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Crafting papers for publication: Novelty and convention in academic writing

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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.

Keywords: writing, communication, novelty, convention, text-building strategies.

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> "I will tell you something that my father told me once: Your work has many things correct and many things innovative. Unfortunately, the innovative things are not correct and the correct things are not innovative." *Footnote*.

PROLOGUE

Journal editors certainly have an exciting job: not only do they read studies at the cutting edge of management research, but they also play a role in developing the community of scholars. At the same time, when one is handling large volumes of submissions, manuscripts start to look worryingly similar. This may lead to alienation, unless one acquires an interest in learning from these similarities, identifying patterns, and understanding how they speak to the norms and conventions that define academic knowledge and work. If one distances oneself from the content of submissions and their specific *foci*, papers can be viewed under a different light, not as individual products, but as communicative artifacts that constitute a genre in their own right. A number of interesting questions then begin to arise: why are academic articles written the way they are? What distinguishes a first submission from a published paper? How do we – as editors, reviewers, and readers – recognize strength and novelty in a contribution?

In 2015, with the assistance of editorial colleagues, I began running a series of workshops on crafting papers for publication on behalf of the *Journal of Management Studies* (JMS). I had been with JMS for about two years at the time, and I thought this would be a good opportunity for reaching out to the international community of PhD students and junior faculty. My interaction with a number of brilliant young scholars at various institutions all over the world raised my awareness of the normative, cognitive, and emotional underpinnings of academic writing. This editorial represents my attempt to share what I have learned from these workshops with the readers of JMS.

INTRODUCTION

There is a widespread perception that publishing in academic journals has become increasingly hard and frustrating. Journals receive a large volume of submissions, only a tiny fraction of which end up getting published or indeed manage to pass the first round of review. As our field gains recognition and legitimacy, it also becomes more crowded and more competitive, and industry standards become more sophisticated. Consequently, the threshold for getting a paper accepted has risen dramatically.

Over the past few decades, a number of books, editorials, and essays in top management journals have covered a range of questions on academic publishing, such as the meaning of theoretical contribution (Corley and Gioia, 2011; Whetten, 1989), issues of originality and relevance (Bartunek et al., 2006), scholarly impact (Ashford, 2013), writing as conversation (Huff, 1999), readers' sensemaking (Johanson, 2007), and ethics in publishing (Harley et al. 2014). The *Academy of Management Journal* (2012) recently published a seven-part series entitled "Publishing in AMJ" in which the editors provided advice and suggestions on the full range of tasks involved in the writing of a paper, from topic choice to crafting a discussion section. Taken together, these writings form a sort of meta-level discourse on what it takes to be published, in the sense that they somehow unearth the conventions of academic writing while concurrently reinforcing them.

The theorizing of academic writing has provided considerable benefits in terms of the codification of canons for rigour and relevance, sharing of best practices related to publishing academic articles, and transparency of the editorial process. At the same time, higher-level debates on 'how to' be published portray a fundamental tension between novelty and convention. Journals (and their reviewers) encourage originality and single out novelty as a major criterion for assessing the value of a contribution. Yet, scholars work within shared conventional understandings that constitute industry standards and are often codified by journals in their missions and submission guidelines. These conventional understandings give rise to a 'double bind' (Bateson, 1956) whereby authors are somehow 'instructed' to be innovative and surprise the reader while at the same time being expected to abide by the normative boundaries of correctness. This puzzle is well captured by the paradoxical quote at the beginning of this article, which is extracted from the award-winning Israeli film *Footnote*. *Footnote* tells the story of an academic who has never published anything significant in his career, and his only claim to fame is being mentioned as a footnote in the work of a more famous scholar. The quote highlights the impossibility of simultaneously achieving innovation and correctness in the pursuit of academic knowledge. But is this really the case?

In this editorial, I address the tension between novelty and convention from a communication perspective, drawing on my experience as an editor, reviewer, and author. I propose that *academic writing is an act of communication, based on an established set of conventions, involving a plurality of actors (authors, editors, reviewers, and other scholars), and aimed at conveying a core message (contribution) to an audience of (management) scholars and practitioners*. The corollary to this argument is that effective writing requires an understanding of the use of academic conventions and an appreciation of how editors, reviewers, and readers in general make sense of what we write.

In the following sections, I discuss how different social actors and established conventions intervene in the construction of academic articles. First, I 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 offer insights from a practical exercise I conducted at the workshops, my purpose here being to appreciate the use of conventions as a powerful tool for communicating a message and conveying a contribution 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.

THE REVIEW PROCESS: THE ROLE OF EDITORS AND REVIEWERS

JMS currently receives around 800 submissions to its regular issues every year, but if one then adds submissions to special issues and other commissioned content, the figure rises to over 1,000. The desk rejection rate currently stands at around 59%. While this level might sound alarming, it can be actually beneficial to authors: if a manuscript is underdeveloped or at an early stage, authors will be told just a few days after submission and will receive a constructive set of comments from one of our editors. This also relieves reviewers of the burden of reviewing low-quality submissions. The rejection rate in later rounds (after review) is around 33%, while the acceptance rate is approximately 5%. Overall, our review process is fairly efficient: it currently takes an average of 2.5 days for an initial decision and an average of 81 days for a decision after review. Typically, manuscripts will be revised between two and four times before acceptance; however, we endeavour to make a decision regarding eventual publication after the second round of review. Table 1 outlines the interaction between editor, reviewers, and authors during the various stages of the review process at JMS.

The review process is often perceived as an antagonistic exercise in which editors and reviewers focus their efforts on spotting flaws and weaknesses in submitted manuscripts. From a communication perspective, however, the review process can be more appropriately considered as a double blind dialogue between one or more authors and a team of reviewers, guided by an editor who knows both. The purpose of this dialogue is to distil a contribution through several rounds of feedback and to communicate it to an external audience (see figure 1). The initial submission will contain a message that is noisy, confusing, and possibly inconsistent. However, if editors and reviewers see potential in the message, they will work together with the authors to strengthen it as far as possible.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

Manuscripts that are rejected usually present pretty common flaws (see Clark et al. 2006), but the reasons for rejection vary between the desk review and after review stage. At the desk review stage, editors perform a careful – but fairly swift – assessment of the submitted manuscript. They look at whether it fits the aim and scope of the journal, meets minimal academic quality standards, contains the kernel of a contribution, and is likely to be received favourably by reviewers. Conversely, manuscripts that are sent out for review are subjected to a more stringent degree of scrutiny, in which each individual section of the manuscript is carefully considered. Editorial decisions after review benefit from the valuable comments of expert reviewers. In making sense of a submitted manuscript, editors and reviewers ask questions about the paper's motivation, its conceptual clarity and grounding in the literature, the rigour of its methods, the link between empirical findings and theoretical interpretation, and the strength and novelty of its contribution. These questions presuppose institutionalized expectations and shared assessment criteria by which editors and reviewers intervene, albeit indirectly, in the process of academic writing. Indeed, reviews and editorial letters, while subjective, largely rely on established templates that reflect industry standards. They enact conventional understandings of scientific knowledge, which, through iterative rounds of feedback, ultimately affect the core message conveyed in a given submission.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

The model in figure 1 underlines the fact that as academic authors, we are writing for an audience. Our job is to generate interest and communicate clearly. Effective writing means putting a message across. Usually, a 'revise and resubmit' or 'reject' decision means that the authors have not communicated, or that they have not transmitted their message as effectively as they should have. Therefore, when they revise a manuscript, their job is to read the reviewers' reports carefully and figure out why they have failed to communicate. In order to do so, it is important for them to appreciate how reviewers, who act on behalf of the audience, make sense of a submitted manuscript. In the next section, I discuss a practical exercise that I designed for my JMS workshops to convey a real-time reading experience and illustrate how conventions can be effectively leveraged to transmit powerful messages.

CONSTRUCTING THE MESSAGE: TEXT-BUILDING STRATEGIES AND THE DOUBLE EDGE OF CONVENTIONS

At my workshops, I run a speed-reading exercise in which I divide participants into two groups and assign one article that has been published in a top journal to each of them. The two articles differ in terms of kind (conceptual vs. empirical), the topic under investigation, and the authors' nationality (European vs. American). I ask participants to read the introduction to their article very quickly, and to tag each paragraph in the margins with a phrase or sentence that sums up the main point. I tell participants that they are expected to complete the exercise within one to two minutes. In the discussion following the exercise, I work with the participants on deconstructing the authors' text-building strategy: that is, developing an understanding of how a text has been deliberately constructed to convey a message to an audience (Geertz, 1988).

The first aspect that emerges from the discussion is clarity of communication, which makes the two articles relatively easy to follow despite the complexity of the topics under investigation. Of course, the articles represent final products that have gone through many iterations, whereas if we had the opportunity to access previous versions, we would probably see the gaps in communication that were picked up by the reviewers and then addressed by the authors. I then ask what makes these introductions effective and easy to follow. The participants realize that a striking feature of the two introductions is the similarity of their text-building strategies. Each individual paragraph forms a building block along a line of argument that unfolds as follows: describing the topic under investigation and justifying why it matters, positioning the topic within relevant theoretical debates, formulating a research question based on what is or is not known about the topic, anticipating the findings and intended contribution of the study, and providing the reader with a roadmap. This concatenation of paragraphs leads to the construction of the core message.

The speed-reading exercise reveals that there are conventional ways of writing academic papers and that effective communication occurs when ways of writing are consistent with ways of understanding. The use of conventions is particularly conspicuous in the introductory section. This section is highly codified because it 'sets the hook' for the reader (Grant and Pollock, 2011). Each of the subsequent sections follows a specific rationale, although their general purpose will be to unpack what is stated in the introduction. The speed-reading exercise also highlights that editors and reviewers tend to make sense of submitted manuscripts semiotically: that is, they look at what the text *does.* In assessing a manuscript, reviewers focus on the authors' text-building strategy: they assess how authors construct meanings along a line of argument, and how this line of argument might lead to a contribution.[1]

From a semiotic point of view, all academic articles look alike. They tell the story of a theoretical puzzle in search of a solution. An article is driven by a theoretical question that generates a process of investigation, and leads to a solution. The answer to the original question is the article's contribution. The story follows a conventional

[1] Semiotics is the study of meaning making. It deals with the way in which meaning a message is produced and communicated through a system of signs and conventions.

structure, which is reflected in a standard sequence of sections: title, abstract, introduction, theoretical background, methods, findings or results, discussion, and conclusion. The story is constructed through a semiotic architecture of complexity consisting of sections, paragraphs, and sentences, each of which performs a particular role. Sections define the standardized format of a journal and are associated with expectations on the part of readers. Paragraphs within sections develop specific ideas along a line of argument. Well-written papers usually contain one idea in each paragraph, which is usually stated in the first sentence. Sentences within paragraphs rhetorically signal specific aspects of the core argument and alert readers to critical issues. A familiar example is the setting of a theoretical gap. This is typically achieved by contrasting what is known with what is not known through the use of adversative adverbs such as 'however', 'while', 'yet', 'nevertheless', 'unfortunately', 'regrettably', and so on.

A semiotic reading of academic papers indicates that authors engage their readers through the use of shared codes and conventions that guide the readers along a predetermined path and convey a particular message. In this regard, conventions are a double-edged sword that can be conceptualized as a structure-agency problem. On the one hand, conventions restraint the author's agency. For example, journals' editorial guidelines specify word limits, expectations about contributions, referencing formats, writing style, and so on. The implication of this constraining aspect of conventions is that 'you cannot use the text as you want but only as the text wants you to use it.' (Eco, 1979, p. 9). On the other hand, conventions do a great deal of work on behalf of the authors and help them communicate their message to the reader. Conventions are sensegiving mechanisms because they delimit the ways in which a text can be read and understood, and thereby orient the reader toward a preferred direction.

To sum up, academic papers are indeed creative endeavours, but they also follow strict conventions. Academic writing requires navigating the tension between novelty and correctness. Successful authors typically address this tension through 'optimal distinctiveness' (Brewer, 2003): that is, they develop text-building strategies that allow them to achieve an optimal balance of inclusion and distinction. As a result of optimal distinctiveness, journal articles contain elements of novelty and convention, deviation and reproduction, and surprise and predictability to varying degrees (see Lampel, Lant, and Shamsie 2000; Patriotta and Hirsch, 2016).

JOINING ACADEMIC CONVERSATIONS: THE ROLE OF OTHER SCHOLARS

> "…books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told."
> Umberto Eco, Postscript to the Name of the Rose, p xxiv.

Scholarship is a collective endeavour aimed at enhancing knowledge in a given field of studies. Journal articles are written by one or more authors for an audience, in conversation with the ideas of other scholars and through interactions with reviewers and editors. They are communicative acts based on established conventions, and involving multiple constituencies.

References are probably the most conspicuous manifestation of conventional writing (recently, journal articles will often end with a list that includes somewhere in the region of 100 references). Semiotically, they signal the presence of other scholars in our own work. The use of references in academic articles reminds us that manuscripts are never written from scratch; rather, they are inserted in broader conversations about a particular topic. Umberto Eco (1984) has noted that it is not true that works are created by their authors; they are created by other works and speak to one another (see also Patriotta, 2016). He viewed knowledge as a timeless, universal library in which books interact with each other to create new knowledge.

Similarly, Anne Huff (1998) has used the metaphor of the conversation to characterize interactions among scholars. She believes that writing for scholarly publication is about joining conversations within a particular field of interest in order to improve understanding of a particular phenomenon. Some conversations are well-established and easier to join, but they tend to take place within a crowded space, and thereby constrain the scope of a contribution. Newer conversations offer greater scope for contribution, but authors will need to spend more time legitimizing their chosen focus. Starting new conversations is a challenging endeavour, but if it is successful, it can lead to groundbreaking contributions.

The metaphor of writing as a conversation suggests a step-by-step approach to conceiving a paper and developing powerful contributions. This type of approach foreshadows a text-building strategy that unfolds according to the following 'moves': 1) identifying a 'good' conversation; 2) analysing the conversation; 3) adding to the conversation. Conversations provide the baseline for a contribution: that is, they fix a reference point for establishing what is known in a particular area of investigation. If a contribution extends or challenges what is known, then joining a conversation will help authors identify and address gaps that are in urgent need of attention. Therefore, appreciating how conversations are set up and developed is essential for improving the effectiveness of our writing and conveying a novel message.

By setting authors' writing endeavours against the backdrop of existing knowledge in a given field, the conversation metaphor reiterates the tension between novelty and convention. Just like conventions, conversations both enable and constrain authors' agency. On the one hand, they help authors position their argument within existing debates and thereby set up the baseline for a contribution; indeed, contributions are strong and novel insofar as they build on what has gone before. On the other hand, conversations delimit the space for contribution; academic writing largely occurs in previously mapped out – and often crowded – territories, and is subordinate to collective concerns. This being the case, carving out a space for a contribution has become increasingly difficult.

GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS: THE ROLE OF THE READER

Effective communication requires cooperation on the part of the reader (Eco, 1979). As the principal recipient of an academic article, the reader is a part of the picture in the generative process of the text. This has a number of implications for academic writing. First, communication with the reader relies on shared expectations. To communicate a message, authors must assume that the set of expectations they rely on is shared by their prospective readers. In this regard, conventions provide a shared code through which a core message can be communicated and understood by its intended audience.

Second, effective writing presupposes an ability to 'sit on your reader's chair' (Johanson 2007): that is, to imagine a model reader, understand how this reader attempts to make sense of what he/she reads, and foresee his/her resulting interpretation of the text. Sitting on the reader's chair amounts to ensuring that a prospective reader is able to deal interpretatively with the text in the same way as the author deals with it generatively (Eco, 1979). This is easier said than done, because authors and readers follow different sensemaking processes. Authors have a comprehensive grasp of the story from the outset. They have full knowledge of all the times, people, places, and events. They know on page 1 what is going to happen on page 20. Conversely, readers make sense of a text in real time, as they go along. They have no background knowledge and no insight into the author's thought processes. An important task in scholarly writing, therefore, is to fill the author/reader sensemaking gap. The introductory section is crucial in this respect: not only does it operate as an impression management device, setting the hook for readers, but it also provides them with the information they need to make sense of what is to come and assess the value of the intended contribution (Johanson, 2007).

Third, the author's sensegiving is very important for helping readers' sensemaking. Readers need to be consciously guided from what is known to what is unknown, and then back to what is being added to what is known. Sensegiving amounts to tugging readers down a predetermined path and orienting their interpretation in a preferred direction. The text-building strategies I discussed earlier are expedients for giving sense to the readers and telling them how the intended message should be received. Text-building strategies engaged in through the effective use of conventions induce the reader to 'read the text as it wants to be read.'

Fourth, as editors and reviewers act on behalf of readers, understanding their sensemaking is likely to increase our chances of having papers accepted (Johanson, 2007).

Based on the common reasons for rejection I have mentioned above, and taking into account what we have learned so far about readers' sensemaking, it is possible to outline practical ways of anticipating reviewers' concerns and improving communication (see table 2).

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

Although conventions standardize a message to some extent, each individual reader will appropriate the message or contribution in a unique way. According to Eco (1989), all texts have a degree of openness that makes them susceptible to different interpretations to varying degrees. It is this openness that keeps scholarly conversation alive and produces advancements of knowledge in a particular field. Accordingly, a contribution is strong and novel insofar as it maximizes openness to further developments. Journal articles typically conclude by outlining avenues for future research, and while the concluding section is also part of a conventional scheme – and is therefore ritualistic to a certain extent – it nonetheless invites further questioning and problematization, and so the very closing point itself becomes, in effect, an opening point.

UNDERSTANDING ACADEMIC ARTICLES AS SEMIOTIC ARTEFACTS

Corbett et al. (2014) have argued in a highly insightful JMS editorial that academic articles are examples of storytelling (see also Harley and Hardy 2004). Editors, reviewers, and readers will consider some stories to be more legitimate, more interesting, more powerful, or more novel than others. Language and the effective use of conventions play a critical role in conveying powerful messages and achieving strength and novelty of contributions. 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).

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

The semiotic architecture displayed in table 3 suggests two important implications in regard to how successful authors navigate the tension between novelty and convention. First, by providing the framework for constructing and delivering a contribution, a semiotic architecture allows for conceptual innovation. In other words, conventions provide the backdrop for the production of novelty. Second, in their assessment of a manuscript, reviewers will, at least initially, focus on the paper’s semiotic architecture, and highlight their concerns about the semiotic unfolding of the argument (what the text *does*). From this perspective, semiotic awareness can help authors fix potential flaws in their line of argument and address the reviewers’ feedback practically.

CONCLUSION

In this editorial, I have looked at academic writing as a collective endeavour whereby authors, construct and communicate meaning to an external audience through the use of established conventions. Specifically, I have considered how authors navigate the insidious tension between novelty and convention by engaging in a dialogue with editors, reviewers, other scholars, and readers.

If journal articles are largely based on conventions, then academic writing is a craft that can be learned through training. Obviously, a knowledge of conventions is not a substitute for good ideas and quality writing, but an awareness of them – what they do and how they can be mobilized to deliver an original message effectively – is essential in order to increase our chances of having papers accepted. Perhaps more importantly, a knowledge of conventions can act as a vehicle for stimulating more imaginative forms of writing. Howard Becker (1982) has argued that mavericks in any creative field are former mainstreamers who have grown uncomfortable with conventions (see also Patriotta and Hirsch, 2016). This insight suggests that knowledge of conventions is essential in order to deviate from conventional modes of expression.

Conventions reflect dominant views in science and culture at a particular point in time and, as such, they largely reproduce the world as it is. It is important to recognize, however, that they are tacit agreements, unwritten rules of the game. Conventions are not set in stone; rather, they reflect a negotiated order (Strauss, 1978) and are therefore amenable to change. Altering them can prove difficult, however, because they also express the degree of legitimacy and success of a field in some way. Reflecting on the first forty years of ASQ in 1996, Jim March expressed wonder at the marked improvement in the average quality of published articles, while simultaneously stressing the consequences of the tension between novelty and convention:

> "The mean is up. Just as clearly, I think, the variance is down. There has been considerable long-term movement toward serious professional standards and standardization. Although casual observations and unsupported imaginations have maintained a certain place and even secured a kind of breathless cachet, they have for the most part been replaced by trained competencies. It is an exchange that has its costs, but on the whole, the vapidity of many contemporary contributions

> seems to me less a source of dismay than is the vacuousness of many earlier ones."(March, 1996: 280).

The trend that an imaginative mind like Jim March was able to capture more than twenty years ago is still an ongoing one, and has possibly even gained strength. *De facto* standards and career pressures often induce authors to adopt safe text-building strategies based on optimal distinctiveness. An appreciation that the vapidity of competent writing is somehow preferable to the vacuousness of unsupported imagination is, indeed, meagre consolation. The search for optimal distinctiveness may represent a compromise that leads to an incremental reproduction of existing knowledge and ultimately maintains the status quo. In order to stay alive and be revitalized, fields require a certain degree of risk-taking, which is often reflected in the adoption of novel practices and styles. As it moves towards a stage of maturity, our own field is increasingly in need of conversation starters, new ways of envisioning model readers, and authors who are able to develop more imaginative text-building strategies.

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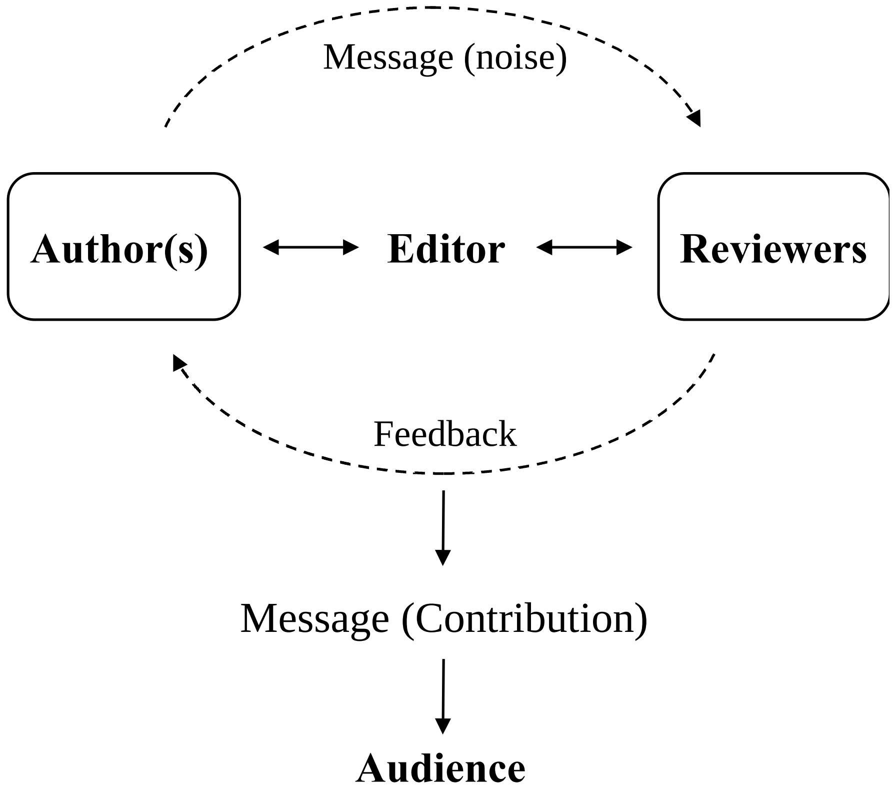

Figure 1: The review process from a communication perspective

Table 1: Stages of the review process at JMS[2]

- Editorial office receive manuscript
- Editorial assistants allocate manuscript to Editor
- Desk Review (within 5 days, takes 2.5 days on average) => desk reject/send out for review
- Selection of reviewers (minimum 6)
- Manuscript sent to 3 reviewers
- Reviewers return reviews (4 weeks)
Reviewer
- Makes recommendation on publishing
- Writes comments to Editor (optional)
- Writes comments to Author
Editor
- Reads manuscript
- Reads reviews
- Writes decision letter
Repeat for each revision

[2] It is standard practice at *JMS*, once a paper has been through one or more reviews, to seek the views of a second editor. This is done to ensure consistency in decisions as well as to gain additional input. We try to introduce the second editor to the process as early as possible, so that the author(s) have the benefit of their input before the paper has been through many revisions

Reasons for rejection	*Suggestions*
Motivation: Is the paper driven by a clear purpose? Does the paper address issues that are in urgent need of attention? Does the paper conceptualize a relevant theoretical puzzle (vs. gap spotting)?	Tell the reader what your paper is about and why he/she should care. Formulate one research question and stick to it. Establish your paper's contribution in the first two to three pages of the paper. Successful authors typically develop one core message in the introductory section and then carry it out throughout the rest of the paper
Conceptual clarity: no definition of core constructs, conceptual density, weak grounding in the literature, poor analytical integration among concepts.	Define concepts the first time they appear and stick to those definitions (do not use terms and concepts interchangeably). Be parsimonious in the use of concepts as each of them is likely to be grounded in a specific literature. Also, using too many concepts will make analytical integration more difficult.
Methods: Inconsistencies in the research design. Lack of detail about sampling, data collection and data analysis procedures. Transparency of the link between data and interpretation.	Provide a rationale for whatever you do in your paper. For example, when describing your research methods, tell readers what you did, how you did it, and why. This will increase the integrity of your findings and the credibility of your claims.
Findings: Interpretive claims not supported by empirical evidence. Use of empirical evidence not supported by theoretical narrative. Misalignment between data and theory.	Develop a powerful narrative through both showing and telling ("this is what I observed, this is what it means"). Do not make unsubstantiated claims in the hope that the reader will trust you (telling without showing) Do not put the burden of interpretation on the reader (showing without telling).
Contribution: Research question not answered. Summative (rather than formative) arguments. Lack of discussion of how findings map into extant literature. So what? – Extending and/or challenging previous work. Lack of theoretical and managerial implications.	Provide an answer to your research question: readers would normally expect that you answer your question at the beginning of the discussion section. Explain how your findings extend existing knowledge, how they can be generalised to other settings outside the domain of your study, and what practitioners can learn from them.

Table 2: Understanding and addressing readers' sensemaking

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