

## Methods Section

### Due in Week 8 Lab

Up to this point you will have read quite a bit about your research topic. You will have a sense as to what methods have been used to address similar and related questions. Use the literature as a reference and guide as you construct an argument for why it makes sense for you to follow the methodological plan you set out in your paper.

#### Methods (4-7 pages)

- Briefly reintroduce your research question
- Describe the specific methods of data collection and analysis you would use to answer your research question “if you had a million dollars” (e.g. if time and money were not limitations). Why did you choose these methods?
- • A detailed description of the pre-test you plan to actually carry out before the end of the quarter, and a brief description of how well it fits the target population of your research question
- Describe the ethical implications of your research. Could conducting your research harm your research subjects in any way? If the ethical implications of the “ideal” project and the pretest are different, describe both.
- Describe the strengths and weaknesses/limitations of your chosen methods, and how you are attempting to limit the weaknesses you have identified.

If you plan to engage human subjects in your research, please also include in an appendix (which does not count as part of your 5-7 page paper):

- Human Subjects Protocol Form OR the Human Subjects Exemption Request Form.
- An informed consent for your subjects to sign (unless you filled out the Human Subjects Exemption Request Form, which does not require informed consent forms).
- A draft of the data collection instrument you plan to use for your pretest (e.g. survey or interview questions).\*

### Notes on designing the pretest

This part of the assignment is meant to help you test your methods to find their weaknesses and make improvements on them. It will also give you an opportunity to conduct at least a small amount of the analysis that you would have to complete if you were to actually carry out your project on a larger scale. Here is what you are charged with doing:

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\* If you will propose using multiple instruments please submit at least the instrument you will use in your pretest. If your pretest instrument will be different from your proposed instrument include at least the instrument you will use for your pretest.

Develop a way to apply your methodological approach on a small scale. For example:

If your methodology calls for interviewing 100 people, develop your interview schedule, conduct a one-two hour interview with one or two persons, transcribe and encode the interview and analyze what you find.

OR

If you plan to conduct a survey, develop the survey and have people fill it out. If the survey is simply something that you hand out to people and they fill in on their own, get 15 people to do so. If the survey requires you to ask the questions of the respondents individually, do so with 5 people. If your survey is meant to be answered by college students, ask your TA about the possibility of having students in your section fill it out.

OR

If your question is best addressed through secondary data analysis, use U.S. Census data (or other publicly available data) to present descriptive statistics and/or a simple regression.

OR

If your question is best addressed through statistical methods but there are no data sets available to use to answer your question, design a survey that would gather the information you need. If the survey is simply something that you hand out to people and they fill in on their own, get 15 people to do so. If the survey requires you to ask the questions of the respondents individually, do so with 5 people. If your survey is meant to be answered by college students, ask your TA about the possibility of having students in your section fill it out.

OR

If you are conducting textual or any other analysis design and carry out coding and analysis procedures for a sub-sample of your texts. For example, if your texts are documents code and analyze 10 pages worth of documents. If your texts are films or other audio-visual material code and analyze 1-2 hours of the material, etc.

For the Methods Section Assignment due Week 8 you should include a detailed narrative description of what you will do for the pretest. You will not have to have actually completed it yet at this point, but you should be working on it.

**IMPORTANT:** If you plan to engage human subjects in your research, you **MUST** submit IRB/Human Subjects Protocol. Do not begin your pretest until you get an e-mail from your TA telling you that your pretest proposal is cleared and you may begin!