Foreword

In the professional practice fields of social work, nursing, education, and so forth—just as in the disciplines—inquiring minds want to know answers to basic questions about individual and collective behavior: What is happening here? Why did it happen? How did it happen? What does it mean? What are the effects of its having happened? Teaching and learning how to pose meaningful questions of this kind and how to investigate them in systematic, ethically responsible, empirically defensible, and practically useful ways are demanding tasks. Multiple challenges to developing "inquiry-minded graduate students" present themselves in such an undertaking.

An early challenge arises in picturing what learning to be inquiry minded entails. Numerous textbooks present in various ways the toolbox of methods and procedures for social-behavioral inquirers who seek to collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data to answer important empirical questions in their fields. One can easily get the impression from such books that the process of learning to be an inquirer is a matter of following a "how-to" prescription. Learning the tools of the trade is indispensible to being a good inquirer. However, the *process* of becoming "inquiry minded" is, as Rallis and Rossman emphasize, a journey. The metaphor of a journey signifies development over time. Moreover, a journey can be a trek, an undertaking on a difficult and not necessarily straightforward path from Point *A* to Point *B*. When on a journey, one needs to be capable of dealing with detours and delays; perhaps some bad advice; perhaps some

backtracking; and often indecision about the best next move. To be sure, the journey has a "destination," as the authors put it—the process of inquiry "ends" with some kind of product. Yet, to my way of thinking, such destinations are merely temporary stopping points. The journey to becoming—and sustaining the ability and dispositions to be—inquiry minded is never really finished.

The journey requires a number of capacities. Acquiring and enhancing those capacities constitute yet another set of challenges to becoming inquiry minded. The abilities and aptitudes that make up being inquiry minded are at least threefold. First, there is the challenge of learning the language of the practice. Researchers must become adept at working with the core epistemological ideas of responsible, systematic, empirical inquiry—notions such as explanation, objectivity, subjectivity, generalization, representation, theory, evidence, justification, and warranting—as well as the more specialized vocabulary of terms such as interpretivism, constructionism, hermeneutics, standpoint, critical realism, and critical theory that influence the framing of a study's questions and theoretical perspective. Second, there is the necessity of learning that inquiry practice demands both technical and craftsman-like skills. To engage in systematic, disciplined inquiry—that is, an investigation that is well ordered, organized, methodical, and well argued—one must become expert in using some of the tools of the trade. Here, methods books are most helpful in providing advice on the design of experiments, the requirements of a good interview, the design of a good survey, the means of analyzing narrative or quantitative data, and so forth.

What these books cannot provide, however, is instruction in the capacity for practical wisdom. And this presents yet another challenge. Such wisdom is all about learning how to exercise good judgment absent any procedural rules in the many decision situations one faces as an inquirer. For example: How do I know whether I have sufficiently searched for evidence to disprove my hypotheses (the search for disconfirming evidence or negative cases)? How do I know which alternative explanations for a causal relationship that I have postulated are plausible? How many people should I interview? How extensive should my field notes be? How should I handle a breach of confidentiality? How do I assess the risks to participants involved in my field study? In the field of nursing, Patricia Benner and colleagues have identified "clinical reasoning" as a form of practical wisdom. It involves reflective, critical thinking coupled with the ability to reason in situ—to "size up" the situation as it presents itself here in this set of circumstances, at this time and place, with these particular contextual dimensions—along

with an ability to identify patterns. The capacity for good judgment is something acquired through experience, through the study of cases of similar decision-making situations, through conversation with others further along in their journey, and through thoughtful conversations with peers who are making the journey to be inquiry minded.

A final challenge, intimately related to acquiring aptitudes and abilities, is cultivating intellectual habits, values, and dispositions that are the mark of scientific integrity in an inquiry-minded person. These include a commitment to fallibilism, taking seriously the notion that one can be wrong about one's beliefs or position and being open to new evidence and arguments; skepticism, the continual scrutiny of one's procedures and methods for errors as well as the search for evidence that disconfirms one's claims, assertions, or hypotheses: honesty, curiosity, objectivity, and the willingness and ability to explore suppositions and beliefs that lie behind one's research interests and agenda.

The great pragmatist philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce provided some practical advice for guiding the reasoning process that makes up becoming inquiry minded: "Upon this first, and in one sense this sole, rule of reason, that in order to learn you must desire to learn, and in so desiring not be satisfied with what you already incline to think, there follows one corollary which itself deserves to be inscribed upon every wall of the city of philosophy: Do not block the road of inquiry" (1898/1992). *The Research Journey: Introduction to Inquiry* is a text that embodies that advice and provides a reliable guide to becoming inquiry minded.

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Preface

This book is a product of our several decades of teaching about research, conducting research ourselves, and advising graduate students who conducted research and of our reflections (meaning both thought and action) on the teaching and on the conduct of research. We are methodologists—we care about what is behind the methods chosen to inform questions. We are also practitioners—we do what we teach about. Most important, the book is a product of our years of collaboration—teaching and researching.

For the past 7 years, we have co-taught a course that introduces the concepts and processes of inquiry to graduate students in the social sciences and professional schools. This course had its roots in the Inquiry for Practitioners course Sharon Rallis developed and taught in the 1990s at Vanderbilt University. While the course was offered through the Peabody College of Education and Human Development, students enrolled from public policy, divinity, law, nursing, public health, and other disciplines. Because most of the students came from either the social sciences or professional schools, the purpose of the course was to make inquiry relevant and practical to people who work in fields that can be informed by research; Rallis hoped they would become capable and critical consumers and researchers. The goal was to ground practice in theory. Meanwhile, Gretchen Rossman was teaching the same types of students—those from both social science disciplines and professional schools—so her research courses also emphasized the value of informing practice through research.

Over the years of various collaborations—writing books, conducting research, coteaching, giving presentations—a new version of Inquiry has emerged. At the University of Massachusetts Amherst in the School of Education, the course has now become a required introductory inquiry course for doctoral students in several specializations. The course focuses on questions foundational to fostering inquiry mindedness in graduate students:

- What is knowledge?
- How is it produced?
- Who uses it and how?

We have found that the course—Introduction to Inquiry—serves to socialize graduate students into the world of scholars who are committed to conducting research that will contribute to human well-being. The course also serves to familiarize graduate students with the discourses, norms, and practices of academia and the research enterprise.

This book has developed from our teaching practice. Thus, our purpose is to share the course experience with you, to the extent that pedagogy in practice can be translated into a book. Therefore, we try to explicate—that is, make transparent—our pedagogy. Our audience is students and the faculty who teach them. We hope that the faculty are committed to their own learning as well as that of their students.

The book is structured to follow a teaching sequence; in fact, it maps neatly onto our syllabus for the course (changed, updated, and revised each year, of course). Each chapter begins with a series of critical questions that we hope will guide reading and prompt further questions for discussion. These questions are followed by a dialogue among five graduate students whose journeys into inquiry are just beginning. While the metaphor of journey is overused, we still find it generative to capture the notion of *inquiry as journey.* These students are modeled after very real graduate students whom we have taught. Their challenges and joys are embedded in these dialogues as well as throughout the chapters. We also draw on other examples from our students over the years in several places. The chapters end with learning activities that we have used over the years and refined, based on student feedback and our own critical reflections on how well they worked. Further readings are suggested.

Chapter 1—"Inquiry as Learning: Beginning the Journey"—presents our central argument that inquiry is all about learning and that the researcher

is a learner. Chapter 2—"Ways of Knowing: Finding a Compass"—presents questions about epistemology and ontology (in ways that are grounded, we hope) to invite students to consider what some of their basic assumptions are about knowing, knowledge, and the social world. Chapter 3—"The Cycle of Inquiry: More Than One Way to Get There"—describes models of inquiry and learning that reinforce the notion that there are multiple ways to know and understand. "Being an Ethical Inquirer: Staying Alert on the Road"—Chapter 4—argues that the inquirer should be a moral practitioner whose sensibilities recognize the need to honor participants as well as meet standards for ethical practice. In this chapter, we address university-based requirements for protection of human subjects. Chapter 5—"Constructing Conceptual Frameworks: Building the Route"—takes students through the complex, exciting, confusing—and essential—processes of connecting their personal research interests with larger, historical, ongoing discourses that are relevant for their work. Students learn how to build their arguments, support them with sufficient evidence, and articulate their reasoning. "Designing the Inquiry Project: Finding 'True North'"—Chapter 6—offers several options for designing a study; it shows how designs should emerge from the conceptual framework. Chapter 7—"Things to Consider in Writing: Staying in the Right Lane"—provides detailed tips and hints about writing introductions, avoiding plagiarism, and using appropriate citation formats. Finally, Chapter 8—"Knowledge Use: Arriving at Your Destination"—considers the often-unanswered questions: What happens with what I've learned? How can it be used? Who else might care? This chapter closes the loop by revisiting the conceptual framework as the heart of any inquiry project.

We would like to acknowledge the doctoral students in our Introduction to Inquiry course over the past 3 years. Those in the 2009 cohort wrote the Prologue; the 2010 group provided critical feedback on three chapters; and the 2011 group offered not only insights and suggestions but also line edits. Our appreciation to each group. The 2009 class included Mika Abdullaeva, Gerardo Blanco Ramirez, Cheryl Brooks, Jackie Brousseau-Periera, Chris Canning-Wilson, Erica Cole, Ellie Cruz, Jeff Darling, Daniel De La Torre, Mindy Eichhorn, Sabrina Forbes, Letha Gayle-Brissett, Mohammad Javad, Martin McEvoy, Tara Pepis, Konda Chavva Reddy, Dawn Rendell, and Sara Sandstrom. The 2010 group comprised Yetunde Ajao, Sandra Andrew, Theresa Bianchi, Diana Bonneville, Michael Buoniconti, Koni Denham, Maura Devlin, Kevin Fleming, Noga Flory, Yang Gyeltshen, Emily Perlow, Tony Randall, Yedalis Ruiz, Karla Sarr, Rolf Straubhaar, Chris Tranberg, and David Vacchi. The 2011 group included Tara Brandt, Javier Campos,

Patrick Connelly, Helen-Ann Ireland, Mike de Jesus, Salma Khan, Naeem Khawaja, Alicia Remaly, Colleen Smith, and Julie Spencer-Robinson.

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CHAPTER 5

Constructing Conceptual Frameworks
Building the Route

✸ *Critical Questions to Guide Your Reading*

➥ *What is a conceptual framework? (remembering)*

➥ *What is the relationship between a literature review and a conceptual framework? (analyzing)*

➥ *What role does theory play in a conceptual framework? (analyzing)*

➥ *How does a central argument develop from a conceptual framework? (analyzing)*

➥ *Who are the members of my community of practice? (applying)*

➥ *Who is my main audience? (applying)*

➥ *What "currents of thought" are most relevant for my inquiry project? (evaluating)*

➥ *How might I effectively organize my discussion of the literature? (applying)*

Dialogue 5. Grappling with a Conceptual Framework

Professor Bettara asked the students to get into groups of three—their triads. The purpose of the exercise was to share with one another their initial thinking about the argument they want to make—their intuitive

locating—and "currents of thought" that might support their argument. Each member was told to speak for no more than 5 minutes, with no questions from their partners. After speaking, the other members could ask questions. Bettara stressed that the partners could only ask questions; no reactions or comments were to be allowed. Martina, Samira, and Reilly pulled their chairs together to form a triad.

SAMIRA: I really wouldn't know where to begin. I only know I'm interested in social justice. Why don't you start, Martina? You seem to at least have a focus.

MARTINA: Yes, but this is very difficult for me! I've been doing this work for the Rainbow Fellowship that is gathering information about what's happening with AIDS-affected children in my village. I'm not a physician, so I don't know much about the disease; all I know is that many, many children are heading up households and caring for younger kids. And what makes it such a tragedy is that the kids who take on this responsibility for their siblings cannot make it to school. They get trapped. Sometimes other family members help out, but everyone is facing really difficult times. I'm just not sure what relevant research and theories might help me build a conceptual framework.

REILLY: Oh, but there's the whole critique of development that you should use. It's loaded with insights about why there is still such great poverty in your kind of country.

SAMIRA: (*Interrupting*) Hang on there. First, Bettara said we could only ask questions. And second, what do you mean when you say "your kind of country?" Sounds pretty arrogant to me.

REILLY: Hey, wait a sec. I'm just trying to help her out.

SAMIRA: Then let's hear what Martina's thinking.

MARTINA: OK, I'll go on. I've got a lot of statistics about poverty levels and the incidence of HIV/AIDS. And I believe there is something about the intersection of economic opportunity, politics, and AIDS, but I'm not sure. I need to look into this more deeply.

REILLY: What is going on politically?

MARTINA: Good question. The former president was from a different tribe than my village. Over the years, they never received any

"benefits" from his presidency; in fact, they suffered while other areas of the country were given preference. I'm just not sure how to tie this into my interest in the children who are heads of household or to turn it into an argument.

SAMIRA: Wow. That sounds like something I'd be interested in. I'd want to argue that national policies are inequitable and unjust. Can you talk some more about how the president's decisions affected your village?

Martina went on to describe, in some detail, how previously enacted policies shaped her community's access to health care, economic opportunities through building good roads, and pastoral care through religious organizations. Although she had only begun to articulate an argument and conceptual framework—and was not even sure that it was the "correct" one—she had the beginnings of a roadmap that could guide further explorations in the literature.

Note that in this activity Bettara insisted that students only ask questions of one another; they were not supposed to offer comments. We invite you to think about why this might be a useful pedagogical strategy. Also note that our "bad boy" Reilly was unable to abide by this directive. What is important, however, is that he was "disciplined" by members of his community of practice rather than by the professor. This is important because it represents the assumption, on the part of two members of the triad, of responsibility for their own learning and that of their colleagues.

As this dialogue depicts, beginning to build a conceptual framework and an argument that will guide an inquiry project is challenging intellectual work. In fact, we claim that it is the *most* challenging—and most important—aspect of designing a project. It entails iterative processes, that is, recursive activities that both build on each other and loop back to revisit assumptions (remember double-loop learning in Chapter 3). Conceptual frameworks can fruitfully be thought of as composing the *what* of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Rossman & Rallis, 2012), where the "substantive focus of the study" is described (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 6); these ideas were introduced briefly in Chapter 2. The design for conducting the inquiry (discussed in Chapter 6) is *how* you plan to implement the inquiry

and follows from the *what*. Both are interrelated sets of considerations; here, we separate out the conceptual framing but remember that considering *how* you might implement the inquiry will recursively shape the *what*.

Major activities in developing a conceptual framework include identifying and interrogating your personal perspectives; considering a variety of strands of theorizing and research; determining whether these would be generative for the project; exploring them in depth. What does this mean for you? First, this entails asking yourself where you stand on the issue, what your intuitive perspective is: "You need to determine *how* you see and how *you* see" (Schram, 2006, p. 39). Think about the sets of assumptions about ontology and epistemology discussed in Chapter 2; draw on these to create a more developed "research perspective" or "research orientation," as we have mentioned. Second, conceptualizing entails reading openly and widely; more reading; talking to your community of practice; and then more focused reading, this time with a critical eye. The virtue of this early exploration is that it helps you come in touch with the strands of thinking—the "currents of thought" (Schram, 2006, p. 63)—that will be meaningful for framing the project.

A note here: A conceptual framework cannot be fully developed until you have immersed yourself in relevant theorizing and research; however, you will be lost in reading the literature unless you enter with an intuitive sense of what might be the key elements of the conceptual framework, what might be called "sensitizing concepts" (Blumer, 1954, p. 7), to give you direction. This chapter focuses on this intuitive locating, on reading relevant literature, and ways these are brought together to become the guiding framework for the project.

At this point, you may be asking yourself several questions: What is a "conceptual framework?" What does "conceptualizing" mean? Why is it central to inquiry? Why an argument? How does building an argument fit with the conceptual framework? What role does a literature review play? This chapter explores these questions.

WHAT IS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK?

A conceptual framework is a structure that organizes the currents of thought that provide focus and direction to an inquiry. It is the organization of ideas—the central concepts from theory, key findings from research, policy statements, professional wisdom—that will guide the project. Framework

= organization or structure. Conceptual = concerning thoughts, ideas, perceptions, or theories. The framework emerges from wide and intensive reading of relevant literature and links your project to ongoing conversations in your field, thereby establishing parameters: what your focus is, and what it is *not*. It also provides direction for the research questions you pose, for design decisions, and for preliminary analytic strategies. As such, a well-developed and integrated conceptual framework distinguishes a thoughtful inquiry project from those that are impoverished, at least intellectually. Most important, a conceptual framework provides coherence to your thoughts, making it easier to convey "how and why your ideas matter relative to some larger body of ideas embodied in the research, writings, and experiences of others" (Schram, 2006, p. 58). As noted earlier, this is often the most challenging aspect of inquiry; unfortunately, it is often misunderstood, glided over, or given short shrift. In their article "Overlooking the Conceptual Framework," Leshem and Trafford (2007) describe how research candidates are not well taught about how to develop interesting conceptual frameworks and how little attention these are given in research methods texts.

As you come to know your perspective, identify your interests, and read what others have written on the topic, you are conceptualizing. The ultimate goal here is to "produce a coherent, focused, integrative, and contestable argument that is comprehensible to readers who are not directly acquainted with your topic" (Schram, 2006, p. 63). The framework acts as a kind of boundary for the inquiry. We think of conceptual frameworks as comprising three interlinked elements: your perspective; relevant research; and generative theories or theoretical constructs.

Building a conceptual framework starts with you, your knowledge and interests that may emerge from past experiences and study. You ask: What do I care about sufficiently to learn about in more depth? What do I know about this from my own experience? Why is this topic important to me? How do I feel about the issue or topic? How can this interest—my passion—become a feasible topic for an inquiry project? The answers to these questions contribute to the sensitizing concepts that "draw attention to important features of social interaction and provide guidelines for research in specific settings" (Bowen, 2006, p. 3). These concepts "offer ways of seeing, organizing, and understanding experience" (Charmaz, 2003, p. 259) and "suggest directions along which to look" (Blumer, 1954, p. 7) for currents of thought you will need to explore. Because we are thinking beings—*Homo sapiens sapiens*—we carry these interests, preferences, and interpretations of experience in

our heads, and inquiry begins with such concepts, whether we have made them explicit or are even aware of them. However, systematic research requires you to be aware of and state them. As you begin to focus what may be a diffuse set of interests into an inquiry topic, you are beginning to develop an intuitive framing. As you explore and answer these questions for yourself, you articulate central assertions or claims that are grounded in your interests. You thus make the conceptual framework *yours*—an understandable and integrated context for your inquiry project.

A second element is the "literature"—what is already known and talked about concerning the topic. You will discover and critically read the research, policy writings, reports about practice, evaluations, essays, perhaps newspaper articles, maybe even popular communication on the topic. You ask: What questions have been explored that relate to mine? What research can I build on? What have "experts" said about this topic? What is the discourse in the public domain? No matter what your general area of interest, some research is likely to have been conducted. We are quite suspicious when students claim that there has been no research that is related to their inquiry projects. This is just not the case! Although there may be no research that has been done on this specific topic, with this particular population or sample, using the research methods you envision, there is *related research* that you must be draw on to demonstrate your familiarity with the currents of thought in your chosen field.

A third element is the theory or theoretical constructs that you have determined will be generative in grounding the project. Many of the research reports that you read will have theoretical groundings, so pay attention to these as you read the research. Here you ask: What theoretical ideas or concepts usefully provide direction for my inquiry project? A word here about theory, an often misused and misunderstood term: A theory is a set of propositions that underlie, explain, and predict phenomena; it is a model of some aspect of reality. However, a theory does not have to be universally accepted; a theory can be viewed as a set of working understandings or hypotheses (Weiss, 1998). Many references to theory imply what we call small-"*t*" theory—hunches or an intuitive set of ideas believed to guide actions. We all carry *theories* around in our heads, theories we use on a daily basis. For example, a small "*t*" about instruction in the college classroom might lead us to modify a teaching strategy based on the prediction that this change could lead to better student performance. We are thus "theorizing" about teaching, based on professional wisdom and experience. If we are good scientists, we gather data about this new strategy, remaining

open to failure, partial success, or outstanding success. In the case of the first two, we might then revise our teaching "theory."

Theory with a capital *T* refers to an accepted "set of assumptions, axioms, propositions, or definitions that form a coherent and unified description of a circumstance, situation, or phenomenon" (Burke, 2009, p. 62). These Theories are labeled (e.g., self-efficacy) and often attributed to an individual or group of individuals (e.g., Erickson's [1959] Identity Theory or Levinson's [1978, 1996] Adult Development Theory). Both Theory and theories contribute to a generative conceptual framework, one that can be considered *foundational* (i.e., based in theory). Both kinds of theory serve to connect focused ideas—for example, HIV/AIDS-affected children in Kenya—to larger ones—postcolonial theories—and provide a direction for analysis. Note that we write "provide a *direction* for analysis." This is important because good inquiry demands openness to the unexpected: "Theory can provide perspective and suggest pattern, but it need not define what you can see" (Schram, 2006, p. 60).

Figure 5.1 depicts these key elements. Note that these contribute to the conceptual framework and also provide preliminary guidance for an analytic
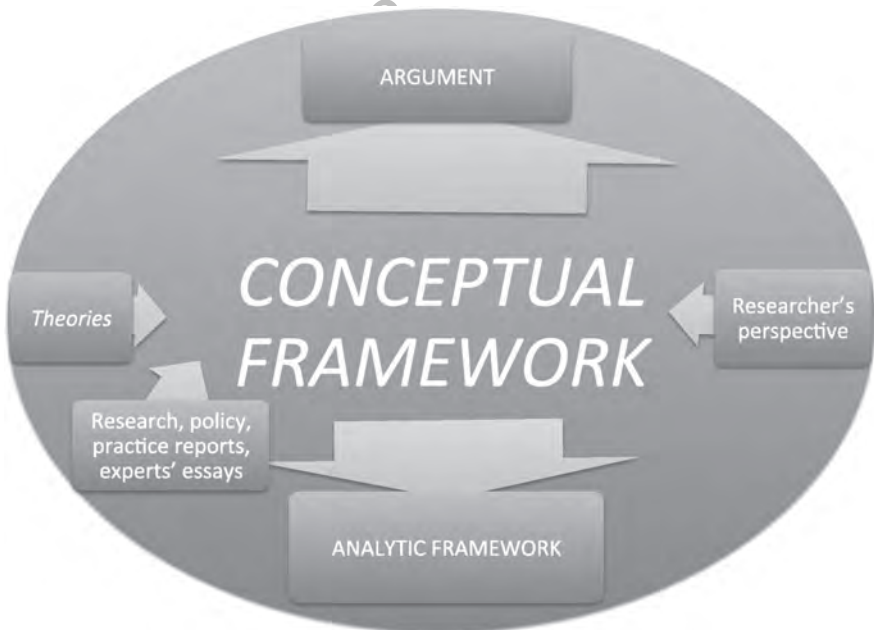

FIGURE 5.1. Conceptual and analytic frameworks.

framework—key concepts and hypotheses that will guide data analysis as you move through your inquiry cycle.

Thus, the conceptual framework provides the basis for a coherent study. It connects the *what* with the *how* of the inquiry. In short, you conceptualize the *what* by embedding your ideas and questions in a larger pool of ideas and questions: What experiences have you had with the question or problem? What are related concepts? What have others already learned about the issues? What research has already been conducted? What Theories might inform the ideas? You are making an argument and positioning it on the terrain of your journey. The framework also links to the design for the study, ensuring that the approach and methods are coherent and flow logically from the framework, and provides a preliminary map for analyzing the data, that is, a preliminary analytic (as depicted in Figure 5.1).

We now present an extended example developed from the conceptual framework of a former student, Aysen Kose (2010). Her conceptual framework encompasses the elements (argument; researcher's perspective; Theoretical frames; research, policy, and practice reports; analytic framework) in Figure 5.1. Lest you feel overwhelmed by the following example, we assure you that the work represents more than a semester in the *Introduction to Inquiry* course; in fact, we draw on Kose's dissertation to describe and illustrate the process:

AYSEN'S CONCEPTUALIZING PROCESS

School Counselors' Leadership Practices
through the Lens of Distributed Leadership

Personal perspective (experiences and values): Aysen, a former school counselor in Turkey, was frustrated with the limitations on her role that required her to work with individual students who experienced problems. She saw this approach as situating the problem in the student, not in the context of the school where the student experienced the problem. She believed that usually it isn't the student who needs fixing, it is the system, so she asked: Why don't counselors take on more systemic roles within the school? What factors support or inhibit counselors working with the system as well as with individual students?

Research and policy: Through her reading and classes, Aysen learned about a new vision for school counselors that drew on concepts of advocacy, leadership, teamwork and collaboration, accountability, use of data, and systemic change. The new vision for school counselors requires that counselors take leadership roles to become advocates and change agents for the success of all students and must align comprehensive counseling programs toward the mission of the schools. Her review of the literature contrasted the old image of the counselor's role (works to help individual students; operates in a "counseling silo" within the school) with the new (works to change the system rather than the individual student; is integral to the operation of the school as a whole).

Theoretical constructs: Aysen's reading led her to explore Theories of leadership and change. Specifically, she discovered several useful and relevant theories: organizational structure (e.g., Argyris & Schön, 1978; Elmore, 2000), distributed leadership (e.g., Spillane, 2004), and change agency and systemic change (e.g. Carr-Chellman, 1998; Senge, 1994). These contributed to her articulation of an argument to guide her study (and eventually served to guide her analysis).

Argument: The new vision requires school counselors to serve all students, not just those who need individual assistance; thus, school counselors are expected to provide leadership not only at an individual level but also at the school system level. The new school counselor will be a change agent, a proactive participant in school improvement efforts. For the counselor to operate systemically and collaboratively, school leadership activities must be distributed across all members of the organization.

Research question: How do school counselors enact overall school leadership practice for schoolwide improvement?

1. What formal and informal organizational routines allow school counselors to take on leadership roles? How do school counselors contribute to constructive leadership practices through those routines?

2. What activities do school counselors implement that demonstrate the new vision of school counseling? How have these activities changed over the last 8 years?

Analytic framework: Aysen's data analysis followed several phases. According to *distributed leadership theory*, leadership practice is shaped through social interactions and routines, which are observable practices. Thus, she began by identifying *formal* and *informal* routines and events in which the school counselors participated and by organizing them in a table according to purpose, persons involved (leaders and followers), role distribution, tools used, and who called the meeting. Next, she coded the events and routines for characteristics using categories from her conceptual framework, such as systemic, focused around single student, demand driven, structural, counselor initiated. Her next phase coded the counselors' actions within the routines: specific tasks, roles, times and places, substance. Finally, she sought to identify core patterns (or lack of) across the routines.

Through your conceptual framework, you explicate and ground the perspective *you* have developed toward the issue: Who are you in relation to this question, this problem? Why do you want to inform it, to address it? How does your focus link to larger issues? Who else is interested? We have found it useful to use the metaphor of a "lens" for this. The metaphor captures both *what* you see and *how* you will see it. Cameras differ and capture different aspects of the social world based on, for example, the photographer's perspective—his or her position—as well as camera settings—shutter speed, lighting, wide angle or zoom, color or black and white. All these elements shape the resulting picture, just as with inquiry. Think of the conceptual framework as the sum of these elements: the perspective that you bring— your camera, if you will—to better understanding, and perhaps hoping to change, some aspect of the social world that intrigues you. Overall, the conceptual framework captures the complex deductive–inductive reasoning that goes into framing the study; it brings together the abstract and the concrete, the general and the specific.

> Conceptual framework = your lens.

In summary, conceptual frameworks serve many purposes; they:

- *Construct* the argument;
- *Describe* and *map* the topic of interest;

- *Identify* key epistemological assumptions and personal or professional interests—your intellectual orientation;

- *Situate* the study in the ongoing scholarly conversations about the topic—the various research discourses;

- *Recognize* potential contributions of the study to knowledge (the literature, theory, policy discussions, and/or issues of practice);

- *Develop* "sensitizing concepts" (Blumer, 1954, p. 7);

- *Suggest* (sometimes preliminary) analytic variables, categories, and/or themes;

- *Sharpen* the focus;

- *Generate* hypotheses and/or research questions; and

- *Provide* direction for analysis.

As noted previously, developing a conceptual framework entails critically examining all three elements (your perspective, Theory, and related research) for their relevance, insightfulness, credibility, and usefulness. Although personal or professional experience (discussed in greater detail later) can provide the wellspring for interest in a topic, you must subject that experience to serious examination and critique. Your experience does *not* generalize to the world.

BUILDING AN ARGUMENT

Thinking about conceptualizing as creating an argument helps to situate *you* in the topic. In essence, you put forward a point of view and a context for the inquiry in which the problem or interest or issue and the reasons and strategies for pursuing it are convincing. You are making a case and building a logic to support that case. We suggest that many communications (an e-mail, an advertisement, even a love letter) can be viewed as arguments in the sense that they want to convince the reader of something: that the work needs to be completed, that the product is worth buying, that your feelings are valuable. So too a conceptual framework is making a central argument: This topic or focus is well framed by drawing on *X, Y,* and *Z* traditions in scholarly writing. The conceptual framework clarifies this perspective at the

> **Arguments are meant to convince the reader.**

outset, stating it clearly so that readers can understand your map and agree, disagree, or suggest modifications. For example, Martina's emerging argument might be stated as: *As a consequence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, many children have been orphaned, and many have become heads of their households. They cannot attend school; they are burdened with caring for younger siblings or relatives; they are unable to find sufficient food and clean water for themselves and those in their care. All too often governments turn a deaf ear to their plight and have not enacted policies that treat these children equitably and beneficially, ensuring a social network that supports the children's well-being.* The problem is clear: Too many households are headed by children. Martina's passion is clear: This is a deeply disturbing circumstance. And the framing literature is suggested: government policies and programs.

To build an argument is to state how you understand a phenomenon—your central claim or thesis—that is supported with reasons and evidence; considerations of alternative views; and putting forward a rationale. Developing a convincing and credible argument is central to your work as a scholar, as an inquirer. Why do we emphasize "convincing"? Much writing at the graduate level—scholarly term papers, proposals for research, theses and dissertations—depends on an argument and supporting evidence that *convinces* readers of the plausibility of your argument. Imagine a thesis or dissertation proposal defense. And note that these are typically referred to as "defenses," whether in the natural or social sciences or applied fields. In these meetings, you are called upon to defend your ideas—your assertions, the evidence put forward, the purpose for your work—and to convince those present of the soundness and potential contributions of the inquiry. After all, this committee can turn you down, disapproving what you propose! The need to convince takes on higher stakes when submitting a proposal to a funding agency. The stakes here are perhaps more clear: The agency can fund, not fund, or ask for revisions—hence, the need to convince your readers of the plausibility and worth of your inquiry project.

Next, some clarification of terms:

- An *argument* is generally a statement (or set of statements) whose purpose is to persuade or convince;

- An argument makes a central *claim* or *thesis*—the statement of a position or an assertion about some set of circumstances;

- An argument depends on *evidence* that the reader finds credible, that is, sufficient to support the claims made;

- The argument and its supporting evidence are made explicit through *warrants*, which bridge the gap between the evidence and the claim or assertion, providing reasoning that shows the relevance of the evidence to the claim; and

- A strong argument *acknowledges and responds* to other, perhaps disputative, views.

These ideas are summarized well by Booth, Colomb, and Williams (2008) in a book chapter entitled "Argument as a Conversation with Readers." Their remarks are made in the context of writing research reports, an activity central to graduate school. They note:

> In a research report, you make a *claim*, back it with *reasons*, support them with *evidence*, *acknowledge* and *respond* to other views, and sometimes explain your *principles* of reasoning. (p. 108)

Note the use of the metaphor of "conversation." This leads quite directly into consideration of the audience: Who are your readers? Your conversational partners? To whom are you addressing your written work? Who needs to be convinced of the soundness and credibility of the argument? Considering audience and purpose are central to developing sound arguments. We provide examples from everyday life to help clarify these important elements of building strong arguments (see Learning Activities 5.1–5.4 at the end of this chapter).

ENTERING THE CONVERSATION: YOUR COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Building a conceptual framework is complicated and messy. Students often ask how to begin. A convincing argument must be grounded in the literature (research, theories, policies, reports of practice); specifically, it must be supported by theoretical constructs that help to illuminate the topic. This is where students sometimes get stuck. We suggest that they begin with their personal insights, discuss these with their community of practice, and then

turn to searching in the literature. However, this process is often reversed: Students have read in their field and come with ideas, theories, and knowl-

> Community of practice = your face-to-face colleagues and critical friends.

edge of previous research, which then need to be critically examined through and with their community of practice. This refinement—and quite often new insights—is essential for a relatively economical search through reams and reams of potentially relevant research and appropriate theories. For example, Reilly recognizes that a lot is known about any topic at hand, but he tends to categorize the known as unitary, one body: "*This* is the lit you need to look at." Dialogue with his peers exposes the limitations of his categorization and opens up other possibilities: What does Reilly mean by neoliberalism? How—and where and when—do others use it? Where does it come from? How is it applied to specific events, activities, and people? Eventually, he sees that his label encompasses multiple interpretations and that other perspectives may be equally illuminating.

Alternatively, Kevin's interests stem from his individual professional experience as a high school principal. He has not thought about research that may expand his views. His community of practice can help him recognize that several differing and alternative literatures apply to the role of the principal and eventually help him raise new questions that mean more to him than the general ideas he held. Specifically, his peers' questions led him to uncover his deep concerns for adolescent boys, the lack of role models, and potential roles for principals. They helped Kevin find his passion and connect it with existing literature.

Again, as suggested earlier, we find it useful to use the metaphor of "conversations" when thinking about creating conceptual frameworks. You enter into conversations and shape and mold them as you develop the core ideas. These conversations have many participants: yourself with your passion and interests; peers and professors who help you craft a solid perspective; and others who have written about the focus of your project. These conversational partners make up both a *community of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and a *community of discourse* (Nystrand, 1982), as discussed in Chapter 3. Central to building a strong conceptual framework is getting in touch with your passion, or *engagement*, as we have noted before. Conversations in your community of practice can help you ground this passion within a larger context of what is known and what might be learned.

ENTERING THE CONVERSATION: YOUR ENGAGEMENT

In Chapter 1—and revisited earlier here—we emphasized the importance of your personal interests in a topic or focus for the inquiry project. Together with an intuitive understanding of some of your fundamental assumptions (see Chapter 2) and your in-depth reading of the literature, these form your perspective.

> **Where does your passion lie?**

But how do you identify your perspective? This usually begins with an intuitive locating: You come to the inquiry with some interests. Your head is not empty, nor are you a blank slate. These interests may be grounded in personal, sometimes quite intimate, experiences. Or they may be professional, arising from experiences you have had in work. Or they may be scholarly, coming from intriguing theories or research you have read. To complicate matters more, your initial interests in the topic may be some complex mix of all of these. As Schram (2006) notes, this initial intuitive locating "represent[s] a complex mix of direct experience, professional insight, intellectual orientation, intuition, emotional investment, and common sense" (p. 21). Rossman recalls a graduate student in counseling psychology who wanted to focus her inquiry on the processes of healing among mothers who had lost children. The student herself had lost children when they were quite young—her personal interests in this inquiry were deep and abiding. But she was also pursuing certification as a counselor and hoped to build a practice that would, in part, serve mothers in the processes of grieving and healing. To build a conceptual framework, her challenge was to link these personal–professional interests to scholarly work that was relevant and would provide a generative framework for her inquiry.

Rallis worked with a doctoral student in sports psychology who had been a basketball player and whose profession now was coaching. While playing basketball, she had the good fortune to try out for the women's Olympic team. Although she failed to qualify for the final team, the experience changed her life. Because of her passion, she chose to focus her inquiry on the experiences of women who pursued the goal of Olympic competition with incredible single-minded purpose and actually competed in the event. She used Bloom's theory of talent development (see Bloom, 1985) to guide her exploration. Thus, her interests arose primarily from her own experience, which she linked to broader and explanatory Theory.

As depicted in the dialogue that opens this chapter, one of our characters, Martina, had lived and experienced the devastation of HIV/AIDS in her home village in Kenya. She came to graduate school with a passion for pursuing a project that might help ameliorate the painfully challenging circumstances of children affected by HIV/AIDS: specifically, orphans and children who headed households as a result of the loss of their parents. Thus, her passion and locating the focus of her project came from deeply personal experience and emotional investment. However, as a nonformal educator and as a student pursuing a doctorate in international development education, she imagined creating programs that would serve these children and might help to improve their life circumstances. As with the two other students just discussed, Martina's challenge was to link these interests—her passionate dedication to the children—to relevant scholarly work about the intersection of poverty, livelihood opportunities, and HIV/AIDS. In the process she gravitated to and eventually drew on Freirean theories about social change, oppression, and education. What drove her inquiry was her bedrock commitment to the children.

As a contrasting example, another of our characters in the dialogue, Reilly, came to graduate school with a deep commitment to student activism and with the political position that universities exploited students. His experiences in his previous two master's degree programs had exposed him to strands of neoliberal theorizing, which center on a critique of universities as becoming increasingly corporatized. Thus, what drove his inquiry project was a set of theoretical and political ideas and propositions that he was determined to "prove." His interests and passion arose from these ideas, as applied to the student organizing work that he had been engaged with during his academic career. His challenge was to interrogate these ideas with an open mind. The first step for all of these students in moving forward was to connect with their deep and sustaining interests. In locating your own focus of inquiry, it is important to get in touch with where your passion lies.

Why is engagement or even passion important? Inquiry projects sometimes take years to complete. Once apparently completed, moreover, they may well turn into long-term projects. In the short term, however, imagine the hard work of creating a conceptual framework, posing intriguing research questions, then implementing the project (with all of its unanticipated challenges and rewards), and writing it all up. What will sustain this work? Our experience has shown that students who care deeply about the focus of their projects are more likely to end up with fascinating stories to tell (formally, we call these theses or dissertations). Those who take on

a project because it is convenient, because it is their professor's research agenda, or because it seems easy produce impoverished work.

But we hear you asking: Doesn't passion mean bias? This is tricky. Yes, we all have biases, but what matters in our inquiry is how we handle our biases: Do we acknowledge them? Do we recognize limitations imposed by our biases? Are we open to alternative views? In the prior examples, each of the students brought personal interest or bias, which they drew on to make their arguments and deepen their inquiry. While all four were deeply interested in the experiences of people—they wanted to understand what happened to the people in specific circumstances—they did not have a stake in the results. The fourth, however, had an explicit agenda and was certainly passionate about it, but more inclined to seek "proof" for that agenda. This is important: All but Reilly were open-minded about what they might learn. Biases come with our passions, but bias can raise an ugly head when the inquirer appears to have all the answers before beginning the project, as, it could be argued, was the case with Reilly. One question we like to ask in dissertation defenses is: What have you learned that you didn't already know? If the answer is a halting, "Well, not much," then we become worried that the person's bias has directed and limited the exploration.

ENTERING THE CONVERSATION: THE COMMUNITIES OF DISCOURSE

The conversation must, ultimately, also include those who have written about your topic—the communities of discourse. Although you do not have immediate, face-to-face conversations with these scholars (for the most part), you engage with their ideas, their assertions, the claims that they make about the topic.

As we have discussed, the relevant literature that provides the circles in the Venn diagram of your conceptual framework can include Theory, theories, scholarly research, policy statements, and reports of professional practice. Theory (with a capital *T*) is often seen as the most prestigious in many fields; in fact, a discussion of Theory is required for many such inquiry projects. As part of your

> Community of discourse = scholars, policymakers, practitioners.

socialization into graduate study and scholarship, you will learn the norms that guide scholarly research in your field. This is important! There is not

one approach (more Theory, less policy; more Policy, less theory) that is the best; it depends on the professional norms within a discipline.

The discussion of relevant literature is often described as a "review of the literature," as if there were one modality and organization for this discussion. Such is not the case. Lively, engaging, even original discussions of relevant writings of other authors are not formulaic, nor should they be tedious to read. We caution students that this creative, integrative writing is *not* the mere recitation or listing of "so-and-so found this; such-and-such found that"—what we describe as "annotated bibliographies." The process of reading, reviewing, finding links to other authors and key works, critiquing them, and locating counterdiscussions, along with all the hard intellectual work associated with these activities is frustrating, engaging, challenging, and ultimately rewarding.

Recall the discussion of models of creativity in Chapter 3. We drew from the work of Bargar and Duncan (1982), who specifically wrote about encouraging creative work at the doctoral level. The tasks of reading, reviewing, and finding links to other works maps neatly onto the *immersion* phase of the creative process. You immerse yourself in ideas, assertions, findings from research, claims—these foment in your

> A review of the literature is *not* an annotated bibliography.

preconscious mind, percolating away during the *incubation* phase. These two phases can be the most frustrating because overall logic and organization have not yet emerged for how *you* want to represent your fundamental argument: its central assertions, the evidence you will bring forward, links between evidence and claims, and so on. We often remind students of this, cautioning that they must allow time and space for this incubation to take place. We also provide deadlines for those who get stuck in incubation.

Our experience suggests that insight, or illumination, follows—the "aha" experience—which indicates that an organizing schema has emerged. This, then, may well become the map for the conceptual framework. However, another cautionary note: There is tedious, painstaking work ahead, what Bargar and Duncan call "verification" (1982, p. 5). Another term for this that we use is "development." Both terms capture the hard work of filling in the assertions, claims, and evidence that flesh out the framework and its central arguments. In following this process, especially allowing ideas, readings, and Theories to incubate and attending to your insights, you claim your intellectual space.

Reading and reviewing relevant literature is often challenging because there are few simple strategies; it is sometimes tedious work. Students may well think of a literature review as a list of publications relevant to their topic; as a survey of what is out there; or, as we noted earlier, as an annotated bibliography. None of these captures the richness and generativity of a well-developed review of what others have written. At best, a review of the literature helps you to:

- *Learn* what is known about the topic and where the gaps lie;
- *Learn and explain* how knowledge in the field has been developed over time;
- *Demonstrate* that you understand the linkages between the currents of thought in the field;
- *Argue* that the research you are proposing is likely to be worthwhile;
- *Explain* how the research is justified; and
- *Identify* how the research may well make a contribution to the field.

"The literature" is a vague and ambiguous term, implying a wholeness and boundedness to that literature that doesn't exist. Although this makes identifying and reviewing relevant written work challenging, we hope we have made clear that the metaphor of "conversation" helps. We see literature reviews as conversations that you enter into; you converse with:

- Scholarly traditions;
- Recognized experts;
- Empirical research;
- Experience; and
- Professional wisdom.

In the critical discussion of these writings, the literature review should:

- *Reveal* underlying assumptions behind research questions;
- *Demonstrate* that the researcher is knowledgeable about research traditions appropriate for the discipline and topic;

- *Identify* gaps—spaces where the current inquiry project can contribute; and

- *Provide* the logical groundwork for articulating and refining research questions.

At this point, some strategies for organizing your thinking about "the literature" may be helpful.

WAYS OF ORGANIZING

So far, we have explored what the literature review should accomplish and how you make sense of all you read. Now you are ready to organize the ideas and begin writing. To augment the discussion of purposes mentioned previously, Cooper (1988) describes several ways of approaching the task of putting it all together. He suggests considering the audience, focus, specific goals, authorial perspective or stance, coverage, and organization. Each is useful in working your way through the writing up of what you have learned in conversation with the communities of discourse. What is important is that the review is not an annotated bibliography, a simple list of what you have read. Rather, the review reveals that you recognize the relevant currents of thought, how they are connected, and what gaps exist. Remember that a fundamental purpose is to support the argument you have constructed and to help situate that argument within a larger context.

> Audience, audience, audience—to whom are you writing?

Thinking about your *audience* is a fundamental step. Since you are in graduate school, the most likely audience for a literature review is a scholarly one: your advisors and examiners and other scholars in the field. Your review, critique, analysis, and synthesis of the literature should, therefore, keep this audience firmly in mind; you should speak to this audience. This suggests a *focus* on relevant theory/ies, research findings or outcomes, and perhaps research methods. A scholarly audience wants to be convinced that you know and understand the key theories and research studies conducted that are relevant for your topic. However, in applied fields, such as education, public health, public policy, or management, a focus on applications for practice may also be appropriate and quite useful. Thus, your review should

address theories and research, but it may emphasize the implications for, let's say, management of not-for-profit small businesses. As another example, Rallis and her coauthors began their how-to book for school principals with a practitioner-oriented chapter reviewing and critiquing what is already known about principal leadership (Militello, Rallis, & Goldring, 2009).

The relative emphasis within the review is also shaped by your *specific goals*, which may be:

- *To offer an integrative discussion*, which could include developing generalizations across research findings, resolving conflicting perspectives or research findings, and/or building connections across key ideas or concepts articulated in theories;
- *To critique the existing literature*, identifying shortcomings (perhaps historical) or inadequate analyses;
- *To identify central issues* or questions that will frame your inquiry project; and
- *To identify gaps* where your project will contribute.

As you write, you embody your *authorial perspective*, or *stance*, relative to the topic and the discourses that you converse with. We have discussed the centrality of your perspective throughout; in writing, you articulate this perspective and build the central argument that frames your project. Historically and, in some disciplines, to the present, this notion of authorial perspective is anathema. With epistemological assumptions that are more objectivist (see Chapter 2), the norms in these disciplines stipulate an apparently neutral authorial stance. Recall the discussion about James Watson and Barbara McClintock, Nobel laureates whose open espousal of their very deep—and very personal—engagement with their topics was present in their bodies of work. Both use the first person throughout their work. As before, we caution you to consider your audience and the prevailing norms of the relevant communities of practice and discourse.

Finally, the *coverage* and *organization* of a literature review are crucial for developing your overall argument and framework. Again, historically, literature reviews were supposed to be "exhaustive" (and, as we note, exhausting!). In some fields and with some topics, this may be possible, but many inquiry projects represent the intersection of currents of thought: the overlapping circles in a Venn diagram. You need to become immersed in the relevant theories and research about your topic, but we encourage

students to lift the burden of having this immersion be exhaustive. Rather, consider that the discussion of relevant literature can focus on authors and/or works that are "representative" or "central" or "pivotal." This will entail learning which authors and key pieces of scholarly work are, in fact, representative or central, but articulating that your review will be one or the other helps the audience understand the scope and boundaries you have placed around it.

How you *organize* the review is often where you demonstrate creativity, new insights, and certainly the overall framework. Simply categorizing by the currents of thought you followed will not reveal your analyses and syntheses of what you read. Consider arranging your review in any of the following ways: historical or chronological, conceptual or thematic, pivotal moments, or methodological (i.e., by the various methods used by researchers on the problem or issue). Obviously, an overall historical organization could include a focus on methodology within key time periods in the development of thought within the field; thus, creative blending of these structures of organization is always possible.

With these ideas in mind, you have some "hooks" to help guide you through the processes of reading and critiquing and writing about the literature that is the core of your conceptual framework. As you engage in this work, keep in mind that you are developing *your* intellectual stance that will guide your inquiry project.

This chapter has focused on the complex processes of developing a conceptual framework for an inquiry project. As we noted at the beginning, this is very much an iterative process as you examine your own interests for an intuitive locating of the project; delve into theories, research, policy statements, reports of practice on the topic—the currents of thought; revisit your intuitive framing; read more literature; and so on. Note that the preliminary framework you are constructing will also be refined and shaped as you consider *how* you will implement the project; we discuss these important considerations in Chapter 6. We close this chapter by emphasizing how important a clear conceptual framework is for any inquiry project: for providing direction, for raising intriguing research questions, and for foreshadowing the design. In summary, your conceptual framework reveals the route of your journey.

Learning Activity 5.1. One Study, Four Representations

To engage you in the need for building a convincing argument, we invite you to review four versions of essentially the same ideas: research on IQ and birth order. Our purpose is to encourage critical thinking about audience and who might be convinced by each representation and central argument.

In our classes we provide four quite different versions of a study on IQ and birth order. You could use our example or find any four perspectives on some idea. We selected the particular research about birth order based on the assumption that each of you is part of a family and therefore may well be interested in the study. The versions come from the following sources:

The journal *Science, 316*(22) (2007), downloaded from *www.sciencemag.org*

A news report on the study published in the *New York Times* (*www.nytimes.com/2007/06/21/science/21cnd-sibling.html?hp=&pagewanted=print*)

A commentary on the study in the June 2007 *Slate* magazine (*www.Slate.com*)

An interactive blog on the study, also found on the *Slate* website

Once you have read the different reports and commentaries, we invite you to think about and discuss with your critical friends which version of the study seems the most "true," "correct," or "credible." Be careful not to assume that the report in *Science* is/must be the most authoritative because it is a research report.

One outcome we hope for is that you will begin to understand that formal "research reports" are only one representation of knowledge, one that society tends to valorize. Most of us think, "It's a research report, so it must be true!" The discussions focus on purpose and audience, important concepts to integrate into your thinking. The conversation also focuses on how different representations are, or are not, "legitimate," as discussed in Chapter 3, in terms of norms of scholarship. This, in turn, invites introspection about your personal inquiry perspective.

Questions we ask:

- What is the fundamental argument? The major point?
- What is the central claim or assertion?

- What is put forward as evidence?
- What evidence seems most valid (to you), and why?
- What is the purpose of each different article? Who is the intended audience?
- Which representation has the most credibility (to/for you)?

Learning Activity 5.2. Developing a Position

Writing memos helps you articulate what you are interested in—the focus of a possible inquiry project—and helps you develop a set of assertions around your perspective on the topic. Three related memoing exercises are described next.

Guidelines

This first assignment asks you to choose an issue or topic that is important to you. Because our field is education, we ask you to make an assertion or a set of related assertions (something they believe to be true) about a type of educational organization (e.g., schools, universities, nonformal programs) or process (e.g., policymaking, decision making, learning). Your assertion can be related to the field in which you are studying. You should define key terms and explain how you *know* that your assertion has merit or why you believe it to be true. Put simply, you identify your standpoint and how that shapes the assertion. We ask: Where are you coming from? What experience or knowledge shapes your assertion? What assumptions have you made that support this assertion? To develop skills of writing concisely, we ask that the paper be no more than two pages.

Group Discussion

Work together in your critical inquiry triads (see Learning Activity 3.2) or in another relevant group to critique each other's position papers. Questions to guide this dialogue are clarifying questions only. Our expectation here is that you will help one another get more clear about what each person believes to be true (their knowledge), how their experience is shaping their knowledge claims (their perspective), and what has led them to believe that their assertion is true (what they rely on as evidence). Next, we ask you to complicate their assertions in a second paper, described next.

Learning Activity 5.3. Complicating Your Position

Guidelines

Drawing on the first position paper and its assertions, take a different point of view that complicates the first paper. Because positions are often firmly held, we ask you to consider what someone who disagrees with this position would argue. What points would that person make? How would that person try to convince you of his or her position? This mental debate will offer a new and, it is hoped, a more complex, nuanced assertion based on that perspective. In the second memo, consider: What are your new assumptions and how do they differ from your previous ones? Finally, comment on how the new perspective has changed how you view the organization or process.

Debrief

Once again, return to your critical inquiry triads and pose questions about how the argument is developing. Focusing on assertions and counterassertions helps you understand the elements of strong argumentation. We then ask students to depict ideas primarily nonverbally through concept maps.

Learning Activity 5.4. Concept Mapping

Guidelines

We invite you to draw on the analyses in papers 1 and 2, focusing your topics a bit more and building a framework around the ideas. We suggest that you, quite literally, use bubbles and arrows and question marks to create a map of your thinking. In doing so, we suggest that you consider the following: What questions do you have about your topic now? What are the central concepts that you have been writing about? How do you think these concepts relate to one another? What currents of thought might they link to? As before, you might turn to your critical inquiry group to share and critique each other's maps: Does the map make sense? Are the connections between ideas apparent and reasonable? What is missing?

FOR FURTHER READING

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➥ Fink, A. (2010). *Conducting research literature reviews: From the Internet to paper* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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