

## MOTIVATING MOVES

An effective argument will not simply demonstrate that its main claim is true; it will also show why that claim is meaningful or important. Motive is the moment that occurs early in your essay where you show your audience not what you will argue, but *what is at stake* in that argument. More specifically, motive statements highlight a problem, confusion, tension, or gap in our existing understanding. Put differently, writers motivate their arguments by suggesting in their introductions how those arguments reconsider, critique, or even challenge the status quo.

Match the “motivating moves” at right with writing samples from the disciplines at left.

### Published Writing from the Disciplines

Sociology: How does one explain the seeming inconsistency between the responses by the Hispanic community to the 1992 poll, on the one hand, and the general pride that most Americans express about their immigrant roots, on the other?<sup>1</sup>

History: The rescuing of Armenian genocide survivors was at once a critical moment in the definition of modern international humanitarianism and human rights *and* a site of resistance to the colonial presence in the post-Ottoman Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>2</sup>

Environmental Science: Although the origin of these sources [of oxygenated organic compounds] is still unclear, we suggest that oxygenated species could be formed via the oxidation of hydrocarbons in the atmosphere, the photochemical degradation of organic matter in the oceans, and direct emissions from terrestrial vegetation.<sup>3</sup>

Psychology: While social psychologists and experimental psychologists generally agree that deception should be a last resort and is sometimes unnecessary, there are underlying issues in this debate that need to be discussed.<sup>4</sup>

### Some Motivating Moves

1. The truth isn't what one would expect, or what it might appear to be on first reading.
2. The knowledge on the topic has heretofore been limited.
3. There's a mystery or puzzle or question here that needs answering.
4. Published views of the matter conflict.
5. We can learn about a larger phenomenon by studying this smaller one.
6. This seemingly tangential or insignificant matter is actually important or interesting.
7. There's an inconsistency, contradiction, or tension here that needs explaining.
8. The standard opinion(s) need challenging or qualifying.

<sup>1</sup>Simon, Rita J. “Old Minorities, New Immigrants: Aspirations, Hopes, and Fears.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530 (Nov. 1993): 61. Print.

<sup>2</sup>Watenpaugh, Keith David. “The League of Nations’ Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism.” *American Historical Review* 115.5 (Dec. 2010): 1318. Print.

<sup>3</sup>Singh, Hanwant. “Evidence from the Pacific troposphere for large global sources of oxygenated organic compounds.” *Nature* 410 (26 April 2001): 1078. Print.

<sup>4</sup>Cook, Karen S. and Toshio Yamagishi. “A Defense of Deception of Scientific Grounds.” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 71.3 (Sept. 2008): 215. Print.