**Data/Methods**

*SOC 4881 – Population Studies Research Practicum*

**DUE**

*March 11*

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Complete this assignment in your group. Be sure to agree---early---on a division of labor within the group; make sure everyone has a meaningful role and has a way to learn from the assignment. It might be a good idea to meet as a group (in person or virtually) to make a plan.

Your task is to write the methods section of your research paper. As we’ve discussed in class, the main goal of the methods section is to explain to the reader---in enough detail that they could reproduce what you did---how you will answer your research questions.

Your methods section should be about 2,500 words (not counting the front end or the reference section).

The document you turn in should have the following sections:

1. Your Front End (revised based on feedback you’ve been given)
2. Your methods section (~2,500 words)
3. References

Below are the basic things you should cover in the methods section, along with some suggested word counts and a few other notes.

1. **What data will you use (and why?)** (~1,250 Words)

Name and describe the data source

How was the data collected? In your case, how was record linkage accomplished?

How is the sample restricted? (i.e., how did we get from ~12.7 million to just ~380,000?)

Discuss strengths/weaknesses of these data vs. vs. alternative options

1. **How will you measure every concept?** (~500 Words)

Cover every concept in every question … how precisely will you measure everything?

Discuss strengths/weaknesses vs. alternative measures

1. **What analytic methods will you use to answer each research question?** (~500 Words)

Go question by question and provide details about how the question will be answered

Start simple in this draft … you can get more complex as the paper develops

Discuss strengths/weaknesses (vs. alternative ways of answering the question (e.g., what are the pros and cons of our brother pair comparison methods?)

1. **What problems do you anticipate and how will you overcome them?** (~250 Words)

Outline threats to valid results (e.g., the fact that we can’t link everybody)

How will each be overcome?

When they are done with your methods section, the reader should be able to clearly understand exactly how you will answer all of your research questions. They should also understand your reasoning for making the choices that you did (e.g., about why you measured things the way you did, why you used these data and not others).

Of course, the methods section should be clearly and logically written. The reader should never have to wonder where you are going with your explanations/descriptions or why they are reading certain passages. I strongly suggest you look closely at the methods sections of several published papers for examples; don’t focus on their substance as much as on their structure, logical flow, and organization.

**GRADING**

This assignment is worth 8 points. Everyone in the group will receive the same score unless I receive (and verify) information that some in the group deserve more/less than others in the group. In those instances, I will communicate with everyone in the group to come to a fair resolution.

To receive full credit, the document you turn in should include:

1. Your Front End (revised based on feedback you’ve been given)
2. Your methods section (~2,500 words)
3. References

The methods section should be about 2,500 words and should describe (1) what data you will use, how the data were constructed, and why those data are the best suited for answering your research questions; (2) how you will measure every concept in your research questions; (3) what analytic method you will use to answer your research questions; and (4) what problems you anticipate and how you will try to overcome them. If these things are unclear, you will not get full credit.

Points will be deducted if the front end is not clearly written or logically constructed.

Assignments turned in late will receive half credit. Assignments should be emailed to me (in Word format) at [warre046@umn.edu](mailto:warre046@umn.edu).