

# The Story of a Research Study

## Introduction

I looked at the situation and found that I had a question to ask about it. I wanted to investigate something in particular.

## Review of Literature

So I read everything I could find on the topic; what was already known and said, and what had previously been found. I established exactly where my investigation would fit into the big picture, and began to know at this stage how my study would be different from anything done previously.

## Methodology

I decided on the number and description of my subjects and, with my research question clearly in mind, designed my own investigation process, using certain known research methods (and perhaps some that are not so common). I began with the broad decision about which research paradigm I would work within (eg, qualitative/quantitative: critical/interpretive/ empiricist). Then I devised my research instrument to get the best out of what I was investigating. I knew I would have to analyse the raw data, so I made sure that the instrument and my proposed method(s) of analysis were compatible right from the start. Then I carried out the research study and recorded all the data in a methodical way according to my intended methods of analysis. As part of the analysis, I reduced the data (by means of my preferred form of classification) to manageable thematic representation (tables, graphs, categories, etc). It was then that I began to realise what I had found.

## Results/Findings

What had I found? What did the tables/graphs/categories etc have to say that could be pinned down? It was easy enough for me to see the salient points at a glance from these records, but, in writing my report I also spelled out what I had found truly significant, to make sure it was not missed by my readers. For each display of results, I wrote a corresponding summary of important observations relating together only elements within my own set of results, and comparing only like with like. I was

careful not to intrude my own interpretations or voice my excitement just yet. I wanted to state the facts - just the facts. I dealt correctly with all inferential statistical procedures, applying tests of significance where appropriate to ensure both reliability and validity. I knew that I wanted my results to be as watertight and squeaky clean as possible; they would carry a great deal more credibility, strength and thereby academic 'clout' if I took no shortcuts and remained both rigorous and scholarly.

### **Discussion**

Now I was free to let the world know of the significance of my findings. What did I find in the results that was so significant for answering my original research question? Why was I so sure that I had some answers? What about the unexplained or unexpected findings? Had I interpreted the results correctly? Could there have been any other factors involved? Were my findings supported or contested by the results of other similar studies? Where did that leave mine in terms of contribution to my field? Can I actually generalise from my findings in a breakthrough of some kind, or do I simply see myself as reinforcing existing knowledge? And so what, after all? There were some obvious limitations to my study, which, even so, I'll defend to the hilt; But I won't become over-apologetic about the things left undone, or the abandoned analyses, the fascinating byways sadly left behind. I have my memories....

### **Conclusion**

We'll take a long hard look at this study, from a broad perspective. How does it rate? How did I end up answering the question I first thought of? It needs to be said in a few clear, succinct sentences. That way I'll know that I know what I'm talking about. I'll wrap up with whatever generalisations I can make, and whatever implications have arisen in my own mind as a result of doing this thing at all. The more you find out, the more questions arise. How I wonder what you are....how I speculate. OK, , so where do we all go from here?

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