

March 22, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

The order to stay at home poses challenges for research. These challenges may be especially anxiety-inducing for assistant professors in our departments. Here is a short checklist for chairs to use with Assistant Professors to help them think about a research plan during the current conditions. There are some huge obstacles to executing research right now and obviously some things cannot be done. What can't be done:

- 1) Field work and in-person interviews.
- 2) Use of archives and libraries in person.
- 3) What may be the most difficult is finding the solitude necessary to serious thought. Childcare, eldercare, and simply finding time without the distractions of family life make social distancing and quarantine exceptionally challenging for research.

Here is what can be done (just some ideas)

1. Finish off projects you've been putting off.
2. Polish existing work rather than begin anew. So much of publication is about presentation. The inability to collect new data may allow us to polish the gem before putting it on display more thoroughly than we may otherwise normally do.
3. Methods-focused pieces that tap existing data—replication studies or even rethinking existing results in light of new or different methods.
4. Conceptual work rather than empirical research. So much of our data-driven world focuses on data collection, but we all know this sort of work often comes at the expense of thinking about the very concepts that we measure. Forced from the "field," we can use the break to think anew about fundamental concepts that we or others may operationalize later.
5. Learn new software/techniques: now may be the time to crack GIS, ecological inference, twitter scrapping, or learn how to turn text into data.
6. From Louis DeSipio: collaborations that allow for comparative analysis where each collaborator brings their data to the collaboration.
7. Review essay of a subject that interests you that you haven't had time and space to sit and contemplate. This is a great way to kick start a new research project.
8. Archives in many cases now upload huge amounts of material and allow off site use. This may be expanded in response to the coronavirus pandemic and it is worth inquiring with each archive you were thinking of using if they have altered their policies. In my own field this has already happened. Archives in Russia and Israel, for example, have hugely expanded free online access over the past several days.
9. This from Matt Huffman: "Maybe you already know this, but this journal has a special issue/guest editor(s) for every issue. Maybe someone could submit a proposal to edit one (but that relies on others being able to do research, but maybe it could work anyway,

depending on the topic). I edited one years ago, and it's a great experience:  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/home/ann>”

10. Survey research using Qualtrics, Mech Turk etc (**IRB is supposedly up and running to approve this sort of thing**)
11. Telephone and Zoom interviews. Everyone has Zoom now!!
12. Pop-up workshops and even conferences on zoom—start small, say five people—on a focused subject. Start a once per week discussion of someone’s paper or work. The budget will be minimal and the catering costs are low!

Feel free to add your own!

Best wishes,

Jeffrey Kopstein