

Introduction, Literature Review, and Argumentation

Overview

This resource shows how the introduction and literature review of your paper work together to advance your argument. We will use an annotated introduction and literature review from a real, published article in the field of labor studies as a model.

Argument structure

The introduction of the model paper lays out the following argument structure (color-coded here and on next page):

Step 1: Author presents a **common view** or “dominant account.”

Step 2: Author clarifies that he wishes to **challenge this common view**.

Step 3: Author provides **alternatives** to the common view.

Step 4: Author **builds on** one or more of these alternatives to challenge the common view.

Why this structure?

In their book *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, Cathy Birkenstein and Gerald Graff propose that “academic writing is, broadly speaking, argumentative writing.” They then demonstrate that an argument makes sense only if it’s clear what that argument is responding to. Otherwise, readers won’t understand the purpose of the information presented.

Birkenstein and Graff argue convincingly that almost all effective academic writing follows some variation of this structure. But this doesn’t apply only to professionals; students can use this structure too.

Part 1: Introduction—Comments in right margin refer to steps 1–4 above. Some key sentences are bolded.

1. Globalization processes in the recent era have eroded workers' power across the globe. The increased locational fluidity of capital, made possible by advanced forms of transportation and communication technology, have armed employers with an unbeatable weapon of "spatial fix" against militant workers and their unions. Capitalist corporations have expanded beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, decentralizing their operations in the process. Meanwhile, there are no adequate state-like structures at the global level to act as regulators or provide transnational unions with a legal framework for consolidating gains. In general, the future looks very bleak for organized labor.

Step 1: Presents a **common view** or "dominant account."

2. Or so the dominant account would have it.

Step 2: Clarifies that author wishes to **challenge this common view**.

3. **Several observers have countered this view.** Some, such as Silver, have argued that although the current period represents a historic lull in labor militancy, this is but one phase in a long-term cycle of workers' struggle. While capital has been able to relocate production away from militant labor strongholds, it ends up recreating similar conditions that provide for and instigate such militancy, and this "ripple effect" repeats itself—albeit with different structural potential—with the advent of new industries (Silver 2003). Other observers point to recent organizing of low-wage service workers in advanced "postindustrial" nations as a potential spark that could ignite "the next upsurge" in the labor movement (Clawson 2003; Milkman 2000, 2006; Voss and Sherman 2003; Lopez 2004; Chun 2009). Still others argue that globalization per se is not so much to blame as commonly thought. Moody, for example, holds that advances in productivity, the relocation and restructuring of production within advanced economies (like the United States), as well as a series of strategic errors by union leaders are as much to blame for labor's decline as the transnationalization of production (Moody 2007a, 1997).

Step 3: Provides **alternatives** to the common view.

4. But yet a fourth theory also counters the spatial dispersal and “race to the bottom”-type theses on globalization (e.g., Tonelson [2002]). This perspective, known as global cities theory, argues that the internationalization of capital since the early 1980s has produced a new set of strategic administrative nodes—global cities—characterized by dense agglomerations of firms in the “producer services”: marketing, accounting, legal and management consulting, but most importantly, finance. While this theory provides a counterweight to the spatial dispersal component of the doomsday paradigm described above, **its implications for labor movements have not yet been explicitly worked out or empirically investigated. This article aims to do that.**

Step 4: Builds on one or more of these alternatives to challenge the common view.

5. First, I provide an outline of the global cities paradigm and derive three key hypotheses relevant to workers’ power. Second, I explore these hypotheses through a historical analysis of three relevant case studies: the last three transit strikes in New York City—1966, 1980, and 2005.

Last paragraph of introduction previews the organization of the paper.

Part 2: Literature review

Topic sentences in the literature review should introduce the content of each section or paragraph and the relevance of that content to the author's argument. Read each topic sentence along with the comments in the right margin.

Note: Because the title of this section refers back to the first sentence of paragraph 5, we know that it includes the literature review.

Global Cities and Labor Movements

6. **Global cities theory puts forward a series of hypotheses about the structure of the world economy and the central role of urban centers in it.** Sassen claims that the most recent phase of capital expansion represents “an epochal shift in the spatial organization of capitalism” since the collapse of the postwar “Pax Americana” when American military, economic, and political hegemony within the capitalist world was backed up by the institutional framework of the Bretton-Woods monetary system (Sassen 2001, 3; 2006, 43). After a period of turbulence in the 1970s and early 1980s—which included a huge fiscal crisis in New York City—investment was diverted on a large scale away from industry and trade and toward services, particularly financial services. Foreign direct investment (FDI) in services (and primarily within the triad of Japan, North America, and Western Europe) came to replace investment in manufacturing and trade as the dominant form of international transaction following the resolution of the Third World debt crisis in 1982 (Sassen [2006, 24-25]; see also Moody [1997, 67-84]). This internationalization of capital, however, required the expansion of transnational corporations’ (TNCs’) management functions due to the complexities of increasing cross-border exchange. Specifically, demand for services such as accounting, advertising, legal and management consulting as well as financial services surged and a number of smaller, specialized firms sprang up and began catering to such markets around the primary points of financial exchange—cities such as Tokyo, New York, and London, but also Paris, Frankfurt, Hong Kong, and others. These cities have become “postindustrial production sites”—and the primary markets—for producer services (Sassen 2001, 127). Because of this they are also “highly concentrated command points in the organization of the world economy” (ibid., 3; see also Brenner [1998]; Friedmann [1986]; Scott [1988]).

This first topic sentence reminds us of the relevance of global cities theory to the problem that the author is focused on.

Attendant to these changes in the political economy of major cities are a host of social transformations. For one, global cities are said to exhibit increasing “social polarization” or income inequality due to the general decline (or downgrading) of manufacturing (Nørgaard [2003, 103]; see also Fainstein [2001]). While this sector had once provided a large share of stable, middle-income jobs in many cities, its decline is hypothesized to be more rapid, more severe in global cities since the rising price of real estate acts as a stronger push factor making industrial production less and less profitable. The resulting service-dominated employment structure is said to have “a growing share of casualized low-wage jobs along with a growing share of high-income jobs” (Sassen 2006, 173). A second major social transformation is the massive influx of immigrants. This will be discussed in more detail later on.

As a basic framework for understanding workers’ power, I employ Wright’s categories of structural and associational power. The former “results simply from the location of workers within the economic system,” while the latter “from the formation of collective organizations of workers” (Wright 2000, 962). When discussing structural power, I refer exclusively to workplace power—that resulting “from the strategic location of a particular group of workers in a key industrial sector,” as opposed to marketplace power (Wright 2000, 962). There are, however, objective limits to workers’ power. These include the power of direct employers, whether private or public, and the power of the state (which depends as a limiting factor on its stance toward organized labor). In the case of public-sector workers, the class equation is simplified, since the employer and the state are identical (Trejo 1991; Barnum 1971). Thus the dimensions of power relevant to our analysis are transit workers’ structural power—their ability to cause damage to the city’s economy through work stoppage; associational power—the strength of their union and the degree of support they receive from other groups of workers and the wider public; and the power of the city-state combined with its orientation to labor—either friend, foe, or somewhere in between. **On the basis of these three dimensions, three central hypotheses about the position of organized labor can be derived from global cities theory.**

"Major cities" echoes the key phrase "global cities." "Social transformations" connects back to the author's main argument about the importance of major cities.

In this topic sentence, the phrase "workers' power" is used to link an additional set of ideas back to the author's main argument.

This is the transition to the next section, in which the author lays out his hypotheses.