

13

Drawing Conclusions

Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the process of drawing **conclusions** based on collected evidence. At this stage, the hypothesis or research objective is examined and verified. A proper conclusion is grounded on careful analysis and interpretation of data gathered in light of the basic question being researched.

Four basic questions guide the activities of data analysis and interpretation:

1. What did the researcher ask? Before arriving at conclusions, social researchers must continually remind themselves about the questions that motivated the research topic in the first place. The first step in drawing conclusions is to clarify how the research relates both to the hypothesis and to the research topic.
2. What are the findings? First, the data need to be interpreted. Second, the data must be related to the hypothesis or research objective. Third, the data must be evaluated.
3. What are the conclusions? A good conclusion has two aspects: first, it clearly states, in simple terms, what the data reveal; second, the concluding statements refer back to the larger issues that animated the research project.
4. To whom do the conclusions apply? The conclusions regarding the data apply to those from whom the data were collected as well as to the larger population from which they were drawn.

Conclusions can be narrow (referring to the data or facts produced by the research) or broad (referring to applying the findings and generalizing to a broader population). Some conclusions refer to the implications of the research findings for larger issues.

Key Term

Conclusion A conclusion clearly restates the general aim of the research, the findings, support or rejection of the hypothesis, implications of the project for larger concerns, and suggestions for future research. (p. 271)

Study Questions

Scroll down for answers.

1. What are the two basic features of a good conclusion?
2. What issues should be the focus when answering the question, “What did you find?”
3. What are the differences between a narrow interpretation and a broad interpretation of the applicability of conclusions?
4. Hypotheses can be stated in which two forms?
5. What are the five main components of a conclusion?

Video Resources

The “Three Minute Thesis” or 3MT competition is an excellent tool for disseminating research conclusions. Instructors can likely find 3MT presentations from their universities on YouTube, but the following video is a timely example from Dalhousie University’s 2018 competition.

Faculty of Graduate Studies, Dalhousie University. (2018). *The 2018 Winner of Dalhousie’s 3 Minute Thesis Competition* (2:47) <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=THEj27MQyjI>

Answers to Study Questions

1. The two basic features of a good conclusion are as follows:
 - The conclusion states, in clear terms, what the data reveal both in relation to the hypothesis/research objective and the existing research (literature review).
 - The conclusion relates back to the larger issue. (p. 271)
2. When answering the question, “What did you find?” the focus should be on the following:
 - the interpretation of data;
 - the relationship between the data and the hypothesis/research statement; and,
 - the evaluation of the data. (pp. 273–275)
3. The narrow interpretation is based on the limitations of the sample. The broader interpretation centres on the larger issues to which the research can be applied. (pp. 280–281)
4. Conceptual form and operational form (p. 272)
5. The five steps:
 - Restate the general aim of the research
 - Restate the findings of the research
 - Indicate whether the hypothesis is supported or rejected, or whether the result is unclear
 - Explain the implications for the larger issue
 - Make suggestions for future research (p. 278)