

Block

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UNIT 1 GENDER AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY IN RESEARCH

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of this Block where you will be reading about differences between multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to research. The unit will also look into the need for, characteristics, requirements, applicability and advantages of this kind of research. Thereafter, how interdisciplinary approach is helpful in Women's Studies is discussed. This section is followed by some practical issues that make such research a more challenging exercise for researchers. Let us now look at the objectives of this unit.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading you will be able to:

- Comprehend the concepts of research across disciplines;
- Differentiate between inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary research straddling different disciplines;
- Explain the need for, requirements, application, and advantages of this type of research; and
- Situate research in Women's Studies under the rubric of interdisciplinary research.

1.3 CONCEPTS OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY INTERDISCIPLINARY AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY

Research project that are interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary in nature are considered more suitable to analyze complex patterns of human behaviour. Disciplines are the result of artificial fragmentation of knowledge. Modernization developed in an era of specializations that led to the emergence of specialized disciplines with well defined boundaries. A discipline is defined as a specific branch of knowledge, institution learning or a field of study. The knowledge accumulated in these specialised fields is parochial and cannot provide an adequate and holistic explanation about human life. Real world problems are rarely confined to the artificial boundaries of academic disciplines, and therefore, can be fruitfully examined in a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary frame work.

The **Gulbenkian Commission (1996)** has brought out the fact that the development of various disciplines in social sciences was influenced by the philosophy of modernism that shaped the growth of natural sciences into various disciplines. The application of scientific methodologies in these disciplines to study human behavior and social structure attempted to describe and explain social phenomena in a similar manner in which the natural sciences explained natural phenomena. These were institutionalized as academic disciplines in the university system. Research was also institutionalized by creating specialised journals, forming associations of scholars and the library collection began to be catalogued by discipline. The Commission recommended opening up of social sciences to form an integrated system of knowledge. It stated that present knowledge is parochial and social facts cannot be analysed by fragmented approaches concluding with the observation that multidisciplinary work has come to stay, though many problems are likely to emerge in the transition from uni-disciplinary to inter-and multi-disciplinary research.

Post modernists too reject the traditional academic cannon as well as traditional subject boundaries dividing studies on the human condition. It is unlikely that any complex human behavior can be explained satisfactorily with the tools from one specific discipline. Different disciplines capture a particular dimension of the phenomenon under study. Each discipline comes with its distinctive variety of assumptions and presuppositions with which a researcher may not be familiar. That is why the overriding imperative for an interdisciplinary study is the need for a common language to describe and explain the complex object of study. With such a paradigm, the social studies would be poised to take off from a segmented proto science to a rigorous interdisciplinary unified science capable of producing reliable and cumulative knowledge.

Different Modes of Engagement of Disciplines

An attempt to integrate knowledge about human conditions and human behavior has resulted in the emergence of different patterns of involvement of various disciplines in particular projects. The basic patterns may be identified as multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary.

These terms are increasingly used in the research literature, but are ambiguously defined and interchangeably used. The following analysis provides a clear understanding of these terms.

1.3.1 Multidisciplinarity

Multidisciplinary is the most basic and initial level of involvement of different disciplines that are working on a problem in a parallel or sequential manner without challenging each other's disciplinary boundaries. Multi-disciplinary team work is increasingly being emphasized in health research, health services, gender studies, social work, education and policy.

Multidisciplinarity according to Klein "is a process for providing a juxtaposition of disciplines that is additive, not integrative. The disciplinary perspectives are not changed but only contrasted". (Klein 1990, p. 56) A painting can be studied not only within art history but also within the history of religion, history and geometry, and the different perspectives can be juxtaposed for highlighting similarities and differences.

In a multidisciplinary team dealing with service delivery, each team members is responsible only for the activities related to his or her own discipline. Individuals from diverse disciplines work together on a common problem, but with limited interaction. According to the **Gulbenkian Commission** 'Area studies' may be cited as the prime example of a multidisciplinary programme (Area studies brings together people from different disciplines within an institutional setting for studying a given geographical or cultural space from different perspectives like sociology, anthropology, history,

psychology producing a disciplinary-based understanding of the object of study. This approach assumes that the division between the various disciplines of social sciences is artificial.

Thus, a multidisciplinary approach evolves new understanding through adapting and modifying existing concepts, methods and theoretical frameworks within a discipline, and borrowing ideas from other disciplines. It draws knowledge from various disciplines without openly violating the boundaries of specific discipline.

1.3.2 Interdisciplinarity

Interdisciplinary implies the emergence of novel insights and understandings of a problem domain through the integration or derivation of different concepts, methods and epistemologies from different disciplines.

Interdisciplinary is a synthesis of two or more disciplines establishing a new level of discourse and integration of knowledge. For example, when nuclear physics is combined with medicine it leads to a new treatment for cancer. Political science is often portrayed as the 'junction subject' of the social sciences, born out of history and philosophy, but also drawing on the insights of cognate disciplines such as economics and sociology, and to some extent, the study of law psychology and geography. This openness to exchange of ideas and concepts between disciplines is the strength for fostering interdisciplinary work within the social sciences.

Interdisciplinary projects involve closer and more frequent collaborative exchanges among researchers drawn from different fields are working together on a common problem. (Rosenfield 1992). In interdisciplinary research, concepts, methodologies are explicitly exchanged and intergraded resulting in a mutual enrichment. Interdisciplinarity, thus, involves interaction among two or more different disciplines, and occurs at the interface between disciplines. This may range from the sharing of ideas to full integration of concepts, methodology, procedures, theory, terminology, data, organisation of research and training. (Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, Canada-2004)

1.3.3 Transdisciplinarity

Transdisciplinary approach provides holistic schemes that subordinate individual disciplines, looking at the dynamics of whole systems. Transdisciplinary teams, using a shared conceptual framework, draw together discipline-specific theories, concepts and approaches to address a common problem. It is thus holistic in nature. The best examples of this approach examples are Marxism and structuralism. Intradisciplinary researchers from different fields not only work closely together on a common problem over an extended period of time but also create a shared conceptual

model of the problem that integrates and transcends their separate disciplinary perspectives (Rosenfield, 1992).

Among these patterns of disciplinary engagement i.e. multi-disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity, the interdisciplinary approach is a more commonly accepted approach in designing and implementing research projects.

Check Your Progress:

Write a few lines about each of the following:

i) *Gulbenkian Commission*

ii) *Multidisciplinarity*

iii) *Intradisciplinarity*

iv) *Transdisciplinarity*

After reading about the differences between various disciplinary approaches to research, let us now focus on interdisciplinary research.

1.4 NEED FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

This approach is not always necessary in all projects. Some projects are so simple and straight forward that they are best performed by one person or experts from one discipline. However, in more complex situations there is a need to look beyond the disciplinary boundaries of a specific discipline (usually the core discipline in which the principal research has been trained).

There are several reasons that make teamwork involving several disciplines more desirable.

- 1) The inherent complexity of the phenomenon under study;
- 2) The desire to explore problems and questions that are not confined to a single discipline,
- 3) The need to solve societal problems,
- 4) The power of new technologies. (*Facilitating Interdisciplinary Research* 2004, No. 2, p. 40).

In general the need for interdisciplinary approach is felt in following situations.

- **To resolve a real world problem**

Disciplines are the outcomes of artificial fragmentation of knowledge. Real world problems are rarely confined to the artificial boundaries of these disciplines. An integrated knowledge system is required to analyse the nature, causes and consequences of these problems. For example, the epidemiology of AIDS or global warming require understanding of diverse disciplines like Medicine, Biology, Meteorology, Economics, etc to solve these problems. The approach is also essential when the subject is felt to have been neglected or even misinterpreted in the traditional disciplinary structure of research institutions, for example, Women's Studies or Ethnic Studies or Area Studies.

- **To provide different perspectives on a problem.**

Modern world problems are complex and multidimensional in nature. It is necessary to understand different perspectives on the problem as examined in different disciplines, and integrate them in toto to get a total picture of the issue. For example, land use patterns may appear differently when examined by different disciplines- Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Geography and Politics. Patriarchy cannot be properly understood without inputs from Sociology, Politics, Economics and Anthropology.

- **To develop a right research question**

An appropriate research question is identified and suitable hypotheses are framed for testing when the approach is interdisciplinary in character. In the area of public health research, the use of biomedical theory -sex and psychology- and the use of social theory- Gender and social capital- is essential to develop the right approach for problem solving and evaluation. The subordinate and exploitative status of women can not be understood without reference to patriarchy and the social economic and political institutions evolved and supporting it.

- **Planning and provision of integrated services such as health care and health education.**

Interdisciplinary team work is required in health and social care services, such as primary health care, public health education, integrated child development, reproductive health and training of medical and nursing students. Such team work can offer a coordinated range of skills, expertise, and clinical experience through inter-professional support. In some cases, the law of the land or guidelines for provision of different services may insist on a team of service providers with a background from different disciplines.

- **Contribution to theory**

The interdisciplinary research in recent years has challenged the traditional theories that are proved to be less realistic. The research has helped to generate new theories that are closer to reality. In the field of Development Economics the new theories of development have incorporated the social, political and institutional dimensions of development.

1.4.1 Characteristics of Interdisciplinary Research Projects

An interdisciplinary project reflects the following characteristics.

- It involves two or more disciplines and joint work.
- Unified problem formulation and sharing of ideas.
- Exchange and integration of concepts and methodologies.
- It is interactive, integrative and collaborative.
- It has an applied orientation.
- It leads to emergence of new knowledge or perspectives, new disciplines e.g., Bioinformatics, Social and Preventive Medicine, Eco philosophy.
- The outcome is more than the sum of the individual parts.

1.4.2 Requirements of Interdisciplinary Approach

The factors that promote interdisciplinary research successfully may be identified as follows:

- ***Nature of the research project:***

If a research project involves an investigation about a complex multidimensional problem and, the epistemology of a single discipline is unable to address the problem at hand, there is a need for interdisciplinary team work to carry out the project. This involves experts from the relevant disciplines to come together and form a team. Many action research projects in applied fields, including evaluation and outcome assessment of programmes need an interdisciplinary approach. The research in development policy is interdisciplinary in character. For instance, the main goal of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is poverty reduction. The goal is set forth as a set of interlinked health, education and production objectives with quantifiable outcomes.

- ***Capacity of the investigator:***

The interdisciplinary approach requires team work. The principal investigator should have leadership qualities to create and lead a team. The investigator should possess a good communication and networking skills. In addition to technical expertise, effective interdisciplinary process requires softer human skills like leadership, empathy, tolerance of difference and strategic ambiguity. The management of human capital depends on the ability and leadership skills of the lead investigator. Three types of leadership tasks need to be performed for interdisciplinary research. These tasks are:

- Cognitive tasks: These focus on meaning-making through a mental model or mindset visioning, thinking, and rethinking stimulating ideas about interaction across various disciplines that generate new understanding and encourage collaborative work modes.
- Structural tasks include management issues of coordination and information exchange including defining objectives, recruitment of experts, accountability for deadlines and deliverables, and facilitating information flows across different disciplinary cultures status, hierarchies and organizational structures.
- Process tasks ensure productive and constructive interaction and communication among members of the team and the associate tasks like arranging meetings, determining ground rules, framework of collaboration and identifying the tasks that make members move towards their objectives.

The mere addition of researchers from various disciplines or with different academic and professional credentials is not sufficient to make a research interdisciplinary. It involves amalgamation of perspectives and skills of the involved disciplines in all phases from developing the study design through data collection data analysis specifying conclusions and preparing reports and publications.

- ***Requirements of the Funding Agencies:***

Interdisciplinary approach is also promoted by funding agencies to produce concrete results for policy formulation. Many funding agencies at national and international level fund interdisciplinary projects. Some of these agencies have framed guidelines for carrying out interdisciplinary research. Funding of projects depends on the research design, level of interdisciplinarity, team of experts identified and the organization of work. The Global Development Network insists that any research projects based on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) should be necessarily interdisciplinary in nature. The International Council of Social Science Research also encourages interdisciplinary projects. Funding for research projects in the fields of health and education require team work. Interdisciplinary grant applications require the selection of referees from more than one discipline, the establishment of a Review Panel with members from different disciplines or panel members from different disciplines in the peer review process.

1.4.3 Levels and Patterns of Interdisciplinary Research

In a four-level typology, Simon and Goode (1989, pp. 220-221) have sketched the range of interactions that occur in both research and teaching in a team work based project. The lowest level is the reductive role of supplying background or contextual information to other disciplines. Elaboration or explanation of findings is the next level, but is still limited. At third higher level of interaction, joint definition of variables or categories occurs and in the highest degree, fundamental questions are refined by integrating all participants' approaches into the research design. Differing degrees of integration and interaction are further evident in methodological versus theoretical issues of interdisciplinary research.

Quality of conceptual collaboration:

The degree is determined by the synthesis of theories and ideologies from various disciplines in the given research project.

Levels of interaction among the members:

This may range from simple communication of ideas to the mutual interaction of organizing concepts, methodologies, epistemologies, terminologies and data in a larger framework.

Degree of communication and sharing:

In an interdisciplinary project, the team members may remain loyal to their respective disciplinary languages and learn each other's terminology or develop and use a common language.

Degree of interpersonal collaboration and team work:

The degree of interdisciplinarity research is also identified by the degree of collaboration among members as indicated by the number of meetings held, exchange of ideas and the commitment of team members involved in the analysis of the problem.

For Boden (1999), the highest levels of the genus Interdisciplinarity are Generalizing Interdisciplinarity and Integrated Interdisciplinarity. In Generalizing Interdisciplinarity, a single theoretical perspective is applied to a wide range of disciplines, such as cybernetics or complexity theory. In Integrated Interdisciplinarity, which Boden pronounces "*the only true interdisciplinary*," the concepts and insights of one discipline contribute to the problems and theories of another, manifested in computational neuroscience and the philosophy of cognitive science. Individuals may find their original disciplinary methods and theoretical concepts modified as a result of cooperation, fostering new conceptual categories and methodological unification (Boden, 1999, pp. 19-22).

1.4.4 Possible Gains from Interdisciplinary Approach

The following may be identified as the broad gains from interdisciplinary research.

- 1) Creativity often requires integrated knowledge that can be derived only through interdisciplinary approach, which results in important contribution to the new field.
- 2) Disciplines have their own limitations in solving complex social problems and understanding the social phenomena. These barriers can be overcome through an interdisciplinary perspective.
- 3) Interdisciplinary knowledge and research operationalises the ideal of unity of knowledge.
- 4) There is greater flexibility and academic freedom as the disciplinary boundaries get blurred.
- 5) It bridges communication gaps across the disciplines there by helping to mobilize the enormous intellectual resources in the direction of greater social rationality and justice.
- 6) Projects in health, gender studies, education, psychology etc. need an integrated approach for analysis of the problem. For example, in psychiatric disorders management, it has been shown that

i) Write a few characteristics of interdisciplinary research.

ii) *What are the requirements that shape interdisciplinarity in research?*

iii) What are the gains of conducting research with interdisciplinary approach?

1.5 DIFFERENCES IN MULTIDISCIPLINARY AND INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

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Multidisciplinary	Interdisciplinary
1. Working with several disciplines	Working between two or more disciplines
2. Members from different disciplines work on different aspects of a project or in parallel or sequential manner, and later add up the results.	Members from different disciplines work jointly on the same project and produce integrated outcomes.
3. Individual goals from different professions are applied to the given problem	Goals are shared among the members.
4. Participants maintain own disciplinary roles while working together.	Participants accept the common role but still maintain a discipline-specific base.
5. Disciplinary boundaries remain unchanged.	Blurring of disciplinary boundaries.
6. External coherence (motivated by a desire to focus on client's needs)	External as well as internal coherence (motivated by a desire to focus on different dimensions of the issue at hand and the needs of the team).
7. Participants learn about each other about their respective disciplines.	Participants learn about and from each other and develop a common understanding.
8. Participants work individually on the specific issue addressed by their respective disciplines, and the results are added up in the final report.	Participants work together and share ideas through mechanisms like meetings, workshops and give a concrete shape to ideas and outcomes. The report includes the analysis in an integrated form.
9. Methodologies are discipline-specific Common methodologies are framed out of integration of methodologies of different disciplines.	Common methodologies are framed out of integration of methodologies of different disciplines.
10. Instrumental, supportive and complementary knowledge or perspective to address a question is generated.	Epistemological innovation involving creation of new knowledge or perspective, even new disciplines.
11. The outcome is the sum of individual parts.	The outcome is more than the sum of the individual parts
12. Graphically analogous to a horizontal series of compartment, each linked by a vertical unidirectional arrow to a higher 'control compartment above'	Graphically analogous to a horizontal series of compartments each linked by a vertical, unidirectional arrow to a higher 'control' compartment above, and bidirectional arrows between pairs of horizontal compartments.

1.6 APPLICATIONS OF INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

Here we will look at application of interdisciplinary approach in **Health Research, Education and Health Care Services**.

Multidisciplinary and Interdisciplinary approaches are commonly adopted in health research and provision of health care services. For instance, in a multidisciplinary team dealing with under-nutrition, members of the team function as independent specialists and assess the status of the child and the family under the direction of a team leader. In an interdisciplinary periodic under nutrition team, members come together as a whole to discuss their individual assessments and develop a joint plan for the child.

Interdisciplinary team work is required in health and social care, such as primary health care, education in health care and training of students. Such a team work can offer a coordinated range of skills, expertise and clinical experience in a setting of inter-professional support.

An integrated health service provider adopts a team approach in attending the health problems of the clients. An interdisciplinary approach to health service delivery necessitates effective communication among the various team members involved in patient care. The team includes not only the professional but the patient and the family and others as well. The end product of this endeavour is a **Health Care Plan** that involves effective collaboration between the Team members. Team practice has led the professionals to see the clients and their families as whole persons and not as parts of the whole (brain, hands, legs, bones etc.). The knowledge of other disciplines allows professional to accommodate larger functional goals and integrated health interventions instead of working on disabilities. For the patient also it is beneficial to get total information than the partial explanation offered by each specialist. Interdisciplinary brings together diverse knowledge and skills and can result in quicker decision making. It may also help to reduce redundant and fragmented services and thereby help to attain cost efficiency.

Interdisciplinarity in this form is observed in various health packages such as treatment of AIDS, Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) programme, nutrition and multi drug therapy in leprosy

1.7 INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH IN WOMEN'S STUDIES

Women's Studies was initiated as the academic response to the women's movements and the human rights ideologies of 1970s. The absence of gender perspectives in teaching, curricula and research was observed across various

disciplines. The need for new approaches and methods to address gender issues resulted in the development of an interdisciplinary structure. Women's studies is a well organized discipline today, and has a research field in its own right with its journals, research centers and study programmes. Interdisciplinarity is stated to be the main characteristic of the field, formulated both as a means as well as an end. From the outset empirical data about the reality of women's lives was developed from different disciplines like Sociology, Anthropology, Economics and History, which fed into the emerging feminist theory and philosophy. The School of French Feminist Research is a prime example of such interdisciplinary research.

Research in gender studies continues to be interdisciplinary in nature due to the fact that gender cuts across disciplines, and the established disciplines have to evolve to incorporate the gender component. Interdisciplinary research projects in women studies are considered essential to develop feminist perspectives in other disciplines. The interaction of feminist methodology with disciplines enables to understand not only gender differences, but also how such a differences intersects with caste, class, patriarchy and religion. Indeed, intersectionality is the methodological hallmark of interdisciplinarity in women and gender studies.

Check Your Progress:

- i) *Name three situations where interdisciplinary research is more suitable.*

- ii) *Write a few characteristics of interdisciplinary research.*

The following section looks into interdisciplinary feminist research

1.8 INTERDISCIPLINARY FEMINIST RESEARCH

It is a fact that women's studies is involved in gaining knowledge about women from various disciplines. But, the association of women's studies with other disciplines has not been very successful in the creation of distinct feminist spaces within these disciplines. Though the feminist challenges have been well received in the disciplines, particularly the social sciences, yet there is no significant dent made on their basic framework of analysis. They continue to remain gender blind. The boundaries created by institutions and associations are stronger and rigid than those created by intellectual theories.

Research project in gender studies are interdisciplinary at various levels but team members still retain their identity in individual disciplines. Gender research has been dominated by social scientists who are yet to accept the paradigm of post structuralism. These are those who believe that goals of women's studies are best served when gender is integrated within existing disciplines and there are others who feel that women and gender studies should be separate autonomous disciplines along the lines of other social sciences. Consequently, tensions around theoretical perspectives and approaches and around disciplines persist.

At a practical level, the difficulties continue due to the disciplinary structure of universities. Academic programmes, evaluations and publications are still discipline-oriented and accordingly funded. Though several universities have programmes on women's studies, feminist perspectives are almost absent from the rest of curriculum. Interdisciplinarity is thus, reduced to strict disciplinarity. At present, there seems to be a movement towards adopting a dual strategy, integration through interdisciplinarity of methods and disciplinization through conceptualisation. While earlier the driving force was the Women's movement, new theoretical, political paradigms like post structuralism, post colonialism are driving research paradigms in women and gender studies. Gender is made a theoretical issue attracting the new generation students and researchers from different disciplines. The Women's Studies Centre becomes a natural meeting ground for developing both teaching and research on these lines.

The lively debates on disciplines, methodologies and theories notwithstanding, feminist researchers have always been self-reflexive, self critical and constantly evolving a number of alternative methodologies which question 'the reality' that could be objective and lying outside the subjects themselves. Feminist researchers have emphasized the role of collective and interactive knowledge production over the individual contribution.

1.9 INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH: PRACTICAL ISSUES

Let us now read about some of the practical issues that concerns interdisciplinary approach in research.

Divergent paradigms:

Interdisciplinary research reflects divergent paradigms in the physical and social science and humanities with associated differences in underlying premise and methodologies. The physical and social sciences employ a positivist or post positivist mode of inquiry in which it is presumed that an appreciable reality exists and it objectively knowable. The methodologies are primarily hypothesis- driven and make use of experimentation to achieve objectivism. The starting point for all collaboration is a common problem or question. The humanities employ a critical theory or constructivist mode of enquiry in which reality is presumed to be experientially-based, and historically shaped, and its understanding is only relative in nature. The approach emphasizes subjectivism and the inherent interactions between the investigator and the object or subject of study. In gender studies, a mix of both the approaches is observed, which means that such divergent paradigms set a limitation on interdisciplinarity.

Epistemological Sovereignty:

It is often observed that must interdisciplinary research ends up giving a dominant role to a single discipline or epistemology subordinating others to a support role. For instance, if an economist formulates the research questions for a project and only later invites a social scientist for investigation, the research typically remains framed by economic theory limiting the scope of the social scientist's inputs. The discipline of the lead researcher often dominates the terrain in such research. An interdisciplinary project needs to be framed keeping interdisciplinarity in mind from the outset beginning with the choice of research questions.

Problems of Collaboration and Integration:

Interdisciplinary teams have been found to be successful in clinical and comprehensive health care services delivery and medical education. But team work is not always effective and does not always deliver what it promises to deliver. Interpersonal conflicts and disciplinary disagreements are likely to emerge. A substantial amount of time has to be spent by team members from various disciplines in communicating and understanding each other, which may be cumbersome. Lack of confidence and mistrust among specialists from other disciplines can crop up obstructing effective decision-making. In addition, team members' perceptions of their respective roles and contribution to the team may clash. These issues may destroy a team (Rotherberg, 1981)

Effectively functioning teams are essential for making interdisciplinary projects successful. Administrators must allow time for the team members to plan, practice and critique their work together, while simultaneously encouraging a sharing of information and skills. When team leaders and team members sincerely commit their time and professional expertise, the results have been found to be good. Henry Ford summarises the challenges and benefits of team work succinctly *“coming together is the beginning; keeping together is progress, working together is success”*. (Erika Anderson : erikaanderson.com.)

Evaluation of Interdisciplinary Research:

Evaluation of interdisciplinary research poses many problems. There are no set norms or parameters to assess the quality of research and verify the results. Experts from more than one discipline, profession and field are required. The variety of goals, size, scope, scale, level and degree of integration, epistemological and methodological mixing, pluralism of values and interests etc. make this kind of research difficult to evaluate. A commonly agreed upon assessment yardstick needs to be developed with adequate indicators reflecting different dimensions of the research.

1.10 LET US SUM UP

Interdisciplinary method is now establishing firm roots in different domains of academic and applied research, cutting across disciplinary streams, ideologies, assumptions and areas of practice. It is generally accepted that efforts to involve more than one discipline are valuable and beneficial. It forms the base of feminist research. It is being widely used in health research, health care services, health education and health policy. Funding agencies often call for research proposals that involve multiple disciplines. Teaching and research in Women Studies continues to be interdisciplinary in character, despite many hurdles and institutional barriers. However, there are numerous difficulties in carrying out research projects that are interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary in nature. Team work is difficult to organize and manage. Yet, interdisciplinarity is now accepted as an unquestionable given in research all over the world. The quest is to find out the ways and means of carrying out the research more effectively and spread the horizon of research to integrate knowledge from different disciplines to solve real world problems. The challenge is to evolve epistemologies and develop a common language to make multidisciplinary/interdisciplinarity a reality.

1.11 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Discuss with the help of examples, the concepts of interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinarity.

- 2) Explain the need and requirements of interdisciplinary research.
- 3) Discuss interdisciplinary research method as a feminist research method.
- 4) Discuss the basic problems and issues involved in interdisciplinary research.

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UNIT 2 CONCEPTUALIZING A RESEARCH PROJECT

G. Uma

Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objectives
- 2.3 Selection of Topics and Formulating Research Questions
- 2.4 Criteria for Evaluating Research Questions
- 2.5 Conceptualizing a Topic
- 2.6 Factors Affecting the Selection of Topics
- 2.7 Unit of Analysis
- 2.8 Understanding Variables
- 2.9 Relationship among Variables
- 2.10 Research Proposal for Doctoral Research
- 2.11 Managing Resources
- 2.12 Let Us Sum Up
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2.1 INTRODUCTION

There are several sources of inspiration for good research ideas, but as a beginning exercise, it is perhaps most helpful to select a group, or an individual, or a set of behaviours and attitudes in which you have some personal interest. Whatever topic a researcher chooses, personal interest plays a vital role. As a postgraduate student, the topic you have chosen to study/ research on may lead to further exploration or it may provide you the scope for professional development and employment. So, several factors play a crucial role in selecting the research topic. Once the topic chosen, there are scientific research methods to convert the topic into researchable form. In this Unit, we will discuss how to find a viable topic, formulate relevant research questions, develop a hypothesis, identify important variables and conceptualise different stages of social science research in general.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Examine criteria for selecting research topics;
- Explain the significance of formulating research questions;
- Analyze factors affecting research topic in social science research;
- List significant issues in selecting a research topic;
- Explain relevant variables and relationships among variables;
- Define unit of analysis; and
- Outline a research proposal, data collection and data analysis procedures.

2.3 SELECTION OF TOPICS AND FORMULATING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To initiate *exploratory* research, you will just need to identify the subject for investigation. To move beyond exploration to description and explanation, you will need to begin specifying the research problem - a question or questions concerning your topic that you believe are most important to answer. Let us assume that you want to understand the reasons for violence against women in Indian society. This problem has to be converted into research questions. To begin with, to convert this general interest into a design for research, the researcher might formulate questions like: what are the reasons for violence against women? Subsequently, the researcher would need to refer to some literature on violence against women. Afterwards, the researchable problem has to be converted into a set of research questions: Why is there violence in society against women? If violence increases over a period of time, what are its consequences on society? What happens to the relationships between men and women in the family? etc.

The formulation of a research problem narrows the topic to manageable proportions and suggests strategies for the research design, particularly possible variables to be used and the settings for collection of data.

Sometimes the purpose of a study is as important as the topic in determining research design. We may discover the purpose of a piece of research by asking why and to whom it is useful to have the answers to the questions being asked. Sometimes there is no special motive for research other than to explore some phenomenon or to add to human knowledge in a particular area. In this situation, the investigator enjoys a great deal of freedom in defining concepts and operationalizing variables. However, in other cases

like deductive inquiry or applied social science research, the purpose of the investigation is much more focused. In that case, a specific hypothesis is being tested, or human behaviour is being evaluated according to a predetermined set of criteria. In these instances, the purpose of the study has a profound effect on research design. Indeed, we often cannot begin to choose the most appropriate measuring tools for the variables we are manipulating until we know why the data are being collected in the first phase.

Formulating suitable research questions from a research problem is the significant step in both qualitative and quantitative research. As you learnt in the previous units of Block 2 and Block 3 of this course, qualitative research is more open-ended than the quantitative research. Research questions help in collecting the right kind and amount of data to address the research problem. According to Alan Bryman (2008), research questions are important because they guide:

- your literature search;
- in deciding what data you need to collect;
- your analysis of the collected data;
- in writing of your research report; and
- prevent you from losing focus of your research..

Research questions can be derived from a wide variety of contexts like personal interests/ experiences, existing theories and available research on the topic.

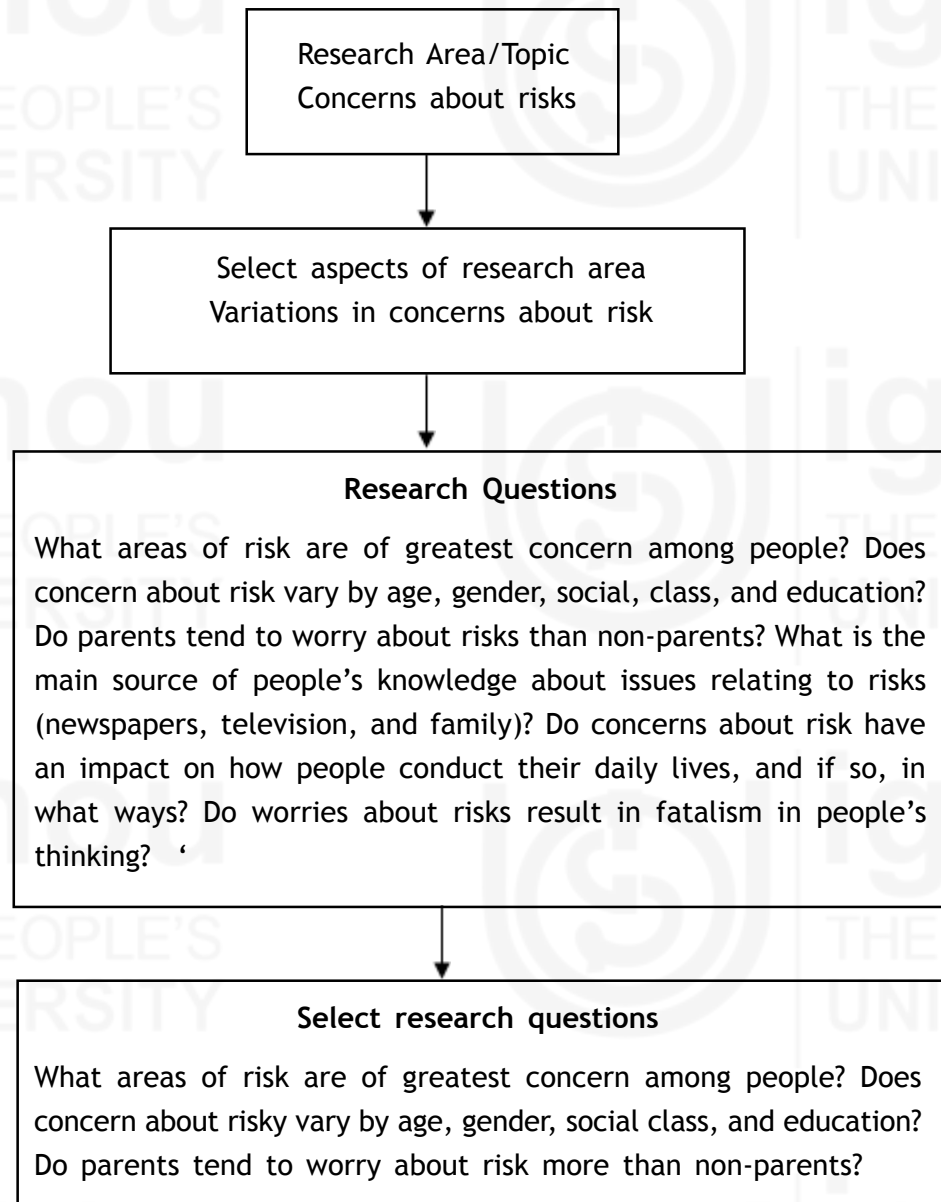
2.4 CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following points will give you an idea on how research questions can be formulated:

- Research questions should be clearly stated, uncomplicated in form with the capacity to be researchable.
- The researcher should ensure that the research questions are original and the ideas are his/her own.
- Research questions should neither be too narrow nor too broad.
- It should be possible to convert research questions to objectives and, from the objectives one should be able to draw hypothesis and develop methodologies to respond to them.

- Research questions should have some connections with already established theory and research. This means that there should be a literature which one can draw from. This will facilitate the researcher in formulating research questions. Even if you choose a topic that has been scarcely addressed by social scientists, it is unlikely that there will be no relevant literature.
- All research questions should be interrelated to develop overall argument in the final report. Unrelated research questions create confusion.

The figure given below will make the whole process more clear to you.



Source: Alan Bryman, Social Research Methods, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 71

Figure 2.1: Steps in Selecting Research Questions

Let us now read, how to comptualize a research topic.

2.5 CONCEPTUALIZING A TOPIC

Once your topic has been chosen and a more specific research problem has been formulated, some **conceptualization** is necessary. The researcher will need to *discover*:

- 1) Which concepts are most appropriate to the chosen topic?
- 2) Which variables follow from these concepts, and how they are defined?
- 3) How do the variables relate to one another?
- 4) What are the specific sources of data? Ideally, in *inductive* scientific inquiry, each of these tasks is accomplished gradually, after research is initiated. The answers emerge as the investigator proceeds. By contrast, the more *deductive* the strategy for inquiry, the more likely it is that all four issues will be tackled together at an early stage in research design, before the investigator goes into the field. You have read about inductive and deductive method in Unit 1, Block 2 of this course.

There are two major types of reasoning are deduction and induction. The difference between two depends on the researcher's strength and claim on a particular research problem and how comes to conclusion based on his idea. According to **Singleton and Straits** (1999, pp. 45-50)

"When a person uses deductive reasoning, or presents a deductive argument, he or she is claiming that the conclusion absolutely must be true if all the premises are true.(all the syllogisms that we have considered henceforth are deductive arguments.) When a person argues inductively, he or she is claiming that the conclusion is probably true but not necessarily true if all the premises are true".

Box No. 2.1

Distinction between Inductive and Deductive Forms of Logic

The deductive method takes a few axioms or so-called true statements with the aim of proving other true statements or theorems, which logically emanate from them. The inductive method, on the other hand, makes many observations about nature, with the aim of discovering a few but strong statements about how nature works or about what are the laws and theories that are at the back of how nature appears to us.

In the deductive method, logic is the main operating tool. If a statement emanates logically from the axioms, it must be true. In the inductive method (often called the scientific method), observation of nature is the main operating tool. If an idea is in conflict with what occurs in nature, the idea has to be given up as useless.

ii) What are the points to be kept in mind while evaluating research questions.

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2.6 FACTORS AFFECTING SELECTION OF THE TOPIC

Selection of topic is the first step in the process of doing research. As we have learnt, any problem which affects society could be the topic of research in social sciences. It could be an issue about which we desire more knowledge like what are the situations in which people adopt risky behaviours; or it could be a practical issue like how to reduce violence against women in society. The following factors play a crucial role in the selection of topics in the social science research.

- The researcher chooses a topic with the goal of advancing the scientific knowledge in the existing discipline. The existing organization of disciplines helps the researcher to choose the field of interest and for selecting a specific topic. For example, gender studies students can choose to trace the history of women's movement, study the facets of the women's movement in the present context, examine problems faced by women in different societies, examine violence and dowry problems in India, reason for lack of women's representation in legislatures at state and national level, study marriage as an institution, relationship of gender and caste, quest for autonomy, different feminist thought in India, women's issues in the development spectrum, etc.
- The focus and development of social science research is closely connected societal problems and the problems human beings face in general. Inequality of the sexes, problems of dalits, violence in society is some areas of social science research in different disciplines.
- Personal interest and motivations also play a crucial part in selecting research areas/topics. Research involves a lot of time, money and hard work. Formulating a research problem requires a lot of reading and thinking, especially when identifying gaps in existing scholarship which can become the starting point of new research. Personal interest and motivation play a crucial part in topic selection. For instance, Social Psychologist **Zick Rubin** (1976, pp. 508-9), identifies several reasons why he chose to research on the topic of romantic love. Firstly, he needed a topic for his psychology dissertation and secondly, the topic he decided upon was barely explored by psychologists having been largely confined to the domain of literature, especially poetry.
- Selection of the topic is influenced by social premiums. This includes availability of funds, popularity of the topic and prestige. For example, the United Nations play an important role in integrating women's issue into national development of member states. The period 1976-1985 was declared as the International Decade for Women. During this period, most of the research concentrated on the issues related to women and development. At present, climate change is the topic which is attracting social as well as natural scientists' attention. Gender issues are also integrated into the climate change: individuals and institutions doing

research on the topic examine the impact of climate change on women and their livelihoods. They consider climate change as the biggest threat in the 21st century. The international scientific community has urged the world community to stabilize the level of carbon emissions in the atmosphere in order to avoid future ecological disaster. Several international summits like the Inter Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have been organized to find solutions to the problem of climate change largely due to global warming. Looking at the gravity of the problem and the temporary relatively easy availability funds, researchers tend to do research on climate change. Existing disciplines like Economics, Women's and Gender studies and Development studies are integrating climate change in research agendas, and researchers are encouraged to explore the different dimensions of the phenomenon and propose concrete strategies to address the problem to avert a global disaster.

- Apart from individual skills and interest and social exigencies, availability and accessibility of reliable data, expertise in identifying and developing the research agenda and the state of development of a particular discipline also exert their influence. The choice of a research topic may be affected by any of the above mentioned factors or all of them. Initially, personal Interest may play a role in the selection of the topic, but it has to be further justified on how it will contribute to the existing theoretical knowledge in the discipline and/or how the findings of the study will help in addressing social issues and problems.

Whenever a researcher chooses a topic, the chosen topic has to be reformulated as in researchable terms in the form of a research proposal. This involves translating the chosen topic into more clearly defined, specific questions or problems that are amenable to being researched. Both choosing a research problem and finalizing a research proposal require a literature review. By analyzing existing material related to the research topic, the researcher may find research gaps, and new questions may arise. In the process of literature review, researcher may decide the directions the research will take and the concretization of a researchable problem and specific questions, the units to be studied, etc.

2.7 UNIT OF ANALYSIS

According to Royce A. Singleton, Jr. and Bruce C. Straits (1999, p. 57),

“the entities (objects or events) under study are referred to in social research as unit of analysis. Social Scientists study a variety of units (also called elements or cases). These may include individual persons, social roles, positions, relationships, a wide range of social groupings such as family, kinship, organizations, cities, villages, documents, etc. The unit of analysis is who is analyzed and described and what is analyzed and described”.

For example, if a researcher wants to know the reasons for high rate of poverty among women, he or she could trace the development historically and/or collect data in the present context. Some research questions could be:

- Is it a fact that historically women are vulnerable in society and face persistent poverty?
- Is poverty a feminine phenomenon? Or has modernization made them more vulnerable? Here, the purpose of the study is to find out the reasons and who is described and what is analyzed.

The Researcher has to be clear in getting information about the selected sample to decide the unit of analysis. S/he must also understand that the selected sample may be individuals or a group (the individuals they belong to). In this regard, **Singleton and Straits** (1999, p.), differentiate between individuals and group.

“Information about one set of units that is statistically combined to describe larger social unit called aggregate data. If collective information about a particular group is used on a statistical summary basis simply to describe the makeup of individuals within the group, then the unit of analysis is the individual. However, if aggregate information is used to compare different groups or collectivities, then the unit of analysis is the group”.

The following example will give you a better understanding of what is understood by a unit of analysis. If researcher wants to study a woman in an organization, then a woman is a unit of analysis, provided the objective of the research is to find the characteristics of women. But if a researcher's objective is to examine the women members' role in an organization and how organization responds to women members' needs, then the organization itself is the unit of analysis. The data collected from the women in an organization will describe the organization culture/policy rather than women. So, the unit of analysis is organization. The following table will describe and give you an idea of unit of analysis and variables.

The researcher's primary objective is to observe the unit of analysis and the relationship among the characteristics of the unit of analysis. **Singleton and Straits** (1999, p. 67) write

“Characteristics of unit vary, taking on different values, categories, or attributes for different observations, are called variables. Variables may vary over cases, over time, over both cases and time”.

For an example, if you take individuals, the characteristics may vary from individual to individual like age, gender, marital status and these are called variables. Along with this, variable may vary from a individual over a period of time such as age, level of education and income.

Researcher should not confuse variables with attributes. For example, Gender is a variable consisting of male. Likewise, marital status is a variable and the single, divorces, separated are the categories in the variable.

There are different types of variables like independent variable and dependent variable. (You have studied variables in detail in the Unit 1, Block 3 of this Course). Read again to know more about types of variables in relating to research question and unit of analysis.

Table 2.2

Research Question/Hypothesis	Unit of Analysis	Variables
What one wants to know?	What entities are described and compared	With respect to what characteristics
Are older people more afraid of crime than younger people?	Individuals	Age, fear of crime
The greater the growth of air passenger traffic at a city's airport, the greater the economic growth	Cities	Growth of air traffic, economic growth
The higher the proportion of female employees, the lower the wage in 19 th century factories	Factories	Proportion of employees who are female, average wage
Does economic development lower the birth rate?	Nations	Level of economic development and birth rate
The longer the engagement period, the longer the marriage	Couples(dyad)	Length of engagement, marriage duration
Fan support in the National Basket Ball Association (NBA), as measured by attendance, is not related to the proportion of black players of the team.	NBA teams Individuals	Racial composition of the team, average attendance
Student's grade point average is directly related to his or her class attendance.	Students	Grade-Point average, attendance record

Source: Royce A. Singleton, Jr. and Bruce C. Straits, "Approaches to social research, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 71

Thus, major issue involved in formulating a research problem is drawing out of units of analysis. Based on the units of analysis, the researcher can collect the data for analysis.

Take up the following exercise to assess you understanding of last few section.

Check Your Progress:

- i) *What factors affect selection of a research topic?*

- ii) *What is understood by unit of analysis?*

In the following section read more about variables.

2.8 UNDERSTANDING VARIABLES

When you conceptualize any topic, you need to choose or create categories or characteristics that are relatively simple and straightforward. These important categories or characteristics chosen on the basis of the research question become variables. Each variable should be conceived of in a way that allows for it to be readily and precisely measured. The same principle applies in the selection or construction of theory (that is, the overall blueprint for relating one variable to other variables).

Social Scientists classify variables in several ways. Once the researcher identifies the research problem, she/he can observe or measure many potentially relevant properties or variables. Those variables selected for analysis are called **explanatory variables** and all other variables are called **extraneous variables**. (kish, 1965).

There are two principle types of explanatory variables: dependent and independent variables (Refer Unit 1 of Block 3 for more details). In relation to specific independent and dependent variables, there are antecedent and intervening variables. An antecedent variable occurs prior in time to both independent and dependent variables. For examples, the national survey in US shows that a child's academic achievement depends on the type of schools s/he attends. The private school students show higher academic achievement than the public school students. In relation to independent variable - type of school, dependent variable - academic achievement, the antecedent variable would be parents' income. The intervening variables would be the students' attendance, teaching methods, nature of assessment etc.

The control variables are constant and they won't any change in the course of observation. Another distinction in variables is quantitative and qualitative variables. If the variables are quantitative, the differences are expressed numerically. But qualitative variables are discrete categories usually designated by words or labels, and non-numerical differences between categories.

Like individuals in social relationships, different variables are also interrelated in research. Events precede or follow the occurrence of other events. At the same time, pairs or combinations of things occur together or change together. Social scientists are interested in the relationships among variables, and the nature and extent of impact that one variable has on other variables. This can be studied by using qualitative or quantitative data collection methods.

2.9 RELATIONSHIPS AMONG VARIABLES: EXAMPLES FROM WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES

The prime objective of social science research is to find relationships among variables. When we look at research in women's/gender studies, the focus is to pin point the reasons for unequal treatment of girls and women and how power relations are operating in the society. Since the late 18th century, social scientists have developed a variety of theories to explain differences among human beings. Let us read about a few of them.

Feminist anthropologists have argued that the organization of social and economic relations such as social stratification, the monogamous family, ownership of property, and forms of work and production have greatly influenced gender differences. Work in this discipline has not only focused on theory and conceptual development but, studies on women's status and position has also built in an action component to bring appropriate legislations and policy for concrete change in the lives of women in particular and society at large. For example, studies have shown that more than one billion people live in poverty around the world, and a great majority of

them are women. This leads to the violation of their basic human rights to food, adequate housing, a safe and healthy living environment, health and well being, social security, employment and development (Beijing Platform for Action 1995, Global Framework).

Researchers explore the reasons, why more women are suffering in poverty and whether trickledown effect is happening or not, and how to bring appropriate policies to change the situations. Gender and Development Expert, **Momsen** (2011) has given some reasons. According to her, the after-effects of colonialism in poor countries of the South and those with economies in transition including rapid industrialization have had an adverse impact on women increasing gender discrimination. For instance, the modernization in agriculture and other sectors has resulted in decreasing subsistence activities formerly overwhelmingly undertaken by women. Often, a majority of the better-paid jobs involving new technology go to men. Modernization of agriculture has also altered the division of labour between the sexes, increasing women's dependent status as well as workload. This was shown by **Esther Boserup** in her study on the African agricultural pattern after the introduction of modernization (Boserup, 2007). Women often lose control over resources such as land, and are generally excluded from access to improved agricultural methods.

According to 2010-2011 **Karnataka Households Asset Survey**, women owned only 16 per cent of the total wealth in the richest 20 per cent of rural households. In rural areas 71 per cent of all plots of land were owned by men and only 14 per cent were owned by women. On the other hand, new low-paid and low skilled jobs for young women are also created in factories producing goods for export. Rapid urbanization and the decline of agriculture have also resulted in rapid migration of male to the urban areas. This has resulted in more women being left behind to support children.

Many studies in Africa and South Asian countries have shown that male income is less likely to be spent on the family, whereas women spend their earnings for the welfare of the family. The study conducted by **Ashok Pankaj** and **Rukmini Tankha** on Employment Guarantee Programme titled "Empowerment Effects of the NREGS on Women Workers: A study in Four States, shows that 68 percent of women workers are collecting income by themselves and due to this there is greater control on their earnings. The study also pointed out that women were able to retain their income partly or fully and were able to exercise their choice to use the income. They spent their income on daily consumption items, household durables, health and education of children, visiting relatives and on social ceremonies. (Ashok Pankaj and Rukmini Tankha, 2010)

In the above examples, studies in a way anticipate the expected results. According to. **Singleton, Jr. and Straits (1999)** anticipated relationships are implicit in the researcher's implicit focus. If a gender expert looks at

any house, it is not with the eyes of the architect, but the gender experts look at the house from gender perspective, and how suitably designed the building is for girls and women to live in .

Another important aspect of research is building of a perspective in the minds of researchers. If the issue is gender, then the researchers must build a perspective on the history of feminist movements and different feminist theories. This will give a clear idea about the arguments that the research seeks to advance. Understanding and using appropriate theories in research is vital. Facts alone (whether the researcher collects data through quantitative/qualitative methods) never give results. Anticipating relationships among variables and using appropriate theories will provide results. We will see how theories will help us to understand the causal relationships.

Box No. 2.2

Experience of students- How theory influences the research questions

Rebecca Barnes's interest in feminist theories relating to patriarchy influence her selection of women-to- women partner abuse as a focus for her enquiries.

I became interested in the topic of women to women partner abuse as an undergraduate. My first encounter with this subject area took the form of a theoretical engagement with feminist explanations for domestic violence- primarily emphasizing patriarchy - and the ways in which engaging knowledge about violence and abuse in female same sex relationships challenges this understanding. It was as a result of this first encounter that I became aware of the scarcity of research in this area, particularly in the U.K, where this subject was virtually uncharted territory. I was at this point interested in pursuing a postgraduate study, and thus decided to conduct my own U.K based study on women to women partner abuse for my Ph.D

What forms and dynamics of abuse do women experience in same-sex relationships? What opportunities and challenges do women experience with regard to seeking support for women-to-women partner abuse? What impacts does being abused by a female partner have upon women's identities and biographies? How women's accounts of women-to-women are partner abuse similar to and different from heterosexual women's accounts of partner abuse?

(The above case study is adopted from Bryman, Alan: , Social Research Methods, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 71)

In the following section you will read about the requirements of research proposals for academic research.

2.10 RESEARCH PROPOSALS FOR DOCTORAL RESEARCH

In the process of preparing the dissertation/ thesis, the first step is to prepare a research proposal. The **Research Proposal** gives an idea of what the proposed research intends to find out. And how it is planning to do so? The proposal contains the specific research problem of the proposed research and the research methods used for engaging with the research issue. The background to the topic in the literature and the specific research questions will also form part of the proposal.

The background knowledge emerges through the review of literature of the proposed topic. Based on the proposal, the researcher will be allocated a supervisor who is the expert in the field. Discussions with the expert-mentor, on the proposed topic will help the student to sharpen the research. Other elements of the proposal are the objective(s) and plan of the study, sources of data and methods of data collection. The research proposal is only a working document. And the ideas set in the research proposal can be refined and developed as the research progresses.

Once the research questions are clear, the student/ researcher can develop the objectives of the research based on the research questions. After objectives have been developed, the methods of data collection and data collection instruments have to be identified and developed. Prior to initiating the research, a pilot study is often undertaken to test the data collection tools developed for the purpose. Suitable changes can be made in the research protocol thereafter. Access is also an important issue in data collection. If the researcher wants to collect data from closed settings like organizations, prior permission has to be obtained before proceeding. Another issue is access to the right people from whom data can be collected. Sometimes this is an arduous process because key informants have to be identified through influential persons, and their consent to participate in the research obtained before data collection can begin. Sampling of informants is an important matter.

Answering the following questions will help the researcher in sampling:.

- Who do you need to study in order to investigate the research questions?
- How easily can you gain access to a sampling framework?
- What kind of sampling strategy will you employ?
- Can you justify the choice of sampling?

Here are a few tips for students who want to undertake a research study.

- Maintaining field notes of the research is useful to undertake the research work and assess progress during the research.

- If you are doing survey using postal questionnaires, keeping the record of how many questionnaires you have sent and to whom, when and where is essential. When receiving the filled questionnaires, one has to keep a record of how many questionnaires have been received and how many of them are yet to be received.
- If the researcher is using the participant observation method to collect the data, keeping good field notes is vital.
- Regular coding of data is essential. If you are collecting data using quantitative methods, data entry using statistical packages (like SPSS) becomes necessary. If you are using qualitative methods to collect data, field notes have to be transcribed regularly.
- Learning usage of data analysis packages is important.
- Issues of personal convenience, safety and comfort also play an important role in data collection, and should be considered while planning the research.

2.11 MANAGING RESOURCES

A student should know how to use human, time and financial resources optimally.

The first thing that students should keep in mind is that they should choose a topic which is not only of interest to them but it should also be researchable. All institutions and universities allocate a supervisor to the students. Allotted supervisors are subject experts who know the research area well and they have the skill to facilitate the students to carry out the research. Students must have discussion with the supervisor at every stage of the research process like formulating the research question, finalizing the interview schedules, analyzing data, drafting of dissertation/ thesis, etc. Supervisors have also gone through the same process while submitting their thesis and research papers to various peer reviewed journals, and applying for research grants. Thus, their experience will help the student in carrying out his/her research.

Research is a time bound activity. Students and researchers should understand how to manage time and resources in a judicious manner. With regard to graduate and postgraduate students, their research activities are part of their degree programme. They may get three to four months to complete the entire research process, including writing reports, printing and viva-voce. With regard to doctoral students, they may get maximum 5 years to complete the research. Students can work out the time table with the supervisor's advice detailing different stages of research. The time table should specifically mention the starting and completion dates of particular activities. Some activities like searching for new research in the area,

review of literature, etc. are ongoing activities carried out simultaneously with other activities like data collection, data analysis etc.

Before starting the research, analyzing the available resources is important. Research needs resources for different activities like printing of schedules, travel costs for library visits, photocopying, secretarial assistance, purchasing stationery, data collection, etc. etc. Acquiring resources and, managing costs are important considerations. While collecting data, they may need equipments like recorders. They should find out whether the university loans the equipment or whether they need to hire/purchase it themselves. Researchers may need specialized software like **SPSS packages** or qualitative data analysis package like **NVivo**. Such software for analyzing data are too costly for students to purchase without assistance. They should find out whether the university will provide required software or not. Addressing all these practical concerns will help a student determine whether the particular research topic is feasible or not.

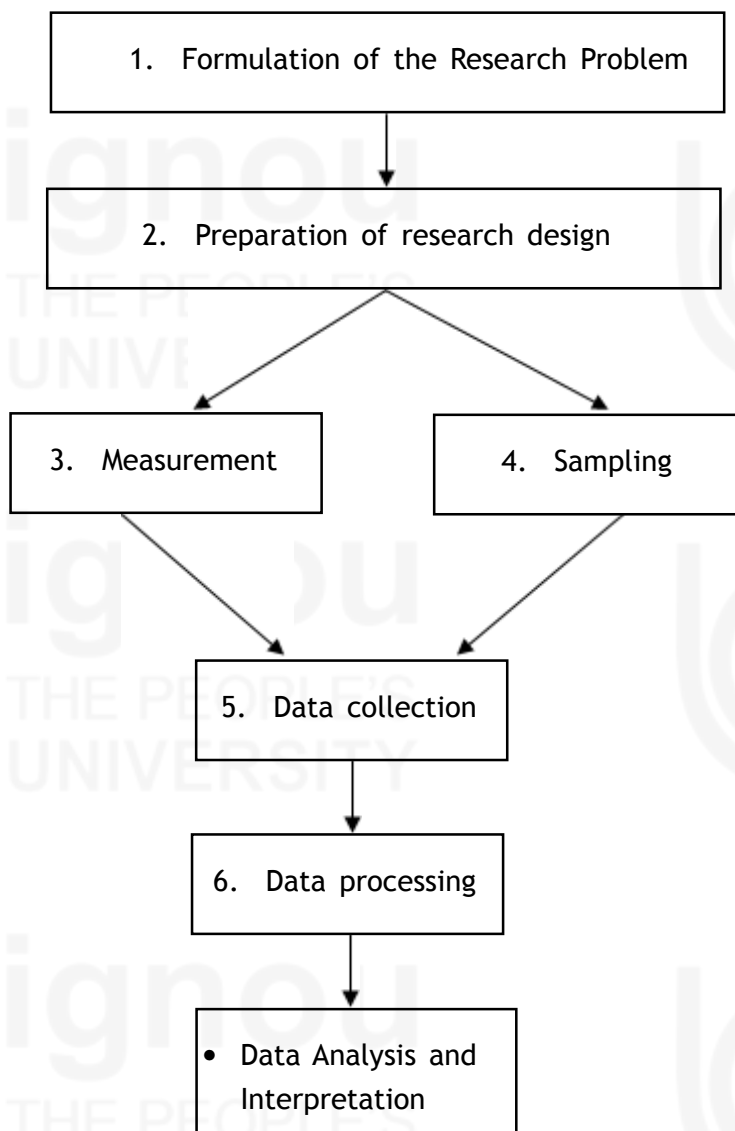


Figure 2.2: Stages of Social Research

Source: Royce A. Singleton, Jr. and Bruce C. Straits; Approaches to Social Research, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p.92.

2.12 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we looked at the factors affecting choice of research topic, identifying the research problem, choosing appropriate data collection methods, sampling, piloting, data analysis and report writing. All these issues were discussed with suitable examples, and the significance of formulating research questions has also been explained. Identification of unit of analysis, variables and their role in social science research has also been discussed to help you in understanding of carrying out a research study. Finally, we discussed in the concept of the research proposal and how it is important for a research student to manage the available resources.

2.13 GLOSSARY

Field Notes : A detailed chronicle by an ethnographer of events, conversations, and behaviour, and the researcher's initial reflections on them.

Hypothesis : An informed speculation, which is set up to be tested, about the possible relationships between two or more variables. For ex., if the social solidarity of one group is higher than that of another, then its suicide rate will be lower.

2.14 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) What are the important factors that need to be kept in mind while choosing the research topic?
- 2) Discuss the role of the supervisor in research.
- 3) What are the different stages in social science research? Discuss each stage with suitable examples.

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UNIT 3 RESEARCH TOOLS FOR PROJECTS, PAPERS AND REPORTS

Vanishree Joseph

Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Objectives
- 3.3 Secondary Data
 - 3.3.1 Advantages of Secondary Data
 - 3.3.2 Disadvantages of Secondary Data
- 3.4 Library and Online Research
 - 3.4.1 Advantages of Using the Library
 - 3.4.2 Disadvantages of Using the Library
 - 3.4.3 Advantages of Using Internet
 - 3.4.4 Disadvantages of Using Internet
- 3.5 Web Databases
- 3.6 Style Manuals
- 3.7 Bibliography
- 3.8 Footnotes, Endnotes and Citations
- 3.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.10 Unit End Questions
- 3.11 References
- 3.12 Suggested Readings

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit deals with research tools used for projects, papers and reports. Data collection for inquiry forms the major part of the research. There are various ways and means to obtain data. In modern days technology plays a crucial role in providing different data sets and data sets based on web is quite widely used now. How web data bases can be used is also discussed in this Unit. Research reports can not be finalized until sources are acknowledged and references are being made. The final section of this Unit deals with the difference types of referencing style. Let us read the objectives of reading this Unit.

3.2 OBJECTIVES

After completing this Unit, you should be able to:

- Analyse the advantages and disadvantages of secondary data;
- Explain the importance of library and online research in the contemporary world;
- Examine the utility of web databases; and
- Explain various referencing styles.

3.3 SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data is obtained from sources which have been collected and compiled for another purpose, but which are available and important for the research being undertaken. It consists of already available compendia, statistical statements and reports. For example census reports, reports of Sample Survey Organization, National Family Health Survey, and Reports of Government Departments can be used by researchers. These secondary sources of data not only consist of published reports but also unpublished records like personnel records of any organization, inventory records, minutes of meetings etc. They are diverse in nature and consist of all kinds of material having common characteristic features. For your understanding those features are listed below:

- They are available in a concrete form;
- These data have been generated independently of the researcher; and
- They are not limited in time and space.

Further, these data can be used by the researcher in the following manner:

- They can be used for reference purposes;
- They can be used as benchmarks against which the findings of the present research may be tested; and
- They may be used as the sole source of information for a research project.
- Research may be carried solely using secondary sources completely depending upon the nature of the research topic and research questions.

Furthermore, secondary sources of data may be classified in terms of internal and external sources. **Internal sources** may be obtained within the **organization where as external** is sought from outside sources. While pursuing research with the use of secondary sources there are certain advantages and disadvantages. These are discussed in the following sub-section.

3.3.1 Advantages of Secondary Data

Data obtained through secondary sources have some advantages.

They can be obtained quickly. Only desk work is involved to collect data once the researcher identifies the location of secondary sources.

- Space and time will not be a constraint for the researcher and s/he can cover wider geographical areas and longer reference periods by sitting at one place.
- By using the a larger set of data spanning different geographical spaces and historical periods, broader generalization can be made.
- Secondary information helps to verify the findings based on primary data.
- Finally, it reduces the cost incurred for research, since the data have already been collected by someone else who has invested money, time and energy.

But secondary data are not free from certain disadvantages which are presented below.

3.3.2 Disadvantages of Secondary Data

- These data may not always meet the requirement of the researcher.
- There is no surety of the accuracy of data.
- These data may not be up-to-date .
- The origin of data may not be available to the researcher. Sometime the accessibility of data depends upon the proximity of its location with the researcher.

However, secondary data is very important for providing some background information to the researcher and will help him/her formulate the research questions. Every researcher should search through the relevant secondary data before collecting primary data. Thus, secondary sources of data are vital for research in all its phases from conceptualization of the research problem to dissemination of research findings.

After reading about secondary data, you will read about the use and importance of library and on line research sources.

3.4 LIBRARY AND ONLINE RESEARCH

Research can not be done without using the sources available in a library. Libraries provide information and knowledge to the researcher. In the modern era of information technology online resources are also playing an important role in providing information and knowledge to the researcher. Both of

them have their own strengths and weaknesses. In this section, the uses of library and online facilities are discussed. In a library, the researcher has physical access to books and materials and on the internet everything is virtual. Nowadays, libraries are also providing access to online resources and the gap between the two is getting narrow. Internet provides access to online resources. The advantages of using internet are:

- Availability of recent and current information around the world.
- Accessibility and convenient to work from anywhere.
- Provides diverse information.
- Easy to download and edit information.
- Requires only minimum skill for use.

But, there certain disadvantages in using the internet for research. They are:

- Available information is unorganized.
- Lack of reliability of available information. Accuracy is not checked often.
- May not be available for longer period.
- Not possible to get information on all topics.
- Payment required for specialized information

On the other hand,using a library for research has many advantages as listed below:

- Easy to identify and locate material in libraries as they follow standard classification systems.
- Resources are not compromised in quality as they have their own selection criteria.
- Library staff can provide assistance in locating needed resources.
- Print form is much easier to read.
- Preserved items and old records and other data of historical importance can be available only in the library.

But, libraries do have some disadvantages and they are:

- Library is not accessible all the time.
- Research has to be carried out in a specific physical time-bound environment, which may not always be convenient .

3.5 WEB DATA BASE

A web database is a wide term for managing data online. A web database gives you the ability to build your own databases/data storage without your being a database guru or even a technical person. There are many types of web databases depending on their usage. Some of the major types of databases are discussed below:

- 1) Catalogs - in both business-to-business and business-to-consumer e-commerce. Catalog databases allow browsers to search items by keywords or combinations of keywords. Many sites provide a local search engine that scours only pages of that particular site.
- 2) Libraries of books, articles, CDs, and movie clips. These types of sites also often include a local search engine that allows a user to search for the keywords in a title, author name, or specific entries in an article. University faculty, staff, and students often have access to such large databases through their institutions. Most of these databases are not owned by the academic institutions, but are operated by organizations that specialize in running library databases such as ABI/Inform and UMI.
- 3) Directories, which can include names, addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses. For instance, professional associations can provide members with access to membership lists.
- 4) Client lists and profiles. Usually, individual users have access to these databases only for the purpose of inserting or updating their own records. A registered username and password are usually required to gain access to these databases.

From a technical point of view, online databases that are used via Web browsers are not different from other databases; however, an interface must be designed to work with the web. The user is provided with a form in which to enter queries or keywords to obtain information from the site's database. The interface designers must provide a mechanism to parse data that users insert in the online forms, so that the data can be placed in the proper fields in the database.

A database is a collection of records that are compiled efficiently to regulate managing, storing and accessing of logically inter-related information. There are two popular types of Databases: Desktop and Server.

Desktop databases are designed to run on personal computers. More popular desktop database products include FileMaker Pro, Microsoft Access and Lotus Approach.

Server databases are generally used by business and organizations as they offer the ability to manage huge amounts of data and allow many users to view and update information simultaneously. Server databases are expensive but are worth the cost for the benefits of data management that they offer.

Attempt the following exercise to assess your learning from the last couple of sections.

Check Your Progress:

i) Write advantages and disadvantages of the following:

a) Secondary data

b) Internet research

ii) What is understood by web based research?

You will now read about different styles of citing references in a publication.

3.6 STYLE MANUAL

A handbook or guide that illustrates the accepted format for citing your references in term papers, theses, articles, etc. is given below:

- *ACS Style Guide*
- *AMA Manual of Style*
- *AP Stylebook*

- *The ASA Style Guide*
- *Bluebook*
- *The Chicago Manual of Style*
- *The Elements of Style*
- *The Elements of Typographic Style*
- *ISO 690*
- *MHRA Style Guide*
- *The Microsoft Manual of Style*
- *MLA Handbook*
- *MLA Style Manual*
- *The New York Times Manual*
- *The Oxford Guide to Style/New Hart's Rules*
- *The Publication Manual of the APA*
- Turabian Style

The section that follows now deals with writing of bibliography in a research publication.

3.7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

A bibliography is a complete or selective list of works compiled on the basis of some common principle, as authorship, subject, place of publication, or publisher.

It is a list of source materials that are used or consulted in the preparation of a work or that are referred to in the text.

Bibliography is also a branch of library science dealing with the history, physical description, comparison, and classification of books and other works.

Bibliographic works differ in the amount of detail depending on the purpose and can generally be divided into two categories: **enumerative** bibliographies (also called compilative, reference or systematic bibliographies), which result in an overview of publications in a particular category; and **analytical** or critical bibliographies, which study the production of books. Earlier, bibliographies mostly focused on books. Now, both categories of bibliography cover works in other areas including audio recordings, motion pictures and videos, graphic objects, databases, CD-ROMs and websites.

Citation styles vary, but an entry for a book in a bibliography usually contains the following elements:

- author(s)
- title
- publisher and place of publication
- date of publication
- place of publication

An entry for a journal or periodical article usually contains:

- author(s)
- article title
- journal title
- volume number
- pages
- date of publication

A bibliography may be arranged by author, topic, or some other scheme. Annotated bibliographies give short descriptions (also known as abstracts) about how each source is useful to an author in constructing an argument or writing a paper. These descriptions, usually a few sentences long, provide a summary of the source and describe its relevance. Reference management software may be used to keep track of references and generate bibliographies as required. **Mendeley** is a software which can be used for reference purpose. **Endnotes** is a name of another software which helps with different reference styles.

After reading about how to write bibliography in different research publications, in the following section you will read about a very important component of any research publication. It is the use of footnotes and endnotes.

3.8 FOOTNOTES AND ENDNOTES

Footnotes are an essential element in presentation of an academic argument. Informed use of footnotes allows you to display full range of readings and research you have undertaken, and avoid weighing down your main text with interesting but tangential information.

You should see footnotes as an opportunity, not as a chore. For these reasons, you should not leave compiling your footnotes to the end of the dissertation writing process. They also often take more time than you expect. You have the choice of using footnotes or endnotes. In either case they

should be numbered with Arabic number sequences (i.e. 1, 2, 3 etc.) rather than any alternative system (Roman numerals, for example, i, ii, iii, iv, v etc. are not acceptable). The footnotes for each chapter should begin with a fresh numerical sequence. The footnotes in the introduction and conclusion should also have separate sequences. If you are using endnotes, these sequences should be separated by headings which indicate which chapter they refer to. Any direct quotation or substantial borrowing from an authority, or reference to an authority by name, must be acknowledged in a footnote. Author's names in footnotes appear in the normal order, e.g. John Smith (NOT Smith, John, which is reserved for the Bibliography). For place of publication, always cite a city or town rather than a country. If two cities are cited, e.g. New York and Oxford, say so. If there are three or more, just list the first. For American cities, you have the option of adding an abbreviation of the state too, but if in doubt just omit. The publisher's name should always follow AFTER the place of publication, thus (London: Jonathan Cape), NEVER (Jonathan Cape: London). Date of publication - use the date of the actual edition you are using (not the first date of publication), since the pagination may vary between different editions even if they have not been revised.

Always italicise, never underline (a hangover from the days when dissertations used to be typed on typewriters). Footnotes can be elaborate, but beware of using overlong footnotes. Remember, footnotes do count towards the overall word-limit, so moving material into footnotes is not a way of saving space. You can be concise with footnotes, do make use of judicious phrases like 'for further discussion see ...' rather than reiterating arguments that are only laterally related to your material. In almost all cases footnote references should be placed at the end of sentences in the main text. The most common exception to this is where you have a list in the main text, where each of the separate elements requires individual footnotes, in which case footnote references should follow them immediately. The secret of good footnoting is good note-taking. Always keep a complete record of the full source and specific page numbers as you take notes. Whenever you copy any passage - even a short passage - verbatim into your notes, be sure to use inverted commas in your notes to indicate that you have done so. This will help you to **avoid accidental plagiarism**.

Footnote will be given at the end of the page where as endnote will be given at the end of the text.

The following section will equip with referencing of different published sources (in MLA Style Manual).

References to books:

Full name of Author(s), *Complete Title* (in italics), place of publication and publisher separated by colon followed by comma and date (in brackets), page number(s) (p. or pp.). Thus:

Louise Campbell, *Coventry Cathedral: Art and Architecture in Post-War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 10-16

References to articles:

Full name of Author(s), 'Complete title' (in single quotation marks), *Name of Periodical* (in italics) volume number and part (in Arabic numbers), year (in brackets), page number(s) (p. or pp.).

Thus: S.Fakuda Par and A.K.Shiva Kumar,, 'Human Development', *Journal Of Human Development and Capability Approach* 20/3 (2003), pp. 477-82

For some monthly journals you may wish to specify the month as well as the year. *Apollo* magazine and *The Burlington Magazine* are cases in point. This is especially important for publications like *Apollo* where each monthly issue has a new pagination (*The Burlington Magazine*, by contrast, has a continuous pagination over the whole year). Where a journal does not have a continuous pagination over the course of a year/volume then it is difficult to locate a reference without knowing the precise number or month of a particular issue. Thus:

Donal Cooper and Janet Robson, 'Pope Nicholas IV and the Upper Church at Assisi', *Apollo* 157, no. 492 (February 2003), pp. 31-35.

Donal Cooper, 'Raphael's Altar-pieces in S. Francesco al Prato, Perugia: Patronage, Setting and Function', *The Burlington Magazine* 143, no. 1182 (September 2001), pp. 554-61.

References to essays in anthologies/edited books :

Full name of Author(s), 'Title of chapter' (in single quotation marks), 'in', *Full Title of Book* (in italics), 'ed.' or 'eds' (for plural - note lack of full stop here) followed by name(s) of editor(s), place of publication and publisher separated by colon, followed by comma and date (all in brackets), page number(s) of chapter referred to (p. or pp.). Thus:

Victoria Avery, 'Alessandro Vittoria: The Michelangelo of Venice?', in *Reactions to the Master: Michelangelo's Effect on Art and Artists in the Sixteenth Century*, eds Francis Ames-Lewis and Paul Joannides (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 157-79.

References to catalogues:

Full title of exhibition (in italics) (open brackets: 'exhibition catalogue', name(s) and place(s) of museums where exhibition held, dates of exhibition 30 September 2003 - 7 January 2004), 'ed.' or 'eds' followed by name(s) of editor(s), place of publication and publisher separated by colon and followed by commas and date of catalogue publication (in brackets), page number(s) referred to (p. or pp.). Thus:

Bellini and the East (exhibition catalogue, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, 14 December 2005 - 26 March 2006 and National Gallery, London, 12 April 2006-25 June 2006), eds Caroline Campbell and Alan Chong (London: National Gallery, 2005), pp. 7-8.

Citing electronic sources:

Full name of Author(s), 'Title of Page' (in single quotation marks), title of complete work, if this page is part of a group of documents, date page was created (if known), URL (written thus: <http://www.warwick.ac.uk/arhistory/research.html>) and date you consulted it: e.g. consulted 24 February 2014. For successive references, you may limit the reference to the author and date as with other abbreviated references. A useful guide is Melvin E. Page, *A Brief Citation Guide for Internet Resources in History and the Humanities* (1996): <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/about/citation/>

Even if you are consulting articles through electronic resources (especially through JSTOR and similar journal databases) you should use the hard-copy citation (which JSTOR, for example, provides as a cover sheet to its PDF files. You should only give a URL for dedicated e-journals which are ONLY available online, and which are not published in hard-copy.

Citing manuscripts and archival sources:

When citing manuscripts, you should include place, name of library, then MS (to indicate manuscript) with the number or pressmark used by the library concerned, followed by folio number (either fol. or ff. and including r-v to distinguish recto and verso). Thus:

London, British Library, MS Harley 4431, fol. 24r-v.

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS ital. 548, fol. 10v.

Please ensure that archive names and locations are given in full and that citations of pressmark or finding numbers follow the exact form used by the library or repository of archives concerned. For an archival source, you should cite place, name of archive, name of the collection or section to which it belongs, number of document within that section (and/or title where this is appropriate), and folio. Thus:

Florence, Archivio di Stato, Notarile Antecosimignano 7147, ff. 166v-168r.

For references to the recto and verso of the same sheet cite in the singular, thus: 'fol. 166r-v'. You may wish to use abbreviations for certain archives, some of which are in standard usage, for example MWCD for the Ministry of Women and Child Development, MHRD for the Ministry of Human Resource Development). If you use these they should be included in your list of abbreviations at the beginning of your dissertation. In the first citation to a document from one of these archives you should give the full formula followed by 'hereafter cited as ...' in brackets, thus:

Ministry of Women and Child Development (hereafter cited as MWCD).

References to manuscripts and archival documents are especially important. By definition, these are unique sources, with only a single copy in existence. Your reference must be sufficiently clear so as to enable a scholar from any part of the world to locate the particular page or folio within the manuscript you are referring to. If you are citing an original source at second hand, from a secondary work, without having consulted the original work, you must make this clear in your reference. Thus:

Quoted by Vanishree, India 2013-2014 Budget: An Analysis from Human Development perspective in W.A Lewis, *The Theory of Economic Growth*(Ill: irwin, 1955), p. 109.

By constructing your footnote in this way you avoid the pretence that you yourself have consulted the primary source. This reference also shows that you have relied on another scholar's transcription of the quotation.

References to successive editions of a book

Important works often go through several editions. You should always cite the edition which you are using, as paginations can change between different editions even when the book has not been revised. You can specify this in your references thus:

Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980, 4th edition, first published 1972), pp. 14-15.

Similarly, you should state whether an edition is a revised edition. Note that word programmes often automatically put '-rd' and '-th' endings into superscript, we ask you to change -rd and -th back to regular font size (i.e. to -rd and -th)

Citing dissertations:

Name of author, 'Full Title of dissertation' (in single quotation marks, not italics), 'Ph.D. thesis' or 'MA dissertation/report', name of University and date (in brackets), page number(s) referred to (p. or pp.). Thus:

James Hankins, 'Latin Translations of Plato in the Renaissance', Ph.D. thesis (Columbia University 1984), p. 21.

Successive references:

A full reference to the work should be included when it is first cited. Thereafter shorter references may be used. Thus, for the examples cited above:

Campbell (1996), pp. 55-58

Smith (1997), p. 479 Avery (2003), p. 158

Bellini and the East (2005), p. 55 Hankins (1984), p. 21

In rare cases where you have to cite two works published by the same author in the same year, you should distinguish these by a superscript a or b. Thus:

Avery (2003²), p. 123

In your first, full reference you should include (hereafter referred to as Avery, 2003²) at the end of the reference in brackets. In the full bibliography you should include (referred to in the text as Avery, 2003²) in brackets at the end of the bibliographic entry. You should not use Latinisms like 'op. cit.' or 'loc. cit.' which are now generally discouraged. Where you immediately repeat the reference used in the previous footnote you may use 'ibid.' (Latin meaning 'In the same'). Thus:

(44) *Bellini and the East* (2005), p. 56

(45) Ibid., p. 58

However, 'ibid' should be used sparingly, and only where there is no possible confusion as to what it refers to (it should be avoided, for example, where the previous footnote contains more than one reference). Moreover, 'ibid' is not only confined to footnotes and it can be used in texts while the reference is cited again within the same paragraph.

Take up the following exercise to assess your learning of the last few sections.

Check Your Progress:

i) *What is a bibliography?*

ii) *What is the difference between footnotes and endnotes? Why are these used while writing a paper?*

Revisit what you have read in this unit by going through the following section.

3.9 LET US SUM UP

This Unit has dealt with what is the need of using secondary data, web databases, online resources and library for writing papers/articles or other academic research work. It has also given you different styles of referencing. Any research report will be complete only if proper referencing is made. The quality of the report lies on the quality of the references used and indexed.

3.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Explain the need for secondary data. Give examples in support of your answer.
- 2) Find out some of the online libraries and examine their utility in research.

3.11 REFERENCES

Kerlinger, Frank Nichols and Howard B. Lee. (1999). *Foundations of behavioral research*. 4th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Miller, Delbert C., and Neil J. Salkind. (2002). *Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement*. 6th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

3.12 SUGGESTED READINGS

Fritz Ringer. (1997). *Max Weber's Methodology: The Unification of the Cultural and Social Sciences*. Harvard University Press.

Creswell, John W. (1997). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

UNIT 4 WRITING AND PREPARING FOR PUBLICATION

Monica Khanna

Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Objectives
- 4.3 Planning a Research Paper
- 4.4 Report Writing
- 4.5 Adopting a Feminist Approach
- 4.6 Research Publications
- 4.7 Ethics in Research
- 4.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.9 Unit End Questions
- 4.10 References

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The availability and easy accessibility of information and research material online has led to the incorrect assumption that research is mere child's play. Indeed, copying and pasting of data from the internet cannot be considered as research. So, what exactly do we mean by research? Research has been defined as

“an active, diligent and systematic process of inquiry in order to discover, interpret or revise facts, events, behaviors, or theories, or to make practical applications with the help of such facts, laws or theories” (www.wordiq.com).

Original research involves not only gathering and compiling information, but also interpreting and analysing that information. This unit will help us to understand research from a gender studies perspective, and will guide us how to write and prepare a research paper for publication.

In this unit you will read about how to go about planning a research paper. Thereafter, the unit discusses how to write a research report. In the next section how to incorporate feminist approach in research is dealt with. Following this is a discussion on the requirements of a research publication. The unit ends with a section on research ethics that need to be kept in mind while writing the report. Let us read the objectives of reading this unit.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- Structure your thoughts and ideas;
- Write reports;
- Conduct feminist interrogation of seemingly neutral writing styles; and
- Differentiate between the different types of research publications.

4.3 PLANNING A RESEARCH PAPER

Students are generally overwhelmed by the very thought of writing a research paper. However, if planned and executed in a systematic manner, the task is far simpler than what one imagines. The first step in writing a research paper is choosing a topic. Before you choose a topic, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this topic relevant, and does it meet the requirements of the research publication I wish to write for?
- Is it original in its approach and outlook?
- Is there sufficient research material available to enable me to conduct my research?
- Will my research make a substantial contribution to this field of study?
- Who is my target audience and what would interest them?
- Most importantly, does this topic interest me?

Having decided on the topic, you can start brainstorming - that is, putting down all the random thoughts that come to your mind when you think of the topic. This will help you to broaden your scope and examine the topic from divergent angles.

Then, you can start the actual process of research, the collection of primary and secondary data. The most difficult task is that of sorting out your data, and deciding what material to include, and what to exclude. You may sort your data according to:

- **Relevance to the topic:** Decide whether the material substantiates what you are trying to say, and if plays a significant role in understanding the topic.
- **Independence:** Does it constitute an independent, unique point, or is it a repetition of something you have already read or discussed previously?

- **Priority:** How important is it in comparison with your other material? You may have a word limit, and hence, you will have to restrict yourself on the material you include. Do not try to include everything simply because you have spent time in gathering the material - prioritize according to importance and significance.
- **Propriety:** Is the material appropriate for the research publication and its audience?

Once you have selected your material, **you must prepare an outline** which will enable you to have a structure for your report/paper. Your outline may look like a detailed 'Table of Contents' of a book, and will include not only the sections of your paper, but the sub-sections as well. Each sub-section will illustrate a distinct and unique aspect of your main topic, and will provide fresh insights into your topic.

Now that you have a concrete structure, you can use it as a guide and start expanding on the outline to write your paper.

4.4 REPORT WRITING

The research paper is like writing a report, wherein a problem is examined in detail in order to convey certain information or findings. It may even offer certain recommendations. It is factual, detailed and objective in nature. The language used is clear and accurate, and marked by the use of concrete words. It refrains from being imaginative or fictitious, and avoids the use of flowery or figurative language. A report is logical in its approach, and offers a comprehensive understanding of the problem.

Let us examine the format for a report. It begins with a **Title**. Most students tend to confuse the 'title' with the general 'topic'. For instance, 'Modern Poetry' is a topic, but 'A Feminist Interrogation of American Poetry from World War II to the 1970s' is a specific and clear title. It highlights the perspective from which the research is being conducted, and also clearly states the scope and content of the study.

A long report may include a **Table of Contents**, which will describe the structure and contents of the report. It may be followed by an **Acknowledgements** section wherein the writer expresses his/her gratitude to those people who have in some way helped in writing the report either by providing data or information, or even moral, intellectual or financial support.

An **Abstract** is a small but integral part of the report, because it determines whether you have generated enough interest in your research to convince a reader to read the entire paper. It is a brief summary of your paper, and should ideally be written after you have written the rest of your paper. It

gives an insight into the background of your study, objectives, methodology used for research, main findings and conclusions. The abstract should not be more than 10% of the actual paper.

The **Introduction** of the report will convey the relevance and significance of the study by providing a brief background of the problem. It will further state the objectives of the research, explaining what the researcher hopes to achieve through this work. The Introduction should also mention the scope of the research and its limitations, if any. The introduction must be concise, and must catch the attention of the reader, motivating the reader to read further.

The next section of the report is its **Methodology**, or the procedure used for collecting data. You need to justify your choice of the sample used for data collection and statistical techniques applied. How many subjects did you study, and why? You need to provide details about the subjects (respondents), and the criteria for inclusion or exclusion of subjects. You also need to state the limitations of your sample, and explain why you chose this particular method for the study. Your methodology could include observation, surveys, questionnaires, personal interviews, or a particular approach (eg. Marxist/ Feminist approach) while examining secondary data. You would also need to explain whether you followed up with the subjects for feedback after conducting your research, and have taken the findings back to the respondents.

You then proceed to discuss your **Results** or **Findings**. Visual illustrations using tables, illustrations, diagrams, figures and graphs are helpful in providing a clear and vivid explanation of the results, especially statistical data. You must remember to label the illustrations correctly and sequentially. Each illustration/ table must be titled and numbered using Arabic numerals (Eg. Table 1.1, 1.2 and so on). The table should be self-explanatory and should be easily understood, even though it may be supplemented by text. The text should read logically and the illustrations should provide the required evidence.

This section will be followed by a **Discussion** or analysis of the findings. The data must be interpreted to give the reader a comprehensive idea of the results of your research. The implications of these findings must also be explained. However, it is important to avoid generalization of results - conclusions must stem from the data and not be influenced by personal opinions. The **Conclusion** may be combined with the Discussion section, or may even be a separate section. It will provide a brief summary of the findings and summarize the research, talk about the strengths and weaknesses of the study, explore how this study fits in with other research conducted in this field, and also offer a direction for future work in this area. Some reports may include a section on **Recommendations**, or specific changes to provide a solution to the problem.

The **Appendix** section contains all additional information that is important and relevant for the report, but cannot be incorporated directly in the report. Surveys, questionnaires and glossaries may be included in the Appendix. The Appendix is generally labeled using capital letters (eg. Appendix A, Appendix B etc.)

References, the last section of the report, is extremely crucial and must be written with great care and precision (You have read about referencing in Unit 3 of this block) . References should be numbered consecutively in the same order as they appear in the report. One may either use the **Vancouver** or **Harvard** system for referencing. In the Vancouver system, superscript numerals are used in the text, and their corresponding numbers appear in the References. The Harvard system lists the references in alphabetical author according to the last name of the author.

Once you finish typing the report, do not forget to **proof read** it for grammatical, formatting or factual errors. Ensure consistency in the format, and clarity and conciseness in the content. It is also important to make sure that the report meets the editorial requirements of the journal you are writing for. All journals have specific style sheets that guide authors for preparing works for publication - consideration like word limits, referencing styles, etc.

Attempt the following exercise before reading further.

Check Your Progress:

- i) *What needs to be kept in mind when you choose a research topic?*

- ii) *What should be the format of any research report?*

Let us now read what is understood by feminist approach in research.

4.5 ADOPTING A FEMINIST APPROACH

Andrea Doucet and Natasha Mauthner, in “Feminist Methodologies and Epistemology”, state that feminist research

“has become a well-used term for the work that feminists do when they take on either qualitative or quantitative research that is driven by, and aimed toward, a desire to challenge multiple hierarchies of inequalities within social life. Feminist scholars have made significant contributions to both mainstream and alternative thinking around issues of power, knowing, representation, reflexivity, and legitimation in methodological and epistemological discussions. Feminist sociologists have been particularly prominent in their participation in advancing such knowledge”. (Douchet and Mauthner, 2013, p.42)

It is only natural that when we conduct research, we bring into the collection of data a certain amount of subjectivity, and our own individual identities - be it our race, nationality, gender or economic class. When a man interviews a woman, there is a power hierarchy involved, which affects the attitude of both the interviewer as well as the interviewee, and therefore the content of the interview. On the contrary, if the interviewer and interviewee are both women, the hierarchical order is changed. According to British sociologist **Ann Oakley** (1981),

“Where both share the same gender socialization and critical life-experiences, social distance can be minimal. Where both interviewer and interviewee share membership of the same minority group, the basis for equality may impress itself even more urgently on the interviewer’s consciousness” (Oakley, 1981, p.55).

However, it is important to remember that women do not constitute a homogeneous group either, and that the differences in race and class may again affect interviews. The same is true for data collection or questionnaires. Respondents of a questionnaire may hesitate to provide authentic and true information for fear of revealing personal information, or even on account of their apprehension about the person collecting the data. This would adversely affect the content of research material and render it inaccurate. Moreover, when analyzing the data, the researcher may intentionally or unintentionally misinterpret the data to suit his/her hypothesis. This will be discussed in detail in the section on ‘Ethics in Research’ of this unit.

The element of subjectivity is not limited to primary research alone but rather, extends to secondary research as well, which may include literature, television, cinema or advertisements. In order to understand how feminist

research is conducted in literature or media, it is important to go back to certain basic theories of literature and the concept of ‘representation.’ (You have about it in Unit 1 of Block4)

Classical theory of criticism focused on the mimetic quality of art and literature, stating that art was but an imitation of reality. The author constructed an imaginary world of fiction that had its foundations in the real world that we could see around us. However, over a period of time, such conceptions were challenged. The postmodern age no longer views literature as a reflection of reality and the author as the determiner of meaning within a text. On the contrary, there seem to be a multiplicity of meanings that a text offers - and it is up to the reader to create or find meaning in a given text. These multiple meanings may differ from reader to reader. **Roland Barthes**, one of the proponents of structuralist theory, in fact, heralded the ‘death of the author’, claiming that the focus needs to shift from intention to interpretation. The very notions of ‘reality’ and ‘consciousness’ are questioned because they are perceived as being subjective in nature.

Literature, according to the structuralists, had become metalinguistic and reflexive. **Jose Agnel Garcia Landa** in ‘Theory of Reflexive Fiction’ (1992) defines reflexive theory as a theory which favours metafictional works over realistic ones, self-consciousness over conventional verisimilitude. He adds that fiction is now perceived as a structural game with the codes of literature. It becomes a way of finding new meanings that can only be produced by new linguistic and perceptual structures. The work allows a multiplicity of meanings which may even conflict with one another. The theory of reflexivity allows the reader to understand the processes by which he/she reads the world as a text.

Each reader interprets or decodes the text differently, based on his or her own perception, ideology and background. Critic **John Fiske** claims that there is no such thing as monolithic audiences or monolithic readings, and points out:

“The structure of the text typically tries to limit its meanings to ones that promote the dominant ideology, but polysemy sets up forces that oppose this control. The hegemony of a text is never total, but always has to struggle to impose itself against the diversity of meanings that the diversity of readers will produce” (Cited in Tester, 1994, p. 69).

From a gender studies perspective, Fiske’s argument suggests that while a patriarchal text may attempt to advocate its own philosophy, all women may not necessarily be passive consumers of patriarchal ideology. It further suggests the possibility that even a text which reinforces patriarchal ideology may lend itself to feminist interpretations, however unintentionally.

While reading a text from a gender studies perspective, it is important to focus on the way that women have been portrayed. Often in literary texts as well as media representations, one finds contrasting depictions of women - the ideal and selfless 'perfect' woman is contrasted with the evil, dominating and materialistic 'wicked' woman. Such extreme one-dimensional portrayals are referred to as 'stereotypes'. **Myra Macdonald** in *Representing Women: Myths of Femininity in the Popular Media* (1995) discusses the importance of the stereotype:

"The concept of the stereotype is used to criticize the reduction of the three-dimensional quality of the real to a one-dimensional distorted form. Particularly when the group being stereotyped is already in a disadvantaged position, the stereotype intensifies the offence" (Macdonald, 1995, p.13).

Let us take a well known example from the great Hindu epic, the *Ramayana*. Sita, the epitome of self-sacrifice and goodness becomes a role model for all women who are expected to emulate her virtues. Surpanakha, on the other hand, embodies all that is evil - lust, desire and selfishness. While Sita is revered even to this day, Surpanakha is regarded with contempt and distrust. Similarly, most television serials portray stereotyped images of women characters - the 'sati-savitri' silent suffering homemaker is contrasted with the materialistic 'vamp' figure, the home breaker. The differentiation in their characters is evident in their outlook towards life and even in the way they dress and speak.

Feminist film critic **Shoma Chatterjee** suggests in *Subject: Cinema, Object: Woman - A Study of the Portrayal of Women in Indian Cinema* (1998) the need for feminist theory to examine 'presences' or the ways in which women are portrayed in films, the kind of images they are invested with and the kind of characters constructed in the film, as well as the 'absences' or the ways in which women characters do not appear at all in films. The same theory could apply to any form of art. One needs to observe how and why art chooses to portray only certain images of women that are in synch with the ideology of the artiste, while certain portrayals are deliberately avoided so as to conform to the dictates of society. When **Deepa Mehta's** film *Fire* (1996) was released, it became hugely controversial on account of its portrayal of a lesbian relationship between two unhappily married women. Some people found this portrayal objectionable and destructive to Indian values and culture. Lesbianism still remains a taboo subject in India, and lesbians are hence conspicuous by the absence of their portrayal in books, television or cinema.

In any given age, if an attempt has been made by the dominant group (in this case, patriarchy) to impose itself on the subordinate group (in this case, women), attempts have also been made by the subordinate group to

challenge the dominant ideology. As **Denise Thompson** states in *Radical Feminism Today* (2001),

“No system of domination, even the most totalitarian, functions without contradictions, ambiguities and resistances” (Thompson, 2001, p.12).

As a student of gender studies, it is also important to explore the manner in which certain texts attempt to subvert patriarchal ideology. Several writers have tried to incorporate the ideals of the feminist movement into their writings. While some have overtly challenged patriarchal ideology, others have done so in a subtle manner. Postcolonial critic **Chandra Talpade Mohanty** states in her essay *Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (1991), resistance is not necessarily identifiable through organized movements as resistance inheres in the very gaps, fissures and silences of hegemonic narratives.

Geetanjali Shree's novel *Mai* (2000) is a good example of resistance. On the surface, the novel appears to depict a self-sacrificing mother who appears to be a passive victim of patriarchal oppression. However, a close reading of the novel reveals the strength of the main character, Mai (Rajjo), around whom the story revolves, and who eventually emerges not only as a resisting force but also an agent of social change. Mai does not raise her voice or protest against the injustices being meted out to her children. She remains silent, but that silence becomes a powerful weapon to challenge her oppressors. For instance, her son Subodh is trying to persuade the family to allow his sister Sunaina to leave their hometown for further studies. The family depends upon Mai to dissuade Sunaina for she has a strong influence on her daughter - but Mai does not say a word. By refusing to speak, she exhibits resistance and an unwillingness to accept something that she does not believe in. Eventually Sunaina leaves for further studies, without realizing the role that her mother had played in allowing her to go.

Feminist interrogation therefore entails not only an analysis of the manner in which a writer portrays gender, but also the ways in which some writers have tried to resist and subvert stereotypical gender portrayals. It is also important to understand the role that gender plays when conducting primary research since the identities of both the researcher and the subject are necessarily bound to have an impact on the final research.

You have earlier read about feminist approach in social science research in Unit 2, Block 2 of this Block.

4.6 RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

There are a variety of research publication options that one can consider for publishing one's paper. The content, style and approach of one's writing will naturally vary, depending upon the publication. Sometimes, students are unable to distinguish between various terms, and use them interchangeably. Let us examine some of these publications and terms in detail:

Monograph: A monograph is said to be a work of writing upon a single subject, usually by a single author. It is often a scholarly essay or learned treatise, and may be released in the manner of a book or journal article. To put it simply, a monograph is an in-depth, detailed and comprehensive study of a particular subject. It could be a biographical study of an individual, a study of the works of a particular writer or artist, or even a study of a specific species.

Research Paper/Article: A research paper is an original, scholarly piece of research work, generally written by a researcher who may be affiliated to a college or university. It may be published in a specialized journal, and may be read by experts in the field, or even academicians and scholars from various fields. Research papers are usually reviewed and scrutinized by a peer evaluation panel before they are published. This panel comprises other researchers from the field who review the paper for content accuracy and to ensure that it meets the standards and requirements of the journal where it has been submitted for publication.

Conference Paper: A conference paper is a research paper that has been presented at a conference or seminar, and is subsequently published by the organizers of the conference. The publication of a conference paper is usually quicker than that of a research paper.

Review Article: A review article contextualizes the research in a specific field by providing an overview and summary of the research that has so far been conducted in the field. It paves the foundation for further research, and is an excellent introduction to the subject.

Article: An article is a non-fictional piece of writing that is published in a newspaper, magazine or journal. It may include research, an analysis of a current issue, interviews with relevant persons, as well as opinions of the writer.

Anthology: An anthology is a collection of selected literary writings or essays, either by the same author or by various authors writing during the same period, on a particular theme, or in the same genre. For instance, it could include a selection of poems or short stories written by one poet/

author. It could also include a set of plays written during a literary period - for instance, *An Anthology of Elizabethan Drama*.

Edited Scholarly Book: An edited scholarly book is a collection of the works of several authors on a specific subject. The essays in the book are compiled and edited by one or more editors. A research scholar may publish an essay or a chapter in an edited scholarly book.

Manuscript: Manuscript is the original formatted text that a writer submits to a publisher or editor for the purpose of publication. The publisher may prescribe a particular guideline which the writer is expected to follow while writing. This guideline will include font size, spacing, margins, format for indentation, page numbering, name of the author, number of words etc.

Advocacy Material for Policy Makers: Advocacy refers to a strategy which is employed to influence policy makers to either create new policies, reform the existing policies that seem ineffective or detrimental, or to ensure that existing policies are indeed being implemented. In order to bring about the desired changes in society, one may have to deal with and write to policy makers directly. This entails a process of negotiation and mediation with decision makers (government bodies or opinion leaders).

Alternately, one may work with the media in order to address issues that are affecting the public. One may also tie up with local non-governmental organizations which will support the policy changes being advocated. Needless to say, such writing requires tremendous persuasion power and skill as it must be able to convince the policy makers to bring about the required changes. Several NGOs as well as government departments, for example, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, prepare Advocacy Material in an effort to alleviate the problems that women are facing, and to bring about positive changes for women in society.

4.7 ETHICS IN RESEARCH

You have read about Ethics in research on Unit 4, Block 1 of this course. Here, we are again discussing the same with regards to writing of research report.

Research is an activity that is likely to foster changes and developments in the field of study, and pave the way for further investigations. Conducting research, therefore, is a moral and social responsibility, and it is important to remain ethical while conducting research.

Let us examine two major forms of violation of research ethics that frequently take place in the field of research.

Misrepresentation:

Although research should ideally be objective and unbiased, it has been seen that invariably, the prejudices, perspectives, opinions, ideology, background and values of the researcher are influential in determining his/her research methodology, the choice of data, and consequently the results.

For instance, a great deal of research has been conducted to justify the traditional sexual division of labor in society, with the male being accorded the role of bread-earner, and the woman being the nurturer of the family, whose prime responsibility is to bear and rear children.

Let us take the example of the theory of bio-determinism, which states that women have an innate maternal instinct that propels them towards motherhood, and this instinct is absent in the male species. Experiments conducted on chimpanzees seem to prove this premise. It was found that when male chimpanzees were placed alone with infants, they did not display maternal protectiveness towards them. Researchers thus concluded that in the case of human beings also, females are necessary for the growth of human infants. However, such research has been critiqued by **Naomi Weisstein** (1971, p. 226), who states emphatically that “**humans are not non-humans**”, and claims that such research clearly reflects an ideological bias.

According to Weisstein,

“Invariably, only those primates have been cited which exhibit exactly the kind of behavior that the proponents of the biological basis of human female behavior wish were true for humans” (1971, p.227).

She points out that generally baboons and rhesus monkeys are cited because

“males in these groups exhibit some of the most irritable and aggressive behavior found in primates, and if one wishes to argue that females are naturally passive and submissive, these groups provide vivid examples” (1971, p. 227).

She further quotes a study conducted on marmosets (a species of monkeys) by **G.D. Mitchell** where it is the male who carries the infant at all times, except when it is time for feeding (Cited in Wiesstein, 1971, p. 227).

In fact, even in the case of baboons and rhesus monkeys, such theories have been proved inaccurate. Lab experiments conducted by **Liebowitz** (1978) show that female rhesus monkeys reared in isolation and deprived of observing maternal behavior, do not instinctively display maternal behavior towards their young ones. On the other hand, normally reared male rhesus monkeys tend to display maternal behavior with infants in the absence of

mature females. Such studies suggest that maternal behavior is not instinctive in females, but rather, is learned through exposure and experience (Cited in Women's Studies Collective, year 1983, p. 283).

Hence, it is obvious that research may often be subjective. The researcher may deliberately choose a sample that supports his/her hypothesis, and may intentionally omit or misrepresent data that does not agree with his research premise. Such actions are morally unethical, and are clearly a sign of misrepresentation which defies the code of ethics that a researcher is expected to follow.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism, which essentially refers to the act of borrowing someone else's ideas and passing them off as one's own, is more serious an offence than what it seems to be. In fact, it is today becoming a serious threat to original research. While it may not be a crime, it is a moral offence, and can even lead to legal complications wherein the researcher may be penalized for copyright infringement.

Plagiarism is a fairly complicated phenomenon which includes:

- Submitting someone else's work with your name and details;
- Copying the ideas, thoughts and language of another writer without quoting the source and without giving them due credit;
- Providing incorrect details about the source of a quotation;
- Retaining the sentence structure while making a few changes in the words so that it does not seem copied word for word;
- Taking so many ideas from a source that there is no originality in your work, even if you give credit to the source for the ideas mentioned;
- Copying ideas from multiple sources and joining them using a couple of sentences;
- Copying directly from one's own previous work and using it for a new research paper for another publication;
- Mentioning the name of the writer but not mentioning the details of the work from where material has been taken;
- Providing incomplete information about the source so that it is difficult to trace the source.

Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. Some students, in order to save time, effort and energy, simply take material from other sources and pass it off as their own. Often they hold pressing or multiple deadlines responsible for their decision to plagiarize. They believe they do not have the time to work on so many research assignments simultaneously, and

rather than spending hours trying to find the right material, analyzing it themselves and constructing their thoughts (all of which is extremely time consuming), they find it quicker and easier to download, copy and paste material from the internet. The material available is ready to use, and often free of cost - and especially if the students have left all the research to the last minute, they can only meet the deadlines if they copy.

Some students are apprehensive about their writing and grammatical skills, which they feel do not meet the standards of the course. The language of professional writers seems far better in comparison with theirs. Hence, in order to score better marks and impress their faculty members, they choose to copy the matter from the internet or books rather than writing it themselves.

Another justification for plagiarism is the fact that all their peers also do it, and that therefore it is acceptable. Moreover, they feel that they cannot afford to be so idealistic as to attempt everything on their own for it will mean a loss of marks and prestige for them, if the papers of others who have found the material on the internet are adjudged superior.

In some cases, however, plagiarism happens unintentionally. Some students do not know how to cite sources, and are ignorant of how to quote from a text. They may paraphrase what a writer has said, and thus, while the words may not be copied directly, the ideas certainly are! They do not realize that they need to give credit to the writer for his ideas as well as his words. Sometimes, they do not write down their sources while they are conducting research - and at the last moment, find it extremely difficult to go back and trace the source of the data. Sometimes students fail to distinguish between common knowledge which is public property, and original ideas which are the intellectual property of other writers.

However, it is important to remember that all forms of plagiarism are morally unacceptable. Today, the availability of **plagiarism software** enables publishers and educational institutions to scan and screen research papers before publication. If the paper is found to have been copied from another source, it will instantly be rejected. This will also affect the reputation of the research scholar.

One must also keep in mind that most works are bound by **Copyright Laws**. The Oxford English Dictionary defines Copyright as,

“the exclusive and assignable legal right, given to the originator for a fixed number of years, to print, publish, perform, film, or record literary, artistic, or musical material.” <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/copyright>. (last accessed on ??/)

While one can copy from the source, one must give credit to the copyright holder for his work. Copyright exists in all fields - be it publishing, films, music, business, and violation of the copyright law by copying without giving credit to the source can lead to legal action being taken against the violator.

Attempt the following exercise to assess your understanding of the previous sections.

Check Your Progress :

i) *Write a line or two about the following :*

Monograph

Research Paper

Conference Paper

Review Article

Anthology and

Manuscript

ii) *Write a small note on the following :*

a) *Misrepresentation*

b) *Plagiarism*

4.8 LET US SUM UP

The unit began with describing steps to be kept in mind while choosing a topic for research which is dealt with in the section on planning a research paper. Following this a discussion on the contents on a good research report which should include the title of report, table of contents, acknowledgement, introduction, methodology, result/findings, discussion/analysis, conclusion and recommendation, if any. There should also be appendix and reference section in a research report. After typing the report, it is important to proof read it for grammatical, formatting or factual errors. The next section is on adopting feminist approach in research followed by the requirements of a research publications. The unit ends with a section on ethical practices to be adopted while writing a research paper.

4.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) What do we mean by a 'feminist' reading? Apply your understanding of the concept to a book, poem or film of your choice.
- 2) How does misrepresentation entail violation of the code of ethics?
- 3) What is plagiarism? Why are students inclined towards plagiarizing material instead of conducting original research? Discuss.

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