

How to Analyze the Logic of an Article/Chapter/Book/etc.¹
Professor Jennie Burnet, Global Studies Institute, Georgia State University

One important skill for understanding an essay, article or chapter is through the analysis of the parts of the author's reasoning. Once you have done this, you can then evaluate the author's reasoning using intellectual standards. Here is a template to follow.

1. What is the main purpose of this article?
(State as accurately as possible the author's purpose for writing the article or for doing the research.)
2. What is (are) the important question(s) the author of this article is trying to address?
(Figure out the key question(s) in the mind of the author when s/he wrote the article.)
3. What kind of study was done? (Case study, survey, ethnography, documentary research, etc.)
 - 3a. What or who were the subjects/informants/interviewees?
 - 3b. How many subjects or interviews were there? If the author does not state tell us, then state that the author does not tell us.
 - 3c. If the method was ethnography, how long was the fieldwork, where was the fieldwork done, how did the ethnographer do his or her ethnography? If the author does not state tell us, then state that the author does not tell us.
4. What facts, data, evidence or experiences does the author use to answer the important question of the article?
5. What are the main assumptions underlying the author's thinking?
(Figure out what the author is taking for granted.)
6. What are the main inferences or conclusions in this article?
(Identify the key conclusions the author comes to and presents in the article.)
7. Do the author's conclusions follow from the data or evidence presented? Why or why not?
- 8a. What are the implications if we take the author's line of reasoning seriously?
(What consequences are likely to follow if people take the author's line of reasoning seriously?)
- 8b. What are the implications if we fail to take the author's line of reasoning seriously?
(What consequences are likely to follow if people ignore the author's reasoning?)

¹ Adapted from "The Thinker's Guide to Analytic Thinking" by Dr. Linda Elder and Dr. Richard Elder, 2007, p. 12.