

## **Primary research: What does it mean?**

Primary research is any type of research that you go out and collect yourself. Examples include surveys, interviews, observations, and ethnographic research.

Conducting primary research supplements secondary sources, such as journals, magazines, or books.

It includes but is not limited to:

### ***Observations:***

Observations involve taking organized notes about occurrences in the world. Observations provide you insight about specific people, events, or locales and are useful when you want to learn more about an event without the biased viewpoint of an interview.

### ***Interviews:***

Interviews are one-on-one or small group question and answer sessions. Interviews will provide a lot of information from a small number of people and are useful when you want to get an expert or knowledgeable opinion on a subject.

### ***Surveys:***

Surveys are a form of questioning that is more rigid than interviews and that involve larger groups of people. Surveys will provide a limited amount of information from a large group of people and are useful when you want to learn what a larger population thinks.

### ***Analysis:***

Analysis involves collecting data and organizing it in some fashion based on criteria you develop. They are useful when you want to find some trend or pattern. A type of analysis would be to record commercials on three major television networks and analyze gender roles.

## **Where do I start?**

Consider the following questions when beginning to think about conducting primary research:

What are my genuine interests/passions?

What people/contacts/sources do I already know...who I could develop?

How am I going to be able gain access to these groups or individuals?

What exactly is my research question?

How do I plan on discovering it? (This is called your research methods or methodology)

What are my biases about this topic?

What might I to discover that adds new knowledge to the field?

*Adapted from OWL: Conducting primary research*  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/559/1/>