



WRITING CRITICALLY ABOUT THE LITERATURE

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OUTLINE

- Introductions
- What is critical writing? Why is it valued?
- How critical writing relates to other types
- The language features which identify it
- The parts/structure of critical writing
- Discipline-specific factors
- Some handy bits of language for your writing

INTRODUCTIONS

- Cassily Charles
- Please introduce yourself via the text chat
 - Your area of professional/research interest
 - Your geographical location
 - A 'bonus' fact about you – e.g. how many parrots live in your home? Have you made yoghurt this week? What colour are your favourite socks?

WHY IS CRITICAL WRITING VALUED/VALUABLE?

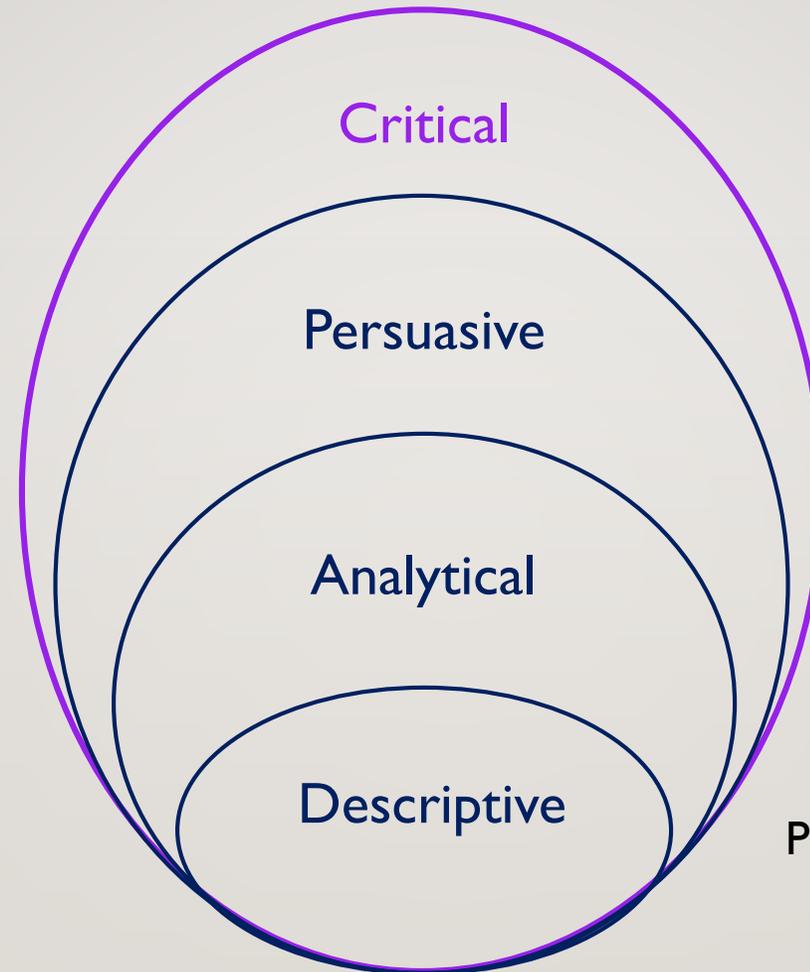
- necessary to identify a gap for your own original research
- important to judge the usefulness of research to industry / professional applications
- demonstrates deeper understanding, respect for previous work + independent stance
- draws on discipline-specific norms and knowledge
- shows arguably the highest level of academic writing

WHAT IS CRITICAL WRITING?

- Evaluating previous research
- Identifying debates / alternative approaches
- Examining and questioning evidence
- Weighing strengths and weaknesses
- Assessing the current state of knowledge
- Asking probing questions
- Looking for opportunities to contribute

PURPOSES

WHAT IS CRITICAL WRITING?



Evaluating others' work, entering a debate, considering alternatives
> at least 2 positions, including yours

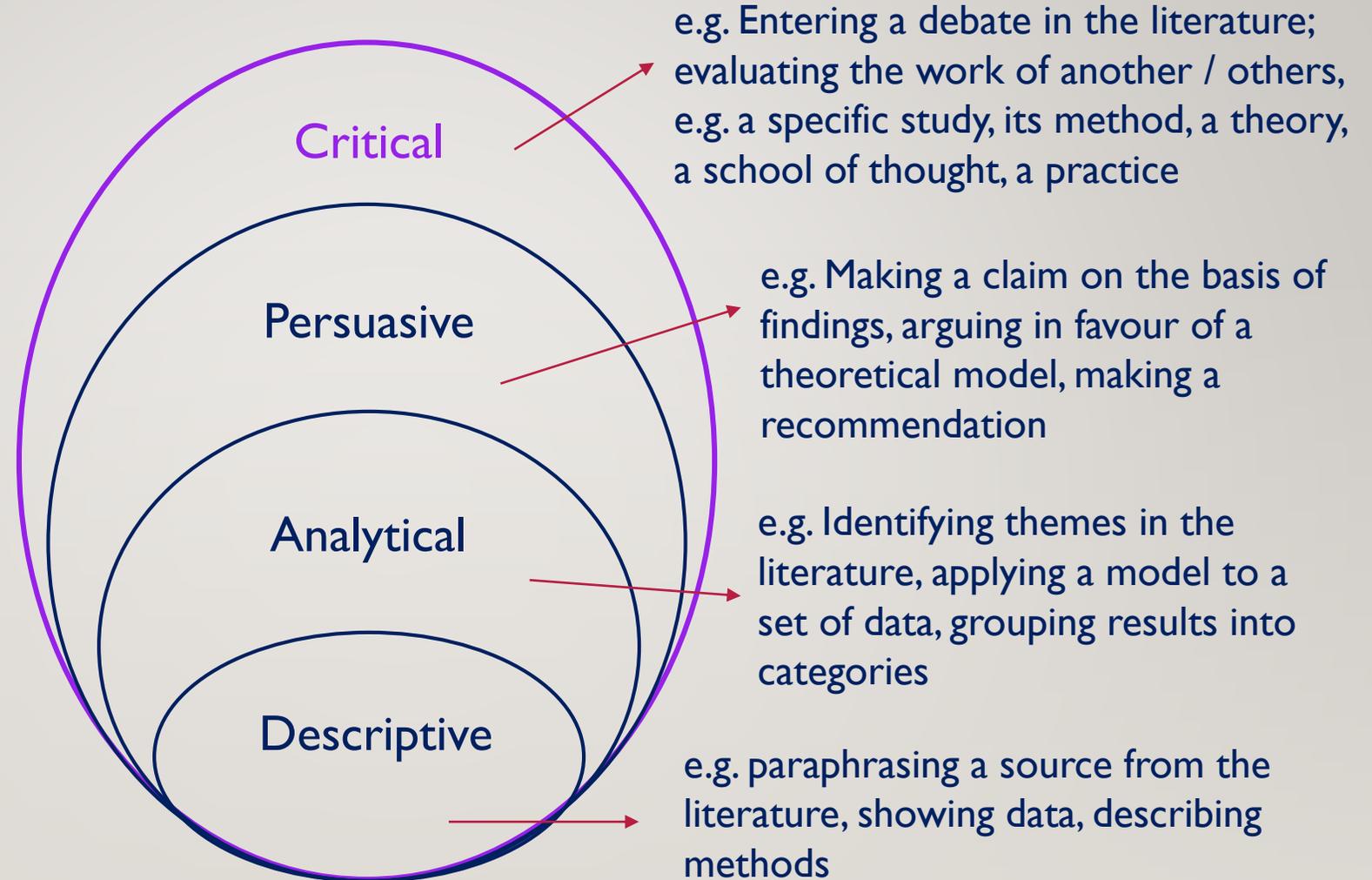
Taking a position, making a claim, developing an argument

Re-organising information: applying models to data, comparing, finding patterns & categories

Providing information & facts

EXAMPLES

WHAT IS CRITICAL WRITING?



LOOKING FOR THE ONION LAYERS

Read Text A

Is this paragraph critical, persuasive, analytical or descriptive?

Which words influence your decision?

Read Text B

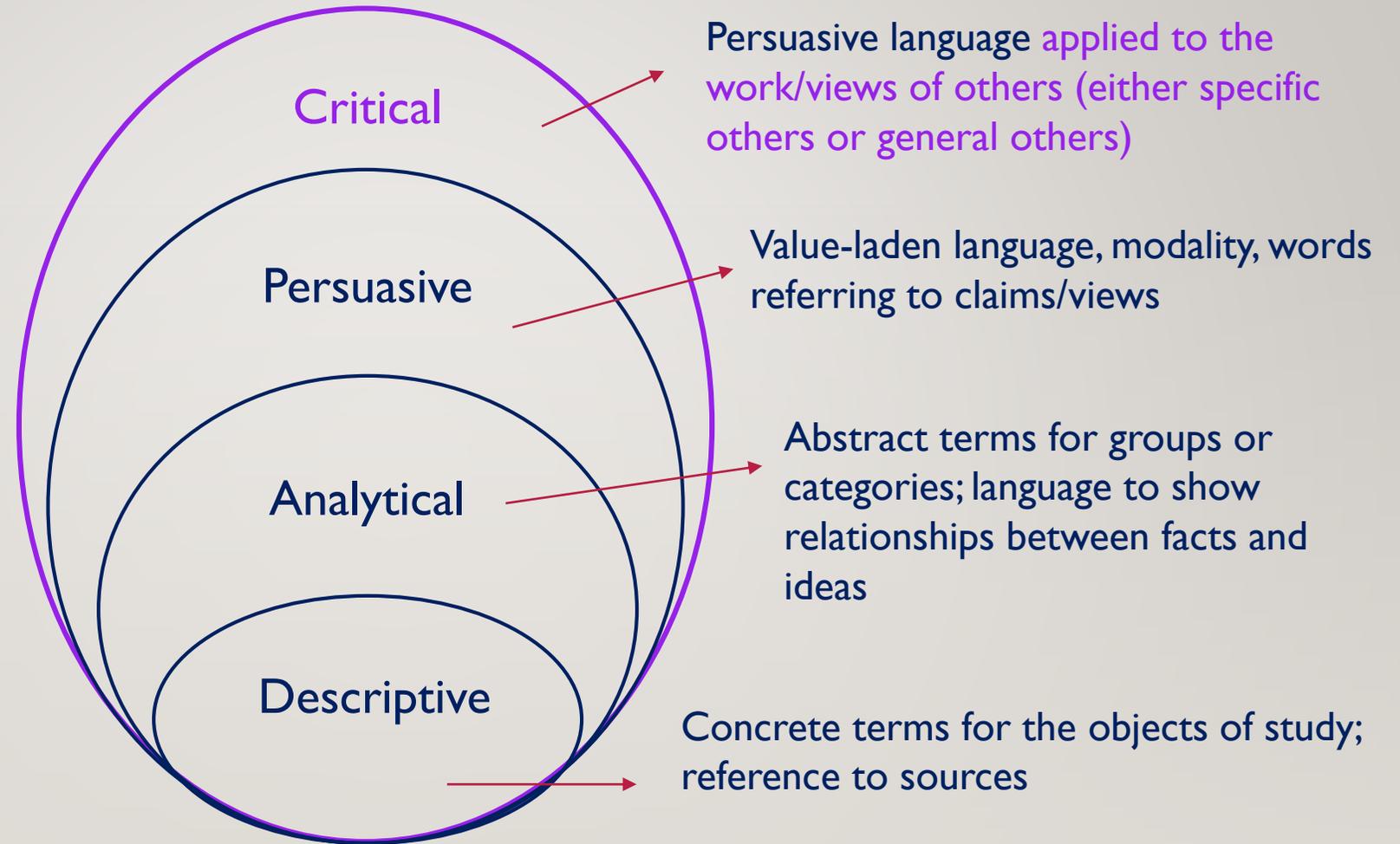
Is this paragraph critical, persuasive, analytical or descriptive?

Which words influence your decision?

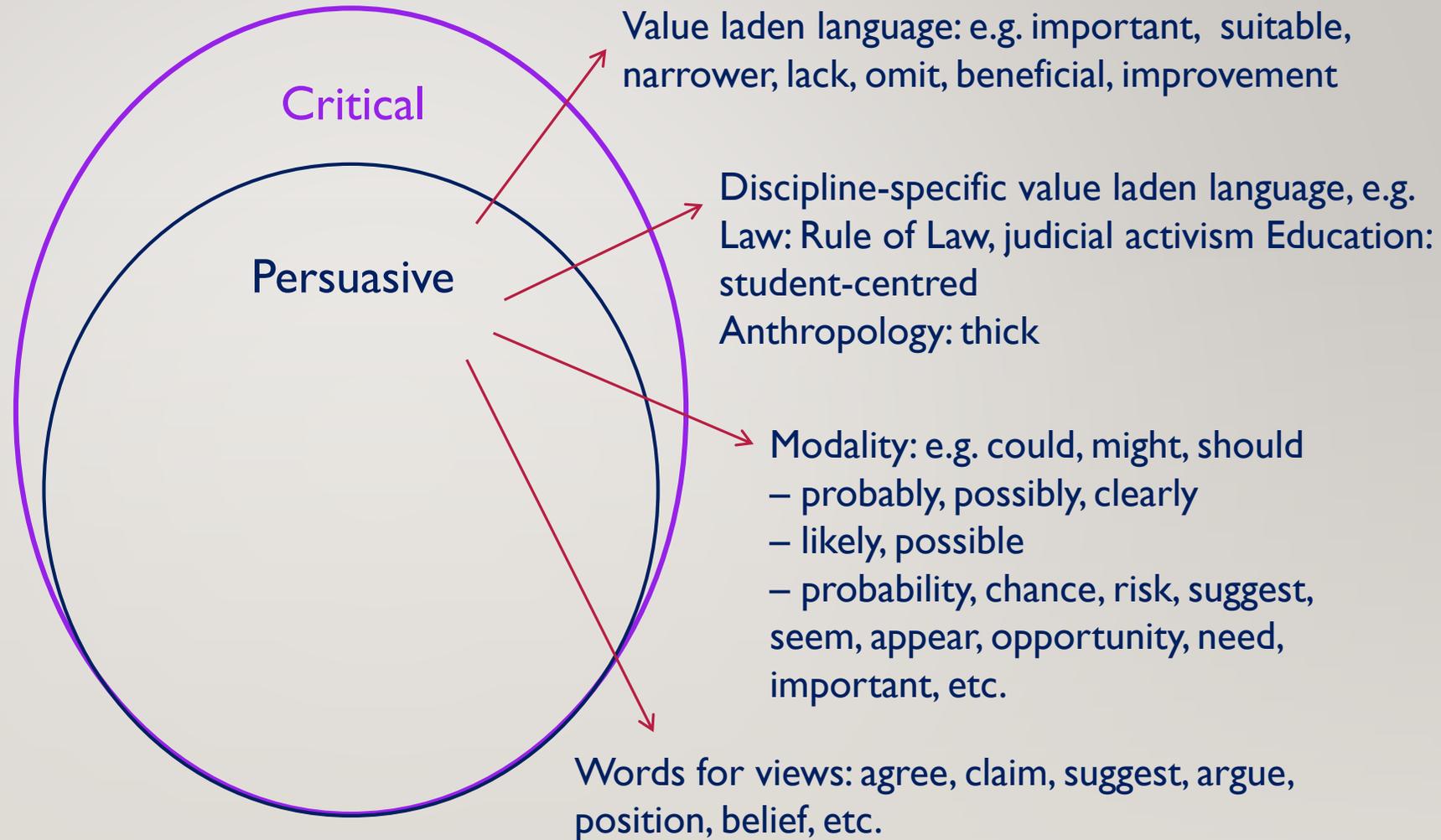
If you have extra time, look at Text C: Could this be critical writing?

IDENTIFYING LANGUAGE FEATURES

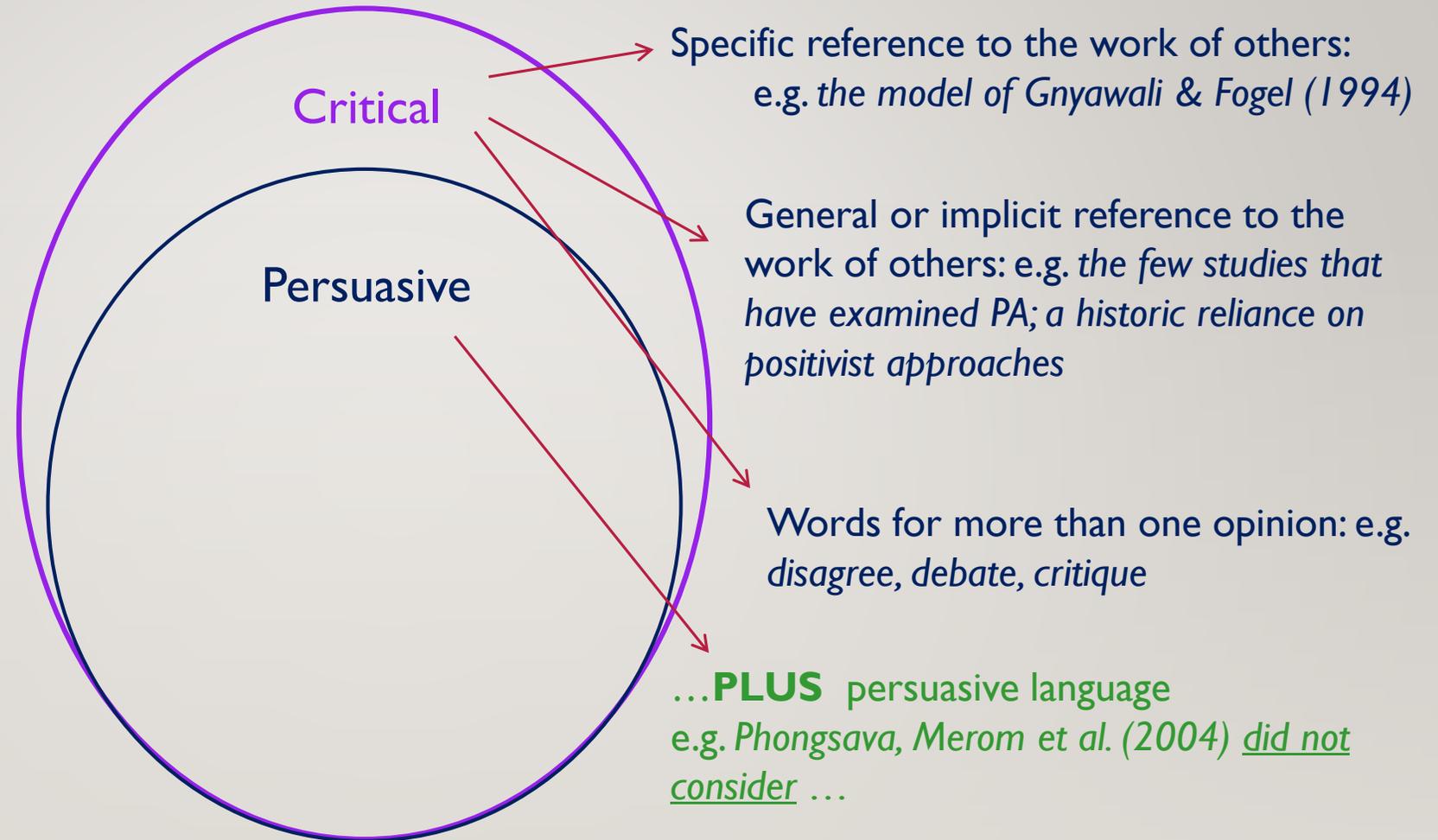
WHAT IS CRITICAL WRITING?



IDENTIFYING LANGUAGE FEATURES



IDENTIFYING LANGUAGE FEATURES



EXERCISE

Read Text D or Text E

1. Underline any value-laden language which shows the author's view on the work of others.
2. Circle any modality for strengthening or softening the author's position.
3. Has the author referred to the work of others without using a specific name?

If you have extra time, look at Text F: Does the author show any positive or negative attitude towards the work of Aubrey de Grey?



THE PARTS/STRUCTURE OF CRITICAL WRITING

The basic building blocks of persuasive writing:

Claim + Evidence

Critical writing is a complex of those same building blocks:

Someone else's view/choice (summary of the target, e.g. *their claim/aims/method*) +

Your Claim (evaluating the target, according to some criteria, e.g. *usefulness*) +

Your Evidence (e.g. other supporting literature / your reasoning about benefits)

THE PARTS/STRUCTURE OF CRITICAL WRITING

Your **critical claim** (i.e. the view you express about the target) can have two parts

- a) **Evaluation**, either explicit or implicit - *essential*
- b) **Proposal** – *optional*

e.g. While previous descriptive research has provided an overview of patient-carer dynamics, **it has not examined which of these impact on engagement with telehealth.**

Exploratory research would be useful, to investigate the role these relationships play, in supporting or discouraging the uptake of telehealth.

THE PARTS/STRUCTURE OF CRITICAL WRITING

Your **critical claim** (i.e. the view you express about the target) can have two parts

- a) **Evaluation**, either explicit or implicit - *essential*
- b) **Proposal** – *optional*

Sometimes the evaluation and proposal are folded in together.

e.g. While previous descriptive research has provided an overview of patient-carer dynamics, **exploratory research would be more useful at this stage, to shed light on the role that these interactions play, in supporting or discouraging the uptake of telehealth.**

THE PARTS/STRUCTURE OF CRITICAL WRITING

So the basic structure is...

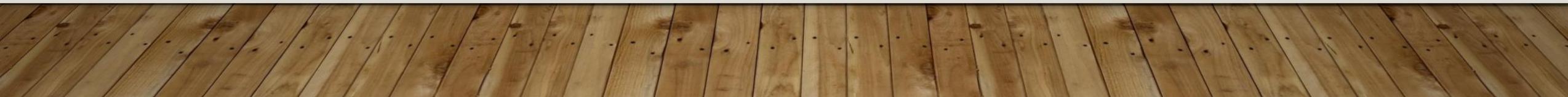
1. Summary of the target (i.e. other person's/group's choice that you are critiquing)
2. Your claim
 - a) Evaluation
 - b) Proposal (*optional*)
3. Evidence for your claim

** Does it have to be in this order? Can you see these parts in Text D, B or E?*

** Does this structure have to be within a paragraph? Can it be spread out?*

EXERCISE

Look at Text G

- What parts of this literature review chapter do you predict will be critical?
 - Where do you predict the author's **critical claims** are located in this text?
 - Where do you predict the **summaries** of other researchers' work are located?
 - Where do you predict the **evidence/support** for the author's claims is located?
- 

YOUR DISCIPLINE SHAPES YOUR CRITIQUE

- ⚙ The kind and amount of evidence
- ⚙ How strong the claims should be
- ⚙ The amount of critique expected
- ⚙ The targets for critique
- ⚙ The criteria for critique

How do/did you discover these in your discipline?

HANDY BITS FOR YOUR CRITICAL WRITING

- Concession: e.g. *while, whereas, although, despite*
- Endorsement: e.g. *claims, states, points out, shows*
- Modality: e.g. *could, may, possibility, appears to be*
- Value laden language: e.g. *convincing, useful, apt*
- Grading: e.g. *somewhat, slightly, in some cases*

APPLICATION EXERCISE

Take an article from your own discipline

1. What targets could you critique in this article?
2. What criteria could you apply to those targets?
3. Choose a target and write 3 sentences:
 - Summarise the target (e.g. the sample, the analysis, the research questions)
 - Evaluate the target, according to the criteria (e.g. reliability, insight, equity)
 - Note the evidence which supports your evaluation

YOUR NEXT STEP

What do you want to focus on now in your own critical writing?

- Adding more critique to your writing
- Adjusting the structure of your text, to build in the parts of your critique (i.e. summaries + claim + evidence)
- Strengthening evidence/support for your critique
- Acknowledging the work of others (e.g. by using concession statements)
- Adjusting the strength/weakness of your claims
- Making subtle evaluations while referring to sources
- Something else...

YOUR NEXT STEP

Discussion and feedback on your critical writing

- Consultation hours
 - Tuesday 22nd September, 1pm-3pm AEST = 11am-1pm WA = 3pm-5pm NZ
 - Wednesday 23rd September, 6pm-8pm AEST = 4pm-6pm WA = 8pm-10pm NZ
 - Saturday 26th September, 3pm-5pm AEST = 1pm-3pm WA = 5pm-7pm NZ
- Email education@dhcrc.com to express interest

Thanks folks, and happy writing

