

Writing Up your Research

- MA Cultural Astronomy and Astrology
Researching Contemporary Cosmologies
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Be familiar with Chapter 11

Hennink, Monique M., Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey,
Qualitative research methods (Los Angeles ; London: SAGE,
2011).

Not all of this chapter will apply to your research but it
covers the key principles that you need to be aware of in
writing up your research.

When field work becomes research

- Investigation without publication and dissemination is not research.
- Investigation which only reports is not research.

To count as research, a project has to seek to make a contribution to knowledge (and perhaps practice and/or policy) in the field. To make this contribution it has to be published – written up.



In order to understand your work any person will need the answer to four key questions .

These questions are :

What have you done?

Why have you done it?

How have you done it?

What did you find and why does it matter?

Until these questions are answered
the reader will struggle to make sense
of your research.



These questions need to be addressed at the beginning of your paper

WHAT

Introduction – the Aim of the paper

State your research question – take this from your E1 form

WHY

Academic Rationale

The brief evidence for your academic rationale

– the Literature Review (take this from your E1 form plus you will have more literature to add)

HOW

Methodology

Include target group and ethical issues – Use your E1 form as a start.

What you found

A brief pointer to what your research revealed.

The structure of your final research paper needs to have these headings

- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Methodology

- Findings/Discussion
- Conclusion

Tip: Open a Word document and insert these headings.

Then go to your Research Proposal E1 form, and cut and paste the different sections under the correct headings.

You will be amazed to find that a large part of your paper is now in place with the gaps being Findings and Discussion and your conclusion.

The Introduction - Example

The numbers of westerners interested in reincarnation greatly exceed the numbers of westerners attached to Eastern or New Age religions. The doctrine of reincarnation belongs to neither of western society's two major belief systems, namely Christianity and secularism, which makes it particularly interesting to sociologists: it is a deviant belief which people "ought" not to hold. **This article explores what reincarnation means to some of those who believe in it, why they find it attractive, and how it relates to other aspects of their life – not least the religious organizations to which they belong but which do not teach it. In particular, the article asks whether the twentieth century privatization of belief makes it easier to hold beliefs not taught by one's church.** After a brief review of the survey data on belief in reincarnation, we summarise the findings of an intensive interview study of a small number of English people who entertain the idea. **We conclude that reincarnation is indeed for them a private belief, detached from religious and other affiliations, from the New Age, from popular literature on the subject, and from everyday life.**

Walter, Tony, and Helen Waterhouse, 'A Very Private Belief: Reincarnation in Contemporary England', *Sociology of Religion*, 60 (1999), 187-197.

Blue: Academic rational. The Why

Red: The aim of the paper, the research question. The What.

Black: a short reference to the methodology and the trajectory of the paper. The How.

Green: A hint of the conclusion. What we Found.

The Literature Review

Your literature review is where you cite and discuss the previous work in your subject field or in a similar field.

In order for your work to be able to add to the body of academic understanding it must be linked to other papers – CITATIONS REQUIRED!

Otherwise it has no context and does not contribute to the overall 'picture' of the subject which leads to a serious loss of marks.



Methodology Section

The all important **HOW** you are doing the work

- Introduce your methods - interviews, questionnaires – and use citations to show why these methods are suitable.
(Take this from your E1 form)
- Introduce your target group – number, location, orientation.
- Discuss your biases, reflexivity, and insider/outsider issues.



Remember the Brink paper on school girls and astrology. He tried to measure belief by using just a simple tick box questionnaire.

He appears to have used the **WRONG** tool, in the **WRONG** way and thus made incorrect assumptions about his data.

You need to prove that you are using the RIGHT tool – thus justify your methodology via citations. Then you can make claims about your findings.

Field Work/Discussion

What did you find and why does it matter?

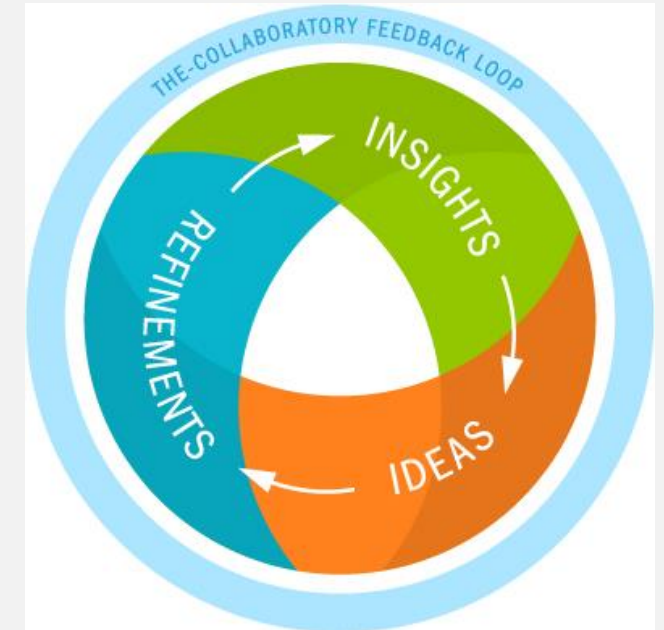
Your discussion of your findings in the field and the relating of your findings back to your academic argument.

Your research findings are meaningless unless they are related back to your research question and your academic rational through the lens of your literature review. **If you do not do this it is a serious loss of marks.**

This turns reporting into researching.

Your paper is written in a feedback loop.

The findings can feedback into your literature review, which can feedback into your methodology, which can feedback into your discussion and themes which in turn feeds into your conclusion and eventually feeds back to your introduction.





Researcher vs Reporter

The researcher will do the job of a reporter – collecting data- But they go beyond reporting.

The researcher places their findings into the context of the given opinions in the field.

The research therefore adds to the conversation. The research finds new knowledge.

A reporter just presents the field findings.

Their job is to provide information so that others can analysis the meaning of the field findings.

Reporters can look like researchers as they can go out into the field, or ask people to come to them (in the studio) for interviews.

However they do not analyse, they just collect data.

You need to be a Researcher not a Reporter.



Coding the way to find the hidden information in your interviews.

- Coding is the practice of add keywords to different parts of your interview material.
- For example, you could use a code word 'Happy' and everytime in any interview someone referred to feeling happy or joyful or overly pleased you could write the word 'Happy' next to it.
- Have ALL your interviews in one large document so you can then pull up all the phases that you have labeled as Happy.

Practical Tips

Create a two column table in WORD.

In one column, the largest cut and paste your typed out interview text.

In the small column, use that for writing comments or key phases about different parts of the text.

Use an non-alphabetical character to mark a key word or phase - eg, <happy. That way when you search the Word document for the keyword you are not going to get the word in your text but only show the word in your coding.

I: *In comparison to what you are doing now, do you think things are getting more systematic, or complicated?*

T: *Well, I can't say that it is getting more complicated. It is getting more organized and clearer. More things are now written with specifications, for both my colleagues and myself. For example, as I am now the activities supervisor, I have produced a work schedule for the year, which could be passed on to my successor. This is in regards to administrative work. On the planning side for our own subject, says P.E., we have not specified the work to be done on monthly basis, but we have planned by projects or schemes. For example, say we had a "little athletes" scheme; we would have written a proposal for the whole plan, which my colleagues and I would follow.*

I: *So, you mean you did not have a job description; nevertheless you have developed your job to a stage where things are getting more systematic and mature and even have some automated processes. Can these processes be regarded as a kind of operation manual which you can pass on to your successors?*

T: *Yes. But this does not apply to everything. Particularly, in my curriculum development work I have not developed things to such a level yet. Changes are still on their way as things are still in an initial phase. There were hardly any standard procedures.*

- Accepts the culture, values and attitudes of the members in the organization.

- Internal quality of teaching as a profession

- Assimilates a web of values based on a social consensus of professional behaviour – indirect learning.

- Accepts and behaves in ways that are appropriate to that organization.

- Acts independently.

- Commitment to working with colleagues

- Internal quality of teaching as a profession

- Social negotiation; Crisis

Coding Memo:

Culture, values, and attitudes are factors for considering PSPETs' work lives. Check and be

Practical Tips

Use highlighting in your interview transcript and on your keyword to link the keyword to the particular part of the text.

Data

Codes

(Q1) **Moderator:** What do you think about the apparel industry in Sri Lanka? Who are the customers, competitors, suppliers and influential parties and *what* is their influence on the business and management controls of the business?

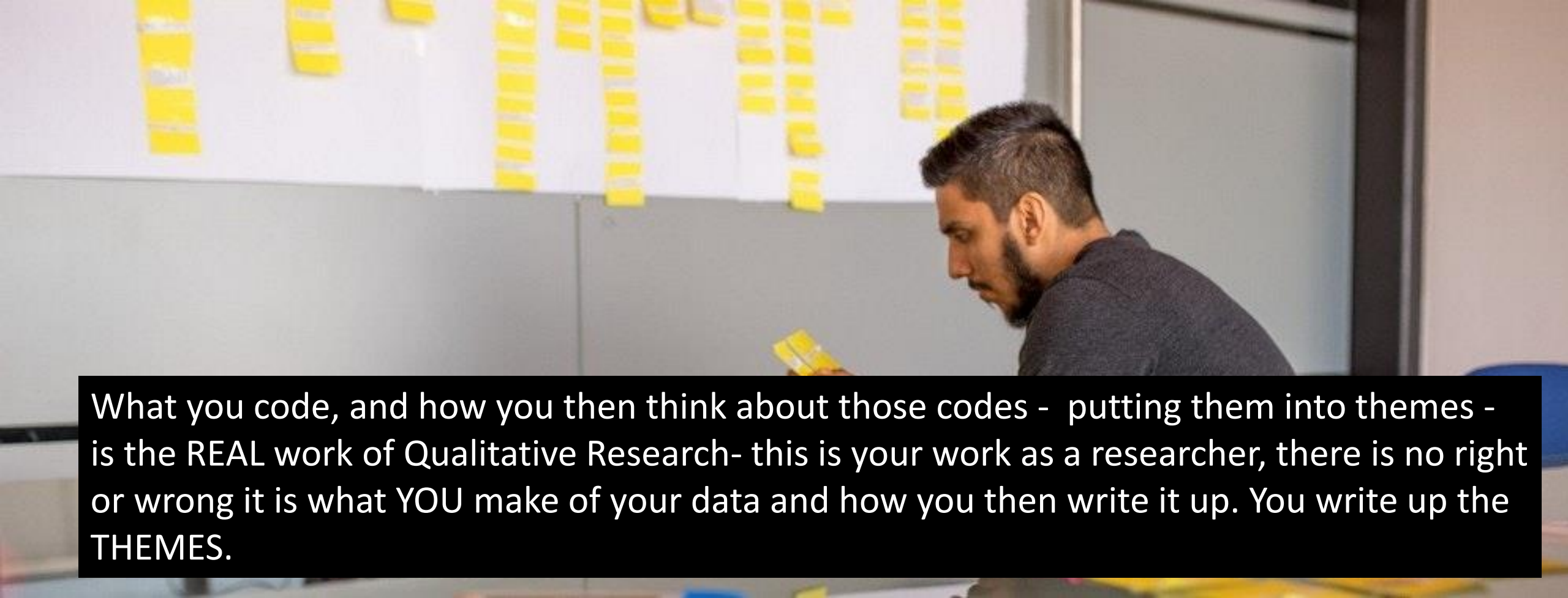
Finance Director: Global competition and GSP plus [Generalized System of Preferences] and the Trans-Pacific Trade Partnership have a direct impact on our operations, and on management controls. More than 60% of Sri Lankan apparel exports are to the United States and other Western countries. Our operations and controls have to focus on their demands in order to survive in the market. In the meantime, competition in the industry is increasing from emerging countries like Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. So, our controls have always to focus on reducing costs and producing products at competitive prices. The economic environment of our country too is not supportive of the apparel industry because other industries such as tourism and hospitality are growing. Thus finding labour for the apparel industry will be difficult in about another five years because they expect

Global statutory rules

Customer regulatory demands

Influence of changing market conditions

Facing changes in the local industry



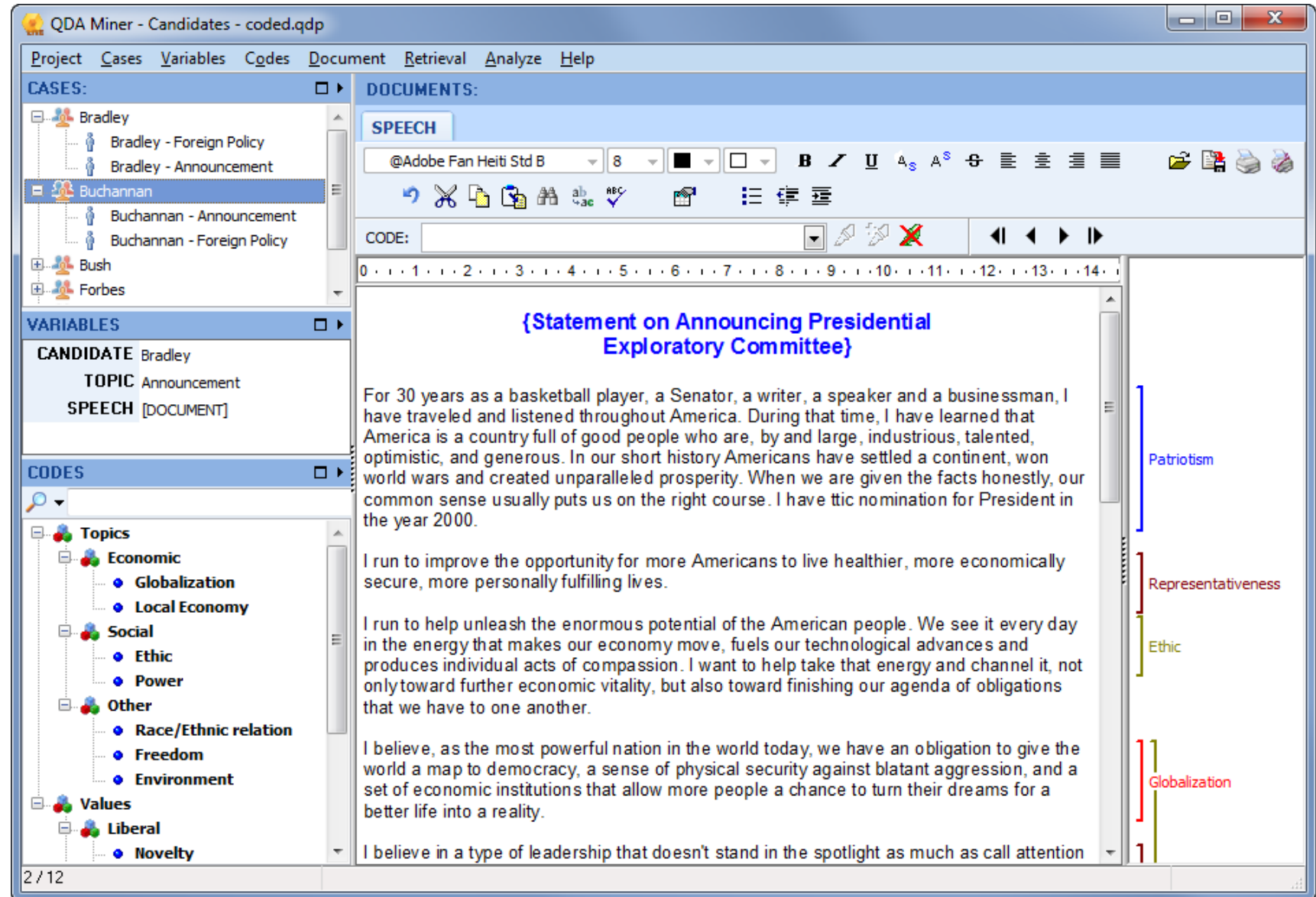
What you code, and how you then think about those codes - putting them into themes - is the REAL work of Qualitative Research- this is your work as a researcher, there is no right or wrong it is what YOU make of your data and how you then write it up. You write up the THEMES.

Collect your codes words on **one document** and then look for themes – maybe ‘happy’ belongs to a wider theme of ‘emotion reactions’

A Free CAQDAS package:

QDA MINER LITE (FREWARE)

This is a free package but for those wish to explore this type of software It runs on MAC and PC.



Field Work/Discussion

Clearly write up your THEMES and discuss them by [linking your THEMES back to your literature review](#).

- Do your findings confirmed your expectations and those of other researchers in the field or have you found something different/new/contradictory/anomalous?

Layout Point: Use tables or graphs for quantitative data, label them clearly as **figure 1, 2 and 3** etc, and if needs be **refer to tables in your appendix for more complete data**. The appendix tables should also be labelled.

The appendix is not part of your word count.



Does the piece of the jigsaw that you have found add to the picture or does it change the picture and challenge how the other pieces have been put together?

Conclusion

Your conclusion is the other bookend to your introduction. It needs to take the reader full circle and make them understand why your research is important.

Thus a conclusion **must**:

- Return to your research question.
- Briefly summarises your procedure and findings.
- Add your unique finding.

It is also your chance to give your own thoughts. The conclusion is the place where you can add the final comments on the points you have found in your research – **it must be based in the evidence you have provided**. You thus want to summarize your paper but additionally emphasis, in some way, the importance of your findings. **Give your reader a new insight into the subject.**

VIP Questions to ask yourself: Can you make sense of your findings? Can you offer some sort of explanation, however tentative? What are the professional/practical/political implications of your findings?



A person should be able to read your introduction and your conclusion and:

- a) Understand the aim of your paper.
- b) Have an overview of your methodology.
- c) Gain an idea of the themes that you developed.
- d) Understand what you found.

If they wish they can read your entire paper and see the detail of the evidence for your findings.

Some causes for loss of marks

- Unclear introduction so the reader does not understand the focus of your work.
- Methodology not justified via citations
- Literature review simply reporting the different opinions rather than developing a discussion and poor or no referencing.

Your Results

- No discussion – simply listing findings – **this can actually lead to failure.**
- Too many quotes with little or no discussion – reporting!
- Insufficient use of your primary sources – your interviews/questionnaire. No quotes taken from interviews.
- Discussion with little or no reference back to your literature review – **this can lead to failure.**
- New material introduced in your discussion, separate to your literature review.
- Conclusion not returning to the original aim and summarising the main themes.
- Conclusion not grounded in the evidence presented in the paper. Generalisations or speculations.

Check List – Essential that you do this....

Tick these boxes to get the best marks for your paper but more importantly to write up a wonderful paper.

- ☐ Have I address the **What**, **Why** and **How** issues in my introduction?
- ☐ Have I justified my methodology by citing scholars who argue that my chosen methodology is valid for my intended research?
- ☐ Have I consider the work of other scholars in the area of my research? In exploring this have I avoid just reporting this literature but instead shown the different opinions on the key themes that I am going to explore in my literature and are important to my findings?
- ☐ Have I written up my findings as a researcher and avoided just reporting facts?
- ☐ Have I used quotes from my target group to help make my arguments which support or disagree with the previous literature I have cited.
- ☐ Have I written a conclusion which summarises my work but also synthesis it together and shows why my work is important.