**PSC-4099**

**Thesis Assignment #4:   
A strong draft of your paper’s “Hypotheses, data, and measurement” section**

**This assignment is due in electronic and hard copy form one week after your presentation that included an overview of this content (i.e., either Tuesday, October 24 or 26.**

To submit the assignment electronically, e-mail the work as *an attachment* (i.e. a pdf, doc, docx, or rtf formatted file) to [msetzler@highpoint.edu](mailto:msetzler@highpoint.edu). To be accepted as on-time work, *the subject line of the email must be:* ***psc4099 assignment 4.*** Bring a hard copy to class the following Tuesday.

**What is the purpose of this assignment and what should yours look like?** You are being asked to write a “research design” that hopefully will end up being a polished version of the “research methods section” of your thesis. Before you start this assignment, you are required to carefully read through this sample of what your assignment should look like:  
<https://marksetzler.org/SeniorSem/Assignments/ThesisAssignments/PSC-4099-ThesisAssn4_Assignment%20example.docx>

This assignment asks you to do 6 things:

1. Begin the assignment by writing a brief (less than one page) summary of what your research question is.
2. Next, list all of your project’s testable hypotheses (see examples in the sample assignment linked above) that identify what you expect the relationship between your independent and dependent variables. This part of your assignment should run no more than a page and typically will be shorter because you should have made the theoretical case for each of your hypotheses in the “front end” of your thesis leading up to the methodology section. Each hypothesis should explicitly refer to independent and dependent variables that you have coded in your dataset.
3. Next, identify your dataset and describe its basic features, including what population it represents, the organization collecting the data, if the dataset’s survey used a stratified or another type of random sample (which almost always is the case with thesis projects), how the data was collected, the sample size, and when the survey was administered. A good example of what you are looking for can be reviewed in the Bolsonaro article.   
     
   If your project involves only some of the data (e.g., you have a multi-country study, but only are looking at one country’s respondents), make sure to note this and explain how many observations are in your sub-sample. You will see examples of how to describe your dataset in the sample assignment linked above as well as in every research article you have been asked to read in this class.
4. Next, explain how your dependent, independent, and any control variables that have been created and coded for your project. The dependent variable is described first, and then come the intervening (if you have them) and independent variables, appearing in the order that they were introduced in your paper’s front end and hypotheses. Any control variables (if you have them) should be introduced and described last.   
     
   You must explain how you will be coding or recoding the responses for each of the variables you will examine in the study. For reasons that are discussed in class, all of your variables should be (re)coded so that they are a “dummy” (0-1) variable, an interval variable, or a series of "dummy" variables. **Your dependent variable must be either a dichotomous variable or an interval variable**. To the extent that you can do so, your coding decisions should be defended by replicating coding strategies utilized in previously published studies. Use and code variables in the same way that the authors of those studies have, and if they have control variables that are available in your dataset, make sure to include them in your study. Cite these authors, including the specific pages to which you are referring.  
     
   Keep in mind that you may not have any control variables. If you think that certain factors are the cause of the outcome you are explaining, you probably will need to control for other variables that could be explaining the outcome (that is the case in the sample project linked above, and is something that your literature review will help you to determine). In other cases, students will be looking at several variables to see which are most important in explaining an outcome and all of the variables in their project are independent variables.

If your hypotheses involve an intervening variable, make sure to explain that. As a reminder, an intervening variable is what you have when you think the effects of your independent variable/s on your dependent variables are mediated by another variable. For example, if you are studying how attitudes about populism shape support for democracy differently in France, Germany, and the United States due to the different political institutions of these countries, your hypothesis involves using country-setting as an intervening (sometimes called a “mediating”) variable.

1. Next, use SPSS to create a summary statistics table and paste it into your paper. I should look like the table in the sample linked above (i.e. SPSS: Analyze -> descriptive statistics -> descriptives -> select every variable you have created, following the order you have described them in the assignment -> ok). The table should have all of your variables and is a way for you and your instructor to make a preliminary check that you have not accidentally omitted observations or neglected to recode missing data.
2. Finally, make sure to append your codebook assignment and syntax. Your syntax should be copied into your assignment document (i.e., do not give me a separate SPSS file). Your syntax should include the original questions (but they should be formatted so that SPSS won’t read this as code). This part of the assignment is critical so that your instructor can verify that your coding makes sense before you begin to analyze your data in the second half of the term.

For the main body of this assignment, aim to submit a 5-to-10-page paper (double-spaced, with normal font and margins). The actual length of your assignment will reflect the number of hypotheses and variables you have, and the estimate I have given **excludes** your descriptive statistics table; a bibliography, and an appendix with both your variable codebook and a print-out of your annotated SPSS coding.

Please do your best work. Your assignment will be evaluated based on effort and professionalism. A = Excellent in all respects; B = Good work with evident room for improvement; C = Minimally satisfactory work that obviously could be much stronger; D = Poor work. Late work will receive a 10% per day deduction.