GOVT 352 Research Methods and Quantitative Analysis
Do Human Rights Treaties Matter?

In "The United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: Does It Make a Difference in Human Rights Behavior,"[1] Linda Camp Keith considers whether signing an international treaty guaranteeing human rights to citizens actually improves states' human rights performance. Based on your reading of the article, work through the questions below to re-evaluate some of the arguments she considers. Save your copy of the dataset to your removable media. Submit your responses to the questions in a single Word document with your name in the header so that it appears on every page. Only submit the relevant portions of your SPSS output; you may resize them to conserve space.

Download the "Keith 1999 replication" data file (Excel format, on Scholar) and save it to your removable media. Open SPSS, then open the file from there, and take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with the data. You'll notice that the second variable, "abbrev," is an abbreviated form of the state name. From that, you can tell that the data are in state-year format: each state in the world is included, with one row for each year that the data set covers. The variable "ICCPR" captures whether a state has signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and "proto" captures whether the state also signed the Covenant's optional protocol that allows individual citizens to lodge rights complaints with the UN.

Getting to Know the Data

1. The data span 18 years immediately following the entry into force of the ICCPR. a) Do the data contain more country-years of treaty participation, or non-participation? (*Hint:* What kind of statistic or analysis answers this question? Think about all the things we've seen this term.) Provide your evidence in your response document. This needn't be the SPSS output; you can simply tell me what you calculated/did and what you found.

2. While we're at it, let's also get to know our outcome variables. AI (Amnesty International) and SD (State Department) are the two personal integrity rights measures that Keith uses. Both are ordinal variables scaled from 1 (lowest level of violation/abuse) to 5 (highest level of violation/abuse).
   a) Graph the distribution of each of these variables.
   b) What is the appropriate measure of central tendency and dispersion to use for a variable at this level of analysis? Identify it, then calculate and report the central tendency and dispersion of each variable (SD and AI).
   c) What does a code of 99 mean? How frequent is it? How do you think that will matter for our analysis? (*Hint:* Do you need to tell SPSS to handle that 99 differently than it handles, say, a 4? Does that affect your response to any other questions here?)
   d) How different are these variables? Briefly describe the results of an eyeball analysis, then use SPSS to compare the means of the two variables. Interpret your findings, including the *p* value.

Does Treaty Participation Matter?

3. Time for a first crack at the data. Keith hypothesizes that signing the ICCPR should cause states to have better human rights records.
   a) Write Keith's hypothesis in hypothesis notation. In your typed model, **bold** the DV and write the IV in ALL CAPS.

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[1] *Journal of Peace Research* 36,1 (1999): 95-118. I thank Dr. Keith for making the replication data for this project available on the JPR website.

b) Let's see if we can replicate Keith's basic bivariate findings (bottom half of Table 1).[2] Calculate a difference of means (with t-test) for signatories and non-signatories; do this twice, once for each DV. Report and interpret both sets of findings, including the *p* values.
c) Make bar graphs of your findings with error bars.
d) Try treating the DVs as proper ordinal variables this time. What tool do we use to analyze the data now? Why? Run that analysis twice, once for each DV against the IV, and put the results in your response document. Report and interpret both sets of findings, including the *p* values.
e) In a couple of sentences, compare the results you got in part d with the results you got in part b. Does the relationship appear stronger in one format than the other?

4. Create a trichotomous (three-value) variable called Sig_OP_012 (for signatory, optional protocol, coded 0-1-2) whose value is 0 if the state is not a party to the treaty in that year, 1 if it is a signatory to the treaty but not the optional protocol, and 2 if it is a signatory to the Optional Protocol (OP). (*Hint:* You will need to do this in two separate steps because the signatory and OP data are in two separate variables.)
a) What level of measurement is this new variable?
b) Since our DV only has 5 values, treat it properly as an ordinal variable. Cross-tabulate it with the new Sig_Op_012 variable that we just created and apply the appropriate test. Copy your crosstabs table into your response document.
c) According to the data, does signing the Optional Protocol result in higher human rights scores? Use the values you calculated, including an interpretation of the p value, to support your claim. Theorize why or why not, drawing on Keith's arguments as needed.

What If It's Not the Treaty's Fault?
5. What if the factor driving human rights records isn't the treaty at all? What if it's something else, something causing *both* quality human rights practices *and* treaty participation? The best candidate for such a variable is democracy. Democracy, by definition, relies on the existence of civil and political rights, and countries with democratic governments are historically strong supporters of international law. So it's a plausible explanation for both.
a) Create a new variable, RegimeType, that equals Democ3-Autoc3.[3] We really just want a simple measure of whether a country is or is not a democracy, though, so we'll dichotomize RegimeType into Regime01, which equals 1 if RegimeType is greater than or equal to 7 (the field's consensus value for a 'full' democracy using this particular measure). Run a quick frequency table of this variable and put that table in your response document.
b) Calculate a difference of means and t-test using Regime01 as your independent variable and AI as your dependent variable. Create a bar graph to display this difference and include it in your response document along with a verbal interpretation of your findings (including the *p* value).
c) Compare this graph and results with your findings in 3b. (Be sure you're comparing the same DVs!) Based on these preliminary analyses, which factor – democracy or the ICCPR – seems to have the biggest effect on human rights records? Be specific about the evidence that you have for your claim.

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[2] Keith does something a little analytically questionable here. She treats a 5-category ordinal variable as a continuous (interval-ratio) variable and calculates a mean from it, as if the numeric values had meaning. Scholars generally agree that ordinal variables with more than about 8-10 categories can safely be treated as I-R, at least for most purposes. Five values, as Keith has here, is really too few for that to be a defensible choice, at least for the SD and AI data; it's a bit more defensible for the Freedom House data, which have 7 possible values. Since this bivariate analysis is not really the focal point of the research, and she treats it more or less properly in the important part (the multivariate model), we'll play along by treating AI and SD as I-R variable ourselves.

[3] Democ3 and Autoc3 are the 11-point measures of democracy and autocracy from the Polity III project. They measure institutional characteristics of democracy, primarily constraints on the executive, rather than rights-based characteristics. Because they capture related facets of the same idea, scholars typically create an index of the two by subtracting Autoc from Democ. The result is a 21-point scale that can be treated like an interval-ratio variable.