A Guide to Writing Your Research Paper

The goal of the course research paper is to have you put into practice what you have been learning about data analysis using SPSS. Specifically this project will require you 1) to develop three cohesive research questions that may be addressed with inferential statistics, 2) to execute the analyses with SPSS using three hypothesis tests, and 3) to report the results in an APA-style Results section. The data on which this project is based may come either from one of two specific “canned” data sets that I provide you or, subject to my approval, from a project of your own. In either case, these are individual projects, and each student is expected to generate and test his/her own hypotheses. The guidelines below describe the steps involved.

I. If you intend to use one of the data sets I provide, your first step will be to peruse these two files available on the course web page. Only those files marked with asterisks are acceptable for this paper. Choose only one file for your analyses.

II. Whether you decide to use one of my data sets or your own, the next step is to look at the codebook and brainstorm to produce research questions that address a research theme of your choosing, one that will motivate and tie together specific questions. Make sure that these questions involve drawing population inferences. Descriptive statistics are necessary preliminary information, but they are not acceptable by themselves.

III. Once you have come up with your motivating topic and specific questions, the questions must be translated into statistical hypotheses that can be tested with SPSS. Although you are not obligated to do so, you might wish to show me your questions and the analyses you propose to address them. You are expected to choose appropriate tests and to check their assumptions. You may not run three of the same analyses, e.g., do not run three Mann-Whitney tests.

IV. After you have run the analyses, highlight and annotate the relevant portions of your printouts (just as with a homework assignment) and write an APA-style Results section reporting what you found. Write a single Results section using subheadings to separate the material from the three analyses. Follow APA style throughout. The paper should be about two pages long; it is unusual for it to be over three pages and very unusual for it to be as short as one page. Attach your printouts to the Results section.

V. This paper is due at the beginning of lecture on Wednesday, July 20. Papers submitted after this deadline will receive no points.