioia, 2011; Cornelissen and Durand, 2014; Whetten, 1989), or producing research that is interesting (Bartunek et al., 2006), or impactful (Vermeulen, 2007; Wickert et al., 2021). Clearly, there are different answers to this question. At one extreme, one might argue that changing the conversation *is* the goal. If the scholarly conversation is how scholars understand the world, then changing the conversation by definition changes how the community comprehends and responds to the world (see Huff, 1999).

A different answer is that changing the conversation is distinct from but linked to other substantive outcomes. For instance, one might argue that extending theory serves to alter the scholarly conversation (Hideg et al., 2020; Rockmann et al., 2021) or that new empirical facts can influence societal conversations about the true state of the world (Tihanyi, 2020b). Echoing this view, Corley and Gioia (2011) asked whether theoretical contributions that do not change the conversation are really making a difference. An alternative view is that changing the conversation itself is a way to redirect attention to socially important questions, approach established problems differently, or to help develop new theory. Taking the latter view, Godfrey (1998) discussed conversation as a methodology for theory development. Drawing on Mary Parker Follet’s (1924) idea of interpenetration or integration, Godfrey observed how scholars can make progress in understanding organizational concepts through discussion and dialogue, coming together to understand and step outside of particular perspectives, interrogate facts, and build on the ideas of others by critiquing and iterating them,

leading to fruitful new concepts and theories. In a similar vein, Cunliffe (2022, p. 1) views conversations, sensibility, sensitivity, and reflexivity as approaches to theorizing that complement ‘forms of theorizing that are based on a masculinized rationality that privileges abstraction, a logic of objectivity and proceduralization’. We revisit below the relationship between scholarly conversations and other ways to understand scholarly contributions below, in light of our examination of conversation-changing papers.

Second, readers may be asking themselves whether the focus on conversation-changing contributions is desirable and sustainable for a field of study. After all, if we want to have a meaningful conversation there must be sufficient mutual understanding, common frames of reference, and established assumptions. If every scholarly contribution sought to significantly shift the conversation, then opportunities for a conversation to mature, develop, and sustain interest would wane. Kuhn (1996) proposed a temporal dimension to this tension: normal science, when existing ideas and assumptions solidify, is followed by paradigm shifts. Accordingly, papers that shift paradigms are valuable, especially when they solve problems that cannot be productively fixed by relying on ingrained ideas and assumptions. Sometimes it takes a new voice or perspective for the conversation to evolve.

Another argument in favour of conversation-changing papers is that they can help direct attention to pressing social issues or grand societal challenges (George et al., 2016). Engaging in new scholarly conversations about these challenges is important not only for building a critical mass of potentially useful knowledge and expertise within management studies but also for engaging productively with scholars in other disciplines and with policy makers and practitioners to co-produce impactful research (Wickert et al., 2021).

## A TYPOLOGY OF CONVERSATION-CHANGING PAPERS

To understand how micro papers change scholarly conversations, we analysed a selection of papers in leading journals. We started with the basic question: what is a conversation-changing paper? Working independently, each of the four authors selected ten papers that in their view had significantly shaped how scholars were studying and writing about a given topic. We make no claims that this limited sample is comprehensive and we recognize that our selections reflect our own interests and experiences. Doubtless, readers will have their own views as to which papers most productively changed the conversation in their own areas of research. Despite its limits, our selection and analyses provide preliminary insights into the features and functions of conversation-changing papers.<sup>[2]</sup>

We initially focused on two broad dimensions of these papers: how the papers changed the conversation (e.g., by introducing a new perspective or concept) and the functions of these changes (e.g., shifting attention to a new phenomenon or changing how causal relations are understood). Next, and again working independently, we used open and axial coding (Locke, 2000; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) to identify central concepts or categories and their properties and then to cluster these concepts and

categories into broader themes or higher order categories that describe the features and functions of the papers. Our final step was to combine our individual analyses. This step revealed significant consistency, particularly in terms of the lower-order concepts and categories we generated, enabling us to aggregate them into a consolidated typology.

Figure 1 illustrates the typology that we developed from these findings. Our typology distinguishes between papers that (a) sustain the conversation, (b) alter the conversation, or (c) divert scholarly attention to an entirely new conversation. The typology illustrates archetypes or stylized examples for the two categories of contributions that were the focus of our analyses, which we discuss in more detail below, referencing exemplars. Our typology also identifies the functions of the respective conversation-changing types, in terms of outcomes for the scholarly conversation. Table I builds on the typology by identifying salient attributes of the various types of conversation-changing contributions, including the authors' motivation for the study, the papers' relationship to field specific concepts and core relationships, the paper's relative reliance on ideas from the focal field versus other fields, and the degree of the authors' reflexivity when they question and/or reflect on the state of the field. We elaborate on the typology and attributes as we analyse selected exemplars.

### Altering an Existing Conversation

*Deepening the conversation.* One way to change the scholarly conversation in valuable and productive ways is to deepen it. By deepening the conversation, we mean enabling detailed conversations about a phenomenon, concept, or idea. Several of the articles in our sample were noteworthy for how they deepened the scholarly conversation. One such

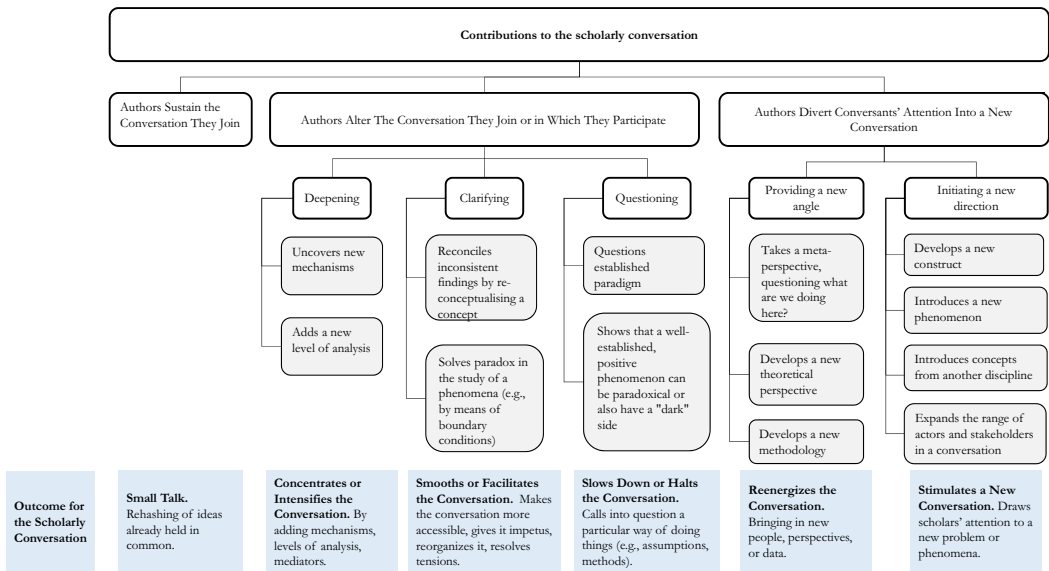


Figure 1. A typology of conversation-changing contributions and their outcomes for the scholarly conversation [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

Table 1. Typology of scholarly conversations: sustaining, altering, and diverting conversations

	Altering			Diverting		
	<i>Sustaining the conversation</i>	<i>Deepening the conversation</i>	<i>Clarifying the conversation</i>	<i>Questioning the conversation</i>	<i>Offering a new angle</i>	
Motivation for the study	To confirm and test field-specific knowledge	To improve deficiencies or close gaps in field-specific knowledge	To address and resolve field-specific tensions, paradoxes, contradictions	To question field-specific knowledge and understanding	To provide a new perspective on an old problem	To make visible field-relevant knowledge presently invisible to the field
Relationship to field-specific concepts	Use existing constructs	Elaborate on or nuance existing constructs (e.g., dimensionality)	Organize, clarify existing constructs	Question existing constructs	Give new understanding to an existing construct	Introduce new constructs
Relationship to field-specific understanding of core relationship	Use known relationships	Elaborate on or nuance core known relationship (e.g., moderators, mediators)	Organize, clarify existing relationships	Question nature of core relationships in the field	Give new understanding to an accepted relationship in the field	Introduce new relationships
Relative reliance on understandings from focal field vs other fields	Mostly focal	Mostly focal	Mostly focal	Mix of focal and other	Mix of focal and other	Mix of focal and other
Reflexivity	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate-High	High	High
Selected exemplars	–	Amabile et al., 2005; Grégoire et al., 2010; Smith and Lewis, 2011	Cardon et al., 2009; Dane and Pratt, 2007	Berdahl et al., 2018; Galperin et al., 2020; Van Knippenberg and Sitkin, 2013	Greenhaus and Powell, 2006; Schneider et al., 2002, Detert and Edmondson, 2011	Fisher et al., 2020; Verbruggen and De Vos, 2020

contribution is Grégoire et al.'s (2010) study of the cognitive processes through which entrepreneurs recognize opportunities. This article changed the conversation about entrepreneurial cognition because it laid out the micro-level cognitive mechanisms that skilled entrepreneurs use to recognize opportunities. Prior to this article, this process had largely been a black box and people assumed that recognition of opportunities involved mental prototypes. Gregoire and colleagues showed that opportunity recognition involved drawing novel connections between ideas and events in real time and discerning structural alignments between technological features and market features. In effect, it added a new level of analysis to how this phenomenon is understood. This contribution enabled researchers to talk about and study this vital part of the entrepreneurial process more accurately and in more detail. In 'deepening the conversation' papers, researchers advance the conversation by elaborating on and nuancing existing constructs and relationships, in this case concerning known cognitive processes and the role of prior knowledge as an antecedent.

Another exemplar contribution that deepened the scholarly conversation significantly is Amabile et al.'s (2005) study of affect and creativity. Although the relationship between affect and creativity was posited in various literatures, this article deepened the conversation by clarifying the interplay between affect and creative cognition in the workplace. Amabile and colleagues used established concepts such as positive affect, cognitive variety, and creative cognition but nuanced the relationships between them to develop a new model (the organizational affect-creativity cycle) that suggests a dynamic and recursive relationship between affect and creativity. Like Grégoire et al.'s analysis of opportunity recognition, Amabile and colleagues' analysis proposed new mechanisms, in this case the mechanisms linking affect and creativity. The effect of this article on the scholarly conversation was that it enabled more in-depth conversations than previously about the relationship between affect and creative cognition and the antecedents of creativity in organizations, enabling emotion researchers to develop a new dialogue about the consequences of positive affect and enabling creativity researchers to unpack the psychological and organizational antecedents of creativity.

As noted in Table I and depicted in Figure 1, papers that deepen the conversation by elaborating on or nuancing existing constructs and/or their relationships tend to rely on ideas from the focal field and work with existing assumptions rather than question those assumptions. For instance, Smith and Lewis' (2011) paper on paradox largely focused on elaborating on known categories of organizational tensions and nuancing the relationships between them. Their analysis relied on ideas from existing studies of tensions and paradoxes and they organized and sharpened the focus of the paradox lens instead of questioning it. In so doing, they offered a new conceptual model that added different explanatory mechanisms to how paradoxes occur. The effect of this article was to concentrate the conversation on inherent *and* socially constructed aspects of paradox and intensify debates on how paradoxes can be resolved and managed.

*Clarifying the conversation.* A second approach to changing the scholarly conversation is to clarify fundamental features of the conversation, usually the assumptions, concepts,

and relationships that have been integral parts of an ongoing dialogue. Clarifying the conversation entails making the topic more understandable than it was and free of any confusion. When scholars clarify the conversation, the purpose is to explain the nature of the core concepts in clear and consistent ways, removing inconsistencies and bringing precision where there was vagueness. In such cases, a typical motivation is to resolve inconsistencies and tensions in research on these topics. The net effect of clarifying is to facilitate more productive conversations than before and to smooth the way for future dialogue, removing obstacles and creating new connections to enable the conversation to flow and in some cases even accelerate and grow.

Two papers that reshaped the scholarly conversation by clarifying it are Dane and Pratt's (2007) article on management intuition and Cardon et al.'s (2009) review of entrepreneurial passion. We see these articles as instances of changing the conversation, rather than sustaining the conversation, because although both concepts had been discussed by foundational scholars – Simon (1987) in the case of intuition and Schumpeter (1954) in the case of entrepreneurial passion – research on these topics had remained fragmented, dispersed, and on the fringes until the re-analyses by Dane and Pratt (2007) and Cardon et al. (2009). For Dane and Pratt (2007, p. 33), the intention was to facilitate a more 'productive discourse on the topic of intuition within the management literature' than the prevailing discourse by reducing the diversity of perspectives on what intuition is and when it is likely to be effective. For Cardon et al. (2009, p. 512), the goal was to 'explain previously unanswered questions in the literature'.

How were these articles able to change the scholarly conversation? In both cases, the problem is framed from the inside (i.e., the lack of a unifying perspective on what intuition and passion are and how they work) but solved with help from other fields. In the case of Dane and Pratt (2007), the outside perspective came from drawing on 'advances in psychology and the decision sciences' (p. 34). Cardon et al. (2009) adopted self-regulation as their overall theoretical framework and drew on psychological research on emotions. Also noteworthy is the degree of reflexivity shown when questioning key assumptions and relationships, often by juxtaposing them with those in other fields (see Table I).

By bringing clarity and consistency to what intuition and passion are (and are not), both articles were able to facilitate or smooth the scholarly conversation (see Figure 1, outcomes for the scholarly conversation). Both articles have been highly influential because by clarifying core concepts they enabled scholars to have more consistent and productive conversations than before, ensuring that researchers are talking about the same thing and providing a conceptual base for further discussions in which they will have a common frame of reference. In both cases, the frame of reference is sufficiently inclusive that many other scholars could position their own research within the new framework but also sufficiently discriminant to point out dead-ends and unhelpful diversions from the core conversation.

Clarifying a scholarly conversation can also help widen the conversation into new areas; for instance, extending the conversation to include a broader appreciation of the effects of the focal phenomena or to connect with new groups of scholars. Dane and Pratt (2007) extended the conversation to include an important discussion regarding the conditions under which management intuition is likely to be effective. Cardon et al.'s (2009) work extended the

conversation by connecting entrepreneurial passion to substantive outcomes (e.g., venture creation and growth) and preparing the ground for a series of offshoot conversations linking passion in terms of outcomes of central concern to entrepreneurship scholars. Bringing clarity also enabled more researchers to join the conversation, growing it into new fields and among new communities. For instance, Dane and Pratt's article has been influential in psychology, ethics, and operations research, while Cardon et al.'s article has influenced educational researchers as well as psychologists and economists.

*Questioning the conversation.* A third approach to altering the scholarly conversation is to question what the participants take for granted. When authors question the assumptions, constructs, core relationships, and the particular ways of doing things in a research field, they could potentially stop the conversation or slow it down. The reckoning that ensues can propel a sizable tangent in the conversation, amplify the range of constructs available to understand the phenomenon and/or create tension that future research may seek to clarify. Our sample of conversation-changing papers included several 'question the conversation' ones. Among them, Berdahl et al.'s (2018) theoretical framework for thinking about work as a masculine contest culture stands out for spurring a large number of new studies in just a short period of time.

Berdahl et al. (2018) observe that mainstream approaches for addressing gender inequality in the workplace – fixing the women, valuing the feminine, and addressing implicit bias – have had only marginal success. Like other 'questioning the conversation' papers, they question the value of refining what appear in practice to be unfruitful theories. They also question assumptions that guide practice in their research area, such as the assumption that requirements for getting ahead in organizations are gender neutral. Additionally, they revisit relationships that have been taken for granted, like whether and to what extent the determinants of career success that we have assumed to be gender neutral in our field specifically favour the men that most ascribe to the masculine contest culture.

Another example of a paper that questions the field-specific knowledge and understanding is Galperin et al. (2020). Contrary to what has been widely accepted in the hiring literature, these authors theorized and empirically showed that highly capable job candidates can be penalized in the selection process. Their core theoretical assumptions were that highly capable candidates would be more likely than other candidates to show lower levels of future organizational commitment because they would be less motivated than others to work toward achieving organizational goals and they could more easily than others find a job elsewhere. The results of four experiments confirmed their hypotheses: rather than hiring top achievers, managers were more likely to hire candidates with lower but sufficient levels of capability.

To question field specific knowledge, understandings, and practices to the degree that authors like Berdahl and her colleagues do requires a level of reflexivity that may be aided by the author's position vis-a-vis the field. For example, the author may see the field from the vantage point of the author's knowledge area, thus bringing fresh eyes to the conversation. Berdahl et al. (2018) purposefully gathered a multidisciplinary team of psychologists, sociologists, managers, engineers, and law scholars. Galperin et al. (2020) successfully questioned well-established ideas in the hiring literature by bringing together scholars in two disparate areas of research – recruitment and selection and

organizational commitment – which helped them develop their theory about how highly capable candidates might in fact not be hiring managers' most preferred candidates. Other exemplars show that reflexivity can also come from experienced scholars looking across fields of research. For instance, Van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) went back to the drawing board and questioned some of the basic assumptions behind the construct of transformational leadership, including whether a construct should be defined in part by its outcomes. They encouraged a generation of leadership scholars to be more careful about the fundamental theoretical assumptions behind transformational leadership but also behind leadership research more generally. At the time Van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) were published, the authors had over 30 and 20 years of publication experience, respectively, but varied in their extent of publications in the field of leadership, which may have contributed to their ability to reflexively challenge the transformational leadership construct.

### **Diverting Attention into a New Conversation**

*Offering a new angle.* A fourth approach, to changing the scholarly conversation is offering a new angle, that is, providing a new perspective to a familiar problem. For example, Greenhaus and Powell's (2006) theory of work-family enrichment changed the conversation in the work-family literature because it put forth an overarching model of how 'experiences in one role improve quality of life in the other role' (p. 73). Although previous research had demonstrated positive spillovers and other positive interdependencies between these roles, Greenhaus and Powell's (2006) view built on a positive psychology perspective that contrasted sharply with the conflict perspective that still dominated at the time. Yielding a new concept and a comprehensive model of work-family enrichment, Greenhaus and Powell's (2006) new angle became the guiding lens for future research on the mutually beneficial experiences of work and family.

Another example that has offered a new angle is a paper by Schneider et al. (2002). In this paper, the authors introduced a concept called 'climate strength' to conceptualize the variance in climate perceptions between team members and proposed that average team members' climate perceptions have different effects on team outcomes based on how much variability there is among team members in their perceptions. The new angle in this case came from Schneider et al.'s (2002) observation that customers of service teams with a positive service climate enjoyed better customer experiences when the perceptions of team members were aligned (i.e., when there was less variability in service climate perceptions, characteristic of a strong service climate). This paper offered a new angle to climate research specifically, and team research more broadly, because it showed that not only the aggregate or average team members' perceptions of a given construct matter, but also how much variance there is in such perceptions. Before this paper was published, team research had almost exclusively focused on exploring the role of average team member perceptions to conceptualize emerging, team level constructs.

A key to offering a new angle that shifts the scholarly conversation may reside in the extent to which authors reflect on the state of the field. Greenhaus and Powell (2006),

for example, reflected critically on the dominant conflict perspective on work-family relations and systematically reviewed empirical work in their domain that supported the expansionist alternative. Schneider et al. (2002) were inspired by the methodological advances in multi-level research at the time, specifically in relation to different compositional models to operationalize lower-level constructs to higher levels. They combined these ideas with the insights from related literature on culture strength to provide a fresh perspective on how climate perceptions can be conceptualized and studied. This high degree of reflexivity may explain why offering a new angle can change understandings of accepted relationships in a field (see Table I). For instance, Detert and Edmondson's (2011) critical reflections on why employees don't speak up in organizations led them to posit implicit voice theories not merely as a mediator between contextual antecedents and voice behaviour but as a hitherto underappreciated driving cause of such behaviour. Their work provided a fundamentally new angle to ongoing conversations that has spurred many voice scholars to revisit their assumptions and include new variables in their work.

*Initiating a new conversational direction.* A fifth approach to changing the scholarly conversation is to start a new conversation by proposing a new direction or new ideas to explore in conversation. One such example is Fisher et al.'s (2020) paper on entrepreneurial hustle. We consider this a new conversation because unlike the above examples, the core concept (in this case, hustle) had rarely been discussed in scholarly research (although it did appear in cultural studies and is familiar in the start-up world). The stated goal of Fisher et al. (2020) was to propose entrepreneurial hustle as a new category that captured a key aspect of the entrepreneurial experience that was missing from entrepreneurship research. In this case, as in several other papers in our sample, the conversation revolves around a new concept, i.e., entrepreneurial hustle. The introduction of this new concept was deemed necessary, according to the authors, because 'there are virtually no constructs in the entrepreneurial action literature that allow researchers to build theory about why, how, and when specific entrepreneurial actions lead to entrepreneurial success or failure' (Fisher et al., 2020, p. 1028). The development of this concept allowed the authors to pose new questions that seek to bring others into this embryonic conversation around the nature and effects of this phenomenon. Another example is Verbruggen and De Vos's (2020) paper on the theory of career inaction. As hustle was to entrepreneurship, inaction is a new construct in the careers literature, defined as the 'failure to act sufficiently over some period of time on a desire to make a change in one's career' (p. 378). By outlining this new concept, the authors open the door to a brand-new conversation about the nature, causes, and consequences of career inaction.

How do scholars achieve such a significant shift in the scholarly conversation? Our analysis suggests that there are different ways of achieving this end. For Fisher et al. (2020), the development of their novel concept was grounded in the inductive analysis of field data. In this case, the shift in perspective comes not so much from the researchers bringing a new lens from another field but through their ability to see and describe the world through the eyes of their informants, in this case successful entrepreneurs. Deriving the concept from data not only provides management researchers

with a new conceptual lexicon to describe this important phenomenon but also provides a common language with which they can meaningfully engage with practitioners, facilitating a set of potential additional conversations. In our other example, Verbruggen and De Vos's (2020) uncovered the new construct of career inaction by noticing what artists would call the 'negative space' in how existing theories depict careers. Perhaps the most well-known image of negative space is that of a black vase, which, with a shift in perspective, reveals two profiles, face to face. The term negative space has no pejorative connotation. It simply denotes space with shared boundaries, but behind and around an object that is just as useful and relevant as the focal object. Photographers and filmmakers use negative space to bring balance to their work. Verbruggen and De Vos's (2020) description of how they identified this new construct, career inaction, suggests that they saw and valued the negative space around dominant career theories. As the authors explain, 'it is because of the one-sided focus on how career decisions are made and realized that our understanding of careers has remained incomplete' (Verbruggen and De Vos, 2020, p. 376). The shift in perspective that allowed the authors to see this negative space – making visible what previously was not (see, Figure 1) – was probably also aided by the authors' readings from fields outside careers research, like psychology, memory, and psychiatry, as well as by their ability to think critically about accepted lines of inquiry in careers research.

## DISCUSSION

Our typology provides a detailed picture of various ways researchers can significantly shift scholarly conversations through their papers. We make some general observations about this way of thinking about contributions to a discipline and draw attention to some notable features of this approach.

One striking observation is the basic difference between thinking in terms of changing the conversation and thinking in terms of making a theoretical contribution (see, Corley and Gioia, 2011; Cornelissen and Durand, 2014; Whetten, 1989). When we think in terms of making a theoretical contribution, we focus on changing theory, as if theory exists in box and arrow diagrams floating around in the ether. The idea of theoretical contributions is somewhat devoid of the human context, and it encourages us to reify theory as a tangible object of change. In contrast, thinking in terms of changing the conversation naturally leads us to think about influencing people, specifically changing the perspectives, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours underpinning the scholarly conversation. Whose conversation do we want to change, why do we want to change it, and why should participants care? (For a practical discussion of this point, see Grant and Pollock, 2011). The idea of changing the conversation foregrounds the human context of research and treats this context as part of what we change when we do good research.

There are three important ways in which thinking in terms of changing the scholarly conversation brings people to the fore. The first concerns influencing scholars who are already engaged in the conversation. The second concerns influencing scholars who might currently be outside the conversation but who might be brought into it

to effect some change – from providing a new angle to stimulating greater reflexivity to broadening the range of expertise brought to bear upon an important problem. We have discussed these two aspects of changing the scholarly conversation, above. The third – and perhaps most important – benefit of thinking in terms of changing the scholarly conversation concerns the opportunity to connect scholarly conversations to wider societal conversations.

Management research is often criticized for existing in its own thought world, separate from the worlds of practice, policy and wider social discourse (see, e.g., Kieser and Leiner, 2009). And yet, some of the papers we analysed were exemplary because they changed the scholarly conversation so that it connects and adds significantly to an important conversation ongoing in society. One such example is Smith et al.'s (2019) article on black women executives. By providing a new view of why intersectional invisibility has paradoxical effects, this work highlights strategies black women can use to gain the visibility needed to ascend in their careers. This work not only connects management scholarship to important societal discussions about race, gender, and work equality but also promises to add to this wider societal conversation in a way that may help disrupt stereotypes and suggest equality-enhancing interventions. In other cases we looked at, the articles shifted scholarly attention to phenomena or practices that promise to benefit the well-being and performance of employees in other ways, such as in the relationship between leisure and work (Sonnetag, 2003) or to the adoption of personalized management learning techniques (Petriglieri et al., 2011). These and other examples illustrate the value of adopting the lens of research as conversation for scholars seeking to respond to and shape wider conversations about important societal challenges (Tihanyi et al., 2022).

Returning now to our typology, we offer some observations and draw attention to some noteworthy features and implications. One observation concerns how our typology relates to recent work on theory building in management. Our typology identifies ways scholars can change the conversation by deepening, clarifying, questioning, and diverting the conversation or initiating a new one. An overarching challenge that scholars often face, however, is how to open new intellectual terrain while maintaining the thread of the old conversation.<sup>[3]</sup> Shepherd and Suddaby (2017) argue that this challenge can be addressed by shifting the 'scene' or the context of the argument. They identify three key ways that this is typically accomplished, namely by shifting the ontology, moving up and down levels of analysis, and moving between theory and empirics. Hence, although the idea of the scholarly conversation may lead us to think differently about the impact of research compared to the mindset of the theoretical contribution, there are clearly complementarities between these approaches (see also Corley and Gioia, 2011; Cornelissen et al., 2021; Cutcher et al., 2020).

A notable feature of our typology concerns the nature of the types of conversation-changing contributions we identify. Although there are different ways to change a conversation, these types are not mutually exclusive. Rather, we consider our categories to be mutually overlapping. Consistent with this idea, some contributions seem able to change the conversation in several ways. For instance, while Smith and Lewis (2011) deepened the conversation on paradoxes by adding new explanatory mechanisms, they also sought to clarify it by addressing different and long-established debates among paradox scholars. Similarly, in addition to offering a new angle on the

links between work and family, parts of Greenhaus and Powell's (2006) article fit the clarifying type of conversation changer since their new model explains the interrelationships among various positive work-family linkages previously identified in the literature.

So, it seems that researchers can shape a scholarly conversation in more than one way with a single contribution. What we observed, however, was that even when contributions were altering the conversation in multiple ways, the authors tended to have one dominant purpose for their papers, with another purpose being secondary. For instance, some papers needed to first clarify the key assumptions underpinning a particular conversation before offering a new angle. In other cases, researchers might offer a new angle in order to initiate a new construct or expand the range of actors included within a conversation. Few papers tried to change the conversation in more than two ways. There are probably good reasons for this. Trying to shift the conversation in too many ways could undermine one's contribution to the conversation, leaving readers confused about the purpose of a paper and the intended direction of the conversation.

Finally, although our typology is derived from analysing exemplar micro-level conversation-changing papers, our proposed ways of changing the conversation could also apply to papers in the macro domain. As noted previously in this article, we focus on micro-level research as this type of work tends to be incremental and focused on gap-spotting; however, our macro-level colleagues could also benefit from our typology as it will allow them to converse with their audience more effectively than before about how they can alter or divert scholarly conversations in their areas of research.

## **GUIDANCE FOR PRODUCING A CONVERSATION-CHANGING PAPER**

Conversation-changing papers are those that we, as editors, are most excited about reading and managing. However, writing such papers can be a daunting task because they require navigating: *people*, not least of which is oneself, in terms of understanding the personal resources required, and the participants in the conversation, whose readiness to partake in the conversation shift may depend on whether their status in the existing conversation is at stake; *perspectives*, the prevailing and new ways of seeing that need to be packaged with the appropriate level of detail and reflexivity for the intended participants; and *places*, the spaces where the author invites a shift in conversation. Reviewers and editors, also, when tasked with assessing and helping to develop a conversation-changing paper, may grapple with how to negotiate people, perspectives, and places. In this section, we provide some guidance on how to approach writing as well as reviewing and editing conversation-changing papers with these considerations and our typology in mind.

### **People**

A research conversation takes place between scholars who write about their research and other scholars – not just those who eventually read the published paper but also those who review the paper and those who manage the review process. Changing the scholarly

conversation requires inspiration and courage, engaging others in developing new ideas, and navigating egos and politics.

*Finding the inspiration to change the conversation.* Writing conversation-changing papers involves showing an excellent grasp of the field and of conversations that take place in the field. This is necessary so that the authors can explain in what ways they are changing or starting a new conversation and why this is needed. Reading more broadly and/ or collaborating with scholars from other disciplines can be particularly helpful in identifying the scope and directions for changing existing conversations. Attending conferences where scholars from multiple disciplines present their work can also spur ideas for new angles for an ongoing conversation. Inspiration for changing an existing conversation or taking it in a new direction can also come from engaging with practitioners and experts who work in industry. Such engagements can identify the need for the existing conversations to change, so that current business and social challenges can be appropriately addressed, ultimately leading to more impactful research (Wickert et al., 2021). However, writing conversation-changing papers requires a certain level of reflexivity; authors must take a step back from the current conversation to alter it in a meaningful way or to start a new conversation. The level of reflexivity needs to be particularly high as scholars seek to break away from established concepts, re-define them, and/or introduce new ones.

*Building the courage to write a conversation changer.* Writing a conversation- changing paper often starts with mustering the personal courage to do so. Presenting novel, potentially contentious, ideas that change the way scholars approach a certain topic is difficult and challenging as there may be serious personal and career consequences to doing so (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009). Fortunately for authors, there is a body of scientific work on how to be successful at voicing ideas and engaging in conversation changing discourse (e.g., Detert and Edmondson, 2011). Among many other factors, research highlights the importance of authors having high and stable self-esteem that does not depend on the approval of others (Kernis, 2003), having intrinsic motivation and passion to pursue their ideas (Deci and Ryan, 2000), and having a learning mindset that enjoys developing their ideas more than the end-goal of their paper being published (Dweck et al., 1995).

Of course, to have one's voice heard one must stay in academia, so we should not take for granted the extrinsic drivers of scholarly work, such as tenure, promotion, and pay. But, pursuing work that is not intellectually interesting and that is not what one values is probably not going to feel intrinsically motivating or authentic. These are critical considerations because burnout is a very real problem in our scientific endeavours. And, believing in the importance of what you are doing is a great antidote to the distress of (repeated) rejections from publishers. So, we advise colleagues to stay true to their ideas and values regardless of where or whether their articles get published. The courage to write conversation-changing papers must be found within, so scholars need to develop self-esteem and confidence in their ideas, pursue their ideas with purpose and passion, be reflexive, and have intrinsic motivation and a learning mindset.

It is important to recognize that not all articles change the conversation, and, for those that do, it may take substantial time before their impact is recognized. While writing critical, conversation-changing papers is at the heart of why many scholars sign onto the academic

endeavour (and thus have intrinsic motivation), academics know that such articles are more difficult than other articles to get published. Hence, writing conversation-changing articles is a risky investment of time and energy when tenure is also a goal. For this reason, junior scholars are often advised to pursue lower-hanging fruit to get their PhD and the tenure and job security that follows. At the same time, the fresh or novel perspectives of newly minted academics can spur improvement-oriented, impactful ideas (Gingras et al., 2008).

*Testing the waters.* One way for scholars to engage the scholarly community with their conversation-changing ideas is to present potentially conversation-changing papers at brown bag sessions and targeted conferences, where support for such papers could be garnered through dialogue with other scholars who study similar phenomena and sustain the conversations in their field. Alternatively, for a conversation-changing paper that intends to open the door to new scholars participating in the conversation, authors will want to gain an understanding of how to best invite these scholars into the conversation, for example by attending conferences in related disciplines or different fields, requesting informal reviewers to provide feedback and reactions at different stages of the paper development process. For journals, organizing joint conferences or joining special issues with other journals can be an effective way of stimulating and inviting conversation-changing articles.

*Navigating egos and politics.* Getting a conversation-changing paper through the review process can be frustrating and contentious because reviewers may take a conservative view of what constitutes a good paper. For the paper to alter the conversation or start a new one, it must substantially challenge existing conversations, which are often started and maintained by the very editors and reviewers who act as gatekeepers of the conversations that scholars aim to change. Authors should consider that their reviewers (and, ultimately, their readers) may be the ones whose work they are elaborating on, clarifying, questioning, or discrediting. Hence, even as authors question or even dismantle perspectives, core constructs and relationships that scholars previously brought to the conversation, they may want to consider and address how others can continue contributing to the conversation. Alternatively, a conversation-changing paper may open the door to new participants and an author will need to think about how best to invite them into the conversation.

Beyond perspective taking to learn how their ideas will be received by the readers, writers need to consider the broader political considerations of changing a scholarly conversation, not the least of which are the power coalitions supporting or resisting their ideas and the zeitgeist and timing of presenting those ideas. Authors of successful conversation-changing papers often get buy-in for their ideas beforehand – for instance by getting friendly feedback from key players before submitting the paper to a journal. Scholars may also choose to include relevant co-authors to show that there is a power collation behind their ideas. Aspiring conversation changers also need to be mindful about timing. Certain articles will be more positively received based on how related articles in the field are evolving. When we were researching this editorial, several authors of conversation-changing papers we spoke to told us that their paper may have been rejected if it were offered in a different time period. Sometimes scholars sit on ideas for a while, letting them mature, until they feel the time is right to take them to publication.

Editors and reviewers of conversation-changing papers should evaluate a conversation-changing paper based on its rigour and novelty (rather than its reliance on established views). They should also be willing to open themselves up to having their own views and perspectives challenged. Questions editors and reviewers may ask themselves are: ‘Is this a valid conversation in my particular area, even if I didn’t start it?’ and ‘Would it be helpful for my field if I relinquished my position at the centre of this scholarly conversation?’. Additionally, editors may find our typology useful to identify the type of conversation-change a submission falls under in order to identify reviewers who are open and can be developmental to scholarship that proposes to alter existing conversations or initiate new ones. An important means of getting more voices to participate in conversation-changing discourse is for leaders in the field (be they editors or reviewers) to actively encourage speaking up. This requires that scholars exhibit non-ego-defensive behaviours, such as humility, about their work (Owens et al., 2015) and a non-fragile self-esteem that doesn’t seek approval from others (Leroy and Choi, 2022). In summary, a certain amount of reflexivity is needed on all sides of the conversation for it to be meaningfully and productively changed.

## Perspectives

Scholars who write conversation-changing papers and reviewer of those papers have specific perspectives or motivations on how to frame the research conversation and how to evaluate it, respectively. For instance, scholars might engage with the field-specific concepts to study their core relationships, or they might draw from perspectives from other fields.

*Motivation and framing of the study.* It is obviously vital to frame and explain one’s purpose for writing a scholarly paper. This helps orient editors, reviewers, and readers to the author’s intentions. Reviewers and editors may find our typology useful in helping authors to formulate how they are changing the conversation. So, instead of just asking: ‘What is novel?’ ‘What is your contribution?’ reviewers and editors can ask authors to think about *how* their contribution changes a conversation, which may help the authors achieve clarity and focus in their theorizing and writing.

*Set up the conversation-shift with the literature review.* Authors can use the literature review to signal their study’s motivation and set up the type of conversation change they are seeking to initiate by explaining how they intend to draw on and utilize the literature in their study. For example, if the paper seeks to resolve a tension or clarify a construct, the literature review should set up the issue that needs to be explained. If the paper seeks to make something visible that previously was not, the authors should show the ‘negative space’. If the author is going to bring in a different literature to bear on a construct or relationship, the literature review can help show the similarities and differences between the approaches from the two fields.

*Relative reliance on understandings from the focal field vs other fields.* How much do the participants in the conversation need to know? Authors who seek to elaborate on or deepen a conversation may need to be quite granular in order to explain the new twist they propose for an otherwise well-established concept and set of relationships. But authors

who seek to bridge two fields will need to both (1) establish credibility vis-à-vis scholars who are deeply familiar with the separate fields by showing their knowledge of the scholarly contributions in each field, and (2) avoid losing some of their readers with too many details from just one of the areas of scholarship. We argue that most conversation-changing papers will involve a mix of focal and other fields in order to meaningfully change the existing conversation or start a new one.

## Places

Finally, we would like to touch upon where the research conversations take place. Conversation-changing papers can make a significant impact on the field, gauged in terms of the number of citations, scholarly awards, and consistent use in doctoral training. Most notably, conversation-changing papers tend to be published in journals where scholars are encouraged to be bold and to challenge existing conversations or create new ones.

*Journals and their scope and mission.* Business and management journals, including those that focus on micro-level research, vary in their mission, scope, and criteria for publishing papers. As noted previously, not all papers can be expected to change or start new conversations. Many journals focus on publishing papers that sustain existing conversations. Others, however, are more open to publishing papers that substantially alter the conversation. Therefore, authors should study their target journal's mission and scope to make sure their conversation-changing paper fits the journal's criteria. Editors and reviewers should take care to shift their mindset when they review conversation-changing papers to provide fair and constructive comments and recommendations, considering what the paper aims to achieve. At *JMS*, we are open to publishing conversation-changing papers, and we encourage our reviewers to provide constructive and developmental feedback and not reject papers solely on the grounds that they deviate from existing conversations. Hopefully, this editorial has clarified how such deviations can be productive.

## CONCLUSION

*JMS*, like other leading management journals, seeks to publish papers that significantly (re) shape scholarly conversations in management studies. But, until now, it was not clear what it means to change the scholarly conversation, what such changes look like, and what functions such conversation-changing papers serve. Our analysis of exemplar conversation-changing papers in micro research reveals that such changes involve deepening, clarifying, questioning a conversation or diverting attention to a new conversation by offering a new angle or initiating a new conversation. Through these approaches, researchers can intensify a conversation, smooth it or slow it down, and even reenergize a conversation or stimulate an entirely new one. Changing the scholarly conversation can bring in new people and perspectives, divert the attention of researchers to important problems or new phenomena, and enable scholars to engage more deeply with conversations that have a societal impact. With this more refined understanding of how researchers can change the scholarly conversation and the benefits of such changes, we hope to have equipped

researchers, editors, and reviewers in the micro domain with the knowledge they need to think about how contributions stand to reshape the scholarly conversation in their field. As *JMS* editors, we encourage scholars to pursue writing such papers and editors and reviewers to develop a mindset of considering conversation-changing papers as necessary to drive our field forward. We hope many such papers will find a home at *JMS*.

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## NOTES

- [1] Other editorials in leading management journals have provided guidance on various aspects of academic writing. These include the excellent ‘From the Editors’ series in the Academy of Management journals, which have covered setting the hook (Grant and Pollock, 2011), positioning a paper (Barney, 2018), crafting a theoretical contribution (Cornelissen, 2017), and telling the story (Pollock and Bono, 2013), to name but a few. Our editorial is different because it focuses on what it takes to produce a productive change in the scholarly conversation in micro research, focussing on the processes and outcomes of these particular types of field shaping shifts, rather than on providing guidelines for writing types of papers (e.g., theory papers, review papers) or stylistic aspects of writing (e.g., positioning, storytelling).
- [2] The full list of papers is available on request from the authors.
- [3] We thank one of our friendly reviewers for this constructive observation.

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