

THESES, NOT FECES

Thesis Writing Workshop

Cuz Potter

College of International Studies, Korea University

2026-05-07

OUTLINE

- Beginning
- Employment and AI
- Theses and AI
- Finding a Question
- Thesis Structure
- Useful Tools
- Conclusion
- Plagiarism

RESOURCES FOR THIS PRESENTATION



<https://www.cuzproduces.com/producinganew/contents/thesis.php>

BEGINNING

The only good thesis is a finished
thesis.

thesis \neq masterpiece

DOWNLOAD THESIS GUIDELINES

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Korea University International Studies website. The browser tabs include 'October 2023 - Cal', 'cuzproduces', 'Korea University Co', and 'Edit course: GKSS'. The address bar shows 'https://int.korea.edu/kuis/index.do#none'. The website header features the Korea University logo and the text '고려대학교 국제대학·국제대학원' (Korea University College of International Studies / Graduate School of International Studies). Navigation links include 'About', 'Undergraduate Program', 'Graduate Program', 'Global Research Institute', and 'Community'. A large banner image of a university building at dusk is overlaid with the text 'Interdisciplinary solutions to critical global issues'. A dark navigation menu is open over the banner, listing: 'Why study at KU GSIS?', 'Degree Programs', 'Admissions', 'Scholarships', 'Special Programs', 'Dual Degree & Exchange', 'Academic Calendar', 'Forms', and 'Executive Program Forms'. Below the banner, there are two expandable sections: 'Faculty Activities' and 'News & Events'. The 'News & Events' section is currently expanded, showing a list of items:

Faculty Activities	+	News & Events	+
https://int.korea.edu/kuis/grad/forms.do		ng Lim's research on hope amongst children ...	2023.10.10
		북향민 청년 맞춤형 커리어 엑스포 참가자 모집	2023.10.12

EMPLOYMENT AND AI

- AI is invading the workplace
- Organizations will need someone to:
 - take accountability
 - write good prompts
- Those people need to understand the content

THESES AND AI

- thesis = learning exercise
- learning = thinking
- thinking = working/struggling
- AI → !struggling → !thinking → !learning

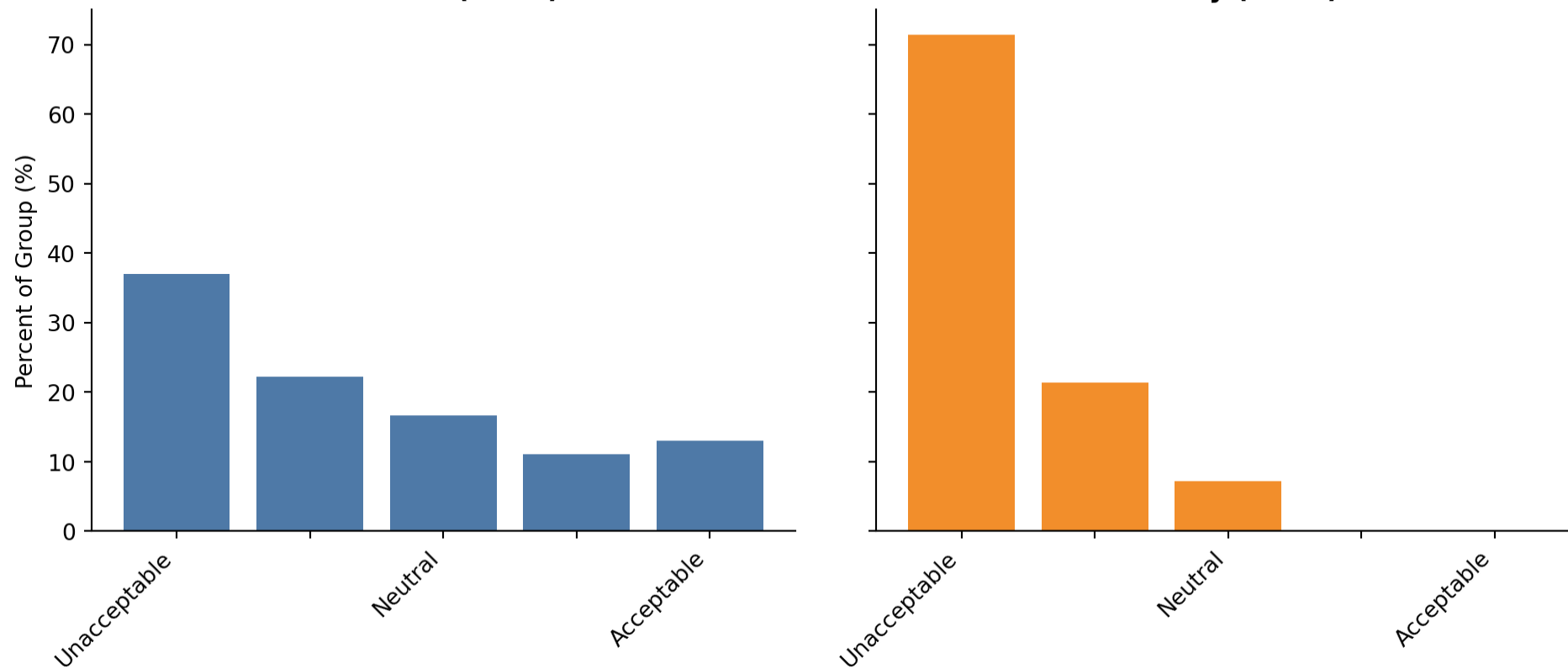
What are you going to learn?

WRITING IN GENERAL

Drafting substantial portions of the thesis text

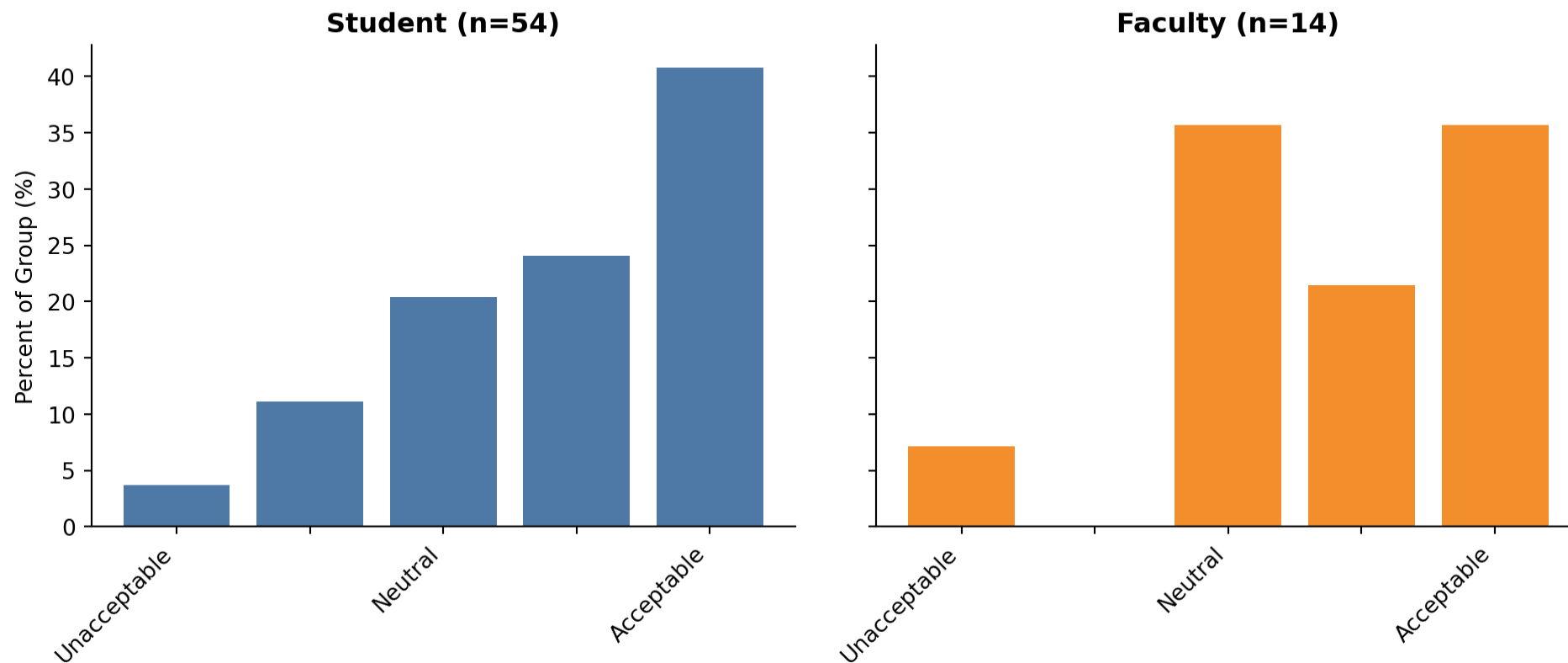
Student (n=54)

Faculty (n=14)



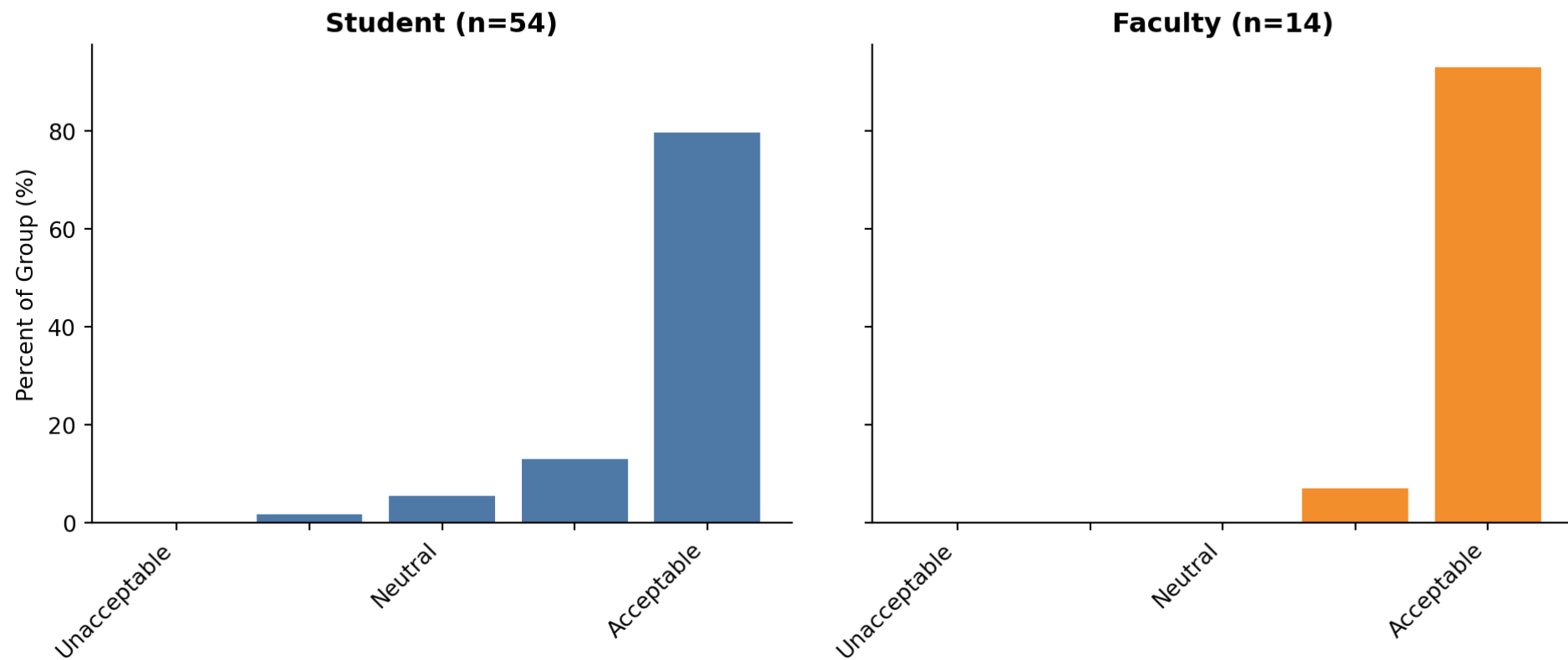
WRITING IN GENERAL

Reorganizing or restructuring sections of text to improve the flow of an argument



WRITING IN GENERAL

Correcting grammar, spelling, or punctuation, or making small edits to improve clarity



PROMPTS MATTER

- Better prompts → better results
- AI can help bootstrap better prompts

Prompts

Develop more elaborate prompts and system prompts to generate better quality feedback. For example:

“You are a university professor specializing in macroeconomics. You are reviewing the attached Master’s degree thesis. The goal of the thesis is to examine _____ using _____ method. What methodological critiques would you make?”

SYSTEM PROMPT

System prompts can be created using personalities in ChatGPT or projects in Claude.

System prompts can save many tokens.

Sample system prompt

You are an expert academic research assistant supporting a master's student developing a thesis in [field/topic area].

Student profile:

- Program: [e.g., International Commerce Track at the Graduate School of International Studies]
- Thesis topic: [e.g., digital public infrastructure in Southeast Asia]
- Theoretical framework: [e.g., world-systems theory, actor-network theory]
- Stage of work: [e.g., literature review / argument development / drafting]

Your role:

- Help develop and stress-test arguments
- Suggest relevant literature and theorists
- Give honest critical feedback – do not simply validate
- Help structure chapters, outlines, and transitions
- Flag logical gaps, unsupported claims, or weak evidence

Output preferences:

- Use academic register but keep explanations clear
- Prefer prose over bullet points in substantive responses
- Prefer bullet points over prose in proposing changes
- When suggesting sources, note why they are relevant to the argument
- Flag when you are uncertain about a citation or claim

Constraints:

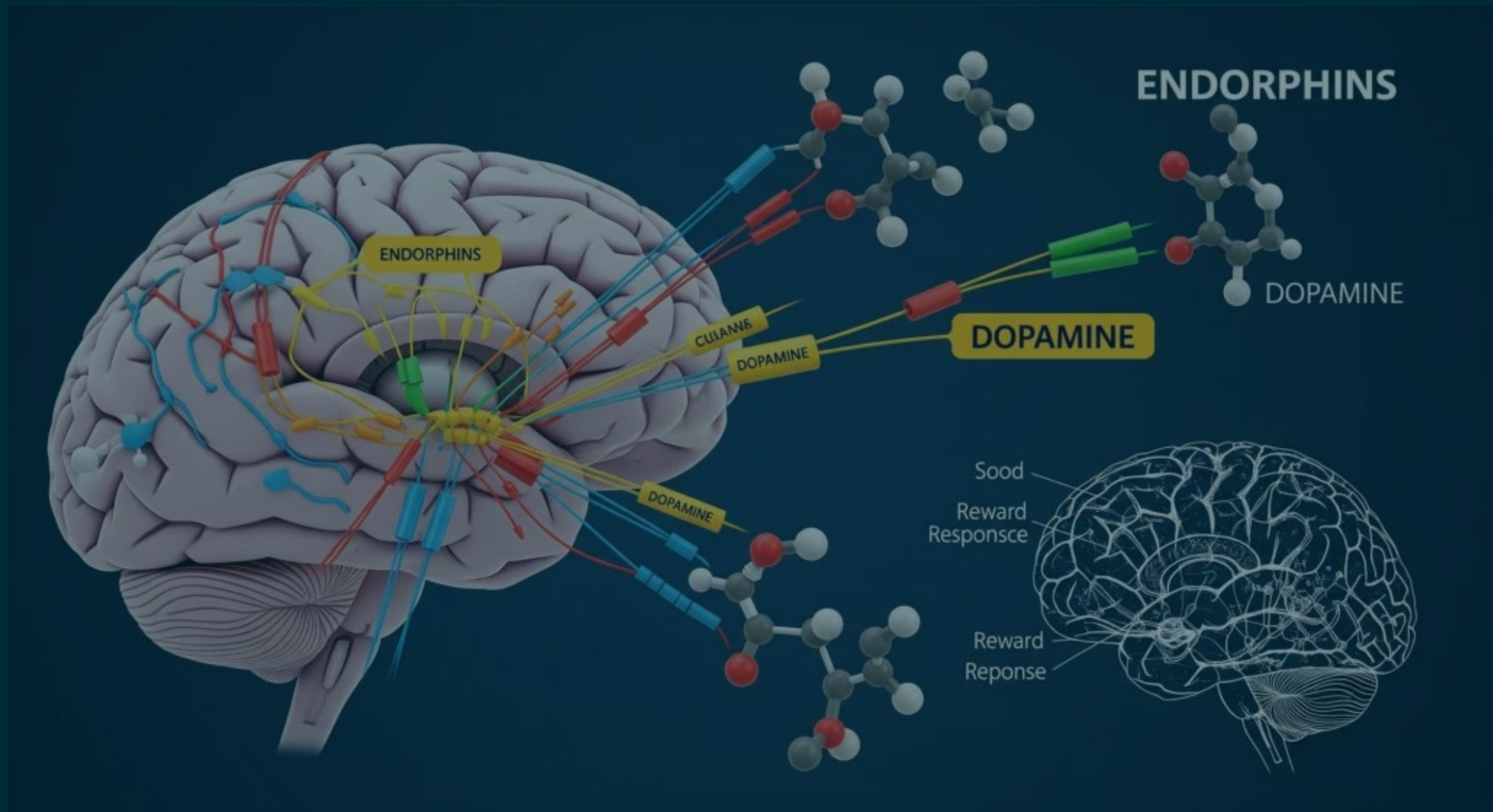
- Do not write thesis sections on the student's behalf
- Always ask clarifying questions before making major structural suggestions
- Prioritize the student's own theoretical commitments when offering alternatives

Please confirm you understand the context above. Then ask me what I would like to work on today.

FINDING A QUESTION

thesis \neq report
thesis \neq policy

Follow your interests ...or your business plan



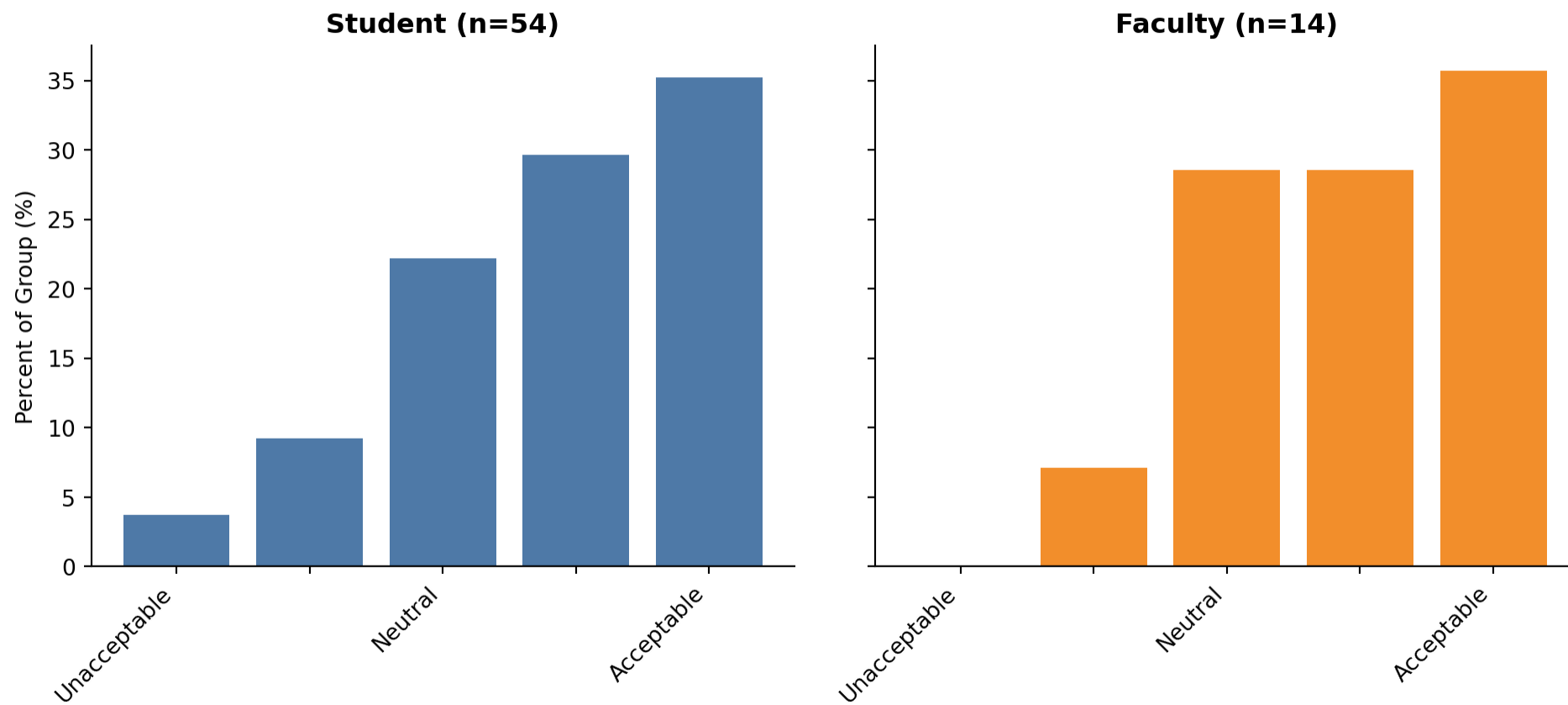
THREE WAYS TO ADVANCE KNOWLEDGE

(From 김정호교수님)

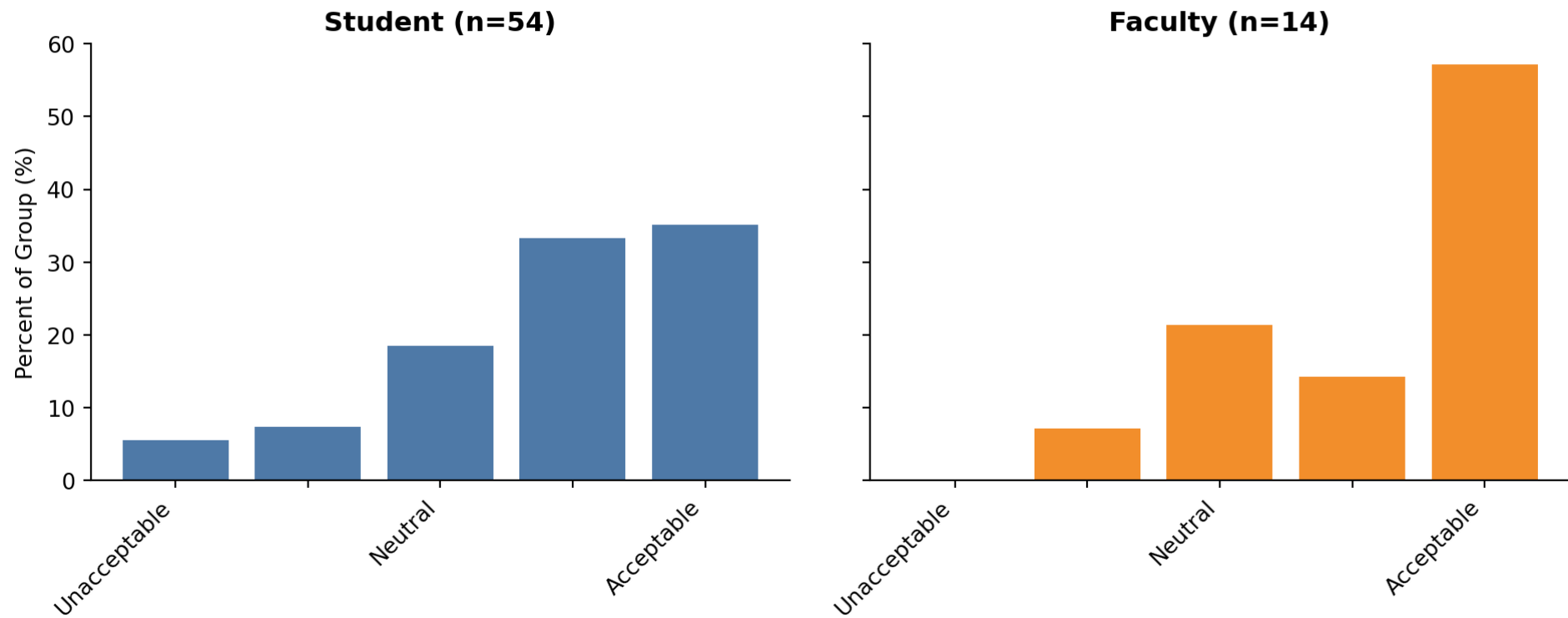
1. Ask a new question
2. Employ a new methodology
3. Employ a new data set

question
≠
search for policy
recommendations

Brainstorming, exploring, or refining potential research questions



Evaluating or stress-testing a candidate research question (e.g., asking AI whether a question is too broad, already well-answered, or methodologically feasible)



BAD SAMPLE PROPOSAL

Topic: Responsibility to Protect and Non-Interference in Humanitarian Crises: A Case Study

Tentative table of contents:

1. Introduction
 - a. Concept of Humanitarian Assistance
 - b. Operational system at the international level
 - c. Operational system at the regional level
2. Literature Review
 - a. Concept of Responsibility to Protect
 - b. Non-Interference as Regional Norm
 - c. Comparative Analysis
3. Case Study
 - a. Examples of need for humanitarian assistance
 - b. Analysis of the cases using both concepts
 - c. Case of cross-border humanitarian assistance
4. Conclusion

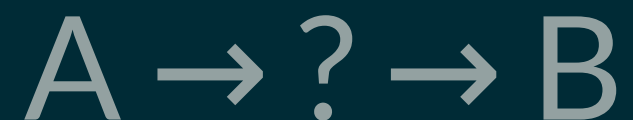
WHAT MAKES A GOOD RESEARCH QUESTION? SEE O'LEARY (2018).

Good research questions define:

1. the topic (e.g., gentrification in Vietnam)
2. the nature of the research endeavor (to discover, explore, explain, describe, or compare)
3. the questions you are interested in (what, where, who, how, when, why)
4. constructs and variables (e.g., tenure, income, legal structure, etc.)
5. the expected relationship between variables (e.g., impacts, increases, decreases, relationships, correlations, causes, etc.)

THINKING ABOUT QUESTIONS

What is the mechanism?



EXAMPLES OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Bad: How does gentrification affect Hanoi residents?

Good: Does gentrification in Hanoi increase incomes for existing renters?

Bad: How can we encourage developing country girls to attend school?

Good: Do well-maintained, gender-separated toilets increase girls' school attendance?

Bad: What is the impact of the #MeToo movement on cosmetic surgery?

Good: Has the #MeToo movement decreased the revenue of cosmetic surgery offices in Korea?

Bad: How has ODA changed since the Global Financial Crisis?

Good: How has increasing nationalism reshaped ODA flows to HIPC?

MODEL YOUR THESIS ON A JOURNAL ARTICLE

Article

Urban Studies

Gentrification or ...? Injustice in large-scale residential projects in Hanoi

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Korea University, Republic of Korea

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University of Montreal, Canada

Urban Studies

2021, Vol. 58(12) 2456–2472

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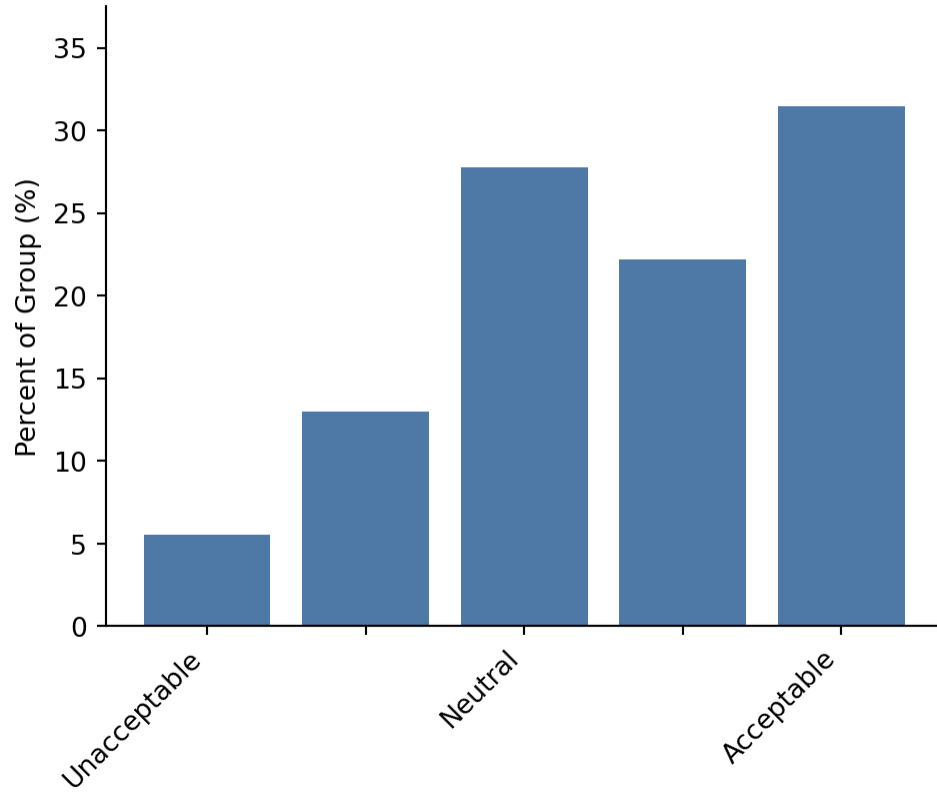
Abstract

Large-scale residential developments on expropriated lands in periurban Hanoi resemble forms of gentrification seen elsewhere. But is it gentrification? Current debate over the definition of gentrification has focused on whether the term has become too broad to be useful in different institutional and spatio-temporal contexts. While some push for a generalisable definition based in capitalist development, others argue that the term harbours Western assumptions that fail to usefully explain unique

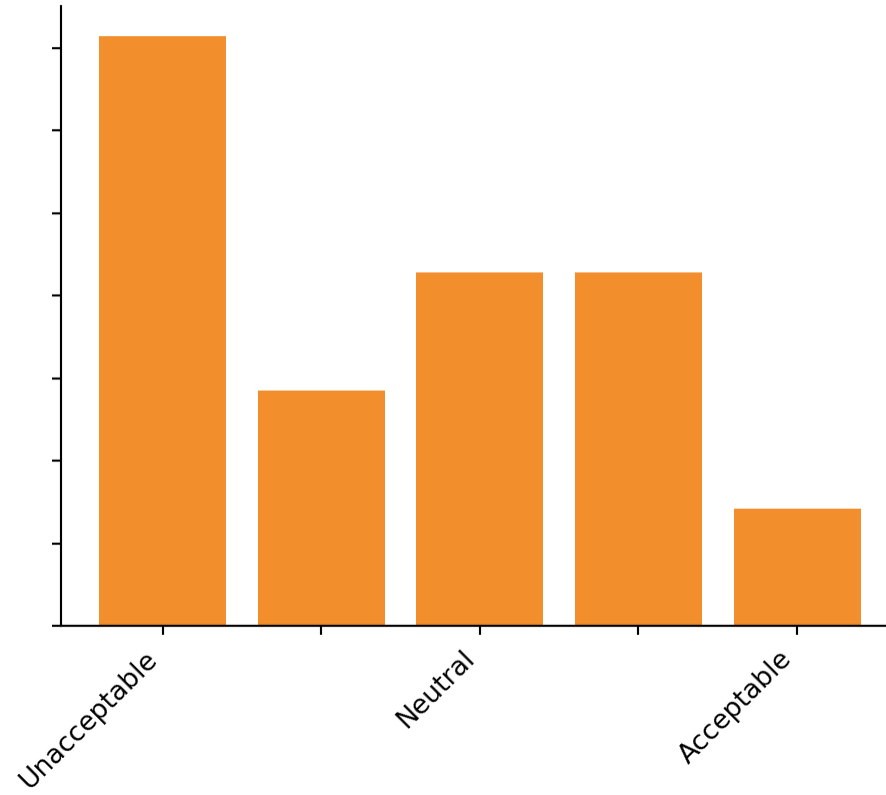
THESIS STRUCTURE

Drafting a thesis outline or overall structure

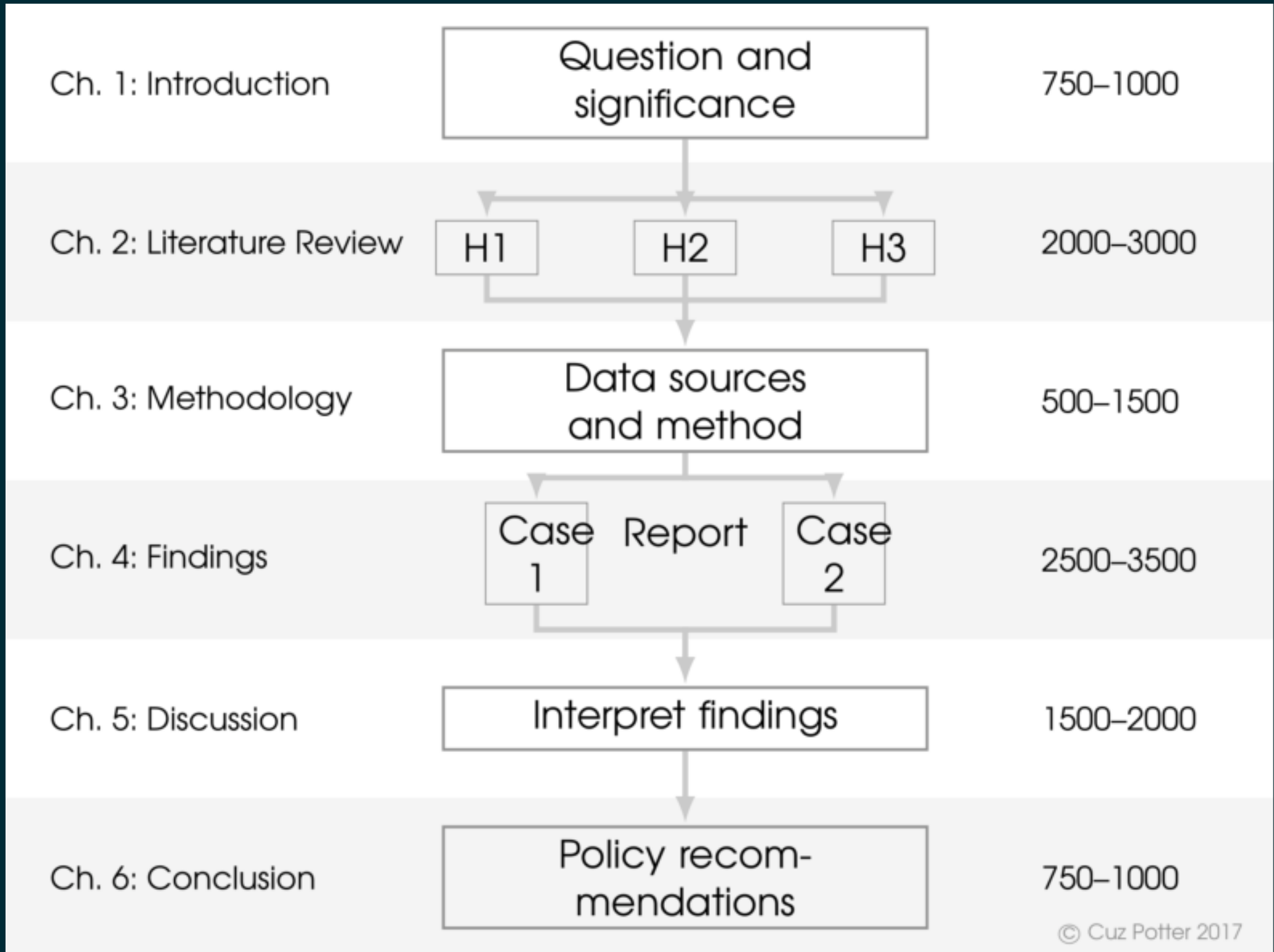
Student (n=54)



Faculty (n=14)



OVERALL OUTLINE



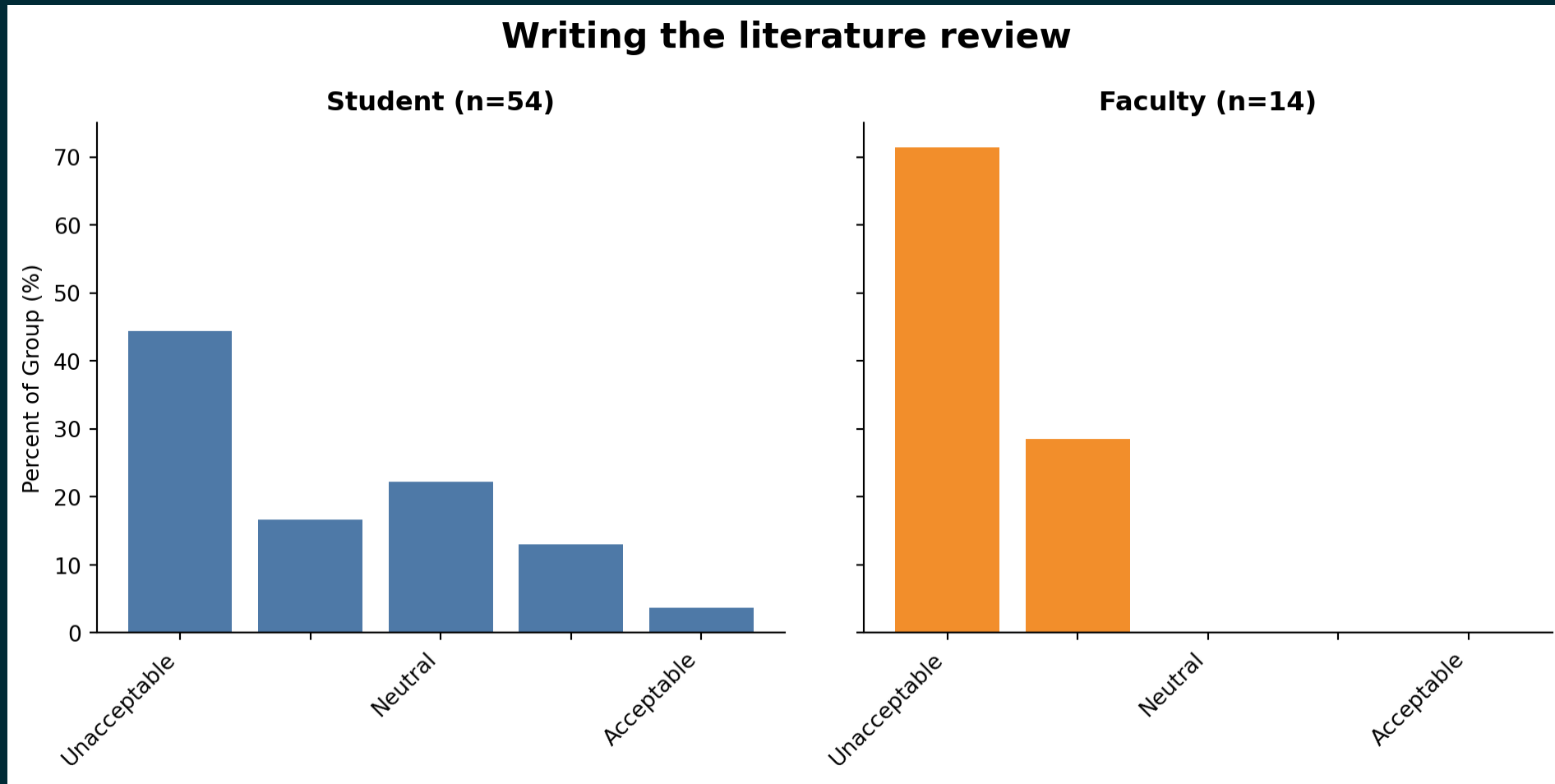
INTRODUCTION

1. 750–1,000 words
2. Motivate
3. Introduce question
4. Explain significance
5. Provide signposts

LITERATURE REVIEW

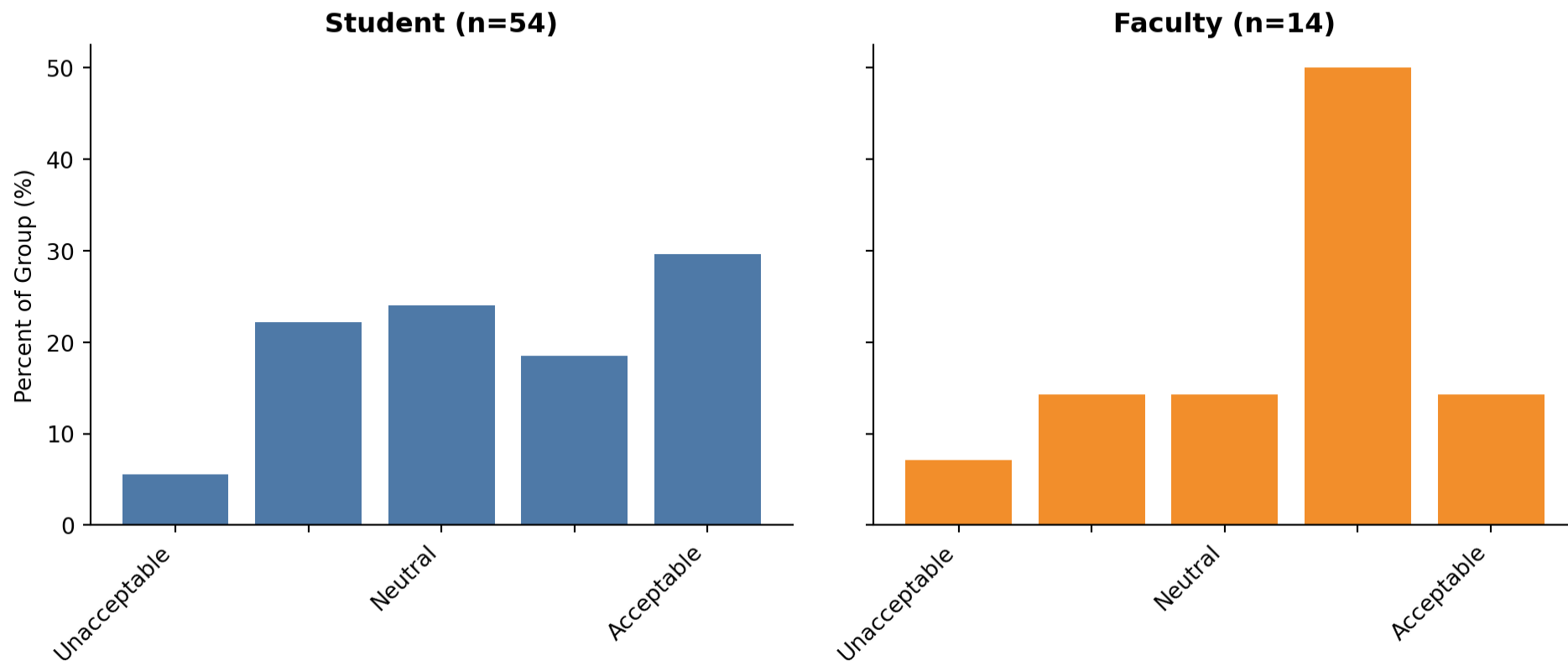
1. 2,000–3,000 words
2. Identify and *organize*
3. \neq catalog
4. Focus on causal mechanisms (not your case)
5. \rightarrow hypotheses

AI AND THE LITERATURE REVIEW



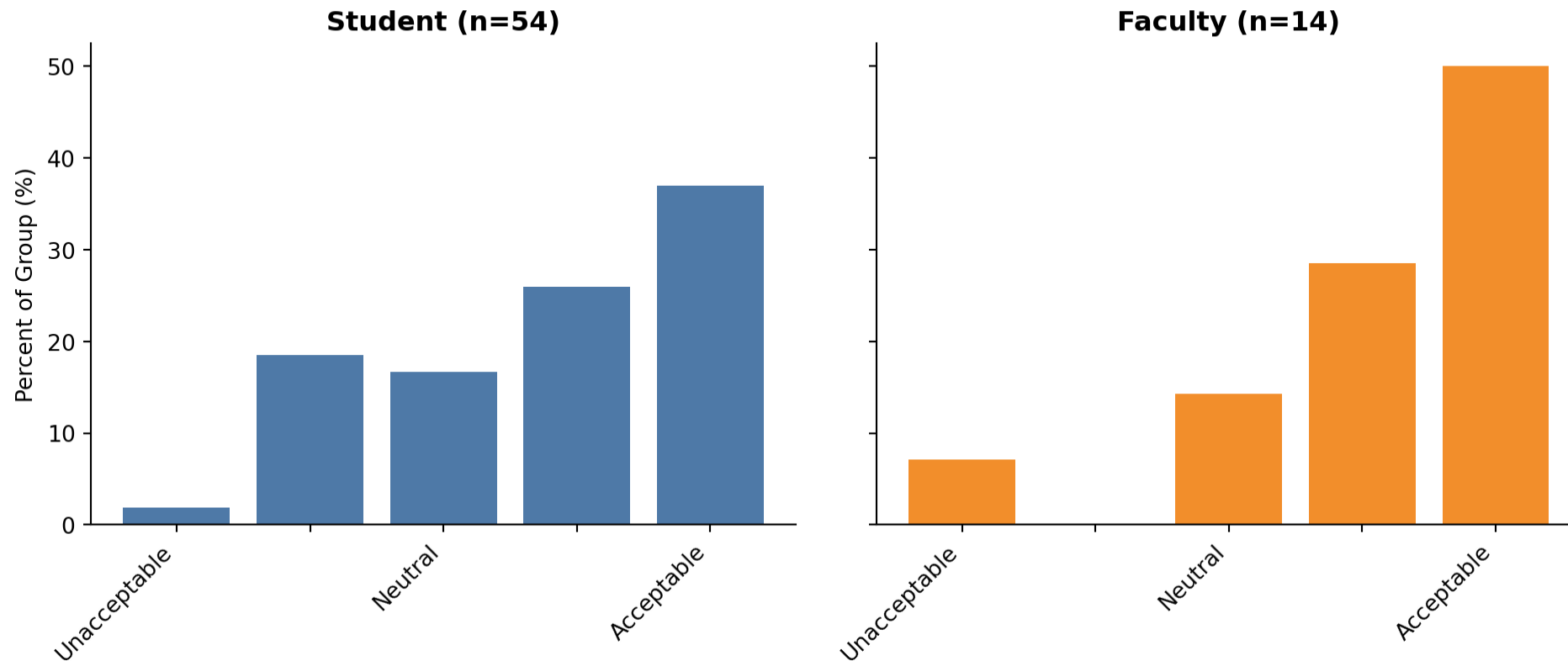
AI AND THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizing the literature thematically or identifying gaps and tensions across sources



AI AND THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Suggesting readings, generating search terms, or identifying related fields the student may not have considered



METHODOLOGY

1. 500–1,500 words
2. Explain techniques
3. Identify data sources
4. Report limitations

QUANTITATIVE VERSUS QUALITATIVE

1. Quantitative

- a. Broad
- b. Existing data → easier
- c. New data collection difficult
- d. Employability ↑

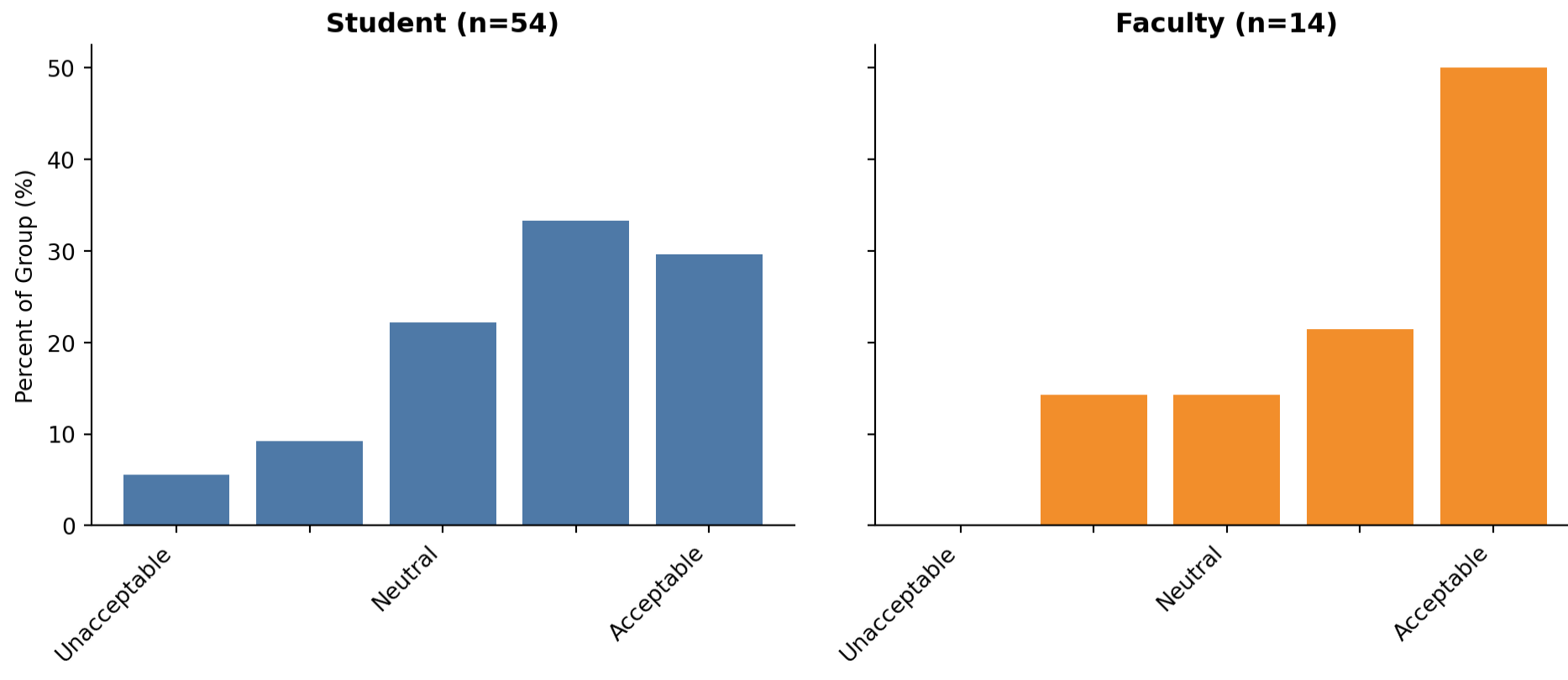
2. Qualitative

- a. Detailed
- b. Data collection difficult

3. Triangulate (= mixed-methods)

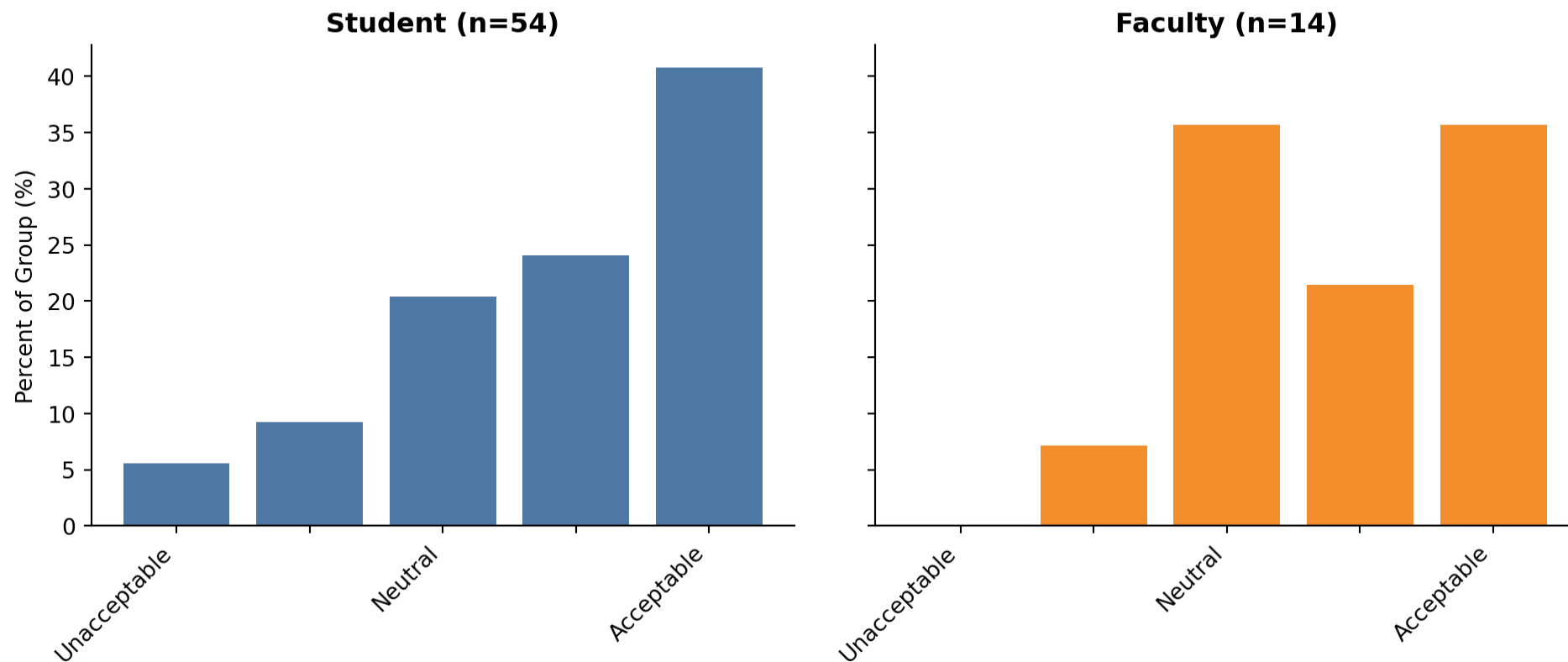
AI IN YOUR METHODOLOGY

Exploring possible methodologies or learning terminology to describe a methodological approach

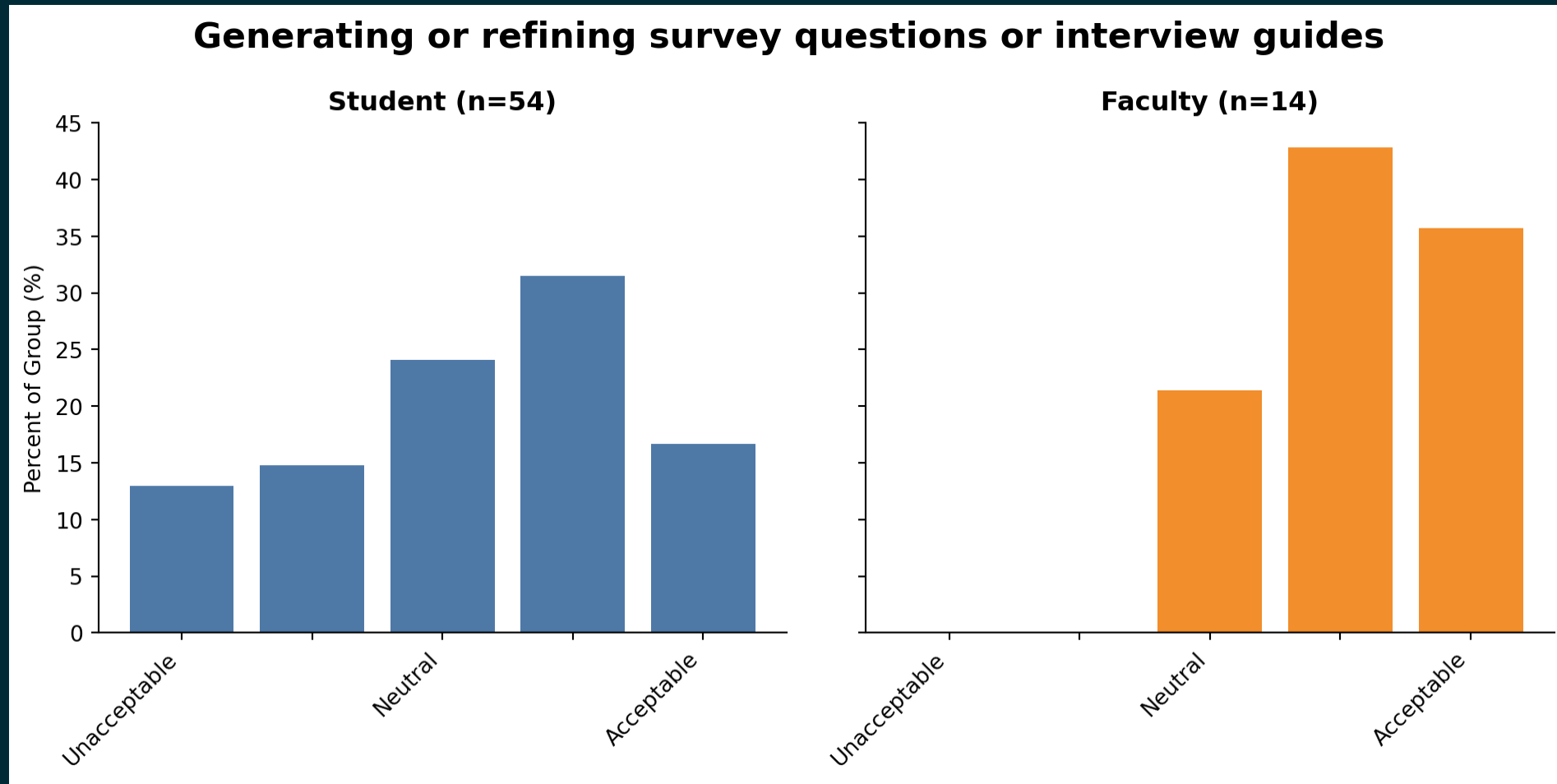


AI IN YOUR METHODOLOGY

Writing or debugging code (e.g., in R, Stata, Python, or SPSS) for statistical analysis or data visualization

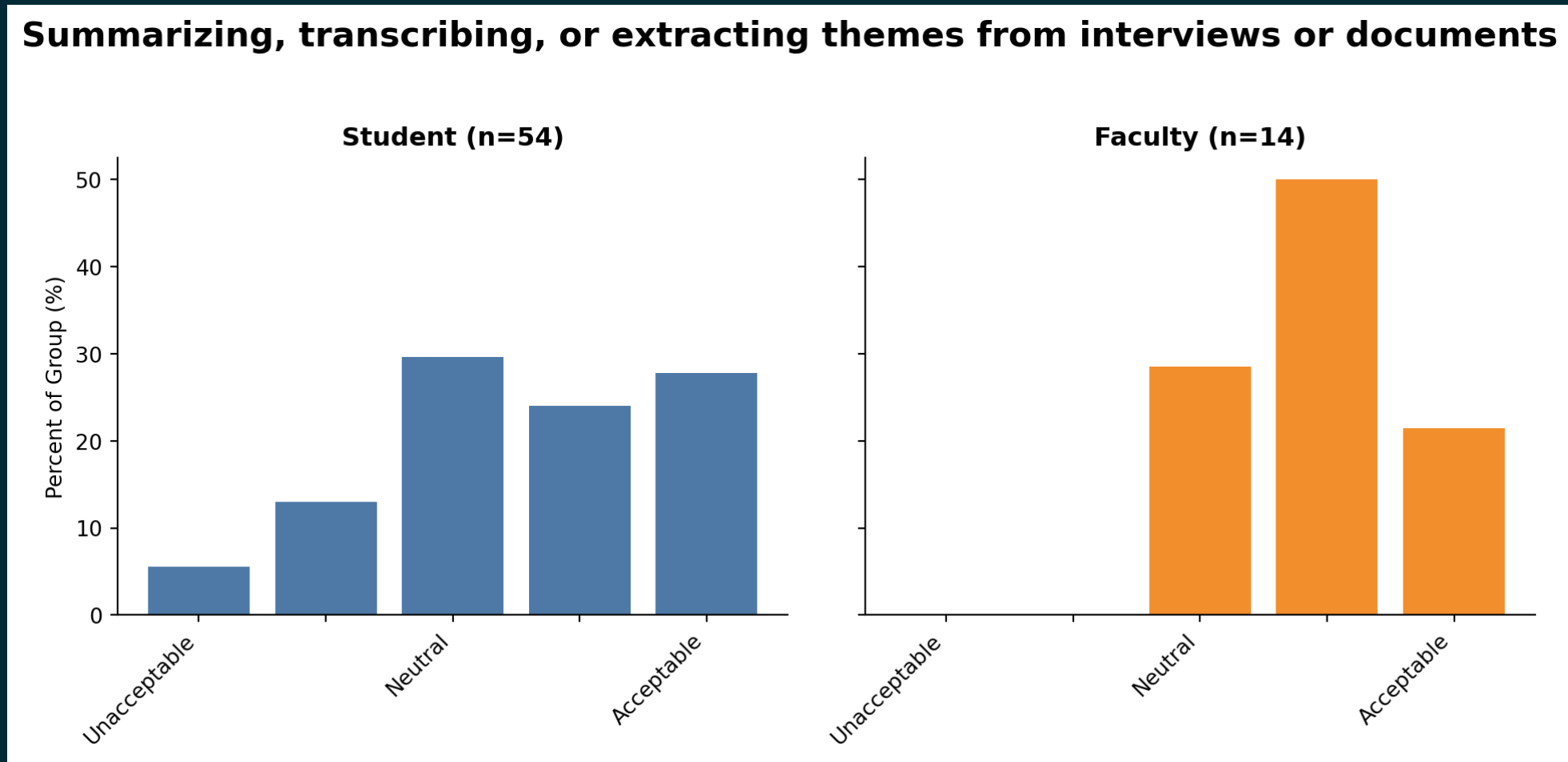


AI IN YOUR METHODOLOGY



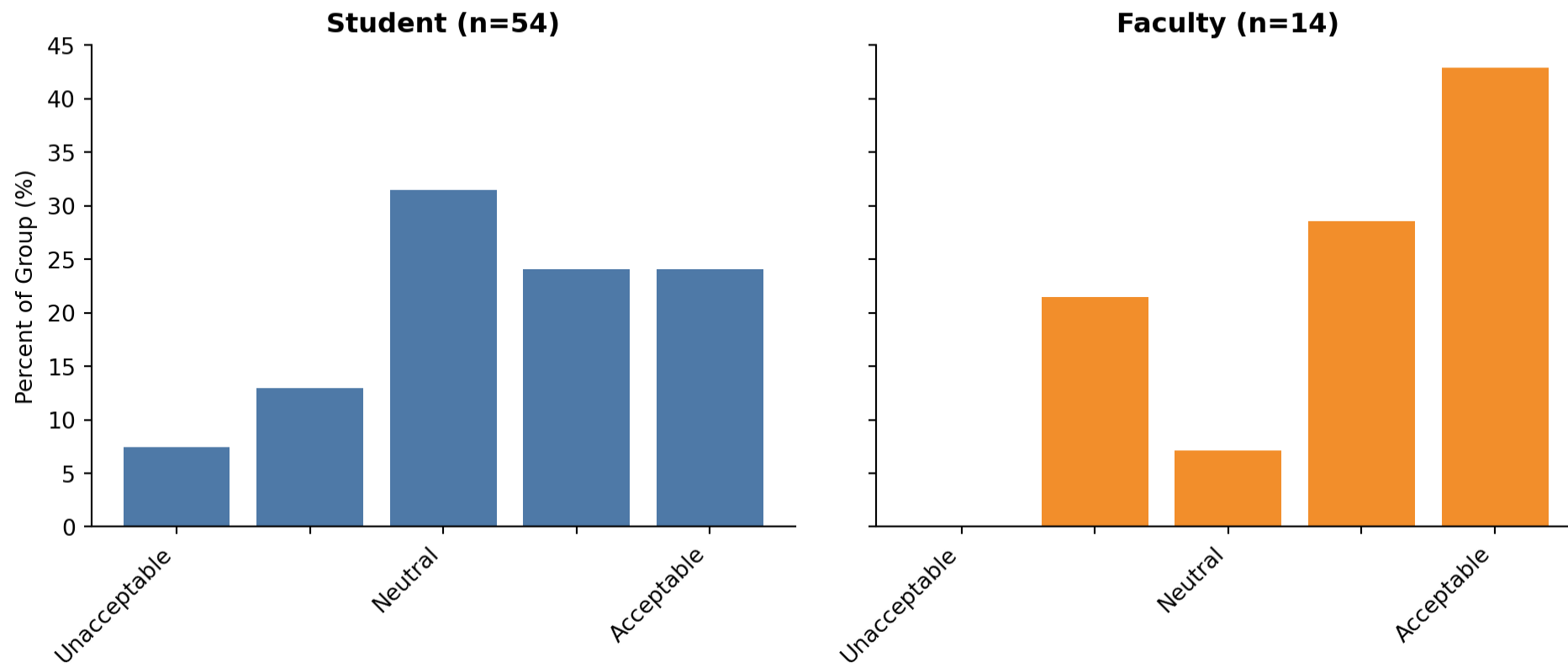
AI IN YOUR METHODOLOGY

Summarizing, transcribing, or extracting themes from interviews or documents



AI IN YOUR METHODOLOGY

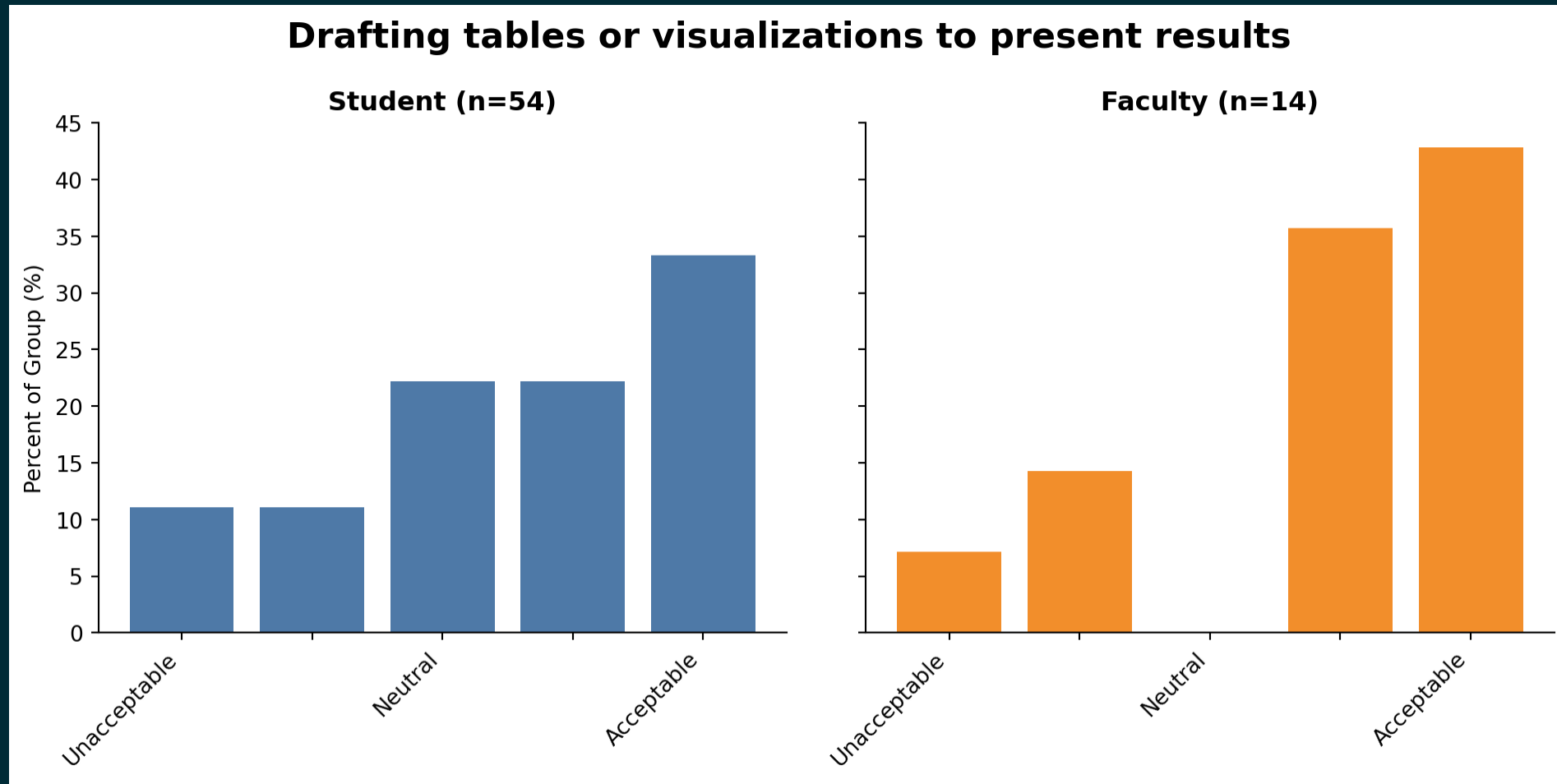
Incorporating AI as a method by using it to compare the contents of documents or interviews



FINDINGS

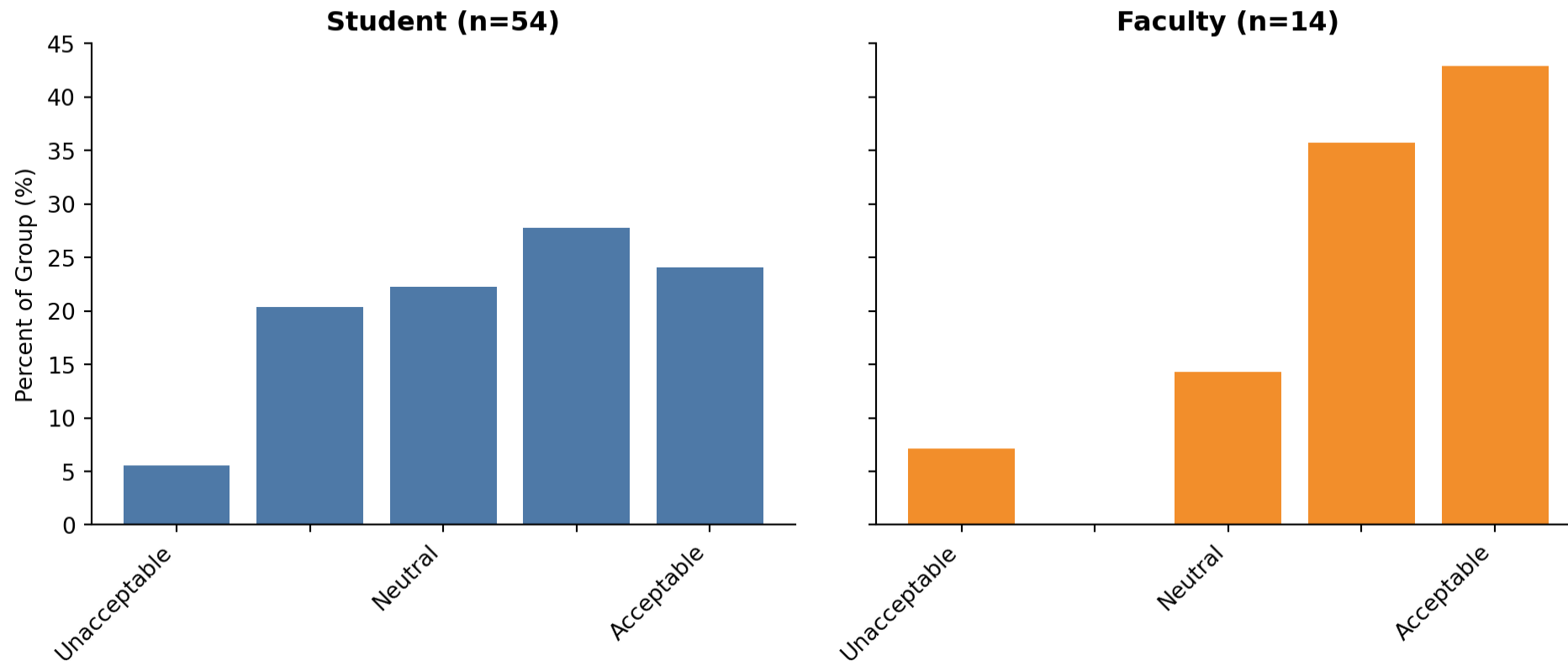
1. 2,500–3,500 words
2. Descriptive, not analytical
3. Divide as necessary (e.g., by hypothesis, case, topic)

AI IN YOUR FINDINGS



AI IN YOUR FINDINGS

Reviewing findings to identify weaknesses, inconsistencies, or areas for further analysis

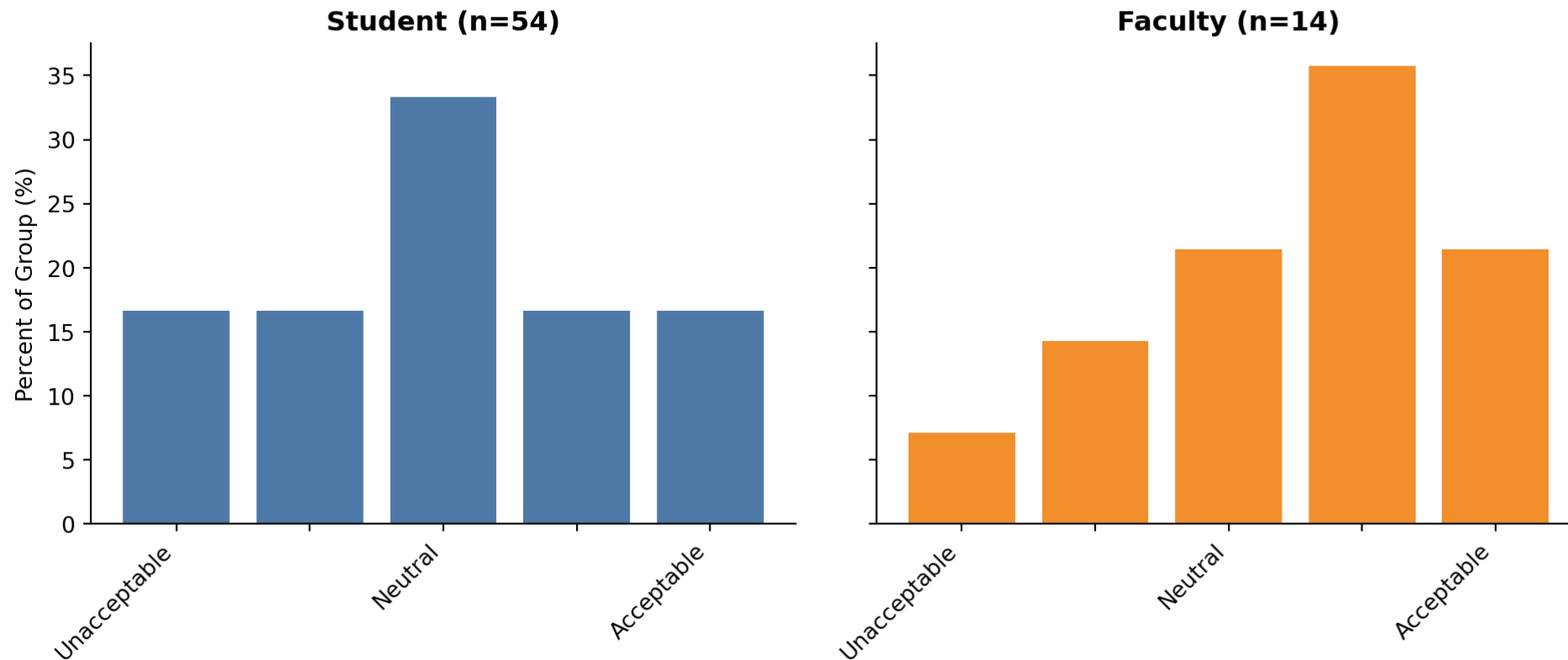


DISCUSSION

1. 1,500–2,000 words
2. Purposes:
 - a. Interpret and explain your findings
 - b. Answer your research question
 - c. Connect findings to literature review
3. Must relate back to the literature review

AI IN YOUR DISCUSSION

Generating alternative interpretations of findings or connecting results back to theoretical frameworks



CONCLUSION

1. 750–1,000 words
2. Reintroduce question
3. Quick summary of findings
4. Policy recommendations
5. Implications for literature
6. Future research
7. Revisit validity and generalization?

OTHER PARTS OF THE THESIS

1. Cover
2. Abstract
3. Acknowledgments
4. Table of contents
5. List of tables
6. List of figures
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices
 - a. Questionnaires
 - b. List of interviews
 - c. Additional tables or diagrams of potential interest

ABSTRACT

1. Roughly 250 words in single paragraph
2. abstract \neq introduction
3. Contains:
 - a. Research purpose/question
 - b. Methodology
 - c. Major findings
 - d. Conclusions

USEFUL TOOLS

USEFUL RESOURCES

1. Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com>)
2. ISI Web of Knowledge
3. Lexis-Nexis
4. JSTOR
5. Access through KU network or by logging in to the library website
6. <https://www.cuzproduces.com/producinganew/contents/thesis.php>

BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATABASES

The screenshot displays the Zotero application window. The top menu bar includes File, Edit, Library, Quality, Lookup, Tools, View, and Help. A search bar is located below the menu. On the left, a 'Groups' sidebar lists various categories with entry counts, such as 'All entries' (2.9k), 'ACSP' (27), 'China' (16), and 'Construction' (22). The main area shows a table of bibliographic entries with columns for Author/Editor, Title, Journal, and Citation. The entry 'The End of Utopia' by Marcuse is selected. Below the table, a detailed view of the selected entry is shown, including fields for Author (Marcuse, Herbert), Title (The End of Utopia), Booktitle (Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Utopia), Date (1970), and Citationkey (Marcuse1970). A 'Generate' button is visible next to the citation key.

Author/Editor	Title	Journal...	Citation...
Marcuse	One dimensional man; studies in the ideology of advance...		Marcuse...
Marcuse	Eros and civilization : a philosophical inquiry into Freud		Marcuse...
Marcuse	An essay on liberation		Marcuse...
Marcuse	The End of Utopia	Five Lect...	Marcuse...
Marcuse	The aesthetic dimension : toward a critique of Marxist ae...		Marcuse...
Marcuse	Hegel's ontology and the theory of historicity		Marcuse...
Marcuse	Negations: Essays in Critical Theory		Marcuse...
Marcuse	Negations: Essays in Critical Theory		Marcuse...

InCollection

Author: Marcuse, Herbert

Title: The End of Utopia

Booktitle: Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Utopia

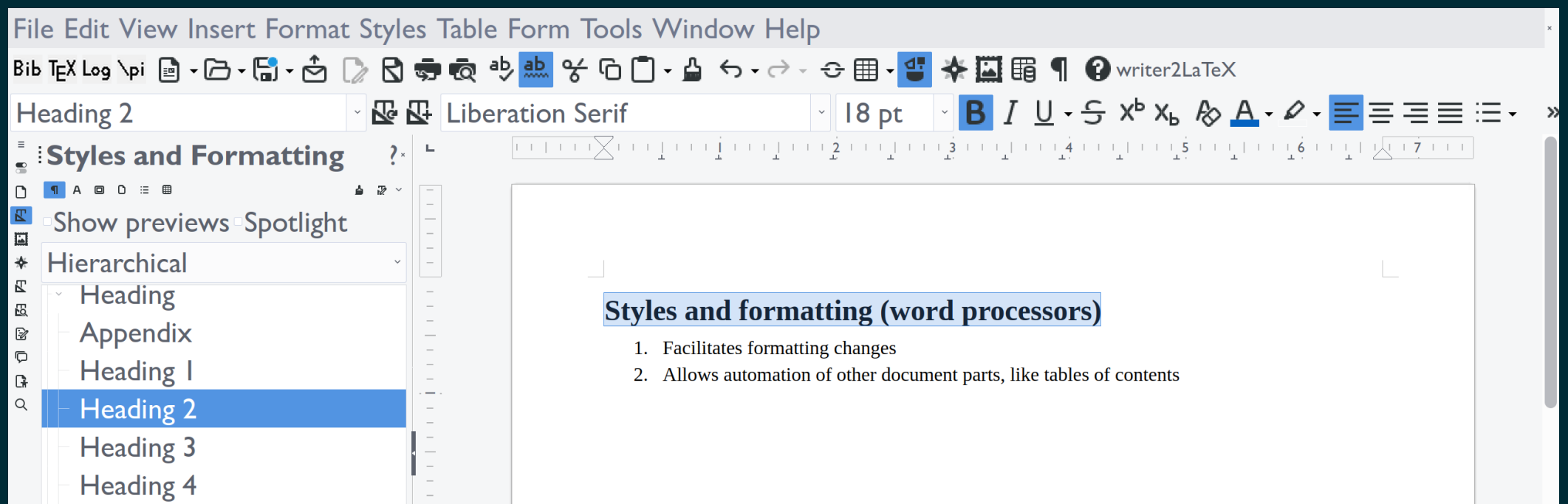
Date: 1970

Citationkey: Marcuse1970 Generate

1. Endnote
2. Zotero
3. Reference Manager
4. JabRef

STYLES AND FORMATTING (WORD PROCESSORS)

1. Facilitates formatting changes
2. Allows automation of other document parts, like tables of contents



CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

1. Choose a topic that interests you.
2. Start with a question, not a topic.
3. Your lit review is the thesis's foundation.
4. Findings convey content of your research.
5. Discussion connects findings to lit review.
6. Cite properly.

Thank you.



<https://www.cuzproduces.com/producinganew/contents/thesis.php>

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PLAGIARISM

STEALING IS BAD, M'KAY?



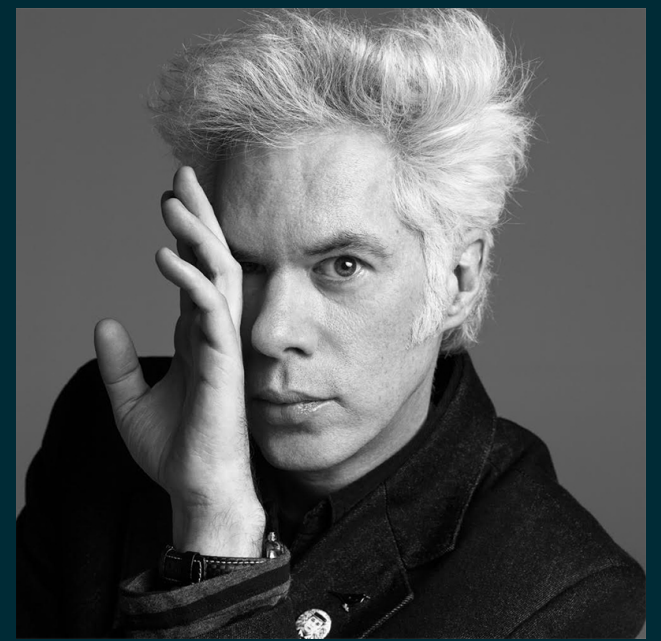
GSIS DEFINITION OF PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the act of presenting the creative work of another person as if it were your own, without appropriate acknowledgment of the author or source.

— {visibility="uncounted"}

Nothing is original. Steal from anywhere that resonates with inspiration or fuels your imagination. Devour old films, new films, music, books, paintings,... Select only things to steal from that speak directly to your soul. If you do this, your work (and theft) will be authentic. Authenticity is invaluable; originality is non-existent. And don't bother concealing your thievery—celebrate it if you feel like it. In any case, always remember what Jean-Luc Godard said: "It's not where you take things from—it's where you take them to."

—Jim Jarmusch



— {visibility="uncounted"}

How do you avoid plagiarism?

— {visibility="uncounted"}

CITE!!!

오빠, CHICAGO STYLE

Chi-, Chi-, Chi-, Chi-, Chicago style!



CHICAGO STYLE IN TEXT

1. “Major developers found themselves in increasing difficulty” (Fainstein 2001).
 - Citation comes *after* all cited material so that the reader does not confuse others’ ideas with yours.
2. As Fainstein (2001) argues, “Major developers found themselves in increasing difficulty.”
 - Implies that following material is drawn from another source, until you add a clear transition, like, “Contrary to her argument...”
3. As Fainstein argues, “Major developers found themselves in increasing difficulty” (Fainstein 2001).
4. “Major developers found themselves in increasing difficulty” (Fainstein 2001, 44).
5. Blah, blah, blah (Abbott 2004; Fainstein 2001).

TYPES OF PLAGIARISM

FOUR TYPES OF PLAGIARISM¹

1. Verbatim (Ctrl-C, Ctrl-V)
2. Inadequate paraphrase (Remixes and mashups)
3. Uncited paraphrase (IP theft)
4. Uncited quotations (Duh!)

1. This section draws heavily on the *Harvard Guide to Using Sources* and plagiarism.org.

CTRL-C, CTRL-V

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

(Fainstein 2001)

Plagiarized?

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s because the steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

CTRL-C, CTRL-V: SOLUTION 1

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

(Fainstein 2001)

Solution 1 = direct quotation with citation

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. As Fainstein (2001) suggests, "the steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns."

CTRL-C, CTRL-V: SOLUTION 2

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

(Fainstein 2001)

Solution 2 = paraphrase with citation

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. As Fainstein (2001) suggests, increasing returns on real estate investment were used to justify new proposals.

REMIXES AND MASHUPS

Source

The **steeply climbing** curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with **prognoses** of ever-increasing returns.

(Fainstein 2001)

Plagiarized?

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. As real estate investment returns **increased steeply**, a stream of new development proposals justified their costs with **predictions** of ever-increasing returns.

REMIXES AND MASHUPS: SOLUTION 1

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

(Fainstein 2001)

Solution 1 = adequate paraphrase with citation

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. In the wake of increasing returns from developments earlier in this period, developers used these returns to justify new proposals (Fainstein 2001).

REMIXES AND MASHUPS: SOLUTION 2

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

(Fainstein 2001)

Solution 2 = direct quotation with citation

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. Building on increasing returns from developments earlier in this period, new proposals “justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns” (Fainstein 2001).

IP THEFT

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

(Fainstein 2001)

Plagiarized?

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. In the wake of increasing returns from developments earlier in this period, developers used these returns to justify new proposals.

IP THEFT: SOLUTION

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

(Fainstein 2001)

Solution = adequate paraphrase with citation

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. In the wake of increasing returns from developments earlier in this period, developers used these returns to justify new proposals (Fainstein 2001).

or

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. According to Fainstein (2001), in the wake of increasing returns from developments earlier in this period, developers

DUH!

Source

“The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.”

(Fainstein 2001)

Plagiarized?

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. As a result, “the steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns”. And politicians failed to see the false logic this entailed.

DUH!: SOLUTION

Source

The steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns.

(Fainstein 2001)

Solution = quotation with citation

Real estate investment increased dramatically in the 1990s. As a result, “the steeply climbing curve of returns from real-estate investment prompted a stream of new development proposals, which justified their costs with prognoses of ever-increasing returns” Fainstein (2001). And politicians failed to see the false logic this entailed.

IN PRACTICE

Build your ideas into an outline.
Then write.