

## WE1S “human subjects” research grounds big data study in our own communities, inspiring local actions that can be scaled and adapted.

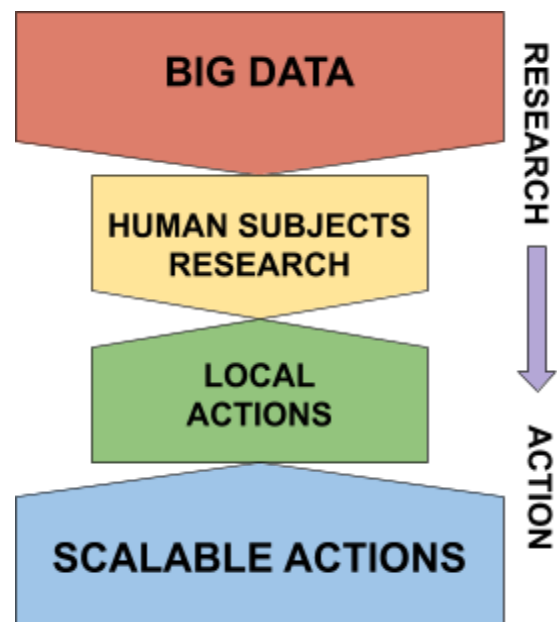
In addition to applying digital research methods, WE1S carried out human subjects research pilot projects at UC Santa Barbara (Spring 2019) and the University of Miami (Spring 2020) with IRB approval.<sup>1</sup> Research consisted of 1) a survey, open to both undergraduate and non-undergraduate participants, with questions about educational background, the process of choosing a major, and experiences with the humanities, and 2) a series of focus groups in which participants discussed their perceptions of the humanities, learned about WE1S’s digital methods, and gave feedback on selected materials.

The goals of WE1S’s human subjects research were twofold. First, we wanted to understand how people experience the humanities in our own communities and put the “close reading of a campus” in conversation with a larger panorama of research about public perceptions of the humanities at a big-data scale. By inviting members of our communities into our research process at an early stage, we could provide space for human perspectives within a computational workflow.<sup>2</sup> Second, we wanted to access points of view that were not adequately represented in our corpus of news materials, such as the voices of first-generation college students.

<sup>1</sup> In research, “human subjects” means “a living individual about whom an investigator ... obtains (1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual or (2) identifiable private information” (UCSB Office of Research). “IRB” is an “institutional review board” overseeing the ethics of such research.

<sup>2</sup> This goal of foregrounding the human within the digital is conceptually similar to that behind our “Grounded Theory” approach, as well.

Human subjects research can also help WE1S make recommendations for moving from research to action. Informed by the interlinked processes of big-data research and human subjects research, we can develop advocacy practices directly responsive to our immediate communities and campuses. We can also build from these local experiences to suggest ways that others could ask their own research questions and create their own solutions elsewhere. (See, for example, Action Cards 8-X and 8-Y [to come].)



### Resources

Blog Post, Jessica Gang: [“Announcing WE1S Human Subjects Research”](#)

Research Portfolio on WE1S human subjects research by Avery Martin

[Survey Questions, UCSB](#)

Survey Questions, U. Miami