

Strategies for considering texts (from Kamler and Thomson, and Clark)

Strategy 1 (Kamler and Thomson, 2006, p42)

When evaluating a text, ask and make note of the following:

- What is the argument?
- What kind/aspect of x is spoken about in this article?
- From what position/using what methodology?
- Using what evidence?
- What claims are made?
- How adequate are these? (blind spots and blank spots)*"
- What does this work contribute to the field as a whole?
- How does this work relate to what I want to say?

*Wagner's (1993) idea, (discussed pg 41-2 in Kamler and Thomson, 2006) - blind spots are "areas that are overlooked for theoretical or methodological reasons" ie what about the way it is carried out or the ideas it is based on limits the findings (research that can only give limited data, regardless of quality)?; blank spots are "shortcomings of the research as it is", i.e. what could it have seen using current methods/theory, but just didn't (badly done research)?

Strategy 2 (Using text partners, from Irene Clark, QMUL workshop series 2006)

For each article / chapter you read, ask and make note of the following:

- The thesis/hypothesis of this article is:
- The most interesting ideas/facts/findings in this article are:
- Why do I find these ideas/facts/findings interesting?
- What aspects of the topic does this article overlook or distort?
- If I were to write to the author of this article discussing these ideas, I might say the following:
- A potential use of this article for my thesis/dissertation is:

Strategy 3 (Kamler and Thomson, 2006, p46)

Fields of knowledge production – questions to ask about groups of texts/data to get a view of the cultural/political/ideological positioning of the knowledge they deal with

- Who is producing knowledge about x and who is not?
- How are these knowledges produced?
- What knowledges are included and where, and which are excluded?
- What connections exist between these different sets of knowledge?
- Who has access to these knowledges and who does not?

- What discourses are common across the field of knowledge production?
- In whose interests does this work?

Useful resources

Clark, I. 2007. *Writing the Successful Thesis and Dissertation: entering the conversation*. NJ: Prentice Hall

Kamler, B. and Thomson, P. 2006. *Helping Doctoral Students Write: pedagogies for supervision*. London: Routledge

Murray, R. 2008. *How to write a thesis*. Berkshire: OUP/McGraw-Hill