Positioning Papers for Publication

JAY B. BARNEY

EDITOR IN CHIEF, ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT REVIEW

PRESIDENTIAL PROFESSOR OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

LASSONDE CHAIR OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ECCLES SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

Introductions: Writing as joining a conversation

- Introduce yourself
- Make it clear you've been listening
- Identify the next story
- Make it clear why the next story adds to the conversation

All in 1.5 pages

A simple framework

- First sentence: "This is the conversation I want to join"

- Rest of first paragraph: "I have been listening to this conversation, and these are its main elements."

- First word of second paragraph: "However"

- Rest of second paragraph: "This is the next topic in this conversation, and this is why this topic is important."

- First sentence of third paragraph: "The purpose of this paper is . . . "

- Rest of third paragraph: "Preview critical conclusion/finding; preview unusual sample/unusual method; preview the structure of the paper."

A simple framework: Example—"Diversification and the Value of Individual Firms," with Ty Mackey and Jeff Dotson, SMJ, 2017

▶ First sentence: "This is the conversation I want to join"

"It is probably the case that more has been written about the relationship between corporate strategy and firm performance than any other topic in the field of strategic management."

A simple framework: Example

- First sentence: "This is the conversation I want to join"
- Rest of first paragraph: "I have been listening to this conversation, and these are its main elements."

"Theoretically, some scholars have focused on the performance effects of different types of diversification (e.g., related vs. unrelated), while others have focused on when firms can enhance their performance by engaging in diversification instead of remaining focused. Taken as a whole, prior theory suggests that the ability of a diversification strategy to create value depends on the specific resources and capabilities controlled by a firm and the context within which it is operating."

"Of course, this theoretical literature has given rise to a large empirical literature.   Some of this work has examined the average impact of different types of diversification (e.g., related vs. unrelated) on firm value, while other work has examined the average impact of diversification on a firm's value relative to a portfolio of focused firms. Overall, this empirical work seems to suggest that, on average, related diversified firms our perform unrelated diversified firms and that, controlling for the propensity to diversify, diversified firms do not, on average, trade at a discount compared to focused firms."

A simple framework: Example

- First sentence: "This is the conversation I want to join"

- Rest of first paragraph: "I have been listening to this conversation, and these are its main elements."

- First word of second paragraph: "However"

"However"

A simple framework: Example

- First sentence: "This is the conversation I want to join"
- Rest of first paragraph: "I have been listening to this conversation, and these are its main elements."
- First word of second paragraph: "However"
- Rest of second paragraph: "This is the next topic in this conversation, and this is why this topic is important."

"despite this voluminous work, there is a fundamental mismatch between the theoretical diversification literature—which examines the relationship between diversification and firm performance for individual firms—and the empirical diversification literature—which examines the average relationship between diversification and firm performance for a sample of firms. Such a mismatch would not be problematic if it was possible to infer the firm specific relationship between diversification and performance from the average relationship between diversification and firm performance in a sample of firms. However, this will rarely be the case. In particular, knowing that—on average—firms pursuing related diversification strategies outperform firms pursuing unrelated diversification strategies does not necessarily imply anything about the relationship between the type of diversification strategy chosen and performance for a particular firm."

A simple framework: Example

► First sentence: "This is the conversation I want to join"

► Rest of first paragraph: "I have been listening to this conversation, and these are its main elements."

► First word of second paragraph: "However"

► Rest of second paragraph: "This is the next topic in this conversation, and this is why this topic is important."

► First sentence of third paragraph: "The purpose of this paper is . . . "

"The purpose of this paper is . . ."

A simple framework: Example

► First sentence: "This is the conversation I want to join"

► Rest of first paragraph: "I have been listening to this conversation, and these are its main elements."

► First word of second paragraph: "However"

► Rest of second paragraph: "This is the next topic in this conversation, and this is why this topic is important."

► First sentence of third paragraph: "The purpose of this paper is . . . "

► Rest of third paragraph: "Preview critical conclusion/finding; preview unusual sample/unusual method; preview the structure of the paper."

A simple framework: Example

- Rest of third paragraph: "Preview critical conclusion/finding; preview unusual sample/unusual method; preview the structure of the paper."

"The purpose of this paper is to re-examine the relationship between a firm's diversification strategy and its performance using a method—hierarchical Bayesian modeling—that enables the estimation of this relationship at the firm level. Consistent with prior theory, the empirical results in this paper show that all forms of diversification strategy—related diversification, unrelated diversification, and remaining focused—can create value for different firms. Indeed, most firms in the sample studied in this paper choose a value creating diversification strategy."

Common errors in writing introductions

Common errors in writing introductions

► Putting the entire lit review in the first paragraph: Need to show you've been paying attention, don't need to cite every paper

Common errors in writing introductions

▶ Putting the entire lit review in the first paragraph

▶ Trying to summarize entire theory in second paragraph: If you could summarize entire theory in one paragraph, not much of a theory

Common errors in writing introductions

- Putting the entire lit review in the first paragraph

- Trying to summarize entire theory in second paragraph

- Trying to make the paper about more than one thing: The "meaning of life"

Common errors in writing introductions

▶ Putting the entire lit review in the first paragraph

▶ Trying to summarize entire theory in second paragraph

▶ Trying to make the paper about more than one thing

▶ List of contributions: If you have to list contributions, then you haven't been clear about how your research question pushes the conversation along

Common errors in writing introductions

- Putting the entire lit review in the first paragraph
- Trying to summarize entire theory in second paragraph
- Trying to make the paper about more than one thing
- List of contributions
- Describing, in detail, your unique methods or data: You get one sentence

Common errors in writing introductions

- ▶ Putting the entire lit review in the first paragraph
- ▶ Trying to summarize entire theory in second paragraph
- ▶ Trying to make the paper about more than one thing
- ▶ List of contributions
- ▶ Describing, in detail, your unique methods or data
- ▶ Starting with specific phenomena: Start with theory, relationships between phenomena

Common errors in writing introductions

▶ Putting the entire lit review in the first paragraph

▶ Trying to summarize entire theory in second paragraph

▶ Trying to make the paper about more than one thing

▶ List of contributions

▶ Describing, in detail, your unique methods or data

▶ Starting with specific phenomena

▶ Letting the introduction go over 2 pages: Bad writing = bad thinking

Thank you

Meet the Editors

Jay Barney, University of Utah
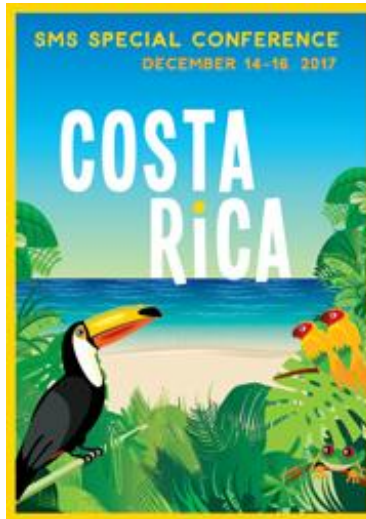Alvaro Cuervo-Cazurra, Northeastern University
Melissa Graebner, University of Texas
Koen Heimeriks, Warwick Business School
Will Mitchell, University of Toronto
Myles Shaver, University of Minnesota

Strategic Management Society Special Conference Costa Rica, December 14, 2017

SMS SPECIAL CONFERENCE
DECEMBER 14-16 2017
COSTA RICA

Meet the Editors: Agenda

- How to position a paper for publication?
  - Jay Barney
- Question-based framing
  - Will Mitchell
- What is a contribution to theory? How do you create one?
  - Alvaro Cuervo-Cazurra
- What are the best uses of qualitative methods? What are some common mistakes?
  - Melissa Graebner
- What are the best uses of quantitative methods? What are some common mistakes?
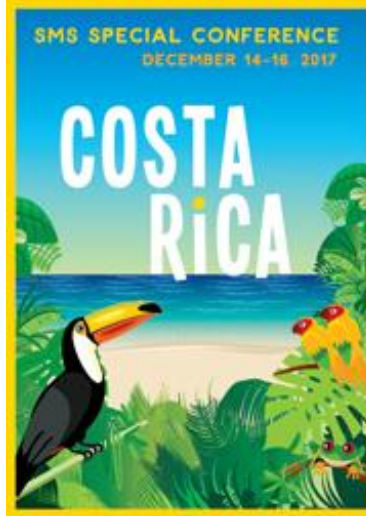 - Myles Shaver
- How do you manage the review process successfully? How do you select journals? How do you respond to reviewers well?
  - Koen Heimeriks

- Your questions, doubts, suggestions...

What is a contribution to theory?
How do you create one?

Alvaro Cuervo-Cazurra

Co-Editor, Global Strategy Journal

Northeastern University, a.cuervocazurra@neu.edu

Strategic Management Society Special Conference
Costa Rica, December 14, 2017

As editor, identifying the contribution:

- Story
  - Paper has an argument (propose rather than find, do not go fishing)

- Authorship
  - I/we argue that...   (This is your paper, say it)

- Coherence
  - The ideas (variables analyzed) make sense together (rather than statistically related)

- Explanation
  - There is a explanation of how one gets from variable A to variable B (steps rather than phrase (citation, citation, citation), phrase (citation, citation), phrase (citation, citation, citation)

- Novelty
  - It is non obvious (This is the first paper that studies…. (Unless new phenomena, you do not understand the topic or have not done a thorough literature review…)

As author: identifying the contribution to theory

- Go deep into one theory for coherence
  - What do you believe in? What is your discipline? How do you see the world? Do not choose theories that fit but present explanations that fit your viewpoint.
- Do not have horse races
  - You will be trampled in the race: If believe in one then be true to your believe
- Link theories from the same discipline
  - Have similar assumptions on world view and can be integrated
  - Be careful with false similarities: E.g., Resource-based view and resource dependence, neo-institutionalism and institutional economics...
- If integrating theories, state core assumptions of theories and identify boundaries in which assumptions no longer hold and can be integrated
  - Very complex! Deal with the challenge of knowing two fields in depth!
  - Problem if using different theories explaining different statistical findings
  - Explain reasons for integrating theories

As author: Identifying the contribution

- Delete all references and read: Does it make sense?
  - Simple, clear language (use not utilize, explain not explicate…)
- Give to a friend for comments: Does it make sense?
  - Reviewers and editor should not be the first people who read the paper
- Tell a friend who works in industry: Does it make sense?
  - Add examples and managerial voices to illustrate relationships

Conclusions

- Two areas of contribution:
  - To theory
    - Theory (with capital letter) and theory (with low case letter)
    - Find assumptions, challenge assumption, relax assumptions
  - To the topic
    - Typical contribution
    - New relationships, influence

From the Editors: Qualitative Research

Melissa Graebner

Co-Editor, *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*

What are the best uses of qualitative methods?

What are some common mistakes?

Use #1: Build new theory when prior theory is absent, underdeveloped, or flawed

- Advantage of qualitative data: open-endedness

- No prior theory
  - e.g., Ozcan & Eisenhart, 2009, "Origin of Alliance Portfolios"

- Prior research lacks ecological validity
  - e.g., Sutton and Hargadon, 1996, "Brainstorming groups in context"

Use #2: Capture individuals' lived experiences and interpretations

- Less common in strategy research
- Again, the advantage is open-endedness. But there are important differences vs. theory-building.

- Interpretive studies:
  - Aim to preserve the subjective nature of their data throughout the analytical process
  - Often viewed as antithetical to a positivist, "scientific" approach
  - May use qualitative data even when substantial prior theory exists
    - e.g., Creed et al.. use qualitative data to "complement and extend" previous theoretical work (2010: 1337) .

Use #3: Understand complex process issues

- Phenomena involving complex temporal dynamics or causal mechanisms, often embedded in nuanced social interactions

- Advantage of qualitative data: Richness

- In practice, many process studies involve some theory-building – but qualitative data can also be used for process studies in areas of relatively mature theory
  - E.g. Martin (2011) – top management team processes
  - Process researchers may even use qualitative data to test theory (e.g., Greenwood et al., 1994)

Use #4: Illustrate an abstract idea

- Advantage of qualitative data: Vividness, concreteness and richness

- Example: Siggelkow, 2001, "Change in the Presence of Fit."

"The framework proposed in the paper emerged more from a conceptual exercise than from my exposure to Liz Claiborne's experiences. However, the case turned out to be a very helpful illustration and was used in that manner after the conceptual framework was presented."

- Open-endedness is less important – these researchers may have well-developed models prior to gathering their data (e.g., Kauppila, 2010, "Creating Ambidexterity").

Use #5: Examine narratives, discourse or other linguistic phenomena

- Phenomena that fundamentally involve words and language

- May or may not be interested in individuals' subjective experiences
  - May examine media accounts, annual reports, websites and press releases
  - And they may code their data in ways that enable statistical analysis
  - E.g., Martens et al.'s (2007) analysis of narratives in IPO prospectuses
    - Quantified narratives to test hypotheses using statistical estimation

Common Mistakes

- Not enough data, or the wrong data
  - E.g., fewer than 10 interviews
  - E.g., people reading other people's minds
- Mechanical use of an established approach
  - It's an idiosyncratic process by nature
  - Look at published papers, but don't mimic them
- Not showing enough data
  - Data are interesting!
  - And they substantiate your findings

Further Resources

- Langley 1999, *AMR*, "Strategies for Theorizing from Process Data"
- Edmondson and McManus 2007, *AMR*, "Methodological Fit in Management Field Research"
- Graebner, Martin and Roundy 2012, *SO*, "Qualitative Data: Cooking Without a Recipe."
- *Journal of Management Inquiry* 2017, "Finding Theory–Method Fit: A Comparison of Three Qualitative Approaches to Theory Building"
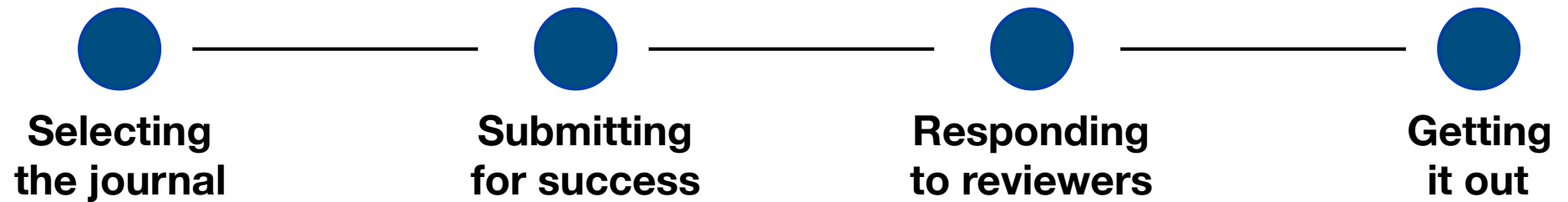
Insights on how to manage the review process

SMS Costa Rica
"Meet the Editors" Session
Koen Heimeriks, Warwick Business School
Associate Editor, *Long Range Planning*
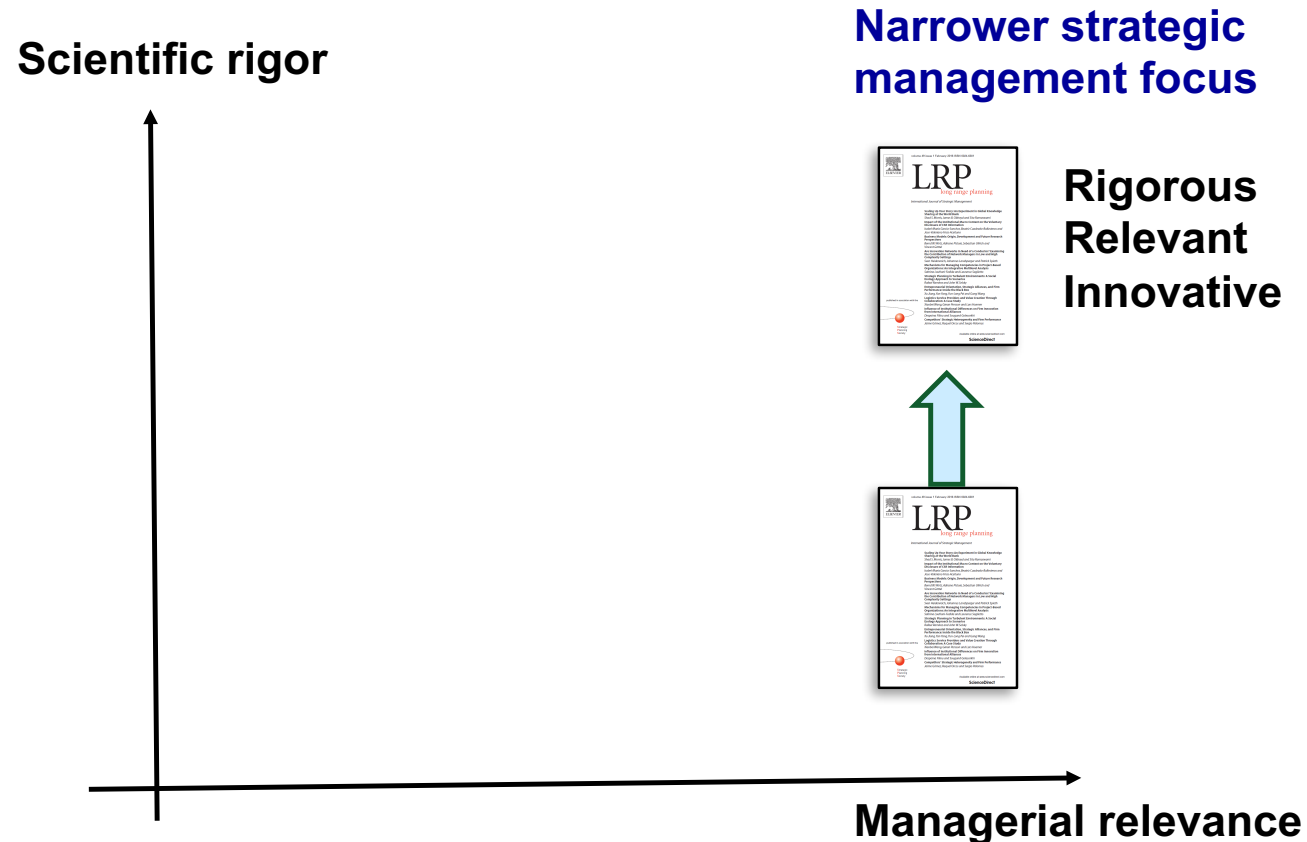
The "review process"

Review process

Selecting
the journal

Submitting
for success

Responding
to reviewers

Getting
it out

Insights on journal selection

Selecting the journal — Submitting for success — Responding to reviewers — Getting it out

1. <u>SEEK JOURNAL FIT</u>: As each journal has a different style (e.g., purpose, type of debates, etc), seek optimal fit

2. <u>CONVEY YOUR AIM</u>: Explain how your paper's aim connects with the journal purpose (e.g., submission letter, reviewer recommendations)

Example on journal aim

Long Range Planning – Strategic Positioning

Scientific rigor

Narrower strategic management focus

Rigorous
Relevant
Innovative

Managerial relevance

Insights on journal selection

Selecting the journal — **Submitting for success** — Responding to reviewers — Getting it out

3. <u>COLLECT "HONEST TO GOD" FEEDBACK</u>: Make sure to seek your toughest friendly reviewers

4. <u>STAND OUT</u>: It's surprisingly easy to stand out (i.e., check submission guidelines and procedures)

5. <u>DELIVER PURPOSE</u>: Be conscious on how your paper delivers on its key promises (i.e., articulate gap definition and rigor + relevance in letter)
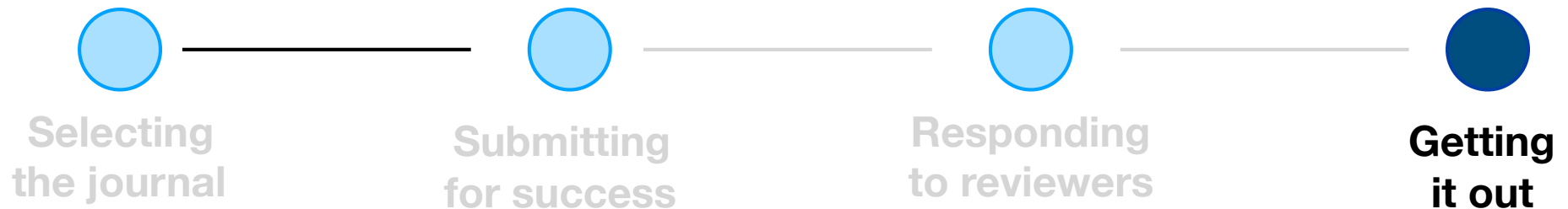
Insights on reviewer response

Selecting
the journal

Submitting
for success

**Responding
to reviewers**

Getting
it out

6. <u>BE YOUR BEST SELF</u>: Especially in case of tough critique, show Reviewers and AE who you are (i.e., "it pays to be nice")

7. <u>REMEMBER SOCRATES PARADOX</u>: "The only thing I know, is that I know nothing" ("*ipse se nihil scire id unum sciat*")

Insights on publishing

Selecting
the journal

Submitting
for success

Responding
to reviewers

**Getting
it out**

8. <u>LEARN FROM EXPERIENCES</u>: It's OK to make mistakes — implement suggestions before resubmitting elsewhere

9. <u>AND PROGRESS</u>: Try to stand out (e.g., by collecting new data) and collaborate with others you can learn from

wbs
WARWICK BUSINESS SCHOOL
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

THANK YOU!

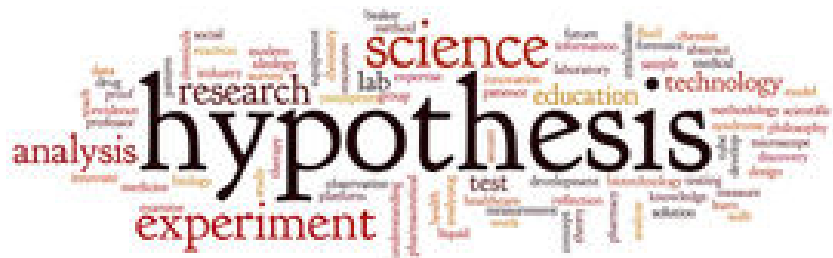*Koen Heimeriks*, Warwick Business School
www.koenheimeriks.com

Will Mitchell
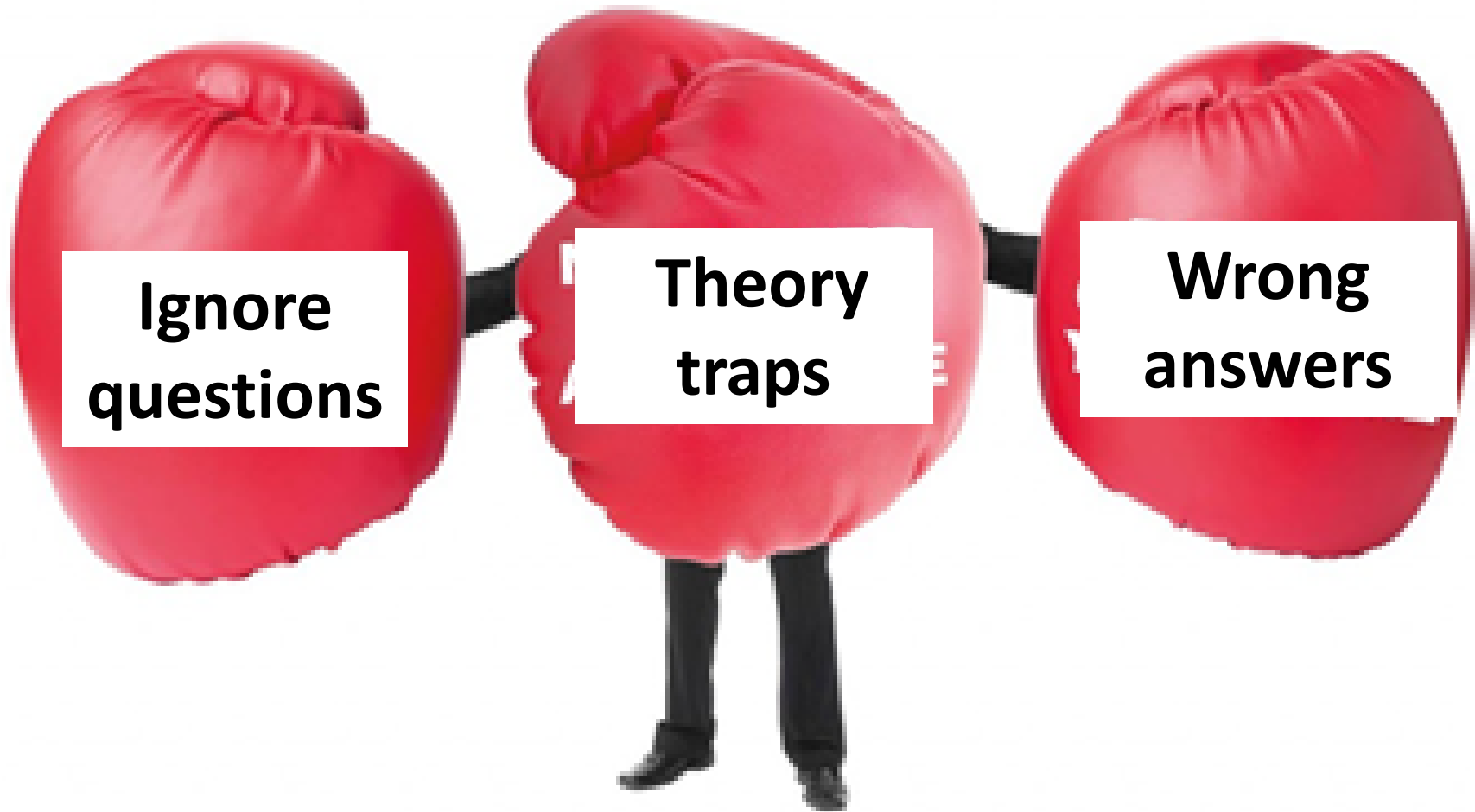*University of Toronto*

Question-Based Research
December 2017 – SMS Costa Rica

Our Dominant Framing: **Hypotheses**

- **Ubiquitous**: +80% of empirical papers in SMJ

- **Reader (or author)**: When you read (or write) a paper, how many hypotheses have unambiguous logic?

Triple Whammy of Weak Logic

Ignore questions

Theory traps

Wrong answers

Alternative to Hypotheses

QUESTION-BASED RESEARCH

- **Not**: Brute empiricism -- battery of results with loose speculations about causes

- **Rather**
  - **Focused framing**: Questions & relevant prior research
  - **Careful analysis**: Assess plausible mechanisms
  - **Rigorous interpretations**: Grounded in questions

- **What do we gain?**
  - **Empirics**: New understanding of relevant phenomena
  - **Concepts**: New theory

Question-Based Options

Framing: Research questions

1. **Puzzles**: Ambiguities in theory & empirical patterns

2. **Inductive extension**: Of prior qualitative studies

3. **Orienting propositions**: Arising from concepts in relevant theories, providing lens for exploration
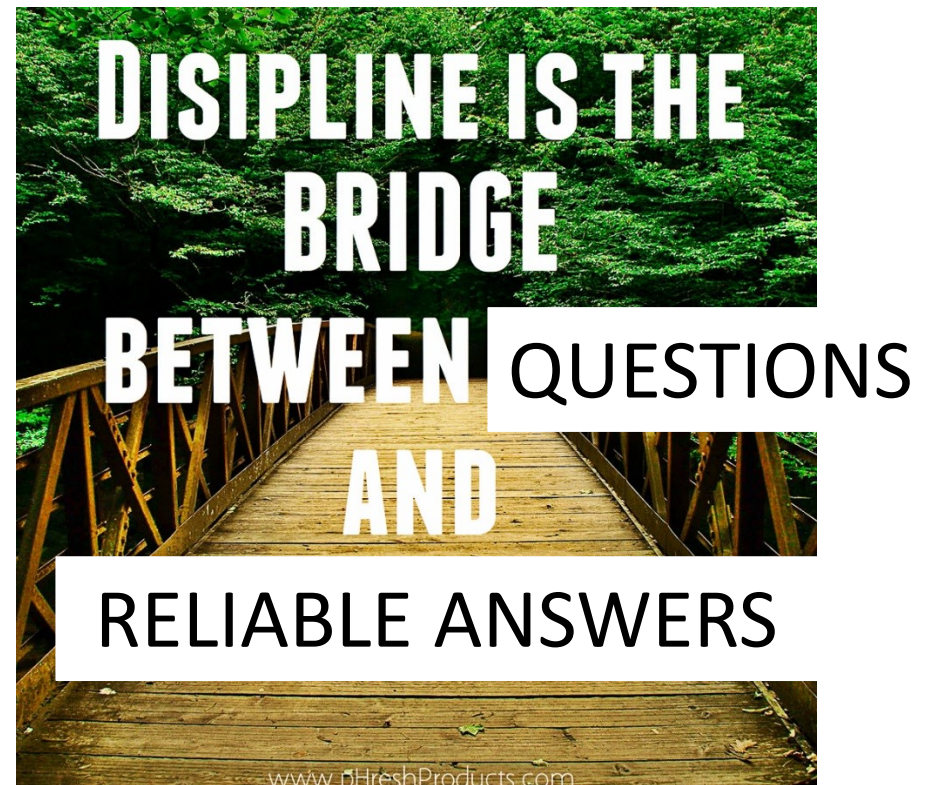
4. **Other** …

Interpretation

1. **Stylized facts**
2. **Empirical extensions**
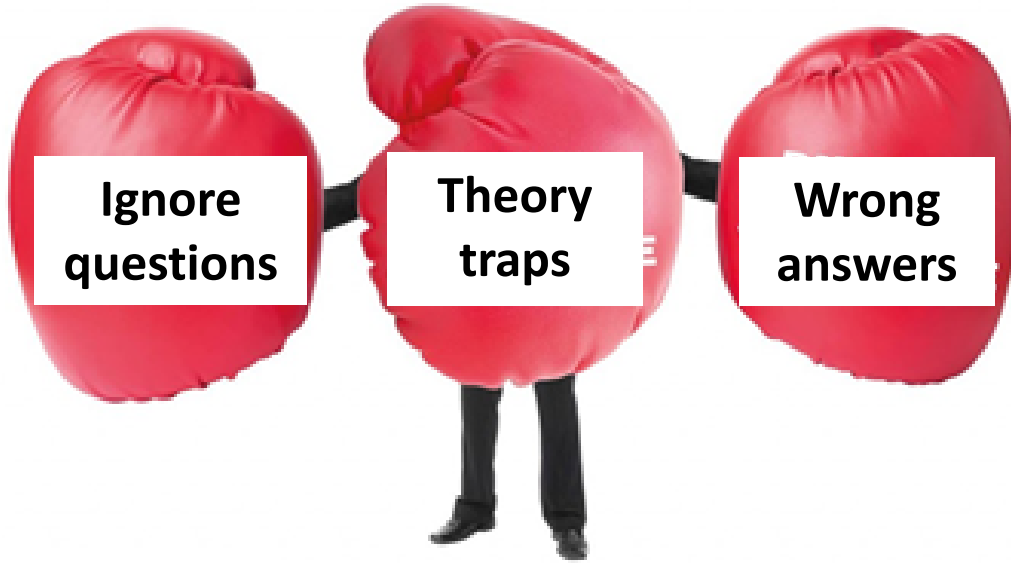3. **Theory deepening**
4. **Theory creation**
5. **Other** …

Research Questions: Challenge & Opportunity

Challenge:
Avoid sloppy thinking

Opportunity:
Disciplined novel knowledge

Triple Whammy of Weak Logic

| Ignore questions | Theory traps | Wrong answers |

➢Ignore & misinterpret key parts of the world

- **Questions**: Avoid causally compex questions

- **Theory**
  - Lock in on wrong mechanisms
  - Trapped by existing theories & their assumptions, concepts, & logic

- **Results**
  - Unreliable answers
  - Strongest interpretations lost in residual