



Entering the Conversation

When writing for academic purposes, you are contributing toward a larger conversation taking place among scholars. Therefore, you need to place your thoughts and input within that larger conversation. What do others have to say about this topic and how does your contribution relate to, and extend, this larger conversation?

Establishing this conversation is the purpose of including a literature review in a paper. But you must do more than simply review what others have stated; you must then contribute to this conversation in a meaningful and significant way. Luckily, there are a number of “moves” that can be made in order to enter the ongoing conversation related to your chosen topic. It is in the beginning of your paper where you will use these introductory moves to create a research space in which your paper will exist.

Writing experts and scholars, John Swales and Christine Feak (2009) created a list of moves that can be followed when writing graduate papers and scholarly articles:

Move I: Establish a Research Territory

- A. Show that your research area is of importance, is interesting, problematic, or relevant in some way. Why should your audience care about your research area?
- B. Introduce and review the previous and current research in your chosen research area. This is where you are showing the larger conversation taking place and what you are, therefore, responding to in your paper.

Move II: Establish a Niche

- A. Point out a gap, raise questions about, or extend the knowledge in some way of the previous and current research.

Move III: Occupy the Niche (This is where you show where your work fits into the larger conversation.)

- A. State your project or your research question and hypothesis.
- B. Forecast for your reader what you plan to include in your paper. That is, briefly explain your outcomes or results and why they are significant.

Adapted from Swales, J. M. and Feak, C. B. (2009). *Academic writing for graduate students*. Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan Press.

The following is an example of each of these moves:

Move I. A.

“...Rhetoric functions to create new realities. When words or ideas are put together, they become part of the rhetorical realm, which often shapes our mental and physical realities to create a new reality; this is demonstrated by the role that language has had in determining the fate of juvenile offenders. Inserting narratives into a public discourse on the punishment of children becomes a way to move judgments out of the courtroom and engage a broader audience that will ultimately decide the fate of not just a single case or individual, but many individuals categorically and simultaneously. There has been some scholarship on how narrative is used within the courtroom at criminal proceedings to affect the decision of the jury in determining the crime and punishment of an individual. Austin Sarat (1993), for example, has looked at how narratives of violence work in capital trials, and Jeffery D. Tatum (2002), has explored narrative use in trials of doctor- assisted suicides. A number of scholars have also examined ways in which public narratives affect social change and social movements (Pollenta, 2002; Benford, 2002; Rice, 2002; Brown, 2002; Rothenberg, 2002; and Nolan, 2002). For example, James L. Nolan Jr. (2002) has shown how a public narrative discourse on therapeutic culture has impacted drug courts starting and becoming so popular. In showing how a narrative can propel a social movement, he states, "The drug court phenomenon is a movement within the criminal justice system" and "it is cultural factors-ideas, beliefs, worldviews, the collective consciousness- that drive and give direction to social movements" (p. 151-153). Public narratives help to lay the foundation for our cultural and collective beliefs and worldviews. I seek to fill in the space between these two research focuses. My attempt is to further the research on the use of narratives in affecting social change and to also examine how the use of public narrative, versus narrative within the courtroom, can lead to the eventual punishment of an individual before they ever enter the courtroom. In other words, my research will focus on narratives that create the social changes that will determine punishment, but specifically public narratives that function on a large scale and focus on children who commit violent crimes.

Move I. B.

Move II. A.

The rhetoric examined in this paper uses a David and Goliath-themed narrative as a lens to examine a battle over the fate of children in this country who commit crime. The different narrators, however, decide whom in their story David will represent and who or what will be represented by Goliath. These modifications in characters give the audience different perspectives from each narrator, which guide our beliefs. I seek to eavesdrop on some of the conversations about juvenile crime and punishment in America between 1995 and 2012 by tough-on-juvenile- crime supporters and those who oppose extreme sentencing of juveniles. I will apply a narrative analysis framework to this case study to show how each side is using rhetorical strategies that function to create changes in the public policies that determine how we punish children. Through this narrative analysis it will become evident that a David vs. Goliath-themed battle narrative is unfolding. First, I will present the narrative analysis of the rhetoric from those who want tougher punishments for children who commit crimes, and next, from those who want to end the policies that mandate the trying and sentencing of children as adults. I will then compare how each narrative functions to create a reality that will determine how these children are punished by exploring the rhetors' use of pathos, binaries, and public narrative creation. To conclude, I will examine some possible effects of the rhetoric concerning juvenile offenders on the way we control the behaviors of children in general.”

Move III. A.

Move III. B.