

## *Rhetorical Strategies for Working with Institutional Review Boards*

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- Make an appointment with an IRB staff member to learn about your institution's IRB's requirements and how you can best meet those requirements.
  - o Quite often, each institution's IRB has specific language and forms researchers must use to receive approval. Learning how your research fits into the requirements prior to submitting forms for IRB review may save you and the review board time and energy.
- Seek the help of a mentor in your department who has experience with IRB.
  - o Quite often, a mentor will have tips and advice for you, and may even provide you with examples of previous research proposals that have been approved.
- Cite previous research that utilized methods similar to the ones you will use.
  - o Referring to previous research, even in parentheses shows an IRB that you are familiar with the methods and that other scholars in your field have already conducted research with the methods.
- Be precise and concise when preparing your IRB documents.
  - o Avoid using jargon or explaining theory or pedagogical issues in detail; leave this discussion for publications.
- Explain your project in detail, however.
  - o The proposal is the only part of your research the IRB will see; therefore, describe your project's details so that the review board can gain a full understanding of your research.
- Account for risk, however minimal it may be.
  - o The IRB needs to know that you are aware your research entails risk and that you are prepared to handle it, even if this preparation reads, "This study involves no risk beyond what is experienced on an average day. To prepare for potential risk, the researcher will call [insert appropriate contact information here]."
- Acknowledge and address risks when working with captive populations, including students. Explain in detail what it means for students to withdraw from the research.
  - o When can students withdraw from the study? Only during the research, or for a specific time afterwards? Will the students' grade be affected? Do they get to review the transcripts or findings? Can they make adjustments to the publication submissions? What really happens when a student in a captive population withdraws?
- Hedge whenever possible, particularly in the "Benefits" section.
  - o You cannot be sure participants *will* benefit from the study, but they *may* benefit from the study.