FROM THE EDITORS

CRAFTING REFERENCES IN *AMJ* SUBMISSIONS

As Jobs showed it off to me, he caressed the stockade panels and recalled a lesson that his father implanted deeply in him. It was important, his father said, to craft the backs of cabinets and fences properly, even though they were hidden. "He loved doing things right. He even cared about the look of the parts you couldn't see."

–Isaacson, *Steve Jobs*: 6

A manuscript's references have been described in a number of ways. References connect a scholar's work to what has already been said (Becker, 2007), identify the conversants being joined (Huff, 1999), and acknowledge intellectual indebtedness to those who have come before (Cronin, 1982). References also shape the consensus to which one is contributing (Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997) while setting the stage for new theoretical argumentation (Sutton & Staw, 1995). More metaphorically, references represent the "frozen footprints in the landscape of scholarly achievement" that "bear witness to the passage of ideas" (Cronin, 1981: 16). To some readers, references stand as the subconsciously hidden part of a manuscript—the unseen parenthetical content that gets skipped as the prose is consumed. To other readers, however, references become an unobtrusive measure of craftsmanship. Seeing what is cited (and how and where it is cited) can provide insights into the time and care that went into a manuscript's construction.

Unfortunately, the crafting of citations and references is a topic rarely covered in the pages of management journals (for exceptions, see Campion [1997] and Harzing [2002]). The purpose of this editorial is therefore to offer advice on citations and references for scholars who are writing manuscripts for submission to the *Academy of Management Journal*. Some of my advice will focus on avoiding obviously shoddy craftsmanship, as in a cabinet whose shelves are crooked, uneven, or bowed. Other pieces of advice will go beyond that goal by describing how to construct references that have refined craftsmanship, as in a cabinet that looks sturdy and attractive in front and behind.

AVOIDING SHODDY CRAFTSMANSHIP

The first (and admittedly modest) goal when constructing citations and references is avoiding obvious mistakes that undermine the scholarship exhibited in your work. Avoiding such mistakes will not, in and of itself, "impress" readers and reviewers. It will, however, remove a source of distraction, freeing readers to focus on the substance of your work.

Format Properly

Consider this scenario. You are an *AMJ* reviewer who is reading an original submission, with your review being due in the next week. As you pore over the manuscript, you realize that the references are formatted according to another journal's style guide (say, *Administrative Science Quarterly* or *Journal of Applied Psychology*). What attributions could conceivably be made in this scenario? Maybe the manuscript has already been rejected somewhere? Or perhaps the author is a first-time submitter to *AMJ*? Or maybe the author just has a poor attention to detail? Of all the attributions that can be made in this situation, none of them are beneficial to the author. It is therefore important to attend to *AMJ*'s style guide—available on our website and in the February issue of the *Journal*—and limit formatting mistakes as much as possible. As Silvia (2007: 89) argued, "Your friends down the hall can see your sloppy reference list; the critical, anonymous peer reviewers should see your best work."

Be Accurate Bibliographically

One function of references is to guide the interested reader to further information on your particular topic. That guidance is obviously most effective when the cited source appears in the references, with the author's name spelled correctly, the listed year accurate, and the proper volume and page numbers provided. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Indeed, one study of 355 references drawn from five experimental psychology journals found that 112 (32%) had at least one

error, with mistakes in the title and authors being most common (Faunce & Job, 2001). Such mistakes are easily avoided. All that is required is a proofread that is dedicated solely to checking the reference against the PDF or paper copy of the source in question.

ACHIEVING REFINED CRAFTSMANSHIP

Although ensuring that references are "cosmetically correct" is important, it does not itself signal a deep pride in one's work. Nor is it likely to trigger positive attributions about your work on the part of readers and reviewers. How then can you craft references that are refined, polished, and first-rate?

Be Accurate Substantively

In a review of referencing errors in the expatriate failure literature, Harzing (2002) found that substantive misrepresentations of cited content were more common than inaccuracies in bibliographic details. For example, articles cited studies on expatriate failure rates when those works did not actually contain such rates. Avoiding such misrepresentations requires taking the time and care to capture the nuance in what you are citing. Consider this example:

> Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) showed that trust is predicted by three characteristics of the trustee: ability, benevolence, and integrity.

What's the missing nuance? Mayer et al. (1995) is an *Academy of Management Review* piece, with the authors building a theoretical model by drawing on prior work and their own conceptual insights. Strictly speaking, theory papers do not "find" or "show" anything: it takes empirical data to do that. If the intention is to showcase some of the empirical findings that helped inspire Mayer et al.'s (1995) theorizing, then referencing those primary studies would be appropriate. If the intention is to summarize Mayer and colleagues' own findings, then here is the more appropriate passage:

> Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) theorized that trust is predicted by the ability, benevolence, and integrity of the trustee—propositions that were supported by their subsequent empirical work (Davis, Schoorman, Mayer, & Tan, 2000; Mayer & Davis, 1999; Mayer & Gavin, 2005).

Harzing (2002) provides some guidelines for ensuring that citations accurately represent the sub-

stance of the cited work. One guideline, quite simply, is to ensure that you have read the original source for yourself, rather than mimicking someone else's citation of that source. Another guideline is to carefully consider which references belong with which clauses in a given sentence. Such nuances are lost when authors merely include all citations in one string at the end of compound or complex sentences.

Acknowledge Seminality

If one function of references is to give credit to prior work, it becomes important to give credit where credit is truly due. Consider this passage:

> Procedural justice represents the perceived fairness of decision-making processes and is fostered when procedures afford input, consistency, accuracy, bias suppression, representativeness, correctability, and ethicality (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001).

Although Colquitt et al. (2001) provided the first meta-analysis of the procedural justice literature, that article did not introduce, define, or develop the construct. Anecdotally, it seems that meta-analyses often find their way into definitional passages without being identified as such. Passages that define constructs or that make reference to theories should credit the seminal works that kicked off that stream, as in the below:

> Procedural justice represents the perceived fairness of decision-making processes and is fostered when procedures afford input (Thibaut & Walker, 1975), consistency, accuracy, bias suppression, representativeness, correctability, and ethicality (Leventhal, 1980).

If authors want to supplement such passages by referring the reader to recent narrative or meta-analytic reviews, that can be done by appending "for a recent review, see . . . " to the citation. Relative to pieces that introduce constructs or theories, articles that reveal empirical findings will have a more limited "shelf life." Those articles should also be given proper credit, however, at least until subsequent studies qualify, reframe, or debunk their findings. One way to give those articles that credit is to avoid what Harzing (2002) calls "empty references." Those references occur when authors cite articles that merely refer to earlier work rather than providing original empirical evidence.

Consider Rigor

When citing empirical work, another element of craftsmanship is taking into account rigor. For quantitative articles, authors should give precedent to studies high on construct, internal, and statistical conclusion validity. For qualitative articles, authors should give precedence to studies that gathered and coded compelling data using appropriate methodologies to draw rich theoretical insights. Considering rigor in this way helps ensure that the most persuasive knowledge is what gets transmitted through (and perpetuated in) the literature. By extension, conference papers typically hold more limited value as references for empirical findings. Although they are often refereed, the "bar" for selection for a conference program is lower than the standard for acceptance at most journals. The same could be said for book chapters. Although I have edited, authored, and cited many book chapters, my own view is that refereed narrative reviews, conceptual papers, and empirical studies deserve precedence when they cover the same terrain as a book chapter—particularly given that they are more accessible to most readers. The exception, of course, would be when a book chapter is the seminal citation in a given stream of work, or when there is no refereed substitute for it that is suitable.

Optimize Scope

One of the most difficult issues to manage in the crafting of references is scope: how many citations should be provided for a given passage? On the one hand, omitting important references—especially seminal references—fails to give credit where credit is due. Such omissions also deprive the reader of relevant signposts for learning a literature. On the other hand, too many references can distract readers while adding unnecessary length to a manuscript. As Feldman (2004: 5) advised, "the references should be exhaustive rather than exhausting." Consider this passage:

> Most personality traits can be subsumed under five broad dimensions (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 1985; Norman, 1963; Tupes & Christal, 1961), with meta-analyses supporting the predictive validity of the "Big Five" for job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hough & Furnham, 2003; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000).

Does that passage possess optimal scope with respect to its references? It seems to adequately cover the seminal origins of the Big Five, but does it adequately cover the meta-analyses? The passage omits one "meta-analysis of meta-analyses" that maximizes sample size (Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001). It also omits a recent review that revises some effect size estimates upwards by using observer ratings of personality (Oh, Wang, & Mount, 2011). Of course, if those two citations are added the passage will be contributing nine references to the manuscript. What is therefore required is a "Goldilocks-style" happy medium in order to achieve a scope that is "just right." Achieving that happy medium is often subjective and may be at odds with the desire to acknowledge seminality. In this case, my own instinct would be to omit Tupes and Christal (1961) because it was a technical report and Norman (1963) because its outlet falls outside the typical intersection of management and social psychology. Hough and Furnham (2003) could be omitted because it is a book chapter that may not be accessible to many readers. Finally, the other two meta-analyses are subsumed by Barrick et al. (2001). The resulting passage is below, with the "e.g." alerting the reader that neither string of citations is exhaustive.

> Most personality traits can be subsumed under five broad dimensions (e.g., Goldberg, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 1985), with meta-analyses supporting the predictive validity of the "Big Five" for job performance (e.g., Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001; Oh, Wang, & Mount, 2011).

Note that reasonable scholars can disagree about how much more optimal the second passage is than the first. What is important is that authors take the time to deliberate these issues in order to make careful, reasoned decisions.

CONCLUSION

A good paper is usually noteworthy in a number of respects. Maybe its opening pulls the reader in and sets the stage for what is to come. Maybe its handling of theory is persuasive, clear, and nuanced. Or maybe the writing style is crisp, distinct, and uncluttered. All of those elements are important, and all of them reveal a pride in one's work. That said, evidence of craftsmanship can be found as much within parentheses as outside them. Attending to the accuracy, seminality, rigor, and scope of your references therefore becomes a vital part of constructing an *AMJ* submission.

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