

The Practice of Social Research

Doctoral Training Centre

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Why Research?

- *To understand* or ‘to know’
“All men by nature desire to know” (Aristotle)
- *To arbitrate* between competing truth claims.
- *To build* broader theory
- *To inform* policy and practice

The Role of Methodology

- Research methods provide foundation for knowledge claims.
 - Research users can judge epistemic strength of knowledge claims on basis of methods used
- To justify claims to knowledge, you must describe details of sampling, data collection, variables, measurement tools, data analysis, etc.

The Process of Social Research

Components of a Social Research Project and Report

1. INTRODUCTION

- Introducing of research problem
- Introduction of objectives and how objective will be achieved

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

- Review of previous work relating to research problem (define, explain, justify)
- Review of previous work relating to methodology
- Review of previous work relating to results (particular reliability, etc.)

Components of a Social Research Project and Report

3. METHOD

- Explanation of how data was collected/generated
- Explanation of how data was analyzed
- *Explanation of methodological problems and their solutions or effects*

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

- Presentation of results
- Interpretation of results

Components of a Social Research Project and Report

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- Recapitulation of findings (*without figures*)
- Discussion of results in light of broader context, research and theory
 - (e.g. comparison with results in previous research, effect of method used on the data obtained)
- Has the research problem been solved?
- To what extent has the objective being achieved?
- What has been learnt from the results?
- How can this knowledge be used?
- *What are the shortcomings of the research or research methodology?*

RESEARCH METHOD

- The method section answers two main questions
 1. How was the data collected or generated?
 2. How was it analyzed?

“ It shows your reader how you obtained your results ”

METHOD

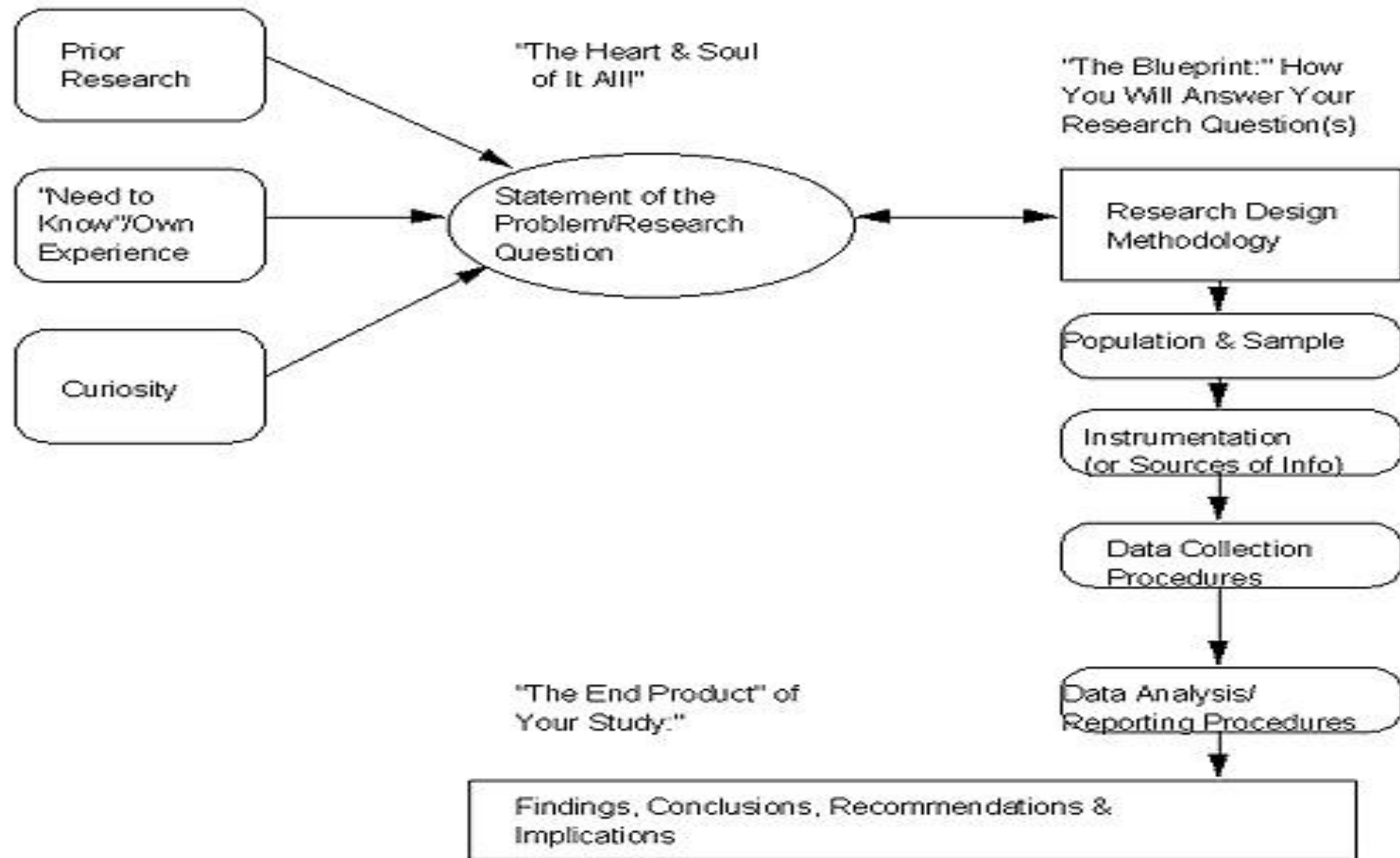
- Why do you need to explain how you obtained your results???
 1. Method affects results
 2. Helps the reader evaluate the validity and reliability of your results and conclusion you draw from them

METHODS

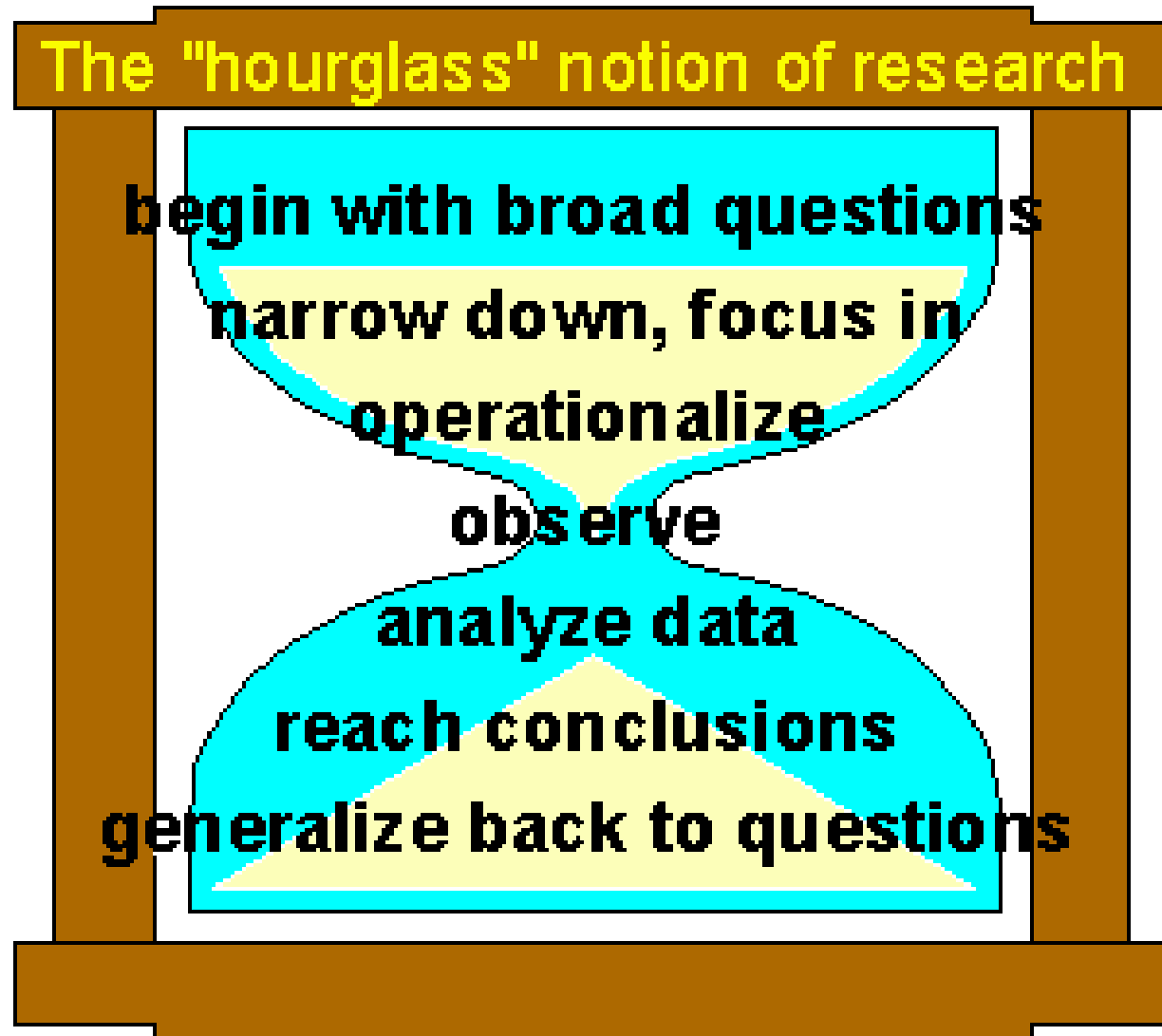
- Your methods section should make clear the reasons why you choose a particular method or procedure.
- The data was collected or generated in a way consistent with accepted practice in the field of study
- The research method must be appropriate to the objectives of the study
- The methodology should also discuss the problems that were anticipated and explain steps taken to prevent them from occurring

Figure 1.
A Diagram of the Research Process

Sources of Research Ideas



HOURGLASS METAPHOR



Research Process: Getting Started

- Every successful research project requires two things:
 1. a meaningful research question
 2. an appropriate way to answer that question.
- Choosing an appropriate research design involves matching goals that motivate your research with methods for meeting those goals.

Operationalisation

- Operationalization is the process of translating abstract things into concrete, measurable variables.
- Easier said than done.
- Operationalization: Defining concepts by what they do.
- “Operations” are the procedures or steps one must go through in order to observe the concept being defined.

Definition: Research Design

Process of choosing a way to answer your research question, which requires knowing both what your options are and how to evaluate their relative strengths and weaknesses.

Research Design = Choices

- Research design all about making choices.
- To make a good choice, you need to know (1) what your options are and (2) how to evaluate those options.

Research Design: Getting Started

- Sometimes, your best choice will be a single research method
- Other times, an integrated combination of methods will best serve your purposes.
- It is helpful to think of methods as tools that offer a set of strengths that can be used to accomplish range of goals.