

# **Research Methods**

*Based on The Practice of Social Research by Earl Babbie*

## **Describe research aims**

What is the purpose of this research? Are you using a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed research strategy? What are your major hypotheses or research questions? If you are using hypotheses, identify your null hypotheses. What are your units of analysis? What theoretical perspective will you use? What are your independent and dependent variables and how do they relate to one another? What is the unique contribution of the study? Make the case that it is testable/falsifiable and plausible.

## **Describe background and significance**

Describe how the study builds on past research and critiques past work. Indicate the quality of your literature review, including such things as its timeliness, comprehensiveness, thoroughness, and analytic approach. Explain how the study is relevant to your audience.

## **Describe research design plans**

Describe your research design plans. Identify the kind of data collection procedures you will use. Discuss how time is handled, what kinds of comparisons you will be able to make, how you will assign cases to comparison groups, how you will handle expectancy effects, and the two kinds of validity you must consider. Be sure to indicate what those types of validity mean as well.

## **Describe sampling plans**

Describe the sampling strategy you will use in your study. Be sure to make clear that you understand the basic logic of what sampling is trying to accomplish, the primary goal, and what type of sampling procedure best achieves that goal. Point out whether your study is qualitative or quantitative and choose procedures appropriate for your approach. Describe your planned sampling procedures in some detail. Discuss any more advanced sampling issues that are relevant to your study.

## **Describe measurement plans**

Describe your measurement plans for your proposal. What are your key concepts and how will they be measured? How are your measures appropriate for your planned analyses given issues

like levels of measurement and dimensionality? How will measurement quality be assessed? For quantitative measures, will you use single items or scales? Are there scales available? Will you use any standard scaling procedures? For qualitative measures, describe your coding procedures.

## **Describe analysis plans**

Describe your analysis plans. Indicate whether you will employ qualitative or quantitative strategies (or both). Will you perform a case analysis, a variable analysis or a cross-case analysis? If your analysis is quantitative is it univariate, bivariate, or multivariate? If it is qualitative describe your coding and memoing procedures. For either qualitative or quantitative give at least one example analysis planned, and describe your analysis procedures.

## **Describe ethical strategies**

Address ethical concerns. You should describe how you will obtain informed consent, minimize risks to human subjects, do no harm, identify procedures you will use to protect their privacy, and perhaps conduct a debriefing.

# **Research Proposal**

## Research Aims

What is the purpose of this research? Are you using a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed research strategy? What are your major hypotheses or research questions? If you are using hypotheses, identify your null hypotheses. What are your units of analysis? What theoretical perspective will you use? What are your independent and dependent variables and how do they relate to one another?

## Background and Significance

Describe how the study builds on past research and critiques past work. Indicate the quality of your literature review, including such things as its timeliness, comprehensiveness, thoroughness, and analytic approach. Explain how the study is relevant to your audience.

## Research Design

Describe your research design plans. Identify the kind of data collection procedures you will use. Discuss how time is handled, what kinds of comparisons you will be able to make, how you will assign cases to comparison groups, how you will handle expectancy effects, and the two kinds of validity you must consider. Be sure to indicate what those types of validity mean as well.

### Sampling Plan

Describe the sampling strategy you will use in your study. Be sure to make clear that you understand the basic logic of what sampling is trying to accomplish, the primary goal, and what type of sampling procedure best achieves that goal. Describe your planned sampling procedures in some detail. Discuss any more advanced sampling issues that are relevant to your study.

### Measurement Plans

Describe your measurement plans for your proposal. What are your key concepts and how will they be measured? How are your measures appropriate for your planned analyses given issues like levels of measurement and dimensionality? How will measurement quality be assessed? For quantitative measures, will you use single items or scales? Are there scales available? Will you use any standard scaling procedures? For qualitative measures, describe your coding procedures.

### Analysis Plans

Describe your analysis plans. Indicate whether you will employ qualitative or quantitative strategies (or both). Will you perform a case analysis, a variable analysis or a cross-case analysis? If your analysis is quantitative is it univariate, bivariate, or multivariate? If it is qualitative describe your coding and memoing procedures. For either qualitative or quantitative give at least one example analysis planned, and describe your analysis procedures.

### Ethical Concerns and Strategies

Address ethical concerns. You should describe how you will obtain informed consent, minimize risks to human subjects, do no harm, identify procedures you will use to protect their privacy, and perhaps conduct a debriefing.