

THE USC WRITING CENTER PRESENTS...

THE NOVELTY MOVES:

**Explaining the Originality of Your Research in
the Academy, on the Job Market, and Beyond**

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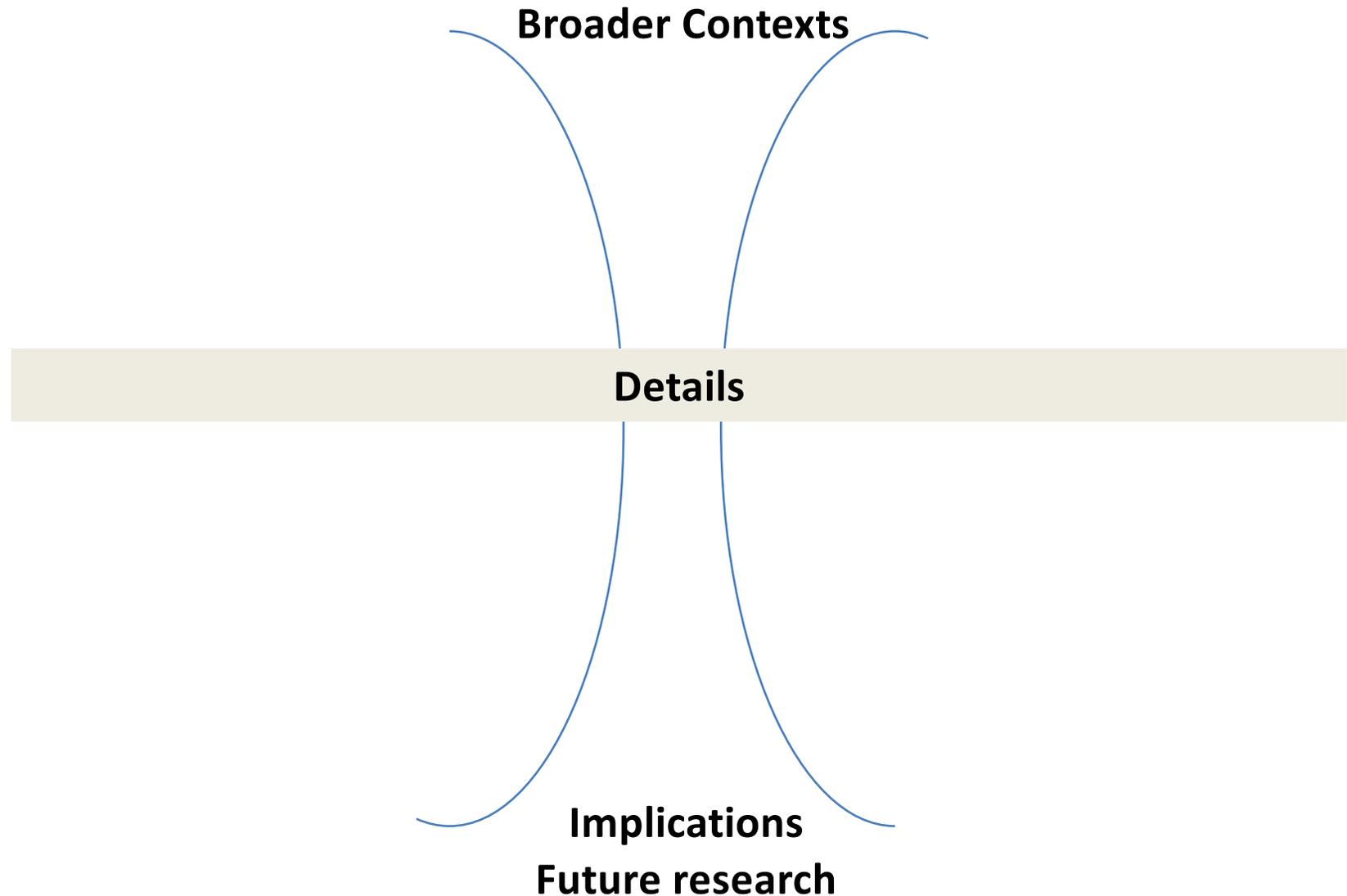
This workshop for graduate students presents four rhetorical “moves” that communicate why and how your work is an essential contribution to your field. These well-established moves can help you structure a job letter, a dissertation introduction, a conference presentation, or a literature review of journal articles and papers. While the method is applicable to graduate students in any discipline, these moves will be particularly helpful to students in STEM fields.

I. Introducing the 4 “Novelty Moves”

There are three basic types of research

Experimental	Problem/Solution	Theory-Building
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the exact mechanism causing the fishhook effect for particle separation?• What happens to particles sent through an inhomogeneous magnetic field?• What risk do hurricanes present to offshore wind farms?• Do men and women use metaphors differently in speech?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can we improve fault analysis in reactors with support vector machines?• Can the GAB model be improved by adding a fourth constant?• Can we develop sodium-ion batteries to provide a cost-effective means for long-term energy storage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can we better understand the role of nostalgia in forging immigrant identities?• How are 19th C discourses of sexuality and animality related?• Can we develop a framework for understanding creativity that can help us develop UI tools to support creative processes?

All three types move from BROAD to narrow back to BROAD



Research in most fields tells a similar research story

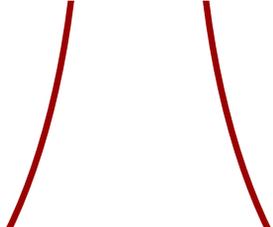
There's a compelling need for more research on this!



So, here's what we did



And here's what we found



And here's what it means

Introductions need to tell a particularly compelling story

There's a compelling need for more research on this!

So, here's what we did

And here's what we found

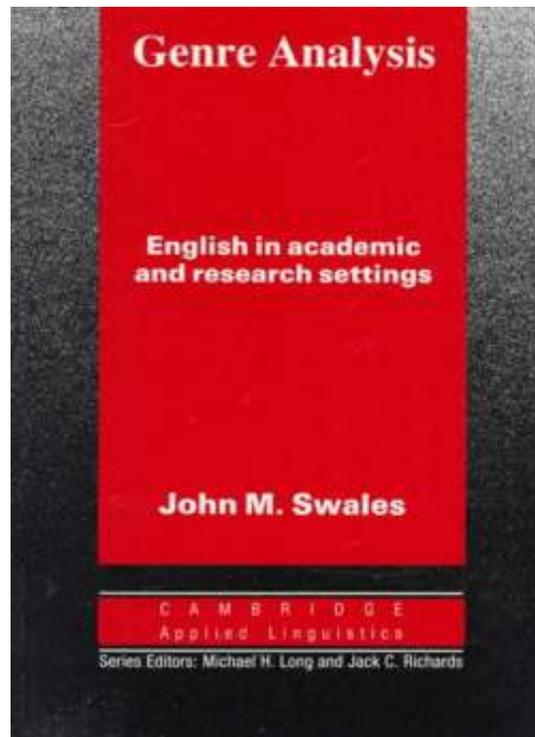
And here's what it means

Unfortunately, the introduction is often the hardest—yet most critical—part of the project to write



Because we often struggle to situate our research within its broader contexts

Fortunately, linguists have analyzed the introductions of published articles and revealed consistent patterns or “moves”



We call these moves the “Novelty Moves”

1. Explain the Significance

*Why should a wider audience care?
How are people being affected?
What’s the real world context?*

2. Describe the Status Quo

*What is currently known?
What are people doing to
address the issue?*

3. Identify a “Gap”

*What is the problem?
What is missing or unknown?
What is the flaw?*

4. Fill the Gap

*How does my work solve the problem?
How does my work address the issue in
a new way?
How does my work extend or develop
current knowledge?*

What does it mean, and what does it take, to keep a work identity alive? **Scholars have investigated** identity work in organizational contexts characterized by strong cultures, tight communities, and strict display rules, showing how people strive to fit into demanding roles without losing their individuality. Economic volatility and technological change, **however**, have led more people to work outside such strong contexts as independent workers loosely connected to organizations or selling directly to the market. For these workers, **the availability** of institutionalized frameworks to orient their identity work is, **at best, elusive**. **Thus, we conducted** a qualitative study of independent workers who were facing chronic uncertainty about the stability and meaning of their work identities.

Significance

Status Quo

Gap

Fill the Gap

2. Identifying the “Novelty Moves”

Unscramble this introduction

A	Thus, to increase the sparkles available for unicorn consumption, this paper presents a model for developing hydroponic sparkle gardens from which sparkles can be harvested and used to maintain the flying capabilities of the unicorns we've come to rely on.
B	Researchers have recently discovered that this flying ability depends on unicorns' access to sparkles, which are a naturally occurring within enchanted forests.
C	Unicorns' ability to fly provides humans with the previously unknown joy of visiting mountaintops, cloudscares, and the ends of rainbows.
D	However, because enchanted forests (and consequently sparkles) are becoming scarce due to changes in the global climate, unicorns are in increasingly in danger of losing their ability to fly.

A “correct” order:

C
B
D
A

Although plastic has **revolutionized** modern life, traditional petroleum plastics have a **staggering impact** on the environmental. Bioplastics, an alternative to petroleum plastics, may be a more sustainable option because they use fewer fossil fuels in production and reduce greenhouse gas emissions as they biodegrade. One particularly promising bioplastic is polylactic acid (PLA), which resembles traditional plastic and can be processed on equipment already used for petroleum plastics. **However**, the commercial viability of PLA is **currently limited** because it can only be composted in industrial facilities and cannot be mixed with other recyclable materials [1, 2]. To make PLA more commercially viable, we develop a device that composts PLA and other bioplastics within a home composting environment [3]. Such a device, we argue, encourages the production of more sustainable and economic bioplastics.

Significance

Status Quo

Gap

Fill the Gap

4. Adapting the Novelty Moves

The flexibility of the Novelty Moves makes them widely applicable



A. Combining the Moves

Major depressive disorder (MDD) is a **common and debilitating condition** that **contributes significantly to global disease burden.**

Significance

Anhedonia is a core symptom of depression, **but** the underlying neurobiological mechanisms are **unknown**. Correlative neuroimaging **studies implicate** dysfunction within ventromedial prefrontal cortex, **but** the causal roles of specific subregions remain **unidentified**. **We**

Status Quo + Gap

addressed these issues by combining intracerebral microinfusions with cardiovascular and behavioral monitoring in marmoset monkeys to show that over-activation of primate subgenual anterior cingulate cortex (sgACC, area 25) blunts appetitive anticipatory, but not consummatory, arousal, whereas manipulations of adjacent perigenual ACC (pgACC, area 32) have no effect.

Fill the Gap

B. Rearranging the Moves

The literature on undergraduate women in engineering is rife with situations in which women face major problems in team projects and other interactions outside of class **but have no good strategies for resolving these problems.**

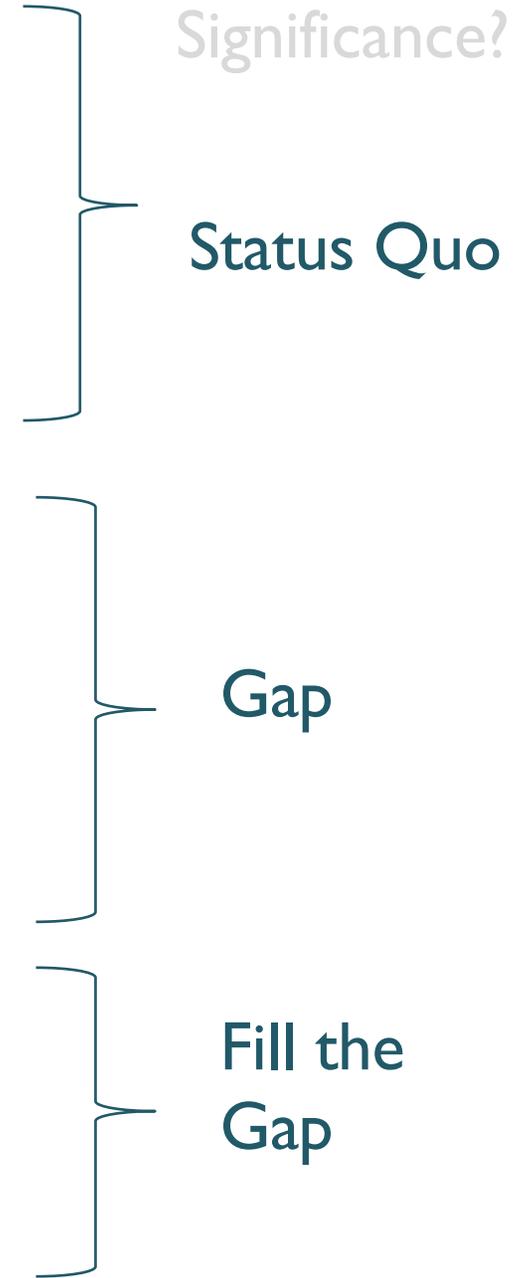
Status Quo and Create a Gap

This project is based upon the theory that women who have been successful in engineering schools and workplaces have developed tacit knowledge (assumptions, habits, and strategies that individuals know but usually cannot articulate explicitly) about how to interact successfully in this environment. The goal of this project is to tap into this tacit knowledge and bring it to the surface where it can **serve as a resource for young women and girls** just entering engineering and similar male-dominated fields.

Fill the Gap and Significance

C. Omitting a Move (with caution)

Theories of public policy change, despite their differences, converge on one point of strong agreement: the relationship between policy and its causes can and does change over time. This consensus yields numerous empirical implications, but our standard analytical tools are inadequate for testing them. As a result, the dynamic and transformative relationships predicted by policy theories have been left largely unexplored in time series analysis of public policy. This article introduces dynamic linear modelling (DLM) as a useful statistical tool for exploring time-varying relationships in public policy.



Laws restricting the behaviors of homeless people in public places are proliferating.
Proponents argue that such “quality of life” laws will encourage homeless people to move off the streets and into services, and thereby improve their quality of life. Critics argue that these laws target vulnerable individuals and show little evidence of improving the lives of homeless people. To inform this debate, this article reports data from two separate surveys of Colorado homeless residents regarding their experiences with quality of life policing, supplemented by a review of police data regarding contacts, ticketing, and arrests of homeless people

Significance

Status Quo

Gap?

Fill the Gap

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Significance

Status Quo

Gap?

Fill the Gap

Academic Phrases for the Novelty Moves



Significance	Status Quo	Gap	Fill Gap
-X project is important because...	-Prior research has shown that...	-However, the commercial viability of X is currently limited because...	-This paper describes a new solution for...
-This work investigates modern concerns with...	-The most-used method for investigating this problem is...	-Although X practice has been used widely, it inadequately addresses...	-We offer a novel approach to...
-X significantly impacts...	-Previous studies have evaluated...	-Whereas research has shown X, it has largely overlooked Y...	-The goal of this paper is to explore a new theory about...
-Due to an ever-increasing number of...	-X process has been described as...	-While current findings are promising, more research is needed because...	-Here, we investigate the previously unstudied X...
-To understand X, it is crucial to...	-Recent work in X has questioned whether...	-While X's work has pioneered the field of Y, it has also raised new questions that need to be explored, such as...	-Unlike existing approaches to X, our approach emphasizes...
-X is especially useful in...	-Ongoing studies indicate that...		-We will suggest ways to address shortcomings in current approaches to X....
-X has become an urgent issue in...	-New models of X suggest that...		