AMR Writing Theoretical Papers: A Workshop from the Editors

Session Coordinators/Presenters:
Cindy Devers, Texas A&M University
Gary Ballinger, University of Virginia
Belle Rose Ragins, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Academy of Management Meeting
August 5-9, 2016
Anaheim, CA
Workshop Objectives

◆ Help participants write theoretical articles that make a contribution to the literature.

  • **Writing clear theory**
    – Writing style, presentation and organization of theoretical manuscripts

  • **Making a theoretical *contribution***
    – Content and paths to making a contribution
    – Challenges and dilemmas in theory building
    – Ways to address these challenges
8:00-8:10: Introductory Comments: AMR mission
  • Belle Rose Ragins

8:10 – 8:30: Publishing Tips from AMR Authors
  • Moderator: Gary Ballinger
  • Panelists: Daniel Albert, Stephanie Creary & Lee Jarvis

8:30- 9:00: Publishing In AMR: Pitfalls and Solutions
  • Cindy Devers

9:00- 10:00: Small Group Discussions: What Makes a Theoretical Contribution?
  • Led by current/past AMR Associate Editors/Editors

10:00-10:30: Small Group Reports and Large Group Discussion
  • Workshop Evaluations
AMR Facts & Stats

- Established: 1976 (40th birthday this year!)
- Published: Quarterly (January, April, July & October)
- Circulation: 16,073
- Submissions: 400-500 a year
- Acceptance Rate: 6-8%
- Double-Blind Peer Reviewed: 3 reviewers
- Goal: 60 days from submission to first decision
- Impact Factor: 7.288  5-Year Impact Factor: 12.453
- Rank: #1 in Business; # 2 in Management
  - (2015 Journal Citation Reports)
AMR’s Mission

http://aom.org/Publications/AMR/Information-for-Contributors.aspx

◆ To “publish new theoretical insights that advance our understanding of management and organizations.”

◆ AMR publishes “novel, insightful, and carefully crafted conceptual articles that challenge conventional wisdom concerning all aspects of organizations and their role in society.”

• We do not publish literature reviews, case studies or empirical research.
Possible Paths

http://aom.org/Publications/AMR/Information-for-Contributors.aspx

- Develop new theory
- Significantly challenge current theory
- Synthesize recent advances and ideas into fresh theory
- Initiate a search for new theory by pointing out and carefully delineating a novel type of problem
- Craft ways to improve the process of theory development
- Diverse styles of theorizing: proposition-based, process models/narratives & typologies (Cornelissen, in press)
What do we want?
What do we need?

◆ We want our authors to
  • craft novel, groundbreaking theoretical papers that push the boundaries of our field.

◆ We need diverse new voices that create bold, “big idea” papers that launch new streams of research and change our conversations about organizations.
Our Developmental Mission

- Develop our authors and make AMR the gold standard for developmental reviewing
Developmental Reviews

◆ Helps authors discover gems and take their work to the next level

◆ Perspective taking
  • What does the author need?

◆ Visualizing the Author
  • Picture the author in your office.... what would you say to them?

◆ Role shift: from gate keepers to colleagues
Why a Developmental Approach is Important (for AMR and the Academy)

- **Raises the Level of Scholarship for AMR and the field.**
  - We need to encourage rather than deflate our authors, because our authors are the future of our field.

- **Helps Authors Push the Boundaries of Their Work**
  - Punitive reviews narrow visions and rewards authors for taking small, safe steps.

- **Levels the Playing Field and Promotes Inclusion of Diverse Voices**
  - We need bold new ideas from fresh voices.
The Review Process at AMR

◆ Initial submission goes to Editor
  • Suitable for AMR?
◆ Editor assigns Associate Editor (AE) (feel free to suggest!)
  • Suitable for review?
◆ AE selects three reviewers (double blind)
◆ AE renders final decision
  • Goal: 60 days from submission to decision
  • Options: Reject, R&R, conditional accept, accept
    – Approximately: 15-20% offered R & R
    – Approximately: 50% of R1s invited to do R2
    – Approximately: 90% of R2s accepted
  • Goal: Make decision in 2 rounds
Special Topic Forums

- **The Changing Nature of Work Relationships**
  Emily Heaphy, Jody Hoffer Gittell, Carrie Leana, David Sluss, Gary Ballinger, and Kris Byron. *Submission Date: June 15–September 1, 2016*

- **Advancing and Expanding Work-Life Theory from Multiple Perspectives**
  Gary N. Powell, Jeffrey H. Greenhaus, Tammy D. Allen, and Russell E. Johnson. *Submission Date: September 1–September 30, 2016*

- **Diversity at a Critical Juncture: New Theories for a Complex Phenomenon**
  Stella M. Nkomo, Myrtle P. Bell, Aparna Joshi, Laura Morgan Roberts, and Sherry Thatcher. *Submission Date: February 1-28, 2017*

- **Sociocognitive Perspectives in Strategy and Organizations**
  Mike Pfarrer, Cindy Devers, Kevin Corley, Joep Cornelissen, Don Lange, Rich Makadok, Kyle Mayer, and Libby Weber. *Submission Date: April 1-30, 2017*
Publishing Tips from AMR Authors

- **Daniel Albert**, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

- **Stephanie Creary**, Cornell University

- **Lee Jarvis**, Grenoble Ecole de Management
Why do papers get rejected?

How do I get mine accepted?
## Feedback Form for Reviewers

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Reviewer Recommendation

- Accept as Is
- Minor Revision Needed
- Major Revision Needed
- Doubtful that revision would be successful
- Reject
**Scope and Contribution**

- Hooking readers - Why is this important?
  - Need to answer problematization question: “without this work, what can’t we understand?’ or even more seriously: ‘what do we get wrong?’”

- Focus is too broad or too narrow (e.g., grand epic theory vs. incremental steps)

- Try to do too much or too little

- “First” or “Only” not enough

- Novel? Have others addressed this using different labels?
Chutes and Ladders

◆ Structuring the Paper
  • Teeing up, wait for it, and winding roads
  • Literature review overwhelms paper
  • Promises made but not delivered

◆ Clear Writing (and rewriting!)
  • Clear thinking/clear writing synergy
  • Friendly reviews
  • It’s all about the rewrite – nothing is wasted.
  • Never lose sight of your reader
What readers want

- **Clear** (nearly effortless reading)
- **Compelling** (why is this important?)
- **Coherent and focused** (1-2 strong messages)
- *Papers that offer a clear, direct, and compelling story that hooks the reader, then carries them on a straightforward journey from the beginning to the very end of the manuscript.*
- **Novel and exciting new ideas they can use**
  - *They can’t use your ideas if they don’t understand them or if your gems are buried in your paper.*
Summary: Core Questions

◆ Is the topic important and interesting? Does it pass the “so what” test?
◆ Does the paper create, extend or advance management theory in a significant way?
◆ Are there clear implications for future research/practice?
◆ Does it contain a well-developed and articulated theoretical framework or typology?
◆ Are underlying causal mechanisms explained clearly?
Summary: Core Questions

◆ Is relevant literature used and accurately cited?

◆ Are the constructs defined clearly? Avoid:
  • Same constructs labeled differently throughout manuscript
  • Different constructs used synonymously - construct soup
  • Questionable selection (why these and not others?)
  • New label for same old thing/repackaging old ideas

◆ Did you demonstrate effort?
  • Don’t hand wave – know the literature, cite the literature
  • AVOID TYPOS AND GRAMMAR/LANGUAGE ERRORS
And...

- Friendly (but not overly friendly)-review, a must!!!!
- Get a non-academic friendly-review:
  
  *The Grandmother Test*
Sample questions

- What does “making a theoretical contribution” mean?
- As authors, what are some of the dilemmas we face when writing theory?
- Handling R & R’s and the publication process
Report Back
(15 minutes to share small group ideas)

- Common themes, ideas and resources

  - Check out our new FAQ website
Remember.....

It’s all about support and relationships...

no one does it on their own.
Joy and Humor

Really? I thought it was Publish or Paris.