

**Answers to Study Questions
for
Chapter 13**

(Don't forget that the companion website also has multiple choice questions that you can take for practice. You will find them here:

http://www.southalabama.edu/coe/bset/johnson/dr_johnson/2mcq.htm)

13.1. Define historical research.

Historical research is a type of research that examines past events or combinations of event to arrive at an account of what has happened in the past.

13.2. Why would a person want to conduct historical research?

Historical research is conducted to

- Uncover the unknown,
- Answer questions,
- Identify the relationship that the past has to the present,
- Record and evaluate accomplishments of individuals, agencies, or institutions,
- Aid in understanding the culture in which we live.

13.3. How can historical research tell us anything about the present?

Historical research can show patterns that occurred in the past and over time which can help us to see where we came from and what kinds of solutions we have used in the past. We usually will see that what we do today is specifically rooted in the past. Understanding this can add perspective on how we examine current events and educational practices. It can also show us that we do not need to continually reinvent the wheel because we should always start with what history tells us.

13.4. What are the steps involved in the conduct of historical research?

Here are the five steps:

1. Identification of the research topic and formulation of the research problem or question.
2. Data collection or literature review
3. Evaluation of materials
4. Data synthesis
5. Report preparation or preparation of the narrative exposition

Much of the time in conducting historical research involves the process of collecting and reading the research material collected, and writing the manuscript from the data collected. The researcher often goes back-and-forth between collecting, reading, and writing.

13.5. Identify the sources of historical research topics?

Here are a few sources of topics:

- Current issues in education

- Desire to understand the impact of a specific individual, an institution, or a social movement on an educational policy or educational reform
- You might want to understand the relationship among different events (e.g., decisions to use busing and then to drop busing to schools)
- Desire to understand the historical roots of an educational policy
- You may even decide that past events have not been presented accurately so you decide to write up your new interpretation (which must be based on some evidence).

13.6. What type of information is used when conducting a historical research study?

- Information in documents, records, photographs, relics, and interviews.
- Documents and records include, for example, written or printed materials such as diplomas, cartoons, diaries, memoirs, newspapers, yearbooks, memos, periodicals, reports, files, attendance records, census reports, budgets, maps, and tests.
- Oral histories is another very useful type of information. An oral history is what you obtain when you interview a person who has had direct or indirect experience with or knowledge of the chosen topic.
- Relics are also used and include, for example, articles of clothing, buildings, books, architectural plans, desks, or any other object that might provide useful information about the past.

13.7. Where would you find the historical information needed for a historical study?

Most historical information exists in libraries and the National Archives. However, historical documents can be found in other places such as local courthouses and school board central offices as well as individual schools. Conducting an oral history with a person who has experience with the topic of interest is also a good source of information.

13.8. What is the difference between a primary and secondary source?

A primary source is a source in which the creator was a direct witness or in some other way directly involved or related to the event. A secondary source is one that was created from a primary source or other secondary sources or some combination of primary and secondary sources.

13.9. What is the difference between external criticism and internal criticism?

External criticism refers to the validity, trustworthiness, or authenticity of the source, whereas internal criticism refers to the reliability or accuracy of the information contained in the source.

13.10. What is meant by positive criticism?

Positive criticism refers to understanding the statements made and the meaning conveyed in the source.

13.11. What is meant by the terms “vagueness” and “presentism” and how do they relate to positive criticism?

Vagueness refers to uncertainty in the meaning of words and phrases, whereas presentism refers to the assumption that present-day connotations of terms also existed in the past. Positive criticism is established by insuring that the researcher has the correct meaning of the statements made in the sources and that the interpretation of the sources is correct by avoiding the problems of vagueness and presentism.

13.12. What is negative criticism, and how does a person conducting a historical study achieve negative criticism?

Negative criticism refers to establishing the reliability or authenticity and accuracy of the content of documents and other sources of information. It involves a judgment about the authenticity and accuracy of what is contained in the source and this judgment is achieved by using the following three heuristics:

- Corroboration refers to comparing documents to each other to determine whether they provide the same information or reach the same conclusions.
- Sourcing refers to information that identifies the source or attribution of the document
- Contextualization refers to the identification of when and where an event took place.

13.13. What methodological problems might a person encounter when synthesizing material and preparing the narrative report?

Synthesis is the selection, organization, and analysis of the materials collected.

- The materials must have met the tests of internal and external criticism.

During data synthesis and report preparation, the researcher must be careful to avoid the following four methodological problems:

1. Confusing correlation and causation.
2. Defining and interpreting key words, terms, and phrases (i.e., the issues of vagueness and presentism must be addressed).
3. Differentiating between evidence indicating how people should behave and evidence indicating how they did in fact behave.
4. Maintaining a distinction between intent and consequences. This can be difficult because the events took place in the past. You cannot assume that the consequences observed in the past were necessarily intended by the historical actors.