**TWR - episode 93**

This episode of think right revised is brought to you by prolific my new virtual community for academic writers. When you join the prolific Community, you'll get immediate access to exclusive events and conversations about academic writing and publication that you won't find anywhere else. You'll also find a community of thoughtful academic writers who want to learn from one another's experience helpful and practical resources curated into a private Library accessible only to prolific.

Accountability structures to help you accomplish your daily weekly quarterly and annual publication goals and writing tasks a space to ask questions share challenges and gather tips and suggestions that will help you write more and better and consistent posts that will inspire you spark thought-provoking conversations and offer expert perspectives and advice on academic writing and publication each and every day.

Learn more about prolific and sign up for your free two week trial at prolific dot mn/dot Co you're listening to think right revised episode 93. Hey there and welcome to think right revised a podcast that offers a peek behind the scenes of productive writing life. I'm your host. Dr. Katie Linder.

In this episode. I want to talk a little bit about confidence and in particular I want to address kind of when you're approaching particularly academic research or studies and you don't really feel like you understand what's going on. And this can happen at all stages of a researcher life cycle. It can happen when you're approaching a new methodology that maybe you don't know very much about it can certainly happen when you're a grad student or you're at the dissertation stage and you're trying to kind of make your way through a bunch of scholarship or a literature review and you don't quite know like what how they're getting to the results that they found or.

You don't really understand how they did the coding, you know that they talk about in the article or something along those lines where it seems kind of confusing to you. And the first time that I really kind of remember having this issue with a particular scholar was when I was in graduate school.

And I've talked previously on the show that Mike both of my graduate degrees are in women and gender studies. And so some of the work that we approached was very theoretical and others of it was very practical and one of the first Scholars that I remember having the situation with where I just did not understand what was.

Happening in the Articles and in the work was Judith Butler which some of you may be familiar with Judith Butler's work. It's almost in some ways intentionally obtuse. It's very high Theory and in some ways. I think the language that's used is meant to kind of. Help you feel like you don't understand and I remember at the time thinking like wow.

I'm not sure I'm supposed to be here if I can't understand this or I'm not sure that you know, I know is everyone else getting this and I'm not because I just don't understand. Like any of these sentences like I would read a sentence over and over again and it would just make absolutely no sense to me and some of it was just the language that was being used.

There were words that I've never seen before and so I had to like look up words and things like that, but the kind of way that Judith Butler writes in her work and if you've read her work, you probably understand what I'm saying. She kind of intentionally white tries to make things more obtuse and.

I think she does but I do remember also having this conversation with a faculty member at the time and just saying like I feel pretty stupid but I can't understand this and and she kind of was one of the first people this faculty member to point out to me that that's part of how Butler writes like that's part of what she's trying to do is to kind of engage with these ideas at such a level that it kind of boosts them.

Into kind of a I don't know like a higher level of credibility because she's using this very complicated language and theory and that that's just a strategy that she was engaging with as a scholar and this particular faculty member also said, you know, I'm not sure that's a strategy that I would employ like.

That's something that you know, I want my work to be more available. I want my work to be understood Easier by my audience. And I just I kind of realized at that moment that it was a choice that she was making and it was about the author it was not necessarily about me and my level of intelligence.

It was kind of a rhetorical choice that the author was making and I think you can identify different authors that have done this like a lot of authors who are philosophers. If you think about people who struggle with reading like proust for example, or who struggle with reading. Like Dubliners or you know, like other books that are kind of notoriously difficult.

This is something that the author is kind of intentionally doing and they have a purpose behind that but it doesn't necessarily reflect anything about the audience. So this I think. Is kind of a important moment in my own background as a researcher because I have for the past several years been very engaged in helping others to understand what research is and to have increased research literacy because I do see people who are lacking in confidence around these issues and sometimes it's not about them.

It's about how the work is written and if the work is intentionally written in a way, that's kind. To a disciplinary standard that is meant to be kind of difficult to understand. It may not be about the reader it maybe about the author, you know needing to be better at communicating what it is.

They're trying to say. And I think sometimes we put too much on the reader and not enough on the author in terms of responsibility for really making sure that that understanding comes through so you'll see this in my work in terms of really encouraging research literacy through some of the books that I've written that are really meant to be practically applying research and taking research findings and and making them very practical like my book on Blended course design.

You also definitely see this in my other podcast. Research and action where I interview researchers and really try to break down what it is. They're doing in language that everyone can understand and before people come on the show as guess. I talked with them about that and how I'm going to kind of break down any jargon that they're using or I'm going to try to offer examples if they go into something that feels very theoretical or abstract because I want people who are listening to the show to really be able to follow along especially if it's not their discipline of origin.

Or it's not a methodology that they're familiar with. So I've become really okay through that show in particular with saying I don't understand something or I don't know and not feeling like it's a reflection on me. It's really putting the onus on the other person in a polite way, but but. To have them explain it to me in a way that I can understand and I'm not I'm never going to be I think someone who just kind of sits and pretends like I know something when I don't I'm always going to be that person who's asking like and just kind of raising my hand and saying I don't understand what you just said like can you back up and explain it in a different way so.

A big goal of that is just research literacy giving people the basic tools and knowledge that they need to understand the different kinds of research results. That might come their way and we see this in you know, media articles like newspaper articles where statistics are presented and people might not really understand what that means.

You know, I think journalists have. A huge responsibility to kind of translate a lot of that and many of them do it very well to kind of help an audience that's not really trained in academic research to better understand what those findings mean. But in the Academy, I feel like we probably still have some work to do in terms of helping to communicate what it is that we can actually say from certain studies and because we're often talking to other academics and we assume that they know what we mean.

We don't always practice how to break things down in a way that will help people. So all that to say I've been thinking about this a lot because we recently released a tool through my Research Unit at Oregon State eCampus called the report readers checklist. And the whole goal of this tool is to help people kind of better understand what they should be looking for when they read a research report that.

Releasing results of a study and we get a lot of these reports in the field of online teaching and learning. They're not really peer-reviewed. They just get released through a research group or through a company that's done a study and we have written these reports as well and my Research Unit.

It's just kind of a common practice in our field, but I think some people don't really know how to approach those reports, especially if they haven't been trained in an academic environment to read research and there are a lot of people in online teaching and learning. On the administrator side who don't go through and get a terminal degree.

So they might have like a master's degree, but they haven't done a dissertation and they may just have not really been steeped in academic literature. And I could definitely see how that would be overwhelming to look at one of these study reports and not really understand what they're supposed to take away from it and some of the study reports do an excellent job of having an executive summary or really try to apply what the findings mean to different audiences, but some of them don't and they really rely on the audience to try to translate that.

So I will link to this tool in the show notes again. It's called the report reader checklist. And it's a t campus dot Oregon State DOT edu / checklist. It is an actual checklist. It's a one-page document. But the other thing that we decided to do was build out a supplementary website that really explained each of the criteria and on the checklist so that you can better understand why we think that is important to look for when you're reading one of these reports and then we also linked to a bunch of sample reports that represent each of the criteria.

And well so that if you're looking for a good example from our field, you could find one and I guess what's kind of interesting about this is in some ways. I feel like my research trajectory is Shifting away in some ways from. Adding more to the field and actually trying to help people digest what's already there?

And we see that in we recently created a database in the last couple of years. And now we have this report reader checklist. And certainly my research group is still contributing new knowledge to the field. But it's almost like in some ways. I was thinking about comparing it to open educational resources as a movement.

If you're familiar with oer it's generally this idea of creating free resources for people to use and a certain point the oer movement had to kind of look back on itself and say do we want to just keep creating more stuff or do we want to help people to remix and reuse the stuff that's already there or to kind of navigate, you know, what's already out there and that's when you started to see a we are.

Searchable databases and things like that where people could come in and find things more easily. And in some ways I feel like that's a turn that my own work has taken to really help people be more research literate in the field of online teaching and learning and to process what's out there because there's a lot there's a lot of scholarship on what do we know about online teaching and learning what works what doesn't work and for whom and there are a lot of people that don't have time really to dig into that.

So it's a big responsibility for me and my research group to kind of help make some of that research. Novel but also digestible. So all this to say if you're feeling a little lacking in confidence about reading research not really understanding what it means. You're not alone in that and you might want to just kind of ask curious questions and I bet you you'll encounter some people who also are confused and who want to kind of dig in and learn a little bit more with you about a particular topic.

And of course you can always send in those questions to me and maybe I'll try to tackle it on a research and action podcast episode if there's something that is really confusing about a research methodology or design that you want me to tackle on that show. You can always email me with those questions at contact a kitty litter dot work.

You can also tweet to me at Katie double underscore lender or reach out to me on Instagram @ KD underscore Linder, and I hope that you won't hesitate. Eat the next time you have a question to raise your hand and to say I don't really know what you mean and put that responsibility back on the person to explain it to you in a way that you can understand.

Thanks for listening. Thanks for listening to this episode of thank right revised show notes and a transcript for this episode can be found at Katie lender dot work / podcasts think right revised is part of the radical self-trust podcast Channel a collection of content dedicated to helping you seek self-knowledge nurture your superpowers playfully experiment live your core values with intention practice loving kindness towards yourself and others.

And settle into your life's purpose learn more about the rst channel at Katie lunar dot work / podcasts. If you found this episode helpful, please also consider rating and or reviewing the show in iTunes. Thanks for listening.