

Types of Researchers

Answer these survey questions and use the provided table to determine the researcher type(s) with which you identify. You'll review the different researcher types and associated methods to determine the types of inquiries and methods that align with your paradigm and your ways of engaging in inquiry.

Background Information

“Most of us have our own unique style of inquiry. Some styles embody the traditional norms of science while others exemplify nontraditional norms. There is no one right or wrong way to investigate a problem per se, but if you have a very strong research style, you might find it frustrating to work on a project that is designed for a different type of researcher. A [research] topic should be an original contribution to scholarly research that fills a void in the literature and extends prior knowledge. An [inquiry] can replicate a study in a different environment or time or develop a new theory. Regardless of its intent, you should find a project that you are passionate (or extremely interested) about working diligently on.

Note: It is important to keep in mind that in doing research there is room for the daring, speculative, inventive spirit who creates new theories or tried bold, imaginative experiments, as well as for the cautious, critical spirit who examines theories searchingly or for those who will patiently design experiments requiring complete attention to detail. There are researchers who prefer the precision of mathematics and those who prefer the color of words; those who prefer to deal with human beings and human problems and others who prefer to work with computers or microscopes. However, according to Goldstein and Goldstein in their book *How We Know* (1985), ‘for all there should be the same goal---the joy and excitement of discovery and the same outcome---knowledge.’”

2. To discover your research typology:
- Enter your T, F, I, and S numbers in the spaces provided below in the table.
 - Fill in the remainder of the table by computing the sums of:
 - T + I in cell I
 - T + S in cell II
 - S + F in cell III
 - I + F in cell IV
 - Your research style(s) is (are) the cell(s) with the largest sum.
 - Underline the style(s) with the largest sum (Types I, II, III, or IV)

T-value: _____

F-value: _____

I-value: _____	I. (T+I) _____	IV. (F+I) _____
S-value: _____	II. (T+S) _____	III. (F+S) _____

I. Conceptual Theorist

II. Analytical Scientist

III. Particular Humanist
Humanist

IV. Conceptual

Type of Researcher		Brief Description
I	Conceptual Theorist	Holistic and imaginative-believes in TOE (Theory of Everything)
II	Analytical Scientist	Preference for exactness, precision, and unambiguous situations
III	Particular Humanist	Humans are too complex to study as a whole
IV	Conceptual Humanist	Knowledge exists to better humanity

3. Read about your research style(s) below and evaluate the strength of the descriptions and your computed style with how you feel you engage in inquiry.

I. Conceptual Theorist.

- a. This type of researcher believes in TOE, i.e., the Theory of Everything. A conceptual theorist is holistic and imaginative. He or she believes in multiple causations and the development of a coherent testable framework through large-scale correlation. Science holds a definite privilege in this type of thinking but it is not the only way that a conceptual theorist views a problem.
- b. Motto: Intellectual conflict is an important characteristic of research and should not be dismissed. Such conflict is vital to the development of both methods and theories.
- c. Methodologies that would likely appeal to a conceptual theorist: correlational studies, factor analyses, descriptive research, repertory grid analysis, Q-methodology, and Delphi study.
- d. Research topics that would likely appeal to a conceptual theorist if asked to choose a research topic on smoking and health: Determine the correlation between smoking and diseases, smoking and personality types, why people smoke, and as many multiple correlations as one can ascertain between smoking and other factors.

II. Analytical Scientist.

- a. This type of researcher prefers exactness, precision, and unambiguous situations. Science is also paramount and exact in this type of thinking. The analytical scientist sees science as ruled by nature. The ideal experiment is one where all variables are controlled.
- b. Motto: In order to label something a scientific theory, it must be cast into a logical form so that, given the proper antecedent conditions (X, A), one can make the valid deduction (Y). Otherwise (according to the analytical science view) it is nonscientific.
- c. Methodologies that would likely appeal to an analytical scientist: experimental design, quasi-experimental design semiotics, trend analysis, design-based research, regression-discontinuity design, and retrospective record review.
- d. Research topics that would likely appeal to an analytical scientist if asked to choose a research topic on smoking and health: Determine definitively if cigarette smoking causes cancer. Simulate smoking in laboratory animals and determine if cancer is caused.

III. Particular Humanist.

- a. This type of researcher prefers personal knowledge to rational knowledge. Science is not privileged in this type of thinking and is subordinate to other disciplines such as poetry and literature. The particular humanist believes that humans are too complex to study as a whole.
- b. Motto: It is absurd to think that science has remained immune to outside influences. The challenge is to develop a methodology that does justice not only to the humanity of the participants studied but to the researcher as well. Only a person who is passionately involved in his or her research can make a difference.
- c. Methodologies that would likely appeal to a particular humanist: case study, appreciative inquiry, action research, semiology, phenomenology, grounded theory, critical incident technique, and hermeneutics.
- d. Research topics that would likely appeal to a particular humanist if asked to choose a research topic on smoking and health: Study a smoker and determine why this person started smoking and any ill effects attributed to smoking. Have cancer patients who have smoked keep a diary and study their feelings and concerns.

IV. Conceptual Humanist.

- a. This type of researcher prefers holistic knowledge. Science has no special privilege in this type of thinking. Knowledge exists only to better humanity. To further understand humanity, a conceptual humanist believes that one must study human behavior from many points of view and constantly develop new approaches to improve human life based on these observations.
 - b. Motto: The question is not, “Is storytelling science?” but “Can science be used for the betterment of humanity?”
 - c. Methodologies that would likely appeal to a conceptual humanist: grounded theory, phenomenology, evaluative case study, causal comparative research, historical research, appreciative inquiry, content analysis, Delphi method.
 - d. Research topics that would likely appeal to a conceptual humanist if asked to choose a research topic on smoking and health: Survey ex-smokers and determine the most effective ways each person was able to stop smoking. Use this information to develop a program to help people stop smoking.
4. Look at the *Choosing Your Research Method* table below and answer the following questions:
- a. Which three methods appeal to you the most and why?
 - b. Which three methods appeal to you the least and why?

Research Method	Brief Description	Type
Case Study research	Group observation to determine how and why a situation exists	III
Content analysis	Analyze text and make inferences	IV
Correlational research	Collect data and determine level of correlation between variables	I
Delphi research	Analysis of expert knowledge to forecast future events	I, IV
Descriptive research	Study of "as is" phenomena	I
Ethnographic	Cultural observation of a group	
Evaluation research	Study the effectiveness of an intervention or program	IV
Experimental research	Study the effect of manipulating a variable or variables	II
Factor analysis	Statistically assess the relationship between large numbers of variables	I
Grounded Theory	Produce a theory that explains a process based on observation	III, IV
Hermeneutic research	Study the meaning of subjects/texts by concentrating on the historical meaning of the experience and its developmental and cumulative effects on the individual and society	III
Historical research	Historical data collection and analysis of person or organization	IV

Meta-analysis research	Seek patterns in data collected by other studies and formulate principals	
Narrative research	Study of a single person's experiences	
Needs assessment	Systematic process of determine the needs of a defined demographic population	
Phenomenography	Answer questions about thinking and learning	
Phenomenology	Make sense of lived experiences of participants regarding a specified phenomenon.	III, IV
Semiology	Study the meaning of symbols	II, III
Trend Analysis research	Formulate a forecast based on regression analysis of data	II

Questions for Reflection & Debrief

1. To what extent do you believe your identified type of researcher, motto, research topics, and associated methods align with how you feel you actually engage in everyday inquiry?
2. How can you ensure you remain true to your own way of knowing/inquiring while choosing an appropriate method to engaging in your scholarly research project?

Supplemental Resources

- Simon, M. K. (2011). *Dissertation and scholarly research: Recipes for success; a practical guide to start and complete your dissertation, thesis, or formal research project*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Pub. Co.
- <http://dissertationrecipes.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Choosing-Your-Research-Project.pdf>