HOW TO CARRY ON RESEARCH AND PUBLISH IT IN INTERNATIONAL JOURNALS

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•EIC of BFJ and EBM of JIM, JIC, MBR, IEEE TEM

General suggestions

- Time matters:
  - In the absolute **best scenario** (the almost zero probability event) it is going to take you at least one year to get a paper published.
  - This if you don't have any **accident** *in the* process.
  - Accidents do happen though. The **average time** between first submission and final acceptance in a good international journals it more like three year.
  - Some factors can reduce or retard the process

General suggestions

- Quality and quantity (both matters):
  - **Your CV** should contain some publications in the top journals, but the number of publications also matters
  - Having three papers in different journals is better than having them in the **same journal**, once the quality has been accounted for.
  - **Diversify your research portfolio.** At the beginning of your career you want to aim high, but better journals tend to reject more papers
  - So, out of your portfolio of papers, **identify the one or two which have the best chances** of being published in a very good journal, and push them hard.

General suggestions

- KNOW the journals that you are targeting
  - You should read at least 15 paper from the journal
  - You should know which are the trends and hot topics of that journal
  - You should read main information and guidelines of the journal
  - You should know WHO are the Editor / Senior Editors / Guest Editors and read at least 5 paper each of them

TAKE AWAYS: Ask to senior colleagues that have published there! Ask to people that you meet at the conferences. READ READ READ!

General suggestions

- Single sentence to state your objective and contribution

Let's exercise on it

Challenge, Change or Advance what we know?

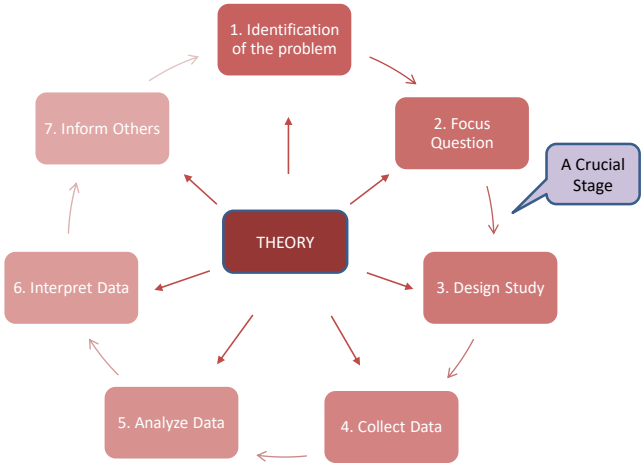
General suggestions

- Papers should not be too long: 15-25 pages make for a good length paper → a **shorter paper** tends to have a faster turnaround and higher probability of being accepted with less revisions requested
- Maintain a **stock** of papers under review constantly
- If the **acceptance rate** at good journals is 15% on average, you need 7 papers under review in a year if you want one paper accepted per year at the targeted journal
- This does not mean that you need to write 7 papers a year! → **critical role of network → build it and develop it**

General suggestions

- **Abstract** should cover issue, answer according to theory, details of method, key findings, specific value/use that follows from finding. (SHOW ME YOUR BEST ABSTRACT!)
- Use citation call and **reference** style of the journal that you submit to (READ IT CAREFULLY)
- Revise with help of readings and comments by two **colleagues** of your paper before submitting.
- Avoid identifying your study as mainly a replication. This needs to be **valuable** (some replications are accepted but not on top journals)

Writing a paper



Writing a paper

- Start by writing down an **outline** of your idea (TALK WITH COLLEAGUES THAT KNOW THE TOPIC).
- Let's decide immediately the order of the authors and the role of each author
- Work **first on the main body** of the paper
- Then write **introduction** and **conclusions**
  - Plan on spending about half of your time writing introduction and conclusions, as they are key in catching the referee's attention
- Title of your paper needs to be **theory focused**; most titles are not theory focused (not too long!) (SHOW ME YOUR TITLES)
- **Avoid places** in your titles
  - Limits interest in the study and takes you away from a focus on theory)

Writing a paper

- Cover Letter
  - Most (3 of 4) cover letters do **not tell what is** unique and valuable.
  - Most (4 of 5) cover letters do **not tell how** the paper relates to articles appearing in the journal that the author submitting the paper to.
  - Take-aways: **do both!**
  - Both actions will increase getting over the first hurdle—gaining acceptance into the review process; avoiding desk rejection.

HAVE A LOOK AT THE EXAMPLE

Writing a paper

- Introduction
  - Use the introduction to provide evidence that the question you are dealing with is relevant and your approach is interesting
  - Use real life examples to motivate your analysis
  - The introduction should come very fast to the main point (examples)
  - Cite the papers of the potential referees/editors in the introduction, and give them accurate and generous credit
  - Contribution and preliminary info on method and key results

Writing a paper

- Main body
  - Use simple, consistent notation throughout the paper
  - Strike a balance between theory and applications.
  - A theory paper should say something about why this is a relevant contribution → theory building and contribution
  - An empirical paper should say something about the theory that has led to the empirical work → novel results or contexts of analysis

Writing a paper

- Main body
  - Paragraphs should not be too long. In a full page you should have at least two or three paragraphs
  - If you work on theory, use propositions, theorems etc to summarize your results and provide an outline of the main steps of your argument
  - Use figures (they can often make your argument much clearer) and report empirical results in tables (a good guideline is to have no more than 6).
  - Do not use an excessive number of numbered equations

Writing a paper

- References
  - Do not cite an enormous number of papers
  - A good number of references is between 20 and 25
  - Practical suggestion: Include references to the work of authors you know like your paper, as they might become your referees
  - Cite some of your own work if relevant and published in a good outlet
  - Cite articles from the journal and from the EIC (if relevant)

Key Factors – Preliminary screen

- Does it fit the journal scope?

  Read carefully the information about the journal!

- Major flaw with methodology that is hard to repair?

  Will additional data will be needed? Reliability and Validity? Will it be easy to correct?

- Contribution of the paper:

  What is the contribution to current state of the art? Does the paper make contribution to "what we know"?

Preliminary screen - examples

- **Fit to the journal**

Paraphrase the **mission of the journal** if you want to improve your chances

Do not send paper to journal that you do not know in detail

Preliminary screen - examples

- **Data**: *Will additional data will be needed? Reliability and validity? Will it be easy to correct?*
  → Problem: COMMON METHOD VARIANCE

  CMV creates a false internal consistency, that is, an apparent correlation among variables generated by their common source. Therefore, authors must assess not only whether CMV exists, but also how likely it is to generate Type I and Type II errors. Our position is to inform potential contributors that they should, prior to journal submission, deal with potential CMV biases in their research both seriously and explicity.

Chang, S. J., Van Witteloostuijn, A., & Eden, L. (2010). From the editors: Common method variance in international business research.

Preliminary screen - examples

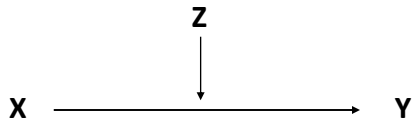
- **Contribution**

  The topic of (dual) embeddedness has received a great deal of attention by the literature focusing on international business (and also by this Journal) and this makes the object of the paper worthy of attention.

  Nevertheless, with respect to the existing literature - that the Authors recall quite exhaustively -, the paper offers a limited contribution both from the theoretical and the empirical points of view.

Papers get rejected because of… a lack of theory

- A key reason for rejection is lack of solid conceptual framework
  - Theory ensures **findings** are generalizable beyond your data
- Avoid reviews of related literature, ad-hoc hypotheses (i.e., which lack an overarching theoretical foundation) and abundance of many theories.
- Basic framework for building hypotheses
  - **Main effect**: More X leads to more (or less) Y
  - **Moderator**: Relationship between X and Y depends of Z



Papers get rejected because of… a lack of contributions

- Papers get published because they result in a **belief shift** (Who can do? What better? How after reading your paper?)
  - **Interesting** and **relevant** (new and non-obvious findings)
  - **Valid** and **rigorous** (methodological and conceptual)
  - **Broad Appeal** (scholars, managers, policy makers)
- Look for ideas in **business press**, teaching/executive **education** or **Practitioner Associations**
- Write down your **abstract** (Who, What, How) and **title** to test your idea actually working on it (to avoid betting on a dead horse)
  - Why should this question be researched?
  - And why should it be researched by you?

Ex. Theory and Org Sci

- Open Innovation is NOT a theory, it is a phenomenon; theory in Org Sci typically means a description that explains the difference between alternative states (e.g., success vs failure, changes in one way vs another way, one actor making one decision and another actor making a different decision)
- Conundrum of publishing in Org Sci: can't just use an existing theory, but must contribute to that theory. But all journals say that.
  - My suggestion: find a single theory you can contribute to, but at the same time talk about the phenomena as creating new challenges/dynamics/needs

Theory – potential errors

Mistakes about theorizing I've made:

- Can't be a single person's theory or your own brand-new theory; there needs to be a body of literature behind the theory so that others think it is an acceptable theory.
- Draw from too many different literatures (e.g., creativity AND resource based theory OR innovation AND collective action)

Mistakes about theorizing I've seen:

- Actor-Network Theory & Networks are not a "theory" since it doesn't describe alternative states
- Describing a case or analysis in great detail instead of describing the part of the case or analysis in great detail that leads to the contribution (and minimizing stuff we already know)

Other key Factors

- Positioning of the paper
  - Abstract and introduction → first impression (see next slide)
- Research gap
  - Hypothesis or theory development that you proposed are interesting and fill the gap in the extant literature ?
- Theory development
  - Basis for explanation of phenomenon
  - Interdisciplinary research – High risk, high chance to make impact. Small vs. large contribution –risks

Examples

- Negative examples at the beginning of the paper – first impressions are vital!
- P.3: the goal stated in the first paragraph is not consistent with the abstract
- P.3 bottom: individual culture is conceptual paradox. I assume that there is a misinterpretation of the literature (!!!)
- P.4 top: I assume you mean the individual perception of organizational culture? (What is the level of analysis? Does author mix levels?)
- P.4 middle: what do you mean by "successful" definition? Accepted by the relevant community?

First example: the positioning

- **HMHR** (highly cited paper)
  - **Abstract**: an extensive body of literature has investigated financial and strategic variables as predictors of M&A performance without finding clear relationships. *This paper proposes…*
  - **Introduction**: in recent years we have witnessed a sharp increase in cross border M&A around the world. But the growth in M&A activity stands in sharp contrast to their high failure rate.

First example: the positioning

- Focus in HR versus other streams of research (and HR journal vs. finance and strategy literature and journals).
- Failure to predict M&A performance
- Contrast: growth in activity vs. high failure rate → *why? It may be interesting to understand this.*

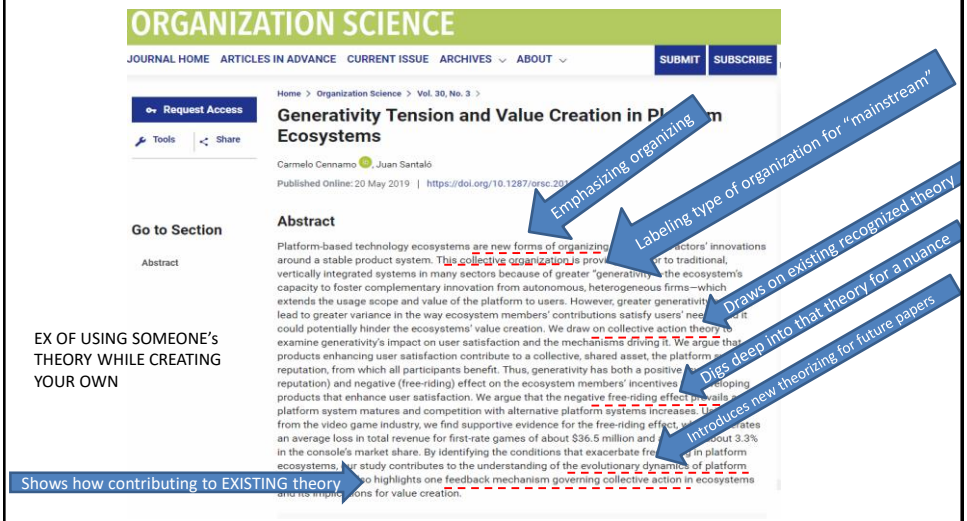
Second example

- **SMJ** (highly cited paper)
  - **Introduction**
  - **Two independent streams** of management research has investigated M&A: ***one stream*** *examined…interesting, these researchers hypothesized, but failed to find, consistent relationships…* ***A second stream*** *of research examined…most studies examined…most studies remain in theory building stage (no measurement of construct, no systematic findings)… We examined…*

Third example

- **Advances in M&A** (Award)
  - **Abstract**: empirical findings from the past 15 years suggest that the influence of culture on the integration process is critical. However, the interrelationships between corporate and national cultures and their influence on merger success are not clear, and the results of empirical studies are contradictory.
  - **Introduction**: most management researchers and practitioners point out that cultural differences and integration (…) are critical to performance (e.g., …). However, the interrelationships among corporate culture, national culture, and integration approaches are not clear.

Another Example - Abstract



Other Key Factors

- **Methodology** → use benchmarking articles and support your methodology with relevant references
  - Can I trust the data?
  - Does the author(s) show me all information or only selected information?
  - Can I trust operationalization? Does it fit variables and theory?
- **Results** → give clear and interesting results!
  - Can I trust results? Did author make enough tests for reliability and validity?
  - Does authors rule out other explanations? Are there control variables?
  - Can I trust the analysis?
  - Does analysis fit the goals of the study?
  - Find someway (ethically) to support the dominant logic for some context even when your findings run counter mostly to the dominant logic

Results - examples

- Does authors rule out other explanations? Are there control variables?
  - Example: "*In trying to find explanations for our results that are outside the theoretical focus…we rule out relative size and elapsed time…"*
- Can I trust the analysis?
  - Reviewer: " *The sample is very small, differences and similarities may have to do with the interview technique"*

Results - examples

- Does the analysis fit the goals of the study?
  - Reviewer: *"Whilst the research recounted here specifically aims to test whether a competency model is transferable between cultures…this is not tested"*
- Need for more data? This may lead to rejection.
- Is it possible that data and analysis were done before theory development?

Other Key Factors

- **Discussion** → contribution!
  - Does it fit positioning and goals of the paper?
  - What is the contribution? "*The findings of this research provide the first systematic evidence linking equity and human capital…*"
  - Is it significant?
  - Does author speculate ? (provide implications that are not based on results)
- **Discussion/conclusions** → contribution and implications!
  - What it contributes to the current literature (based on the positioning of the paper and its goals)
  - Is there a contribution without statistical significant results?
  - Future directions (give example on possible future research that can advance state of the art)
  - Implications for managers, policy makers, etc. ?

Other Key Factors

- **Discussion/conclusions** → review that I received.

Building your discussion*: I would suggest that a discussion section be more comprehensively developed that links back to your initial research questions and a clear statement of proposed contributions, once you have reframed your arguments and developed some propositions. What should we, as readers, take away regarding your study? What are the key theoretical contributions that are gained? How can these findings contribute to the literature stream associated with family business, or to the broader scholarly understanding of innovation in general? What do we know about this literature stream now that we have read your study? What future research should be conducted within this literature stream that can be extended based upon your study?*

This is what I often call **"closing the loop".** Specifically, you:

a) state in the introduction that there is a gap (your research questions), and you plan to address the gap theoretically;
b) present a formally developed and very focused literature review that gives the rational for the study and develop propositions that reflect this gap;
c) "Close the loop", by developing your discussion section that ties back to the research question(s). In the end, you hope that the reader has been able to read the article and see the article, in its entirety, as encapsulating the resolution of a theoretical or empirical gap.

Discussion

- Does it fit positioning and goals of the paper?
- What is the contribution? *"The findings of this research provide the first systematic evidence linking equity and human capital…"*
- Is it significant? *"The findings also highlight the usefulness of combining the macro, strategic management approach and the micro, behavioural approach to better explain…"*
- Does author speculate? Provide implications that are not based in results.

Discussion (cont')

- What it contributes to the current literature (based on the positioning of the paper and its goals)
- Is there a contribution without statistical significant results?
- Future directions (give example on possible future research that can advance current state of the art)
- Implications for managers? *"The implication is clear: the management of a buying firm should pay at least as much attention to issues of…as they do to issues of…"*

Conclusions

- So what?
- *"This paper provides a theoretical model that makes three important contributions: (1) it explains how…, (2) it emphasizes the role of cultural differences…, and (3) it suggests a solution for the conflicting results of empirical studies about the effect of culture clash…"*

Marketing a paper

Especially at the beginning of your career, people need to get to know you, so:

- **Go to conferences**
  - To get the best feedback, try to go to small group, field focused conferences
  - Large conferences are good mainly for networking and for publication opportunities
- **Give seminars in different Universities**
  - Again, try to focus on `relevant' audiences, i.e. places were people can give you useful feedback
- **Be an active member on online communities** (facebook groups, blog, etc.)

Where should I send my paper?

- Generalist vs Specialized journals
  - Views on this issue differ, especially between Europe and the US
  - In the US: people tend to prefer top field journals to good general interest journals
  - In Europe good general interest journals are probably considered more attractive than top field journals

Where should I send my paper?

- Regular vs Special issues
  - Screen all the special issues on your research topics carefully
  - Individuate guest editors and have a look of their CV if you do not know them
  - Focus your research on hot and trend topics (more probability to be published)

Where should I send my paper?

- Remember always to diversify your submissions
  - When choosing where to send your paper: look in the journal you are considering for papers which are dealing with a similar subject
  - Refer to the papers recently published in the outlet you are considering
  - Avoid (at least temporarily) journals that have rejected your papers consistently

Journal Rankings

There is a small industry out there, and every scholar will have something to say about one ranking or another.

- **Scopus** (Scimago Journal & Country Rank)
- **Journal Citation Reports** (Thomson Reuters – Web of Science)
- **ABS ranking** → example
- **Tinbergen Institute Ranking**
- **National rankings** (ANVUR ASN – ANVUR VQR – AIDEA)
- Others

Invited to Revise/Resubmit?

- This is a **good outcome!**
- Start working on the revisions right away. If you think the revisions are not doable, ask a senior colleague for advice before starting to work
- Do **ONLY** what the editor/referees ask you to do. Once you have a R&R, don't insert new extensions if they are not requested!
  - Explain how the change meet the reviewer's specific comment
  - Describe where exactly the change was made in the text (page, paragraph, sentences)

Invited to Revise/Resubmit?

- Your response to the editor and to the referees are **very important**. So spend quite a bit of time in drafting those, explaining carefully and precisely what you have done to meet the various requests (example)
  - Reply to each and every item of reviewers and editor
  - Always be polite
  - Thank for the recommendations
  - Be clear on the exact change you did
- Send your revisions back expeditiously, but be meticolous. Don't wait the last day to send back you revisions!

Final remarks

- Read key articles on how/what to submit to an academic journal. For example, read:
  - "Peer Review for Journals: Evidence on Quality Control, Fairness, and Innovation," J. Scott Armstrong," *Science and Engineering Ethics, 3* (1997), 63-84.
  - "Research on Scientific Journals: Implications for Editors and Authors" J. Scott Armstrong, *Journal of Forecasting, 1* (1982), 83-104.
- Work with a mentor as a co-author; select a mentor who has 10+ articles published in top journals.
- Start with best top journal (at least get good comments for improvement).
- If rejected (we all get rejected): go to next level journal after major improvements.
- Be actively involved in Scientific Communities (also on the web such as blog, facebook groups, etc.)

Thanks for your attention

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