

Discussion Questions

1. Why do research questions have to be asked in a precise way? Give an example of a precise research question. How does it make it possible for you to test and measure your topic?
2. If you were to conduct a study to measure student satisfaction with a particular academic department on campus, what research method(s) would you use? Why? How would the method(s) you might select vary according to (a) the size of the department and (b) the type of information you sought?
3. As stated in this chapter, “sociologists must be continually open to having their findings reexamined and new interpretations proposed. Describe a time when you changed your mind due to new information. Was it difficult for you to change your mind? Why or why not?
4. Why is the ability to be open to new ideas and interpretations so vital to the scientific perspective? Do you think you could carry this aspect of the scientific process out successfully—no matter what the topic? Why or why not?
5. If you were to examine the relationship between the government and the economy in the United States today, which of the four major theoretical perspectives outlined in the chapter would be most helpful? Why?
6. Imagine you would like to conduct a sociological study of the students with whom you attended the fourth grade, to determine what key factors influenced their academic achievements. Which of the four major theoretical perspectives would you employ in your study? Why?