**Activity 9: Tracing the Scholarly Conversation**

**Purpose of this assignment:** The goal of this activity is to help you learn how to trace the scholarly conversation on a topic, using references and “cited by” tools to find previous and more recent works related to a specific source.

**How does it fit within the entire project?** The review of the existing literature on a topic is critical to assessing the knowns and unknowns of the topic, the context for the scholarly conversation on this topic, the important actors of this conversation, and identify the contribution that particular articles, books, and other scholarly pieces make to knowledge on the topic.

**Tasks required:** Complete the activity below.

**Deliverable:** Completed version of this handout uploaded to [LMS] by [deadline] (one per person).

**Estimated time:** [to determine based on the depth of the reflection, the number of source from the citation list to study, etc.]

**Group work or individual work?** Individual work [can be also used for group work].

**Notes to instructor:**

* This activity was developed by [Jane Hammons](https://library.osu.edu/people/hammons.73).
* Provide students with a source that is a few years old (it should be old enough that other researchers will have had time to cite it in their own published works). Or, have them locate a source relevant to their topic that is a few years old.

**Step-by-step:**

*Tracing the Conversation Backward*

1. Look at the source provided to you. Review and summarize briefly the source.
2. Answer the following questions:
   * Do you think this researcher(s) was the first to explore this topic?
   * How would you use this source to find previous research on this topic?
3. Review the citations/Literature cited for the article. Answer the following questions:
   * What is the oldest source that you can find listed?
   * Are there any journals that you see that are cited more than once?
   * Are there any authors that are cited more than once?
   * Which sources do you see that look as if they would be the most relevant to the specific research question?
4. Select [one] source from the citation list. Locate that source and compare it to the original source—what is the relationship between the two sources?
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 for this second publication.

*Tracing the Conversation Forward*

1. Return to the original article. Answer the following questions:
   * Do you think this was the final word on the topic?
   * How could you use this source to find more recent sources on the topic or research question?
2. Locate the original source on “Google Scholar”. Review the citations for the article by clicking on “Cited by …”. Identify at least one source that cites the original source.
3. Compare the original and the more recent source. How would you describe the connections between the two sources?
4. Continue to trace the conversation forward, by finding a source that cite the newer publication.

*Reflection*

1. Write a short reflection on what the activity taught you. Answer the following questions:
   * What did you learn in this activity about the importance of citations (or how scholars use citations)?
   * What did you learn about the scholarly conversation on the topic?
   * How do you plan to apply what you learned to your own research practices?