

Conducting Pilot Studies: Learn from Our Mistakes

Lisa Jasinski, Doctoral Student, The University of Texas at Austin
Ashley Stone, Doctoral Student, The University of Texas at Austin

Texas Higher Education Symposium - August 2016

<http://tinyurl.com/pilotstudies2016>

Presentation Overview

What is a Pilot Study?

Myths and Realities

Why a Pilot Study?

Benefits

How do you do a Pilot Study?

Get Started Today

What is a pilot study?



Pilot Studies Defined

In his book on case study research, Robert K. Yin (2014) advocated for the value of conducting a pilot study, explaining that the approach is **“formative, assisting you to develop relevant lines of questions—possibly even providing some conceptual clarification for the research design as well”** (p. 96).

Pilot Studies: Myths and Realities

MYTH	REALITY
“Tons of work!”	Ok. It’s true. “Tons of work!” - but valuable, productive work
IRB-approval will be time-consuming and difficult.	Allot a few weeks to complete ethics training, prepare, and “shepherd” an IRB application.
I won’t be able to use these findings in my dissertation or another research project (i.e., presentation, article).	NO! Once you obtain IRB approval a pilot study is a REAL study with REAL findings with REAL participants. You might be confusing pilot studies with “pre-tests.”
My ideas are too green to conduct research.	All research projects (even those conducted by seasoned researchers) gain shape and clarity throughout the research project (Maxwell, 2013).
Who needs a pilot study? I’m just going to dive right into the real deal.	Don’t miss this change to refine your interview protocols/surveys, ensure alignment between your research questions and method, and gain practical skills to facilitate your planned research.

Why should researchers conduct pilot studies?



Benefits of Pilot Studies

1. Is there **long-term relationship** potential here?
2. Inform **methodology** and **critical framework**
3. **Refine** your interview or survey **protocol**
4. Gain valuable **experience** designing and completing a research study

What did we learn as a result of
conducting pilot studies?



Tangible &
Practical
Research
Skills

Developed
relationships
with
participants

Generated
Findings for
Scholarly
Dissemination

Focus in on
what
matters
most

LESSONS LEARNED

What do we wish we had known *before*
conducting our pilot studies?







Better
acquainted
with the
topic.



Don't be
afraid to
change...
everything.



Pursue with
focus and
rigor.



Pilot in
name only.

HINDSIGHT IS 20/20

Preparing to conduct your pilot study



What's an idea you'd like to test out in a pilot study? (A new skill? A population you want to learn more about? A theoretical framework or methodology that excites you?)

Who is one person you can talk to you to continue developing this idea? (A friend, mentor, academic advisor?)

What is holding you back from conducting a pilot study?

Pilot Study: Prospective Timeline (15 week semester)

IRB - Four Weeks

Recruitment - Three Weeks

Data Collection - Four Weeks

Data Analysis - Four Weeks

Write-up - Two Weeks

References and Resources

Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in educational settings*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Kasunic, M. (2004). *Conducting effective pilot studies*. Paper presented at the Software Engineering Institute, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA.

Kim, Y. (2010). The pilot study in qualitative inquiry: Identifying issues and learning lessons for culturally competent research. *Qualitative Social Work*, 10(2), 190-206. doi:10.1177/1473325010362001

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3 ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

van Teijlingen, E. R., Hundley, V. (2001, Winter 2001). The importance of pilot studies. *Social Research Update*, 1-4.

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Or... Contact us!

Lisa Jasinski, Doctoral Student (ljjasinski@utexas.edu)

Ashley Stone, Doctoral Student (ashley_stone@utexas.edu)