



CRITICAL READING

CASSILY CHARLES FOR DHCRC

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OUTLINE

- Introductions
- Reasons for critical reading & thinking
- What defines critical reading?
- Discipline-specific critique
- A step-by-step model
- Putting it into practice



INTRODUCTIONS

- Cassily Charles
- Please introduce yourself using the text chat
 - Your geographical location, topic of research / professional interest, plus one ‘bonus’ human fact about you...



WHAT ARE *YOUR* REASONS FOR READING CRITICALLY?

- Evaluating the usefulness of individual sources
- Building a thorough understanding of the current state of knowledge
- Identifying gaps in the research literature
- Identifying debates and alternative approaches to your topic area
- Selecting models/methods/approaches/tools for application to industry/profession
- Building & demonstrating your independence as a researcher
- Other reasons...



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE 'CRITICAL' IN READING AND THINKING?

- Asking questions
- Analysing
- Evaluating
- Looking for problems or opportunities
- Comparing alternative perspectives
- Weighing the evidence
- Joining a debate
- Looking for better ways to do things
- Going beyond the surface/obvious/face value

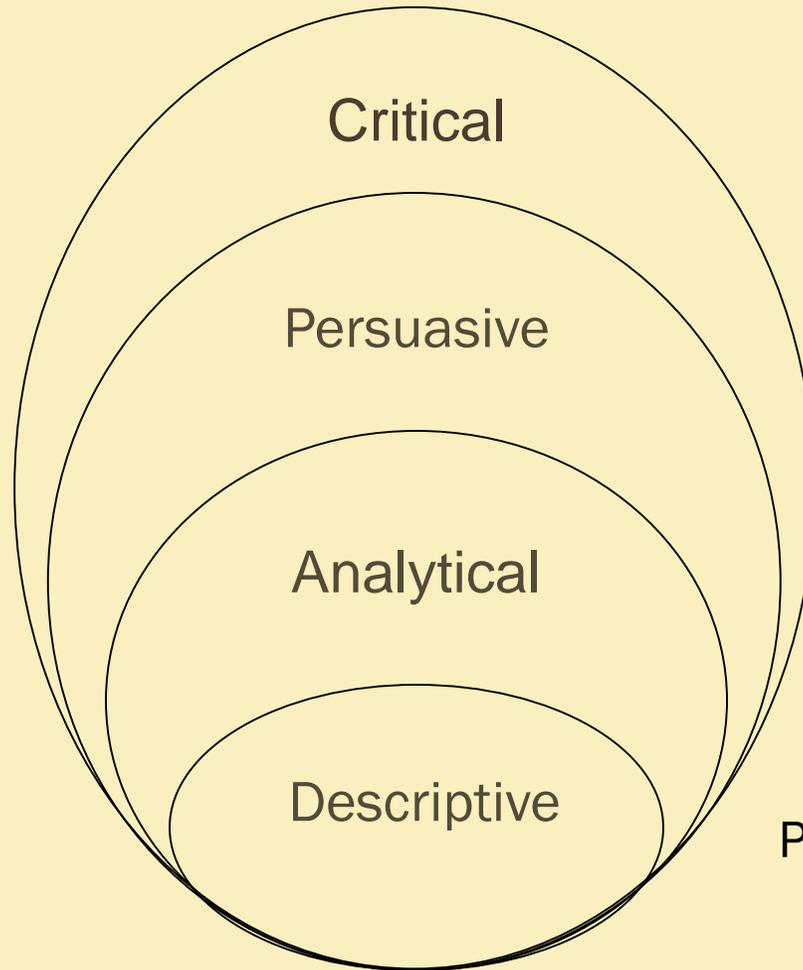


WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE 'CRITICAL' IN READING AND THINKING?

The essential parts of thinking and reading critically

1. Understanding what is already there
2. Analysing alternatives (current or possible)
3. Finding evidence or reasoning for/against the alternatives
4. Forming a view which is supported by evidence / reasoning

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CRITICAL?



Evaluating others' work, entering a debate, considering alternatives

> at least 2 positions, including yours

Taking a position, making a claim, developing an argument

Re-organising information: applying models to data, comparing, finding patterns & categories

Providing information & facts



CRITIQUE IS DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC

- Critical reading requires ...
 1. Target (i.e. specific aspect that you critique)
 2. Criteria (i.e. values/measures you apply)



CRITIQUE IS DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC

- For example...
- Target could be the data collected – e.g. interviews with patients
- Criterion could be reliability – e.g. multiple interviewers? same approach?
- or representativeness – e.g. which patients? how many?

CRITIQUE IS DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC

- Some common **targets** of academic critique:
 - The type of data used
 - The methods used to analyse data/information
 - Theoretical models
 - Researchers' arguments/interpretations

1 minute task: Identify 3 targets relevant for your field or research topic



CRITIQUE IS DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC

- Some common **criteria** of academic critique:

- Accuracy
- Statistical significance
- Real-world applicability
- Cost effectiveness
- Social justice

1 minute task: Identify 3 criteria relevant for your research topic or field



Step-by-step model for critical reading



A STEP-BY-STEP MODEL FOR READING CRITICALLY

1. Identify key choices which have been made in the article.
2. Look for alternatives to those choices (real or potential).
3. Develop a point of view on those alternatives.
4. Gather the evidence for your point of view.

Note: These steps are not always in this order.



A STEP-BY-STEP MODEL FOR READING CRITICALLY

1. Identify key choices which have been made in the article.
 - Read Text A – Abstract for Romero-Hidalgo et al. (2009)
 - What are some of the choices which have been made by the authors?

Share one or two of your observations



Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the attitudes toward cancer predictive genetic testing in a group of non-high-risk women and men and to analyze the factors that may influence their intention to use these tests. We studied a sample of 859 outpatient women and men attending the four tertiary care hospitals of the ISSSTE (Institute of Social Security and Services for Government Employees) in Mexico City. Subjects between the ages of 30 and 74 years with no present or past history of cancer were asked to answer a questionnaire through face-to-face interview. Two different questionnaires were designed, one for women and the other for men, regarding genetic testing of a high-risk gene for breast and prostate cancer, respectively. Descriptive statistics and univariate comparisons were carried out using chi-square test, Wilcoxon's signed rank test, and Friedman test. Multivariate analysis was performed using logistic regression technique. Results showed that the majority of women attended clinics for regular check-ups and for performing screening tests to detect breast cancer, and men did not follow this pattern regarding prostate cancer. Women were more motivated to get genetic testing, more aware about its benefits, and more concerned about having cancer than men.

Romero-Hidalgo, S., Urraca, N., Parra, D., Villa, A., Lisker, R. & Carnevale, A. (2009). Attitudes and anticipated reactions to genetic testing for cancer among patients in Mexico City. *Genetic Testing and Molecular Biomarkers*, 13(4): 477-483.

A STEP-BY-STEP MODEL FOR READING CRITICALLY

2. Look for alternatives to those choices.

- **Select one or two choices in Text A**
- In what ways could they have been different?
- What could the author/researcher have done instead?
- Do you know of research where someone has taken a different approach?

Share one or two of your observations

A STEP-BY-STEP MODEL FOR READING CRITICALLY

3. Develop a point of view on those alternatives.
 - **Select one choice in Text A *and its alternatives***
 - What are the strengths and weaknesses of the alternatives?
 - What makes the author's choice better or worse than someone else's approach?
 - What do you consider to be the best option?

Share some of your observations

A STEP-BY-STEP MODEL FOR READING CRITICALLY

4. Gather the evidence to support your point of view on the alternatives.
 - **Consider your point of view about the alternatives...**
 - What are the strengths and weaknesses of the alternatives? Which is best?
 - What makes the author's choice better or worse than other approaches?
 - What kind of evidence would persuade peers in your discipline to agree with you?
 - Where would you find the evidence? What if you couldn't find strong evidence?

Share some of your observations



Putting it into practice

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

- 5 minutes
 - Read Text B – Abstract for article by Barker (2008)
 - Identify some key choices which have been made.
 - Choose 1 or 2 of these choices and find some alternatives.
 - Develop a point of view about the alternatives.
 - What kind of evidence supports/would support your view?

Share some of your observations



Abstract

Weilmoringle or Wayilmarrangkalku means ‘old man saltbush’ in the Muruwari language. It is a remote Aboriginal community and pastoral property two-hours northeast of Bourke and it is where I grew up. This article explores my ambivalent feelings, triggered by returning there after many years away. In collecting oral histories for community/family research, I am faced with many social and ethical issues, as well as personal ones. I am learning much about the impediments to the application of oral history methods and approaches, which arise from the multiple and interchangeable roles and responsibilities of the researcher as a community person, family member, and researcher. Through 'hangin' out' at Weilmoringle, trying to learn about other people's connections and disconnections to place, I have begun my own journey of rediscovery and reconnection.

Barker, L. (2008). “Hangin’ out and Yarnin’”: Reflecting on the experience of collecting oral histories. *History Australia*, 5(1).

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE: AN ARTICLE FROM YOUR OWN FIELD

- 7 minutes

- Read the Abstract only
- Identify some key choices. *What are the key choices for your own purposes?*
- Choose 1 or 2 of these key choices to find some alternatives.
- Develop a preliminary point of view about the alternatives.
- What kind of evidence supports/would support your view?

Share your observations about this model in practice.



DISCUSSION & FURTHER QUESTIONS

- Challenges that you've experienced in reading critically
- Other strategies that you've used for your critical reading
- Any other comments or questions...

RESOURCES TO FOLLOW UP

- Understanding Health Research – British tool
 - <https://www.understandinghealthresearch.org/>
- Critical reading guides, e.g.
 - <http://unimeib.libguides.com/c.php?g=402756&p=2740808>
 - <https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/writing/writing-resources/critical-reading>
- Publications by Tim Moore about ways of conceptualising critical thinking
- Discipline-specific guides & research

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Thank you