

Writing academically

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Academic

- of, relating to, or associated with an [academy](#) or school especially of higher learning
- based on formal study especially at an institution of higher learning
- a purely *academic* question
- **b:** having no practical or useful significance
- a member (such as a professor) of an institution of learning (such as a university)

Academic writing

1. Academic writing is the social activity of negotiating to be recognised principally by a group of other academic writers – a ‘community of inquiry’.
2. It involves taking a position and defending your position with an argument.
3. The argument needs to be interesting and lively. It might also be critical.
4. The argument needs to be systematic.
5. The argument needs to make a ‘contribution’ to existing scholarship.

Locating yourself in the discourse

‘Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion has already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps which have gone before. You listen for a while until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument, then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or the gratification of your opponent, depending on the quality of your ally’s assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late. You must depart. And you do depart with the discussion still vigorously in progress.’

Burke, K. (1941) *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*, pp110-1.

1 Academic writing as a social activity involving mutual recognition

- Your research is a social process.
- Your writing is social process – share drafts with colleagues, write with others. Write with at least one other academic who is cleverer than you.
- Write because you have something to say, but also with a journal in mind – who are your community of inquiry?
- Recognising and being recognised
- The reviewing process is both social and political.

2 It involves taking a position and defending your position with an argument.

- What are you trying to say? (Not all arguments can be boiled down, but if you had to, what are you saying in a nutshell?).
- Is it problem-based research, or is it theoretical?
- Why is it worth saying – why would your community of inquiry take an interest in what you have to say?
- How have you earned the right to say it? (Previous slide of recognizing and being recognized).

3 The argument needs to be interesting and lively.

- If you are not interested in what you are saying, don't expect anyone else to be.
- It needs to reveal something about the lives of your research subjects, and in doing so will reveal something about you and your interests.
- Straddling the particular and the general.
- The possibility of being critical – being critical always involves a position vis a vis orthodoxy.

The paradox of the subjective and objective

“Detachment comes not from a failure to care, but from a kind of caring resilient enough to withstand an enormous tension between moral reaction and scientific observation, a tension which only grows as moral perception deepens and scientific understanding advances. The flight into scientism, or, on the other side, into subjectivism, is but a sign that the tension cannot any longer be borne, that nerve has failed and a choice has been made to suppress either one’s humanity or one’s rationality. These are the pathologies of science, not its norm.”
Geertz, *Unbearable Light*, 2000: 40

Troubles and issues

- “By the fact of his living he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of this history, even as his is made by this society and by its historical push and shove.” Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, 1959/2000: 10

4 The argument needs to be systematic.

- What is the process you have followed in order to be able to say this?
- How might you have said it differently/done something different?
- Tell us about your methods and their limitations.

5 The argument needs to make a 'contribution' to existing scholarship.

- 'Gaps in the literature'.
- Summing up the existing arguments about what you're interested in and saying something additional/different/contradictory/critical.

Concluding arguments

1. With my efforts to belong both to many groups and retain a sense of freedom as a stepping-stone for this research, I argue for a dialectical relation between individual and social and the importance of not losing this paradoxical approach.
2. Continuingly negotiating identity in power relations places us in situations of contradiction and ambiguity, which can be anxiety provoking and seem to call for a strong sense of self.
3. I argue that paradoxes are not to be dissolved as suggested by some authors (Lüscher, 2012), but acknowledged. Through a hyperdialectical and reflexive approach we might be able to explore the complexity in the way we engage with our practice.
4. My arguments call for a reflection on our being in the world and through this constant visibility in the way we engage, seek recognition etc. in order to capture exactly the contradictory and ambiguous elements of our experience of organizational life.

Concluding arguments

1. Selves are constantly negotiated in power relations in everyday processes involved in facilitating leadership development, which results in feelings of ambiguity and contradictions. The push/pull of being a member of multiple groups is experienced bodily as the negotiation of identity.
2. Selves are emerging paradoxically as individual and social beings in processes of gesture and response through interaction with others in organizations, which includes our historically and culturally identity in the making our present selves.
3. Being member of, or relating to, multiple groups in organizations includes the risk of experiencing indeterminacy and invisibility.
4. Freedom and enhanced individual agency might emerge from the exploration of contradictions and of selves as being both enabled and constrained.

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