



Writing academic papers and reviews

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[Reasons for failing publication]

- The research contributes insufficiently to the discipline/ is merely descriptive/ replicates existing works without adding anything new
- The conceptual framework (i.e. lit review) is poorly developed/ lacks precise definitions of core concepts and theoretical underpinning
- The methodology used is flawed (e.g. small sample/ poorly defended choice of case studies / questionable validity and reliability of measures)
- The writing style is disorganized and the article is poorly structured

[Structure of an (empirical) paper]

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| ■ Title | ■ 8-15 words |
| ■ Abstract | ■ 150-250 words |
| ■ Keywords | ■ 5-8 keywords |
| ■ Introduction (added value/results) | ■ 500-1000 words |
| ■ Literature review/ conceptual framework (expectations) | ■ 1000-2000 words |
| ■ Data collection/sampling/ measurement/methodology | ■ 500-1000 words |
| ■ Analysis of results (analytical narrative/descriptive & inferential stats) | ■ 1000-1500 words |
| ■ Conclusions/ discussion (summary results, limitations, normative considerations and recommendations, future research) | ■ 1000-1500 words |
| | ■ Total 4000 – 7000 words |

[The TITLE]

- Should attract readers' attention
- Should be formal rather than informal
- Should clearly reflect the main theme
- Should be specific
- Keywords are likely to be included
- Should answer:
 - What is researched?
 - How is the topic researched?
 - With whom? population / units of measurement
 - Where / in what context is the study conducted?

[The TITLE: Suggestions]

- Main theme/topic: research
(+ population + geographical area)
- *Value Profile and Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence: A Survey of Student Smokers at the University of Pretoria*
- *Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk*
- *Rules Rather than Discretion: The Inconsistency of Optimal Plans*
- *The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*
- *Lionizing Machiavelli*
- *The Strength of Weak Ties*

The TITLE: Less fortunate choices (in my view...)

- *More than a One Night Stand !*
- *Institutions and Models of Trade Policy: a Difficult Marriage*
- *A Common European Foreign Policy after Iraq?*
- *The Transparency of the ECB Policy: What Can We Learn from Its Foreign Exchange Market Interventions?*
- *Men Taking Up Career Leave: An Opportunity for a Better Work and Family Life Balance?*

[The Abstract]

- Start with a brief theme sentence that captures readers' attention
- Should then indicate the main purpose of the study
- Could indicate the academic / practical importance
- Methodology should be briefly introduced
- Main findings should be summarized
- May include a statement of how gaps in the literature are addressed
- May include a statement of normative implications and recommendations

[The Abstract (2)]

- Is NOT an introduction
- Is a summary of the article, nothing new should be included
- Is a self-contained single paragraph so that the reader gets a clear idea of the entire content of the article without the need of reading it

[The Abstract (3a)]

- This is the first paper to analyse the labour-market assimilation of foreign (i.e. non-citizen) workers in Italy.
- It considers the daily wages and the days of employment of male workers in WHIP, a matched employer-employee panel dataset, from 1990 to 2003. The traditional human-capital approach is augmented by a control for the probability of staying abroad, modelled by aggregate variables of the origin country. The human-capital variables considered are age and experience, both in and out of employment.
- What emerges from the empirical analysis is discouraging. Foreigners who are able to get higher wages are the least likely to stay, but assimilation profiles do not change when return migration is taken into account. Foreigners employed in the private sector earn the same wages as natives upon entry into employment, but the two wage profiles diverge with on-the-job experience. Neither do foreigners assimilate from an employment perspective: a differential in employment between foreign and native workers is found even upon entry, which increases over time. In the construction sector the wage and employment differential is even larger, while manufacturing and services follow the aggregate trend. Africans immigrants have the fewest career prospects while Eastern European and Asian workers are less far behind.
- The general pattern for foreign workers appears to be a fragmented career, either restricted to seasonal or temporary jobs or alternating between legal and illegal employment.

[The Abstract (3b)]

- Can international judges be relied upon to resolve disputes impartially? If not, what are the sources of their biases? Answers to these questions are critically important for the functioning of an emerging international judiciary, yet we know remarkably little about international judicial behavior.
- An analysis of a new dataset of dissents in the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) yields a mixed set of answers. On the bright side, there is no evidence that judges systematically employ cultural or geopolitical biases in their rulings. There is some evidence that career insecurities make judges more likely to favor their national government when it is a party to a dispute. Most strongly, the evidence suggests that international judges are policy seekers. Judges vary in their inclination to defer to member states in the implementation of human rights. Moreover, judges from former socialist countries are more likely to find violations against their own government and against other former socialist governments, suggesting that they are motivated by rectifying a particular set of injustices.
- I conclude that the overall picture is mostly positive for the possibility of impartial review of government behavior by judges on an international court. Like judges on domestic review courts, ECtHR judges are politically motivated actors in the sense that they have policy preferences on how to best apply abstract human rights in concrete cases, not in the sense that they are using their judicial power to settle geopolitical scores.

[The Abstract (3c)]

- *Machiavelli scholarship is prolific but claustrophobic. Even though chapter 18 of The Prince advises the aspiring leader to emulate both lion and fox, commentators ignore or devalue the lion and focus on the fox. Machiavelli is thereby depicted as a champion of cleverness and deception, and not much else.*
- *This article takes up the lion. It argues that Machiavelli's lion is not a simple and violent beast, but is rather a complex tutor that complements clinical and lonely foxiness with crucial injections of virility and community.*
- *Democracy can entail the representation of discourses as well as persons or groups.*
- *We explain and advocate discursive representation; explore its justifications, advantages, and problems; and show how it can be accomplished in practice. This practice can involve the selection of discursive representatives to a formal Chamber of Discourses and more informal processes grounded in the broader public sphere.*
- *Discursive representation supports many aspects of deliberative democracy and is especially applicable to settings such as the international system lacking a well-defined demos.*

[The Abstract (3d)]

- We study unemployment insurance for workers who sequentially sample job opportunities. We focus on the optimal timing of benefits and the desirability of allowing borrowing and saving.
- When workers have constant absolute risk aversion, a simple policy is optimal: a constant benefit during unemployment, a constant tax during employment, and free access to a riskless asset. With constant relative risk aversion, optimal policy involves nearly constant benefits; more elaborate policies offer minuscule welfare gains.
- We highlight two distinct policy roles: ensuring workers have sufficient liquidity to smooth their consumption; and providing unemployment subsidies to insure against uncertain spell duration.
- We propose a theory of the global production process that focuses on tradeable tasks, and use it to study how falling costs of offshoring affect factor prices in the source country.
- We identify a productivity effect of task trade that benefits the factor whose tasks are more easily moved offshore. In the light of this effect, reductions in the cost of trading tasks can generate shared gains for all domestic factors, in contrast to the distributional conflict that typically results from reductions in the cost of trading goods.

[The Introduction]

- State first the broad theme of the study
 - Write the opening statement in plain English, without jargon, make it catchy, use examples/illustrations
- Emphasise academic and/or practical importance (why should WE read it?)
- Summarise available literature and most important previous studies that are relevant to this research
 - Concise review of most recent works that directly relevant
- Indicate gaps, inconsistencies and/or controversies in the literature, point out your contribution/added value
 - Precise and explicit statement of gaps, may discuss a main contribution

[The Introduction (2)]

- Indicate:
 - core research question/problem addressed
 - specific research objectives (to determine, investigate, compare, evaluate, illustrate...)
 - context of the study (country, industry, group, institution, firm)
 - unit of analysis (individuals, laws, firms, governments, families, migrants)
- Outline the structure of the article

[The Literature Review]

- A lit review is NOT a mere summary of the relevant previous research
- It is a RE-view: a critical evaluation, reorganization and synthesis of relevant previous works
- The objective is to identify gaps, inconsistencies and/or controversies

[The Literature Review (2)]

- For a good lit review, you need
 - to find the appropriate literature,
 - to manage the information collected, possibly with the use of software for publishing and managing bibliographies
 - (e.g. EndNote, Reference Manager, ProCite, BibTex, RefWorks)

[The Literature Review (3)]

- A lit review generally includes (not necessarily in this order)
 - brief discussion of how the topic falls into a broader theme of the discipline
 - definitions of key concepts/constructs
 - discussion of relevant research findings/measurements of construct
 - theoretical support for the hypotheses being tested

[The Literature Review (4)]

- A lit review is NOT
 - a mere chronological summary of previous works
 - a mere list of theories/ concepts / constructs
- A lit review should synthesize, digest, critically compare and evaluate
- Need to show that you have read, understood and evaluated previous works

Structure of Literature Review

- The “funnel approach”: place the specific topic into an appropriate broader context, then focus on more specific issues
- Sections should logically follow one another, a logical “story line”
- Use brief but detailed headings
- Always provide very clear conceptual definitions for the abstract concepts/constructs used
- Should provide direct and logical motivations for theory-based hypotheses or for a model that generates them

[Lit Review Writing Style]

- Should be accessible to an intelligent layperson
- Use clear accessible language
- Provide evidence of your argument
- Paraphrase, explain things using your own words, use direct quotations sparingly
- Avoid repetitions
- Provide overviews and build bridges
 - At the start of major section, provide overviews of the contents to follow
 - Provide summaries at the end of major sections
- Keep it short, concise, logical, well defined and clear

[The Methodology]

- Describes the steps followed in the execution of the study
- Should allow readers to evaluate the appropriateness of the methods used, the validity and reliability of findings
- Should enable replication
- Includes information on, e.g.
 - target population, research context, unit of analysis, sampling, respondent profile, data collection methods, measurements

[The Methodology (2)]

- We have collected information on 20,824 implementing measures of 821 directives adopted in fifteen member states between December 1978 and February 2004 from the *CELEX* dataset of the European Union. The directives have been chosen randomly from the dataset and the implementing measures have been classified according to whether they have been adopted by national parliaments, by the cabinet or other executive institutions or by subnational authorities
- *Parliamentary involvement* takes the value of one if at least one national instrument of implementation has been adopted by the parliament in the process of transposition of a given directive in a given member state
- The absolute difference between the position of this minister and that of the farthest coalition party on the left-right scale measures the intensity of conflict underpinning the adoption on this measure. Where more than one implementing instrument has been adopted, *Conflict intensity* is the mean value across all the (executive and legislative) national transposition measures of the directive.
- *Amendment prerogatives* takes the value of one if there is no formal government advantage on amendments (Austria, Belgium, Finland, Luxembourg and Britain), two if there are some government prerogatives on amendments (Germany, Ireland, and Portugal), and three if the government has last offer authority or gatekeeping power on amendments (for the remaining seven countries).

[The Results]

- present the findings of the research in a concise, non-repetitive way
- should be comprehensively enough to properly justify conclusions
- should enable readers to understand exactly what you did in terms of data analysis and why
- consist of
 - analytical narratives
 - descriptive stats (may be shifted to method section) and inferential stats (justify the choice of stat technique)

[The Results (2)]

- Do not use tables and figures if content can be said in a paragraph
- Use tables to present detailed findings
- Use figures when it is essential to report the main findings in a graphical format
- Tables and figures should NOT repeat the same info, should NOT be overused (3-5 tables, 1-2 figures)
- Info on tables and figures should always be discussed in the text, but tables and figures should also stand on its own

[The Results (3)]

- A analytical narrative should be a concise, clear analytical story, with logical links and a purpose
- Keep in mind the difference bw
 - descriptive stats (report data, interpret only speculatively)
 - inferential stats

[The Results: Inferential Stats]

- Remind the core issue tested in the hypothesis
- Formulate correctly null and alternative hypothesis
- Indicate and justify the choice of the significance tests employed
- Indicate the assumptions of such tests, explain the process employed to test them, and the conclusions
- Use tables to summarize the results
- Give a statistical AND substantive interpretation of the results

Inferential Stats: Technique

- We use an event count model (specifically, the negative binomial) to assess the empirical validity of our argument. Event count models have become the standard approach in political science applications where the question of interest concerns the number of events that occur over a particular period of time, such as in the present case, where we focus on the number of article changes made to a bill over the course of the legislative process.
- In most event count formulations, the systematic component of the parameter λ_i , which is defined as the *rate of event occurrence* for an observation period i , is expressed as an exponential function of a set of covariates in X . Thus, for a random event count Y_i , the rate of event occurrence is defined simply as $\lambda_i = e^{X_i\beta}$. The stochastic component of λ_i is most often assumed to follow the Poisson distribution, which implies that the events accumulating during the observation period are *conditionally independent* and that the rate of event occurrence is *homogeneous* across any given time period.
- These are clearly strong assumptions that are probably violated in our case. In particular, we expect that once party groups have expended the legislative resources to make one substantive change to a government draft bill, it is marginally less costly to make several more changes. This is known as *positive contagion*, which results in *overdispersion* in the random event count, Y_i . The general solution for dealing with overdispersion involves the use of a distribution known as the negative binomial, which allows λ_i to vary across an observation period (see King 1989) and which allows for estimation of the degree of overdispersion as a parameter from the data.

[Inferential Stats: Interpretation]

- One of the first messages we draw from the results in Table 2 is that policy divisions between coalition partners have the expected impact on the number of article changes made to government bills. The findings are consistent with our argument that bills dealing with issues that are more divisive for the government are changed more extensively in the legislative process.
- Specifically, from the third column in the table, we see that over any given period of legislative review, a one-standard deviation increase in issue divisiveness for the coalition increases the expected number of article changes in a bill by approximately 30%.
- In contrast, we find no evidence that opposition issue divisiveness has an impact on changes in government bills. This null finding is at odds with much of the conventional wisdom in comparative research that portrays legislatures in these “consensus” systems as arenas in which opposition parties can exert real influence in policymaking.

[Conclusion / Discussion]

- Reinststate the main purpose of the study
- Reaffirm its practical/academic importance of the contribution
- Summarize the results in relation to each stated objective
- Related the results back to the previous lit and findings
- Provide possible explanations for unexpected findings
- Highlight main limitations of the study
- Discuss practical, policy-relevant and normative implications
- Discuss non-obvious future directions of research

[What to publish]

Degrees of innovation	Innovative features: theory, methodology and data		
1	New theoretical development (e.g. formal model)	New methodology (e.g. fuzzy sets) employed for testing an established theory using old data	Original data collected to test an established theory, using a conventional method
2	Development of new theory, tested on old data but employing a new method	New methodology employed for testing an established theory using original data	Original data collected to test a new theory, using a conventional method
3	Original theoretical expectations tested employing a new methodology and using original data		

[What to publish (2)]

- Your best output
- Your most innovative output
- Your most defensible output
- Don't try to do too much: save the next bright idea for a second paper

[Writing papers]

- The structure is NOT the way you write papers
- Write, write, write weekly, if not daily
- Be flexible, use 'rolling hypotheses'



[Writing papers (2)]

- First draft: get your ideas down on paper, work on lit review, hypotheses, data, methodology, results
- Second draft: improve structure, get the flow right, build bridges, provide overviews
- Third draft: improve style, get it to read right
- Fourth draft: work on the details (referencing, headings, tables), work on the conclusion, introduction, abstract, title

[Sample articles]

- Economics
 - Lazear, E. P. and Rosen, S. (1981) 'Rank-Order Tournaments as Optimum Labor Contracts', *Journal of Political Economy* 89 (5): 841-64.
 - Lochner, L. and Moretti, E. (2004) 'The Effect of Education on Crime: Evidence from Prison Inmates, Arrests, and Self-Reports', *American Economic Review* 94 (1): 155-89.
- Labor studies / policy studies
 - Baccaro, L. and Simoni, M. (2008) 'Policy Concertation in Europe: Understanding Government Choice', *Comparative Political Studies* 41 (10): 1323-48.
 - Iversen, T. and Stephens, J. D. (2008) 'Partisan Politics, the Welfare State, and Three Worlds of Human Capital Formation', *Comparative Political Studies* 41 (4-5): 600-37.
- Political theory / thought
 - Dryzek, J. and Niemeyer, S. (2008) 'Discursive Representation', *American Political Science Review* 102 (4): 481-93.
 - Lukes, T. J. (2001) 'Lionizing Machiavelli', *American Political Science Review* 95 (3, September): 561-75.
- Political Science
 - Huber, J. D. (1996) 'The Vote of Confidence in Parliamentary Democracies', *American Political Science Review* 90 (2): 269-82.
 - Martin, L. W. and Vanberg, G. (2005) 'Coalition Policymaking and Legislative Review', *American Political Science Review* 99 (1): 93-106.
- Sociology
 - Chiesi, A. M. (2007) 'Measuring Social Capital and Its Effectiveness. The Case of Small Entrepreneurs in Italy', *European Sociological Review* 23 (4): 437-53.
 - Granovetter, M. (1985) 'Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness', *American Journal of Sociology* 91 (3): 481-510.

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- Dunleavy, P. 2003. *Authoring a Ph.D.: How to Plan, Draft, Write and Finish a Doctoral Thesis or Dissertation*. London: Macmillan.
- Kotzé, T. 2007. *Guidelines on Writing a First Quantitative Academic Article*. Mimeo, University of Pretoria
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- <http://www.roie.org/how.htm>