

Introduction to Research

What is Research?

Research consists of an investigation that:

- seeks answers to a question
- systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer the question
- collects evidence
- produces findings that were not determined in advance
- produces findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study

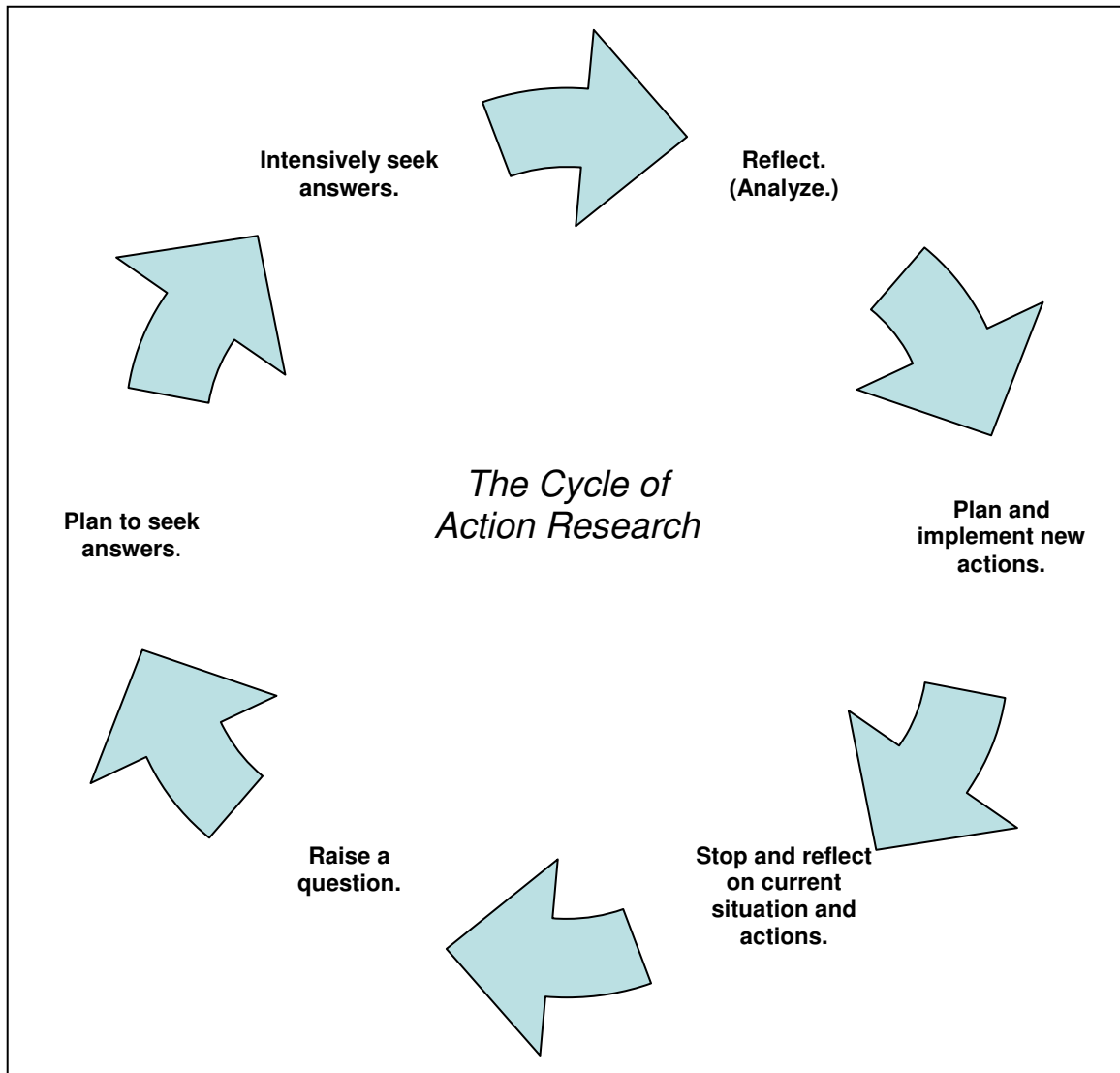
“Good” vs. “Not so Good” Research

“Not so Good” Research	“Good” Research
<p>“Not so good” research is full of inaccurate data and inaccurate conclusions. This may be due to the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The researcher’s is unwilling to consider evidence that contradicts her personal opinions.- The researcher uses inconsistent procedures with different participants or in different situations.- The researcher’s sampling does not ensure that different people are represented.- The researcher’s method of data collection leads to a particular type of answer. (A bias in the method.)- The researcher does not record and maintain the data properly.	<p>“Good” research uses systematic procedures to collect and analyze data, which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The researcher is open to new and unexpected findings.- The researcher uses a predefined set of procedures.- The researcher uses sampling techniques which ensure different people are represented.- The researcher uses different methods of data collection to see if they give the same answers (this is called “triangulation of data”).- The researcher records the data and keeps it in a safe and secure place.
“Not so good” research does not follow ethical guidelines.	“Good” research follows ethical guidelines.

Introduction to Action Research

The Conventional Research Process

Raise a question. → **Plan to seek answers.** → **Intensively seek answers.** → **Analyze.** → **Draw conclusions.**



Introduction to Research Ethics

Fundamental Principles of Research Ethics¹	
Respect for persons 	<p>Respect for persons entails respecting the dignity of research participants and ensuring their autonomy. In cases where autonomy may be diminished, people should be protected from any exploitation that results due to their vulnerability. This principle is important because adherence to it entails that people will not be merely a means to achieve the research objectives.</p>
Beneficence 	<p>Beneficence requires a commitment to minimizing the risks associated with research, including psychological and social risks, and maximizing the benefits that accrue to research participants. Researchers must articulate specific ways this will be achieved.</p>
Justice 	<p>Justice requires a commitment to ensuring a fair distribution of the risks and benefits of research. Research participants should share in the benefits of the knowledge gained. Therefore, the research participants should be people who are expected to benefit from the knowledge gained through the study.</p>
Respect for communities 	<p>Respect for communities means that researchers must respect the values of the community involved in the research and protect the community from harm. This is very important in research which requires community-wide knowledge, values, and relationships and, thus, the community may be impacted by the research process or its outcomes.</p>

¹ Definitions taken from Mack, N., Woodsong, C., MacQueen, K. M., Guest, G., & Namey, E. (2005). *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide*. Family Health International. Available online at http://www.fhi.org/en/RH/Pubs/booksReports/QRM_datacoll.htm.

Introduction to Research Ethics

General Ethical Guidelines for Research

Confidentiality: It is very important to ensure the confidentiality of participants in a research study at all times. Identifying information should not be used when discussing results with anyone, including other researchers. This holds true even when sharing anecdotes or statements that seem inconsequential. When storing data or discussing the results of a study, care should be taken to eliminate names and other identifying information. Before any research study is undertaken, it is imperative to discuss how the confidentiality of participants will be maintained.

Informed voluntary consent: It is imperative to ensure that participants understand the implications of participating in a research study so that they are able to make an informed decision about whether or not they would like to participate in a study. This entails ensuring that participants understand the purpose of the research, what is expected of them, the expected risks and benefits, and that participation is voluntary.

Right to refuse or withdraw at any time: It is imperative that participants have the right to refuse to participate in the study or withdraw at any time without any negative repercussions.

Reporting back: It is important that participants be given access to the findings of the study once data analysis is completed. This will allow them to see how their data is being represented and gain from the findings of the study.

Special consideration for vulnerable groups: Some groups are traditionally considered vulnerable research participants. They include children and youth, pregnant women, and persons with mental disabilities. Other groups such as people without literacy, those with limited economic resources, and women who do not have decision-making power regarding their participation in a study may also be vulnerable. Vulnerable persons can still participate in a research study; however, they need special protections.