RESEARCH DESIGN II: CASE STUDIES AND QUALITATIVE METHODS
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ACADEMIC POSTERS – VADEMECUM

Why posters?

In this "Research Design II" seminar we ask you to prepare a RD poster in groups of four students. The objective is to let you *practice what they preach*, i.e. to apply the theory taught in the seminar and trained in the tutorials. Application fosters the learning effect, and poster design demands for creativity *and* analytical rigor at the same time. Visualising your own research design thus serves as an additional way to practice for the final exam.

Psychological studies moreover show that such a hands-on approach is „better for promoting positive attitudes toward empirical research than is a more traditional reading and writing assignment" (Crowley-Long et al., 1997: 203). Designing RD posters is therefore a very useful method to encourage and prepare you for your own future research (MA thesis or PhD thesis).

As you have to prepare your poster in advance, it will be easy for you to hand in a three-page supplementary with your outline of the poster, the sources, perhaps some additional graphs, and everything else you find helpful for your classmates. All the supplements will be distributed by email to the whole group after the presentation of the poster. Your work on the poster and the three-page supplement accounts for 30% of your overall RDII grade.

What should be on your poster – and what shouldn't?

Your poster shall NOT be just a written outline of your research design stuck to the board, but a visual-graphical expression of your methodological proceeding to answer a specific research question. You do NOT actually have to realise this research design, i.e. collect data, conduct interviews, etc.. However, each group has to think through its design and may present hypothetical findings, as if the design would have been realised.

Every research question is individual. And so is the corresponding research design to answer it. You all know that even if two scholars have the same questions, they will never use exactly the same approach to answer it. Therefore, we hope for individual research design posters. However, some general items should be found on every poster:

- Title
- Short abstract (including research question) (optional)
- Theory (possible hypotheses)
- Methods
- Data/Sources

- Organisation of research (time schedule) (optional)

- Eventually results (or expected outcomes)

- Literature

All in all, think of your poster as a condensed version of a research design for your MA or (prospective) PhD thesis.

What about the style of the poster?

Think of your poster as a source of information, an advertisement and also a summary of your work. In order to be effective, posters should not contain "visual chaos", but they should be focused on key items and terms, rely on graphs and images, while text is used sparingly (Hess et al. 2010). They should be legible from at min. 2 meters and – if possible – on DinA1 paper. For further ideas on the style of posters see the sources below.

Sources:

Crowley-Long, Kathleen, Jack L. Powell, Caryn Christensen (1997): Teaching Students about Research: Classroom Poster Sessions. *The Clearing House* 70(4), 202-204.

Geddes, Barbara (2003): Paradigms and Sand Castles. Theory Building Research Design in Comparative Politics. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Hess, George R., Kathryn Tosney, Leon Liegel (2010): Creating Effective Poster Presentations. Online at <http://www.ncsu.edu/project/posters> (last retrieved 01 April 2012)

Marek, Pam, Andrew N. Christopher, Cynthia S. Koenig (2002): Applying Technology to Facilitate Poster Presentations. *Teaching of Psychology* 29(1), 70-72.

McCready, Rebecca (2011): Creating Academic Posters. Online at <http://fms-itskills.ncl.ac.uk/posters/aboutposters.html> (last retrieved 01 April 2012)