

# Making research/interventions in our field: A modest proposal for ASQ and AMJ

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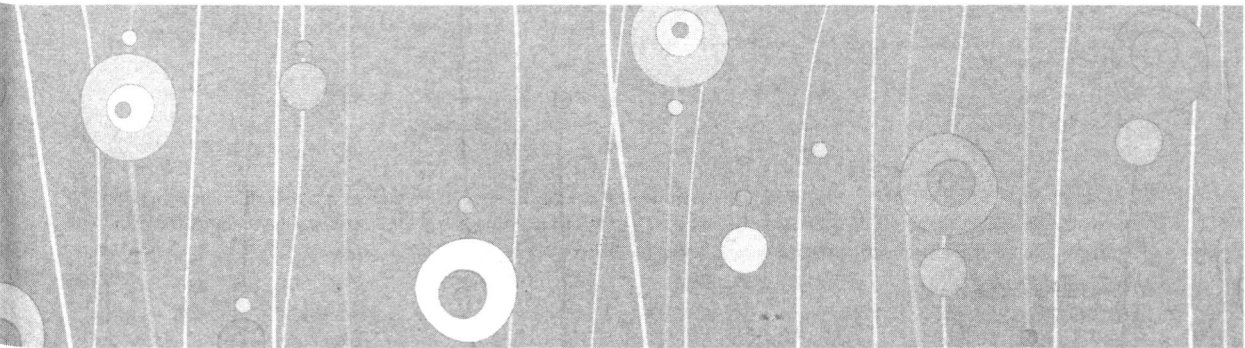
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## Making Research/Intervention in our Field: A Modest Proposal for ASQ and AMJ

William R. Torbert

This modest proposal about the guidelines that all article submissions for *ASQ* and *AMJ* will be asked to follow during the years between 2015 and 2018 is itself framed as a form of research on the future. In research on the future (Ogilvy, 2002), the initial article (e.g. this one) may be conceived primarily as an active intervention intended to influence readers' imaginations and further inquiries by portraying a radically alternative future to current trends in their field. In other words, the future scenario portrayed will show, not just incremental accumulation and single-loop correction to current-paradigm work, but rather double-loop transformations of the norms and institutions of the field.

Later steps in this research/intervention process can document the degree to which this initial article and later related initiatives and dialogues influence practitioners and institutions in the field (in this case AoM academics and their top empirical journals) to change their paradigms, theories, methods, practices, and products. For example, in this particular case one can later compare how many articles in *ASQ* and *AMJ* included the properties recommended below in the 2002–2005 period (0) with the number that come to include the recommended properties in 2015–2018?

In this case, the projected future scenario involves the Academy of Management changing its election system so as to elect a fulltime CEO of AoM from among its academic members for a non-renewable three-year-period, starting in 2009. Each such CEO implements the pre-existing strategy, but also runs for the office on his or her distinctive strategic priorities, which are given preference insofar as they are not in conflict with the pre-existing strategies during his or her period of office, and then become the governing strategy for the following three years. For example, one of the initiatives of the 2009 AoM CEO is to create an annual poll that rank orders what members consider the most important questions in the field, with sufficient attendant demographic data (e.g. age, gender, academic rank, university type, etc.) to permit analyses of how different subgroups' ranks differ.

Within this future scenario frame, the AoM CEO elected in 2012 has run for office on a vision of integrating quantitative, qualitative, and action research, with strategic priorities that include the following broad guidelines for *ASQ* and *AMJ* article-submissions:

- 1 Each article will include explicit commentary on the ways in which its reported research interweaves quantitative, qualitative, and action research methods, engaging Alain Badiou's thesis about the relationship of mathematics, time, and action (Hallward, 2003).
- 2 Insofar as the article is quantitative in nature, its findings will not only achieve currently normative degrees of statistical significance, but will not be considered for publication unless its principle independent variable accounts for at least 20% of the variance in the principle dependent variable (although this guideline alone may panic current empirical researchers, it is hypothesized to become easier to attain as the following guidelines are also met).
- 3 Insofar as the article is qualitative in nature, its findings will not only meet current best practices in qualitative validity and reliability testing, but also will be considered for publications only if it includes a '1st person' research section in which the researchers describe in their own 'critically subjective'

voices how the experience of the research has influenced their views of the topic, of their methods, and of themselves (Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Foldy, 2005).

- 4 Insofar as the article is intervention-research-oriented, its findings will include a '2nd person' research section that represents the distinctive voices of non-authorial participants in the research (Reason and Bradbury, 2007), as well as a description of the ethical safeguards exercised among the participating research/practitioners during the course of the action/study (Institutional Review Board approval of research will, of course, not be necessary for research that is paid for by the client system and incorporates these '2nd-person' research characteristics).
- 5 Studies focusing primarily on the present and the future will be given equal consideration with studies focusing primarily on the past (Senge et al., 2004).
- 6 Studies focusing primarily on double-loop transformation and triple-loop realignments among mission/paradigm, strategy/theory, performance/method, and outcomes/data will be given preference over mere single-loop hypothesis testing (Torbert and Associates, 2004).

It will obviously be in the interest of PhD programs seeking to prepare their students for such guidelines to require quantitative, qualitative, and action research courses (as only one major U.S. doctoral program in the organization sciences currently does). They will also want to highlight how 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-person intervention/research methods triangulate with one another, and how increasing the number of methods used in given study increase the likelihood of successfully accounting for larger proportions of the variance in critical relationships.<sup>1</sup>

## NOTE

1 To be precise, 81 different types of methods ( $3 \times 3 \times 3 \times 3$ ) become available when one investigates the full spectrum of 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-person voice 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-person practice, single-, double-, and triple-loop awareness and change, in the past, present, and future (*ibid*, 220–224).

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