

## Clip 12: Writing up a social research

I'm going to talk about why it's important to consider the ways in which social research is written up. Now the first thing to note, about social researching writing is that writing is the primary means of communication for the research community.

There are a number of reasons for this, the first one is that it helps keep the focus around the evidence and the argument and keeps debates impersonal. This allows our readers to rigorously assess that evidence and those arguments across the time and place. So the writing up of report helps keep the content stable and helps other people read it and evaluate the research field. In order to uphold these ideals social research has developed its own distinctive style and form of writing and familiarity with both structure of research reports and how they are written is vital in being able to reproduce the conventions of social research so that you can communicate with the field better.

Now generally speaking our research report has a number of different sections. The first one of these is the title and generally the title will need to be informative about the contents of the report. It may in some circumstances be catchy and designed to draw the reader into the report but it needs to be informative above everything else. Now the second section that you frequently find in dissertations for example is an acknowledgment section. And that is just a way of saying thank you to the people who have helped you along the way. Thirdly, you'll see a list of contents and that's purely to help you navigate your way around what can sometimes be a lengthy document.

Then starts the substantive bit of the report. First, you will come across an abstract. The abstract is an overview of the whole report in about five or six sentences. It covers what this topic is about why it's interesting what the study aims to do, what it actually did in order to answer those aims and the findings. It might also consider the significance of the research but it will do so very briefly. The introduction to the research report will introduce the reader to the topic but also the remains of the dissertation.

Then you'll see the literature review and the literature review typically does four things. It's quite a lengthy exposition of why this topic is interesting what other people have said about it, crucially what they haven't said about it which leads to what you will do in order to fill that knowledge gap. Then you will see a methodology section.

The methodology section is basically how you went about answering those aims and it will often detail what you did in order to answer the research questions. Then you'll see a results or a findings section and this is basically the answer to the aims you have specified at the end of the literature review. And again this is often a fairly lengthy presentation of the results of your study. Sometimes you will see a discussion section. In other cases you'll see the discussion or the explanation of those results embedded within the findings section.

Finally, you will see a conclusion and a conclusion tends to do three things. One, it underlines the key findings. Two it will articulate the limitations of the study and possibly point to where further research might be necessary and finally, it will outline the significance.

Lastly, you will see a reference section and the reference section provides a list of all the other items of interest that you've referenced throughout your report.

Now producing all of this takes time, indeed writing up is a difficult skill. So a consideration of good and bad practice can help you do it better. One of the key things about writing is persuasion because persuasion is a vital element to writing research. Building and evidencing a convincing argument will ensure that your research is credible and interesting.

The last thing I would say is that you can't write everything and you don't have to, every research project will have all sorts of different avenues that it could have gone down, it can go down every one. So what you have to do is select what's most interesting according to your research rationale and your research questions, that you choose to focus on. Therefore, knowing what you need to write up will help organise your time and effort. And indeed, planning is crucial to this process, never begin a report with a blank screen. Always plan, plan, plan because that will make the process of writing much easier but it will also make it flow a lot better.