



# Argumentative “Moves” in SSHRC Grant Writing

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# Outline for the workshop

- Writing processes that work
- Constructing arguments
- Argumentative “moves” in SSHRC proposals (see last slide for sources on this)
- Style and design tips
- Further reading



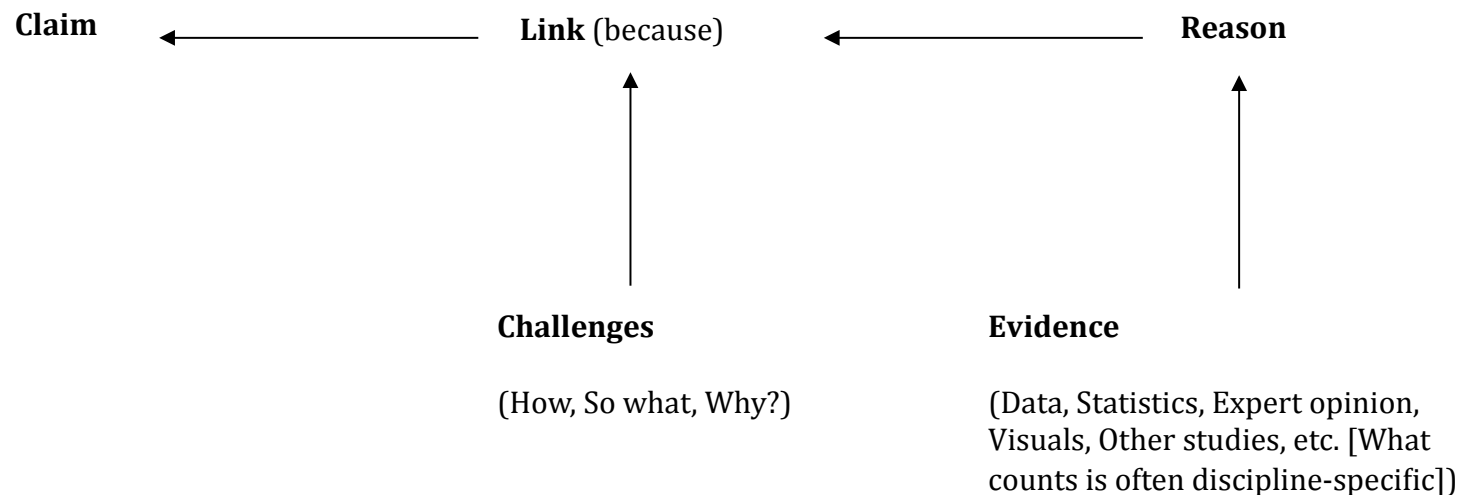
# The writing process

- Idea generation at all stages
- Iterative process
- Drafting
- Revising
- Genre knowledge; genre as social action
- Groups, research teams



# Informal Argument and Academic Writing

SSHRC = CRSH



Ex. [this study] will be a unique scholarly contribution as very few studies genuinely combine oral history and the documentary record.



# Claims and Assumptions

- Claim + stated reason rest upon an unstated reason
- Both the stated and unstated reasons rely on shared assumptions of value between the writer and the reader
- Evidence demonstrates the validity of the stated or unstated reasons
- When values are shared, less evidence is needed to convince the reader



## A claim in 3 parts

- By engaging in historical/archival research, by reviewing the vast amount of public information now available on [this topic], and by conducting interviews with policy makers, researchers, activists and industry representatives, **my research will develop a systematic assessment** of [topic] and the conditions in which it has become finalized.



# Exercise 1

- Write a one sentence claim about your project



# Argumentative “moves”

- “moves” are like tacit questions that grant writers answer
- Moves are a way to organize the proposal
- Moves create a narrative





# Narrative

“A problem exists of social and research importance (territory). Some research already exists, but there is also clearly an absence of research in a particular area (gap). The researcher(s) is/are well prepared (means) to address the problem (goal) by conducting the following study (methodology).”



## Example

- “Recently, Alberta has received much media attention because of its massive drawing power for migrants in a context of unprecedented economic growth (3 references 2007/2006). A less noticed but equally important development is the steady increase of the birth rate in this province, a situation diametrically at odds with the persistent pattern of low fertility in Canada. Most surprising is the apparent lack of scholarly interest to this new development. My study seeks to address this void in the demographic literature . . . .”



## Exercise 2

- Write two or three sentences that build a narrative about your work.



# Territory

- Research territory refers to current research issues or problems
- “Real world” territory refers to social problems or issues
- Connect the two territories: a real world problem exists for which a research area can propose a solution



## Example

- “[this study] will also be of interest beyond the academic community. The project grows out of the initial steps taken by the office of the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba (TCRM). . . It is essential to know the history of agriculture in First Nations communities in order to understand what the barriers have been and how they may be removed.”



## Exercise 3

- Write two or three sentences that connect your research territory to society beyond the university.



# Gap

- Establishes that a problem exists
- Provides motivation for the proposed study by implying the gap needs to be filled
- “This consolidation appears to be pointing to a ‘two-tiered’ financial system: an increasingly ‘exclusive’ financial world accessible to those with capital and wealth, and high-cost financial practices for those populations who are prevented from accessing mainstream credit (ref. 2005).”



# Goal

- States the aim, general objective, chief contribution of the study
- This move responds to the gap or problem identified in the proposal
- “My study seeks to address this void in the demographic literature . . .”





## Example

- “The principal goal of my study is to address these and other related questions and to uncover the underlying social demographic and socioeconomic factors responsible for the recent fertility rise in Alberta.”



## Exercise 4

- Write a goal statement.



# Methodology

- How the goal will be achieved, including descriptions of methods, procedures, plans, or actions and tasks
- Writers demonstrate their methodological competency:
- Presented the specific steps of their study
- Named a theory or method that would enable them to reach the project goals



# Means

- Addresses writer's credibility and readiness to conduct the research

Strategies:

1. Cite their own past or ongoing research to imply connection between proposed research and their competency
2. Make explicit claims about their competency based on previous research



# Examples

- “My own book [title] remains the most comprehensive analysis but the focus was on . . .”
- “To fully address the question on the formalization of fringe finance I draw on ‘cultural economy’. Cultural economy is an approach influenced by post-structuralism, ‘governmentality’, actor-network theory and ‘science studies’.”



## Exercise 5

- Describe the methods you will use to perform your research.



# Document design/style

- When you have a full draft, we'll get together to talk about style and design considerations
- The following slides give you an idea of what that means
- At this point in the process, however, it isn't profitable to focus on these areas



# Objective strategies

- Nominalizations (a verb changed into a noun)
  - We investigated the problem to see . . .
  - A problem investigation showed . . .

Nominalizations remove agency, creating an objective tone

They can improve conciseness.

**Warning:** Overuse of nominalizations can confuse and bog down a reader's understanding





# Passive Voice

- Linguistic construction that places the object in the subject position
  - We investigated the problem (active voice)
  - The problem was investigated by us (passive voice)
- Create objectivity, improve conciseness
- Mitigate blame, emphasize processes over agents
- **Warning:** Overuse can make prose boring or difficult to process



# Signposting

- Techniques that provide a framework or conceptual map for the document (headings, bulleted or numbered lists, etc.)
- Help to organize the information for the reader
- Help reader retrieve specific information later
- Writers use SSHRC headings, as well as their own to guide readers



# Example of signposting

Research plan/Methodology

1. Historical Context Analysis
2. Mapping Public Discourses of Fringe Finance
3. Narratives of Regulation



# Citation

- Citing others: writers build on others' work rather than demolishing it
- Citing oneself: used to enhance writer's credibility



## Example

- “Although sources of public data relating to corporate structure have been used to assess levels of corporate regionalization (Rugman, 2005, Rugman 2004) and processes of transnational class formation (Carroll 2004; Carroll and Fennema 2002), they have rarely been used in the critical finance literature.”



## Further reading

- [http://www.research.uwaterloo.ca/grants/documents/StudyonSuccessfulSSHRCApplications\\_000.pdf](http://www.research.uwaterloo.ca/grants/documents/StudyonSuccessfulSSHRCApplications_000.pdf)
- <http://www.research.uwaterloo.ca/grants/documents/bibliographyforSSHRCapplicationstudy.pdf>

