What is Research? Drawing Icebreaker

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Institution: Northern Illinois University
Course: Any undergraduate program
Discipline: Any
Topic: Understanding the affective component of the research process

About: In this icebreaker activity that can be used in any library session, students draw what research is to them and use a class discussion to acknowledge the emotions associated with research. The goal of this activity is to a) acknowledge the affective component of research while b) assessing students' prior experiences with research and c) starting a library session with active learning in order to create a participatory classroom culture for the session. By using drawing, and discussing emotions, this activity may push you and your students out of their comfort zone, forcing everyone to think in different ways about research while priming students to understand when they should seek support.

Objectives
- Students will acknowledge the affective component of research and know that research is hard for everyone

Materials
- Small scraps of paper for each student, 4x4 inch at smallest to full sheet of paper
- Writing implement for each student
- Slideshow with drawing prompt (alternatively, writing implement to share drawing prompt with students via anchor chart, whiteboard, or blackboard)

Activities (7 minutes)
(1 minute) Draw what research is
- Individually: instruct students to take 1-2 minutes to draw that they think research looks like. I use a prompt on a slideshow which says "Draw what you think research is"

Draw what you think research is

Photo by Kelly Sikkema on Unsplash

(2 minutes) Share with neighbour

- With partner: Have students share what they drew and the emotions they associate with their drawing with a partner.
- Note: I find asking students to share with a neighbour makes them more confident to share with the larger group in the next activity.

(4 minutes) Class Brainstorm and Discussion
- Use whiteboard/chalkboard to brainstorm with your class what emotions they associate with their research.
- Acknowledge that research is challenging for everyone: first-year students, grad students, their professors, and librarians. To demonstrate this, show students the image that you drew and explain what emotions you associate with it. This shows students that you are human and acknowledges that research is hard for everyone.
- Tell students that if they are feeling frustrated with their research, that's normally an indication that whatever they are doing is challenging and they may want to seek support from the library, a peer, or a professor.

(1 minute) Later in lesson
- I often refer to the emotions we wrote on the board throughout the session. For example, if students do an activity, I ask them how it felt.
- I often close the session by reminding them that if they are feeling frustrated (and point to our brainstorm), that should be the moment when they reach out to the library for help.

Assessment
- Assessment *for* learning: This activity is designed to assess what students know about research and access their past experiences with it.
- Assessment *as* learning: Monitor students as they draw and discuss with neighbours to ensure on-task behaviour and gather some ideas about what students are thinking.
- Assessment *of* learning: Use the class discussion to anecdotally note how students are learning to understand that research is hard.

ACRL Information Literacy Framework
- Information Creation as a Process: Knowledge Practice 3
    - "articulate the traditional emerging processes of information creation and dissemination in a particular discipline"
- Research as Inquiry: Disposition 5
    - "value persistence, adaptability, and flexibility and recognize that ambiguity can benefit the research process"

References
Bedi, S., Hartel, J., Hicks, D., Misquith, C., Noone, R., Whyte, J., & Webb, J. (2020, February). Images and imagination: A primer on visual research methods. Panel presented at the *Ontario Library Association Super Conference*, Toronto, ON, Canada.

Kuhlthau, C. (1993). Seeking meaning: A Process Approach to Library and Information Services. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Pub. Corp.