

data

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outline

replication

data basics

merge

tips

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replication, replication

- replication=write computer code that will do *everything* from raw data (eg FED, IMF) to vis
- necessary for science– otherwise don't know what happened
- how was it calculated? is there a mistake? who knows?
- IT perspective <http://journals.plos.org/plosbiology/article?id=10.1371/journal.pbio.1001745>
- pol sci perspective

<http://gking.harvard.edu/files/gking/files/replication.pdf>

rules for everyday practice [revisit/stress later!!]

- once you have coded everything, double/triple-check it
 - leave it aside and check again
 - show it to other people, post on your website
- cross-check final output with raw data—eg are there the same numbers for randomly chosen data points; does it make sense?
- check with alt data ? they tell the same story?
 - google tables/graphs of what i find
 - everything has been already studied by others
 - like lit rev, its data rev

get code from others! the fastest, most efficient way

- the easiest way to do research in 21st century
- start with code others wrote, and build on their work
- any research very close to yours, just email author and ask her to share code with you
- even if it sas or spss etc—you'll be able to figure it out quickly what is going on there and then implement in Py
- don't reinvent the wheel: almost as if you were to start research without reading literature and had to come up with all theories, ideas, and setup on your own!

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data basics

- dataset is a matrix
- cols are variables (var), rows are observations (obs; U/As), and vars are characteristics of obs
- eg 'edu', 'age', and 'inc' are vars and persons are obs
 - each row is a separate person
- have data clean! eg only one top row for var names
 - (xls is typically a mess with unusable var names)

be super careful and clear

- define key vars in as much detail as possible
 - eg instead of “income” “median hh income in current USD”
- think about limitations, shortcomings
 - eg sampling error, missing data, etc
- always try to triangulate, ie measure the concept with multiple vars

data types

- dozens of data types/formats/files
- just google it! eg 'pandas read csv', 'pandas export spss'

APIs/online databases

- but wait, we have databases and internet
- Oracle, MySQL, NoSQL, MsSQL, or even MsAccess
 - usually can use Python to pull directly from databases
- just google it, eg “Python World Bank API”
- but first check maybe Pandas has an interface
 - see notebook sec “API”
- also much easier to use API the web scraping

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the power of merge

- merging is one of the most useful things you'll learn here
- there's a ton data of (and growing!)
- great value comes from simple fact of merging data
- eg Freakonomics book, link in notebook
-

easy to merge; difficult to do it right

- it depends on what kind of data (and luck) you have
- the challenge is to check what happened after the merge
- almost always it merges with issues
- thats where the work begins
- **always investigate carefully non-merges**
- **make sure that *ALL* nonmerges are as expected**
- **even matches can be wrong**
 - use a lot of des sta to investigate
 - always be skeptical, ask yourself whether it makes sense

after merge

- typically some obs did not merge due to diff coding
- say “Poland” ≠ “Republic of Poland”
- “CAMDEN” ≠ “Camden” etc
- then go back and fix it before merge:
- replace to “Poland” from “Republic of Poland”
- in many cases it wasn't supposed to merge
 - eg data A: 1995-2000, but B: 1990-1998
- have to be 100% sure that nonmerges are correct!

merging investigation

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- investigate, eg tabulate time and geography
 - say year and state
- may also want to list part of datafile
 - especially if it is small
- can also sort on key vars
- it does take time to find out what happened
- want to be clear about nonmerges in paper!
 - say how many nonmerges and what you did about it
 - eg dropped, fixed, etc

what to merge on?

- geography! usually have some!
- and can always aggregate up! say have city and state, so can collapse on state
- time! say with weather—usually weather matters!
- occupation! there are occ codes eg <https://www.onetonline.org/find/descriptor/result/4.A.2.b.2>

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data choice matters

- data management often takes 50-90% of time
- most of it is learning/figuring out data
- you'll spend 100+ hrs learning about specific datasets
- don't waste time! pick data that:
 - you're passionate about (eg sth you went to school to learn about, eg poverty, inequality, discrimination)
 - you'll use in other classes, possibly for thesis
 - advance your career after graduation, eg want to work for state—use data they produce or use a lot

make lots of comments in your code

- make comments in notebook in code cells, important!
- explain to yourself what command does, what to look for, etc
- and use plenty of text cells
- if you do not make comments, you will forget...
- use very handy keywords like “TODO”, “KLUDGE”, “BUG”, “LATER”, “FIXME”
- then can ctrl-f for them :)

datasets of the day

- climate/weather, down to county (easy access!)
 - <https://wonder.cdc.gov/EnvironmentalClimateData.html>
- religion!
 - <http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/RCMSCY10.asp>
 - <http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/CMS90CNT.asp>
- state level policy <https://www.statepolicyindex.com/data/>