

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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Why Care about Research  
Methods?



# Chapter Learning Objectives

1. Understand what it means to be a consumer and producer of research evidence.
2. Identify the four major steps in the research process.
3. Describe the four major approaches to social research.

# Chapter Outline

1. Benefits of Studying Research Methods
2. The Research Process
3. Approaches to Social Research

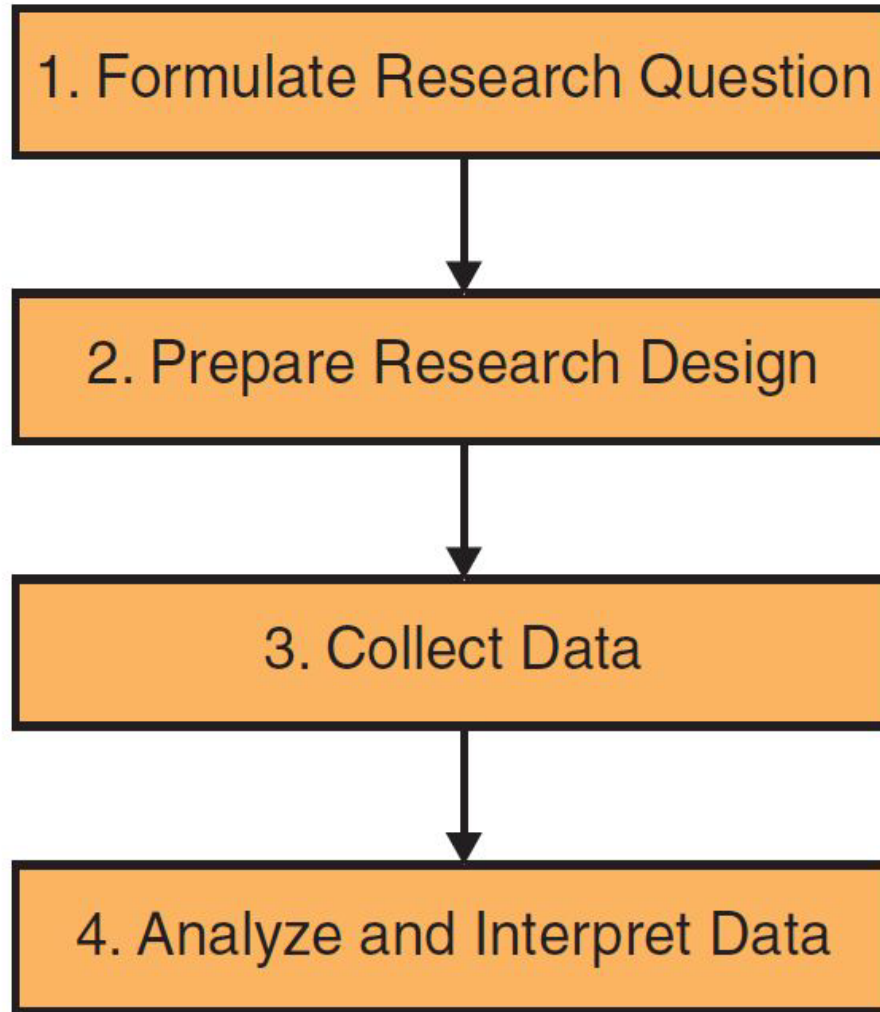
# Social Research in the Media

- People are exposed to vast amounts of information in their daily lives
- Much of this information can be inaccurate, misleading, or conflicting
- How do you know what to believe?

# Benefits of Studying Research Methods

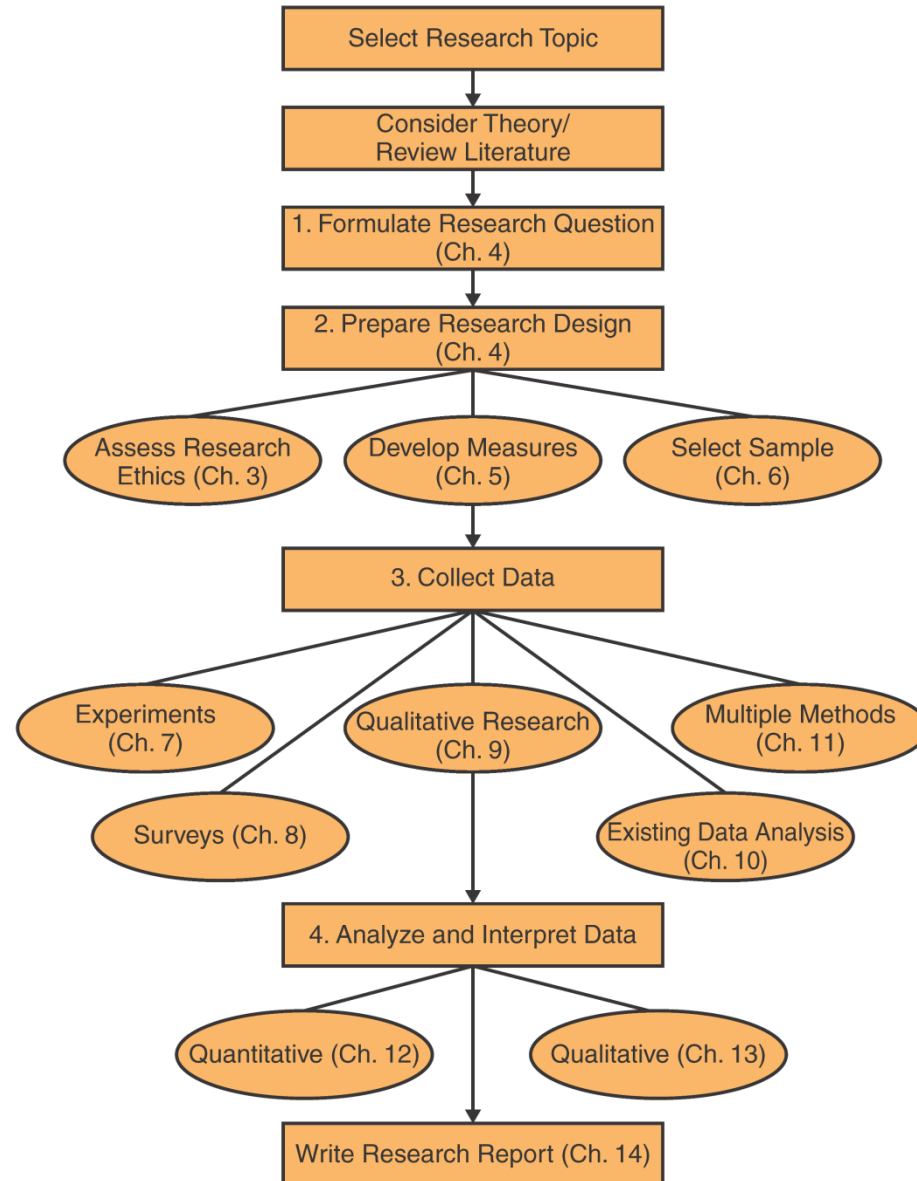
- Can help you become a more critical **consumer** of research evidence, so that you can:
  - Read and understand research reports and articles
  - Know what questions to ask to evaluate the quality of information
  - Determine whether information is credible
- Can help you become an active **producer** of research evidence, so that you can:
  - Conduct your own research as student
  - Do research in your post-graduate career

# The Research Process



# The Research Process

## Elaborated



# Approaches to Social Research

Four basic approaches

- **Experiments**
- **Surveys**
- **Qualitative research**
- **Existing data analysis**

Which approach is appropriate depends on the research question and available resources

Each approach has its own limitations, strengths, and weaknesses



# Experiments

- Involve manipulation and control
- Ideal for understanding the causes of human behavior
- Limited to what can be manipulated
- Often raise questions of ethics

# Surveys

- Involve asking questions of a relatively large randomly selected group of people
- Yield precise statistical estimates of group characteristics
- Respondents may not be truthful
- What people say may not predict what they do

# Qualitative Research

- Involves observing people in natural settings and/or interviewing them in depth
- Provides rich information on social meanings and processes
- Often difficult to know the generalizability of research results

# Analysis of Existing Data

- Involves the analysis of data not produced directly by the researcher who uses them
- Well suited to studying the past and social change
- Data often are unobtrusive
- May be difficult to find data that can adequately address the research question