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**WEBINAR:**  
FROM RESEARCH TO  
PUBLICATION:  
THE IMPORTANCE OF  
POSITIONING

**July 16, 2020**

**6.00 PM CET**

Registration required

# Agenda

- **Positioning: what does it actually mean?**
- **How to “position” your research: Some practical tips**
  - Research design
  - Manuscript crafting
  - Leveraging the review process

Positioning your research: what does it actually mean?

# When initiating a new project, where do start from?

## The author's perspective

- **The phenomenon:** *"Nobody has written about that..."*
- **The target journal:** *"Look at that Special Issue..."*
- **The open question:** *"I wonder if..."*
- **The team:** *"We should write a paper together..."*
- **The problem/dilemma/paradox:** *"How is it possible that..."*
- **The supervisor:** *"You should study this..."*

# When initiating a new project, where do start from?

## The author's perspective

### Challenges:

- **The phenomenon:** *"Nobody has written about that..."* *Interesting, but so what?*
- **The target journal:** *"Look at that Special Issue..."* *Narrow focus, what if unsuccessful?*
- **The open question:** *"I wonder if..."* *Lack concreteness*
- **The team:** *"We should write a paper together..."* *Fighting around the focus*
- **The problem/dilemma/paradox:** *"How is it possible that..."* *Is it really a paradox?*
- **The supervisor:** *"You should study this..."* *What if (s)he is wrong?*

# Why papers get published: The Editors' perspective

**AMJ Board Members' Reasons for Rating an Article as "Most Interesting"**

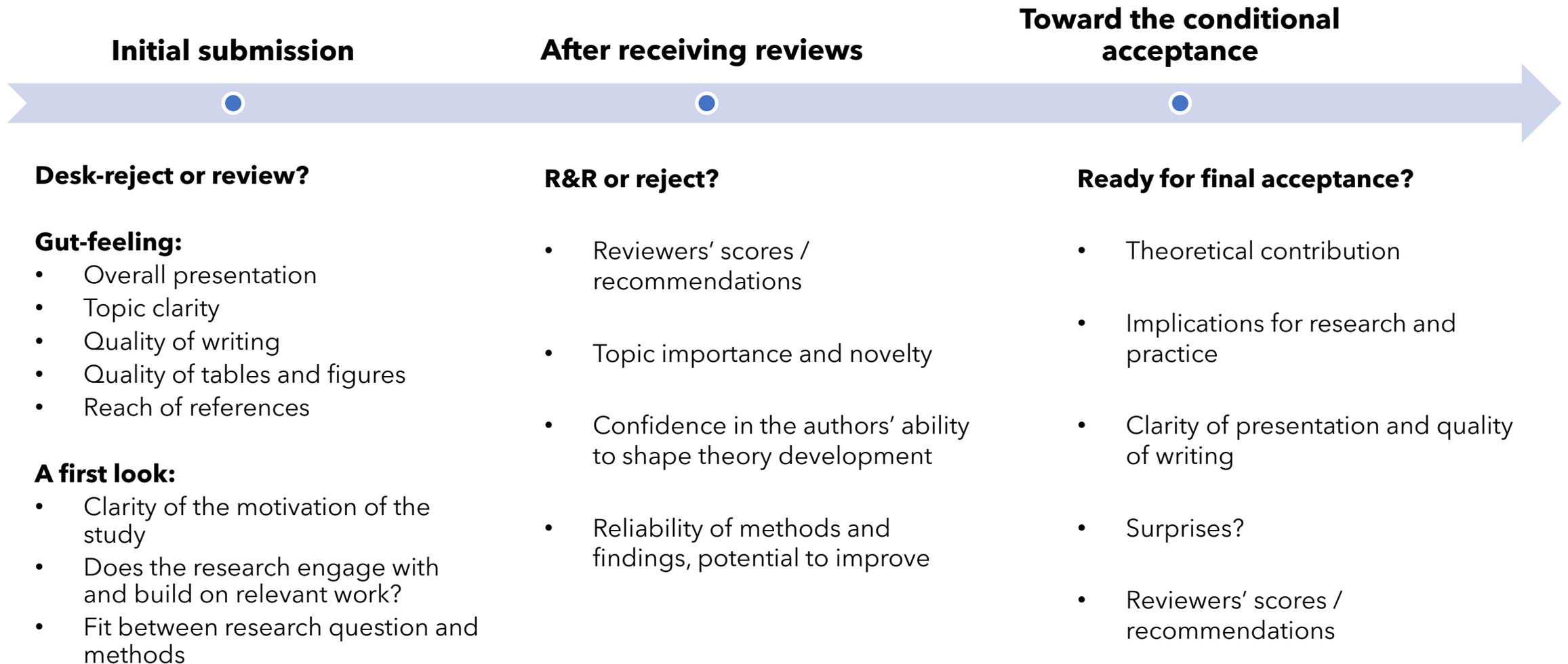
Percent Giving Reason	Reason	General Domain of Reason	Illustrative Quotations
57%	Counterintuitive	Challenges established theory; is counterintuitive; goes against folk wisdom or consultant wisdom, etc; creates an "aha" moment.	"This paper flew in the face of conventional wisdom and demonstrated that 'conventional wisdom' was based on a very biased view of what had been done."
57	Quality	Includes at least one of the following: well-crafted theory; good technical or methods job; good fit of data and theory; sophisticated methodology; great sample; makes the complex look simple and elegant.	"The data are qualitative, collected by lengthy interviews and participant observation. Cluster analysis is used to identify different types. Extensive significance testing and rigorous quantitative validation procedures provide a template for any researcher employing this method. This is followed by the presentation of qualitative data in support of each type, providing further insight."
48	Good writing	Is well framed; builds momentum; provides good examples; is clear and engaging; has rich descriptions.	"The story is compelling, and it is written with such clarity and such drama that it is a good read all on its own."
46	New theory/finding	Creates new theory; synthesizes previous theories; integrates multiple perspectives; comes up with an important finding.	"The study provides insightful theory development to account specifically for nationality-based diversity effects which are then verified through three different studies."
31	Practical implications	Generates usable knowledge in the "real world"; addresses a subject that is very relevant to the real world.	"The article also seemed to have important implications for managers of any organization at or near the top."
28	Impact	Stimulates new empirical or theoretical work; has been cited or quoted a lot; has opened avenues for research in a new areas.	"This classic paper obviously made a huge impact on the field, stimulating hundreds of empirical papers and further theoretical development."

Source: Bartunek, J. M., Rynes, S. L., & Ireland, R. D. (2006). What makes management research interesting, and why does it matter?. *Academy of management Journal*, 49(1), 9-15.

# A metaphor of positioning: Joining a conversation



# Understanding the review process



# Positioning your research

## Three critical questions:

- *Who cares?*
- *What do we know, what don't we know, and so what?*
- *What will we learn?*

## Common mistakes

- *Lack of focus / misleading focus*
- *Failing to motivate and problematize*
- *Underpromising <-- x --> Overpromising*

Source: Grant, A. M., & Pollock, T. G. (2011). Publishing in AMJ-Part 3: Setting the hook. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(5), 873-879.

# Positioning your research

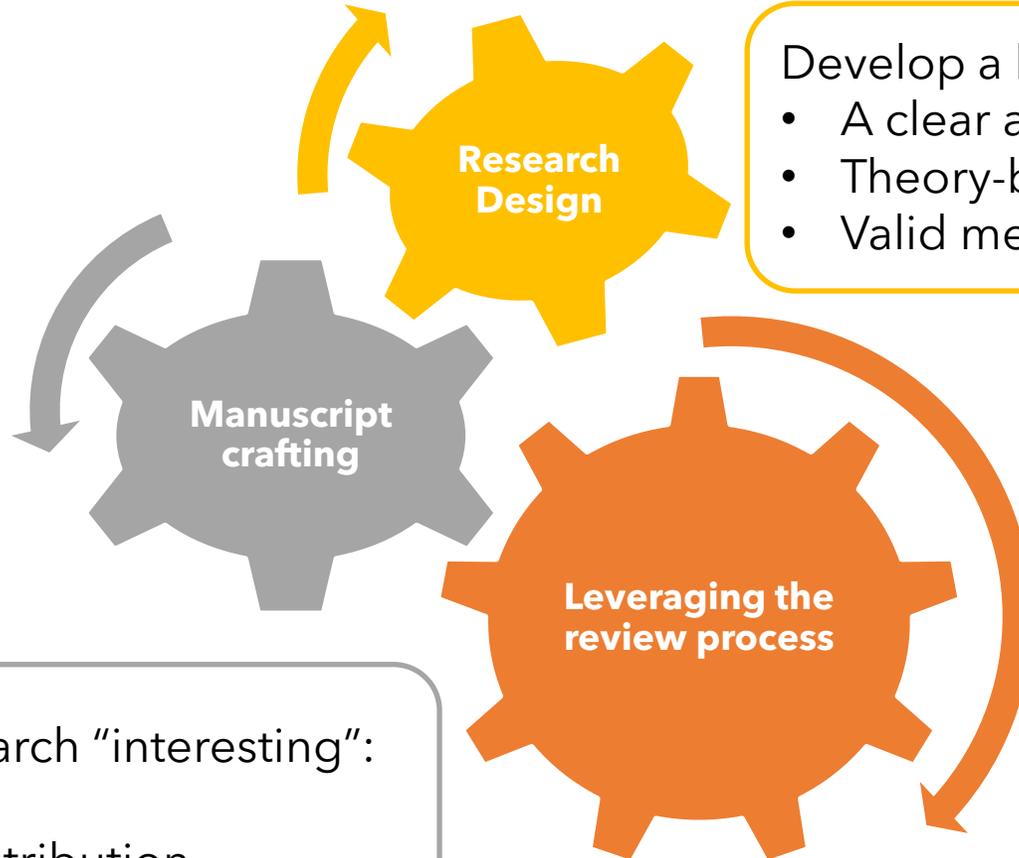
## **Some preliminary thoughts:**

- Developing a high-quality piece of research is critical. Without that, positioning is useless
  - Experience research as a learning process – if you haven't learned anything new, it will be hard to create interest among others
  - Be ambitious, but also humble and open to criticism
  - Any topic can be interesting or boring, what matters really is how we present and discuss it
  - Positioning is about joining a conversation, having something to say, and then be willing to debate
- 

How to “position” your research: Some practical tips



# How to “position” your research: Some practical tips



Develop a high-quality research:

- A clear and important research question
- Theory-based literature review
- Valid methods, fit for the purpose

Engage in the conversation:

- Read the reviews
- Understand the reviewers' perspective
- Respond to the comments

Make your research “interesting”:

- Introduction
- Clarity of contribution

# Research design

## **Develop a clear and important research question**

Asking the “right” question is essential to develop new knowledge:

- Developing a strong and compelling research question is a difficult task that involves several attempts
- The question asked sets the expectations for the reader and it links directly to the contribution

Clear research question:

- The reader can immediately understand what the purpose of the research is, in simple terms
- The question incorporates elements of theory and practice
- The question has to match the key constructs and measures

Important research question:

- The question is theory-informed and theory-oriented
  - The question is broad enough, and specific-enough
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# Research design

## **Present a theory-based literature review**

An effective literature review accomplishes multiple purposes:

- To show that you know the scope of relevant (and irrelevant) literature
- To set the core assumptions from which you want to diverge
- To guide the reader in appreciating the strengths and weaknesses of existing research
- To help the reader appreciate the need for a new, additional insight
- To set the scene for your research methods and findings
- To explain your theoretical contribution

# Research design

## **Valid methods, fit for the purpose**

Motivating the methods:

- Inductive vs deductive approaches (and abduction?)
- Depth vs breadth of the data
- Old vs new methods

Consistency of research design:

- Sampling according to the purpose of your research
  - Measuring what you theorize
- 

# Manuscript crafting

## **Make your research “interesting”:**

- Develop a compelling introduction

### **First paragraph:**

- Define the topic clearly
- Explain why the topic is important and the conversation still alive
- Select the right references

### **Second paragraph:**

- Give a flair of the ongoing conversation, where is it going
- What theory/ies inform the existing conversation?
- What are the established facts and interpretations?

### **Third paragraph:**

- Spell out established assumptions, beliefs and conclusions
- Move from the “gap” to the “problem”
- Create a sense of “possibility” about adding to existing theory and evidence

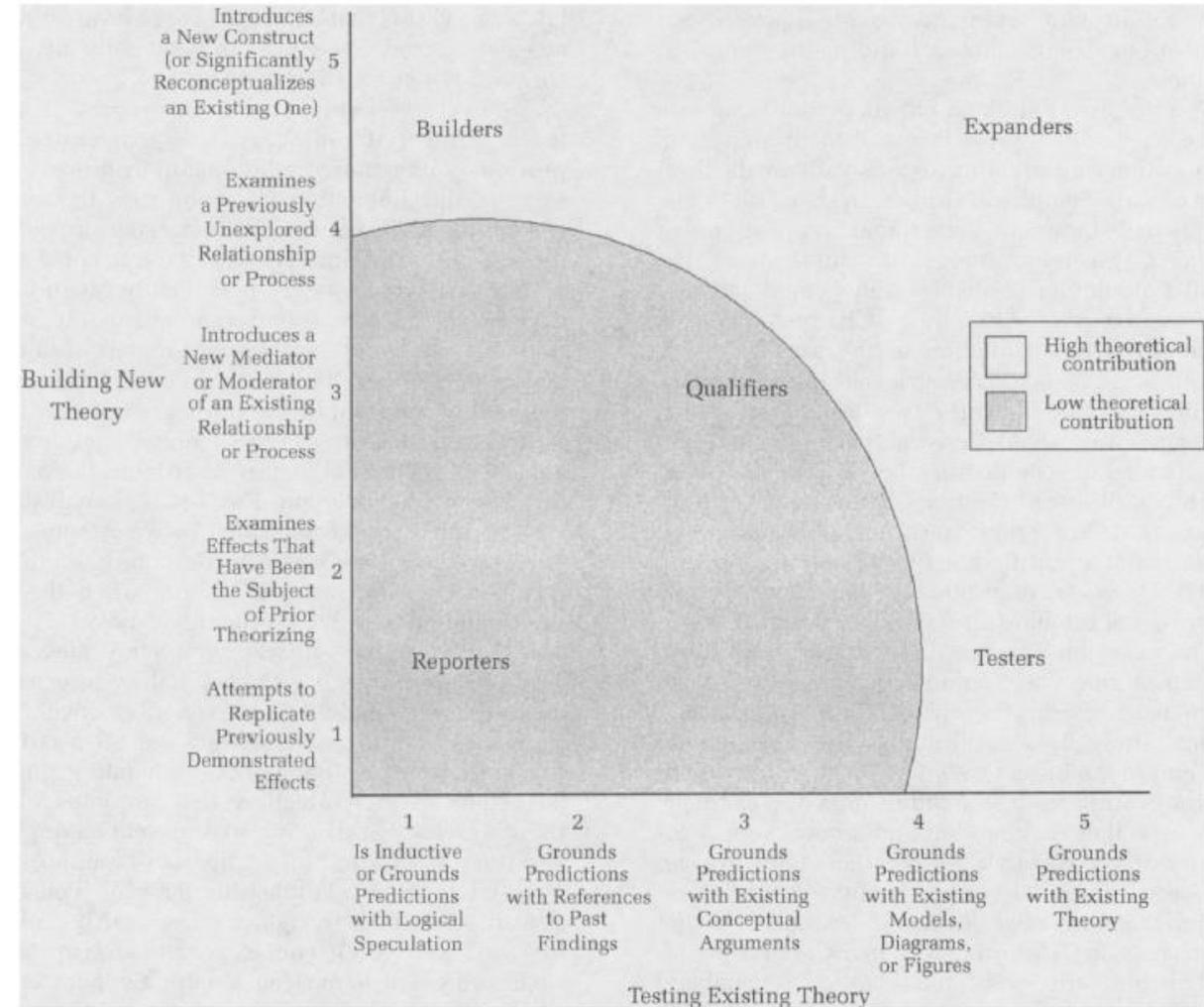
### **Fourth paragraph:**

- State what you do and find, concisely
- Make a promise about contribution
- Highlight the potential significance, reach and impact of your work

Source: Grant, A. M., & Pollock, T. G. (2011). Publishing in AMJ-Part 3: Setting the hook. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(5), 873-879.

# Manuscript crafting

A Taxonomy of Theoretical Contributions for Empirical Articles



## Clearly define your theoretical contribution:

- Types of theoretical contribution

Source: Colquitt, J. A., & Zapata-Phelan, C. P. (2007). Trends in theory building and theory testing: A five-decade study of the Academy of Management Journal. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(6), 1281-1303.

# Research design

## Clearly define your theoretical contribution:

- How you can challenge, extend or enrich theory

		Type of phenomenon	
		New, little understood	Established, narrowly understood
Type of theory	Insufficient existing theory	I. INDUCTIVE THEORY GENERATION <b><i>New emerging phenomena</i></b>	III. THEORETICAL CONSENSUS SHIFTING <b><i>Something has gone wrong with the existing knowledge and beliefs</i></b>
	Pertinent distal theory	II. EVOCATIVE THEORETICAL BOUNDARY SPANNING <b><i>Literature provides limited theory insights about a phenomenon</i></b>	IV. DIVERSE THEORETICAL INTEGRATION <b><i>Two established perspectives explain same phenomena in different ways</i></b>

Source: Nadkarni, S., Gruber, M., DeCelles, K., Connelly, B., & Baer, M. (2018). New ways of seeing: Radical theorizing. *Academy of Management Journal*

# Leveraging the review process

## **Engage in the conversation:**

- Read the reviews, and then read them again
  - Don't rush to conclusions
  - Don't think of favorable vs adverse reviewers - things may change!
- Understand the reviewers' perspective
  - The reviewers' comments can actually help you position your research better
  - The reviewers' comments are somewhat representative of the field, they hide assumptions that you can productively challenge or extend
  - Don't think about pleasing the reviewer, but think about how you can leverage the comment to develop a better paper
- Respond to the comments
  - Write a letter, not just a check-list
  - Let the Editor guide your efforts, but Editor's comments do not overrule the reviewers' comments
  - Explain why you think the reviewer's concern arose in the first place
  - Explain your thinking and how it changed in response to the comment

Q&A

Thank you!