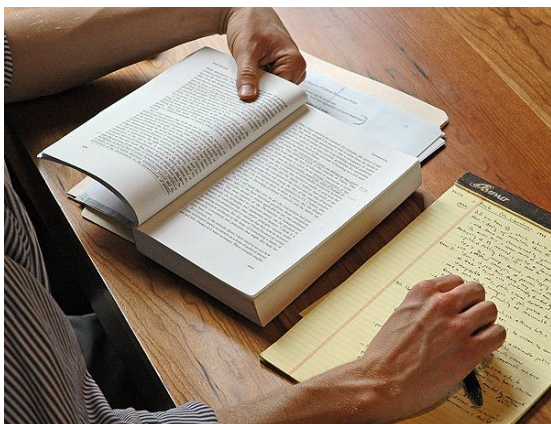


Conducting social science research, allows social scientists to examine the cultures, societies and behaviours of different groups and individuals (De Coeur, Rawes, and Warecki, 2012). It allows them to ask questions, gather and analyze information, and draw conclusions about the types of trends present in our society, its challenges, and to better understand how change happens.

You will be conducting your own social science field research in this course, which will allow you to...

- better understand the research process. As you work through the process in a 'hands on' or practical manner, you will be using the same process as other social scientists.
- compare the results of your inquiry with others (Holloway, Holloway and Witte, 2010).
- better understand the many theorists' work that you will be learning about during this course.
- evaluate the research and resources you will be using throughout the course (De Coeur et al, 2012; Holloway et al, 2010).

The social science research process is organized. As you conduct your own social science field research you will follow a prescribed series of steps using the Inquiry Model. These guidelines are followed to ensure that the research is as objective and unbiased as possible and to gain measureable and accurate results. However, no research is completely objective. We all have biases that come from our culture, experiences and point of view. Social scientists need to reflect, recognize and reduce these inherent biases to the best of their ability.



THE SOCIAL SCIENTIST INQUIRY MODEL

DEVELOP A RESEARCH QUESTION

The social scientist starts with a personal interest in an area of human behaviour affecting or affected by society and begins to look at specific issues connected to this.

Develop a suitable question around which a detailed study can be developed.

CONDUCT INITIAL RESEARCH

The researcher looks at possible answers for the question.

Reviews relevant, useful research published by other researchers (literature review) to learn more about the topic.

FORM A HYPOTHESIS

The researcher develops a statement or hypothesis about the topic based on current information gathered. It is a tentative theory.

COLLECT DATA

Based on the hypothesis, the researcher selects a research method to gather data about the issue. Quantitative methods include experiments, content analysis, and surveys. Qualitative methods include observations and interviews.

ANALYZE THE DATA

Examine and evaluate the evidence to see if the hypothesis is supported.

DRAW A CONCLUSION

The hypothesis is either supported, partially supported, or not supported.

COMMUNICATE YOUR FINDINGS

Communicate the results in a Research Paper using the APA style used by most social scientists.

Some tips to consider...

Developing a detailed research plan will help you to develop critical thinking skills. It might seem like a daunting task but here are some tips that might make it easier.

1

Choose a topic or issue that you are interested in researching, and brainstorm as many ideas about the topic as you can before narrowing your focus on one area.

2

Start by looking at research that other people have done on the topic or issue. Reviewing the current literature will help you see different perspectives connected to the topic. You will be able to compare what others have done and develop a focus or area of interest that you would like to research and compare. Take and keep good notes (including bibliographic information) – you will need them later on when you are writing the research paper.

3

Once you have a topic, begin to develop a specific research question. Most research questions are answered by a description or an explanation. They often indicate a relationship between a topic and a group. For example is there a relationship between single parents and poverty?

4

Develop a good hypothesis. A strong hypothesis is a detailed, specific statement. A good hypothesis is essential for a successful research project.

Hypothesis a possible answer to a research question that explains what happens and why it happens

5

Take a position. Your issue or topic should be connected to a theoretical framework if possible. For instance you may consider looking at gender from a feminist perspective or the family from a symbolic interactionism view point.

6

When choosing a method for gathering data, think about what fits well with your hypothesis. Is your research study more suited to a broad questionnaire or would a detailed interview with an expert in a field work better? Develop useful tools to answer your research question.

7

Stay organized while collecting your data. Once it is all collected, organize it so that you can see what trends or pictures or relationships are revealed. Look at it in more than one way. Create charts and graphs to show your findings.

8

When you have a clear picture as to whether or not your hypothesis was proven, write your research paper which is a cross between a research essay and a lab. Make sure you include references to research from the literature review you did earlier that help you to develop or build your arguments throughout your paper.

9

Discuss a variety of perspectives, viewpoints and findings in addition to your own. Your hypothesis should be obvious but your paper should also appear to be objective or free of bias.

10

Use the APA (American Psychological Association) style when citing material from other sources. It is IMPORTANT to cite sources both in the body of your paper (using in text citations) and in a reference list (bibliography) at the end of the paper. This is required even if you put the information into your own words. For the most part, all the information should be in your own words. Quotes are not used extensively in social science research papers.