

Sociology 750 – Freese – Spring 2005

Exercise #2: Design an experiment

Weight: 4 points

Due date and time: March 3, 5pm (note policy on the syllabus about late exercises).

Task: With *up to three* of your colleagues in the class, you will compose a proposal for a telephone- or Internet-based general population experiment using the Time-Sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences program. This program requires a 5 page proposal, not including references and your proposed question(s). The TESS program guidelines are described at www.experimentcentral.org. The only differences between the materials you are expected to prepare for a real TESS proposal and the materials you should prepare for this exercise is that, for this exercise, you should also include a title page that provides a title for your project and the names of all group members (however, you do not need to provide your institutional affiliation or whatever other biographical information required for a real proposal).

TESS is basically a fledgling program for doing survey-based experiments like those described in the Sniderman and Grob essay on the syllabus. Indeed, I would imagine that the S&G essay might be quite helpful in thinking about your own experiment, and the experiment you propose can be inspired by one of the experiments you read about there (although I would encourage you to think creatively).

As per the TESS guidelines, be sure that the experiment you propose is really an experiment or quasi-experiment. Be sure also that the experiment you propose is really a general population experiment to be conducted in the United States, although you can propose an oversampling of some group. In other words, for example, do not propose an experiment to be conducted among college undergraduates or to be conducted that compares responses between residents of the United States and a different country, not because such experiments are unworthy, but because they would be outside the parameters of what the TESS program is able/willing to conduct.

I'm being intentionally vague on details so that you will look at the TESS website, which you need to look to do this exercise anyway. I will also make available on my webpage a very simple, but successful TESS proposal (written by Devah Pager and me) so that you can see what one looks like.

Forming groups. Groups may consist of up to four people. Everyone in a group will get the same grade. Form your own groups as you wish, *but please do so by classtime on February 24*. Once you have formed a group, one of you should send a notification to

me that cc's all other group members (so I know that you are all agreed and committed to group-hood and group-grade-fate).

But I hate group work! Fine. You can also be in a group consisting only of yourself. Send me an e-mail *by classtime on February 24* if you plan to do this.

Turning it in: By the due date/time, *one* group member should send your proposal to me *as an attachment* at *jfreese@ssc.wisc.edu* with the subject line Completed Exercise 4. You should submit your entire assignment *as a single .pdf file* (meaning that if you do not know how to convert a document into a .pdf file, you will need to figure this out). If you are pleased with your proposal once it's done, you can feel free to go ahead and submit it to TESS as well, either right away or after you have received comments back on it from me.¹

¹ Actually, because the TESS project has reached the end of its funding period, it will no longer be accepting telephone project proposals as of March 1st. However, if the program is refunded, you could submit your project then.