Homework 6: Research Proposal

Comments

It’s now time (or past time) to start thinking systematically about the sorts of variables that are available to you (or will be soon, in the data set that you will be building from the survey questions that you have chosen*), and how they are going to help you address the question(s) you have set for yourself.

To that end, this assignment requires that you prepare a research proposal in which you ask and answer questions concerning your problem, data, and method.

* For semesters in which there are more than one section of the course, you may (for this assignment and the final paper, should you choose to write it) use any questions from either section’s survey. But note that all of your variables must, of course, come from the same dataset.

Instructions

Although a tight outline of requirements is provided below, you should write your proposal in an engaging and persuasive manner, which may stray from this outline but must include each item requested. The total proposal should be four to eight pages.

Questions

Make sure your proposal includes all of the following. (As always, there are points for each item requested.)

- A provisional title
- An introduction to the subject, including:
  - problem statement (a 1-2 sentence summary of the core issues to be addressed in your work)
  - your specific research question(s), stated as explicitly as possible
  - a paragraph explaining the importance of the research that you are proposing to do
- A description of the study itself, including:
  - working definitions of the concepts that your research question leads you to consider
  - a thorough introduction to the dataset that you plan to use to address your research questions (who gathered it and when, what the sample size is, how the sample was selected, what population it represents, etc.)
  - a detailed description of the specific variables that you intend to use as operational indicators of your concepts (what the variables purport to measure, their levels of measurement, their value labels, etc.)
  - a thorough description of your proposed methods: initial recording of the variables, creation of any aggregate measures, and steps in the anticipated statistical analysis – and be very specific about the latter, i.e. the statistical methods.
- A “shell” for the results section of your final paper, including:
  - dummy tables
    - variables and values labeled on a cross-tabulation with empty cells, and the “main diagonal(s)” identified to illustrate your preliminary expectations.
    - don’t invent numbers, much less create an imaginary data set, but you might mark cells in which you expect frequencies to be concentrated with large “X”s
  - a summary listing of expected results