Revised Research Questions Prompt

Submit in Canvas by class time
Format: Microsoft Word document. Although the assignment is short, please use the appropriate
MLA or APA headings (e.g., name, instructor, course number, date etc.)
3 points.

You have already articulated initial research questions, but research questions change as we explore the tools available to us, and the opportunities and limitations that those tools offer us. The purpose of this assignment is for you to demonstrate that you have critically considered the types of questions that you can answer (and therefore make claims about) given the types of evidence that the tools we have explored provide.

Thus, your **main task** in this assignment is to revise your initial research questions based on the tools we have explored and what you have begun to discover. Like the initial research question, this question should be **specific**, but it should critically account for what kinds of questions are feasible and realistic to answer, given the types of evidence that we can collect with the tools in this class.

The assignment will have three parts (and you have already completed one part!).

1. The Initial Research Question

Simply copy and paste this from your Initial Research Question submission.

For ease, use the format:

- "My initial research question for [X] mini-paper/Final Paper was: [insert specific question]"

2. The Revised Research Question

Your Revised Research Question. While it is possible that your research question remained the same, it is likely that it has evolved since your initial research question, since the tools that we are using give us evidence that lends itself to specific types of questions and answers. Additionally, as you explore your evidence, your questions might change in light of interesting patterns that you identify.

  o Again, I highly suggest picking a research question that addresses an issue with which you have familiarity, or a community of which you are a part. To make sense of your data later, you will need context, and we cannot speak for other communities.
  o You should think critically about if the data that we actually collected and the methods that we used can answer that question, since that is a part of the mini-papers.

For ease, use the format:

- "My revised research question for [X] mini-paper/Final Paper was: [insert specific question]"

*This assignment meets the course outcomes (1) Define big data, explain some of the challenges it poses for communications researchers, and develop and refine research questions that are appropriate for "big data" research.

3. Rationale.

Last, tell me in about 3-5 sentences why your question changed or did not change. I suggest you think about the following:

- Can the methods and tools that we are using actually answer the questions that you are proposing to ask? This will be especially important to think about for your Mini-papers and major papers. Were you asking about questions that could not be answered by the tools that we have used? For instance, since our tools only collect samples, and we do not know about how the tools we use collect those samples, we cannot make generalizable claims. Our tools do not collect ALL YouTube videos or ALL Tweets, and we do not know how the tools determine what results they return to us. Additionally, since are only collecting "public" data, the information that we are using to answer our questions only reflects people who a) choose to use that platform, and b) people who choose to make their accounts "public." Therefore, our questions may have to change since we cannot answer generalizable questions, and our evidence only comes from a specific subset of people who use the Internet (and not everyone uses the Internet!).
- Alternatively, did your questions change based on the types of evidence that you learned that you could collect? For instance, if you became interested in what types of content YouTube's algorithms deem to be "relevant" after we used the Digital Methods Initiative NetVizz tool, your questions may have changed in response to learning about the types of evidence we could collect.
- Your questions might also have changed if you discovered something interesting in the data that we collected. For instance, perhaps you discovered an interesting pattern in how certain words were used together, or when people post digital content.
- Perhaps your questions did not change at all! In this case, tell me why you think your question stayed the same. Did you not find any interesting patterns in your data, for instance? Why not?

Steps:

1. You should begin this assignment by first looking at the major assignment for which you are writing the question! What is the assignment asking you to do? How will you meet those requirements?
2. Next, look back to your initial research question. Based on what we have learned in class, think about if you can answer that question. Ask yourself why or why not?
3. Next, think about if you discovered anything interesting in the evidence that we collected in class that might be an interesting avenue to pursue for the Mini-Paper or the Final Paper.
4. Use the research questions handout from class and think about how you can revise your question. Again, make sure to use specific question words that go beyond simple yes/no answers. Although yes/no answers can be a helpful place to start, you will need to expand beyond those answers significantly. I suggest using "Who," "Where," and "When," are great. "How," "What (exactly)," and "Why" are even better, although some of those questions will be difficult to answer with our tools this semester (e.g., you cannot answer why someone does something without talking to them.)
5. Type out your reasons for altering your question, or why you think it stayed the same.

Rubric

Please note: I have included this rubric here for clarity and transparency about my expectations. However, all of these criteria are linked to each other and cannot be separated.

	Excellent	Developing
Research Questions **1.5 points**	Both the initial and revised research questions are included. The research question is specific and within the scope of the types of questions we can answer with big data (e.g., not interview or survey data types of questions). At this point, the research question should be something that we can answer with the data that we collected with our digital tools. The author has thoughtfully considered the limits of our tools in formulating their questions.	Either the initial or revised research questions is missing. The research question is not specific or within the scope of the types of questions we can answer with big data (e.g., not interview or survey data types of questions). The research question is not something that we can answer with the data that we collected with our digital tools. The author has not considered the limits of our tools in formulating their questions.
Rationale **1.5 points**	The author thoughtfully and fully explains why their question changed or did not change.	The author does not thoughtfully and fully explain why their question changed or did not change.