Nominal variables, or variables that describe a characteristic using two or more categories, are commonplace in quantitative research, but are not always useable in their categorical form. A common workaround for using these variables in a regression analysis is dummy coding, but there is often a lot of confusion (sometimes even among dissertation committees!) about what dummy variables are, how they work, and why we use them. With this in mind, it is important that the researcher knows how and why to use dummy coding so they can defend their correct (and in many cases, necessary) use.

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