Whipping up the “Why Paper”: Inquiry into diverse perspectives

Jennifer L. Fabbi  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas, jennifer.fabbi@unlv.edu*

P. S. McMillen  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas, psmcmillen.phd@gmail.com*

Abigail Hawkins  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

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Whipping up the “Why” Paper: Inquiry into Diverse Perspectives

Students are introduced to various databases that provide access to alternative perspectives and to an advanced organizer designed to foster critical evaluation of sources.

Jennifer Fabbi, Head of the Curriculum Materials Library and Special Assistant to the Dean, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Libraries, jennifer.fabbi@unlv.edu; Paula McMillen, Education Librarian, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Libraries, paula.mcmillen@unlv.edu; Abigail Hawkins, Instructional Designer, abbyhawkins7@gmail.com

NUTRITION INFORMATION
In a Valuing Cultural Diversity course, required for all undergraduate education majors, students are asked to write a “Why” paper to investigate and understand alternative perspectives, looking particularly at the perspectives of a cultural group different from their own (Sleeter, Torres, & Laughlin, 2004).


COOKING TIME
Cooking time is at least 60 minutes.

ACRL INFORMATION DIETARY STANDARDS ADDRESSED
Standard Three: 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6
Standard One: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3
Standard Two: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5
Standard Four: 4.1

MAIN COOKING TECHNIQUE
Individual and small-group work, large-group discussion, instructor demonstration, hands-on interactions with information sources

MAIN INGREDIENTS
- Computer access for all students
- Instructor’s station with projector
- Access to the internet and appropriate subscription databases (education research as well as gender- or culture-focused sources, e.g., ERIC, Ethnic Newswatch, etc.)
- Whiteboard/blackboard

PREPARATION
Students will have identified a “Why” question, developed a concept map based on this question, and pre-approved both with their primary instructor. In constructing the concept map, students will have identified key terms, synonyms and related terms pertinent to their original “Why” question.

THE INSTRUCTION SESSION
1. Introduction—1 minute
   • Introduce self and purpose of instruction session.
2. Insider/Outsider pairs—5-7 minutes
   • Have students work in pairs to define and identify benefits of both insider and outsider perspectives.
   • Bring their ideas back to large group discussion.
3. Primary vs. secondary sources—10-12 minutes
   • Using a think-pair-share approach, have students write down examples of primary and secondary sources.
   • As a whole class, write students’ examples on the board under two columns labeled Primary and Secondary Sources. Ask students to indicate which sources would likely be from an insider or outsider perspective. Note that the remainder of the session will have students explore places where they can find information that provides insider and/or outsider perspectives.
4. **Hands-on education research—15 minutes**
   - Introduce and hand out library assignment (Sources Table). Relate it to completing their “Why” Paper (i.e. identifying sources from insider and outsider perspectives).
   - Demonstrate a search in an education research database. Explain and show through your search strategies the connection between the concept map and keyword search.
   - Model evaluating one of the resources found; use the questions posed in the table and involve the class in completing one of the table rows.
   - Give students hands-on time to find a resource relevant to their own question in that database and have them complete a row in their own Sources Table.

5. **Hands-on culture or gender-focused research—15 minutes**
   - Repeat using a culture or gender-focused database. Indicate that an insider perspective is more likely found in these databases than in a general or education database.

6. **Individual research**
   - Provide handout with additional databases and Web sites.
   - Give students the remainder of the time to search their own topic with the librarian available for individual consultation.

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**Sources Table**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Source Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Source Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Voice/Perspective of Writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Insider (I) or Outsider (O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Citation Information (see APA guidelines for specific information needed for your source type)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Why (or why not) is this source of information important to your question? Provide at least 2 reasons or pieces of evidence for your decision.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ALLERGY WARNINGS**

Students may not fully understand the distinction between primary and secondary sources.

Students narrowly evaluate sources based on their relevance to the subject matter of their topics. Particularly for this class and assignment, another criteria we want students to consider is the credibility and perspective of the source’s author vis-à-vis the topic at hand. This needs to be emphasized during the in-class demonstration of evaluating sources found in the databases as well as criteria such as accuracy, scope, and currency.

**CHEFS’ NOTE**

For many students, because this is their first encounter with emotionally-charged diversity topics, they are often more engaged with the project than is typical for lower division students.

See *Cooking Up Concept Maps* in Section 5 to learn to create a concept map.