Methods

Fall 2019

**How To: Findings: Analyzing and Interpreting Your Data**

1. What are your findings? How do you figure out what to analyze?

a. Refer back to your Introduction and Literature Review. What do they say is your main research question? What are the sub-topics of your main research question? What are your hypotheses? You need to test them.

b. What studies do you identify in your Literature Review that guide your research?

c. What questions do you identify in your Literature Review that guide your research?

d. Reflecting on the main research question, the sub-topics, and the questions identified in the literature, now begin to formulate your analysis of the data.

2. Do some straight-forward univariate statistics of your data. For example,

a. Identify your main independent and dependent variables and run some univariate statistics, such as descriptive and frequency distributions: How do the variables distribute themselves?

b. Let the reader know the important aspects of the univariate statistics. For example, if one of your independent variables is sex, you may want to tell the reader the percent of women and men in your sample. If a dependent variable is support for capital punishment, you may want to tell the reader the percent of people in the sample who support and who oppose capital punishment. This gives the reader an overall sense of your main variables, and it eases the reader into your more substantive findings, which follow.

3. Now move to bivariate statistics. Depending on the type of variables, you may want to analyze your data using a cross-tabs table. Or, if you are using an interval-ratio dependent variable, you may want to use a t-test to compare the mean values.

a. Considering your main research question: what could a cross-tabs table tell you about your main research question? What about a t-test of means?

b. What about the sub-parts of your research question: what does a bivariate table (cross-tabs or t-test of means, for example) tell you with regard to these issues?

c. Should you consider recoding any of your variables, or would an index be appropriate?

d. Run the chi-square statistic to see if your relationships are statistically significant and to see if there are some strong relationships.

4. Now move to multivariate analyses if these are appropriate for your research question.

a. Are there any multivariate relationships you should investigate?

5. How do these analyses help you answer your main research question? Think about your hypothesis. Should you reject it or fail to reject it?

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**How To: Writing the Findings Section**

**Due with the Conclusion: Thursday, Nov 21st, 2019**

1. Your Findings section should begin with a couple of simple paragraphs that describe your independent and dependent variables in terms of univariate statistics.
2. Then move to your hypotheses and present information directly related to your hypotheses. In this way you are informing the reader of your main research question(s), and you are explaining what you have found.
3. Be sure to include charts, tables, or graphs that speak directly to your main research question.
4. Then refer back to the studies in your Literature Review, and explain how your findings support or do not support the existing literature.
5. Here is an example of how comparing your findings to the existing literature that you reviewed in the Literature Review can be written (and this is completely made up).

“In comparing my findings to the research of Smith and Rodriguez (1999), whose national study found no evidence of support for abortion, my study clearly identifies a pattern of support. As Table 2 indicates, sixty percent of the GSS sample reports….”

**How To: Writing the Conclusion**

**Due with the Findings, Thursday, Nov 21st**

The Conclusion must contain a number of specific components. Below is a list of the components and the order in which they should be addressed in the Conclusion.

1. What do your overall findings say about your main research question? Do you reject your hypothesis? Do you fail to reject your hypothesis? Overall, do your findings lend support to the literature, or have you uncovered completely surprising results?

2. What improvements could have been made in your study to improve your research? Relate the improvements to conceptualization issues or to survey design issues or to data issues.

3. What suggestions do you as a researcher have for future research? Should the survey have different or additional questions to better understand the main research questions? Did you uncover something that other researchers should pursue further? Would a different sample provide better results?

4. Finally, why is your research important? For example, does your research have policy implications? Now that you have reported on your findings, how does your study make a difference in terms of the issue you studied?

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# Rubric: Findings and Conclusion; DUE Thursday, Nov 21st, 2019

Worth: 25 points

Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Points:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Findings** (2 points each)

\_\_\_\_\_ Provided a smooth reading Findings section

\_\_\_\_\_ Made clear how the main research question is addressed in your Findings Section

\_\_\_\_\_ Made clear how the main issues raised in the Literature Review are addressed in your findings; you referred back to the studies you cited in the Literature Review and discussed how your findings contradicted or supported those earlier studies

\_\_\_\_\_ Provided accurate information (tables/charts are accurate or quotes are accurate)

\_\_\_\_\_ Findings that you report on are directly tied to the questions raised in the Literature Review

\_\_\_\_\_ You included the appropriate findings to address your research question (enough charts/tables)

\_\_\_\_\_ Provided a transitional sentence at the end of the Findings section into the Conclusion

**Conclusion** (2 points each)

\_\_\_\_\_ Provided a smooth reading Conclusion

\_\_\_\_\_ In the conclusion, you state how the overall findings speak to your main research question

\_\_\_\_\_ In the conclusion, you state how your study could have been improved

\_\_\_\_\_ In the conclusion, you state suggestions for future research

\_\_\_\_\_ Finally, you conclude your conclusion with why your study is important

\_\_\_\_\_ Provided Findings and Conclusion in bold at left (1 point)

\_\_\_\_\_ Stapled appropriate rubric (1 point)

\_\_\_\_\_ Included graded drafts and rubrics of all other sections of paper (1 point)

Comments: