

# PSY 250

## Research Ideas and Hypotheses

## The Research Idea

- You find a **research idea** when you find a gap in the current knowledge or an unanswered question that **interests** you.
- Be flexible



## Defining a Research Area

- General Topic
  - Child Abuse
- A particular behavior
  - E.g. infidelity
- A particular population or group of individuals
  - E.g. middle aged women

## Sources of Research Ideas

- Nonsystematic Sources
  - Include those occurrences that give us the illusion that a research idea has dropped out of the sky.
  - Inspiration
    - ideas that pop into one's mind from (seemingly) nowhere
    - usually comes more easily after working on a particular problem for some time.
  - Serendipity
    - look for one phenomenon but find another.
      - E.g. MacDonald (1994)
      - Pavlov
      - Skinner
      - Inequity Aversion (Brosnan & DeWaal)

## Sources of Research Ideas

- Nonsystematic Sources
  - Everyday Occurrences
  - E.g. B.F. Skinner and the Air Crib.



## Sources of Research Ideas

- Reports of Other's Observations
  - Newspaper & Magazines
  - Television
  - Internet

## Sources of Research Ideas

- Systematic Sources
  - Research ideas carefully organized and logically thought out
  - Past Research –
    - highlight any knowledge gaps or unanswered questions in that area.
    - A *failure to replicate* a previous finding raises additional questions that only continued research will be able to answer.
  - Theory
  - Classroom Lectures

## Sources of Research Ideas

- Behavioral Theories
  - Explanations for behavior
  - Why environmental factors lead to different behaviors
  - Good theory predicts behavior in new situations
  - Testing predictions of a theory – good source for research ideas
  - Two opposing theories making different predictions – great opportunity for research

## Background Knowledge

- Don't have to know or read EVERYthing
- Read enough to have a solid, basic understanding of current knowledge in area
- Move from general to more focused research topic – reduces amount of background reading

## Sources

- Primary
  - Firsthand report
- Secondary
  - Description or summary of someone else's work
  - Always incomplete and sometimes biased
  - A good starting point
  - Guide to which primary sources you should focus on

## Surveying the Psychological Literature

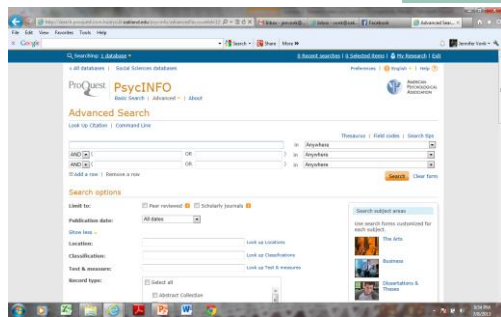
PsycINFO	
<i>Journal of Youth &amp; Adolescence</i> , 1996 Dec; Vol 13(6) 607-69	
<b>Characteristics of married and unmarried adolescent mothers and their partners.</b> Lewin, Michael E.; Olwey, Arthur B.; Peters, James J.; Kahn, Anne C.; et al (1); Utah, Salt Lake City, USA	
<b>Summary:</b> Studied a middle-class, urban clinic sample of 278 mostly Caucasian adolescent mothers (aged 12-20 yrs) and their partners (aged 16-26 yrs). Couples married at the time of conception (n = 22) reported more positive responses from prospective grandparents and earned more than couples not married at the time of conception, but they were more likely to be high school dropouts, suggesting limits in their lifetime earning capacities and less likelihood in identifying one another as sources of emotional support. Couples who married between conception and delivery (n = 110) reported that prospective grandparents responded less favorably to the pregnancy, but while their current attitudes were lower, they were more likely to be continuing with their education. These married after conception had fewer emotional and conduct disorders than do who chose to continue in a dating relationship. Overall, the couples who married after conception appeared to face less severe problems than other initially-married couples or study sites. (p) 1999 APA PsycINFO, all rights reserved	
<b>Key Words:</b>	parent approval & safety level & educational status, 12-19 yr old unmarried vs married before conception vs delivery, mothers & their 16-26 yr old partners
<b>Major Subjects:</b>	Adolescent Fathers, Adolescent Mothers, Marital Status
<b>Minor Subjects:</b>	Adolescence, Adolescence, Childhood, Couples, Educational Background, Family Relations, Income Level, Parental Attitudes, Unwed Mothers
<b>Class. Code:</b>	2841
<b>Classification:</b>	Psychosocial & Personality Development
<b>Population:</b>	Human, Male, Female
<b>Age:</b>	Childhood (birth-12 yrs), Adolescence (13-17 yrs), Adulthood (18 yrs & older)
<b>Language:</b>	English
<b>ISSN:</b>	0647-2891
<b>Document Type:</b>	Journal Article
<b>Researcher's Name:</b>	
<b>Type:</b>	Empirical Study

- Computerized Searches of the Literature –Databases like PsycINFO available online through Kresge library
- Contains abstracts and some full text articles cross referenced by subjects, journal & author.
- Only reputable sources
- Use "cite" function for reference in APA format

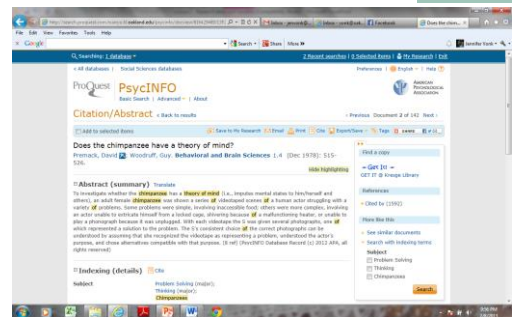
## PSYCinfo Instructions

- Go to Library Home Page
  - Databases
  - Select PSYCinfo
  - Use basic or advanced search
  - Type key word(s) in search field – select "anywhere" in box to the right
- OR
- To search by author used advanced search tab and select "AU author" in box to the right
  - Can limit search but don't have to
  - Select "search"
  - Will provide articles and links to full text articles – select "full text - PDF" or "get it"

## Data Base



## Abstract



## Surveying the Psychological Literature

- Obtaining the Relevant Publications
  - Interlibrary loan – if your library does not have the relevant journals or books, you can request them through *interlibrary loan*
  - Requests for reprints – you can write or e-mail the author of a journal article directly and ask for a copy of the article (reprint). Many colleges and universities have searchable faculty e-mail databases
    - Most are available in PDF form
    - Can download Adobe Acrobat reader to view PDF forms

## Surveying the Psychological Literature

Wann, D. A., & Dolan, P. J. (1998). Spectator's evaluations of rival and fellow fans. *The Psychological Record*, 48, 251-259.

**Introduction**

When sports fans are biased in their evaluations and attributions concerning their team (p. 251), an research has examined the evaluative operations made of other spectators. Hence the present experiment was conducted to examine spectators' evaluations of home fans and rival fans.

**Method**

Participants – one hundred three undergraduate psychology students received extra credit for participation.

Procedure – a questionnaire packet comprising of an information sheet, Sports Spectator Identification Scale, a five-paragraph scenario describing the behavior of a home team or rival spectator at an important basketball game, and several questions concerning the general behavior of the spectator described in the scenario was given to each participant.

Procedure – The questionnaire packet was completed after an informed consent document was completed and returned. One half of the participants read the home team fan scenario, while the remainder of the participants read the rival team fan scenario. The determination of which scenario was read was determined randomly.

**Results**

Analysis of variance was used to analyze the data. The results of these analyses indicated the home fan fan was rated more positively than the rival team fan by participants who were highly identified with the home team. This pattern of results was not shown by lower identified fans. Of particular note was the finding that the highly identified participants did not rate the rival team fan more negatively than did the lower identified participants; they just rated the home team fan positively.

**Discussion and Evaluation**

These results support the authors' initial prediction that participants would give more positive evaluations of fans rooting for the same team and more negative evaluations of fans rooting for a different team. Wann and Dolan's prediction that such evaluations would be shown only by fans who were highly identified with their team. Also was supported. These predictions were seen to be in accord with social identity theory. The study appeared to be well conducted, the fact that the study was not conducted at a sporting event limits its applicability.

- Integrating the results of the Literature Search

- This is the process of making sense of the materials you have assembled.
- recommend taking notes on the different sections of information from each article you have read. These notes should fit on one side of a sheet of paper.

## Common Mistakes in Choosing Research Topics

- Lack of interest in topic
- Topic too safe or too easy
- Topic too difficult
- Topic too broad
- Failure to shift or modify plans
- Inadequate literature on topic
  - Topic may not be testable

## Developing a Research Question

- Regardless of the source of your research idea, your first goal should be to turn it into a question.
- Be critical as you read past research – expand or challenge current ideas

## Characteristics of Good Research Ideas

- **Testable.**
- **Falsifiable**
  - possible that a result is true (supported by the results of the study) or false (not supported by the results of the study).
- Chances for success are increased when your view of nature approximates reality as closely as possible – greater **likelihood of success.**

## Remember...

- Research is an ongoing process
- No answers should be considered “final” answers to the question