

Step 4

Students explain their choice of method

Here are some examples of how *TfC* students explained *why* they chose the method they did to answer their research questions. Some research questions are best answered with a particular method. Asking students to explain why they choose the method they did makes it more likely they will have chosen the best method. The key here is that you and your students need only two or three sentences that provide a convincing explanation for these decisions. Think of it this way: two sentences are all anyone really has time or interest in listening to. Again, there is no RIGHT answer or CORRECT explanation. Instead, there are explanations that are convincing—i.e. that indicate that an informed decision was made—and those that are not at all convincing.

Seminar research question: *“Why do adults lack basic information about the voting process, issues and candidates?”*

Field research method chosen: Focus groups

Explanation for this choice:

“A focus group allows an understanding of the deeper sentiments of many voters towards the issues. This is a way to hear what people really have in mind without restraints.

Surveys limit the ways people can respond by giving them a small number of answer options. These answer options are usually the most obvious answers so if you are trying to be thoughtful the survey may not be a good option for this question.”

Seminar research question: *“Why do high school students in Halifax and Northampton Counties feel unsafe and what can be initiated to increase the feeling of safety?”*

Field research method(s) chosen: Survey and in-depth interviews.

Explanation for this choice:

We thought that a survey and an in-depth interview were the methods that best fit our question. The survey was a good fit because it allowed us to get data from many young people and because the answer options were limited so it would be easier to analyze our results in the time we had to complete our project. Surveys require subjects to give multiple choice or yes or no answers. These options allow us to easily input and interpret the data we received. However, we also saw the advantages of an in-depth interview, especially in regard to allowing people to talk more fully about their views. On a topic, such as personal and community safety this ability to discuss feelings in greater detail seemed to be important. Thus, we added an open-ended question to our survey to get some of this detail while keeping the other advantages of a survey as the primary method of answering our question.

Seminar research question: *"What determines whether a teenager in Rye Town will look for and obtain a job?"*

Field research methods: Surveys and short interviews

Rationale:

The overview of existing literature makes it possible to see what we still need to know about this issue, especially in our own community. The absence of high school students and their voices caught our eye from the start. The survey data that existed never really shed light on what youth were actually doing and why they were doing it. We decided on a mixed approach to our research question. First, we will survey high school students in Rye Town. Then, we will interview a couple of employers in the area who hired teens. We think that together these methods would enable us to compare the views of high

school job seekers and those who hire teens and hopefully start a conversation between high school job seekers and employers.

