

What is a Think Piece?

Excerpted from *The Qualitative Dissertation* *

A think piece is a semiformal document that is more structured and public than an entry in a personal or professional journal, yet less polished than a formal paper or publishable article. Generally, think pieces focus on a particular idea, concept, issue, problem, or question that the author is beginning to explore. Whether one starts by describing some problematic aspect of practice or some nebulous idea catalyzed by reading literature, framing a piece of writing as a think piece conveys three messages: (1) This is where I currently am in my thinking about a subject; (2) I recognize that my thinking is somewhat constrained and/or limited; and (3) I want to engage in conversation that will help me identify avenues for broadening and/or deepening my thinking about the subject. Think pieces can be written at any time in a learning or inquiry process as a way of engaging others in deliberation when one has reached an impasse in one's understanding of an issue or question. Serving as a focal point for deliberation, successive drafts of think pieces provide a space for bringing together reflections on experience and insights from the literature. The point of the writing and deliberation is for the author to get hold of the meanings he or she is trying to formulate and to test the merits of those meanings through the give and take of ideas with faculty, fellow students, and/or professional colleagues.

* Maria Piantanida & Noreen B. Garman. *The Qualitative Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty*. 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2009.