

Dear AP Research students,

AP Research graduate Andrés Moguel suggested the following summer assignment based on his experiences in the class. This is a brainstorming activity to get you thinking about your areas of interest. You are NOT being asked to commit to a research topic yet, although it would be great if you came up with something you can use! If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at [starke@asf.edu.mx](mailto:starke@asf.edu.mx).

Name: \_\_Alfred P. Researcher\_\_\_\_\_

### AP RESEARCH

Let's start thinking about topics and research questions:

Read [The Craft of Research](#) Part II Asking Questions, Finding Answers Chapters 3 and 4 (Pages 37-72)

Read this carefully (and consider taking notes!) as you will be quizzed on this the first week of class. After reading, complete the following activity:

- 1) Think of things that you like or interest you. These could be academic subjects, sports, arts, philosophical matters, etc. Anything! Write them down in the space below:

The ethics of cloning  
The science behind cloning  
Hemingway  
The Korean War  
The use of curse words  
Comfort women  
Sunni vs. Shia Islam  
How to make good free throws  
Why some people are evil  
Best way to learn a foreign language

- 2) Choose one of the topics listed above – one that seems particularly rich and interesting! What questions or problems emerge from this thing or topic of interest? Write these down in the space below.

Are people who use curse words smarter, less smart or about as smart as people who do not use curse words?  
Who uses more curse words, men or women? High or low socioeconomic level? Married or single people?  
What effect does the use of curse words have on the way people perceive a speaker?  
What makes a word offensive?  
Why do people use curse words?  
What makes curse words funny?  
Do today's literary greats use more curse words than authors from the past?

- 3) Search for sources (preferably scholarly sources which you can access through databases via the ASF library site, or through Google Scholar) and evidence that can help or answer these questions. Summarize at least four items below.

“On the Uses of Obscenity in Live Stand-Up Comedy” by Seizer looks at cursing in stand-up comedy as a form of artistry and a way to increase laughter and amusement. She says use of vulgar language helps comedians create an image for themselves and a connection to the audience, where the audience can feel free in an informal atmosphere.

Jay’s “The Utility and Ubiquity of Taboo Words” states that certain personality traits such as extroversion and hostility are associated with the use of curse words, and that these words serve distinct purposes such as expressing anger and frustration.

In an experiment with a small sample, Staley found that use of swear words correlates with sex (men swear more than women), professed religion and religious instruction. The context in terms of the number of people listening did not appear to affect the number of swear words used. This is an old study from the 1970s.

Richard Stephens et al performed an experiment to see how swearing affects people who are experiencing pain. They found repeating a swear word increased tolerance to pain in most people and their theory is that swearing sets off a reaction in the brain that causes people to go into fight-or-flight mode so their current pain seems less intense.

- 4) What questions are still unanswered, or what problems are still present? Write some down. Discard any questions that seem impractical for you, a student, to answer in a period of six months. (HINT: Ideas can often be found in the last part of a journal article, under suggestions for future research.)

Do young men today swear more than young women? Does the type of swearing differ? Does a woman’s use of swear words correlate with her ideas about gender equality? Why do swear words in comedy sometimes make us laugh and sometimes not? If swearing is associated with certain personality traits, can those traits be changed by a change in speech patterns?

- 5) Choose your favorite question from number 4. Complete this template to see how it works out.

1. **Topic:** I am studying \_\_\_\_\_
2. **Question:** because I want to find out what/why/how \_\_\_\_\_,
3. **Significance:** in order to help my reader understand \_\_\_\_\_.

I am studying the use of profane language among women because I want to find out whether feminists use more curse words than other women in order to help my reader

understand how our ideas of gender roles affect our speech patterns, perhaps in ways we are not conscious of.

- 6) Cite your sources below, by hand, in MLA style. Check Out [Purdue Owl](#) for more information.

Jay, Timothy. "The Utility and Ubiquity of Taboo Words." *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2009, pp. 153–161. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/40212309](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40212309).

Seizer, Susan. "On the Uses of Obscenity in Live Stand-Up Comedy." *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 84, no. 1, 2011, pp. 209–234. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/41237487](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41237487).

Staley, Constance M. "Male-Female Use of Expletives: A Heck of a Difference in Expectations." *Anthropological Linguistics*, vol. 20, no. 8, 1978, pp. 367–380. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/30027419](http://www.jstor.org/stable/30027419).

Stephens, Richard, et al. "Swearing as a Response to Pain." *NeuroReport*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2009, pp. 1056–1060.