Research Article Introduction Outline

***Instructions:***

*This document is a checklist/outline recommended by Grant and Pollock (2011)[[1]](#footnote-1) for constructing an AMJ-worthy introduction. You can use this document proactively to create your introduction from scratch or retrospectively to review your completed introduction. Simply edit the gray areas corresponding to a recommendation from the Grant and Pollock (2011) AMJ article.*

*All the best,*

*Ace*

Overarching goal of introduction (checklist):

1. Capture reader’s attention (Y / N)
2. Identify the “conversation” (Y / N)
3. Explain the paper’s contribution (Y / N)
4. Articulate how you will accomplish goals (Y / N)

Common Pitfalls to Avoid (checklist):

1. Fail to motivate and problematize (Y / N)
2. Lack of focus (Y / N)
3. Overpromise (Y / N)

**Establish Importance**

* Who cares/So what? (Capture audience [quote / trend / anecdote / rhetorical question])

*[Insert your text here.]*

* What is your research topic or question?

*[Insert your text here.]*

* Why is this research interesting and important in…?
  + Theory:

*[Insert your text here.]*

* + Practice:

*[Insert your text here.]*

**Highlight Past Research**

* What do we know? How are we already informed on the topic or research question?
  + Key theoretical findings:

*[Insert your text here.]*

* + Key empirical findings:

*[Insert your text here.]*

* What is the unaddressed puzzle, controversy, or paradox? Choose from the following:
  + Synthesized coherence: Enter two different conversations and bridging them?

*[Insert your text here.]*

* + Progressive coherence: Identify an ongoing conversation and describe how it needs to move forward?

*[Insert your text here.]*

* + Noncoherence: Present competing perspectives and explain how you will resolve them?

*[Insert your text here.]*

* How is this study problematized? Choose from the following:
  + Incompleteness: the topic needs to be developed further (more to know)?

*[Insert your text here.]*

* + Inadequacy: the topic fails to incorporate important perspectives (critical of existing literature)?

*[Insert your text here.]*

* + Incommensurability: the topic is altogether inaccurate?

*[Insert your text here.]*

* Why does this need to be addressed? (So what?!)

*[Insert your text here.]*

**Describe Current Study**

* What will we learn?

*[Insert your text here.]*

* How does this study *[change / challenge / advance]* researchers’ understanding?
  + Consensus shifting: challenge widely held assumptions and describe implications for future research?

*[Insert your text here.]*

* + Consensus creation: clarify the lines of debate or resolve a conflict?

*[Insert your text here.]*

* What are the contributions of the study?
  + Theory?

*[Insert your text here.]*

* + Practice?

*[Insert your text here.]*

**Common Mistakes**

* Fail to motivate and problematize
  + Assume it is obvious
  + Assume there is inherent value in being “the first” to do something
  + Focus more on “gap filling” than addressing a question, problem, puzzle, or paradox
* Lack of focus
  + Try to cram too much in; becomes long and rambling
  + Try to use too many rhetorical fireworks and never say what the paper is about and why we should care
  + Spend too much time describing the structure of the paper
* Overpromising
  + Set high expectations that don’t deliver
  + Research questions and claimed contributions in introduction don’t match the rest of the paper
  + Make claims so extravagant they seem outlandish and self-serving

1. Grant, A.M. & Pollock, T.G. 2011. From the Editors - Publishing in AMJ - Part 3: Setting the hook. Academy of Management Journal, 54(5): 873-879. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)