**![C:\Users\amorosoj\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\2283Q910\MC900088948[1].wmf]()EMPIRICAL SCHOLARLY ARTICLES**

Empirical articles are written by researchers to convey information about their study or experiment. The information in the article will be about outcomes of the experiment and the authors will provide data to support how their findings might impact their subject area’s practices.

One way to tell if you have an empirical article is to see if it has the sections listed in this handout as well as data from the experiment.

If you have an empirical article, reading each section of it with a focus will help you understand it. The following is an explanation of what is typically in each section and what key things you should be looking for.

* **Abstract –** this is a summary of the article. It will briefly explain what the experiment was and the findings. Reading this is important because it will help you understand what the main points of the article are and why the study is important. Write the main idea and major findings in the margins as a reminder of what the article is about. Keep these ideas in mind as they should help you understand the article.
* **Introduction –** this is where the authors will say why they completed the experiment. Look for phrases like “The purpose of this study is ….” These phrases will tell you what the researchers hoped to find by completing their study. Once you find the purpose of the study, highlight it and/or make a note about it in the margin.
* **Literature Review –** this is an examination of the other research that has been completed on similar topics. The authors will discuss how previous research has led to their research. They might also point out how their study is responding to questions that previous studies left unanswered. This will help give you background knowledge about the other research that is important to the study.
	+ This section is also helpful if you need to find more articles because the articles mentioned will be on a topic similar to what you are currently reading about.
* **Participants –** this will describe the population or who was studied in the experiment. Things to consider about the population include how large it is, if it accurately represents the people the study will affect (for example: if the purpose of the study is to find out how something affects children, studying adults doesn’t make sense), where (geographically) the participants are from, etc. Highlight and/or make margin notes about details that stand out to you.
	+ You should think about how the characteristics of the participants might have had an effect on the outcomes of the study.
* **Method –** this section will be about how the study was completed; it is a description of the experiment. The authors will discuss what they did (an intervention) to their experimental group and how it was done. This information is important because it describes processes one would have to complete in order to reproduce this study with the same results.
	+ You should be considering if what they did was the best choice. Questions you might consider are:
		- How is the intervention different from what is currently being done in response to the issue?
		- Is the intervention appropriate for the population?
		- Do the tests measure the outcomes that were of concern to the researchers?
		- Are the tests appropriate for the population?
* **Results –** this will explain the data from the experiment. It might not make much sense because it contains specialized, statistical language. Read this section and try to make sense of it; highlight or underline information that seems important AND that you understand. Don’t stress out if all of it doesn’t make sense. The discussion section is included to explain what the results from the experiment mean.
* **Discussion –** here the authors will explain the information from the results section in terms of why it is important. They will explain what findings are significant and why. This section is there to help you understand the results. While reading, if you come across findings that are really important to your purpose as a reader, highlight or underline them and mark the importance in the margin. You might also want to write down how you could use specific findings to inform your practices or thinking.
* **Limitations** – this may have its own section or it might be included in another section; regardless, it is important. It tells you the ways that the authors believe their study is weak. Things that the authors might point out are small sample sizes, populations that are not diverse, how their results only apply to a small group of people, etc. What the authors discuss as limitations is usually clearly stated.
	+ As you read, think about the study and aspects you think limit it. Make note of these limitations in the margin of this section because they could be ideas you use when writing about the article.
* **Implications –** The authors will explain what their findings mean for their field: should practices change or should more research follow? This section explains what should happen now that their study is over. Think about whether you agree with their suggestions or not. Make notes in the margins about this and note your own suggestions.

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The following resources were consulted in the design of this handout:

Bruns, Cynthia. "Empirical Research." *Paulina June & George Pollak Library*. California State University, Fullerton, 25 Jan. 2010. Web. 24 Sept. 2012. <http://users.library.fullerton.edu/cbruns/empirical_research.htm>

"What Is an Empirical Article." *University of La Verne Library*. University of La Verne, 2009. Web. 24 Sept. 2012.

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