Transcript

Chapter 16: Evaluating your Project

How to think critically about your research is perhaps one of the most difficult things to do as a researcher, after all it is your research! Fortunately, there are a number of criteria that you can use to help you to evaluate your project - and it is not all about being negative! For the purposes of our book, we focus on issues associated with originality, significance, and rigor. This involves thinking about:

* How does your research differ to what is already known?
* In what ways are your findings credible?
* Why is your research important?

So, either in your discussion or your conclusion sections of your dissertation, you will need to state what you found and how this adds to the literature in some way. Again, we’re not talking about huge great leaps in knowledge here - such things are actually quite rare in the social sciences. But your research should build on the knowledge-base in particular ways, and you’ll need to state this clearly in your dissertation. So think about how your research is relevant to the literature, why it is timely, and who might be interested in the findings.

Now once you’ve done that, then try to think about your research methods and the degree to which your findings are credible. This might involve thinking about particular criteria of research quality like reliability and validity. But also what worked well in the research process, and what you might you do differently in the future. Try to imagine what a critical friend might say about your research, and how you might respond to such a critique. Think of it like, ‘there are these problems of research...but the findings are still useful because…’

Now finally, think about the significance of your research. To what extent might your results be instructive in contexts beyond your research, and how might your project inform current thinking, policy or practice? It’s also worth remembering that although your research project necessarily has a particular focus, insights in one area will provoke interesting avenues for further investigation elsewhere. So be prepared to think about further research that could lead on from your project.­