Where do research questions come from?

- Existing theories
- Past research
- Observation
- Media, pseudo-science

Existing theories

Theories

statements of principles that help explain behavior

a logically interrelated set of propositions about

empirical reality

Even if a theory has been tested many times, it is important to test theories in a variety of ways in order to see if and when it applies.

Remember we cannot “prove” theories or even test them directly.

Past Research

- Replication or a modified replication of an existing study
- Address the limitations of another study
- Address future research suggested by an author
- Extension of existing study
Observations

• Esp. for those working with “subjects”
  – e.g., medical, social support, field research, etc
• Our own life/daily interactions
• Ex. Oppositional culture, “acting white”
• Ex. Why do women stay in abusive relationships?

Media

• Red states vs. blue states
• Parasite singles
• Violence on TV and kids’ behavioral problems
• Women “opting out”
• Black names

RFAs

• Part I Overview Information
• Department of Health and Human Services
  National Institutes of Health (NIH), (http://www.nih.gov)
• Title: Research on Teen Dating Violence (R21)
• Announcement Type
• New
• Program Announcement (PA) Number: PA-09-170

Executive Summary

• Purpose. This Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) encourages investigator-initiated research grant applications from institutions/organizations that propose to conduct behavioral and/or biomedical research aimed at better understanding the etiologies and precursors for, reducing risk for, and incidence of, teen dating violence (TDV). Research is also sought to elucidate the linkages and gaps among perceptions of appropriate responses to teen dating violence from service providers, the criminal justice system, teens themselves, victims, perpetrators, and bystanders.

• Mechanism of Support. This FOA will use the NIH Exploratory/Developmental (R21) grant mechanism and runs in parallel with a FOA of identical scientific scope, PA-09-169, which encourages applications under the R01 mechanism.

• Funds Available and Anticipated Number of Awards. Because the nature and scope of the proposed research will vary from application to application, it is anticipated that the size and duration of each award will also vary. The total amount awarded and the number of awards will depend upon the mechanism, numbers, quality, duration, and scope of the applications received.

• Budget and Project Period. The total project period for an application submitted in response to this funding opportunity may not exceed two years. Direct costs are limited to $275,000 over an R21 two-year period, with no more than $200,000 in direct costs allowed in any single year.
Narrowing a topic

- Focus on a specific demographic group (age, gender, race, education, etc.)
- Focus on a specific place (country, city, neighborhood, school, class, etc.)
- Focus on a specific time (school year, weekday, month, etc.)
- Focus on a specific comparison (girls vs. boys, married vs. single, etc.)

Things to keep in mind

- What exactly do you want to study?
- Why is it worth studying?
- Does it have practical significance?
- Does it contribute to the construction or development of social theories?
- Keep in mind your interests, your abilities, and available resources.

Feasibility

- Most important
- Time
- Data
- Money
- Skills
- Tools
Questions → hypotheses

- A hypothesis is a statement of something that ought to be observed in the real world if the theory is correct
- Hypotheses have to be testable, and they usually have an “if…then” format
- Examples …

Local economy & college enrollment

- High school graduates living in areas of the country with high rates of unemployment are more likely to enroll in college than are high school graduates living in areas of the country with low rates of unemployment.
- High school graduates living in areas of the country with more plentiful opportunities for those without a college degree are less likely to enroll in college than are high school graduates living in areas of the country with fewer opportunities for those without a college degree.