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[Insert: A Snappy Title For Something You Might Want To Read]

Dear Reader,

A few things to know about what you’re about to read:

1. This is an academic piece of writing.
2. This is not an essay.
3. This paper will have conjunctions.
4. This paper won’t have words that can be found on an SAT prep list.
5. This paper will use the word “I.”
6. This paper will contain anecdotes.
7. This paper is just as legitimate as other academic piece you might read.

If you’re offended by anything on that list you’re one of the people who should be reading this. If you’re sitting there wondering “why would any of that offend me?” you should also be reading this. This piece of writing is meant for anyone and everyone.

Since academics are usually frustrated if the thesis statement doesn’t become clear within the first few paragraphs, I thought I’d state it plainly right now:

If you’re a person who says “academic writing is the best way to convey, legitimize, and extend my ideas to a wider group of people,” here is the thesis statement you should read: I’m going to be arguing that the nature of academic writing is actually exclusive to the point that it’s counterproductive. By using formal layouts and fancy language, academic writing prevents the ideas contained within it from reaching a wider group of people who’ll not only theorize about the ideas as academics do, but actually potentially practically apply them.

If you’re a person who really dislikes academic articles, or doesn’t read them because they find them confusing, here’s a good summary of what I’m going to say:I’m about to tell academics that they should stop excluding people, and share their ideas with the rest of us.

Every time I walk into the Harvard Book Store, I see a wide variety of people around the displays, looking at the new books. Normally there are two displays. One of the displays has the popular books you could find on the New York Times Best Seller list. Around these books, a group of casual shoppers mills about, occasionally picking up the books and flipping them over to read the backs. In another area of the store, there is a different display, filled with impressively titled hard–covered books written by people such as Harvard professors. The people examining these books are academics and other highly educated people, dressed in either nice pants and a collared shirt, or a nice blouse and a skirt. They’re all there to get their (see? I used the words they’re/there/their correctly. This is clearly a legitimate paper) week’s fill of new ideas coming from the upper class academic world.

Then there’s the invisible group of people in the store. These’re the people who don’t have the money to buy a $14 book for enjoyment or a $30 book filled with complex language, tons of charts, and citations that take up half the page. Each of these $30 books and each of the essays in them is written for academics only. Perhaps a few of the people over by the Best Seller display will read one. But it’s almost a sure bet that no one else will.

It’s useless to look at this scene and try to deny that academic writing is classed. The mere categorization of books into two separate displays suggests that academic writing is a genre of its own, meant for a certain ‘type’ of person. In fact, people who aren’t able to understand the writing at the academic display don’t even have to sift through the academic books to find ones they might want to read. That little display isn’t meant for *them.*

Another good way to explain the current model of academic writing might be to compare it to a high end country club. To get into a country club, you need a certain amount of money or connections. In comparison, to understand academic writing, you have to have paid for higher education. To use a country club’s golf courses and tennis courts, you need a certain amount of training in how to play the game. In comparison, in academic writing, you need to a concrete background in the subject you’re reading about – one that can only be achieved through extensive study. By restricting academic papers to essay formats and fancy words, academia itself has created a banner across everything academic saying “UPPER CLASS PEOPLE ONLY.”

This is mostly because academic writing usually assumes that you know things. For example if you are to read academic writing, here are some things you might need to know…

1. The allegory of Plato’s Cave
2. An extensive study of classic literature
3. A basic understanding of economics and political systems
4. (For scientific writing) A thorough grounding on scientific subjects and

Basically, if what you’re reading doesn’t explain a concept for you, you’re clearly not the audience it’s intended for.

Some of you may be sitting there and thinking: okay, so maybe academic writing is harder to read if you don’t have a certain degree of education. So what? The people reading this stuff are the people who can actually do something useful with the ideas, right? I mean, after all, they’re the experts in the field you’re writing in. In truth, this is a fallacy. People who can read academic writing aren’t the only productive and innovative people in the world; in fact, many of the people who would benefit from some of the ideas found in academic writing may be ones who have trouble reading academic writing. By making academic writing inaccessible, the ideas it contains are kept from a large group of people who may actually be able to relate to the ideas the most.

Even though I’m coming to a close, I’m not going to extensively summarize what I’ve written so far. Like I said in the beginning of this paper, this isn’t an essay. Instead, I’m going to plainly state what this essay’s trying to tell you: academic writing is classed and counterproductive.

If you, the reader, have difficulty reading academic writing, that’s fine. The way our society should give people information has failed you.

If you understand academic writing and/or write it, I have a few suggestions. Try to write with a broader audience in mind, and remember that writing for them will help spread your ideas. After all, the only way to declassify academic writing is to make it acceptable to write in an untraditional way. And what better place to start than with you?