The following appeared in an article written by Dr. Karp, an anthropologist.

"Twenty years ago, Dr. Field, a noted anthropologist, visited the island of Tertia and concluded from his observations that children in Tertia were reared by an entire village rather than by their own biological parents. However, my recent interviews with children living in the group of islands that includes Tertia show that these children spend much more time talking about their biological parents than about other adults in the village. This research of mine proves that Dr. Field's conclusion about Tertian village culture is invalid and thus that the observation-centered approach to studying cultures is invalid as well. The interview-centered method that my team of graduate students is currently using in Tertia will establish a much more accurate understanding of child-rearing traditions there and in other island cultures."

Write a response in which you discuss what specific evidence is needed to evaluate the argument and explain how the evidence would weaken or strengthen the argument.

The argument reaches the conclusion that Dr. Karp’s interview-centred approach provides a better understanding of child-rearing traditions in island cultures, like that of Tertia. This conclusion is based on the premise that the recent interviews yielded info in favour of a different outcome, as compared to that of Dr. Field. However, Dr. Karp fails to provide adequate evidence in backing up his claims and solidifying his logic. There are three important pieces of evidence that are necessary for a satisfactory evaluation of the argument.

First, the argument states that interviewed children talked more about their biological parents than about other adults. It fails to establish whether the fact that the children talked about their parents really meant they were raised by them. This correlation has nowhere been explained by Karp, and would need significant support by means of more evidence, other studies, etc. It is possible that the children talked about their parents because they do not spend much time with them, or because they just wanted their parent beside them when interviewing with the anthropology research team. It may also be possible that the interview misinterpreted the children, or that the mere process of interviewing influenced the children’s answers, with leading questions. In these cases, the argument breaks down completely, and the interview-centred method would not be ‘more accurate.’ The lack of evidence in this regard is a gaping hole in Karp’s logic, which persists in the current form of the argument.

Second, the argument fails to prove that the interviewees were representative of all the children of Tertia. Perhaps, a few families on the island prefer to raise their children by themselves, while other parents allow the whole village to rear theirs. If such children formed a disproportionate portion of the interviewee group, then it would skew the observations and results obtained. In fact, Karp fails to establish the exact reason for his disagreement with Field’s study, and it is possible that Field took the observational approach so as to get a bigger-picture view of the island, and to not interfere with the ordinary functioning of Tertian society. By not providing exact numbers or data for the so-called ‘accuracy,’ Karp’s argument fails to make a persuasive case for the validity of its methods.

Finally, the argument fails to consider that different island cultures may not be adequately studied using a single method, and does not provide evidence to disprove this. It may be the case that some island cultures are easier for anthropologists to interact with, and are easier to evaluate and observe. It may also be the case that children of some areas are more introverted and do not wish to be interviewed by people from the outside. In this scenario, Field’s method may prove to be more effective – Karp must provide specific evidence to disprove this, to make a valid argument in favour of altering anthropological practices in investigating island cultures.

In conclusion, the argument, as it stands now, is considerably flawed. A failure to present adequate evidence is the reason for multiple logic ‘holes’ in Dr. Karp’s argument, as detailed above. He should pay more attention to these parts of his argument, and patch them up using substantiative evidence. Such improvements in the argument could even result in Karp finding ways to better his approach, and further make the conclusions of anthropologists more accurate.