**Three Perspectives Strategy UNC Writing Center**

This strategy was described by Lauer, et al.[[1]](#endnote-1) to help writers examine their subjects from a variety of perspectives. Each perspective asks a series of questions which can be adapted as necessary to your own project. Answering them will help you articulate thoughts and make interesting connections in your writing.

**1. Describe and Distinguish**

This perspective emphasizes defining distinctive features of your subject. It is drawn from the physics concept of the particle—one distinct unit. If your subject is complex, it might be helpful to describe it at the macro-level and then to describe each component individually.

* What’s distinctive to you about your subject? To those in your writing context?
* How would you describe your subject to someone in that context unfamiliar with it?
* What physical features characterize your subject (sights, sounds, etc., emotions, attitudes)? What bearing do they have on your research questions?
* What sort of day-to-day activities do you associate with this subject?
* What values do you or others associate with your subject? What is your attitude toward these values? Acceptance? Challenge? Rejection? Indifference? Why?
* When you think of your subject, what recurring images come to mind? What feelings are aroused? Do others in your context share these emotions?

**2. Trace Moves and Changes**

This perspective is drawn from the physics concept of the wave. It emphasizes changes that occur over time, either as they are prompted by significant events or as they gradually evolve. The questions below ask you to consider both your subject and your relationship to it.

* How has your subject changed over time? How do these changes relate to the question you are investigating?
* What changes have occurred in the way others examine your subject? Why?
* What events have shaped or co-occurred with these changes?
* What larger cultural changes have influenced your subject? (e.g., the changing roles of women, the end of the Cold War, the discovery of the quark, the invention of social media)
* How did your experience with the subject begin?
* How have you, your attitudes, or feelings changed? What about those in your context?

**3. Map Networks and Relationships**

This perspective emphasizes connections between your subject and ideas, subjects, and cultural values and practices. It is drawn from the physics concept of the field, the multitude of particles co-existing, interacting (or not) and exerting mutual influence (or not) in particular ways and for particular reasons.

* Group your subject. By placing your subject into a larger group, you can make connections between your subject and the characteristics of the larger group, constructing important features in a more generalize framework.
* Compare or contrast your subject. Identify both points of similarity and difference between your subject and others. How are the similarities and differences interesting or important? What questions do they generate?
* Create an analogy or metaphor for your subject. Analogies and metaphors can give you alternate ways of describing your subject. They can be particularly helpful for explaining complex phenomena in accessible terms. See the Writing Center’s staff page for our [“Writing is like…”](http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/staff10.html) analogies.
* Examine cultural narratives, story lines, assumptions, and stereotypes that apply to your subject. Naming these things helps you analyze their influence on your subject and on the social practices associated with your subject.

**Review Your Ideas**

Review the material you’ve generated and look for productive or intriguing connections, new avenues of exploration, new explanations you’ve been searching for…anything that keeps you moving forward.

1. Adapted from Lauer, JM, Lunsford, A, Atwill, J, Clemens, T, Hart-Davidson, W, Jacobs, D, Langstraat, L, Miles, L, Peeples, T, and Uber-Kellogg, N. (n.d.). *Four worlds of writing: Inquiry and action in context, 4th ed.* Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)