Reflections on pitching research:
Do it your own way

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Abstract: This pitch letter provides a reflection of a student's personal experience of completing Faff (2017)'s reverse engineered pitch. The reflection describes Faff's pitching template as a learning and self-developmental tool. As a learning tool, the pitching template focuses on building technical skills as a researcher. However, as a self-developmental tool, the pitching template creates opportunities for discovering who the pitcher is and aspires to be as a researcher. The underlying message of this reflection depicts that no one pitch is the same. Hence, pitching research enables the pitcher to *'do it their own way',* from their idiosyncratic perspective of the research process.

1. Introduction

I was first introduced to Faff (2015)'s pitching template during my honours year in 2016. I completed my honours in the field of management, where I explored employees' understandings of their experiences of anxiety within open-plan offices. Honours was the ideal time to learn about pitching research because I was searching for tools to help clarify my research process. I remember feeling overwhelmed by an overabundance of ideas, so I needed a framework to channel these ideas into an organized structure. I completed Faff's (2017) reverse engineered pitch, which enabled me to narrow the scope of my research interests (i.e. exploring employee wellbeing within open-plan offices). This pitch letter will discuss my experiences of

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pitching research. Section 2 describes my reflection on pitching research, focusing on '*what does the research process mean to me*?' Section 3 discusses my experiences of *learning, self-development* and *connection,* throughout my pitching research process. Section 4 explains the core message of my pitch reflection, '*do it your own way*'. Section 5 provides a final conclusion. Overall, these sections will retrospectively unpack my experiences of pitching research.

2. Reflection on Pitching Research: 'what does the research process mean to me?'

Faff's (2015) pitching research template is a useful and user-friendly learning tool for individuals at a variety of stages in their research process. Each component of the pitch incrementally and collectively focuses on enhancing the pitcher's research ideas. However, each pitch is unique because it reflects an individual's idiosyncratic experiences of applying the pitching research framework. Individuals can vary in their experiences of pitching research, according to their interpretations of '*what does the research process mean to me?*' For example, my experience of pitching research enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of who I am and who I aspire to be as a researcher. For this reason, I recognized that Faff's (2017) pitching template went beyond being a learning tool because it also embodied the qualities of a self-developmental tool.

2.1 Learning tool: technical and creative aspects

Initially, I regarded pitching research as an instrumental approach for learning core components of research (i.e. research problem, tools, data). As a result, I completed the template with a keen focus on the technical aspects of the research process. However, when I reviewed my pitch I felt there was something missing. I was puzzled because the key components were accounted for. So, I read through my notes from the RBUS6914 course (a coursework unit offered to research students in the University of Queensland Business School) to search for what was missing in my pitch. I came across a phrase I scribbled during the course, '*what does the research process mean to me?*' This phrase stood out because I realized that although the technical aspects of the research process are vital, I was missing the creative aspect of my pitch. Creative aspects referred to how I meaningfully connected to the pitch such as 'what was my unique contribution to this pitch?' or 'how does my interpretation of this study translate in the pitch?' Therefore, I brainstormed '*what does the research process mean to me?*' to embed the creative aspects into my pitch. Key themes emerged including *learning*, *self-development* and *connection*.

2.2 Research process: learning, self-development and connection

First, I regarded the research process as an opportunity for *learning* and building skills to become a proficient researcher. Each time I used the pitch template, I

continued to develop core skills required in the research process such as communicating a research idea and justifying the research problem. As a result, pitching research enabled me to strengthen my skills as a researcher through practice. Second, I perceived the research process as a time of *self-development* because it involved personal growth. When I started my pitch I was afraid of being too sensitive because it could be perceived as a weakness. However, I soon recognized that my sensitivity is a strength because it enables me to construct a unique interpretation of a study. Subsequently, I drew on my sensitivity to communicate other peoples' needs in my pitch. Hence, the research process stimulated self-development because it helped me recognize that I need to incorporate my sensitivity into my research.

Third, I interpreted the research process as a way of building *connection*. Throughout my experience of pitching research I found this learning tool enabled me to connect to others (i.e. existing researchers, mentors, peers) and connect to myself as a researcher. I appreciated the opportunity to learn from others through engaging in this pitching research process. For example, the pitch process enabled me to understand how existing researchers within my field of research conducted their studies and expressed their ideas. Additionally, I valued connecting to others throughout the RBUS6914 experience. I appreciated being part of community that Professor Faff and fellow students created. This supportive community stimulated encouragement, support and mentorship, which I deeply cherished in that stage of my research process experience. Overall, this connection helped to rejuvenate my energy and enthusiasm for working on my pitch.

Furthermore, this process enabled me to connect to myself as a researcher. From my experience of pitching research, I realized that there was no one-way of using the pitch template. Therefore, I felt I had to find my voice as a researcher to complete the pitch because it required individuals to express *their own interpretation*. I focused on finding my 'signature' way of completing the pitch. For example, I recalled on my personal experiences as an employee working within an open-plan office to express my own interpretation of an existing study. As a result, I identified that my 'signature' way of pitching research was acknowledging individuals' idiosyncratic experiences because as a researcher I uphold the belief that there is no one-way of experiencing a phenomenon. Overall, I perceive the pitching template can enable individuals to re-connect with who they are as a researcher.

For these reasons, I recognize that the pitching template is a self-developmental tool. For example, a hidden strength of pitching research is integrating a pitcher's personal experience of growth such as how the pitcher used the pitching template *and* their interpretation of the research process. As a result, the completed pitch was a combination of how an individual interpreted the *technical aspects* of the research process, and a reflection of how individuals *creatively* embedded how they meaningfully understood the research process. Therefore, no one pitch is the same

because pitching research requires the pitcher to *'do it their own way'* from their idiosyncratic perspective of the research process.

3. Experiences of Pitching Research: *learning, self-development* and *connection*

This section will describe my experiences of *learning, self-development* and *connection* as I engaged in pitching research '*in my own way'*. I will reflect on my experiences of completing a reverse engineered pitch (see Appendix 1) on Kożusznik *et al.* (2017)'s 'Out of sight, out of mind' study. Furthermore, I will discuss take-aways, which refer to my experiences of interpreting the pitch.

3.1 Learning

Learning involved understanding how to complete the pitch template. I recalled that my greatest learning opportunity was initially starting the pitch. The first pitch parts: (A) Full reference, (B) Basic research question, (C) Key paper(s) and (D) Motivation/puzzle, required the pitcher to create a foundation of their pitch. At this stage, I grappled with completing the pitch in an 'academic language', whilst avoiding being overly technical. Consequently, I used examples to explain key terms (i.e. environmental stressors). I continued to practice communicating clear 'academic language' in the *Three core aspects of any empirical research project:* (E) Idea?, (F) Data? and (G) Tools?

One key 'learning take-away', I recalled from my pitch is understanding how to start a conversation within the pitch template. I interpreted that starting a conversation is related to understanding how individuals meaningfully connect to this topic. For this reason, I identified key papers that expressed a strong empathic voice for prevalent issues that employees within open-plan offices experience such as poor health, stress and discomfort. These 'pioneering' papers were selected compared with more recent papers because these papers captured an underlying raw recount of how vulnerable individuals felt about these issues within open-plan offices (i.e. helplessness, hopelessness) at a time when these issues were heightened in the media. Whereas, Kożusznik *et al.* (2017)'s paper was selected because it exemplifies a recent study that replicates an emphatic tone similar to these pioneering papers. However, this study represents how the tones of recent frontier studies are shifting away from individuals' experiences of helplessness and hopelessness to empowering individuals in this space. Hence, these key papers enabled me to communicate my pitch in an academic language that could prompt an everyday conversation that aligns with the existing perspective of employees within open-plan offices.

3.2 Self-development

Self-development referred to emphasizing the shift or growth within the literature. The *Two key questions:* (H) What's new? and (I) So what?, reflected on the emerging

novel issues and explanations within this field. I reflected on gaps within the existing literature to communicate where this study fits into the growing literature. For example, this study explored environmental stressors at an individual level, in comparison to traditional studies that focused on group or organizational levels of analysis. A 'self-development take-away' from my experience of pitching research is how the pitch process provided an opportunity to understand who I am as a researcher. Throughout the pitching research process, I reflected on my values of being a researcher to guide me with completing the pitch template. When I felt stuck with expressing my voice, I thought back on how I interpret the research process. For example, I perceive the research process can be therapeutic when it enables individuals to feel heard and empowered through 'voicing their own experiences'. For this reason, I emphasized that individuals can differ in their experiences in my pitch. Therefore, my experience of completing the pitch enabled me to appreciate the growth within the literature and as an aspiring researcher.

3.3 Connection

Connection reflects the role of pitching research within the bigger picture. This is demonstrated in *One bottom line:* (J) Contribution? and (K) Three key findings, which discusses the scope of the pitch in practice. This section summarizes how pitching research helps illuminate implications for theory and practice. Additionally, the Mickey Mouse diagram (Figure 1) depicts a visual representation of the interconnections between the key phenomenon.
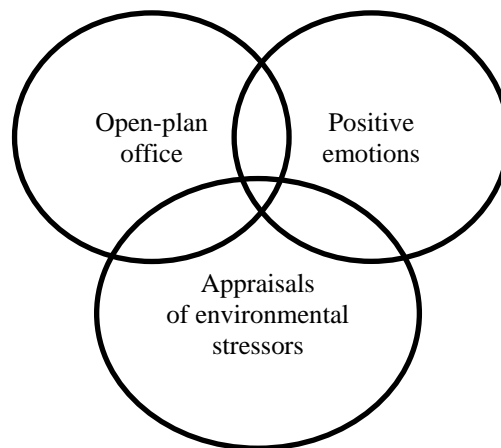

Figure 1: Mickey Mouse diagram characterizing novelty of research idea

A strength of the Mickey Mouse diagram is providing a snapshot of the amalgamation of the key phenomenon within a study at a quick glance. My 'connection take-away' for pitching research is understanding the research process as a way of shaping thought communities. Throughout my experience, I did not

complete my pitch in isolation. My pitch evolved through interactions with peers and mentors (i.e. receiving constructive feedback). Additionally, I reflected on how the Kożusznik *et al*. (2017) communicated their study, through deconstructing the language they used in the journal article. For example, the article enthusiastically emphasised the novelty of incorporating Positive Psychology within this Environmental Psychology study. Hence, I embedded language from Positive Psychology within my pitch (i.e. enabling, flourishing) to honour the essence of this unique research study. In sum, I created a pitch that reflected my experiences of *learning, self-development* and *connection*. Therefore, pitching research creates unique interpretations of research when pitchers *'do it their own way'*.

4. Pitch reflection: 'Do it your own way'

The pitching research process is interactive and creates opportunities for collaboration (see Wallin & Spry, 2016). However, in this pitch letter I have emphasized how pitching research creates opportunities for learning and self-development. This perspective foregrounds individuals' idiosyncratic experiences of engaging with the pitch framework and reflects differences in interpretations of the research process. For example, the underlying take-away from my experience of pitching research is the value of pitching research '*in your own way*'. In my personal experience, I appreciated growing and learning from others. I found discussing and presenting individual pitches within a peer group enriching because it was interesting to see how individual's personalities, values or understandings of pitching research shone through their pitches. Each pitch contained unique strengths; however, the pitches that stood out for me reflected the personal touch. Hence, I perceived pitching research provides opportunities to develop technical skills as a researcher but provides the freedom for pitchers to be creative and '*do it your own way*'. As a result, pitchers can grow and develop as researchers while they engage in pitching research as a learning tool.

5. Conclusion

My experiences of pitching research stimulated my passion for research. I appreciate the skills I have gained from Faff's (2015, 2017) pitching research such as recognizing 'what's new' and the 'so what' factor. These skills have helped me when writing my thesis and even in my day-to-day life. One memory I recall is thinking 'what's new?' when I was designing my backyard. I aspired to create something unique, in comparison to the original landscape or traditional designs. As a result, I often asked myself 'what's new' throughout the process.

Similarly, these skills have helped me think critically and improved my ability to justify my research. I remember after a class, I was excited to test out my new skills, so I came home and critically searched through my thesis to make sure I had integrated the 'so what' factor in my justification. Overall, it was inspiring to learn

and test these skills in practice, within and beyond the pitch template. I look forward to building on my skills of pitching research in my future PhD endeavors. As documented in Faff's evolving pitching research papers (see Faff, 2017), the process of pitching research is continually developing and we have so much more to learn.

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Appendix 1: Example of Faff's (2017) Reverse engineered pitch applied to Koźusznik *et al.* (2017) "Out of Sight, Out of Mind?"

Pitcher's Name	Asmita Manchha	FoR category	Environmental Psychology	Date Completed	2017
(A) Full Reference	Koźusznik, M. W., Peiró, J. M., Soriano, A., & Navarro Escudero, M. (2017) "Out of Sight, Out of Mind? The Role of Physical Stressors, Cognitive Appraisal, and Positive Emotions in Employees' Health", *Environment and Behavior*, vol. 49, no. 2: 1-30.				
(B) Basic Research Question	What is the mediating role of the appraisal of environmental stressors in the relationship between environmental stressors within open-plan offices and health symptoms? What is the moderating role of positive emotions in the relationship between environmental stressors within open-plan offices and the appraisal of environmental stressors?				
(C) Key paper(s)	Bluyssen, P. M., Aries, M., & van Dommelen, P. (2011) "Comfort of workers in office buildings: The European HOPE project", *Building and Environment*, vol. 46, no. 1: 280-288. Bodin Danielsson, C., & Bodin, L. (2008) "Office type in relation to health, well-being, and job satisfaction among employees", *Environment and Behavior*, vol. 40, no. 5: 636-668. Rashid, M., & Zimring, C. (2008) "A review of the empirical literature on the relationships between indoor environment and stress in health care and office settings: Problems and prospects of sharing evidence", *Environment and Behavior*, vol. 40, no. 2: 151-190.				
(D) Motivation/ Puzzle	Within the physical environment of work literature, current research identifies that employees within open-plan offices are at a greater risk of experiencing environmental stressors. Research predominantly explores how the organisation can enhance their employees' wellbeing (e.g. designing sound proof buildings, regulating lighting). For this reason, past research have reinforced an implicit assumption that employees are passive recipients towards promoting their wellbeing within open-plan offices. Therefore, we know little about how individuals can develop their skills to manage environmental stressors within the physical environment of work.				
THREE	Three core aspects of any empirical research project i.e. the "IDioTS" guide				
(E) Idea?	- Research has identified that environmental stressors within open-plan offices pose a risk to employees' wellbeing. For example, a plethora of research has indicated that exposure to environmental stressors; noise, lighting and air particles are connected to health symptoms (e.g. respiratory, cardiovascular problems) and negative organizational outcomes (e.g. impaired performance, sick leave absenteeism). However, research has not challenged why employees seem to have little				

Pitcher's Name	Asmita Manchha	FoR category	Environmental Psychology	Date Completed	2017
	influence in developing and implementing practical strategies to manage environmental stressors within open-plan offices. - Kożusznik and colleagues drew on literature from Positive Psychology to examine how positive emotions may enable individuals to appraise environmental stressors: noise, lighting and air particles to reduce experiences of health symptoms. It was hypothesized that the appraisal of the environmental stressor could mediate the relationship between the environmental stressor and health symptoms. Additionally, it was hypothesized that positive emotions could moderate the relationship between the environmental stressor and the appraisal of the environmental stressor. - This alternative perspective argues that employees can adopt an active role for managing environmental stressors within the physical environment of work. However, this perspective is yet to be accepted and involves acknowledging and mediating collective, idiosyncratic and competing demands from stakeholders including management, policy makers and architects.				
(F) Data?	Quantitative data was collected in a naturalistic context via a diary study and sensory devices within four Spanish organizations. - A diary study involved 59 employees recording their appraisals of environmental stressors, positive emotions and health symptoms, twice a day over a four-day period. - Sensory devices recorded the level of sound, quantity of light and mass of particles in five-minute intervals over the same four days. - The sensory devices captured physical measures within the same location where participants completed their diary entries. There were missing data when participants were out of the office at 49 time points.				
(G) Tools?	Psychological measures were collected in a diary study Physical measures (environmental stressors) were collected by sensory devices: -level of sound (dB(A): BAPPU-evo multimeasuring device - quantity of light (lux): BAPPU-evo sensors (ELK GmbH) - total mass concentration of particles smaller than 10 mm (PM10): Mini Laser Aerosol Spectrometer (Mini-LAS) 11-R (Grimm Aerosol Technik GmbH Data analysis: examined variables at an individual level of analysis (e.g. between-person variations) -multilevel moderated mediation analysis (to capture mediation effects in nested data), used MPlus 7.1 software				
TWO	**Two key questions**				
(H) What's New?	Drawing from Positive Psychology, this study is one of the first to use positive emotions as a secondary appraisal lens to understand the relationship between environmental stressors, primary appraisal of environmental stressors and health				

Pitcher's Name	Asmita Manchha	FoR category	Environmental Psychology	Date Completed	2017
	symptoms within open-plan offices. This study is novel because it recognizes how employees manage environmental stressors at an individual level and emphasises the need for mediating stakeholders (e.g. HR managers, policy makers, office designers, office maintenance) within the open-plan office.				
(I) So What?	Existing research acknowledges how employees are at a greater risk of experiencing poor health outcomes within open-plan offices. Studies primarily focus on the organization's role for minimizing environmental stressors because poor health leads to financial and psychological costs for both employees and organizations. However, employees' needs are not being addressed because employees are perceived as passive recipients in relation to managing environmental stressors within open-plan offices. This study challenges this pre-existing assumption because it reinforces how employees within open-plan offices need to develop skills to manage environmental stressors.				
ONE	**One bottom line**				
(J) Contribution?	This alternative approach proposes that enabling employees to develop skills can help employees manage environmental stressors to enhance their health (e.g. exploring whether positive emotions can lead to greater health). Positive Psychology principles such as flourishing and resilience promotes the need for stakeholders within the open-plan office to work collaboratively to enable employees with managing environmental stressors. For example, stakeholders need to recognise and mediate their competing demands to create a supportive environment for employees to effectively develop their skills.				
(K) Three Key Findings	1. Empirical findings support previous research in relation to how appraisals of environmental stressors can mediate the relationship between environmental stressors and health symptoms. 2. Positive emotions can buffer noise at the secondary appraisal stage. Therefore, in some contexts, individuals can view environmental stressors as less harmful and easier to overcome. For example, a person with higher positive emotions does not evaluate higher levels of noise as threatening. 3. Positive emotions can influence health outcomes for employees within open-plan offices. However, further research needs to identify under what conditions and when individuals can develop their skills to manage environmental stressors within open-plan offices.				