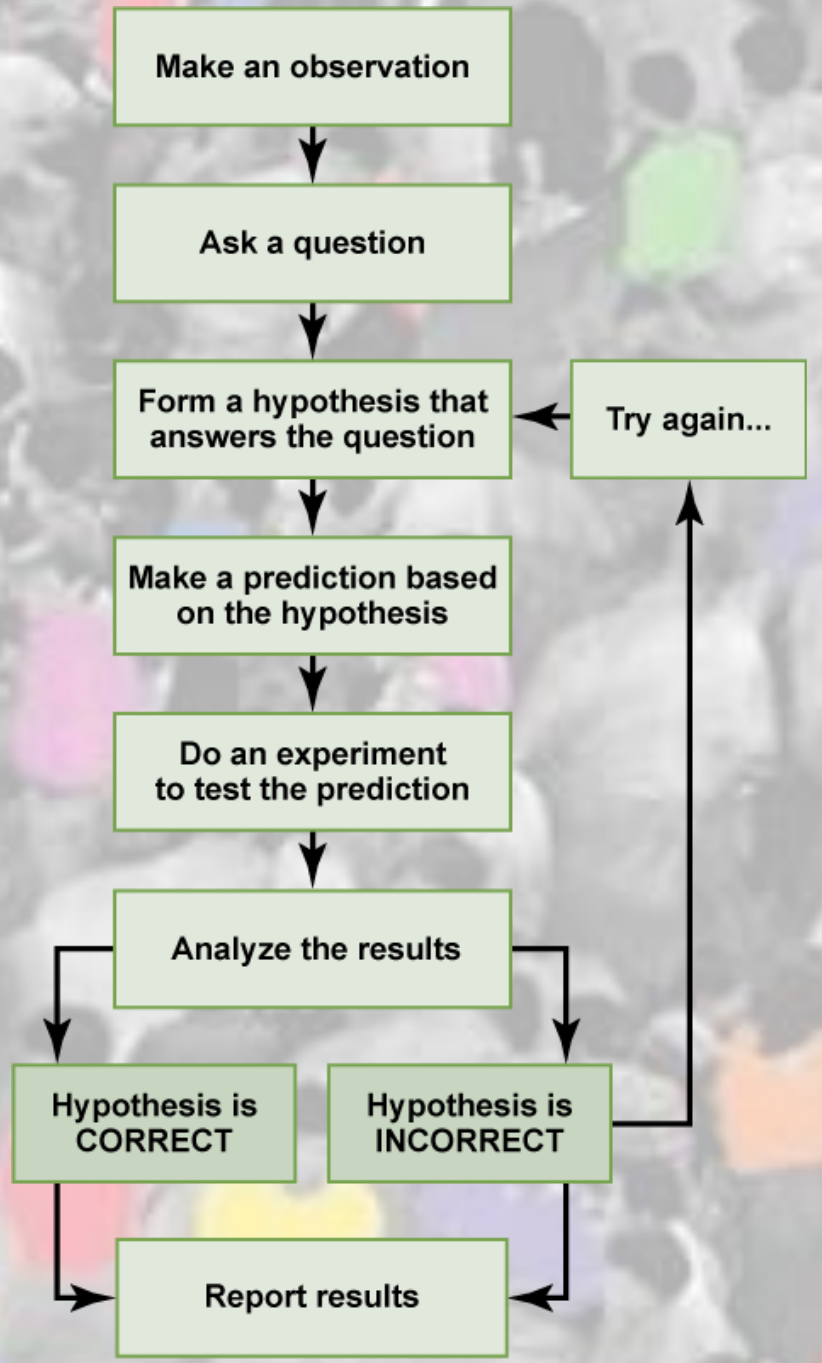
Sociology as a Science

Sociology as a Social Science

- Social Sciences focus on human social behavior and institutions and study the functions of human society in a scientific manner.
  - Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, Economics, Political Science, and History all focus on different aspects of human society
    - Sociology focuses on Society and individuals' roles within society

Sociological Research

- As a science the study of Sociology uses the Scientific Method to come up with an issue and actually test it
  - Uses an objective, systematic, logical way of collecting and analyzing data to test a hypothesis.
  - A hypothesis is an educated guess of the types of results an experiment will produce



Purpose of Sociological Research

- Experiments are designed to reaffirm prior research or test a new hypothesis.
- New experiments are usually designed to discover new causations or correlations between variables (traits)
  - Correlations are connections between changes in one variable that leads to changes in another variable
  - Causation is when something happens because of something else
    - (ex. Introduction to new cultures causes greater cultural awareness)

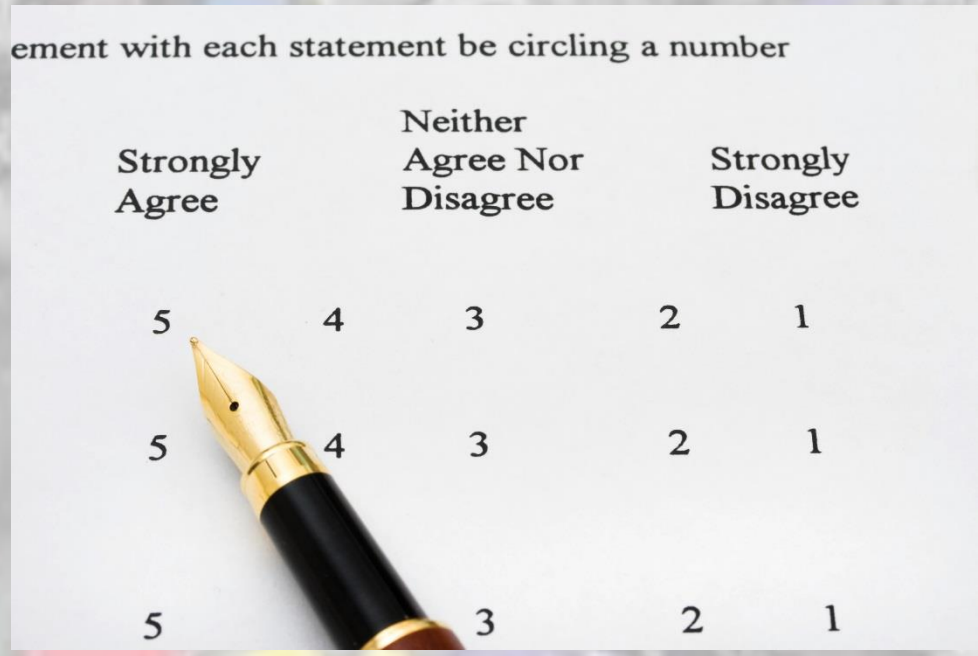
Quantitative and Qualitative Research

- Quantitative Research – Collects numerical data that can then be used to find trends and patterns in the responses
  - Most common forms are surveys and polls

- Qualitative Research – Asks questions geared towards finding opinions, underlying reasons, and motivations
  - Most common forms are focus groups, interviews, and observations

Research Methods: Survey

- To test theories and gather information a popular form of research is a survey
  - Allows researchers to get large amounts of data from a wide range of sources
  - Researchers can use all data or Sample Groups of selected results
- Sociological researchers use Questionnaires and interviews to conduct surveys
  - Use a variety of methods including mail surveys, group administered questionnaires, and interviews



Research Methods: Existing Source Analysis

- Sociologists do not always have to create new data, or they can compare new data to studies that have already been done
  - Sociologist do **Archival Research** where they look at information that has already be collected in past studies
    - Trying to look at change or compare to find trends
    - Archival research is done before a new study and helps develop a base to build a central question to conduct a new study

Key Forms of Sources

Primary Sources: The raw data or results from a prior study

Secondary Sources: An analysis done by someone who did not collect the data themselves

Research Methods: Observational Study

- Sociologists come up with schedule and plan to systematically watch and record behaviors
  - Naturalistic Observation: Researcher observes participants in a natural setting without influencing participants
    - Often times participants do not know they are being involved in the study
  - Structured Observation: Planned situation where researcher controls the environment and observes participants' behaviors
  - Participant Observation: Researchers fully immerse themselves in a social situation over a long period of time and record observations
    - Researcher will usually become part of the environment and get to know participants
  - Non-Participating Observation: Researcher acts an outsider looking in and not immersing themselves in the social situation
    - Observes from afar or uses secondary sources to make observations

Research Methods: Experiment

- Sociologists will design experiments in a controlled environment
  - Will use a control group and a experimental group
  - Usually designed to see how an individual or group will behave in a social situation

Research Methods: Statistical Analysis

- Sociologists use statistical mathematical data
- Entails taking quantitative data collected from surveys, observations, and experiments and analyzing it
  - Trying to find relationships, causation, and correlation between variables