



SPPA 6750 Clinical Research Methodology

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PROJECT 3

One of the major objectives of this course is to make you a better consumer of research, that is, to improve your ability to judge both the quality and significance of the research that you read. As a consumer you are interested in both the good and the bad. An informed consumer is one who detects the flaws in a product but who also notices and praises the good features.

For this project you should select a data-based research article on a topic that interests you. The article may be drawn from any refereed journal. **Please submit to me a photocopy of the article you want to review. I must approve the article before you proceed to review it.** If I do not approve the article, you must find and submit another one.

Read and prepare a critical review of your chosen article. You should attempt to identify all aspects of the described study that could reduce its reliability or validity. In general, you should try to apply as many as possible of the terms and concepts discussed in this class that you find relevant to your paper. You might, for example, raise questions about the recruitment of participants, the matching of individuals in participant groups, the calibration of equipment, the method used for observational measurements, and so on.

You should not expect to find numerous or major flaws in the articles you review. After all, the articles underwent a review process prior to publication, which should have caught and corrected any glaring problems. Rather than searching for "errors" in your article, I encourage you to search for "choices" that the author(s) made. For example, they may have chosen to study a problem within a very limited population (e.g., mainstream children between 2-5 years). If the study would have been better if it was done with a broader population, point this out. Also consider, however, why the authors may have limited the scope of their study (cost, availability of participants, etc.) and discuss this in your review.

Although it's called a critical review, not everything you comment on needs to be critical. If there is a feature of the study or its presentation in the article that you think is particularly clever or well done, talk about this. Also point out any parts of the manuscript that are particularly good or poor examples of effective communication.

Chapter 12 in your Meline textbook is devoted to evaluation of research. Many of the points raised in that chapter can serve as a guide to what you should discuss in your review. Exhibit 12.2, in particular, should prove useful.

Written report

Prepare a 5-6 page double-spaced typed review. Do not exceed this length. Organize your discussion under four headings: Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion/Conclusion. The paper is due at our last regular class meeting on **Monday, April 28.**