



5.1 Introduction

Introduction

In the preceding section, we explored the steps necessary in carrying out effective analysis. This involved approaching the object of our analysis without pre-judging what we think we might find, and then looking for patterns of similarity, difference, contradiction and so on.

In beginning our analysis, we ended up with a clear description and an accurate summary of the data, a preliminary interpretation - but not a comprehensive evaluation.

In order to commence the process of comprehensive evaluation, we move to the next stage in the critical thinking process, where we engage the 'app' known as **critique**.

Earlier, **critique** was described as

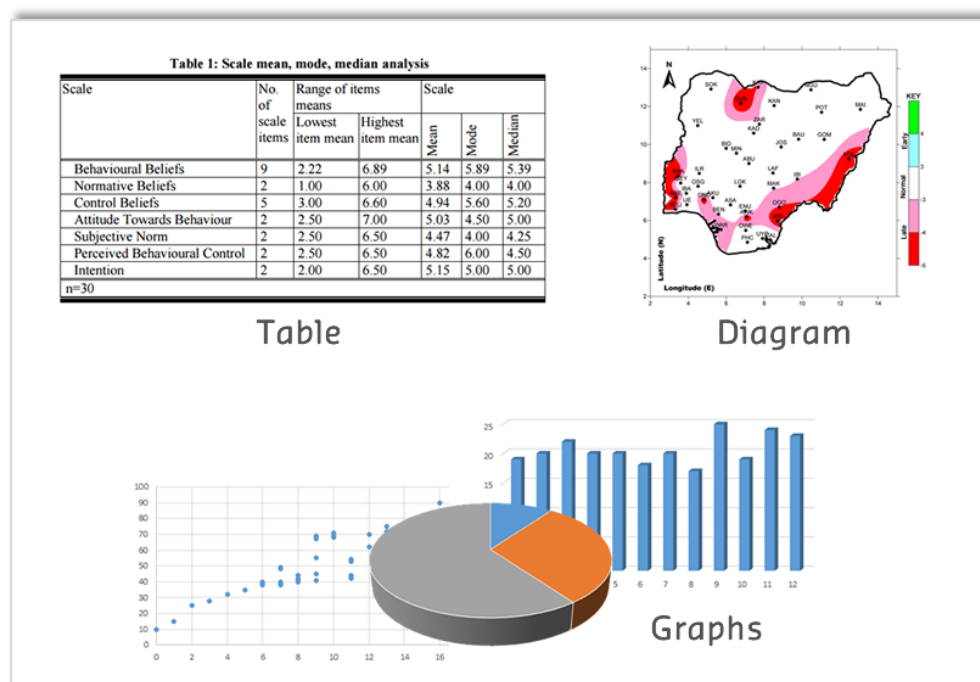
“the systematic analysis and evaluation of any object – often a piece of writing”.

This definition suggests that analysis and critique go together, and that analysis (in its preliminary form), usually *precedes* critique.

Primary Data

As noted in the previous section, the data which is subject to analysis can 'stand-alone' - as in the results of a laboratory experiment, survey, or direct observation. Such data is known as 'primary data' and can be clearly presented in tables, graphs and diagrams.

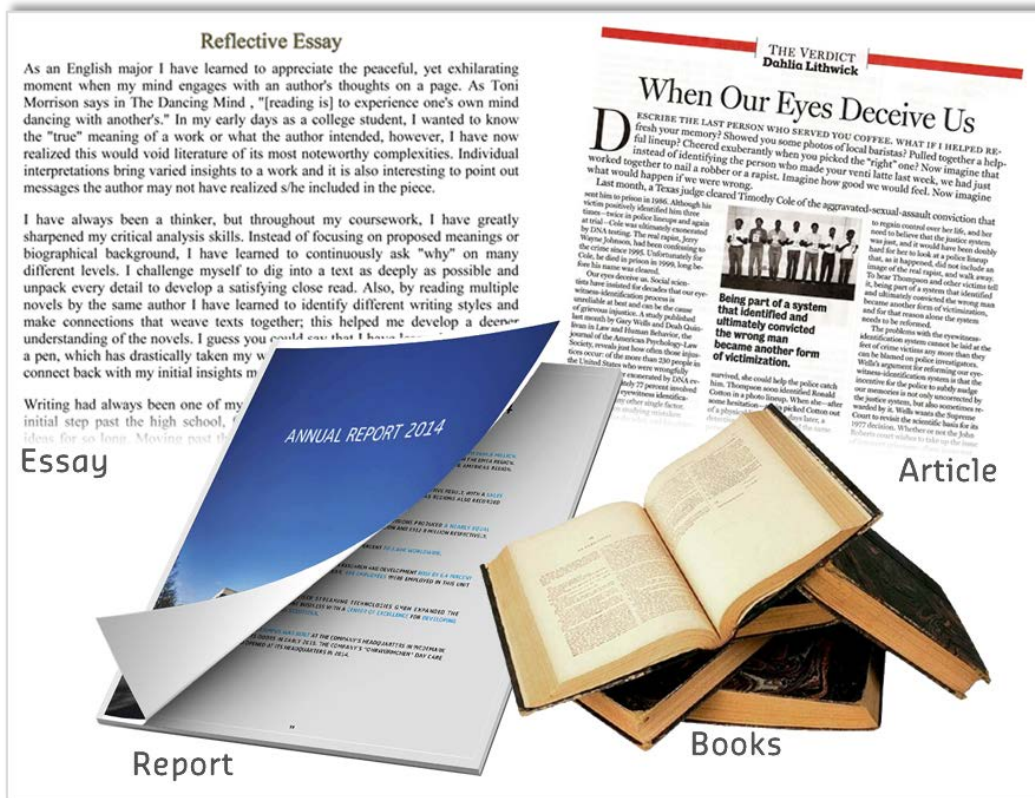
'Primary' Data is often presented in Table, Graphs and Diagrams





On the other hand, the collected data may be ‘embedded’ in a piece of writing which itself evaluates data, make claims, reaches conclusions, and compares these with the claims and conclusions of other writers. This kind of writing is sometimes referred to as ‘secondary’ data.

‘Secondary’ Data is often presented in Essays, Articles, Reports and Books



We can never perform a critique of raw data.

Generally speaking, we critique data which has been transformed into claims and presented in the form of an argument.

Sometimes, it may not be easy to identify an argument in a descriptive or expository piece of writing which aims to inform, educate or entertain (rather than persuade) the reader.

Nevertheless, even if the argument appears to be obscured by the style of writing, we can often uncover the rudimentary structure of an argument by identifying ‘hidden’ assumptions which inform the writer’s approach to a topic.

The main task of this section and the next is to look more closely at how we can critique some of the typical features of academic writing presented in formal and informal arguments.

In this section, we want to focus on the critique of formal argument. However, before doing so, we need to acknowledge that this process also includes an evaluation of the supporting foundations of an argument – namely, methodology and methods. Such foundations are briefly outlined below. You can get further guidance on how to critique these aspects of an argument from your tutor, lecturer or supervisor.