

## **Research Projects**

History H541

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The goal of this assignment is to recreate all the stages of a research project from formulating a research question to describing empirical results. Instead of writing a term paper, you will write seven research reports.

### **Data**

We will be using the Cost of Living Survey collected by the U.S. Commissioner of Labor in the U.S. and five European countries in 1888-1890. These data consist of family budgets including both sources of income and expenditures on a long list of commodities.

### **Finding a research question and hypothesis**

Your project begins with the choice of a research question that can be addressed with data. To give you ideas, a bibliography of published articles that have used the Cost of Living Survey is below. Your hypothesis must be reasonable, but it does not need to be correct. You will be graded on the ingenuity of your project, your use of quantitative methods, and the quality of your writing. Your grade will not be affected if the evidence does not support your hypothesis.

### **Project Reports**

#### **1. Background and Objectives**

State the purpose and significance of this research. What objectives or long term goals are historians in this field pursuing? Review the most significant previous work, and describe the current state of knowledge in the field. Explain the potential contribution of this study. Outline a general plan for the study. Present concisely the rationale behind the proposed approach to the problem.

#### **2. Description of Data**

Describe in detail what data are available. Evaluate the accuracy and reliability of the data and possible sources of bias. Explain the relevance of this data to the historical problems described in Report #1.

#### **3. Specific Aims and Methodology**

List the specific aims of the study. Formulate hypotheses to be tested and methods to be used with the data described in Report #2. Be as specific as possible. List variables to be used, and how they are to be measured. The hypothesis tests listed in this report are to be performed for Report #7.

#### **4. Sampling Design**

Describe the samples to be gathered. Explain and justify your sampling methods, sample sizes, and selection of variables.

#### **5. Codebook and Verification Procedures**

Create a codebook for the data to be gathered. Provide examples of the coding forms that will be used. Describe your coding procedures for categorical variables. Develop procedures for verifying your data.

#### **6. Descriptive Statistics**

Describe the general characteristics of your samples. Compare your samples to available statistics for the parent population or other similar populations.

#### **7. Preliminary Tests of Hypotheses**

Perform the tests described in Report #3 and describe the results.

#### **8. Progress Report**

Summarize the work that you have completed. Describe the progress of the study relative to the research objectives stated in Report #1. Evaluate your original plan and any ways in which it was modified.

## **Bibliography of Historical Studies on Family Budgets**

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