

Critiquing the Literature
(ANTH 410/510)

A. Read the study carefully and identify its parts, thesis and intent

1. What is the research problem addressed?
i.e., purpose, hypothesis, and/or descriptive intent and aim
2. From what theory or body of existing research was the problem derived?

B. Depending on the purpose and type of research (quantitative and/or qualitative – positivist or constructionist):

1. What seems to be the underlying paradigm upon which the study is based – positivist or constructionist?
2. What were the specific methods used to gather data? Are they identified and discussed?
i.e., survey, questionnaire, experimental, participant-observer, unstructured interviewing, key informant

Positivist – and quantitative:

3. Locate the operational definitions – key indicators of study, e.g., “tribal identity,” that are measurable via interview responses and observations, for example
4. Are any causal claims made?

Identify the independent and dependent variables, and the type of variables.
i.e., nominal, ordinal, interval

5. Identify the sample that was chosen for the study.

What kind of sampling techniques was used?

Make sure you can recognize the procedures used by the researcher(s) to select the sample and the measure of variable.

6. What statistics were used to describe and analyze the data?

Did you understand the statistics used?

Was the null hypothesis explicitly stated?

7. Identify the findings.

8. Identify the conclusions.

Do the conclusions support the purposes and intent of the study and why?

9. What issues would you raise about the validity of the study?

i.e., internal, external, content-face, criterion-related, and construct

Constructionist and qualitative:

10. Was sampling done to “saturation” point?

11. Does the text meet the evaluation of “trustworthiness” and “authenticity”?

For both:

11. Are there ethical issues discussed or should have been addressed in the study?

12. What would you have done differently?

Any problems and why?