Critical analysis of a text (introductory version)

(This version asks all ten Critical Analysis Questions (CAQs), but it does not include all of the sub-questions and prompts in the full Critical Analysis template that provide further checks to help answer the CAQs. So for an in-depth critical engagement with a text, you are recommended to use the full Critical Analysis template.)

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| **Short title of text** |

**1. What review question am I asking of this text?**

(e.g. How does the Critical Analysis of this text fit into my investigation with a wider focus?)

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**2. How and why are the authors making this contribution?**

a. Which intellectual project(s) are the authors undertaking? (e.g. Knowledge-for-understanding, knowledge-for-critical evaluation, knowledge-for-action, training?)

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b. What is the authors’ implicit or explicit rationale for their study? (e.g. To understand, evaluate, inform policy-makers and practitioners, improve practice?)

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c. What value stance is adopted towards the practice or policy investigated? (e.g. Relatively impartial, critical, positive?)

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**3. What is being claimed that is relevant to answering my review question?**

a. What are the main kinds of knowledge claim that the authors are making? (e.g. Theoretical knowledge, research knowledge, practice knowledge?)

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b. Excluding aspects that are obviously not relevant to the review question, what is the content of each of the main claims to knowledge and of the overall argument? (e.g. What, in a sentence, is being argued? What are the three to five most significant claims that encompass much of the relevant detail? Are there key prescriptions for improving policy or practice?)

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**4. How certain and generalized are the authors’ claims?**

a. With what degree of certainty do the authors make their claims? (e.g. Do they indicate tentativeness? Qualify their claims by acknowledging limitations of their evidence? Acknowledge others’ counter-evidence? Acknowledge that the situation may have changed since data collection?)

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b. How generalized are the authors’ claims – to what range of phenomena are they claimed to apply? (e.g. The specific context from which the claims were derived? Other similar contexts? A national system? A culture? Universal? Is the degree of generalization implicit? Unspecified?)

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**5. How adequate is the backing for these claims?**

a. If claims are at least partly based on the authors’ own research, how robust is the evidence? (e.g. Are there methodological limitations or flaws in the methods employed? Do the methods include the cross-checking or ‘triangulation’ of accounts? What is the sample size and is it large enough to support the claims being made? Is there a summary of all data that is reported?)

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b. Are sources of backing for claims consistent with the degree of certainty and the degree of generalization? (e.g. Is there sufficient evidence to support claims made with a high degree of certainty? Is there sufficient evidence from other contexts to support claims entailing extensive generalization?)

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**6. How effectively does any theoretical orientation link with these claims?**

a. What assumptions does any explicit or implicit theoretical orientation make that may affect the authors’ claims? (e.g. Does a particular perspective focus attention on some aspects and under-emphasize others?)

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b. What are the key concepts underpinning any explicit or implicit theoretical orientation? (e.g. Are they listed? Are they defined? Are concepts mutually compatible? Is the use of concepts congruent with others’ use of the same concepts?)

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**7. To what extent does any value stance adopted affect claims?**

a. How might any explicit or implicit value stance adopted by the authors be affecting their claims? (e.g. Have they pre-judged the phenomena discussed? Are they biased? Is it legitimate for the authors to adopt their particular value stance? Have they over-emphasized some aspects of the phenomenon while under-emphasizing others?)

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**8. To what extent are claims supported or challenged by others’ work?**

a. If the authors use evidence from others’ work to support their claims, how robust is it? (e.g. As for 5(a).)

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c. Is there any evidence from others’ work (including work you know, but the authors do not mention) that challenges the authors’ claims and, if so, how robust is it? (e.g. Is there relevant research or practice literature?)

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**9. To what extent are claims consistent with my experience?**

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**10. What is my summary evaluation of the text in relation to my review question?**

a. How convincing are the authors’ claims and why?

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