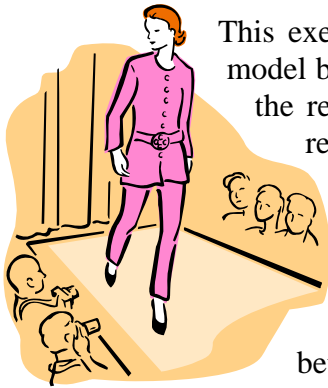


Exercise Set 2

Getting Started with your Modeling Career

Due date: Monday, October 8. Beginning of class.

Purpose:

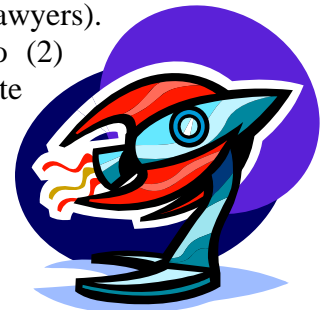


This exercise is designed for you to start thinking about conceptualization, model building, alternative hypotheses and critical tests. These stages within the research process are often overlooked in courses and by researchers, resulting in sloppily constructed studies. Regardless of how sophisticated one's data analytic techniques are, if the study is poorly conceived from the outset the conclusions drawn will be ambiguous at best. Proper conceptualization and rigorous theorizing brings direction and clarity to your analysis. Model building forces you to think through the logical relationships between your concepts and variables. Deriving alternative hypotheses is not only useful in thinking about all potential causes to a phenomenon, but it also allows you to anticipate your critics. Finally, thinking about "critical tests" enables you to determine whether answering your question is empirically feasible – data may be difficult (if not impossible) to obtain, or your hypothesis may be tautologous.

Assignment:

Part A: Warm-up Exercises in Lave & March

Lave & March provide a series of questions and puzzles on pages 83-84. Take a few moments and answer some of these questions within your own head or amongst your friends. (They would serve as a great source of discussion over beer.) Follow the instructions provided on page 83. I particularly recommend the following questions: #9 (newspaper strike); #11 (perception of parents); or #13 (doctors and lawyers). For each question, develop two (2) abstract models, generate two (2) predictions, and think up a critical test that leads you to differentiate between your two models. You do NOT need to type up your answers and hand them in. These are only mental exercises. Great runners never run marathons without stretching out their muscles; you should not attempt to think without stretching your brain.

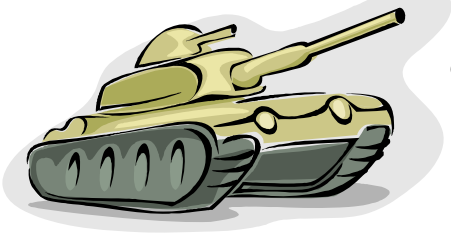


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Part B: Written Exercises

Choose three (3) of the following puzzles to answer using the instructions presented on page 83 of Lave & March as a guide. Generate two (2) abstract models. *For each model*, derive two empirical predictions (for a total of 4 predictions) and think up one critical test to differentiate between two abstract models using the predictions to help you generate ideas.

- 1) Over the past two decades, conservative talk radio (e.g., Rush Limbaugh) has gained dramatically in popularity (as evidenced by Arbitron ratings). However, liberals have not been able to keep pace in this medium. Attempts to build a comparable list of liberal celebrities never seem to draw large audiences (e.g., Jim Hightower, Alan Colmes). Even the much touted Air America (with Al Franken) has not approached the ratings of conservative talk shows and ran into serious financial trouble after a short run. Explain the difference in the popularity of conservative talk radio in comparison to liberal talk radio.
- 2) Since the late 1960s, the average grade point average (GPA) at public universities has increased significantly. During this same time, enrollments have expanded and the percentage of adults holding a college degree has also increased. What might account for rising GPAs?



- 3) International relations scholars have observed that democracies rarely, if ever, initiate wars against other democracies. Most military clashes occur between authoritarian regimes and democracies or amongst authoritarian regimes themselves. Explain.

- 4) Religious attendance in the United States is higher in the Midwest and South than in the West or on the Northeastern seaboard. Why?

- 5) Professor Gill has noticed that graduate students in political science, who have relatively low incomes, typically drink expensive beer (including microbrews and imported ales & lagers). However, in bars attracting people of comparable income, the choice of beverage tends to run towards cheaper domestic selections (e.g., Coors, Budweiser). Explain.



Your response should be typed and not exceed nine (9) double-spaced pages. Note: Prof. Gill may email a few additional options a few days prior to the due date.