Libérez l'article !
La tyrannie des conventions dans l'écriture scientifique

Hervé Laroche

ESCP BS

Séminaire IAE PARIS – 12/09/2023

Trois objectifs :

1) **Mettre au jour** les conventions d'écriture, extrêmement prégnantes mais souvent implicites.

2) Discuter la **pertinence** de ces conventions en examinant leurs conséquences pour 1) la qualité des textes et 2) les efforts demandés aux auteurs (plus généralement : allocation des ressources).

3) Proposer des **pistes d'amélioration** de ces conventions.

Série parue dans *Le Libellio d'Aegis* http://lelibellio.com/

- L'article scientifique (1). La question du genre. *Libellio* - Laroche H. – vol. 15, n° 4, pages 5-14 - Laroche H. – 2019

- L'article scientifique (2). Il était une fois IMRAD. *Libellio* - Laroche H. – vol. 16, n° 1, pages 7-20 - Laroche H. – 2019

- L'article scientifique (3). Au nom du lecteur - l'enjeu de la lisibilité. *Libellio* - Laroche H. – vol. 16 n°2 pp 7-16 - Laroche H. – 2020

- L'article scientifique (4). Questions de styles. *Libellio* - Laroche H. – vol. 16, n° 3 – 2020

- L'article scientifique (5). The bloody English language. *Libellio* – Laroche H. – vol. 17, n°4 – 2021

+ Un article en cours d'évaluation.

Programme

1. The article as a genre

2. Story: The scientific fable

3. Structure: One size fits all

4. Liberate the article! Some propositions

1. The article as a genre

Il faut que chaque chose y soit mise en son lieu ;
Que le début, la fin répondent au milieu ;
Que d'un art délicat les pièces assorties
N'y forment qu'un seul tout de diverses parties,
Que jamais du sujet le discours s'écartant
N'aille chercher trop loin quelque mot éclatant.

Nicolas Boileau, *Art poétique - Chant I* (1674)

Boileau par Jean-Baptiste Santerre (1678)

What is a *genre*?

- A typical clustering of conventions developed over time in response to what writers perceive as a similar problem (Hyland, in Tardy, 2016: 6)

   => recognizable, repeatable regularities in texts

- Parodies and hoaxes are a good sign of the existence of a genre

- Constraints vs variations inside a given genre: liberal ← → conservative

- The scientific article in peer-reviewed journal is **a highly conservative genre**

Qu'en un lieu, qu'en un jour, un seul fait accompli

Tienne jusqu'à la fin le théâtre rempli.

Nicolas Boileau, *Art poétique - Chant III* (1674)

wrong   right
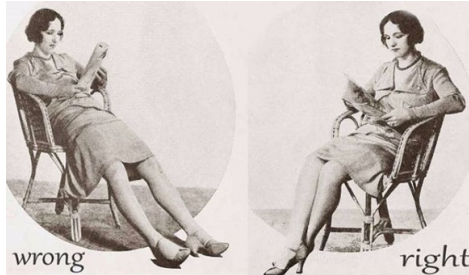
EDITOR'S COMMENTS: POSITIONING A THEORY PAPER FOR PUBLICATION

Jay Barney
Editor

First Sentence: Introducing the Paper to the Reader

Whether a paper is designed to significantly extend a received theory or to develop a new theory (Barney, 2018), the theory developed in it is part of an ongoing conversation in the literature (Huff, 1999). Before attempting to make a contribution to that conversation, an author must make it clear to the reader what conversation their paper proposes to join; thus, the first sentence of the paper must make this clear to the reader. In the case of this essay, the conversation focuses on "how to write and publish theory papers in top management journals."

The Rest of the First Paragraph

After making it clear what conversation their paper proposes to join, the author must convince the reader—especially a reader with expertise in this conversation— that they have been paying attention to this conversation's main findings and conclusions. This does not require a literature review. Rather, it requires two or three sentences that summarize a conversation's main research traditions, along with the most important results associated with those traditions.

First Word, Second Paragraph

The purpose of the second paragraph in the introduction is to identify an unresolved theoretical issue in the received literature and then to demonstrate why this unresolved issue is important. This purpose is signaled by the first word in the second paragraph. Often, the word "However" is sufficient.

The Rest of the Second Paragraph

While not denying the importance of the work cited in the first paragraph, the second paragraph must establish a legitimate reason for writing a new theory paper. Usually, that reason is to resolve a theoretical issue that has not been resolved in the received literature. Thus, the rest of the second paragraph must first identify this issue and then explain why it is important.

wrong   right

First Sentence, Third Paragraph

The first sentence of the third paragraph starts with "The purpose of this paper is . . ." This is where the author presents the central research question their paper seeks to answer. This is done without subtlety, using a simple, short, declarative sentence that tells the reader what question the paper is going to answer. Of course, the answer to this question—to be developed in the paper—must resolve the theoretical issue identified in the second paragraph.

The Rest of the Third Paragraph

The rest of the third paragraph provides a preview of how the paper answers its research question and some of the critical implications of this answer. It is important that this preview not attempt to summarize, in detail, the paper's entire theoretical argument. If this argument can be summarized in a single paragraph, it probably is not much of an argument.

The Length of an Introduction

In well-written papers the full introduction is approximately 1.5 manuscript pages.[4] This length reflects both style and practical considerations.

From the perspective of style, shorter is almost always better than longer. Constraining oneself to 1.5 manuscript pages will almost always generate clearer and more precise writing than writing introductions that go on for two or three manuscript pages. Indeed, in writing papers, authors should generally write a first draft, cut it by 20 percent, and then cut it by 20 percent again. The results of this draconian editing are almost always positive.[5]


WRONG   RIGHT

The 10 commandments

| 1	**Focused**	One idea per paper
2	**Explicit**	Put all the cards on the table from the start; no suspense
3	**Continuous**	No deviations; unfolds coherently (=> reconstructions)
4	**Relevant**	Nothing superfluous; everything contributes (Tchekov's principle)
5	**Exhaustive**	Nothing is missing or omitted
6	**Articulate**	Strong logical and semantic connections between parts
7	**Concise**	Maximum density
8	**Transparent**	Should allow replication (in principle)
9	**Unambiguous**	Easy access to intended meaning; other interpretions closed.
10	**Neutral**	Should not manipulate the reader

Two ideals in tension

Expand
Provide all relevant information
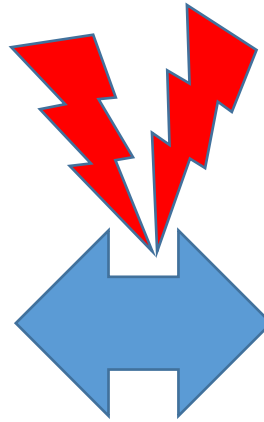
Restrain
Stick to the minimum

Quelques caractéristiques du style académique

Pratique d'écriture	définition	exemple
Effacement énonciatif	L'auteur est tenu de s'écarter devant l'objet étudié. Il n'est présent que de manière secondaire dans le texte. Des règles de discrétion lui imposent de minimiser ses apparitions et d'éviter la première personne.	Voix passive, *nous* d'auteur, etc.
Nominalisation	Le style académique adore les noms et méprise les verbes. Plutôt que d'utiliser des propositions, il fabrique des chaînes de noms	*a systems orientation* (vs *an orientation that focuses on the analysis of systems)*
Compression	La nominalisation compresse les expressions et leur signification, comme dans l'exemple ci-dessus. C'est souvent le contexte qui va permettre d'attribuer le sens à une expression concentrée au point d'en devenir ambigüe.	*patient behavior* = *a behavior marked by patience?* = *patient's behavior?*
Voix passive	Elle est largement préférée à la voix active. La formulation passive est met l'accent sur la variable étudiée ou le concept proposé. Elle contribue à dépersonnaliser le texte et à réifier les variables et concepts.	*Empathy is experienced more strongly for intragroup members than it is for outgroup members* (vs *Intragroup members experience empathy more strongly than outgroup members)*
Abstraction	La résultante de ces pratiques stylistiques est un discours d'un haut niveau d'abstraction.	
Nuances	Le texte scientifique visant à établir un statut épistémique des énoncés (certain/incertain, possible/probable, etc.), il fait un grand usage de nuances	- Atténuateurs (*hedges : it suggests, to some extent*, etc.,) - Renforcements (*boosters : certainly, strongly*, etc.) -- - Connecteurs (*connectors : thus, nonetheless*, etc.)

(Biber & Gray, 2010; Billig, 2013; Hyland, 2008)

Things and people

"Whereas intergroup anxiety is by now an established mediator of intergroup contact and cross-group friendship, the present study also sought to explore cognitions of rejection as a cognitive mediator predicted by cross-group friendship, and predictive of intergroup anxiety, as well as a range of attitudes towards the outgroup. Specifically, we propose that people with cross-group friends cease to expect outgroup members to reject their attempts at contact and friendship."
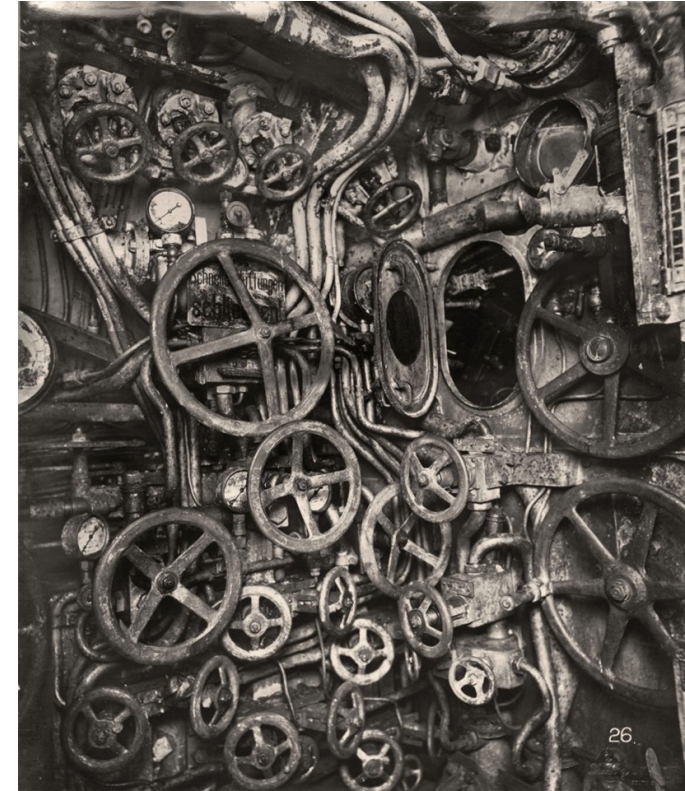
(Barlow, Luis and Hewstone, 2009, p.391. Cité par Billig, 2013, p.189)

The problem with academic writing

- Academic writing produces '**hygienic texts**' (Pullen & Rhodes, 2008, p. 247)

- '**Wooden writing**': "It's as if the academic community itself wrote the article, not [your name here]." (Dane, 2011)

- A monotonic repertoire – an intellectual conformity – consisting of **impersonal, abstract prose** in which human agency is erased (Sword, 2012)

THE PREMISE OF YOUR PAPER IS FLAWED, THE DATA IS SUSPECT, AND THE CONCLUSIONS ARE DANGEROUS. ON THE PLUS SIDE, THE LANGUAGE IS SO COMPLETELY IMPENETRABLE THAT NOBODY WILL EVER NOTICE.

Tom Gauld

Crafting Papers for Publication: Novelty and Convention in Academic Writing

Gerardo Patriotta

University of Warwick

ABSTRACT   In this article, I discuss how different social actors and established conventions intervene in the construction of academic articles. I first provide a 'backstage' overview of the review process at JMS, with a focus on how editors and reviewers influence the development of a manuscript. I then discuss the use of conventions as a powerful tool for communicating a message and conveying it to an audience. Next, I consider how authors use references to engage in conversations with other scholars and establish the baseline for a contribution. Finally, I reflect on the role of the reader as the ultimate recipient of a journal article. I conclude with some considerations on the craft of writing for publication.

Conventions as a harmless necessity

Speaking in the name of the reader

What about novelty?

Patriotta (2017):

1. A journal article is a distinctive genre.

2. The conventions governing this genre are powerful.

3. The conventions are primarily useful for the reader.

4. The conventions allow novelty.

5. Authors should learn how to use the conventions for their own good.

1. A journal article is a distinctive genre.

Yes, definitely!

2. The conventions governing this genre are powerful.

Powerful, certainly; but are they <u>relevant</u>?

3. The conventions are primarily useful for the readers.

Are readers really <u>that</u> stupid?

Conventions are primarily useful for reviewers and editors.

4. The conventions allow novelty.

No!

The story of the journal article is one of ever-increasing normalization.

5. Authors should learn how to use the conventions for their own best.

Can they do otherwise?…

Beyond Formulaic Research: In Praise of Greater Diversity in Organizational Research and Publications

MATS ALVESSON
Lund University

YIANNIS GABRIEL
University of Bath

FORMULAIC RESEARCH, FORMULAIC PAPERS, FORMULAIC REVIEWS, AND FORMULAIC MIND-SETS

Formulaic papers are the products of a sequence of interrelated codified and standardized practices that involve formulaic research, a formulaic editorial process, formulaic reviewing, and more generally, *formulaic mind-sets*, that is, formulaic ways of thinking about what constitutes scholarship.

Standardized Text Structure

Formulaic papers follow a highly standardized structure well known to all. For example, every article published in *Human Relations*, Vol. 65, Issue 12 starts with an introduction on 1–2 pages, followed by a literature review on 1.5–5 pages, followed by a method section on 1–4.5 pages, then research results or findings are addressed (on between 3.5 and 11 pages), followed by a discussion on 2–4 pages and then in two cases a short conclusion a page or less. The reference list ranges from 2.5 to 4 pages.

Formulaism relieves all parties of some uncertainty and anxiety by establishing a *game*, a difficult one perhaps, but at least one where the rules are relatively clear.

The story   The theory

2. Story: The scientific fable

'Is the scientific paper a fraud?'
Peter Medawar (Nobel Prize, Medicine, 1960)

Crafting Papers for Publication: Novelty and
Convention in Academic Writing

Gerardo Patriotta
University of Warwick

Semiotically speaking, a journal article is a distinctive genre: it tells **a straightforward story of a problem in search of a solution**, but it is not a detective story. The archetypical story in an article typically unfolds according to a sequence of standard 'moves' that constitute a semiotic architecture (see Table 3).

Table 3. A semiotic checklist

1. This is what I am focusing on

2. This is why it is relevant

3. This is what is known/not known (and why it needs attention)

4. This is my burning question

5. This is how I aim to address the question (theoretically/empirically)

6. This is what I did

7. This is what I found

8. This is what it means

9. This is what I add

10. This is why you should care

(Patriotta, 2017)

EDITOR'S COMMENTS:
REFLECTIONS ON THE CRAFT OF
CLEAR WRITING

Belle Rose Ragins
Associate Editor
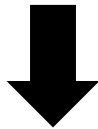
AMR Reviewers' Pet Peeves*

*Bêtes noires

Pet Peeve 3: Story, Story, What's the Story?

The problem. The last pet peeve involves problems with the manuscript's "story line." As the reviewers pointed out, papers should offer a clear, direct, and compelling story that first hooks the reader and then carries the reader on a straightforward journey from the beginning to the very end of the manuscript. As one reviewer remarked, "Many of the *AMR* submissions I read are mystery novels, where even the author isn't sure where the paper is going to end up." Others echoed that concern:

> Many papers are fragmented, have no thread, and tell no story. Authors have to understand that it is not my responsibility as a reviewer to search for the thread but their responsibility to make it as easy as possible for me to follow their story.

FROM THE EDITORS

BEING SCHEHERAZADE: THE IMPORTANCE OF STORYTELLING IN ACADEMIC WRITING

Timothy G. Pollock
Pennsylvania State University

Joyce E. Bono
University of Florida

NARRATIVE ELEMENTS OF STORYTELLING

Although there are many important narrative elements relevant to storytelling, we focus on three: (1) the human face, (2) motion and pacing, and (3) titles.

TABLE 1
Recommended Books on Writing

Book	What It's About
Clark, R. P. 2006. *Writing tools: 50 essential strategies for every writer*. New York: Little, Brown.	Covers all the elements of writing from grammar to flow to productivity. Organized around 50 "tools" with a "workshop" for practice at the end of each tool.
Flaherty, F. 2009. *The elements of story*. New York: HarperCollins.	Covers all the elements of writing effective nonfiction, including topics not often covered elsewhere. Written from a journalist's perspective.
Hale, C. 1999. *Sin and syntax: How to craft wickedly effective prose*. New York: Three Rivers.	A book on grammar that is funny and focuses on effective writing more than following the "rules of the road."
Huff, A. S. 1999. *Writing for scholarly publication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.	Excellent coverage of developing and crafting academic articles in the social sciences.
King, Stephen. 1999. *On writing: A memoir of the craft*. New York: Pocket Books.	Memoir on the life events that shaped him as a writer, discussion of key elements of the craft, and recommendations on how to launch a writing career. Very funny and informative.
Lamott, A. 1994. *Bird by bird: Some instructions on writing and life*. New York: Anchor.	Memoir and reflection on writing and the writing process. Funny and very accessible.
Silva, P. 2007. *How to write a lot*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.	This is a no-nonsense book on how to be a more productive academic writer. It challenges the validity of our most common excuses for not being more productive.
Strunk, W., & White, E. B. 2000. *The elements of style* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.	Classic treatise on grammar usage and how to construct more effective prose. Should be on every writer's bookshelf as a reference.
Sword, H. 2012. *Stylish academic writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.	Systematic look at the practices employed by good academic writers across a variety of disciplines. Her goal is to make academic writing more interesting and accessible.
Truss, L. 2003. *Eats, shoots & leaves*. London: Profile Books.	This is a grammar book that made the *New York Times* bestseller list. Need we say more?
Williams, J. M., & Colomb, G. G. 2010. *Style: Lessons in clarity and grace* (10th ed.). New York: Pearson Education.	A classic used in many writing courses, with helpful exercises to improve your writing.
Zinsser, W. 2006. *On writing well: The classic guide to writing nonfiction*. New York: HarperCollins.	Discusses the key elements of effective writing and how to write different types of nonfiction. The first five chapters read like a novel while giving you technical advice.

HOW TO USE STORYTELLING IN YOUR ACADEMIC WRITING

TECHNIQUES FOR ENGAGING READERS AND SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATING THE WRITING AND PUBLISHING PROCESSES

Timothy G. Pollock

In order to creatively express your ideas you have to understand the constraints and demands of the form you are writing in. I have heard complaints about the journal article format and how it inhibits writers' abilities to develop and express their ideas. My response to such whining is, "Does that mean you can't be creative writing a haiku, then or a sonnet, because they have restrictive forms ?". Every writing form, from limerick to novels to academic journal articles, has specific structures and norms. Forms provide structure that help readers know what to expect and how to find meaning. While some forms are more flexible than others, the creativity comes from successfully conveying what you want within the bounds of the form, not from devising a new and unfamilliar form. Successful academic writers, rather than complaining about the strictures of the journal article form, figure out how to work successfully within it. (p. 3)

Complaints are illegitimate.

Fallacious analogy : literary forms are multiple and are evolving freely (e.g. the sonnet is a dead form).

Talking in the name of silenced readers:
- Are readers that stupid?
- Why wouldn't they enjoy more diversity?

Restrictive definition of creativity as within the form only, in contradiction with the literature analogy.

Means: If you don't succeed within the form, it's because **you**'re not good.
But success within the rules does not prove you're creative in general; it only proves you're good within the rules.

Avoiding the key points:
Is the form relevant?
If yes, why would it be the only one?

21

Sheherazade, seriously?

the editor

the reader ?

the reviewers ?

Léon Carré, 1929-1932

1. Why do scientists have to tell a story?

2. What kind of story is expected?

the author

That's Interesting!

Towards a Phenomenology of Sociology
and a Sociology of Phenomenology

MURRAY S. DAVIS

VS

That's Interesting! A Flawed Article Has Influenced Generations of Management Researchers

Eric W.K. Tsang (ID)

(…) an interesting proposition was always the negation of an accepted one. All of the interesting propositions I examined were easily translatable into the form: 'What seems to be X is in reality non-X', or 'What is accepted as X is actually non-X'. (313)

(…) all social theories which are found interesting involve a certain movement of the mind of the audience who finds them so. These theories implicitly articulate the routinely taken-for-granted assumptions of the audience who finds them interesting, and then deny these presumptions in the name of some higher-or more fundamental-truth. (342)

Obviously, a theory explaining an interesting phenomenon is not necessarily interesting (in the sense of being counterintuitive or novel) in and of itself. More importantly, whether the theory is interesting is simply irrelevant; what is relevant is whether it can provide a satisfactory explanation. (157)

If a theory turns out to be interesting, that attribute is an accidental byproduct and should by no means be set as the target. (158)

It has never been my intention to promote non-interesting or boring research. (Other things being equal, interesting research is certainly better than boring research.) Rather, I hope to debunk the widely held myth that whether theories, theoretical propositions, or empirical findings are interesting is an important attribute of management research. (159)

What likehood it will happen in the next decade? (1)

- Saudi Arabia develops a nuclear weapon

- Russia has a female president

(Pinker, 2021)

What likehood it will happen in the next decade? (2)

- After Iran develops a nuclear weapon and tests it in an underground explosion, Saudi Arabia develops its own nuclear weapon.

- Vladimir Putin is constitutionally prevented from running for another term as president of Russia and his wife takes his place on the ballot, allowing him to run the country from the sidelines.

(Pinker, 2021)

What likehood it will happen in the next decade? (3)

- After Iran develops a nuclear weapon and tests it in an underground explosion, Saudi Arabia develops its own nuclear weapon.

- Vladimir Putin is constitutionally prevented from running for another term as president of Russia and his wife takes his place on the ballot, allowing him to run the country from the sidelines.
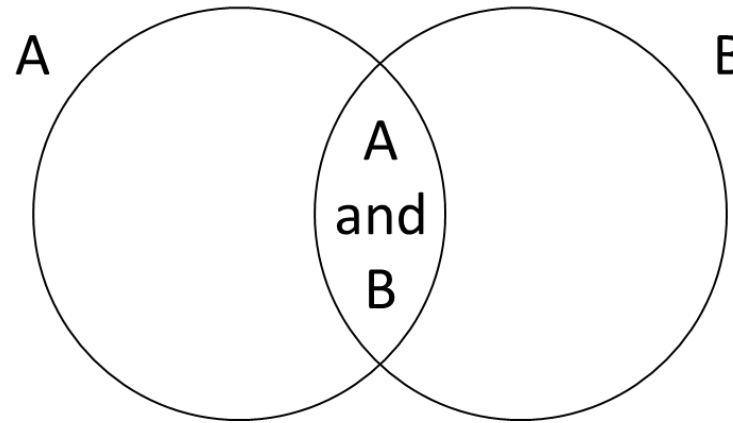
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- Saudi Arabia develops a nuclear weapon

- Russia has a female president

What likehood it will happen in the next decade? (4)

- After Iran develops a nuclear weapon and tests it in an underground explosion, Saudi Arabia develops its own nuclear weapon.

- Vladimir Putin is constitutionally prevented from running for another term as president of Russia and his wife takes his place on the ballot, allowing him to run the country from the sidelines.

- Saudi Arabia develops a nuclear weapon

- Russia has a female president

STORIES   >>   **FACTS**

- This violation of the elementary law of probablity is the *conjunction fallacy* (Tversky & Kahnemann 1983)

Conjunction rule

P(A and B) < p(A)

P(A and B) < p(B)

- Likelyhood here is not assessed in terms of mathematical probability, but rather in terms of *'degree of warrant in light of the present evidence'* (Hertwig & Gigerenzer 1999).

- Stories are especially good at providing a high *'degree of warrant'.*

An analogy about the scientific story

- After Iran develops a nuclear weapon and tests it in an underground explosion, Saudi Arabia develops its own nuclear weapon.

- Vladimir Putin is constitutionally prevented from running for another term as president of Russia and his wife takes his place on the ballot, allowing him to run the country from the sidelines.

- Saudi Arabia develops a nuclear weapon

- Russia has a female president

STORIES

>>
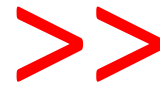
FACTS

'Scientific story'

Content (data, methods, ideas)

An analogy about the scientific story

- Evaluating the worth of the facts and ideas presented in a scientific article triggers **epistemic anxiety**.

- Evaluating the worth of a manuscript (content, facts, ideas) is similar to evaluating the 'pure' likelihood of a event – even with the examination of the methods.

- The scientific story provides a higher '**degree of warrant**'.

- The call for a 'compelling story' has much more to do with the editor's (and reviewers') anxiety than with the reader's expectations (readability, fun).

The conventional scientific story is a FABLE

Most of real research activity involves **solutions (ideas, data, findings) in search of problems** (e.g. "research gap") rather than the reverse.

This conventional story **silences other stories**

      e.g. the real story of how the research was done

      e.g. additional data and alternative tales from the field

      e.g. suggestions and restrictions from the reviewers and editors

Taking narrativity seriously would imply to consider the structure of the story as a **discourse**, not only as a neutral convention or as a harmless rhetoric device (being creative, not boring).

"Every scientific paper is a fraud"
Peter Medawar (Nobel Prize, Medecine), 1963)

3. Structure: One size fits all

Introduction
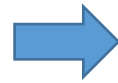Theoretical background
Methods and Data
Findings
Discussion

The article format

IMRAD	
I	Introduction
M	Methods
R	Results
A	And
D	Discussion

➡️

ITMRAD
Introduction
Theoretical background
Data and methods
Findings
And
Discussion

*Exact
Sciences*

*Business & Management
Studies*

Table 3. A semiotic checklist (Patriotta, 2017)

|		
Introduction	1. This is what I am focusing on	**Introduction**
	2. This is why it is relevant	
Theoretical background	**3. This is what is known/not known (and why it needs attention)**	
	4. This is my burning question	
Methods	5. This is how I aim to address the question (**theoretically**/empirically)	**Methods**
	6. This is what I did	
Results	7. This is what I found	**Results**
	8. This is what it means	
Discussion	9. This is what I add	**Discussion**
	10. This is why you should care	

Business & Management Studies

Exact Sciences

Why a Theoretical Background section?

The TB section is needed because of:

(1) the **uncertain status of facts** in social sciences (vs 'hard' sciences),

(2) an ambition to produce mostly **theoretical knowledge** (vs other social sciences).

The TB section is all the more important than extant theory is limited and than methods are not fully reliable.

Extant theory development
Methods reliability

-
-

TB section importance & sophistication
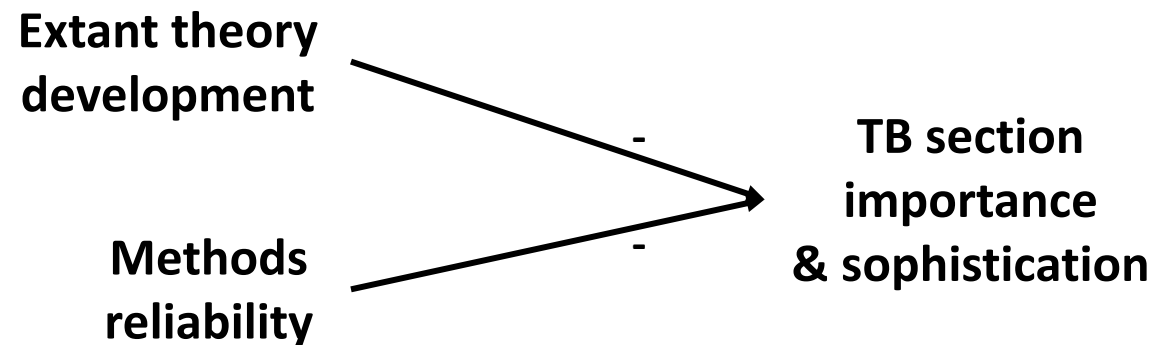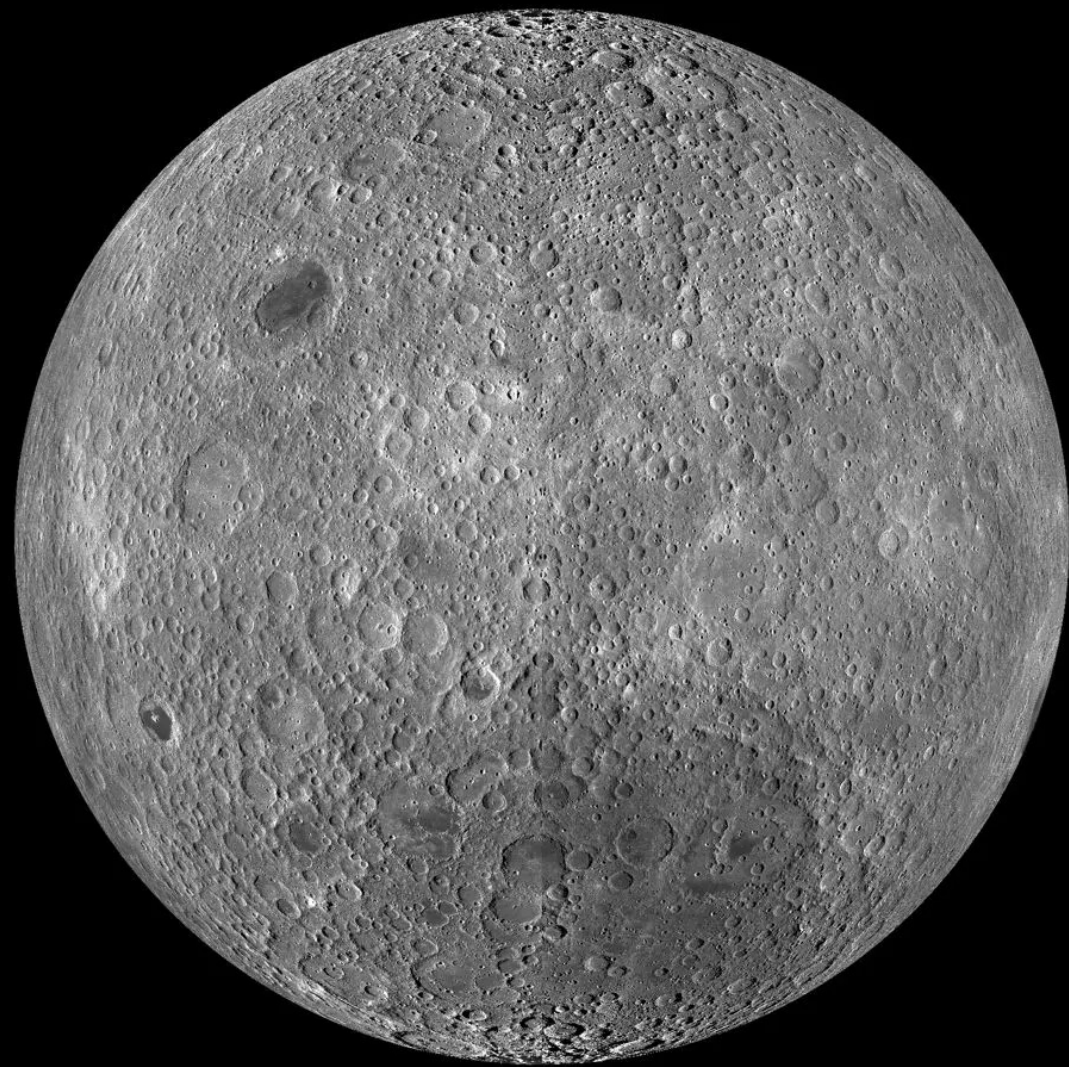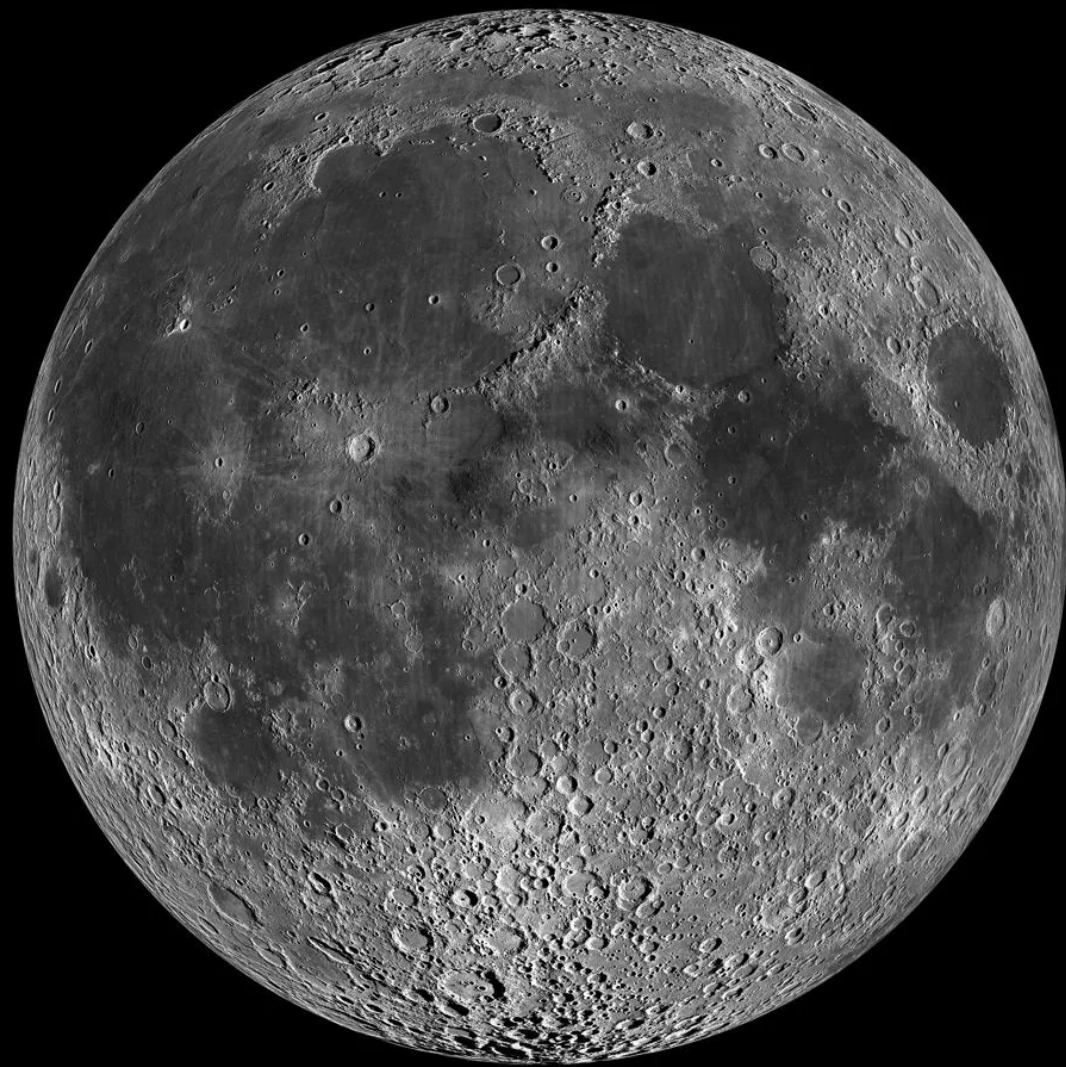
From the Earth, the Moon has a dark, invisible side. The first images of the dark side of the Moon were taken by a satellite in 1959.

However, before 1959, no one expected that the dark side of the Moon would be radically different from the visible side.

The 1959 images made an **empirical** contribution to knowledge. This new knowledge has been integrated to the extant knowledge within the extant theory about the nature of the Moon, how it was formed, etc. (extending the theory to some point).

Imagine that we are in 1959 and that the satellite has just brought images exhibiting a very strange fact X, a unexpected fact contradicting the extant theory.

This raises a double issue:

1)   Is this fact true? Are we sure it is not an artefact? Or worse, a fabrication?

2)   If it is true, then what does it mean? We need to make sense of the visible AND the invisible faces of the Moon with the same theory. Which theory can make sense of this fact? Which theory can integrate both old and new data?

The scientific community faces **ignorance**.

If there is a strong answer to the 1st question ('Yes, this is a true fact'), then ignorance is acceptable. Excited scientists work on proposing competing theories to answer the 2nd question.

If, empirically or methodologically, no strong, clear answer can be given to the 1st question ('Well, we're not sure it's a true fact'), scientists are reluctant to get to work on the 2nd question.
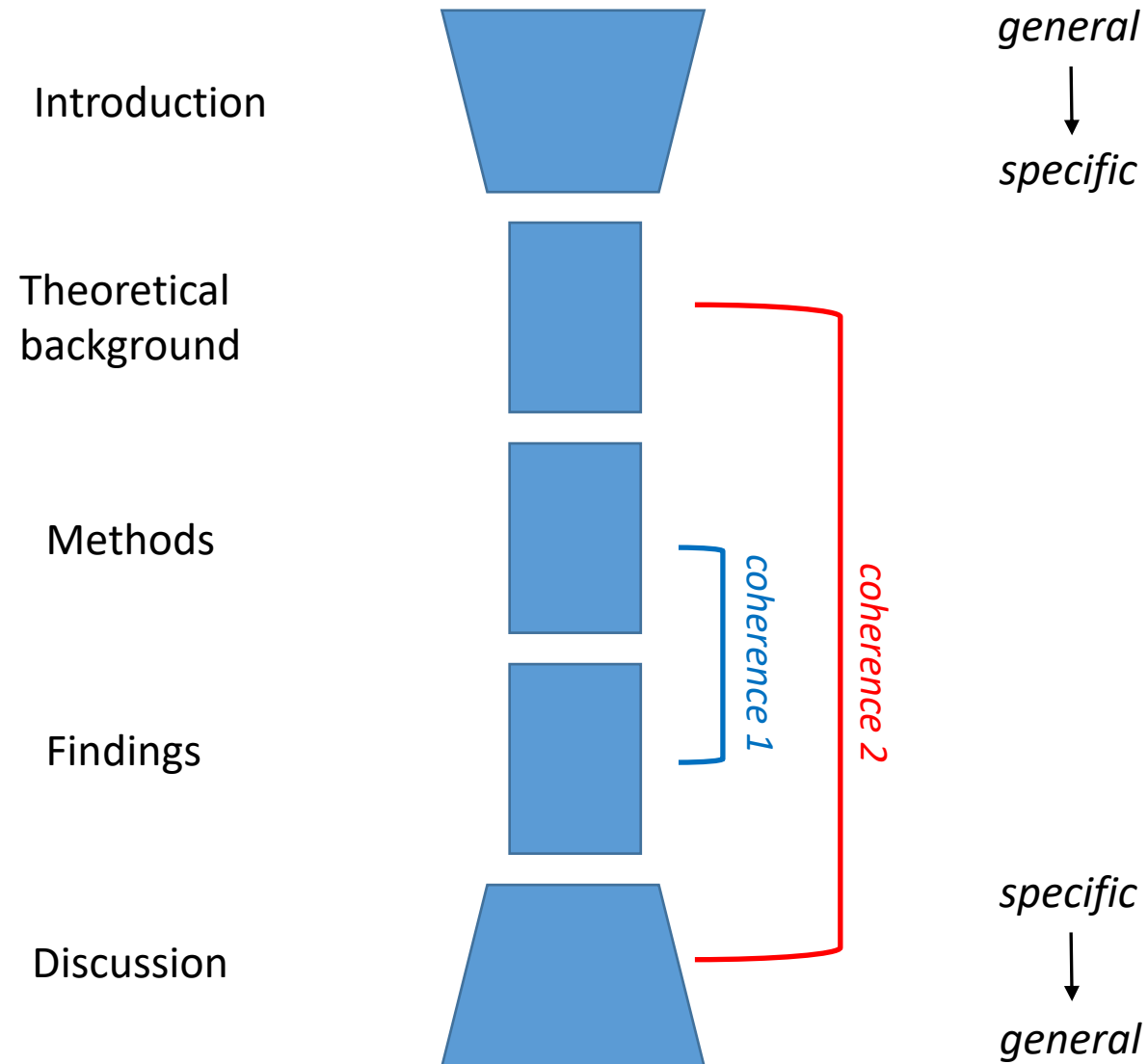
If, however, a theory T is able to make fact X more plausible (and thus discard the artefact/fabrication fear), then scientists might consent to examine the proposition T+X.

In Business & Management Studies (and in the Social Sciences more generally), question 1 is almost always a strong issue. Most new facts are unable to stand by themselves. They need a theory that makes them plausible. X is not enough. T + X is needed.

The *Theoretical Background* section serves the function of making facts plausible (i.e. the data and the findings). Facts are exposed in the *Findings* section. The *Discussion* section then unites facts and theory (T + X).

Note: For an exception to this logic, see *Academy of Management Discoveries.*

Structure of a research article in Business & Management research

Introduction

Theoretical background

Methods

coherence 1

coherence 2

Findings

Discussion

general

↓

specific

specific

↓

general

(Swales & Feak 2012)

38

From IMRAD to I**T**MRAD: Implications

Choice

Theoretical Background is different from Extant Knowledge. It's not "already there": it is a **choice** to be made.

Framing

Who am I talking with? Who is my scientific tribe? Which extant conversation should I join?

Story

Aligning T – (R) – D in a coherent manner is the key constraint.

A personal story

wrong   right

- *Human Relations*
- Qualitative research, data = interviews
- Main idea: *'Hypostatic sensemaking'*
- Though it emerged as a finding, we were (implicitly) asked to introduce the concept in the theoretical background section.
- We decided to stick to the emerging strategy.
- Paper rejected : not convincing enough, *'hypostatic sensemaking'* not sufficiently grounded into literature
- What's disturbing with this is **not** that we are asked to tell a more coherent account than what really happened in the course of the research. It's that the demand is in **contradiction with the principles** of the type of qualitative inquiry that we conducted and that is supported by the journal.
- From a knowledge viewpoint, the position of the concept in the paper is of **little relevance**. Why then is it a major issue?
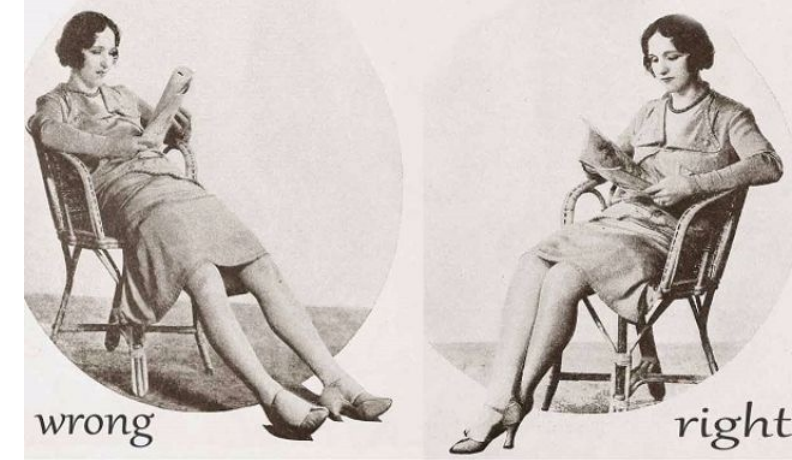
Jamais au spectateur n'offrez rien d'incroyable :

Le vrai peut quelquefois n'être pas vraisemblable.

Une merveille absurde est pour moi sans appas :

L'esprit n'est point ému de ce qu'il ne croit pas.

Nicolas Boileau, *Art poétique - Chant III* (1674)

4. Liberate the article! Some propositions

Question

Outcome — Data

Methods — Extant Knowledge & Framing

Concepts
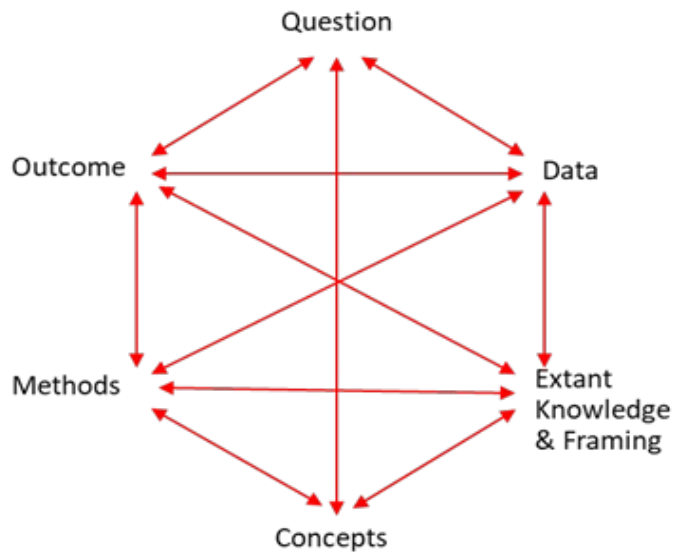
Standard ingredients, not standard stories

1. This is what I am focusing on

2. This is why it is relevant

3. This is what is known/not known (and why it needs attention)

4. This is my burning question

5. This is how I aim to address the question (theoretically/empirically)

6. This is what I did

7. This is what I found

8. This is what it means

9. This is what I add

10. This is why you should care

The standard scientific story
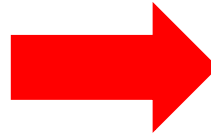
❑ Data
❑ Methods for collecting and analyzing data
❑ A question, or more generally a purpose that is knowledge-related
❑ Concepts, theories, ideas
❑ A link with extant knowledge and framing options
❑ An outcome that has some scientific worth

A list of basic ingredients

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1. This is what I am focusing on

2. This is why it is relevant

3. This is what is known/not known (and why it needs attention)

4. This is my burning question

5. This is how I aim to address the question (theoretically/empirically)

6. This is what I did

7. This is what I found

8. This is what it means

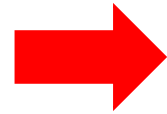9. This is what I add

10. This is why you should care

The standard scientific story

Question

Outcome

Data

Methods

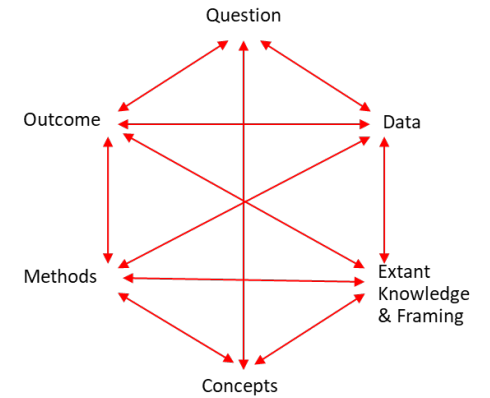Extant Knowledge & Framing

Concepts

A list of basic ingredients
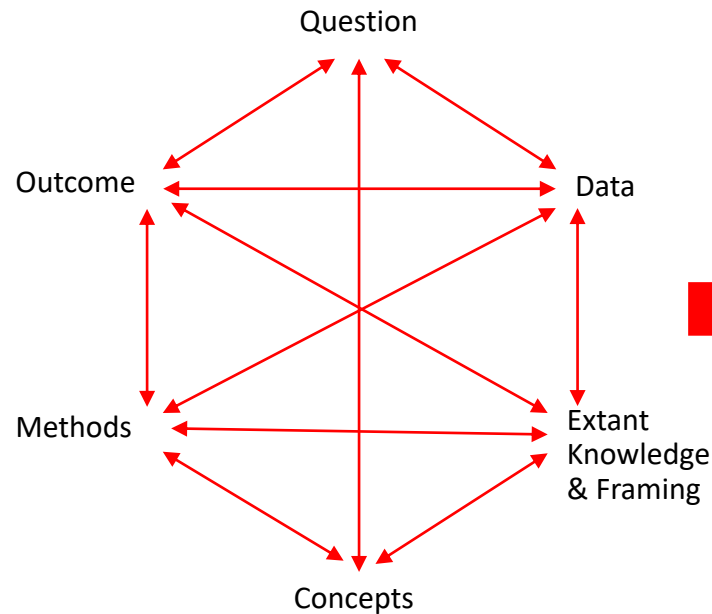
From a set of coherent ingredients, build whatever text is best for the reader, for the advancement of science, and for you (the author).

A free & adequate story

Some examples of alternative structures

The Talking Pig	*The Burning Question*	*The Abduction*	*The Exploratory Quest*	*The Plot Thickens*
1. Data	1. Question	1. Extant Knowledge & Framing	1. Extant Knowledge & Framing	1. Question
2. Extant Knowledge & Framing	2. Extant Knowledge & Framing	2. Question	2. Data 1	2. Extant Knowledge & Framing
3. Concepts	3. Methods	3. Methods	3. Question	3. Methods
4. Outcome	4. Data	4. Data ⇔ concepts	4. Methods	4. Concepts 1
5. Question	5. Concepts	5. Outcome	5. Data 2	5. Data 1
6. Methods (appendix)	6. Outcome		6. Concepts	6. Outcome 1
			7. Outcome	7. Concepts 2
				8. Data 2
				9. Outcome 2
				10. Outcome 1/2

New Rules for Editors and Reviewers

- Be suspicious of the standard scientific fable.
- Focus the reviewing process on the basic requirements: quality of ingredients, overall coherence, and readability.
- Allow authors to adopt the structure and narrative that will best serve their purpose.
- Validate any relevant, readable structure that satisfies the requirements.
- Ensure that the introduction and conclusion provide guidance to readers.

What have we got to lose ?

- **Accessibility for readers.** It can't be worse than today anyway.
- **Rigor.** Rigor is not rigidity and compliance to a standard format. Let's not take the bark for the tree. Rigor is in the substance and in the strength and coherence of the relationships between the ingredients.
- **Transparency**. Accounts of research have to fit within the unrealistic standard story and the ITMRAD structure. This favors deviance rather than transparency.
- **Quality**. Quality is not conformity to a mandatory and unrealistic template. Standard forms encourage standard thinking.

What can we gain ?

- **Honesty and transparency**, because stories could be closer to what really happened.

- **Productivity**, because of less energy spent in solving artificial problems of conformity.

- **Pleasure of reading**, because of variety, innovation, adequation between form and substance.

- **Pleasure of writing**, because of more space for honesty and creativity, less obligation to comply and tell lies.

What would it cost?

Nothing!

Merci !

Hâtez-vous lentement ; et, sans perdre courage,
Vingt fois sur le métier remettez votre ouvrage :
Polissez-le sans cesse et le repolissez ;
Ajoutez quelquefois, et souvent effacez.

Nicolas Boileau, *L'Art poétique, Chant 1*

Comments
welcome!

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