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Justyna Dziejic

University of Social Sciences, Poland

jdziejic@san.edu.pl

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8292-0892

In Pursuit of Storytelling: A Conversation with Olga Tokarczuk, Nobel Laureate in Literature

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If Olga Tokarczuk's use of the word tenderness is cordiality, dignity and the quest for truth, then my interview with her exemplified exactly that. I talked to Olga Tokarczuk in the privacy of the diocesan museum, inspired by the souls of the past and surrounded by sculptures of the Madonna.

I wanted to know how the author created her world in words, how she described small gestures, posture, or objects. Olga Tokarczuk has said that we lack the language to describe a world which is changing. Linguistic expressions and the range of existing metaphors are too limited to accommodate the sensual and visual richness of the world.

Olga Tokarczuk compared writing a novel to telling oneself fairy-tales from an adult perspective. She wasn't totally happy with the metaphor, but what she meant was that crafting a story entails mirroring the world while adding your fantasy to it. For Olga Tokarczuk, writing starts in the head, where images are formed. It's where the author reveals herself in the personality of the characters she creates and which has infinite potential. This reflects the fact that we do not have one personality; we have many. Our social personality is a kind of masked, limited personality, a kind of agent sent out to communicate with the world. However, even when authors draw on themselves for their characterisation, they never entirely reveal who they are.

Olga Tokarczuk explained that for her, travelling is way of being free, an idea which goes back centuries and which lies somewhere deep in our psyche. This is a flux, a little rebellion which produces a kind of disturbance in the mind; brings out new sensations, a refusal to accept the status quo. Moving geographically, changing contexts is a leitmotif of her writing. As she puts it in *Flights*, "Whoever stops will be petrified; whoever pauses will be pinned down like an insect." For Olga Tokarczuk, this is the best way to live the challenges the modern world asks of us. It is not easy as we are subject to so many different influences. One area of influence, which she mentioned, is the fact that we are consumers. As we easily become slaves to a wide range of material things this is an area of life in which we can be manipulated.

Olga Tokarczuk is not a naive dreamer, she realises that we cannot imagine a society that would simply throw these materialistic considerations in the air. Her novel *Flights* appeals to people to value what they have. But living in this world has also a mental aspect. It is a mental journey in which we need to free ourselves from the various material apparatuses, mechanisms, and influences to which we are subjected. Freedom is difficult to describe; it is an intoxicating-awareness of your potential and direction. It is a continuum:

at one end we have safety, love, family, and job security and at the other, the unknown. We are all situated somewhere on this continuum; some people would give anything for a sense of security because, for example, they did not feel it in their childhood, while others decide to travel and in doing so, deprive themselves of this sense of security. However, Olga Tokarczuk assures us that once we have started to explore our freedom in the world, this journey continues and gets easier.

All of this made me think, “Who would be more valued in our society: Kłoska, who lives in the forest, or arrogant Ukleja?” For Olga Tokarczuk, haughty Ukleja is a character who would be more appreciated today. The world’s media doesn’t line up in front of the house to report on a woman giving birth or someone who lives in the forest and picks berries, but they would for someone like the character of Ukleja. She laments that business people and people high up in the power hierarchy are presented as people to envy and examples to follow. As she sees it, the task of a writer is to describe people from different layers of reality, including those from the periphery of experience. This is why in her novels, there is always someone who cannot integrate into this type of social power structure and does not know how to deal with such a system. For Olga Tokarczuk, the most interesting stories always come from the periphery. She quotes Piłsudski¹ who observed long ago that Poland is like a bagel: there is a void in the middle while the periphery is made up of the best pastry. This also applies, in a sense, to topics related to writing; what is currently being discussed, what is in the media, for Olga Tokarczuk, is not writing material. That is why she does not reference contemporary history or take a position on contemporary issues. She penetrates history and social phenomena from a different angle, as she says, from the kitchen, trying to see what is interesting from this perspective.

¹ Józef Piłsudski was a Polish statesman who served as the Chief of State (1918–1922) and First Marshal of Poland (from 1920). After World War I, he was an active player in Polish politics and international diplomacy. He is considered a father of the Second Polish Republic re-established in 1918, 123 years after the final Partition of Poland in 1795.

This is how I remember my conversation with Olga Tokarczuk from which I took away an invaluable feeling of being motivated; motivated to live life unfettered, free, eager to break out of a stifled existence; to live creatively and boldly.

**Edited and translated by Iga M. Lehman
(University of Social Sciences, Warsaw, Poland,
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2092-8119)**



Articles

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Iga Maria Lehman

University of Social Sciences, Poland

ilehman@san.edu.pl

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2092-8119

Tomasz Paweł Krzeszowski

University of Warsaw, Poland

t.krzeszowski@uw.edu.pl

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1649-7050

Writing Differently about
Scholarly Issues: Defending
Our Voices and Inviting
the Reader

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Abstract: This paper addresses an ethical issue which comes into play when a scholar sits down to write an article. It concerns rhetorical strategies traditionally employed in top-tier academic journals, specifically in business and management, which efface a unique authorial voice and are reader exclusive. To reclaim authorial voice and embrace the reader's presence in text construction, we propose approaching scholarly writing as a dialogue between the writer and the reader, an emotional engagement which includes aspects of the notion of "tenderness" coined by Olga Tokarczuk (2019, 2020). Writing with tenderness enables authors to engage with readers in a way that helps them unite fragments of text into a single coherent design.

Because in our digitalised and globalised world, there is a lack of universal values the writer could draw on to craft arguments convincing for the reader, we need to search for new ways to narrate our lives. Our approach involves the inclusion of what Tokarczuk (2019) calls "structures of mythology" which are conceived of as values fundamental for human lives and allow for a wide range of content-dependent interpretations. Incorporating aspects of 'tenderness' in the process of text production will have important impact on the utility, accessibility, relevance, quality and global reach of scholarly writing.

Key words: authorial voice, reader-inclusion, dialogue, tenderness, mythology

"I go back to the reading room, where I sink in the sofa and into the world of *The Arabian Nights*. Slowly, like a movie fadeout, the real world evaporates. I'm alone, inside the world of the story. My favourite feeling in the world."

Haruki Murakam

We begin this paper by citing one of literature's most famous story telling events which features Scheherazade, a renowned storyteller, who, by making the most of her narrative skills, keeps a murderous Pasha so enchanted that he eventually stops his nightly ritual of murdering a young maid and marries her instead. The 1,000 tales with which Scheherazade bewitched the Pasha are to be found in *One Thousand And One Nights* which has had many reincarnations from its origins in the 10th century to modern day writing. Although it is impossible to identify a single dominant literary or rhetorical device which serves to attract and engage the Pasha and the reader, the durability of the text is surely testimony to its effectiveness as a piece of engaging literature.

The listener/reader engagement in the text has also its more lethal side: failure to do so leads to dire consequences, convince or perish. In this sense, John Barth, an American fiction writer, sees Scheherazade's situation as a metaphor for every author's predicament: the Pasha, the total arbiter of what is deemed to be of interest or value, symbolises the reader who has the power to reject or criticise the writer's efforts (Barth, 1984). Similarly, Gordon Lish, a famous editor for *Esquire* who helped the careers of many American writers and yet was a severe critic of their works, was also a teacher of writing and would not allow his students to continue reading their work if the opening sentence failed to capture his interest. A typical evaluation was: "I don't feel like I need to know this to keep on living" (Bowman, 1998). However, Lish did not consider the necessary means by which writers acquire the literary skills needed to enchant the reader. He believed they were learnt through exposure, acceptance and application of certain rhetorical strategies; in essence, the result of "perseverance, application, industry, assiduity, will, will, will, desire, desire, desire" (Bowman, 1998).

To summarise the point of the above anecdotes, any text, whether literary or academic, is interesting and engaging only in so far as its reader deems it so and the literary skills necessary to engage the reader are learnt through exposure and application. In all writing, it is key to keep an audience, usually a demanding one, constantly in mind to forestall potential criticisms or rejection. However, of the relationship between writer and reader in scholarly texts, it has been noted that across academic disciplines authors tend to "build barricades to keep readers out rather than open doors to invite them in" (Tourish, 2020, p. 105).

The increasing criticism – levelled at the quality of much writing in scientific journals – is the best evidence that scholarly writing is notoriously not reader-friendly and academic prose typically employs an impersonal style, bejewelled with technical language (Grey, & Sinclair, 2006; Kiriakos, & Tienari, 2018; Gilmore et al., 2019; Pullen et al., 2020; Tourish, 2020). In many academic contexts, and in particular in writing on business and management, the necessity of the effective use of rhetorical strategies in text production has not been fully appreciated. The main criticisms include the lack of engagement with a wider readership's needs and interests (including non-Anglophone scholars, junior researchers and doctoral students), with the dominance of texts which are inward looking and reflective (Hambrick, 2007) and the use of language which is often over-technical, complex, obscurantist and lifeless and with a writing style which is formulaic, jargon-ridden, authoritative, thereby limiting any impact on a wider readership (Grey, & Sinclair, 2006; Bridgman, & Stephens, 2008).

Indeed, there is an urgent need for new ways of articulation to be employed when writing about scholarly research. The cornerstone of this belief is the need to defend the presence of our own voices in what we write and understanding that effective writing is a dialogue between the reader and the writer (Helin, 2016; Meier, & Wegener, 2017). Following the work of Grafström and Jonsson (2020) and other Critical Management Scholars, we call for “defending and nurturing our own voices in academic texts” (Grafström, & Jonsson, 2020, p. 119) and resisting repeating “the impersonal and sterile ways in which academic texts tend to be written, leav[ing] little room for artistic expression, creativity or [...] passion or feelings” (2020, p. 121). In this way, we will resist being put in “the transcendental position of deracinated, disembodied and unemotional beings, as required by contemporary academic norms of what classifies an academic in a business school, what counts in terms of research performance, that these indicators mark who we can become in this space, and what we can say” (Gilmore et al., 2019, p. 4).

Reader-considerate writing is akin to the notion of “tender narrator” coined by Olga Tokarczuk (2019, 2020), Nobel Laureate in Literature. Writing with ‘tenderness’ enables authors to “tell stories honestly in a way that activates a sense of the whole in the reader’s mind, that sets off the reader’s capacity to unite

fragments into a single design” (Tokarczuk, 2019, p. 22). Textual ‘tenderness’ is based on the relationship that the writer establishes with the reader in which “The Author and the Reader perform equivalent roles, the former by dint of creating, the latter by making a constant interpretation” (Tokarczuk, 2019, p. 22).

‘Tenderness’ contributes to textual dialogicality in the sense that authors carry out an internal conversation in which they consider reader’s reaction in response to the unfolding text by posing and acting upon the questions: “How do I rhetorically recognize my readers’ presence and include them as active discourse participants?”, “How do I allow them the space to dispute or critically interpret the propositional content I present?”

Despite the importance of ‘tenderness’ in all aspects of our lives, the real concern today is how to find values which would be of universal significance and would lay the grounds for developing tenderness in interpersonal communication. In the pre-digitalised and pre-globalised era, people were able to signal a sense of unity, community cohesion and respect for others by appealing to the unified set of values, practices and beliefs that held nations and communities together. The vast and varied amounts of available information we have at our disposal today blur the boundaries between what is good and bad, right or wrong, worth fighting for or protecting. As a result, the enormity of this information “instead of uniting, generalizing and freeing, has differentiated, divided, enclosed in individual little bubbles, creating a multitude of stories that are incompatible with one another or even openly hostile toward each other, mutually antagonizing” (Tokarczuk, 2019, p. 9). It is not surprising then that it is becoming more and more challenging to convincingly narrate the stories of our digitalised and globalised lives as the values and points of view which used to keep communities together are increasingly less identifiable. Recognising this, Tokarczuk suggests, “Returning to the compact structures of mythology could bring a sense of stability within the lack of specificity in which we are living nowadays. I believe that myths are the building material for our psyche, and we cannot possibly ignore them (at most we might be unaware of their influence)” (2019, p. 23).

True as these words may sound, they require some elaboration. The term ‘myth’ is very vague and impossible to define without specifying particular

domains of human experience within existing theories based on different approaches, such as ethno-cultural, religious, literary, psychological, sociological, political and quite a few more. Laying aside endless discussions concerning the nature and senses of the word 'myth', it appears that most relevant to our present concerns is the fact that myths, like metaphors, are molded in specific socio-cultural contexts and understanding them requires appropriate, adequate background knowledge. Moreover, they both determine our understanding and convictions concerning the reality in which we live. Whether metaphors and myths mold our thinking or our thinking molds our metaphors and myths is a futile, egg-or-chicken, bi-directional dilemma, like two sides of the same coin in which one side cannot exist without the other. What really matters is the fact that abstractions are conceptualized as concrete things and myths are alive as long as they relate to concrete events, including our convictions, evaluations, opinions and attitudes. In view of this, Lakoff and Johnson's famous phrase (and the title of their book) *Metaphors we live by* can be supplemented by the phrase *Myths we live by* as a title of an easy to envisage book.

Metaphors and myths determine our interpretations of whatever we experience which, of course, includes spoken and written texts as elements of discourses. This leads us directly to the theme of the present issue of *Discourses on Culture* entitled: "Writing differently about scholarly issues." In view of what was said above, we wish to suggest that one can approach this problem from the point of view of the reader and reformulate the topic as "Reading the same texts differently." This is illustrated by books respectively authored by a world-famous biologist and an ardent atheist, Richard Dawkins, and a reputed physicist and devout theist, Michał Heller. The two books, Dawkins's *The God Delusion* (2006) and Heller's *Wszechświat jest tylko drogą. Kosmiczne Rekolekcje* [Eng. *The Universe is only a Road. The Cosmic Retreat*] (2012), are similar in that although they were written by experts in their respective sciences, they are intended to reach a wide spectrum of readers. For this reason, the two writers do not use esoteric specialised language varieties involving mathematical formalism, but adopt a reader-friendly rhetorical style.

However, the two books are written by authors confessing two opposing 'myths', which could be respectively referred as the 'myth of atheism' and the

'myth of theism.' It is clear that were a case study to be carried out by linguists to test readers' reactions to the two texts, the result would yield the following working hypothesis: "While atheists react negatively to Heller's book, theists react negatively to Dawkins' book, and conversely." Thus, it seems that readers' reactions are determined by their initial convictions and attitudes more than by what the authors of the texts intend to convey to their readers. This observation seems to point to the fact that convictions based on faith in some myths are more stable and contribute to a reader's reception of a text, more than pre-existing knowledge. This phenomena of readers engaging differently with texts is being explored by respective authors in the present issue of *Discourses on Culture*.

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Michel Racine

Université Laval, Québec, Canada

michel.racine@rlt.ulaval.ca

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-3519-678X

Anthony M. Gould

Université Laval, Québec, Canada

anthony.gould@rlt.ulaval.ca

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2599-3235

Forrest Gump's Contribution to Research Methodology: An Analogy for Organizational Culture and Some Musings on How to Write about Comparisons

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Abstract: When the fictional character Forrest Gump said “Life is like a box of chocolates” he offered an intriguing insight into at least one aspect of human existence. However, in creating his analogy he likely fell into a trap that sometimes ensnares social science researchers. For example, since the 1950s authors in disparate academic and professional genres have used metaphors/analogies to better understand organizational culture and create imagery encapsulating its key components. However, this essay argues that this genre is not always associated with methodological rigor. Problems include: metaphors/analogies are often employed without associated rationale; and, authors define their object of analysis in overly broad ways and/or fail to specify an agenda. This article explores these limitations in their historical context and offers a strategy for remedying them, a strategy with implications for scholarly written communication. Identified problems and a proposed solution are somewhat generic and are therefore relevant wherever analogies are used.

Key words: culture, organizational culture, analogy, metaphor, written communication, research methods, comparisons

Introduction

In the story of the same name, *Forrest Gump* reminded us that life is like a box of chocolates. He could have picked other analogies to illuminate what life is like and how its components interact. For example, he could have said that life is like a symphony orchestra practicing before a concert. He could have said that it is like a runaway shopping cart. Alternatively, he could have said that

it is like a game of snakes and ladders. Each of these alternatives would have perhaps been, in various ways, compelling and revealing.

The fact that *Forrest* chose a tangible and well-known product as an analogy to enhance understanding of a broad, somewhat abstract, and often arbitrarily defined idea draws attention to methodological problems which beset research using analogies/metaphors and, in particular, those addressing organizational culture. Three kinds of concerns stand out – concerns that have a special import for those seeking to improve their skill with written communication and stand-out as being able to wrestle (in writing) in a sophisticated way with abstraction and the ethereal.

First, analogies/metaphors are often used without adequately defining the abstract idea that they are intended to illuminate. A working (operational) definition of the target construct should precede choice of a metaphor/analogy because definitions differentiate between ideas and limit the scope of an object of analysis. For example, in the case of life, it appears that *Forrest* was indicating that human beings make choices and may be either disappointed or pleasantly surprised by the consequences of their decisions. Hence, *Forrest* was perhaps focusing on one aspect of life; the freewill aspect. He may have been suggesting that freewill – the purposeful choosing of a chocolate – is inevitably associated with uncertain consequences; you are never sure what you are going to get. If *Forrest* had been focusing on a physiological aspect of life, for example respiration, it would have been difficult to see the relevance of a box of chocolates. However, *Forrest* did not say what he meant by life and did not delimit the notion's scope.

Second, analogies/metaphors are arbitrary. Why choose a box of chocolates and not, say, a runaway shopping cart to indicate what life is like? A methodologically defensible answer to this question seems elusive. One possible response is that the way humans behave *vis-à-vis* chocolates more vividly depicts the relationship between, say, decision-making and its consequences than the way a shopping cart behaves *vis-à-vis* a non-flat parking lot; but perhaps only insofar as *Forrest Gump* is concerned.

Third, analogies/metaphors may be chosen to promote non-scholarly agendas. They may be invoked to either deepen understanding or to promote

commitment to an ideology or course of action. For example, *Forrest* could have been genuinely highlighting that a salient and important feature of human existence is that individuals inevitably make choices which will have either unpleasant or serendipitous consequences. The average of results from these decisions controls certain profound elements of an individual's destiny. On the other hand, *Forrest* could have just been encouraging positive thinking. After all, chocolates mostly taste nice even if some are better than others. *Forrest* was not explicit about his agenda when he compared life to chocolates and it remains unclear whether he was acting as a philosopher or counsellor when he offered his analogy/metaphor.

The remainder of this article focuses on organizational culture as an object of interest. In scholarly literature, this topic has often been the target of analogies/metaphors and the idea of comparison has become integral to qualitative methodologies examining the subject.¹ However, within this *corpus* research rigor is weak by conventional social science standards. In developing this theme, this essay will argue that analogies/metaphors are typically offered with limited or inadequately defended rationale. They are often used without a precise definition of the target object of analysis and may be associated with undisclosed agendas and/or those which are not intended to promote understanding. The article highlights these problems in their context and proposes a methodology for remedying them; a methodology with implications for writing generally about comparisons. Although it began by stressing *Forrest Gump's* legacy, it respectfully acknowledges the descriptive and evocative upside of previous work addressing organizational culture and draws attention to these strengths. Indeed, the mission of this paper is to present a methodology which retains advantages of established methods but which overcomes technical problems arising from use of those methods.

¹ In fact, analogies/metaphors are used to aid understanding of a range of related phenomena. For example, Martin and Frost (1996) used an analogy with a war connotation to describe exchanges between students of organizational culture, "the top-of-the-hill battle." A decade later, they replaced this analogy with "conversation" (Martin et al., 2006).

An outcome of this exercise will be a new take on social science research methodology, and on writing about social science.

By way of preamble, for purposes of this work, whilst the analogy/metaphor (fuzzy) distinction is not focal for understanding, some preliminary comments about these terms are provided. Specifically, according to Gentner (1983, p. 156), who was arguably the first to attempt to systematically delineate the constructs and (when considered alongside others who have written on the subject such as Leatherdale (1974), Cohen (1993), Oswick et al. (2002), Aubusson et al. (2006), and Plantin (2011)) had a special interest in definitions, an analogy is “an assertion that the relational structure that normally applies to one domain can be applied in another domain.” As a subclass of analogy, she elsewhere (Gentner, 1982) proposes that metaphors are governed by less precise and/or less formal mapping-rules but nonetheless are still concerned with two sets of relationships, one of which is being used to understand something about the other. As such, Gentner (1982, p. 107) says that a metaphor “conveys an artistic or expressive non-literal comparison of a certain form.” Whatever the case, she establishes the term “analogy” as a broader construct embracing a variety of phenomena including, for example (what in the physical sciences are sometimes referred to as) models and in the humanities, maps, schemas or structures. In light of such conjecture, the term analogy will henceforth be used in this article.

This article is structured in three sections. First there is a literature review which culminates in the identification of key methodological problems with the study of organizational culture. Second, an analytic framework which facilitates understanding of analogies is discussed. Third, the paper presents and defends a strategy for overcoming – and writing about – or at least combating certain methodological limitations that arise when researchers use analogies to aid understanding of organizational culture.

Literature Review: Representations of organizational culture

For purposes of the following discussion, the object of analytic interest – organizational culture – is viewed by the authors to have a working definition which, despite being at times hard to operationalize, will be meaningful for the majority of people who find themselves in work or bureaucratic settings. Specifically, organizational culture, for purposes of the current narrative, refers to collections of stories, principles and priorities (broadly conceived) that people are aware of and, to varying degrees constrained and governed by, that exist within a circumscribed setting. – Whatever the case, in spite of methodological problems such as changing definitions, arbitrary use of analogies (see the aforementioned discussion on this latter matter drawing on Gentner` s work) and ambiguous agendas, it is possible to approximately place ideas about culture on a continuum ranging from more functionalist to more interpretivist (inspired by Burrell et al., 1979).

In the current application, on the one hand, a functionalist perspective attaches importance to the way elements of a system interact for a purpose within their context rather than the disembodied nature of individual elements. Terms such as order, consensus, and integration are often used to indicate this emphasis (e.g. Hatch, & Cunliffe, 2006; Martin, 2004; Pinder, & Bourgeois, 1983). On the other hand, an interpretivist perspective stresses the experiences of individuals forming part of a unit of analysis. These latter views typically inquire about how members of a group or organisation view their circumstances. Underlying this distinction is a notion akin to the mechanistic/organic dichotomy, first delineated by Burns and Stalker (1961).² The functionalist/interpretivist continuum offers three related advantages when reflecting on literature addressing organizational culture. First, it enables an understanding of the historical antecedents of research and theorising. Early research, from the 1950s, was mostly in the functionalist tradition (e.g., Jaques, 1951) and later research, from about the 1980s, was mostly

² The frog versus bicycle example is often used to explain this distinction. The pieces of a frog have no utility individually. The leg of a frog, if amputated, cannot be used for another purpose. But a bicycle is different; its parts are modular.

interpretivist (Pondy et al., 1983; Frost et al., 1985). Second, it contextualises agendas including employer-related agendas. For example, if a manager takes a functionalist view of culture and says “our chain is only as strong as its weakest link,” they reveal that they consider sub-optimal performance on the part of a team member as an especially serious matter. However, if a manager says that they want their people “to love coming to work,” an interpretivist perspective, then they are stressing that the impressions of work held by each team member should be managed and that they, the employer, have a responsibility to improve the workplace. Underlying each narrative is a differently placed burden of responsibility. For practical purposes, functionalists are inclined to assign blame for problems and single out individuals (e.g., Burrell, & Morgan, 1979). By contrast, interpretivists leave open the possibility that problems need not necessarily be anyone’s fault. Third, and perhaps most relevant to present purposes, a functionalist/interpretivist continuum provides a scheme for classifying analogies which are associated with culture. In the remainder of this section these advantages are explored as part of the literature review.

In the 1950s the functionalist tradition emerged as the first effort to grapple with the nature of organizational culture. For example, Jaques (1951, p. 251) refers to culture as a “general code” enabling individuals to operate in a common way. A group member who is not able to properly access, understand or, for whatever reason, use the firm’s culture-code is viewed as maladjusted. Jaques does not devote attention to describing how the code originates, how it gets internalized by members of a work team, or how it is evolved.³ An idea which could be viewed as a modern incarnation of Jaques’s code conception is that culture is a “software of the mind” or a “mental program.” For example, still working in the functionalist tradition, Hofstede et al. (2010, p. 6) compared computer programs and their relation to hardware with the relationship that culture has with the collective actions of people in a workplace. They use this form of understanding (really an instantiation of abductive reasoning) to retrospectively distinguish between members of groups or categories.

³ Jaques devotes little attention to addressing how change occurs or causal sequences but rather merely describes a series of cross-sectional shifts.

Hofstede's methodology has also been applied prospectively and/or for purposes of prediction (Bashir et al., 2011; Mazaheri et al., 2011; Sartorius et al., 2011). There are at least two related conceptual limitations of the Hofstede paradigm. First, the nature and scope of the functioning of machines and computers is controlled absolutely by the code that is written to govern their operation.⁴ Hence, the software analogy is inclined to portray culture as the only important influence on the collective actions of individuals. Second, consistent with the software/hardware relationship, Hofstede implicitly portrays individuals forming part of a culture as passive agents who succumb to its influence. However, he offers no evidence that this is the case.

Writing from an interpretivist perspective, Deal and Kennedy (1982) describe culture as a "force" that influences group behaviour. The strength of this energy is conceived of as the degree of collective commitment to common values. However, it is difficult to understand how a "force," conventionally conceived of as a physical phenomenon, could corral individual behavior towards a group norm. In this respect the Deal and Kennedy perspective embodies a problem which besets other scholarship addressing organizational culture. Specifically, they invoke abstract, and/or ill-defined, constructs to inform understanding of more concrete ideas. This type of problem became the subject of controversy following the publication of Pinder and Bourgeois's (1982) article which asserted that the use of tropes (a generic figure of speech including analogies and metaphors) in the administrative sciences should be limited because an emphasis on second-order phenomena has potential to remove analytic focus from an object of interest.⁵ Deal and Kennedy's (1982) conceptualisation potentially falls victim to this trap, principally because "force" remains unclear and distracting. However, it is perhaps relatively easy to understand what it means to "share a commitment" to a particular value. For example, two colleagues may agree that it is important to not steal and, at the same time, each be unconcerned about keeping their workplaces neat and

⁴ Assuming certain basic preconditions, like adequate electricity etc.

⁵ Morgan (1983) wrote a rejoinder in which he reasserted the utility tropes.

tidy. In such a case, joint-commitment seems intuitive and a comprehensive understanding of what is occurring can be accomplished without introducing a third variable.⁶ Indeed, conceptions of “force” lead to a less elegant and parsimonious model of the values/commitment phenomenon because they insert additional steps into the understanding process.

Some authors refer to organizational culture as glue that sticks together members of an organised group (Gallagher et al., 2008; Larsson et al., 2003; Meyerson, & Martin, 1987). This representation, a functionalist view, expresses the tendency for team players to reach consensus and harmony. In invoking the idea of glue, it is necessary to specify which of its properties informs comprehension. Aside from being sticky, glue is potentially destructive and/or messy when applied too liberally. For example, glue can connect together dissimilar elements without transforming them and whilst retaining its independence. However, if too much glue is used to connect elements, the connecting may be accomplished but the glue itself may be too obvious and/or render the finished product unattractive. Hence, using glue inappropriately tends to make things worse; a goal may be achieved but at too great a cost. Whatever the case, if glue is presented as a pro-management metaphor (e.g., Alvesson, 1993) then, for reasons that are not made explicit, it must function perfectly and there can be no concept of it being applied too liberally.

Schein (2009) views culture as having the dimension of depth. Depth is accessed hierarchically: first through observing artefacts; then through identifying values and norms; and, finally through establishing the shared but idiosyncratic assumptions of a group. Implicit in this conception is the notion of sequentially more complex levels of understanding. For example, in contrast to certain tribal African communities, in Western societies wrist watches are a common item of apparel. They are worn because people attach importance to the management and control of time; a value. The relevant assumption underlying this value is that time is measurable and has meaningful benchmarks such as hours which are routinely used to regulate a sequential flow of daily

⁶ An influence on these values will be regression towards a mean.

activity. Schein`s three-stage representation is more elaborated than the conceptualisations of earlier functionalists, including Jaques (1951) and Hofstede (1980), as well as Deal and Kennedy (1982). However, Schein`s conception of depth is not fully explained. It appears to arise because of the limitations that language has in conveying meaning. Specifically, beyond the boundaries of linguistic utility there is a grey zone where an interlocutor may have an understanding that cannot be easily conveyed to a third party. This problem does not occur in relation to all that needs to be understood. For example, language may be well adapted to efficiently communicating everything that could ever be known about what a pencil is and how it functions. However, as is well known to poets, language works less well for understanding what love, pain, fear and disgust are. Assuming that there is some shared post-linguistic understanding of certain concepts, Schein is vague about how it originates. He says only that one needs to experience a target phenomenon for an extended period.

Joanne Martin (1992, 2002), using the *Peace Corps* to illustrate her points, proposes a model of organizational culture based on the analogy of a terrain to be mapped with three different layers of information. She labels these as perspectives; a description which may create confusion arising from “mixed metaphors.”⁷ The perspectives, which are viewed here as too broadly defined, are: integrated, which mainly refers to the unique managerial point of view on organizational life; differentiated, a conflict-based perspective which refers to opposing organizational groups; and, fragmented, which reflects ambiguity within the organisation. Empirical and polemic studies of organizational culture have used Martin`s three-perspective model (e.g., Garibaldi de Hilal, 2006; Kavanagh, & Ashkanasy, 2006; Lewis et al., 2003). It may be that Martin`s conception is best suited to the industrial-age workplace model where all members of a firm are located in one physical setting. When analysing modern multi-location firms, geography is a potentially confounding variable.

Alvesson`s seminal conception of organizational culture as multi-level traffic is theory development in the interpretivist tradition (1993). According

⁷ i.e. A map cannot be ‘covered’ with perspectives but may be able to be ‘covered’ with layers.

to this analogy, the construct is comprised of different “levels” which present themselves in an organisation. Culture at the “great” or highest level is conceived of as able to cross more than one organisation. Conversely, culture at a “lower” level is specific to a part of an organisation. It expresses the affiliation of a number of members to a particular group. For example two scholars may work together as employees of a particular university and be similarly influenced by the culture of their institution; a lower-level influence. The same two scholars may have different ethnic origins; “the great level influence” which would compel them to behave differently. In passing, there appears to be intuitive problems with using the analogy of traffic to aid understanding of organizational culture. The main malaise here arises because “traffic” seems to be inextricably linked to the idea of movement and change whereas organisation culture is frequently portrayed as conveying something static or stable about a group. In subsequent work, Alvesson (2008) used the analogy of a football game to aid understanding of organizational culture. Alvesson’s rationale for choosing football as a good analogy for culture is not well developed but appears to have something to do with his perception that the notion of a team-based contest is the most important defining feature of organizational life. Perhaps “football” as a replacement for “traffic” is also a response to a lack of apparent intuitive connection between traffic and culture. However, Alvesson was subsequently self-critical of “football.” In developing Alvesson’s (1993) work, Racine (2010) used the analogy of circulation to analyse organized networks.

In this section it was argued that diverse analogies have been used to aid understanding of organizational culture. However, often the rationale for the choice of analogy is either weak or non-existent. Organizational theorists have also identified other, subtler, problems with this *genre* of research; including the suggestion that multiple analogies make it difficult to gain a global grasp of a phenomenon’s essential nature (e.g., Schultz, & Hatch, 1996).

Problems with culture: A synopsis

Literature addressing organizational culture is piecemeal. Overall it suggests that theorists have different understandings of what culture is and how it should

be investigated. Certain key controversies surrounding the phenomenon have methodological origins and pose special challenges for writing, particularly scholarly writing. These may be summarized as problems of definition and/or contested focus; unstated and/or implicit agendas; and, the arbitrary nature of analogies. These problems are summarized in this section.

The definition of organizational culture is contested. More fundamentally, theorists have not typically given good rationale for their choices. Indeed, there exist at least five viable definitions of organizational culture and no easy way of favoring one of these (Hatch, & Cunliffe, 2006). Mainstream but divergent options are presented below.

- *“The culture of the factory is its customary and traditional way of thinking and doing things, which is shared to a greater or lesser degree by all its members, and which new members must learn, and at least partially accept, in order to be accepted into service in the firm”* (Jaques, 1951).
- *“Culture is a system of publicly and collectively accepted meanings operating for a given group at a given time”* (Pettigrew, 1979).
- *“Organizations [are] culture-bearing milieux, that is, [they are] distinctive social units possessed of a set of common understandings for organizing action (and of) languages and other symbolic vehicles for expressing common understandings”* (Louis, 1983).
- *“Culture is the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with the problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough... to be taught to new members”* (Schein, 1985).
- *“Culture refers to the knowledge members of a given group are thought to more or less share; knowledge of the sort that is said to inform, embed, shape, and account for the routine and not-so-routine activities of the members of the culture”* (Van Maanen, 1988).

Analogies can be used with undeclared intentions. They may not necessarily be deployed to promote understanding (a scholarly objective) but rather to inculcate commitment to a course of action or philosophy (an indoctrination

objective). For example, a manager may say “culture is like family” (Greenfield, 2009, exposing the Lehman Brothers case). In choosing this analogy, the manager invites their team to believe that, although each member is different, their association is based on love and respect, and that each member has a common destiny. In a case like this, the same manager would be unlikely to say why they chose family as an analogy and would probably not say that they are trying to make members of their team think in a certain way. Specifically, they would not distinguish between a scholarly and an indoctrination-related objective.

Although a popular way of understanding culture has been to use analogies, this strategy is associated with three kinds of problems. First, the role and scope of an analogy should be explored in advance of its use. In the case of culture, this is rarely done. For example, authors may just say “culture is like glue” (Gallagher et al., 2008).⁸ The second problem is there is no obvious and defensible way of favoring one analogy over another. This problem is not trivial because analogies inevitably draw attention to important features of a target construct. For example, on the one hand, if culture is like glue, then perhaps its exclusive role is to bind elements together. On the other hand, if culture is like a magnet (Frellick, 2011; Upenieks, & Abelew, 2006), then it will pull certain elements towards it whilst repelling others. Third, when analogies are used, it is not necessarily clear which of their attributes are relevant to the target, organizational culture. Even if a salient attribute is explicitly identified, the reason it is being favored seems arbitrary. For example, glue is sticky, but it is also external to the two elements that it connects together.⁹ If glue is being favored as an analogy for culture, it is reasonable to ask which of these two attributes is more important to understanding.¹⁰ Henceforth,

⁸ It is not suggested here that authors do not often attempt to explain how culture is like glue. In fact authors do typically explain how culture is like the analogy they have chosen – but they typically do not offer a solid rationale for use of their chosen analogy as part of their methodology or discuss the limits of using analogies as an aid to understanding.

⁹ i.e. glue is not incorporated into the two elements that it holds together – if it were, they would not be stuck together; they would be a single seamless element.

¹⁰ Maybe both elements are equally important, but no methodologically defensible strategy has been offered to resolve this.

the three aforementioned problems will be referred to as the multiple analogy syndrome. The next section focuses on this matter.

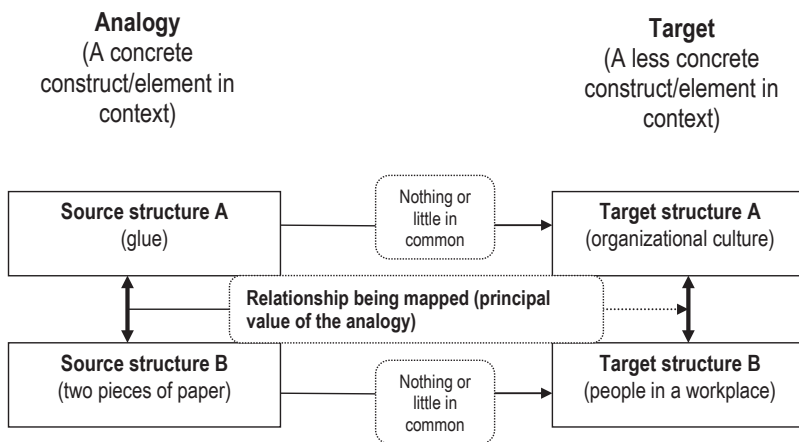
Analogies/Metaphors: A frame of reference

Consistent with the definition of Alvesson and Spicer (2011), “a metaphor is created when a term (sometimes referred as a ‘source’) is transferred from one system or level of meaning to another (the ‘target’).” This understanding can be further refined. As noted in this essay’s introduction, the terms analogy and metaphor are sometimes used interchangeably to indicate something that is tangible in nature but which can be conceptualised to have at least two elements interacting in an obvious way (i.e. have a defined relationship), and which can be used explicitly to shed light on the same kind of relationship for a more abstract pair of constructs. For reasons also explained, the broader idea of “analogy” is preferred here, mostly because it has greater utility (i.e. is applicable to a wider range of phenomena). The reasoning presented in this paper draws on the work of Gentner (1983, 1988; Gentner et al., 2001). Figure 1 depicts the critical components of its conceptualisation. In this illustration, an analogy is established to help understand a target, which should be more abstract. The analogy must have at least two readily apparent elements or structures. The target must also have a minimum of two sub-components but it is not essential that these have anything in common with the corresponding elements of the analogy. Indeed, the structures of the target are unlikely to have anything in common with the equivalent structures of the analogy, the source. For example, if glue is used as an analogy “source” for culture, it has likely been chosen because one of its attributes is that it can join elements together whilst retaining its independence.¹¹ Specifically, glue may be used to stick two pieces of paper together. On the other hand, it is possible

¹¹ In this case, these two things are stuck together with glue. However, if glue has not retained its independence, it may also be said that these two things have become the same thing.

that culture could be viewed as a non-tangible psychological phenomenon that makes people stick together.¹² In a de-contextualised sense, glue (source structure A) has either no or limited points of correspondence with culture (target structure A), and pieces of paper (source structure B) have nothing in particular in common with people in a workplace (target structure B). The idea of glue can only aid in the understanding of culture when it is revealed how glue interacts with other elements. Thus, it is the relation between glue and the paper that it interacts with that represents the explanatory value of the analogy. Furthermore, in this example, a particular attribute of glue is implicitly singled out as being important, namely its stickiness.¹³

Figure 1. Explanatory value of an analogy vis-à-vis organizational culture



Source: Own study.

¹² The word 'stick' here is used colloquially and implies to do things in the same way or to look at things in the same way.

¹³ Glue has other attributes. For example, it is invariably a gel-like substance, inexpensive to buy, and noxious tasting. However, none of these qualities has implications – of the kind being emphasized – for elements that glue interacts with.

Employing a rigorous theory to discriminate amongst analogies

This section focuses on the problem of multiple analogies and outlines a strategy for discriminating between them to distinguish which has the most utility for purposes of illumination. Specifically, it presents a method for answering the question: How can one decide that a certain analogy better aids understanding of organizational culture than others? And/or, which analogy best represents the nature of organizational culture? The identified strategy has two phases: data gathering; and data analysis.

A research design for addressing and writing about the multiple analogy syndrome

Data gathering, phase one, can be done through focus groups or structured surveys. The idea is to present non-experts with a series of analogies which have been used to represent or understand culture (source analogies). These participants should then be formally asked two questions. What attributes does this thing have? What does this thing do? As part of the same exercise the target concept, organizational culture, should be presented on the list of analogies. It would be useful to add to this list analogies that have not been formally presented in literature but which may inform understanding of “organizational culture” and/or which may focus attention on salient relationships between elements of organizational culture as a disembodied entity and elements of collective behavior. Table 1 presents a template for this exercise.

Table 1. Template for data gathering

Analogy/ Metaphor (Source) (A)	What attributes does this thing have? (B)	What does this thing do? (C) (its main functions/ purposes)
Battlefield		
Compass		
Eye Blinders		
Fence		
Glue		
Hologram		
Magnet		
Phone Network		
Road Traffic		
Sacred Cow		
Organizational Culture		

Source: Own study.

In phase two, the analytic phase, a third-party analyst (or analysts) is appointed. This person's job is to independently consider de-contextualised output from the focus group. Such output should be presented in the form of a series of "bundles of attributes" (the individual cells of column B) and a series of "main functions" (the individual cells of column C). Main functions should not be associated with any source and "bundles of attributes" should not be associated with any "source" or "main function." The analyst should be informed of how focus group participants viewed the purpose of organizational culture and what they viewed as its main attributes. However, the analyst should not be told about the source of other "bundles of attributes" or the source of other "main purposes." Their job is to examine which bundle of attributes most closely resembles the bundle of attributes associated with culture. There are various ways of doing this but a Likert-type scale would be particularly suitable (seven represents an identical

“culture-bundle”-“unknown-bundle” relationship, and one represents no similarity between the “culture-bundle” and the “unknown-bundle”). Figure 2 depicts the two tasks that the analyst is required to perform.

Figure 2. Two tasks that the analyst is required to perform

Task 1: “Main function” matching		
“Main function”	Matches with stated main function of organizational culture (mark out of 7)	Conclusion
Unknown “Main function” #1	?/7	The analyst decides which main function best approximates the main function of culture
Unknown “Main function” #2	?/7	
Unknown “Main function” #X	?/7	
Task 2: “Bundles of attributes” matching		
Unknown “Bundle of attributes” #1	?/7	The analyst decides which bundle of attributes best approximates the bundle of attributes associated with culture
Unknown “Bundle of attributes” #2	?/7	
Unknown “Bundle of attributes” #X	?/7	

Source: Own study.

Rationale for the design and implications for scholarly communication

Analogies have been used by theorists studying organizational culture because they may elucidate at least one attribute of the relationship that individuals have with the target. However, there is mostly no objective way of validating which attribute or combination of attributes is universally perceived as the most salient or which analogies best portray this/these attributes. A solution is to disconnect the name or label of a source (analogy) from considerations of its characteristics and/or function(s).

Previous theorising addressing organizational culture has been arbitrary in two senses. First, authors have typically suggested that a certain object and its relationship with its context are an appropriate analogy for understanding organizational culture. Second, the attributes being emphasised, either implicitly or explicitly, of a chosen analogy are not typically accompanied by methodologically defensible rationale. *Forrest Gump's* reference to a box of chocolates provides an intuitively appealing manifestation of both of these problems. Why has a box of chocolates been chosen? What is it about the way that chocolates interact with their context that is important for understanding what life is like? The two aforementioned problems can be isolated and resolved through asking a naïve person to identify salient attributes of qualitatively different three-dimensional things without knowing why they have to complete such a task. In such a paradigm, participants cannot have an *a-priori* agenda when they identify their bundles of attributes. This scenario leads to a collective understanding of what seems the most obvious about different kinds of ordinary things. For example, if a group of people decides that, when they think of glue, they also think of its property of stickiness, then there is external evidence that stickiness is an objectively important propriety of glue. To the extent that the deciding group is representative of a broader population, then a researcher may confidently assert that glue, despite its various attributes and potential functions, is first and foremost sticky.

If a third party examines different functions and/or bundles of attributes and is able to rank them as being more or less closely associated without knowing what the bundles of attributes refer to, there is a basis for differentiating between the suitability of different analogies. In a case where two bundles of attributes and/or functions are judged to be very similar, either object could be an appropriate analogy for the other. Lists of attributes and/or functions work best when they imply something about the way a source relates to its context, a principle depicted in Figure 1.¹⁴ By convention, less abstract elements are used as the analogy for more abstract elements, a principle that establishes which

¹⁴ Therefore, in the case of glue, stickiness is a more helpful attribute than gel-like.

element should be the source and which should be the target. For example, culture may be something that “sticks” elements together and glue may be something that “sticks” elements together. When the attribute of stickiness is presented on two occasions to a dispassionate critic without in each case being associated with anything in particular, then the dispassionate critic will likely observe two instances of the same property and deduce that this property must emanate from a similar kind of thing.

The methodology previously described can be applied in the case of culture or more generally. It has utility when there are several possible analogies that are competing to explain a target concept. It establishes a basis for picking an analogy that will optimally aid understanding. The technique may be viewed as an evidence-based check on intuition.

Conclusion

In reminding us that life is like a box of chocolates, Forrest Gump inadvertently touched on a problem that limits the potential of research using analogies to deepen understanding of organizational culture. Hence, despite the evocative nature of much scholarship addressing this topic, the problem of methodological rigor – and defending, in writing, a chosen approach – continues to plague research. As a consequence, there exists – what has been identified here as – the multiple analogy syndrome. The strategy presented in this essay is a remedy for this malaise and a tool for writing with greater precision about ethereal phenomena (in the present case, culture). Somewhat self-evidently, the strategy presented is generic. As such, it has potential application wherever analogies have become a principal means of concretizing the abstract.

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R. Duncan M. Pelly

Fisk University, USA

duncan.pelly@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-1788-6245

Alain Fayolle

CREA University of Cagliari, Italy

IDRAC Business School, France

Turku School of Economics, Finland

ajc.fayolle@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6092-6898

What Marquis de Sade's
Literary Critique Can Teach
Us about Entrepreneurship

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Abstract: No writer has captured the reader’s imagination as vividly as the Marquis de Sade. Per his usual ramblings, he espouses evil via excruciatingly detailed sexual exploits; but, in later writings he is vehemently critical of those who engage in corrosive behavior. In *Reflections on the Novel*, de Sade provides step-by-step instructions to create repelling, enthralling, and memorable fictional narratives, then stratifies “what not to do” in order to avoid situations that may lead to irreparable physical, mental, and emotional damage in real life. In this same pamphlet, he advocates authenticity in writing and ways to empower the budding Sadist. Moreover, he is unique in this discourse because he deviates from previous writings and speaks directly to the audience. This article deconstructs *Reflections on the Novel* and it provides unique writing tenets as suggested by de Sade. These precepts are revolutionary because they provide new avenues of research in entrepreneurship.

Key words: Marquis de Sade, entrepreneurship, literary critique, authenticity, building systems, reader engagement

What Marquis de Sade’s literary critique can teach us about entrepreneurship

Donatien Alphonse Francois, better known as the Marquis de Sade (1740–1814), is one of the most controversial figures in both history and literature. As a historical figure, he is reputed to be a criminal and a libertine. He is also suspected to be the individual who was the spark that ignited the French Revolution (Gray, 1987). As a literary figure, his works purportedly have no redeeming social value (Wyngaard, 2013), and are nothing more than a “tissue

of horrors" (de Sade, 1987). However, after reading *Reflections on the Novel*, it becomes evident that there is more to this disputatious figure than at first "meets the eye." In fact, he may be able to provide unique sagacity with respect to the true value of entrepreneurship.

Jones and Spicer (2009) posed the question of whether de Sade could be considered an institutional entrepreneur – the conclusion was a reticent 'yes.' It is my contention that de Sade was an entrepreneur on a multitude of levels. His entrepreneurial acumen is evidenced through his pre-Revolutionary works, all of which were written to undermine the authority of both the Monarchy and the Church and to promote dissidence among his French countrymen. In fact, his edicts were so incendiary that he was imprisoned both during and after the Revolution. As a precursory example, during his judgeship, he ruled that the state did not have the right to impose the death penalty upon its citizens (Gray, 1987). His opposition stood in stark contrast to the prevailing judicial norms of the time. His challenging the dominant ideas of the French Revolution led authorities to deem him a danger to the state, resulting in further imprisonment for the Marquis. This example can be construed as narrative entrepreneurship as defined by Spinoza et al. (1997), whereby he created a narrative anomaly that was sufficiently contagious to infect a dominant storyline. He continued his "tirade" on the Monarchy and Church by inciting rioters to storm the Bastille and release prisoners whom he falsely claimed were being executed (Gray, 1987). During the French Revolution, de Sade was considered an outstanding corporate entrepreneur in that his transformation of the Paris hospital system was considered nothing short of exemplary (Quinlan, 2006). He dramatically improved hospital cleanliness, access to patient care, and revamped hospital administration practices. Lastly, in his final days, de Sade was applauded as an exceptional theater organizer. Despite the fact that he was institutionalized in a mental hospital at the order of Napoleon, his theatrical prowess was so widely known that people traveled great distances to Charenton Asylum (in Saint-Maurice Val-de-Marne) to see the plays that he directed, performed, and wrote (Phillips, 2005). Although de Sade's entrepreneurial adeptness does not precisely conform to a specific category of entrepreneurship, his life

experiences combined with his literary successes, define him as a “plus zone challenge” type of entrepreneur (Hindle, 2007; Pelly, & Fayolle, 2020). In other words, his ability to blend practice and theory enabled him to inspire the entrepreneurial imagination.

What lessons does de Sade the writer have for modern scholars of entrepreneurship? It could be argued that entrepreneurship is the study of deviance (Kets de Vries, 1985). In other words, managing and line working are considered ‘normal’ behaviors; whereas, entrepreneuring is a behavior that defies the norm. To understand deviance, we must penetrate the imagination of one of history’s greatest sybaritic minds.

Lying in the subtle clues of his works and within his own literary theory and firsthand writings is an overt understanding of de Sade’s entrepreneurial deftness. Through his works, de Sade teaches us about writing differently. This article addresses de Sade’s axioms in *Reflections on the Novel* at face value to facilitate the analysis of his decrees and to highlight novel ways to study entrepreneurship that follow the spirit of his writing.

De Sade contributes three principal constructs to the study of entrepreneurship. Firstly, he details the sublime in order to avoid real life untenable, corrupting acts. Secondly, he explains the need for authenticity in stories. Thirdly, he provides insight into building systems that coerce, engage, and manipulate individuals to a desired outcome. In short, de Sade’s lasting contribution to the study of entrepreneurship is infection of our imagination (Trouille, 2004).

This work introduces an overview of de Sade the man, along with his literary precepts, particularly his special emphasis on unreason. This synopsis is followed by: evaluating ways in which de Sade’s techniques can be used to describe entrepreneurial failure (i.e., what not to do); entrepreneurial imagination through the study of antenarratives (what was not actually done); and, ways in which de Sade’s writing can highlight institutional and narrative entrepreneurship (i.e., building systems to coerce people via threats and manipulation). These comparisons will be used to advocate a Sadean style autoethnography as a novel methodology, and will be followed by the discussion and conclusion.

De Sade the man, de Sade the writer

De Sade's biography is oftentimes overlooked; nonetheless, it can illustrate the antecedents of his literature, similar to ways that an entrepreneur's life can influence entrepreneurial enactment (Sarasvathy, 2001) or entrepreneurial antenarratives (Rosile et al., 2013). His upbringing was that of pre-revolutionary French aristocracy, but with interesting twists. His father was frequently absent, and his mother was oblivious to him. As a result, he was raised by his uncle, Abbe de Sade (Gorer, 2013). Undoubtedly, the Abbe was a tremendous influence upon the young Marquis. The Abbe had many live-in servants, including a mother-daughter duo with whom he engaged in licentiousness behavior, oftentimes including other individuals as well as components of the socio-material environment – despite the fact he was a “devoted man of God” (Berman, 1999). Moreover, the Abbe had an extensive library of pornographic books that shaped the young Marquis's distorted view of the church and society at large, and that encouraged corrosive behavior (Schaeffer, 2000).

During his early adult years, the Marquis served a seven-year stint in the army, after which he married a young woman from an impressive bourgeoisie family. In the beginning of their relationship, his wife accepted his dark proclivities. It was speculated that his wife either ignored or was complicit in his sexual interactions with prostitutes (Ostermeyer, 1941). Moreover, his mother-in-law, the Madame de Montreuil, initially served as his advocate and defended his character, but withdrew her support when his moral turpitude continued. In fact, she was so appalled by his behavior that she made it her personal crusade to secure his imprisonment (Schaeffer, 2000). It was during these frequent consignments in various prisons that de Sade formed the perfect spaces for his “intellectual adventures” that ultimately gave way to his lasting legacy.

True to form, de Sade's literary style has been described as anti-women, anti-liberal, anti-humanist, and anti-democratic (Corey, 1966). Sadism in contemporary discussion is typically described as similar to Sado-Masochism, a doctrine based upon sexual pleasures (Bos, 2007). Practitioners of Sado-Masochism profess that pleasure and pain can be enhanced when constrained to certain spaces, agreements, or acts that are based upon mutual consent. De Sade's true ideas,

however, are much more nefarious because he views pleasure as a zero-sum game. In other words, pleasure is maximized in direct proportion to the amount of physical and psychological pain inflicted upon the victim.

Unreason in a Sadean heterotopia

In the field of entrepreneurship, de Sade proffers two contributions to theory, each of which will be explored. First, he compels us to focus on unreason. Tracing back to classical economics, research in business typically assumes rational actors (Smith, 2010). Based upon this premise, scholars build models to facilitate their ability to theorize, generalize, and predict future events (Pelly, 2017). However, we can conceptualize entrepreneurs as nonconformists who eschew reason (Kets de Vries, 1985); and, markets can be equally unstable (Chiles et al., 2007). Alternatively, entrepreneurs may be the impetus behind wanton implosion of market forces akin to Schumpeter's (1942) concept of creative destruction. In other words, entrepreneurs can propose counter-stories, institutions, businesses, ideas, or inventions that destroy existing reason in favor of a world to the entrepreneur's liking. Therefore, unreason may not be as farfetched in entrepreneurship as contemporary vernacular suggests.

De Sade's forte is creating and theorizing anent unreason. He grandstands in his works, but in his quest to say everything, he says nothing (Blanchot, 1948). He does not view reality as coherent or sensible, but rather as a series of momentary flashes of gratification (Greteman, 2016). His goal is to create the antithesis of longevity, posterity, and sensemaking (de Sade, 2016). The rationale behind his behavior can be attributed to his view of nature as fundamentally evil (Trouille, 2004). In other words, he believes that hedonism is a natural order of life (Bataille, 1993). De Sade's chief objective is to create a system in which victims become so confused they submit to schema, thereby making him a master of the systems he creates. His philosophy correlates directly with the belief that an entrepreneur can become the leader in a post-equilibrium world (Chiles et al., 2007). In lieu of generalizability, de Sade focuses on "theorizing in the moment," founded upon his whims and the systems he created.

These systems are known as heterotopias, typically defined as zones separated from surrounding regions (Winkler, 2014; Foucault, 1967). Heterotopias may be real or imagined, and are exemplified in thought experiments and in literature (Foucault, 1998; Beckett et al., 2017). Examples of heterotopias from history and sociology include Stone's (2013) depiction of Chernobyl as a heterotopia that echoes the nightmares of the past; and in, Winkler's (2014) description of museums as heterotopias that can pave the way for rehistoricizing. Finally, Pelly (2020) and Pelly and Boje (2019) explore ways that academic silos evolve into heterotopias that awaken latent evil in individuals.

Despite their divergence from the outside world, the inner workings of a heterotopia are internally consistent (Winkler, 2014; Johnson, 2006). They serve as a contrast that enables reciprocal sensemaking (Topinka, 2010). Simply stated, heterotopias can both influence and be influenced by the environment, and can manifest into a series of routines (Gioia, 1992) that socialize (Checkel, 2005) individuals into preprogrammed thinking – even though it may not be in an individual's best interest.

The relationship between heterotopias, unreason, and entrepreneurship is well documented. Hjorth (2005) defined organizational entrepreneurship as the spontaneous growth of heterotopias within an established organization that challenge both its strategy and tactics. Pelly (2016, 2017a) explores how factual and fabricated stories can be the foundation of heterotopias that are designed to supplant dominant organizational routines. Johannisson and Olaison (2007) and Peredo and Chrisman (2006) describe heterotopias that arise as a result of failures in sensemaking of dominant organizations and institutions.

Unreason, heterotopias, and entrepreneurship

The focus upon unreason in a heterotopia can be extrapolated to show that de Sade alters our understanding of entrepreneurship. His version of entrepreneurship experiences no morality and is without limits, except those experiences defined by the imagination and the arbitrary boundaries set by the “overlord” of the heterotopia. To elucidate, entrepreneurship may not

coincide with economic gains, but may focus upon pleasure-seeking and short-term gratification. This is a model not of heroic entrepreneurs as described by Schumpeter (1942), but of selfish ones. This does not mean that Sadean entrepreneurship and pecuniary gains are independent of one another. Money hoarding can be an excess that is as orgasmic as victimization (Bataille, 1993).

These ideas may be considered shocking; however, they are not totally foreign in the study of entrepreneurship. Sarasvathy (2001) famously described entrepreneurs with generalized aspirations in the spur of the moment, which can be construed as hedonistic. Kets de Vries (1985) also described the entrepreneur as a deviant. Moreover, the idea that deep thought and unbounded imagination can result in innovation is not a new concept, especially with respect to enactment (Sarasvathy, 2001). Even case study-based stories of entrepreneurship such as Allen's (2007), are rife with fictionalizations of lying, cheating, alcohol, and quick fixes, which can influence theory and practice (See the *Journal of Business Venturing* Volume 22 Issue 5 for articles that theorize with respect to entrepreneurship as based upon Allen's case). If de Sade is a deviant enactor with a colorful biography, then exploring entrepreneurship through his eyes may lead us to better understand entrepreneurs as deviants, understand the antecedents to their behavior, and harness the power of their imagination to help the reader interpret, instead of merely observe entrepreneurial behavior.

The first rule of de Sade: What not to do

Many literary critics have characterized de Sade as a man who recorded his fantasies through literature. However, in his own words, de Sade purports the obverse. In *Reflections on the Novel* (de Sade, 1987), he explains that the point of his works is to educate individuals about deviance; in effect he wants to scare people away from the villains in his novels. In the same work, he declares that he is performing a public service through his writing. This is a declaration that de Sade is not evil's greatest advocate, but its greatest critic (de Sade, 1987).

This basic precept harks back to a fundamental problem in research, particularly in entrepreneurship. In most post positivist research, there is an obsessive hunt for “the truth” (Herrmann, 2020). This truth focuses extensively on what does work, what happened, and why something was successful (Pelly, 2017). This is particularly problematic for entrepreneurship – there is no universal definition of entrepreneurship, or of opportunity (Alvarez, & Barney, 2007), nor are the basic components of a business plan agreed upon (Gartner, & Teague, 2017). On the other hand, we can heed de Sade's advice and focus upon entrepreneurial failure. These forgotten pathways have been previously explored in case studies (Shepherd et al., 2016), but a literary analysis may be more beneficial, especially when reviewing rejected antenarratives (Rosile et al., 2018) and entrepreneurial struggles (Allen, 2007; Pelly, 2016).

The inconsistencies of entrepreneurship mirror the biographical and literary epochs that transcended de Sade's life. Before the Revolution, the judicial system in France was comprised of two courts – one for members of the nobility and one for everyone else – a clear dichotomy of the law, and for ethics (Jandeaux, 2012). During the Revolution, these values were upturned in a most chaotic fashion, only to be deconstructed once again during the reign of Napoleon (Gray, 1987). A pioneer of de Sade's caliber tests these frontiers during periods of upheaval – by showing humanity in its most repugnant form and by de-masking his fantasies without societal constraints (Delon, 1972). Amidst endless debates on morality, de Sade provided a unifying force of “what is not” acceptable behavior (de Sade, 1987).

By the same token, we may not understand “what is success” in the field of entrepreneurship – but consensus among experts may not be relevant (Pelly, 2017). Perhaps we should follow in de Sade's footsteps to explore what entrepreneurship is not (Jones, & Spicer, 2009), and use his literary exposés to explore entrepreneurial failure and its root causes. Understanding the opposite of success can lead to the opposite of failure, if stories are told in an evocative way that propels the reader into in the story (Whitehead, 1933; Follett, 1970).

Another advantage of using de Sade's premises to theorize about entrepreneurship is relative to entrepreneurial ethics. A libertine who is able

to create a company as a domain of unreason may consider it a given right to terrorize subordinates (Pelly, & Fayolle, 2020). Recounting these acts in a gruesome Sadean-style can serve as examples to students and to aspiring entrepreneurs. Providing examples of unacceptable behaviors is especially germane with the rise of student incivility in business schools (Burke et al., 2014) and calls for increased ethics training in business schools (Giacalone, & Thompson, 2006). De Sade teaches readers to be more mindful and introspective (de Sade, 1987), and repugnance to his depictions of behavior serve as an important reminder that we are all human beings and should be respectful of one another.

De Sade in search of authenticity

Authenticity is continually sought in research so that we may uncover “truth” in our writing (Herrmann, 2020). Enactment is a significant driver in entrepreneurship (Sarasvathy, 2001), meaning it is necessary to assess the motivation behind the entrepreneurial action, be it an underlying intention or generalized aspiration. Unfortunately, most research, including ethnographic research, is observational instead of interpretive (Herrmann, 2020). Researchers focus on the ontic instead of the ontological (Heidegger, 1961); or, what can be sensed instead of what can be believed.

De Sade advocates the use of literature in lieu of history to explore human behavior, and what man wishes to be instead of how he actually behaves (de Sade, 1987). He invites authors to “take off the mask” and make themselves vulnerable to readers. As an author, this vulnerability enhances plausibility (Herrmann, 2020), and it encourages the reader to become a part of the story (Follett, 1970).

This authenticity (or verisimilitude in de Sade’s terms (de Sade, 1987)) can be augmented by giving complete details of our fantasies. In the words of Agent Smith from *The Matrix*, humans define their existence through misery (Wachowski, & Wachowski, 1999), a sentiment shared by de Sade. But the Marquis makes one addition to Smith’s statement – that misery makes the experience believable.

In entrepreneurship, we are flooded with Horatio Alger stories (Decker, 1997) and the myth of the heroic entrepreneur (Anderson, & Warren, 2011). But our fantasies, our fears, our failures, as we play them in our minds, are often omitted from our research (Rosile et al., 2013). Frequently, the choices we did not take are the ones that have the most educational value (Follett, 1970).

De Sade also encourages us to use travel to provide verisimilitude for the reader (de Sade, 1987). Every fantasy, or story, happens in a strange setting. For example, the setting could be on a luxurious yacht after the purchase of an IPO of a tech firm; or, the fantastical grandmother's house where "if only she could see me now"; or, the former or future boss next to the water cooler at the point where the entrepreneur cites Johnny Paycheck (1977) and exclaims, "Take this Job and Shove It." Irrespective, these unique heterotopic settings provide fertile ground for the entrepreneurial imagination, and they provide vivacity for readers to construct their own fantasies. This suggests that writers should focus more on providing "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973); in other words, more on the means of entrepreneurship as well as a re-examination of its ends. The ability to pave the ground for a fertile imagination in entrepreneurship allows the reader to form his or her own conclusions.

De Sade as a builder of systems

De Sade's writings are similar to Schumpeter's (1942), in that both men advocate for the destruction of existing systems in favor of constructing new ones. In fact, de Sade shares many ideas with members of the school of Austrian economics – Kirzner's (1997) exploiting gaps in the market place (or in institutions in de Sade's case); Lachmann's (Chiles et al., 2007) exploration of the socio-material for enhancing opportunities (or improvising with common implements to enhance torture); and, Hayek's (Steele, 1993) use of introspection to understand humanity (or in de Sade case, the use of deprivation and deep thought to enhance perversions).

Contrarily, de Sade is unique in his use of literary device to explore the underlying evil in mankind. His intention is to scare us, to infect our

imagination (Trouille, 2004). His use of literary devices explains in a very authentic way not just the action of constructing systems, but the underlying motivations (Butler, 2003). His form of entrepreneurship emphasizes creating heterotopias as systems, then becoming master of these domains. His use of archetypes provides a road map of how the libertine (or entrepreneur) can exploit others based upon their social status and skill sets. Alternatively, de Sade hints at latent needs by showing how a socio-material environment – replete with a dark isolated castle, a secret room in the Vatican, or a dungeon, can be altered to coerce individuals to conform to the norms of the person in power (Greteman, 2016).

This use of literary devices serves as a roadmap for other entrepreneurs to emulate as they construct their own systems. If we accept the premise that entrepreneurs are deviants (Kets de Vries, 1985), then readers can use de Sade’s ideas as a roadmap to construct their own systems that deviate from the norm.

Tips from de Sade to write the perfect entrepreneurial tale

We do not provide a step-by-step checklist to produce entrepreneurship research like the Marquis de Sade, because he offers an orientation of ethics in lieu of a step-by-step system (Butler, 2003). However, we do offer a few pointers from the Marquis that may give the entrepreneurial research community a moment of for pause.

Many literary scholars have accused de Sade of heinous crimes. However, de Sade freely admits that most of this work is based purely upon fantasy (Wyngaard, 2013). What distinguishes de Sade from other pornographers of the time is that he created a coherent ethic to accompany his stories (Butler, 2003). Unlike the modern entrepreneurship scholar who provides a moral or lesson in the story, de Sade strongly advises against moralizing in the text and, instead, either withholds opinions, or uses subtle nudges within the discourse to allow reflexive interpretations by the reader (de Sade, 1987). On the

occasion that de Sade “lends a lesson to the reader,” his characters convey the message; he does not. Of notable exception is in *Reflections on the Novel* in which de Sade speaks directly to the reader. For writers who create their own entrepreneurial Sadean auto/ethnography, it is encouraged that they allow the characters within the story to deliver the message, and to allow the reader to interpret the findings for their own ways and reasons (as found in Follett, 1970; Whitehead, 1933). Who would have ever guessed that de Sade was a post-modernist at heart?

De Sade also advocates that we embellish or exaggerate what we see (de Sade, 1987). This exaggeration allows for further extrapolation on the part of the reader, who can craft open ended applications. However, he strongly advises against exaggerating to the extent that the story lacks verisimilitude – a story must be relatable, if not believable, at all costs. Interestingly, many entrepreneurs exaggerate their successes in speeches to gain credibility and to form a bond with the audience – perhaps entrepreneurship scholars could emulate their practice as well. This precept implies that truth lies with the reader, not the writer.

De Sade was a master of the *tableau vivant* style of writing (Shapiro, 1993). In other words, his writing segments the action into vignettes that oscillate between characters and narrator to keep the reader engaged and anxious to read the next page. Long, drawn-out text (yes, even the kind found in modern entrepreneurship literature) can be exhausting. More troublesome is the fact that research no longer considers the practitioner, but practitioner critique could be more available if our research read more like de Sade's prose. This structure is frequently emulated in reality television shows – there is filming of the characters, followed by cut scenes that provide thoughts of the characters – with each episode rotating through multiple characters. This style of writing provides the opportunity for more democratic theorizing.

De Sade encourages us to view writing as a palimpsest (McMorran, 2007). The palimpsest is a literary orientation in which the author and reader engage in a simultaneous act of reciprocal interaction with the text across multiple iterations of each manuscript. In many ways, this enables the text to take on a life of its own across readings and interactions of a manuscript.

De Sade was a master of producing multiple versions of his books to match the times in which he was living and the ideas of his audience. His support of the palimpsest is commensurate with indigenous storytelling (Rosile et al., 2018) in which the author engages in the process of storytelling, story listening, and story co-construction, as found in entrepreneurial articulation (Pelly, 2016), or re-historicizing (Hatch, & Schultz, 2017).

Finally, de Sade encourages every novelist to be an effective writer (de Sade, 1987). Much like an evocative autoethnographer (Herrmann, 2020), de Sade realized that without an effective writing style, the author had little to offer. For those of us in entrepreneurship research perhaps we should “spice up” our written discourses to make them more interesting and meaningful for our readers. Like best-selling novelists, our works should be engaging – every article seen as an appetizer, a prelude for exciting things to come. More importantly, we should allow readers to be able to creatively apply our findings to their own stories (Follett, 1970; Whitehead, 1933).

Discussion and conclusion

This writing has focused upon reviving the theories of the Marquis de Sade and applying them to the study of entrepreneurship and its methods. Though de Sade died long before great scholars of entrepreneurship such as Schumpeter (1942) existed, he continues to speak to us through his biography and literature. His written text in *Reflections on the Novel* is clearly unconventional. He speaks to us as an open-ended storyteller, and his perspective on unreason contradicts not only our mainstream understanding of business, but entrepreneurship as well. De Sade’s ideas are much like dark matter, they may be invisible, but they exercise an uncontrollable and significant impact and should be studied (Bertone, & Hooper, 2018). Unreason is the dark matter of entrepreneurship, and this paper has provided a new way to use the insights of the master of unreason to explore understudied aspects of entrepreneurship.

It is our belief that de Sade’s biography and literature (despite their contradictions), can provide insight into ways we study and explain

entrepreneurship. Instead of focusing on the empirical and factual facets of entrepreneurship, it is time to tell a story of entrepreneurship. This would intimate that scholars not search for “truth” but rather for truth for the reader or audience, and act in accordance with the plus zone challenge in entrepreneurship (Hindle, 2007; Pelly, & Fayolle, 2020).

This approach to generate verisimilitude with the reader (de Sade, 1987) means that we focus not upon cold, hard statistics that easily fall into the Oedipus effect (Popper, 1950); rather, the emphasis should follow de Sade's lead and focus less on the “ends of entrepreneurship” and more on “the means.” This philosophy is in line with process studies in entrepreneurship (Hernes, 2014). Through recounting gritty details, or “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973), de Sade directs us not in the elusive pathway towards entrepreneurial success, but away from failure.

Of equal importance, de Sade teaches us ways to construct systems in which the entrepreneur can dictate the rules of success and (un)reason. This removes entrepreneurship from a causation perspective (Sarasvathy, 2001) to a perspective of entrepreneurship without limits. In de Sade's systems theory, entrepreneurship becomes limited not by markets or customer desires, but by the entrepreneur's imagination. This approach encourages us to view entrepreneurship in a different light in order to engage our readers on a higher, more realistic level.

Future research that supports de Sade's precepts should fundamentally diverge from mainstream writing styles and goals. This is a more dramatic shift than simply embracing the playful sides of entrepreneurship (Hjorth, 2005). Rather, it necessitates that entrepreneurship research *be* a story in lieu of simply analyzing stories. Like good storytellers, entrepreneurship scholars should emulate early authors who wrote business novels to inspire readers (Pelly, & Fayolle, 2020).

This approach is not without limitations. The reliance on small sample sizes limits generalizability. However, de Sade would argue that generalizability is not as critical as verisimilitude which supports the postulate that entrepreneurs are black swans; therefore, sensemaking is enhanced through stories in lieu of statistics (Pelly, & Fayolle, 2020). Moreover, Sadean

stories are fictionalized and can be viewed as excessively subjective. However, objectivity is irrelevant in a Sadean entrepreneurial narrative because sensemaking lies with the reader's ability to feel connected to the story, and is not exclusively related to objectivity. Finally, it could be argued that using de Sade could potentially glamorize amorality in entrepreneurship studies. However, de Sade argues that it is only by engaging in evil that we can fully understand it (de Sade, 1987).

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**Reflections
on writing
for publication
in scholarly
journals**

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Preface

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The pressure to publish is not new for academics as it has always been necessary not only as a means for disseminating scholarly ideas and expanding existing research, but also as a way to advance our academic careers and meet employment requirements. However, there is a new aspect of this pressure which is different today: the promotion of a “winner-takes-all” system (Frank, & Cook, 2010), supported by mainstream journals’ policies, in which “there are no benefits at all for almost getting something published in a top journal, and the benefits of publishing in lower status journals decline rapidly” (Philips, 2019, p. 307). The “winner-takes-all” system is based on the journal-proxy method¹ that relies on quantifiable measures to assess research

¹ There is a number of journal-proxy indexes used to evaluate scholarly research output. The most valued measures include impact factor and citations and the most referred to indexes are SCImago, Thompson Reuters Web of Science, Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science and Social Science Citation Index. Publication rankings depend on the citations each article gets and individual scholars are assigned an H-index which has the following formula: h-index = the number of publications with a citation number greater than or equal to h.

value. Unfortunately, it does not give an evaluation of the qualitative aspects of scholarly texts, such as the communicative efficacy or the potential practical application of the findings. Putting this in Hyland's words, the global scientific publishing industry has made scholarly writing a space "where individual reputations and institutional funding coincide; the result of managerialism and an accountability culture that seeks to measure 'productivity' in terms of papers, and citations to those papers" (Hyland, 2016, p. 58). Furthermore, the role of journal gatekeepers in bringing a text to publication is somewhat difficult to determine. Undoubtedly, there are reviewers and editors who offer constructive comments to authors and help them develop their research. However, it is often the case that rejection decisions are communicated in short and generic e-mails, reducing the reviewer's role to a "screening device" (Rousseau, 1995).

Having the experience of becoming and being a bilingual scholar myself, I am convinced that writing for global discourse communities is equally challenging for mother tongue and non-mother tongue scholars. Regardless of our cultural, linguistic and disciplinary background, it is always a tough struggle to find 'the right' voice with which to write about our research. The section "Reflections on writing for publication in scholarly journals" offers accounts of actual experiences academics have had in writing for publication in peer-reviewed scholarly journals. The idea for the theme of this issue was born from criticism appearing within top-tier academic publications addressing such matters as:

- 1) ineffective communication of disciplinary knowledge and beliefs,
- 2) established and dysfunctional norms for producing and evaluating research,
- 3) the exclusion of traditionally marginalised groups, i.e., non-Anglophone scholars, junior researchers and doctoral students.

The personal accounts gathered in this section provide insights into the challenges we face when writing for publication in scholarly journals and hopefully point to means of addressing these challenges.

Iga Maria Lehman (University of Social Sciences, Poland)
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2092-8119)

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R. Duncan M. Pelly

Fish University, USA

duncan.pelly@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-1788-6245

On the Plagues and Pleasures of Academic Publishing

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I knew I was in a world of trouble the first week of my Ph.D. program. The head of our program, a well-known researcher in organization theory, asked us why we chose to pursue a doctorate.

The first student, who was from an impoverished African country, explained, “I hope to use the skills obtained in this program to alleviate poverty amongst my people.” The second student, who was from Asia, bragged, “I am already a professor and I want to learn additional methods to improve my

teaching.” The third student was European, and said, “I dream that a Ph.D. after my name will catapult my consulting career.”

At this point, the head of the program became furious and shouted at all of us. Using a colorful combination of words that could be called “swear bingo,” he explained that he was paying us to be future researchers. We were not here to feed the hungry or become better teachers. He certainly wasn’t paying us to enrich ourselves in a consulting career.

He then looked at me and asked why I was there. I smiled and said, “I want to become a world class researcher.”

When is enough? At what point do we say that publishing seems to be less about advancing the frontiers of knowledge and more about gate keeping? Does chasing impact factors override the creation of articles that create value for practitioners? Does the relentless “publish or perish” culture improve society, or strengthen our character as academicians? I would like to share a few more of my experiences that provide some insight into my frustrations with the processes of writing, revising, and publishing in top academic journals.

I had an inkling the system was broken in the summer of 2019. The summer before, I had presented a paper at a top European conference about the debilitating impact that burn pits have had on the health of U.S. service members, and I explored the role of the military, politicians, and contractors in covering up the health dangers of burn pit exposure. My paper was a finalist (or top three out of roughly 70 papers) for two of the conference’s awards. I did not receive either award, but I was the first person in the history of that conference to have two “top three” papers. I submitted that paper to the journal affiliated with the conference, which was desk rejected due to “no contribution.” I submitted a different paper with the same theoretical framework, but a different empirical setting the next summer, which was also rejected with no feedback.

One of my favorite autoethnographies describes a *Lord of the Flies* type of atmosphere in my Ph.D. program. I decided to submit the paper to a top management learning journal. After three revisions with the journal, I was thrilled that two of my reviewers were ready to see the paper printed. The

third reviewer then decided that the theory was all wrong. This was the same theory I had been using since the initial submission. The field editor then decided to reject the paper. I spoke to one of the editors who told me, “The paper was rejected because it threatened to expose academia. You scared the shit out of us.”

It was simply too controversial to imply that perhaps academicians should be held to the same ethical standards as found in other professions. I have since resubmitted the paper, which was desk rejected at a lower-level journal – the reason was that the editor believed “the paper would cause a lawsuit.” This was “academic freedom” at its finest.

I could recount many other vignettes, but as academic writers, I am positive you have similar stories. The cost of publishing in its current form is very high. Think of the time spent, the man hours wasted, and the tuition dollars allocated on articles that in the best-case scenario are nothing more than mathematical masturbation fetishized by no more than ten people. In the worst case scenario the paper is rejected – leading to yet another faculty member feeling the pressure of the tenure clock or being ridiculed by colleagues.

This is a gate keeping process where individuals from prestigious universities have an advantage, not necessarily because of the quality of the work, but because journals want to have top institutions listed in their tables of contents (Pelly, & Boje, 2019a, 2019b). All of these top journals publish in English, which further excludes individuals from other countries who want to become part of the conversation.

Another voice that is regularly excluded is that of the practitioner (Pelly, & Fayolle, 2020; Pelly, 2017; Frandsen, & Pelly, 2020). How many times has an executive, a lower-level manager, or a blue-collar worker been given the opportunity for their voice to be heard? When is the last time they had the chance to write in academia? Evidently, only someone with a doctorate and extensive research training can tell the stories of the people they observe (assuming they observed their empirical settings in the first place). We have drifted so far away from introducing new phenomena and ideas that publishing itself has become an end, not a means to an end.

How much knowledge is lost in the process? How many revolutionary and useful manuscripts inevitably sit for years on someone's desktop, unable to find a home? Everyone at top conferences explains that we must do better, but few are willing to take that plunge. It is for this reason that I am grateful to the editors and reviewers of *Discourses on Culture* who enable us to have these conversations.

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Penelope Muzanenhamo

UCD College of Business, Dublin, Ireland

penelope.muzanenhamo@ucd.ie

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-8575-9347

Black Scholarship: Autoethnographies and Epistemic (in)Justice

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Introduction

As a Black female scholar I am socially situated within a traditionally marginalized group of knowers, who must also contend with the effects

of the intersecting dimensions of gender, race, and an “African” identity (Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991). However, rather than deter me, I believe my socially powerless identity (Fricker, 2010) has inspired my participation in the struggle for epistemic justice with other Black (female) scholars (e.g. Nkomo, 1992) with the goal to advance Black scholarship (Muzanenhamo, & Chowdhury, 2021). By Black scholarship, I denote epistemological approaches grounded in the social realities of Black (and Brown) individuals and communities, that are adopted by non-White bodies such as myself (Muzanenhamo, & Chowdhury, 2021).

I regard my participation in the collective effort to center Black scholarship particularly within Management and Organization Studies (MOS), as a response to the discipline’s tradition of primarily privileging white male bodies as the legitimate scientific knowledge producers (Fricker, 2010; Nkomo, 1992). This inclination, categorized by Miranda Fricker as epistemic injustice, involves wrong and harmful traditions and practices of excluding and disenfranchising Black female scholars like myself and women in general, among other marginalized individuals (Fricker, 2010).

Epistemic injustice historically promotes the misrepresentation and marginalization of Black social realities within MOS. Effectively, this results in the exclusion of our Black social realities from informing policies, projects and initiatives that impact upon our physical, psychological and social wellbeing. Thus, to redress epistemic injustice and its negative effects as Black (and Brown) scholars, we attempt to ‘tell our stories’ and immerse readers in our social realities to inspire action towards social justice. Emancipatory storytelling (e.g., hooks, 2000) evolves as poetry, autobiographies (Angelou, 2013; Davis, 2022) and autoethnographies (e.g., Bell, & Nkomo, 1999; Muzanenhamo, & Chowdhury, 2022).

Hope lays at the heart of Black scholarship (King, 1968). I see hope as the anticipation of a socially just World that, according to Ernst Bloch, is ‘not-yet become’ but enroute to materialization through collective effort (Ernst Bloch, cited in Brown, 2003; Moir, 2018). However, while hope inspires Black scholarship, my phenomenological experience has introduced me to an immense fear that is encapsulated in the process of writing first-hand

scholarly accounts addressing subjection to social injustice (*our truth*). *Telling our truth to people* and *speaking our truth to power* demands courage (Collins, 2013) and entails a paradox of fear and freedom.

I subsequently illustrate the above stated point by reflecting on my collaborative autoethnography concerning how I suffered a racially aggravated domestic assault, and was temporarily 'homeless' at the height of a teaching term and the Covid-19 pandemic (Muzanenhamo, & Chowdhury, 2022). I proceed by addressing the paradox of fear and freedom against the backdrop of hope in the sections that I have identified below as: *The first time – floodgates opened; Trembling like a reed – The revise and resubmit process, and; the Acceptance – What a dreadful world*. I then conclude this chapter on a hopeful note.

The first time – floodgates opened

When I sat down for the first time to write about how I had been physically assaulted by a white female housemate that I had invited into my rented home (see Muzanenhamo, & Chowdhury, 2022), I felt immensely relieved. Such relief embodied freedom and it was (temporarily) liberating. I was in control over, and (self-)empowered to tell *my truth in my own words at my own time and pace*. This permitted the release of an indescribable anger and pain that had been trapped within me, and had trapped me within a dark mental space for months.

Consequently, I wrote a lot and did so endlessly for days. Notwithstanding, not every word and emotion could be accommodated into the space of a journal article. Hence, the process of *telling my truth* taught me that such *truths* need structure and linkage to the broader community of actors beyond the self. Relevancy to wider community allows *our truths*, as victims of social injustice, to potentially create positive change. It was therefore imperative for my collaborator and I to exercise a degree of judgement over scientific significance, and potentially offer a novel theoretical contribution beyond self-emancipation.

Trembling like a reed – The revise and resubmit process

After submitting the manuscript, I tried to forget about the submission as a way to reduce anxiety and carry on. However, deep inside I feared that *my truth* might be rejected by the scholarly community that I hoped would *listen* to me, *believe* me, and to which I sought to *belong*. I feared epistemic injustice, and that *my truth* might be ‘objectively’ less convincing and compelling to journal reviewers. Therefore, to prepare myself mentally for potential rejection, I read literature on how victims of some of the most brutal physical violence might cope with such dehumanization, particularly when the justice system chooses not to believe *the individuals truth*.

For example, I explored some of the work by scholars such as Raphael (2013), Resick (1984), and Smith and Skinner (2012) on severely traumatic experiences of rape. To me the revelations presented by the above cited scholars on the denial of justice to the victims were so shocking that they left me feeling even more pessimistic. Indeed, reading such work pushed me further deep into the World of fear and anxiety. To me, and in my context, rejection would have meant that someone somewhere had known about *my truth* but denied me the possibility of telling *it* to the World, and through that, denied me any sense of justice. Rejection not only reflected epistemic injustice, but also, the sentiment that my Black Life *did not Matter*. This is how far my mental journey had evolved at the time.

Fortunately – I use this word granted that academic publishing resembles a gambling game (Gabriel, 2010; Horn, 2015) – my collaborator and I received a ‘revise and resubmit’ (RR) recommendation from the reviewers and editor. When I clicked open the editor’s email for the very first time, I remember trembling like a reed in the river. My heart was pounding as if it was going to explode, as I quickly scanned the editor’s email looking for any wording that questioned, doubted or discredited *my truth*, and thus signaled rejection. There was no such apparent suggestion. I was relieved, and hopeful of a potentially good outcome down the line (that is, an acceptance of the manuscript – *my truth*).

The editor and reviewers' comments were challenging but constructive. Notwithstanding, after successfully revising and submitting the manuscript, the same sense of fear re-colonized my mind. To cope, I tried forgetting about the work once again. Yet still, it was déjà vu as the 'if then' scenarios started replaying in my mind and consuming it. Simultaneously, I hoped that the manuscript would succeed. Fortunately, the research was accepted after a few rounds of reviews. I was briefly relieved.

The acceptance – What a dreadful world

In retrospect, I should have celebrated the accepted manuscript as it was an achievement, and a potential contribution to Black scholarship. But I did not celebrate when I first learned of the outcome. Instead, I felt completely exhausted, drained and somewhat empty inside. I believe this was the by-product of a journey involving an autoethnography by a victim: I somehow struggled with the realization that my academic achievement derived from my experience of a racially aggravated domestic violence. It seemed like a paradox.

At the time, it also struck me that I might not have been sufficiently prepared for the World to know what had happened to me (*my truth*) and I feared exposure. I feared the World's *reaction* to *my truth* (van de Berg, 2021). Indeed, fear was again (and constantly) replacing the freedom, liberation and emancipation that surfaced at the time when the 'floodgate opened', and which would have been fortified by the scholarly acceptance of *my truth*. It took me a few days before I realized how delighted I was that reviewers and editor(s) had listened to *my truth*, *believed my truth*, and decided that *my truth* should be told to the World to expose racism – a mutating virus (Nkomo, 2020) – rather than hide it through silence.

In retrospect, however, I humbly claim a better understanding of why some victims of social injustice *never tell their truth* (speak out) or come forward. I believe I now have a better sense of why some victims may choose to suffer in silence, and continue going to work or living their lives as if 'nothing happened

to them'. To reiterate, van de Berg (2021) teaches us that fear is paralyzing. Ellis (1999) further instructs us that in telling *our truth*, we must also consider those who might be implicated by our stories. Such responsibility – in a World full of social injustice(s) – can trigger and cultivate an immense fear within victims. Yet our voices should be heard, and through that, our voices can expose social injustice(s). I therefore believe that we, Black (female) scholars and our allies, must not lose hope and courage, at least in our collective effort to fight epistemic injustice and advance Black scholarship.

Conclusion

Did I succeed or fail in telling *my truth* to the World? This is a question that may take ages to answer. However, I am knowledgeable that autoethnographies not only allow Black scholars to introduce their Worlds to others, but also, they are potentially therapeutic (Ellis, 1999). When we mobilize autoethnographies as elements of Black scholarship and share *our truths*, we explore collective healing by potentially connecting with similar others (victims) regardless of their gender, sexuality, ethnicity or skin pigmentation. Through such scholarly connections we let other victims “know that they are not alone,” they too can heal and overcome “difficult obstacles” (Gorasia, 2018). While we may have our battles (e.g., fear), we are still able to give other victims “hope... that it is possible” (Gorasia, 2018) to survive and possibly thrive. I have seen myself in other Black female scholars' *truths /stories*, and this has so far helped me to grow courageously, professionally, emotionally, and even spiritually. Therefore, may we, the traditionally marginalized scholars, always dare to speak *our truth* with the hope that we can collectively (with our allies) change the World for better.

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Antony Hoyte-West

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland

antony.hoyte.west@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4410-6520

Per Ardua ad Astra? Some Early-career Reflections on Academic Writing for Publication

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Throughout the world, scholarly publications have assumed significant importance in performance and quality evaluations of higher education institutions across many national systems. Though criteria differ between countries, external and internal factors can lead to rewards but also

challenges, particularly for those newcomers to academia writing for academic publication. As I reviewed in the previous issue of this journal (Hoyte-West, 2022), the edited volume entitled *Scholarly Publication Trajectories of Early-career Scholars: Insider Perspectives* (Habibi, & Burgess, 2021) outlines several case studies written by early-career scholars from an array of different countries, providing an illuminating overview of the challenges and pitfalls faced by many new scholars in today's professional environment.

As an early-career scholar myself, my own research interests are broadly interdisciplinary, which reflects and is informed by my academic and professional background in modern languages, translation, and social sciences. I work mostly at the interface of translation studies, multilingualism, and language policy, but have also published occasionally in other fields too. To date, my scholarly output consists of a range of publications, several of which are indexed in international databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. These vary from articles in peer-reviewed journals, chapters in edited volumes, and book reviews to short pieces for professional magazines and invited guest posts for blogs.

As a native speaker of English, I am aware of the advantages this can bring for a career in contemporary global academia, given that English is the language that dominates international journals, major conferences, and applications for important grants. However, learning other languages to a professional level, as well as studying and working in other countries, has meant that I have had an insight into some of the challenges faced by colleagues working with English as their second or additional language.

With my broad and interdisciplinary research interests, finding appropriate venues for publication can take considerable time. To this end, I use the search function on indexes such as Scopus, the Clarivate Web of Science Master Journal List, or the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), with the aim of finding suitable venues. Once I have identified a journal, I look for guidelines regarding the format, length, and type of the publication. I also take into account information regarding author copyright, the estimated time for review and publication, as well as access opportunities. One additional factor in my decision-making process is the belief that each manuscript has

its own suitable venue. Sometimes, for example, this may be response to call for papers for a special issue of a journal, or perhaps an invitation from a colleague to contribute to an upcoming publication.

As for the review process, it is key to note – especially for early-career scholars, who may need these publications for applications and promotions – that time and patience are necessary, and each journal is unique in this regard. Sometimes changes may be requested, deadlines may be shifted, and sometimes the manuscript may even be rejected at various stages of the process. At times, the feedback after the review process can be very helpful; at other times, though, it can seem arbitrary or even highly critical. One thing to highlight, however, is that there may be many reasons why a manuscript is rejected or receives negative reviews, and these do not necessarily have to do with the quality of the submission. For example, a given journal – and especially ones listed in prestigious international indexes – may receive many potential submissions, or a manuscript may simply not be a good fit for that particular publication venue at that time. On several occasions, a rejected manuscript has been later accepted and published elsewhere, sometimes with only minimal changes to its content.

In terms of ‘writing differently,’ the topic of this thematic issue, there is a clear need to communicate knowledge in clear and effective ways. With so much research conducted at the interface of disciplines, there is also a need to ensure that findings remain accessible to scholars who may be approaching the topic from different thematic and disciplinary perspectives. However, in order to publish in relevant outlets, there is still a general need to adhere to relevant norms of publication style, format, and appearance. These are often espoused by leading journals in a particular field and thus remain of strong importance to all those who seek to publish there.

As exemplified by recent developments, ways of ‘writing differently’ are also starting to influence how academic writing is done and transmitted, moving beyond different formats and structures to include interactive online and even video-based publications. In addition, work is also being done in different media to make it more accessible, attractive, and cutting-edge to the wider scholarly community. Some exciting examples from linguistics and

translation studies include, for example, the recent 2021 special issue of the well-known Brazilian translation studies journal *Cadernos de Tradução*, which featured articles comprising videos in Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) with accompanying written texts in Portuguese. In addition, *Linguistic Minorities in Europe Online*, a peer-reviewed multimodal resource from the leading academic publisher De Gruyter, provides a veritable treasury of relevant multimedia on minority languages compiled and created by a range of international experts.

Indeed, as these two examples demonstrate, it is clear that over the next few years novel ways of presenting and disseminating academic research will continue to become ever more important. As researchers seeking to publish our findings, it means that we will have to adapt our writing styles and methods of communication to keep up with these technological, societal, and cultural advances. As such, not solely as scholars but also as individuals, it ensures that we will need to remain current with all the myriad ways of producing and consuming information in the modern age.

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