Research Exchange - February 24, 2021 "Advancement at JAIS"
with Dorothy E. Leidner and Roman Beck

Dorothy E. Leidner  
*Baylor University, dorothy_leidner@baylor.edu*

Roman Beck  
*IT University of Copenhagen, beck@itu.dk*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://aisel.aisnet.org/research_exchange](https://aisel.aisnet.org/research_exchange)

**Recommended Citation**  
[https://aisel.aisnet.org/research_exchange/5](https://aisel.aisnet.org/research_exchange/5)

This material is brought to you by the AIS Recordings On-Demand at AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). It has been accepted for inclusion in AIS Research Exchange by an authorized administrator of AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). For more information, please contact *elibrary@aisnet.org*. 
Common Grounds for Paper Rejection

• Insufficient contribution
• Insufficient theoretical contribution
• What’s new
• Not very interesting
• Not very insightful
• I don’t see anything... new, valuable, interesting...
But What is a Contribution?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is NOT a Contribution</th>
<th>What IS a Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addition of a moderator</td>
<td>Interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing theory in a new context</td>
<td>Insightful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypotheses without an overarching lens</td>
<td>Novel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contribution: The creation of something worthy of attention and reflection.
To Achieve Contribution, One Must Develop Distinction

Distinction: that which sets the paper apart.
Five Areas of Distinction

Theory

Method

Framing

Phenomenon

Composition

JAIS Journal of the Association for Information Systems
Phenomenon

- Nature of the phenomenon
- Importance of the phenomenon to the discipline
- Impact of the phenomenon beyond the discipline
- Theory as phenomenon
- Data as phenomenon
Framing

- IS-Centric
- Justification of Research Question/Objective
- Single vs. multiple streams of literature
- Superficial: gap in what has been studied
- Moderate: gap in what has been found
- Reflective: insights from what has been found
Theory

- Uses: Theory as law, lens, paradigm
- Types: Meta, Grand, Mid-range, Micro theories, Accumulated body of knowledge as theory
- Approaches: Theory borrowing, blending, and building
- Purposes: Theories for analysis, explanation, prediction, explanation (and predication), design (and action)
Theory Contribution by Theory Type

**Theory as Law**
- Testing theory under new boundary conditions
- Expanding theory
- Scale development
- Falsifying causal relationships
- Developing new (mostly micro-level theory)
- Combining theories

**Theory as Lens**
- Theorizing: thick description of practices, narratives, making sense of breakdowns
- Problematization: challenging assumptions of prior theories; providing alternative explanations
- Contributes a new understanding to a phenomenon

**Theory as Paradigm**
- Theorizing: novel perspective of phenomenon
- Developing new theoretical constructs and relationships
- Providing basis for mid- and micro-level theorizing

*Insights that go beyond diligent reporting of empirical findings and the validation of existing knowledge (Alvesson & Sandberg 2013)*
Theory and Phenomenon

- **Theory**
  - New
    - Contribution hinges on using new insights into an existing phenomenon that has been hard to explain
  - Existing/Mature
    - Contribution hinges on using the phenomenon to expand, prove, or falsify the existing theory

- **Phenomenon**
  - New
    - Contribution hinges on quality of the theory and importance of the phenomenon
  - New
    - Contribution hinges on using new phenomenon to push the boundaries of the existing theory
Theory and Phenomenon

Persuasive explanation of causal mechanisms and persuasive explanation of previously misunderstood/ill-understood aspects of the phenomenon

First to apply the existing theory to the mature phenomenon -- need to deliver new elements to the theory and new insights to the phenomenon. Framing and method will be of particular importance

Persuasive explanation of causal mechanisms and persuasive justification of the importance of the phenomenon will be crucial

Need to demonstrate how the theory boundaries were pushed by applying the theory to a new phenomenon – why should the theory NOT be expected to hold.
Method

- Strength of the data
- Innovation in data collection and analysis
- Method bar is constantly rising in all areas – case study, experiments, design science, econometrics, survey studies
Composition

- Composition quality should intensify rather than distract from the contribution
- Theorizing is particularly dependent upon scholarly composition
Creating Distinction

Theory
- Original
- Innovative
- Highly rigorous
- New to IS
- Mature in IS
- Emulative
- Mechanical
- Colossal
- Scholarly
- Elegant

Phenomenon
- Superficial
- Mature
- Emerging

Composition
- Deeply Reflective

Framing

Method
To publish in “elite” journals, one must develop distinction in multiple areas.

Our notion of what constitutes a valuable knowledge contribution needs to be divorced from our notion of theoretical contribution.

Not every one of our research endeavors merits an A publication...but it is still worth our time and effort to explore, to seek, to develop, to extend and to expand our own knowledge.

The ultimate challenge is to provide something new and different, not so new and different so as to render the past unrecognizable but new and different enough to render the future imaginable.
Thank you!