Acknowledgements and Response: Overview

- Questioning Your Arguments
- Finding Alternatives to Your Argument
  - Alternatives in Your Sources
  - Three Predictable Alternatives
- Deciding what to Acknowledge
  - Selecting Alternatives to Respond To
- Acknowledging Questions You Can’t Answer
- Responses as Subordinate Arguments
Acknowledgements and Response: Introduction

Need to imagine objections

Two key kinds of anticipated objections:

Question of intrinsic soundness: clarity of **claim**, relevance of **reasons**, quality of **evidence**

Question of alternatives: different way of framing the **problem, evidence** not considered, **warrants** not considered

Questioning Your Arguments

Why defer (considering) acknowledgments till after your arguments are done?

Types of questions to anticipate:

- Questions of the problem:
  - How you define the problem (what are alternate issues)
  - Is the problem even significant?
  - Nature of problem: Pragmatic or conceptual

- Questions of the solution:
  - Does the solution match the problem?
  - Is the claim too strong. Are there exceptions or limitations
  - Why is the conceptual/practical answer better than others preferred?

- Questions of evidence:
  - The kind of evidence (quantitative, statistical etc.)
  - Accuracy
  - Precision
  - Currency
  - Representativeness of the data
  - Authority
  - Sufficiency

Questions of relevance of reasons (deferred to discussion of Warrants in next chapter)
Finding Alternatives to Your Argument

Alternatives in Your Sources
- Sources that may disagree with your position
- Sources that you may think are unreliable or irrelevant

Three Predictable Alternatives
- Evidence, interpretations of evidence, judgements of reliability of evidence, conclusions, lines of reasoning
- Additional causes beside the ones you claim (for arguments of cause and effect)
- Counterexamples: What are they? Why do you not consider them damaging?

Issues of variations
- Issues of definition: especially when your argument is based on a defined term

Deciding what to Acknowledge

Selecting Alternatives to Respond To (priorities)
- Plausible charges of apparent weakness that can be rebutted
- Alternative lines of argument that have been important to the field
- Alternative conclusions that readers want to be true
- Important counterexamples that you have to explain

(Caution: “Better to ignore something your readers like than to disparage it”)

Acknowledging Questions You Can’t Answer
- One solution: Redefine the problem or rebuild the argument to avoid the question
- Openly acknowledge the problem and respond that
  - The rest of the argument balances the flaw
  - While the flaw is serious, that is the substance for further research
  - While the flaw makes the claim untenable, there is still value in your work as it provides insights to the question, and suggests a direction toward a better answer
Responses as Subordinate Arguments

Responses provide reasons for accepting, limiting, or rejecting what is acknowledged.

Some have argued that food can be addictive, but remember that we are here concerned only with substances for which addiction is the norm. But some people who taste chocolate once may be unable to resist it thereafter, but the number who crave chocolate is a fraction of those who after trying crack cocaine just once are immediately addicted to it. Chernowitz (1998) found that just one exposure to crack cocaine resulted in . . .

Responses may require substantial arguments with multiple reasons, evidence, and even warrants and additional acknowledgements and responses. Acknowledgements and responses thicken the argument and your research.