As professionals serving children and families in a variety of capacities, we continually strive to create new knowledge. As we think about creating new knowledge, it is often necessary to examine issues from new and different perspectives. Many challenges encountered by children and families are complex, multifaceted and their interconnectedness may not be initially apparent.

For this professional project you will include the following components:

1. **INTRODUCTION:**
   Identify a topic(s) of interest (You will work with your committee chair to identify and “fine tune” this topic)
   a. Briefly describe the significance of this topic(s)
      i. **WHY** is worthy of study?

2. **THEORY:**
   Identify a theoretical framework to support the topic of interest
   a. Describe the major tenets / assumptions of the theory
      i. Provide specific examples relating the tenets / assumptions to your topic(s)

3. **RESEARCH:**
   Review empirical literature supporting your topic(s) of interest
   a. Describe relevant supporting literature
      i. Be sure to explore the obvious lines of research but also think “outside the box”. Think about:
         1. What intersections of research may not initially be apparent?

         *For example, when children experience the death of a significant caregiver, almost all will experience some type of grief. Grief can be operationally defined as “normal / typical grief” (with associated characteristics) as well as “complicated grief” (with associated characteristics). Characteristics of grief, whether normal / typical or complicated vary according to developmental level and each unique individual. When exploring children’s reactions to grief, one should consider the circumstances surrounding the death of the significant caregiver. Ambiguous loss adds an addition layer for the child to process. If the significant caregiver was psychologically present by physically absent prior to the death, such as military deployment or incarceration, the child may process the death and grief differently.*
than the child whose significant caregiver was physically present but psychologically absent, in cases of addiction and chronic mental illness.

2. How do those intersections help to explain specific aspects of the research topics?
   a. By exploring the topics described above, you are able to introduce the idea that following the death of a significant caregiver, complicated grief may be amplified if the death involved ambiguous loss.

3. What gaps exist that could be explained by linking bodies of research?
   a. Grief is, by its very nature, “complicated” and unique to every individual and every situation. Introducing the idea that ambiguous loss is an important variable to better understand and support children’s grief. Ambiguous loss provides a new context from which to view complicated grief for children.
   b. Identify key concepts and contexts – and their relationships that are worthy of study. In essence, if you were going to conduct an empirical study of this topic(s), WHAT would you study?

4. CREATION OF A NEW CONCEPTUAL MODEL:
   After thoroughly exploring your topic(s) – 3b above -- you are to create a new conceptual framework in a graphic format.