

## Designing a frame: rhetorical strategies of architects

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### Summary

We examine the rhetorical strategy of architects in widely available architectural texts, to identify what words are available for use in the cultural register. Our results show that these cultural register texts use distinct but related rhetorics; vocabularies of competency that are revealed through clusters of keywords and which capture institutional logics of business, profession and state. We then examine how architect firms use these keywords as rhetorical strategies when competing for projects from clients. Our results reveal that architect firms deploy multivalent keywords—keywords that bridge institutional logics with the same word having multiple meanings—and combine pragmatically unique keywords from distinct logics, allowing them to appeal to multiple, diverse interests in their audiences. Copyright © 2008 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

### Introduction

Professional service firms (PSFs) must communicate who they are and what they can do to gain access to opportunities and resources from clients. For PSF's, whose assets are their knowledge and creative problem solving skills (Jones & Thornton, 2005; Teece, 2003; Winch & Schneider, 1993), this is particularly challenging since the quality of a PSF's knowledge and creative problem solving skills cannot be known before an exchange and are difficult to assess even after service delivery (Brush & Artz, 1999; Darby & Karni, 1973). Whether a building is successful cannot be determined until years after it has been designed and used, when it is too late or too costly to alter. The effectiveness of an advertising campaign is difficult to assess even after implementation, gauged by the famous adage “half of the money I spend on advertising is wasted. I wish I knew which half.” In light of such uncertainty and ambiguity, PSFs rhetorical strategies persuade and reassure clients of their competency to resolve client problems.

PSFs' rhetorics “justify their work and explain to themselves and their publics why what they do is admirable and/or necessary” (Fine, 1996, p. 90). To study rhetoric, Kenneth Burke, a scholar who has

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had a significant influence on literary criticism, communications, and sociology,<sup>1</sup> advocates a focus on “terms” or in our language—keywords—to reveal actors’ strategies and motives. Key terms or keywords define a field and act as a radiating force around which associated terms or words cohere. These words direct our attention, unite a cluster of words into an image (Gusfield, 1989, p. 34) and either “put things together or take things apart” (Burke, 1989, p. 120). Words that put things together—that is act as a binding force within a culture—have been labeled as “keywords” by Williams (1983). Words that take things apart are called “terministic screens” by Burke because of how they “channel” what we see and exclude other phenomena. “[T]he nature of our terms affect the nature of our observations, in the sense that the terms direct the attention to one field rather than another” (Burke, 1989, p. 116). Burke advocates that “the most direct route to the study of human relations and human motives is via a methodical inquiry into cycles or clusters of terms and their functions” (Burke, 1989, p. 135). Clusters of words form vocabularies: the interrelated set of words that actors use to explain, justify and legitimate their actions as socially acceptable. “The fundamental legitimating explanations, are so to speak, built into the vocabulary” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 94). They legitimate by linking actions to their historical and institutional context (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Mills, 1940). For these scholars, rhetoric focuses on language and they advocate the examination of words and vocabularies.

Few scholars, however, identify empirically what keywords social actors use from which societal institutions when justifying and legitimating themselves. More often, scholars identify a keyword *à priori* and trace its usage over time to reveal changes, contestation, and diffusion such as business model (Ghaziani & Ventresca, 2005), corporate governance (Ocasio & Joseph, 2005), and globalization (Fiss & Hirsch, 2005). To understand social actors’ rhetorical strategies, scholars need to identify what keywords are in the cultural register for use and which keywords actors choose to use within a time period and particular social context (Weber, 2005).

Professional services are an exemplary site in which to study rhetorical strategies for several reasons. First, professions claim and develop an abstract body of knowledge to legitimate their position, define jurisdictional boundaries, and justify their work as important to wider publics (Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 1984; Larson, 1977). This rhetoric—keywords and vocabularies—is taught to novices in professional schools, used by exemplars to explain their contributions to the profession and by PSFs to persuade clients of their competency to perform services. Second, PSFs reside at the intersection of institutional sectors (Jones & Manev, 2006). PSFs compete in the market for client services, train in professional schools, apprentice with and are licensed by professional peers and are regulated by the state through codes of conduct and practice. Each of these societal sectors—market, profession, and state—operate with a distinct institutional logic (Thornton, 2004), which shape individual and organizational preferences, identities and actions through particular material practices and symbolic systems (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Third, professional services are also the site of discursive struggles (Larson, 1994), which are revealed through “institutional vocabularies—the use of identifying words and referential texts” (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). The presence of distinct societal sectors means that PSFs can choose which keywords they combine into vocabularies when framing their competencies and motives for clients.

By examining PSFs’ rhetoric—their keywords and vocabularies—we illuminate the complementary relationships among rhetoric, frame analysis, and institutional logics. Rhetoric focuses on language and identifies the keywords that combine into vocabularies, providing the cultural materials by which PSFs seek to persuade clients. Frame analysis highlights the role of actors and their strategies

<sup>1</sup>Gusfield (1989) examines how both C. Wright Mills vocabulary of motives and Irving Goffman’s ideas of self-presentation and frames were influenced by their knowledge of Kenneth Burke’s ideas. Meyer and Rowan (1977) as well as Ocasio and Joseph (2005) have picked up and used Mill’s vocabulary of motive, which is based on Burke’s ideas.

of action (Gusfield, 1989), which is revealed in their frames—that is how they define a situation (Goffman, 1986, p. 10) and link their “strategic agency to cultural meaning or culturally valued ends” (McLean, 1998, p. 52). Most scholars who study frames emphasize either the strategies for or content of frames, but rarely identify where frames come from (Benford & Snow, 2000; 6, P, 2005). A PSF’s choice of its rhetoric and its framing strategies are likely guided by institutional logics, which “define what is legitimate, which issues and problems deserve attention, and what solutions and answers are appropriate” (Thornton, 2004, pp. 13–14). Since a PSF exists at the intersection of institutions, it may frame its actions by using a “cultural toolkit” (Swidler, 1986) of keywords and vocabularies associated with a particular institutional logic such as profession or by combining institutional logics such as profession and market in its persuasion attempts with clients.

Our purpose is to understand architects’ rhetorical strategies—the institutional logics they draw upon and frames they use in their rhetoric where they justify themselves to clients; both logics and frames are revealed in architects’ choice of keywords and vocabularies. We use an exploratory study of architects’ rhetoric—their keywords and combination of keywords into vocabularies—to examine empirically the relationship between institutional logics and framing strategies, which we label as rhetorical strategies. We seek to understand which larger societal logics guide PSFs’ choice and clustering of keywords into vocabularies of motives and competency that they use in their persuasion attempts with clients. By examining the keywords and vocabularies by which PSFs highlight and deploy accepted social categories to legitimate their actions and motives, we attempt to “crack the code” of an unconscious system of categories and institutional rules of the game (Gonos, 1977).

Our research is guided by four questions: (1) What keywords are in the cultural register—“the set of cultural elements at the collective level of the field” (Weber, 2005, p. 229) of the architectural profession and, thus, available for architect firms to use? (2) Do keywords available in the profession’s cultural register form a coherent vocabulary that reveals a dominant professional logic or the co-existence of multiple, distinct institutional logics? (3) What keywords do architect firms draw upon strategically when they frame their competencies and motives for clients? And (4) Do architect firms, as a group, operate out of a dominant logic or combine cultural materials from several logics when framing their competencies for clients?

To answer these questions, we employ the following research strategy. First, we focus on words—the “smallest, and as far as reliability is concerned, the safest recording unit for written documents” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 104). Content analysis has been widely used to study institutions and institutional processes because “institutions are constituted, constructed, and reconstructed in language use” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 74). Second, we identify the content of the cultural register, upon which architect firms may draw, by analyzing widely used and known texts which we expect to reflect different institutions and capture distinct isomorphism mechanisms: normative, mimicry, and coercive (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Third, we use multidimensional scaling (MDS) to assess whether keywords and their co-occurrence within a corpus of texts creates a pattern that captures a vocabulary and reveals distinct institutional logics. Co-occurrence of words is a technique used in content analysis to identify a concept or category (Krippendorff, 2004), which in Burke’s language is a key image. Fourth, we use the keywords identified in the cultural register to analyze architect firms’ rhetorical strategies, which are contained in their submittals for project competitions to a state agency. Fifth, using MDS, we assess whether architect firms’ rhetorical strategies draw upon a dominant logic or combine different logics by examining the proximity of keywords to one another.

Our insights from this study are applicable to a wide variety of professional services that require not only aesthetic sensibilities such as media relations, graphic design, advertising, and publishing, but also creative problem solving skills of investment bankers for new financial tools, management consultants with innovative organizational processes, and public relations firms with corporate reputation management campaigns.

Next, we examine how rhetorical strategies of PSFs highlight the complementary relationship between institutional logics and frame analysis.

## Rhetorical Strategies: How Institutional Logics, Frame Analysis, and Keywords Create Vocabularies of Competency

Institutional theory and frame analysis provide complementary perspectives on why and how rhetoric is used. Institutional logics provide the “basis for action” and mechanisms for conformity or deviation (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 253). They are rules that structure vocabularies, which actors use to frame and make their activities meaningful to others (Sewell, 1992). Since an institutional logic is the cultural resources and material practices associated with social institutions (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton, 2004), which shape organizational actors’ behavior, identities, and practices through isomorphism mechanisms (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), logics should guide which keywords PSF’s use and how they frame their activities when they attempt to persuade clients and legitimate themselves. Because multiple institutional logics are available in any society, this allows PSFs to choose which logics they draw upon when justifying and legitimating themselves to clients.

Within institutional theory, an important and unanswered question is whether multiple institutional logics or a dominant institutional logic guides a profession and PSFs’ rhetorical strategies. Some institutional scholars highlight the tensions and contradictory relations among institutional logics, which initiate change in institutions (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Thornton, 2004). In some cases, these tensions have resulted in the replacement of one logic by another such as a market logic replacing a craft logic in publishing (Thornton, 2002). In other cases, these tensions result in struggles without clear resolution as in architecture which has oscillated between two distinct professional logics—artist versus engineer (Thornton, Jones, & Kury, 2005) and the discursive struggle between fiduciary and expertise logic in accounting and law over multidisciplinary practice (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). Other institutional scholars argue that social actors may pragmatically combine symbolic and material culture without much regard for internal consistency (Swidler, 1986; Weber, 2005) and that few occupations or professions have a single or dominant rhetorical stance (Fine, 1996). An important question is whether organizational actors draw upon multiple institutional logics or a dominant logic, which is revealed in their choice of keywords and how they combine these words into vocabularies to create socially understood motives and competencies.

Frames complement an institutional perspective by illuminating how social actors use rhetoric strategically for sense making and sense giving (Fiss & Hirsch, 2005). For example, architect firms describe themselves by major themes or “motifs” such as aesthetics and art, engineering, client, user, and professional reputation (Blau & McKinely, 1979), network programmers rely on screen writer’s reputation, imitation of successful shows and genre (Bielby & Bielby, 1994), Hollywood screen writers highlight their creativity and/or relational interaction (Elsbach & Kramer, 2002). Because frames tap into existing social categories and institutions, they are diverse but limited in number, capturing “the social underpinnings of society” (Goffman, 1986) and linking organizational actors to their social context (Bielby & Bielby, 1994). Frames “activate existing beliefs and cognitions, rather than adding something new to the individual’s beliefs” (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1997, p. 236). They persuade by telling “people how to weight the often conflicting considerations” involved in complex decisions (Nelson et al., 1997, p. 226). In this way, a PSF’s frame persuades clients by helping clients to navigate the often conflicting demands and competing criteria involved in professional services.

Within frame analysis, scholars highlight the importance of frame alignment or misalignment for persuading others to participate in practices and actions (Benford & Snow, 2000; Diani, 1996). Alignment occurs when frames resonate with or are seen as congruent with the intended audience's lives and experiences (Diani, 1996). A frame's resonance is defined by its credibility with and salience for an audience (Benford & Snow, 2000). Benford and Snow (2000) identify four frame alignment processes: (a) amplification, when social actors' tap into and highlight specific existing cultural values, issues, events, or beliefs; (b) extension, when social actors enlarge a frame's issues, values, or concerns to appeal to a broader, more diverse audience—sometimes triggering tensions around purity of the message and turf battles; (c) bridging, when social actors link two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames into a compelling unified message; and (d) transformation, when social actors use existing understandings and meanings to generate new meanings.

In Table 1, we provide a two-by-two as a heuristic for understanding the relations among institutional logics, framing processes, and rhetorical strategies.

Table 1. The interaction of institutional logics, framing processes, and rhetorical strategies

		Framing process	
		Frame alignment	Frame misalignment
<b>Institutional logics</b>	<b>Draw on a dominant logic</b>	<p>Quadrant 1</p> <p><b>Rhetorical strategy:</b> Adopt and highlight existing keywords to spark cultural resonance and narrative fidelity with audience and/or extend keywords to new audiences</p> <p><b>Frame process:</b> Frame amplification and extension</p> <p><b>Institutional process:</b> Diffusion</p>	<p>Quadrant 2</p> <p><b>Rhetorical strategy:</b> Replace keywords when a more powerful audience endorses and dominates or when new understandings emerge through dialog about keywords</p> <p><b>Frame process:</b> Frame translation and transformation</p> <p><b>Institutional process:</b> Institutional change through replacement</p>
	<b>Draw on multiple logics</b>	<p>Quadrant 3</p> <p><b>Rhetorical strategy:</b> Combine keywords from distinct, multiple logics in new ways to spark cultural resonance through addressing social tensions. Use multivalent keywords that cut across logics and resonate with multiple audiences</p> <p><b>Frame process:</b> Frame bridging through bricolage and/or multivalency</p> <p><b>Institutional process:</b> Pluralism or transformation</p>	<p>Quadrant 4</p> <p><b>Rhetorical strategy:</b> Segment audiences, use different keywords that resonant with a target audience and act as the conduit for new social understandings. Engage in contestation to spark framing contests and move audiences toward new positions</p> <p><b>Frame process:</b> Frame segmentation or framing contests</p> <p><b>Institutional process:</b> Segment audiences to centralize and control understandings. Use framing contests to transform understandings</p>

In quadrant 1, social actors' rhetorical strategy is to adopt existing keywords and vocabularies to create cultural resonance and narrative fidelity with audiences. In frame analysis, these processes are labeled frame amplification and when aimed at new and more diverse audiences are called frame extension (Benford & Snow, 2000). For example, gay and lesbian activists used the language of "good for business practice" to motivate organizational executives to adopt domestic partner benefits (Creed, Scully, & Austin, 2002). Organizational actors also extend keywords and vocabularies from one context to another to spark cultural resonance. In the emerging film industry, Jewish movie moguls used the language (e.g., movie theater, actor, actress) and symbols (e.g., building design and decoration) of the established cultural institution of Broadway theater to render their new industry and practices both understandable and legitimate with the American public (Jones, 2001).

In quadrant 2, organizational actors use keywords and vocabularies that are anchored in contradictory logics, sparking a lack of narrative fidelity and cultural resonance with some part of the audience, as well as generating contestation between groups and the potential for change within a profession or industry. When one logic replaces another, keywords and vocabularies shift over time and new practices and vocabularies emerge. For example, Thornton (2002) showed how the language shifted from sales to profits when a market logic replaced an editorial logic in publishing. Hirsh (1986) examined how vocabularies of corporate takeovers emerged to foster mutual evaluation of actors and their actions by rendering novel events or actions understandable; these vocabularies shifted over time as a deviant act became legitimate. Quadrant 2 emphasizes the replacement of one dominant logic and its accompanying vocabulary by a different logic and its vocabulary whereas quadrant 3, which focuses on bridging, highlights the co-existence of multiple logics that become the source of institutional change and new vocabularies.

In quadrant 3, social actors use frame bridging—the combining or marrying of two or more institutional logics and their keywords, which sparks dialectic tension that can be used for frame transformation (Benford & Snow, 2000; Czarniawska, 2002). This marriage of institutional logics may create institutional pluralism with hybrid identities or institutional redefinition with expanded identities. Institutional pluralism and hybrid identities are seen in the evolution of the architectural profession. Technological innovations from engineering such as steel beam supports provided cultural material to Le Corbusier, who combined the language and logics of functionalism from engineering with the aesthetics from art to transform the vocabulary and style of architecture, which initially was contested and misunderstood (Blake, 1996), but became part of the dominant functionalist or modern style that permeated European countries with large populations of architects and engineers (Guillén, 1999). This marriage of engineering and architecture has been accompanied by a shift in the language seen in hybrid identities of architect-engineer, A/E firms (architecture-engineering) and new areas of specialty such as architectural engineering. This institutional pluralism provides a basis upon which actors call and deploy multiple identities (Kraatz & Block, 2008).

Institutional redefinition occurs when previously distinct institutions and their accompanying logics are married and integrated into a new understanding of previously used terms, creating a new and expanded identity. Weber (1930/2006) in his *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* examined how Calvinism and other Puritan religions married the institutional logic of Protestant religion and its keywords of calling and proof with that of a capitalist logic and its keyword of profit, showing how the blessed are revealed in this life through their acquisition of capital and sparking the work ethic that became the engine of the industrial revolution (Giddens, 1976/2006; Swidler, 1993). In this case, social actors take existing keywords such as profit and calling, and transform them into new understandings which "incorporate ambiguous and often competing ideas" (Ghaziani & Ventresca, 2005, pp. 3–4), allowing for cultural resonance with a variety of audiences such as Christians and capitalists. Scholars have identified two redefinition strategies: bricolage and multivalency. Bricolage occurs when institutional entrepreneurs use the capitalist method of micro-financing to resolve social welfare

problems (Dorado, 2005). Multivalency occurs when actors use words that have multiple meanings to resonate with diverse audiences (McLean, 1998).<sup>2</sup> Both bricolage and multivalency are tactics that allow actors to bridge diverse audiences with their rhetoric.

In quadrant 4, organizational actors may transform institutions by engaging in institutional segmentation or institutional contestation. In segmentation, Cosimo de Medici gained power in Florence, Italy through his multivocality; his ability to speak in a culturally consonant way with distinct sectors of Florentine society who had competing understandings and social networks (Padgett & Ansell, 1993). By structurally bridging distinct societal sectors, he became the conduit of social understandings and resources, re-configuring Florentine society. In contestation, Martin Luther King, Jr. transformed American society and the status of African-Americans through passive resistance: a strategy of confrontation. He was “rebuked on his own chosen ground”—that is openly criticized by liberal white clergy for using Christianity to engage in open confrontation rather negotiation to effect change (Patton, 2004). King’s response in “Letter from Birmingham Jail” is one of the most widely known and influential pieces of rhetoric in American history. He reframed the white liberal clergy’s criticism of him to show why confrontation was both necessary and morally right in order for African-American to get to a position where they could negotiate (Patton, 2004). If social actors bring together distinct institutional sectors with different logics, then these parties engage in “framing contests,” where the lack of cultural resonance and conflict with some societal sectors is seen in their discursive struggles (e.g., abortion as the right to choose vs. the right to life, multidisciplinary practice as expertise vs. fiduciary or the morality of contestation rather than negotiation to effect changes in the law).

Although institutional theory and frame analysis both draw on and implicitly highlight keywords and how keywords combine into distinctive vocabularies, scholars have not married insights from these two theoretical perspectives to understand rhetorical strategies. In our exploratory study of architect’ rhetorical strategies, we seek to empirically ascertain whether specific keywords and distinct combinations of keywords form vocabularies that are associated with particular institutional logics, whether a dominant logic or multiple logics permeate the architectural profession and whether architect firms draw on keywords from a dominant or multiple institutional logics when framing their competencies for clients. Next, we describe our research site and methods for answering these questions.

## Research Context and Methods

### *Architectural profession and the importance of rhetorics*

Architecture is one of the fastest growing and most competitive professional fields, outstripping law in number of new entrants and growth of business (Gutman, 1988; U.S. Census, 2000). Architects specialize in creativity and aesthetic sensibilities where design skills differentiate them from others in the construction industry such as contractors, engineers, and project managers (Cohen, Wilkinson, Arnold, & Finn, 2005). Design is the profession’s pre-eminent skill which articulates its aesthetic logic and which has shaped “the way solutions were articulated to communicate purpose and disciplinary authorization *within* the profession” (Brain, 1991, p. 264). Design is central to many architect firms, shaping their competitive strategy and actions (Jones & Lichtenstein, 2000; Mintzberg, Otis, Shamsie, & Waters, 1988).

<sup>2</sup>Although McLean is the first we know of to introduce the term multivalent for words that tap into multiple audiences, he does not develop the term theoretically or as a strategy employed by writers in his study of Florentine letters.

In architecture, rhetoric, particularly the written word, has shaped the practice of architects. For example, the first century Roman architect Vitruvius' *On Architecture* is still taught in architectural schools and lays out the profession's trinity of core values: durability, convenience, and beauty (1914 translation in 1960 edition p. 17). With books, architects and architectural historians initiate and end stylistic movements such as Hitchcock's and Johnson's (1932) *The International Style: Architecture since 1922*, which marks the beginning of modern architecture whereas Venturi's (1966) *Complexity and Contradiction*, marks the end of modernism and beginning of post-Modernism. Philosophical approaches and stylistic movements are seen in the discursive struggles, which permeate the practice of architecture (Larson, 1994). These struggles are revealed in keywords and slogans such as Louis Sullivan's "Form follows Function" and Frank Lloyd Wright's revision to "Form is Function" or Mies Van der Rohe's "Less is More" and Venturi's rejoinder that "Less is a Bore" (Thornton et al., 2005). Architects hear or read words from clients about what they desire, translate these words into visual images, and then use images and words to explain their solutions to client. "In architecture, the marriage of image and word is central to the planning of spaces, to their construction, as well as to their criticism" (Cuff & Robertson, 1982, p. 8).

Although language is central to the practice of the architectural profession, few scholars have analyzed the language of architects and how they use language to frame themselves for and communicate with others (an exception is Cohen et al., 2005). We identified texts that were widely used by architects and that potentially represented different logics within the architectural profession. These texts are the "strips of activity" (Goffman, 1986) by which we analyzed architects' rhetorical strategies—their choices of keywords and combination of keywords into vocabularies of motives and competency. We used these texts to capture the cultural register—"the set of cultural elements at the collective level of the field" (Weber, 2005, p. 229). We describe these data sources next.

### *Data sources for architects' rhetorics and institutional logics*

We used three distinct data sources to capture the cultural register and ascertain whether there are different institutional logics in the profession. We focused on texts that played a role as isomorphism mechanisms—normative, mimicry, and coercive—thought to shape social actors' behavior (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

To assess a business logic and normative isomorphism, we used two business practice books taught in professional practice courses at architectural schools, published between 1988 and 1997, and had sales of 500 000 or more. These texts are: Gutman's (1988/1996) *Architectural practice: A critical view* and Pressman's (1997) *Professional Practice 101*.

To assess professional logics and tap into mimicry of exemplars in the profession, we used the text from three books of interviews with 91 of the most influential architects of the modern era and published between 1973 and 1993. These books are: Cook and Klotz's (1973) *Conversations with architects*, Heyer's (1993) *Architects on architecture: New directions in America* and Peter's (1994) *The oral history of modern architecture*. The authors used surveys of architects and citations to architects' work to identify exemplars.

To assess state logic and coercive isomorphic forces by control over key resources, the first author gathered Request for Proposals (RFPs) from a state agency that oversees public building project competitions in a Western State. Project competitions are a highly institutionalized interaction ritual that reveals how architects use rhetoric to manage the uncertainty and ambiguity involved in creative problem solving (Bielby & Bielby, 1994). They are also a key strategy for architect firms in building their reputation and extending the range of their practices (Larson, 1994; Mintzberg et al., 1988; Winch & Schneider, 1993). We provide background information on the state process, the RFPs and the

sampling data on architect firms that submitted Statement of Qualifications (SOQs) in Appendix A. We used those project competitions for which we had both the state's RFP and 30 per cent or more of the competing architect firms' responses, known as an SOQ. These SOQs capture architect firms' use of rhetoric to sell their services to clients. The SOQs are proprietary data, which the first author solicited from participating architect firms. Although SOQs are firm data, an architect—a principle-in-charge who is a partner in the firm—leads the project. A key part of our text was this partner's letter and summary of the firm's qualifications given to the state agency in which he (we had no letters from female principles in these data) frames for the state agency's project leader and selection committee why the committee should chose his firm. This resulted in 27 state RFPs and 169 architect firm letters and firm summary statements in the SOQs during 1993–1995.

### *Research methods*

Our data are treated as a cross-sectional comparison during a specified time period of the 1990s. Through architects' word choice, we seek to reveal their rhetorical strategies. We used a multi-step process.

In our first step, we identified the words used in the corpus of texts that reflected a logic: business, profession, and state. Following Bonta (1996) and other scholars (Loewenstein & Ocasio, 2006), we initially relied upon indexes from books. However, we found that those indexes were not very reliable for two reasons: (1) they tended to mix categories and words and (2) keywords were often absent. For example, design as a keyword did not appear in any of the three book indexes of interviews with exemplary architects, yet it was the tenth most frequently used word in these books. Thus, we used a mixture of methods. In the business practice books, we used the concordances, text statistics (e.g., total number of words in the book), and search functions (e.g., search inside this book) in amazon.com. For professional texts, we could not find softcopy format of these books available on the world wide web. We used a random number generator to identify 10 per cent of the pages of each book. We scanned the pages, translated these to text files and used the Word Cruncher function in AtlasTI to build a matrix of the word frequency for each source. For the RFPs, we scanned the submittal requirements, project descriptions, and evaluation criteria—all of which are contained in an RFP disseminated to interested architectural firms. We used the Word Cruncher function in AtlasTI to identify the words in each RFP. For the SOQs, we scanned the lead partner's introductory letter and firm summary statement from the SOQ. The second author used computer programming to identify and count the word frequencies in the SOQs texts.

In our second step, we sorted and standardized keywords across texts using the following procedures. For business practice and professional exemplar texts, a keyword had to occur in all texts since we had only two and three texts per logic source. For the state texts, we required occurrence in at least 67 per cent of the RFP project descriptions. Thus, we corrected for frequent usage of a word within only a single text (Savicky & Hlavacova, 2002). One of the drawbacks of using frequency counts is variance in text length. To assure that our measure accurately mapped the relative dominance of a given word, we divided the raw frequency count by a count of the total number of words in a given text to create a ratio. For the randomly sampled pages of professional exemplars, we used the word counts on each page to create ratios for keywords.

Our initial analysis of word occurrence in logic texts yielded the top 100 words from business practice logic, over 5000 words from professional exemplars logic and 2500 words in the state bureaucratic logic. We combined words into their common stems (e.g., design, designer, designing, designs) to identify distinct words. Next, we used scree plots to identify shifts in word usage and which keywords from the corpus of texts should be retained for quantitative analysis in MDS. This resulted in

13 keywords in business practice, 16 in professional exemplars, and 14 in state bureaucrat logics. Our assumption, often used in content analysis, is that frequency “indicates the importance of, attention to, or emphasis on that symbol, idea, references, or topic in messages” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 59).

One possible drawback of analysis of relative frequency of words is the use of synonyms. To ensure that we did not misrepresent the firms’ rhetorical strategies, we analyzed three dictionaries for synonyms of our set of 30 distinct words representing our three institutional logics (i.e., business, profession, and state). We used the Oxford English dictionary, American Heritage dictionary, and the dictionary in Word computer program to identify synonyms. Only 10 synonyms appeared in more than two dictionary sources. We then checked the standardized frequency of these words in our SOQs to assess their use by firms. Our results show that the usage of these 10 synonyms was extremely low by firms in their SOQs: less than 0.00003, once in a million words and had very small standard deviations across texts. In contrast, our inductive, empirically based method for identifying keywords revealed naturally occurring synonyms such as building, facility, and center.

We operationalized unique versus shared keywords by using a ratio of occurrence: the ratio of the keyword divided by the average ratio within a logic. Keywords that had ratios greater than one occurred more often than average within that logic. When a word occurred more frequently than average within only one logic, we coded it as a unique word for a logic. When a keyword had ratios greater than one across two or more logics, we coded it as a shared word. This strategy allowed us to identify keywords that were multivalent—bridging distinct logics—and keywords that were uniquely associated with a particular logic.

In our third step we used MDS, “one of the oldest and most widely used methods for mapping out the relational systems of differences in the measurement of meaning” (Mohr, 1998, p. 356), to assess empirically whether patterns of most frequently used words within these texts captured and revealed distinct institutional logics. In MDS, items that are closer together in space are more similar in their usage whereas items that are distant in space are less similar in their usage. Thus, MDS maps the similarity and differences in usage of keywords across these texts, allowing us to identify which words combine into and form a coherent cluster, revealing a vocabulary that underpins a logic, or rhetorical strategies used by most architect firms of our results section. These clusters of keywords identify meaning because they co-occurred within a corpus of texts and “meanings do not reside in words but rather in how words relate to their linguistic environment—that is how words relate to other words” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 290).

Specifically, our data format is a two mode matrix with keywords in rows, the columns of the MDS containing the three logics—business, profession, and state—and the cells the ratio of a keyword’s usage within those texts representing an institutional logic. We transformed the matrix into a square matrix of words in order to run MDS on it. For our institutional logic words, since only 6 per cent of the cells in the matrix were zeros, we used a similarity matrix based on correlations among keywords. The matrix was standardized by columns (i.e., within logic) prior to analysis to allow for identification of salient words within a logic. We ran MDS on UCINET using the non-metric option (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002). The presence and absence of relationships of words within and across logics clarifies the boundaries of a logic because the co-occurrence of words within a corpus of texts indicates the “strength of associations between concepts in the minds of the members of a population” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 59).

For our SOQ data 32.5 per cent of our frequency matrix cells were zero. Thus, we assessed the similarities in standardized frequencies by using the Jaccard coefficient algorithm designed to overcome inflation of similarities coefficient due to inclusion of “0” matches (Knoke, 2003; Simmen, 1996). In essence, architect firms used only a few words from the cultural register frequently such as design, building, and project. The Jaccard method revealed the frequency of word usage as a key dimension in the MDS as well as how the shared words were central to architect firms’ rhetorical

strategies. To assess whether architect firms drew on a dominant logic or used multiple logics when they framed their competencies for clients, we ran an MDS with the keywords in the rows, the 169 architect firms' SOQs in the columns and the ratio of keyword usage in the cell. We also transformed this SOQ by word matrix into a word by word matrix as required to run MDS analysis.

To visually represent the different patterns of the three logics, we used NetDraw visualization software. We used the graph layout algorithms (GLAs) to effectively convey specific characteristics of the data (DeJordy, Borgatti, Rousin, & Halgin, 2007). The software also allowed us to attach a logic attribute to each word to identify the convergence and divergence of keywords across different logics and which keywords were combined into a coherent pattern that underpins a logic or rhetorical strategy. Next, we present the results of our data analyses.

## Results: Institutional Logics and Rhetorical Strategies

We identify the keywords from each corpus of texts, show how these keywords reveal institutional logics and then examine whether practicing architects mix and match or operate out of a dominant logic in their rhetorical strategies when competing for projects.

### *Identifying keywords to reveal logics*

Table 2 summarizes the results of our keyword identification across the various texts. The first column of business practice shows 13 keywords typically associated with a business focus such as firm, project, client, practice, and service. Interestingly, professional appears as a keyword in business practice texts but not the professional exemplar texts. The second column captures 16 keywords of professional exemplars such as architecture, space, structure, build, design, new, people, great, and form. The third column identifies 14 keywords used by the state agency in their RFPs, which described services needed for a project: facility, statement, qualification, construction, program, submit, and experience. We identified 30 distinct keywords—18 unique and 12 shared keywords. Unique keywords occurred more than average in frequency in a single logic. Only one keyword—building—was shared across all three logics.

The fourth column identifies the words from competing architect firms' SOQs that were not identified as keywords in the cultural register of the three logics. Only two words were added to the analysis: [state in which the project competitions occurred] and center. We added these words in our analysis of practitioner language in their SOQs.

We used MDS on the keywords elicited from the texts associated with institutional logics—business practice, professional exemplars, and state bureaucrats—to reveal the pattern among keywords and discover whether language in the architectural profession shared a dominant logic or resided in distinct language communities. We then used MDS to identify how practitioners used this cultural toolkit in their persuasion attempts with clients

### *Institutional logics: a dominant logic or multiple logics in the architecture profession?*

Figure 1 shows the MDS of keywords from texts in the cultural register using the cultural toolkit by mixing and matching logics. The resulting graph had a very low stress level (.000), indicating that our plots are valid and accurate representations of the raw data analyzed. In MDS, when words occur in a

Table 2. Keywords—sources, data, and keywords

Logics	Business practice	Professional exemplars	State bureaucrats	Practitioners
<b>Texts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gutman (982 194 sales)</li> <li>• Pressman (607 454 sales)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cook &amp; Klotz' conversations w/architects</li> <li>• Heyer's architects on architecture</li> <li>• Peter's oral history of modern architecture</li> </ul> <p>Interviews with 91 exemplary architects (survey &amp; citations)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Bldg agency's Requests for Proposals (RFP's, bldg project scope &amp; services; evaluation criteria) 1993–1995</li> </ul> <p>27 state RFPs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Architect firms' Statements of Qualifications (SOQs)</li> </ul> <p>169 SOQs of 30 architect firms</p>
<b>Words</b>	<p>High sales &amp; teach practice course in architectural school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avg text: 87 812 words per book</li> <li>• Std Dev.: 64 637</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avg text: 39 293 words sampled per text</li> <li>• Std Dev.: 1216</li> </ul>	<p>Avg text = 805 words per RFP</p> <p>Std Dev. = 328 words</p>	<p>Avg text = 924 words per SOQ</p> <p>Std Dev. = 641 words</p>
<b>Keywords</b>	<p><b>Word freq ratio</b></p> <p><i>Architect</i> .0093</p> <p><i>Architecture</i> .0075</p> <p><i>Firm</i> .0068</p> <p><b>Building</b> .0065</p> <p>Profession .0061</p> <p><i>Design</i> .0057</p> <p><b>Project</b> .0042</p> <p>Client .0041</p> <p>Practice .0036</p> <p><b>Services</b> .0034</p> <p><i>Work</i> .0034</p> <p><b>Office</b> .0030</p> <p><b>Construction</b> .0027</p> <p>N = 13</p>	<p><b>Word freq ratio</b></p> <p><b>Building</b> .0083</p> <p><i>Architecture</i> .0063</p> <p><i>Firm</i> .0033</p> <p><i>Space</i> .0028</p> <p>Structure .0028</p> <p>Use .0026</p> <p><i>Work</i> .0026</p> <p>House .0025</p> <p>Build .0030</p> <p><i>Architect</i> .0022</p> <p><i>Design</i> .0022</p> <p>Great .0021</p> <p>People .0020</p> <p>New .0019</p> <p>Time .0019</p> <p>Form .0018</p> <p>N = 16</p>	<p><b>Word freq ratio</b></p> <p><b>Project</b> .0178</p> <p><b>Building</b> .0087</p> <p><b>Firm</b> .0086</p> <p>Facility .0086</p> <p>Statement .0073</p> <p>Qualification .0072</p> <p><b>Construction</b> .0070</p> <p>Program .0069</p> <p>Submit .0065</p> <p>Experience .0064</p> <p><b>Service</b> .0054</p> <p><b>Office</b> .0050</p> <p>Space .0049</p> <p>Room .0048</p> <p>N = 14</p>	<p>[State] .0110</p> <p>Center .0077</p> <p>N = 2</p>

**Bold and underlined:** the word is shared by all three logics.

**Bolded:** the word is shared by business and state logics.

*Italicized:* the word is shared by profession and business logics.

**Shadow:** the word is shared by state and profession logics.

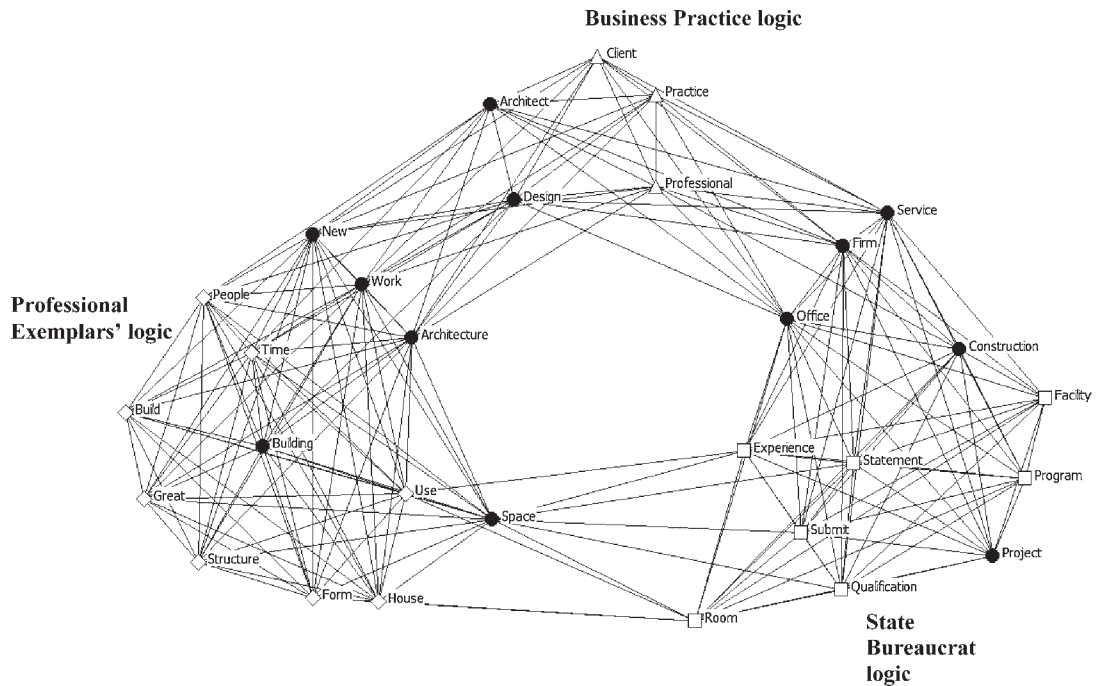


Figure 1. Revealing institutional logics through patterns of keywords.  $\triangle$  = Business,  $\blacklozenge$  = Profession,  $\square$  = State,  $\bullet$  = multivalent keyword

set of texts with similar frequencies, they are shown in closer proximity to one another. Thus, words that cluster together captured a distinct institutional logic and revealed a vocabulary associated with that logic. MDS also reveals key dimensions that underlie the data. In Figure 1, the horizontal dimension, from left to right, captured the two core values in architecture— aesthetics associated with the profession and captured by key terms of great, structure, form, time— whereas the right dimension highlights the functionality of a building captured by key terms program, facility, project. The vertical dimension at the top reveals a focus on people (client, architect, professional) versus a focus on the building as artefact (room, structure, space, form, program).

We coded the unique words in each logic by a symbol— diamond for profession, square for state, and triangle for business— and shared words with a black circle. The unique keywords in each cluster, particularly the most frequently occurring unique words, direct our attention to what actors in that logic attended to as most important and central in defining themselves as architects. In this way, unique keywords created what Burke (1989) calls a “terministic screen,” where keywords channel our attention and also anchor other words, guiding our interpretation and understanding of the vocabulary or cluster of words.

Three logics are revealed in Figure 1: business practice, professional exemplars, and state bureaucrats which reside at the edges of the graph because they are most dissimilar from one another. With professional exemplars, on the left edge of the page, the unique words build, great, structure and people direct our attention to how exemplary architects focus on great buildings that create a particular environment for people. In business practice logic at the top of the page, professional, client, and practice were the most frequently occurring unique keywords (see Table 2), directing our attention to the importance of the architect as a professional whose practice is shaped around the client. With state bureaucrats, who

were also trained architects, several unique keywords appeared frequently such as facility, qualification, program, and project, depicting a building not as an architectural artefact, as by the professional exemplars, but rather as a utilitarian facility to be used by occupants and managed for the public.

Unique keywords differentiated each group of architects: business practitioners focused on the client, professional exemplars focused on the means for creating great architecture, and state bureaucrats focused on the management and construction of public facilities. These vocabularies of unique keywords focused attention to different aspects of buildings and the profession; they reflected and were derived from distinct institutional logics of business, profession, and state. These three groups of architects also shared keywords that bind them together as a profession. Space connects professional exemplars and state bureaucrats whereas office, firm, service, and construction link state bureaucrats with business practitioners. Finally, architect, design, new, work, and architecture bind everyday practitioners to their exemplary brethren.

To illustrate how architects, who were anchored in different institutional logics, employed distinct vocabularies of motives and competency, we use quotes from the texts. We used the following selection criteria: (1) the shared keyword of “building,” which occurred across all three groups, (2) the unique keywords that anchored each logic, and (3) the shared keywords that bridged two logics such as “architect,” “architecture,” “design,” and “work” do for business and profession, “space” for profession and state, and “firm” and “service” for state and business. We bolded unique keywords whereas shared keywords were italicized and bolded. In the following business quotes, the architect’s focus of attention was on servicing the client and the goal was to develop his or her architectural practice.

“...**clients** are looking for *services* that had not formerly been identified as specific skills of the *architect*. These include maintenance cost estimates, post-occupancy evaluation, and *building* diagnostics, plus two subjects that have become major preoccupations of **clients**: interior *architecture* and *space* planning, and ‘facade *architecture*’ or ‘imageability.’” (Gutman, 1996, p. 11)

“The purpose of having a **structure** or organization—a **firm** for the **practice** of *architecture*—no matter what size, is to support the execution of **projects** while ensuring the **firm**’s own long-term health. How the **firm** is **structured** will depend upon the personality and goals of the principals, and the nature of the **clients**. Specific management of **projects** should be suggested by the character of the **projects** themselves. For example, small versus large **projects** implies two different methodologies; similarly different *building* and **client** types (i.e., public or private sector) will require a different focus on *design*, documentation, and *service* delivery.” (Pressman, 1997, p. 77)

In the above examples, space was an analytic process of mapping out how architects helped clients fit their activities effectively and efficiently into a building. Structure referred to the firm rather than to a building. In contrast, exemplary professionals structure refers to the building not the firm. In addition, they did not serve but rather transcended client demands and used space to create great “architecture.”

“an *architect*, when he gets a **program** from a **client**, should begin...right from the start to say, ‘What is the nature of this institution?’ His first duty is this. He must take all the areas which are given to him by the **client** and translate them into *spaces*. The **client** knows only about areas. Then he must take all the corridors that a **client** has in his mind and change them into galleries because corridors only lead you to places for lockers and return air ducts. That’s all it gives you. But a gallery, which probably has natural light, may even reach higher and above all other functioning areas because natural light is the only way you can distinguish *space* from an area.” (Interview with Louis Kahn in Peter, 1994, p. 217).

“*Architecture* is something more than the art of a good *building* and good **construction**. *Architecture* is also more than logical organization of the *spaces* which are required by a *building*

**program**. However, much one may aim at the straightforward solution of the demands of the **program**, there are always various possibilities for the *architect*. This means that function, however important an aspect of *architecture* it may be, is likewise not the determining factor. What causes *architecture* to rise to an art above **construction** and above **spatial** organization? In my opinion, it is this: Just as the human mind derives beauty from reason and sound in poetry and music, it also recognizes in proportions of *spaces* in *architecture*. **Building** only becomes art when it made sublime by beautiful and harmonious *space* proportions which ingeniously express the character and cultural significance of a *building*. *Architectural* art has really one means, proportion, the proportion of *spaces* and *building* masses in both form and color.” (Interview with Richard Neutra in Peter, 1994, p. 63)

“One becomes conscious that there are many ways to organize a *building*; that **structure** is not an end, nor a beginning, but a means to an end—and that end is to create *space* that is an appropriate psychological environment.” (Interview with Paul Rudolph in Heyer, 1993, pp. 296–297)

In the quotes from professional exemplars of Kahn, Neutra, and Rudolph, “space” was the means by which an “architect” transformed a “building” into great architecture. We now contrast exemplary architects with state bureaucrats, who were also architects. For state bureaucrats, “space” was to be managed to gain functionality—the effective and efficient use of a “building” or “facility,” for the occupants and public. “Space” referred to what Kahn above calls areas.

“Early studies of [name of building] explored the possibility of constructing a small concert hall utilizing the large ballroom *space* in the center of the *building* (room 200). The *design* for the **facility**, however, required the removal of a significant amount of valuable *office* and practice room *space* from the lower levels of the *building* to accommodate the sloping floor and removal of the existing floor which could seriously jeopardize the *building*’s **structural** integrity.” (From State RFP)

The information provided herein is intended to assist prospective consultants in the preparation of proposals necessary to properly respond to this **Statements of Qualifications** . . . The successful *firm* will be required to do the following:

Provide total consulting *services* to adequately meet the needs of the [name of building] center and the [name of agency].

Prepare a planning **program** document and detailed cost estimate for the **project** to determine the following:

Types of *practice*, numbers of physicians and allied care providers, staffing requirements, patient encounters, hours of operation, equipment requirement, and **projected** future changes in utilization and resource needs.

*Space* requirements by user, functional relationships and desired adjacencies. Information must be tabulated by number and type of *spaces*, their sizes, number of occupants, related furnishings and equipment, and general environment. (From State RFP)

This analysis showed how architects, who are professional exemplars, state bureaucrats, and practice professors, combined unique and shared keywords into distinct vocabularies of competency, which were based on different institutional logics. The words for these vocabularies were derived from the widely available cultural material of the profession. Thus, these words and distinct vocabularies were the cultural material available to architect firms for their rhetorical strategies to persuade clients of who they were and what they could do. Next, we examine the proprietary data of practicing architect



The frequency dimension captured the primary focus of the practitioners rhetorical strategy: buildings and services for the state (build, building, center, state, program, service, facility), which anchored the left side of the graph. In contrast, the right side of the graph captured exemplary architects focus on designing great buildings through structure and form for people and clients' use; it was rarely used as a rhetorical strategy by practitioners. The vertical dimension at the top was also a less used strategy that highlighted a focus on the building as work (work, house, new, build, structure) whereas the bottom, a more frequently used strategy as seen by the black and gray nodes, highlighted the client–architect interface (design, client, use, architect, experience, service, facility).

The six words at the bottom—design, experience, facility, service, architect, and use—anchored the architect firms' rhetorical strategy and reflected the fundamental concepts of the firms' competency framing: who would do the task (the architect providing a service), the task object (a facility for public use), and skill to do the task (design, experience). To illustrate how architecture firms deployed keywords strategically to create vocabularies of motives and competency, we used quotes from the SOQs texts. We bolded unique keywords, italicized shared words, and underlined the most frequent words of design, building, and project.

“The **programming** team realizes the importance of the utility systems and of flexibility in laboratory *design*. At the same time, the laboratories are occupied by **people** and should be *designed* to suit their requirements. Our team goal is to produce a lab *design* that is a balance between these three elements. The *design* should be an easy-to-work in *space* with a bright environment, with utility *services* that function properly and which are easily accessible for maintenance, and with an overall scheme of casework, finishes, and *services* that are easily modified meet the needs of the current and future **users**.” (From GGG architect firm's SOQ)

“Dear Selection Committee, CCC is pleased to submit our **qualification** and this proposal to [State agency] and XXX County and State Parks & Recreation to provide *architectural design services* for the XXX Clubhouse Remodel. We are pleased to offer the combined talents of the most **qualified professional** team to provide *services* for this *project*. CCC *Architects* has the knowledge and desire to provide the *design services* requested for the development of the clubhouse remodel.” (From CCC architect firm's SOQ for a remodel project)

“We bring our talents and expertise to every *project* we do. We start with assembling the best team of experts within our *firm* together with outstanding consultants with whom we have previous **experience**. This team is assembled under the direction of our principal *architect*. *Unique in our approach to solving design and management issues is the continuity of our design team*. The team we start with is the team we finish with, our team stays with the *project*. The **client** and **user** groups are also part of our team. The continuity of the team and **client** involvement are essential for a successful *project*.”

(From SOQ of ABC firm—the underlined sentence was italicized in the original submittal).

These quotes highlight how practitioners drew upon design as a keyword that historically has defined the profession—even though the vast majority of projects were for analytic services such as masterplanning, feasibility studies, and programs, which did not demand design. Thus, they were legitimating their firm and skills through a widely accepted and understood key term within the profession: design. The above quotes also illustrate how architect firms strategically mixed unique words from different logics while simultaneously anchoring their rhetoric in shared words of space, design, and services to reveal their motives and competency. For example, quote 1 from GGG firm highlights its connection to professional exemplars through words such as people and use, which is

coupled with its focus on the state with the keyword of programming: the service demanded by the state for this project. These keywords were planted amidst shared words of design, space, work, and services. The combination of unique and shared words revealed its vocabulary of motives and competency: a firm that uses its design skills to serve people and create buildings adaptive to changing user needs. In quote 2 from CCC firm, the firm focused on state unique words of qualification and qualified, as well as a business practice concern with being professional. The combination of unique and shared words illuminates a rhetorical strategy as qualified professionals who desire the design project. In quote 3, ABC firm mixed unique words from the state (experience) with those of the profession (user) and business practice (client) and anchored them in shared words of design, architect, and project. In doing so, they revealed their vocabulary of competency and motives as one of professional competency, who not only provided continuity in its team but also as engaged the client as invaluable to the project's success.

Our analyses identified keywords. By analyzing widely available texts within the architectural profession, we identified three distinct word clusters representing distinct logics: business practice, professional exemplars, and state bureaucracy, which defined the cultural toolkit available for competing architect firms. Our analysis also identified shared words that bridged logics. Architects usage of keywords revealed their multivalence: distinct groups of architects had different meanings for the same word such as space. Next, we explored how architect firms used the keywords from the cultural toolkit for their rhetorical strategies when competing for client projects. Their rhetorical strategy was to avoid framing themselves in a single institutional logic instead mixing and matching keywords from different logics, to anchor themselves in shared words that resonated with multiple audiences, and to use the combination of mixed unique and shared words to highlight and frame their competencies for clients. In the following section, we discuss these results, our contributions to theory and offer directions for future research.

## Discussion and Conclusion

We sought to understand what keywords were available in the cultural register, whether they formed a coherent vocabulary and revealed distinct institutional logics. By identifying keywords from widely used texts and mapping these keywords with MDS, we captured three clusters of keywords that formed distinct vocabularies and reflected different institutional logics: business, profession, and state. Although these texts are written by architects,<sup>3</sup> they used words and vocabularies of the profession differently depending on the role they play within the profession. Each group tapped into an institutional logic that focused our attention in distinct competencies: servicing clients, building great architecture, or programming facilities. In this way, the unique words were “terministic screens” in Burke’s language, guiding what architects attend to and see as central to their competencies and the profession. Yet, architects also shared keywords such as building and design, which binds all architects together in their focus on their primary artefact and product as well as the primary skill to create that artefact.

We also sought to understand how practicing architect firms deployed the words and vocabularies available to them from the cultural toolkit when they framed their competencies and motives for clients. Our study revealed that practicing architects highlighted six keywords: building, build, [state], program, facility design, and project. They shared a common set of rhetorical strategies: avoid framing

<sup>3</sup>Gutman is the only one who is not an architect, he teaches architect practice at Princeton School of Architecture

one's firm in a single institutional logic which restricts the competencies which the firm can claim, anchor the firm in shared words that resonate with multiple audiences and expand the firm's perceived competencies by pragmatically mixing and matching unique and shared words to persuade clients that the firm can solve its problems.

Our study makes several contributions to extant theory. One contribution is extending our understanding of professions and PSFs through Williams' concept of keyword and Burke's method of focusing on an array of terms to provide meaning. We reveal how a profession is not homogenous, but rather composed of multiple roles such as government bureaucrat, business person, and standard setter, even though each of these were played by architects. PSFs reside at the intersection of multiple logics; they are trained in professional schools, compete for and service clients in a market, and are regulated by the state through building codes and professional conduct requirements. They reveal the multifaceted nature of professions and the interplay among logics within a profession. Professions may be more diverse and pluralistic than has been previously acknowledged in the literature. Future studies may examine how multiple logics and their interplay may drive dynamics within professions and professional services.

A second contribution is illuminating the institutional rules of the game that PSFs play and abide by when framing their competencies for clients. Institutional logics provide the rules that structure vocabularies; actors use these rules to frame and make their activities meaningful to others. By examining the keywords and vocabularies by which PSFs highlight and deploy accepted social categories to legitimate their actions and motives, we reveal the meaning within an institutional logic and the interplay among logics. The benefit of such an approach and methodology is that it reveals concisely a logic by the pattern of relations among keywords. Our results showed that some architects (e.g., competing architect firms) combined cultural resources pragmatically as predicted by scholars (e.g., Fine, 1996; Swidler, 1986; Weber, 2005) whereas other architects (government bureaucrats, standard setters, practice professors) operated out of a dominant logic as predicted by those who emphasize the contradictory nature of institutional logics (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton, 2004). In addition, our results highlight how government agencies—through holding the ability to prescribe and proscribe behavior (Hinings & Greenwood, 1988)—appeared to compete with other institutional sources of authority such as the profession and market as seen in how state keywords were mixed with professional exemplar and practice keywords by architect firms even when competing for state projects. By identifying keywords and mapping their relationship in multidimensional space, scholars reveal the cultural meaning that underpins institutional logics.

A third contribution is our extension of frame alignment processes to spark message resonance. By using multivalent words, social actors gain flexibility and enhance their ability to "bind" together multiple audiences. As Williams (1983) notes binding an audience and resilience are the functions of a keyword. We explored different forms of resonance such as how architect firms used multivalent keywords that allowed them to appeal to diverse interests within the profession and position themselves broadly in their competencies whereas exemplary architects and government bureaucrats used unique or terministic keywords that restricted our focus to a specific set of competencies and problems. In this sense, our study explored frame amplification through terministic screens or unique keywords and frame extension and bridging through shared, multivalent keywords. Thus, we explored quadrants 1 and 3 of the rhetorical strategies framework we offered in Table 1. An important avenue for future studies will be to examine rhetorical strategies that results from frame alignment or misalignment and institutional logics in longitudinal studies, allowing scholars to assess dynamics of and change in rhetorical strategies.

A fourth contribution is to understanding rhetorics and rhetorical strategies by providing an alternative way to identify keywords and reveal vocabularies through the relations among keywords. Instead of identifying keywords *à priori* and tracing how their usage changes over time, we used an

inductive and empirical approach, allowing the usage patterns of various social actors to identify which words were most salient to them. In this way, we revealed how some keywords such as building are universal in their meaning whereas other keywords such as space and design have multivalent meanings depending on the words associated with it. For example, design was associated with structure, form, and function for professional exemplars whereas it was associated with service, project, and client for business practice professors, who are most often architect practitioners. By using an inductive approach, we captured this difference in keyword usage, which would not have been possible if we had identified keywords or categories *á priori*. In addition, we moved from the notion of a keyword as a single word to how a keyword relates to other keywords, forming a pattern of relations among keywords. Williams (1983, p. 25) bemoaned the lack of such an approach: "I have often wished that some form of presentation could be devised in which it would be clear that the analysis of particular words are intrinsically connected, sometimes in complex ways." This approach is what Burke (1989) advocated: a methodical focus on the relations among terms. By identifying keywords available in the cultural register and using MDS, we provided a methodology to address Williams' concern and enact Burke's methodology, revealing the pattern between structure and meaning (Mohr, 1998). Although we used a cross-sectional rather than historical analysis, we believe that our approach complements the deductive and historical approach often used with keywords.

Our study has several limitations. First, the importance of a keyword may not always be revealed by its frequency. For example, team was a frequently used keyword for architect firms in their rhetorical strategy to win state projects from multiple client organizations. The word, however, was not frequently used by the state, but required in the state process: each architectural firm had to identify which professionals within the firm and also their engineering consulting firms were to be used on the project. Thus, some keywords may be weighted differentially than other keywords by an audience and finding such weights and values is a challenging but important task (Mohr, 1998). A second limitation is that other symbolic material besides words such as images may be important in firms' strategies when persuading clients and provides an avenue for future research. Architecture has a visual language and vocabulary that we did not capture. A third limitation mentioned earlier is the cross-sectional nature of our study, which inhibited our ability to examine how rhetoric changed over time.

There are several directions for future research based on our results. First, scholars may wish to pursue how visual and rhetorical skills and the translation between them shape persuasion techniques. For example, does a building style, represented by the firm in their SOQ, persuade clients, who are trained as architects, more than their words do? Do clients recognize and implicitly align with some styles rather than others? This requires experts—architects trained in decoding visual images—to examine, code, and rate the accompanying schematics and pictures in SOQs. This type of research project may provide insight to both scholars in areas of impression management, reputation building, organizational identity as well as to practitioners who seek to be more effective in their persuasion techniques. Scholarly research on symbolic management is in its nascent phase (Pratt & Rafaeli, 2001) and research comparing the persuasive effects of different forms of symbols may help to advance theory and practice.

A second study is to examine the effectiveness of architect firms' rhetorical strategies on clients. Which strategies are more successful: those that reside in one institutional logic, those that mix and match unique words from institutional logics or those that deploy multivalent words shared by logics? The current study focused on identifying the most prevalent or typical strategies among architect firms. Thus, it revealed that in general architect firms rarely emphasized only one keyword. Rather they tended to mix and match keywords and logics in framing themselves for clients. However, it was beyond the scope of the current study to link specific strategies with outcomes to competing architect firms. Future research can tease out the effectiveness of distinct strategies for PSFs when they seek resources from key constituents.

In conclusion, institutional theory and frame analysis both draw on and implicitly highlight keywords and how keywords combine into distinctive vocabularies; yet, scholars have not married insights from these two theoretical perspectives to understand rhetorical strategies. By examining PSFs' rhetoric—their keywords and vocabularies—we illuminated the complementary relationships among rhetoric, frame analysis, and institutional logics. Neoinstitutional theory has placed actor's agency and strategies into the background, although implicitly recognizing agency and strategy in such concepts as decoupling (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) and imitation of exemplars (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Frame analysis focuses on actors' strategies and agency, but has placed the social institutions and logics upon which actors draw for their cultural material into the background. By combining these two perspectives, we provide a balanced view of actors, such as architects, within their social context: how social institutions guide but do not determine actions and how actors draw upon cultural materials strategically. In doing so, our study contributed to an important but understudied arena: how PSFs' rhetorical strategies draw upon institutional logics when framing their competencies and motives for clients.

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## Appendix A: State Project Competitions

Project competitions, particularly public projects, use a rationalized decision protocol first established by the U.S. government's General Service Administration. The competitive proposal process starts when a government agency releases a RFP, outlining the project goals, scope, and estimated budget. Architect firms respond by submitting an SOQ, which outlines their qualifications for the project, competing on experience, rather than bids, which compete on price. Fees for services are negotiated after the project is awarded to an architect firm. Thus, architect firms submit proposals rather than bids.

The clients for public building projects are federal, state, city, and county governments. These government agencies are staffed with trained architects who oversee the hiring and services provided by architect firms and are the “client of choice” for architects because public buildings have more visible projects and larger construction budgets, which generate more publicity and firm revenue.<sup>4</sup> Government agencies are more predictable in their reimbursement for services (e.g., rarely file for bankruptcy unlike real estate developers) (Larson, 1993, p. 124). Revenues from government agencies accounts for 26 per cent of architect firms total revenue (AIA, 2003); thus, public buildings are a significant income source.

In our study, state projects with estimated budgets of over \$500 000 triggered a competitive proposal process, which starts when the state agency releases a RFP, outlining the project scope and estimated budget. The state agency requested services of masterplanning, feasibility studies, programming, and design for state projects. The Associate Director of the state agency advised us to eliminate construction projects as state law requires selection by the low cost bid alone rather than expertise and is led by a construction rather than architect firm. All architect firms’ responses to RFPS, called SOQ, were reviewed and evaluated by a client selection committee of licensed architects from the state agency, the end user group (e.g., university campus or prison facilities planning), and the regulatory building board. The population of 29 project competitions involved 35 agencies (e.g., corrections, human services, transportation, various universities, administration, etc.) and 110 different selection committee members.

Architect firms’ SOQs consisted of: (1) an introductory letter and summary statement for, (2) specific project experiences that qualify the architect firm for the project; (3) resumes for all professionals proposed for the project, and (4) firm capacity including number of employees and licensed professionals. We use data from Section 1 of the SOQ.

The population of project competitions during 1993–1995 was 29 with 282 SOQ by 49 architect firms. Since we have the evaluation scores from the interorganizational client committee for 275 of the 282 SOQs for 28 projects, we compared how clients perceived firms for whom we had SOQ data ( $N = 180$ ) to those whom we did not ( $N = 95$ , mean = 172.21). Clients rated those firms for whom we had SOQs higher than those for whom we did not (mean = 172.21 vs. 134.86,  $F = 0.5329$ ,  $p = 0.0004$ ). The firms for whom we had SOQs were more established and repeated players in the market for architectural services, which is why we could collect data from them. We had 90 per cent of the SOQs from architect firms that repeatedly played in the market. Most management studies of firms include only those stable firms rather than fleeting members of a market. In fact, most studies do not even capture the high number of fleeting firms. Thus, we believe that this has minimal impact on our analyses of and inferences from the data.

The average architect firm size in our sample was 23 employees, which is typical for the U.S. where two-thirds of architect firms range in size from 2 to 49 employees (AIA, 2003).

<sup>4</sup>Since the late 1800s, architects fees have been based on a 5 per cent of building costs (Woods, 1999).