Quantification and Formality

There is a slight disturbance to the way in which the level of FORMALITY influences the grammar of quantification in English nominal groups, and this disturbance indicates the existence of a semantic cryptotype which we might perhaps call 'FACTIVITY'. Specifically, positive statements behave differently than negative statements and questions do: at the neutral level of formality, positive statements follow the informal-level pattern, whereas negative statements and questions (and sometimes *if*-clauses) follow the formal-level pattern.

[countable : plural]

FACTIVITY ⇒	[Statement: positive]	[Statement: negative]	[Question]
	(*'There were … .'*)	(*'There were not … .'*)	(*'Were there … ?'*)
[formal]	*many questions*	*many questions*	*many questions*
		↓	↓
[neutral]	*a lot of questions*	*many questions*	*many questions*
	↑		
[informal]	*a lot of questions*	*a lot of questions*	*a lot of questions*

⇑
FORMALITY

[uncountable]

FACTIVITY ⇒	[Statement: positive]	[Statement: negative]	[Question]
	(*'There was … .'*)	(*'There was not … .'*)	(*'Was there … ?'*)
[formal]	*much disagreement*	*much disagreement*	*much disagreement*
		↓	↓
[neutral]	*a lot of disagreement*	*much disagreement*	*much disagreement*
	↑		
[informal]	*a lot of disagreement*	*a lot of disagreement*	*a lot of disagreement*

⇑
FORMALITY

If you say *There were many questions* or *There was much disagreement* in speaking, you are likely to sound somewhat more formal than you intended – but it would be all right to express yourself that way in a formal piece of writing. If you find *a lot of* to be too informal for your purposes, try *a great deal of* instead.