

Using the SMART Approach to Evaluating Information

In this exercise, find a news article or report about a scientific study. Use the SMART approach as a way of analyzing the information. Answer questions in these basic areas Sample, Methods, Attitude of skepticism, Researcher bias, & Thorough understanding of the literature.

Read a scientific report, study, or news article and answer the questions below:

SAMPLE: What type of sample was drawn, convenience___ or random___?
Does the structure of the sample represent the structure of the population it claimed to represent___ Yes___ No?
Is it a SLOP Poll___ Yes___ No?
Does it have obvious selection biases in sample participants___ Yes___ No?

METHOD

Which method was used to gather the data?
survey___yes,___no **participant observation**___yes,___no
nonparticipant observation___yes,___no **experiment**___yes,___no
field experiment___yes,___no **clinical**___yes,___no
Was it:qualitative___ or quantitative___?
Do the conclusions drawn fit the research method used___ Yes___ No?

ATTITUDE OF SKEPTICISM

Does it simply reinforce commonly held beliefs or is it suggesting a new outlook or perspective___reinforce___new outlook?
Do you agree with its claims? Why? Or Why not?
What do you suspect might be different if it were studied more?

RESEARCHER BIAS

Which organization, group, party, performed or paid for the study_____?
Are there obvious areas where findings could be self-serving___ Yes___ No?
Did the researchers mention these areas or make an effort to scientifically control for them___ Yes___ No?

THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF THE LITERATURE

Is this a major ground breaking discovery or claim___ Yes___ No?
Does it appear to coincide with other studies in this field of research___ Yes___ No?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Based on your evaluation of the information and the answers you gave above, using this form, how would you rate its overall quality:1=gabrage/junk up to 10=good scientific information?
My evaluation=_____

Your Dispositions Toward Theories

Make sure to respond to all of the statements below before reading the answer key. There are 30 statements below. Read the statement then place either: “A” for “*applies to me*”; “SA” for “*sometimes applies to me*”; or “NA” for “*never applies to me.*” For each statement, think about your own views on people and society. Remember that this assessment in no way attempts to establish right or wrong views. Its purpose is to help you identify your own perspectives and then connect them to the major theories.

Answer: A, SA, or NA	STATEMENTS:
	1. There are always winners and losers
	2. Certain elements of society provide for critical needs of its members
	3. It is important to consider the meanings people place on things
	4. People try to get the most out of their relationships and interactions
	5. To really understand people you have to look at their entire life course
	6. A family is comprised of many complex relationships
	7. The average person is exploited by those who are more powerful
	8. Society tends to find a balance in spite of its troubles
	9. Sometimes two people see the same thing in two different ways
	10. Most people try to avoid pain and losses
	11. We all go through certain stages in life
	12. Sometimes family members cross appropriate lines in inappropriate ways
	13. Those with power usually get their way
	14. Sometimes certain parts of society break down
	15. How we define our life and life events plays an important role in how we experience those events
	16. There's always a give and take in relationships
	17. We tend to grow into the people we now are
	18. If there is trouble in one family relationship, it often spills over to the other family relationships
	19. Conflict is an inevitable part of social interaction

Answer: A, SA, or NA	STATEMENTS:	
	20. Certain elements of society don't always do exactly what they were designed to do	
	21. People fill their roles in life based on what they think they are supposed to do in those roles	
	22. People need to feel that they get some level of value from their relationships	
	23. Sometimes people don't go through "normal" life stages	
	24. There is a balance in families that is disrupted at times	
	25. Those who don't have must struggle with those who have for resources	
	26. Sometimes one segment of society accidently does something either useful or harmful to the rest of society	
	27. How we communicate influences the quality of our relationships	
	28. People typically cut off relationships that are too hurtful or costly	
	29. None of us goes through exactly the same life stages in exactly the same way	
	30. Most families are both functional and dysfunctional	
<p>In the boxes below, circle the statement number if you put either "A" or "SA" in your answer for that statement. If you circled more in one theory than in the others you may lean toward that theory in your personal views. Some find that these statements make sense and are somewhat obvious. That may be because they represent the basic underlying principles of these social theories which have been tested and retested over recent decades. In other words these theories have a close fit to the real social world we live in. This assessment should help you to connect these theories to your personal life experience. The more you learn about these theories the clearer this assessment and its findings will become.</p>		
1, 7, 13, 19, 25 Conflict Theory	2, 8, 14, 20, 26 Functional Theory	3, 9, 15, 21, 27 Symbolic Interaction Theory
4, 10, 16, 22, 28 Social Exchange Theory	5, 11, 17, 23, 29 Developmental Theory	6, 12, 18, 24, 30 Family Systems Theory