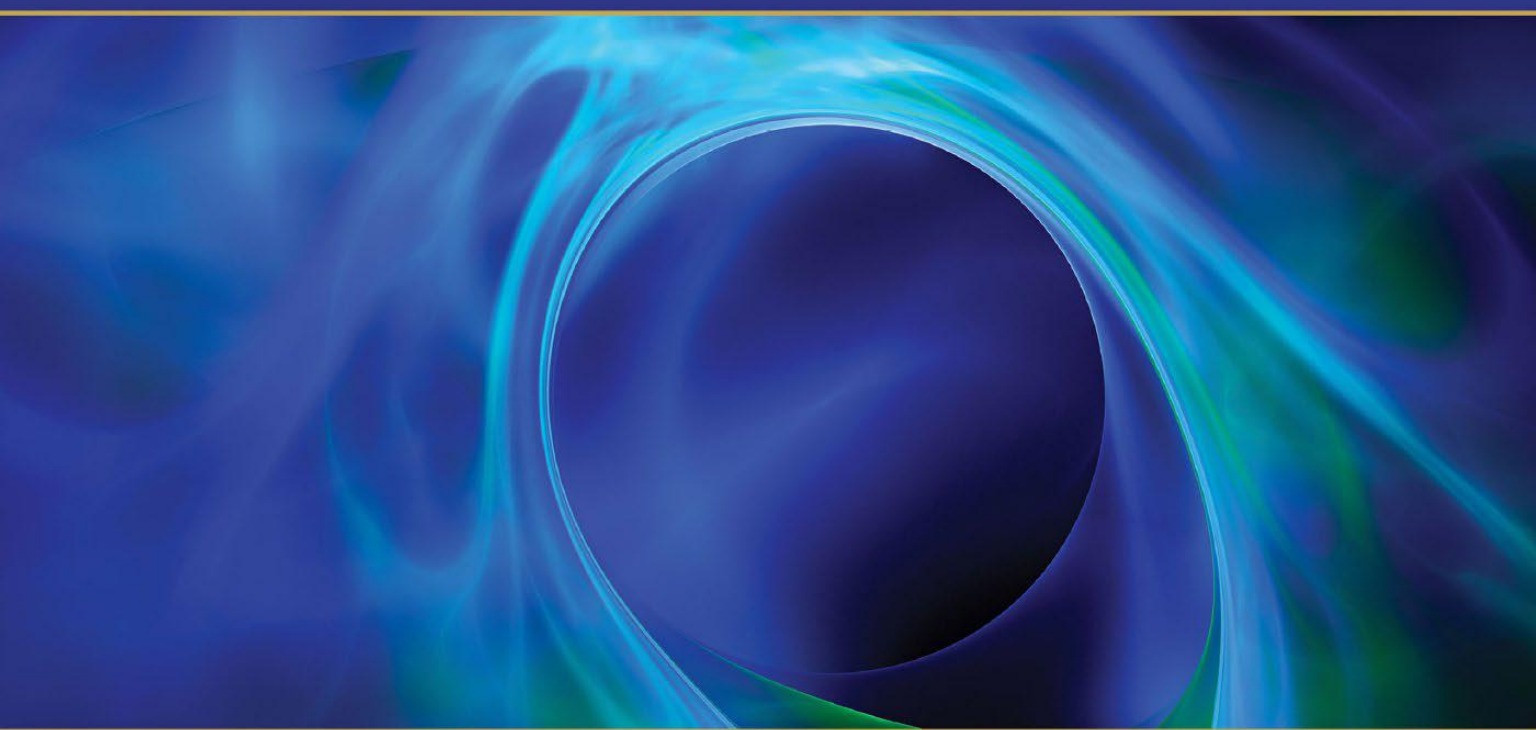


# Applied Multivariate Research

3  
Edition

Design and Interpretation



Lawrence S. Meyers  
Glenn Gamst  
A.J. Guarino





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THIRD EDITION

# Applied Multivariate Research

*Design and Interpretation*

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# Preface

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**W**e are extremely pleased and grateful that SAGE asked us to put together a third edition of *Applied Multivariate Research: Design and Interpretation*. This edition reflects and attempts to not only incorporate feedback we have received from several anonymous reviewers at the start of our revision process, but it also integrates the suggestions, questions, and feedback provided to us by both readers of the second edition and the students in our courses. Because we use the book in our introductory graduate-level statistics/research design courses, we have also seen where we might make changes to help our students better understand, work with, and follow the material.

In preparing the third edition, we have once again reaffirmed the goals we expressed in originally writing this book:

- We hope to communicate in a relatively readable, understandable, and (mostly) nonmathematical manner the conceptual bases of a range of multivariate research designs and analyses. At the same time, we have attempted to not unduly dilute or oversimplify the material.
- We want to demonstrate how to perform, interpret, and report the results of multivariate analyses in a direct and understandable manner.
- We have continued our practice of preparing two companion (paired) chapters for each topic, an “A” chapter presenting the conceptual treatment of the topic and a “B” chapter presenting the step-by-step data analysis, data interpretation, and reporting of the results so that the above two goals can be met.

We have used Version 23 of IBM SPSS and IBM SPSS Amos for this third edition, recognizing that later versions will be available by the time this book is published. All of the data sets used as examples are available on the SAGE website ([www.sagepub.com/meyers](http://www.sagepub.com/meyers)) so that interested users can replicate our analyses on the example data sets.

In addition to updating and carefully editing the material, we restructured the order in which we cover the topics in the third edition:

- Because it was so fundamental in presenting the general linear model and serving as a foundation for the rest of the material covered in this book, we moved our treatment of correlation and regression to the front of the book immediately following our data screening chapters.
- We placed canonical correlation analysis directly after the chapters covering advanced regression analyses.
- The confirmatory factor analysis chapters were moved to an earlier location and now directly follow the exploratory factor analysis/principal components analysis chapters.
- We moved the analysis of variance (ANOVA)/multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) chapters to a location late in the book, and we placed the chapter on discriminant function analysis directly following the MANOVA chapters.

- We added a pair of chapters covering survival analysis at the end of the book.
- Users of the second edition will also notice that the “A” chapters covering confirmatory factor analysis, structural equation modeling, and assessing model invariance were largely rewritten; further, their companion “B” chapters were completely rewritten with the example analyses being made much more extensive and complete. The treatment of ANOVA/MANOVA was also extensively modified from the previous edition, with the focus in this third edition being on covariance and multivariate (between subjects) analyses and their combination (MANCOVA).

We have used data sets from the research of some of our students, including Jacquelyn Johnson, Rosalyn Sandoval, and Leanne Stanley. We appreciate their willingness to share their data sets with us, and we value the time we have spent teaching and supervising them. We were sad to see the editor of our previous two editions, Vicki Knight, retire but we look forward to working with our new SAGE editor Leah Fargotstein and her staff as we move forward.

Our overriding goal in writing this book was to make the world of multivariate research design and analysis understandable to a wide audience, and we sincerely hope that this book is helpful in that regard to its readers and users.

### *Acknowledgments*

With the retirement of Vicki Knight, Leah Fargotstein has stepped up as our new editor. She has taken over the reigns and has done a terrific job in preparing us to put this book into production. Our copy editor, Christina West, has done a wonderful job as well. Christina’s skill and keen eye are matched by her incredible speed and cheerful demeanor. Finally, based on some of the questions raised by our graduate students and some of the nuances they explored in their data analysis, we were able to address issues in some of these chapters that we might not otherwise have covered, and we are grateful for their interest and attentiveness in improving the coverage of the topics in this book.

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# PART I

## *FUNDAMENTALS OF MULTIVARIATE DESIGN*



# *An Introduction to Multivariate Design*

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## *1.1 The Use of Multivariate Designs*

The use of multivariate research designs has grown very rapidly in the behavioral and social sciences throughout the past quarter century. This has been made possible in no small part by increased availability of sophisticated statistical software packages, such as IBM SPSS, SAS, and Stata. But even with the increased availability of such software, behavioral and social science researchers have been using some multivariate techniques (e.g., factor analysis, multiple regression) for a very long time.

Multivariate designs can be distinguished from the univariate and bivariate designs with which readers are likely already familiar. Experimental designs that are analyzed with  $t$  tests or analysis of variance (ANOVA) are univariate designs, so named because there is only a single dependent variable in the design and analysis of the data (Gamst, Meyers, & Guarino, 2008). A  $t$  ratio or an  $F$  ratio is generated to test whether the group means are significantly different.

A bivariate design derives its name from the fact that there are only two variables that are analyzed together; it is exemplified by a simple correlation design. The variables in such a design are often signified as  $X$  and  $Y$  and, unless we are predicting one (the  $Y$  variable) from the other (the  $X$  variable), which variable is assigned which letter is arbitrary. The degree to which the measures are correlated is assessed with a correlation coefficient such as the Pearson correlation coefficient (Pearson  $r$ ).

## *1.2 The Definition of the Multivariate Domain*

To be considered a multivariate research design, the study must have more variables than are contained in either a univariate or bivariate design. Furthermore, some subset of these variables must be analyzed together, that is, they must be combined in some manner to form a composite variable or *variate*. The most common way to combine variables is by forming a *weighted linear composite* where each variable is weighted in a manner determined by the analysis. This resulting weighted linear composite is known as a variate. There are several contexts where we form such variates, three examples of which are as follows:

- In an experimental design in which we wished to compare the performance of three types of memory training, we could measure two or more variables as indicators of performance. These variables could then be combined into a single weighted composite measure when we would perform a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). For example, we could assess both number of correct responses and speed of responding in a memory task that taken together might be interpreted as reflecting performance efficiency.
- In a prediction (regression) design, we might use self-esteem, extraversion, and product knowledge to predict dollars of sales for a set of salespeople in a multiple regression analysis. The variate in this instance might be thought of as sales effectiveness.
- To determine which items on a personality inventory might comprise separate subscales that measure aspects of a more global construct, we might perform a factor analysis on the responses to those items. Each factor would be a weighted linear combination of the inventory items.

### 1.3 The Importance of Multivariate Designs

The importance of multivariate designs is becoming increasingly well recognized. It also appears that the judged utility of these designs seems to be growing as well. Here are two of the advantages of multivariate research designs over univariate research designs based on those offered by Pituch and Stevens (2016):

- Many experimental treatments are likely to affect the study participants in more than one way.
- Using multiple criterion measures can paint a more complete and detailed description of the phenomenon under investigation.

A similar argument is made by Harris (2013):

However, for very excellent reasons, researchers in all of the sciences—behavioral, biological, or physical—have long since abandoned sole reliance on the classic univariate design. It has become abundantly clear that a given experimental manipulation . . . will affect many somewhat different but partially correlated aspects of the organism's behavior. Similarly, many different pieces of information about an applicant . . . may be of value in predicting his or her . . . [behavior], and it is necessary to consider how to combine all of these pieces of information into a single “best” prediction. (p. 11)

In summary, there is general consensus about the value of multivariate designs for two very general reasons. First, we all seem to agree that individuals generate many behaviors and respond in many different although related ways to the situations they encounter in their lives. Univariate analyses are able to address this level of complexity in only a piecemeal fashion because they can examine only one aspect at a time. Multivariate analysis affords us the opportunity to examine the phenomenon under study by determining how the multiple variables interface.

The second reason why the field appears to have reached consensus on the importance of multivariate design is that we hold the causes of behavior to be complex and multivariate. Thus, predicting behavior is best done with more rather than less information. Most of us believe that several reasons

explain why we feel or act as we do. For example, the degree to which we strive to achieve a particular goal, the amount of empathy we exhibit in our relationships, and the likelihood of following a medical regime may depend on a host of factors rather than just a single predictor variable. Only when we take into account a set of relevant variables—that is, when we take a multivariate approach—have we any realistic hope of reasonably accurately predicting the level—or understanding the nature—of a given construct. This, again, is the realm of multivariate design.

### 1.4 The General Form of a Variate

The general form of a variate—a weighted composite—is an equation or function. In the weighted linear composite shown below, the letter  $X$  with subscripts symbolizes each variable in the variate. A weight is assigned to each variable by multiplying the variable by this value; this weight is referred to as a *coefficient* in many multivariate applications. Thus, in the expression  $w_2X_2$ , the term  $w_2$  is the weight that  $X_2$  is assigned (multiplied by) in the weighted composite, that is,  $w_2$  is the coefficient associated with  $X_2$ . A weighted composite of three variables would take this general form:

$$\text{Weighted composite} = w_1X_1 + w_2X_2 + w_3X_3$$

These weighted composites are given a variety of names, including *variates*, *composite variables*, and *synthetic variables* (Grimm & Yarnold, 2000). Variates are therefore not directly measured by the researchers in the process of data collection but are created or computed as part of or as the result of the multivariate data analysis. Because they are not directly measured, what they assess is often referred to as a *latent construct*, and the variate is often referred to as a *latent variable*. We will have quite a bit to say about variates (weighted linear composites or latent variables) throughout this book.

### 1.5 The Type of Variables Combined to Form a Variate

Variates may be weighted composites of either independent variables (i.e., manipulated or predictor variables) or dependent variables (variables representing the outcome of the research), or they may be weighted composites of variables playing neither role in the analysis. Examples where the analysis creates a variate composed of independent variables are multiple regression and logistic regression designs. In these designs, two or more independent variables are combined together to predict the value of a dependent variable. For example, the number of delinquent acts performed by teenagers might be found to be predictable from the number of hours per week they play violent video games, the number of hours per week they spend doing homework (this would be negatively weighted because more homework time would presumably predict fewer delinquent acts), and the number of hours per week they spend with other teens who have committed at least one delinquent act in the past year.

Multivariate analyses can also create composites of dependent variables. The classic example of this is a MANOVA design. This general type of design can contain one or more independent variables, but there must be at least two dependent variables in the analysis. These dependent variables are combined together into a composite, and an ANOVA is performed on this computed variate. The statistical significance of group differences on this variate is then tested by a multivariate  $F$  statistic (in contrast to the univariate  $F$  ratio that readers have presumably studied in prior coursework).

Sometimes variables do not need to play the explicit role of either independent or dependent variable and yet will be absorbed into a weighted linear composite in the statistical analysis. This occurs in principal components and exploratory factor analysis, where we attempt to identify which variables (e.g., items on an inventory) are associated with a particular underlying dimension, component, or factor. These components or factors are weighted linear composites of the variables in the analysis.

It is possible that the prior experience of readers is such that great emphasis has been placed on the differences between dependent and independent variables. If so, it might be somewhat disconcerting to learn that variates can be composed of either class of variables. But it turns out that, in the analysis of data, dependent and independent are roles that are assigned to variables by the researchers rather than absolute attributes of the variables themselves. And just as actresses in the theater can play different roles in different productions, so too can variables play different roles in different analyses. This can be seen very forcefully in the context of path analysis (Chapters 12A and 13A) and structural equation modeling (Chapter 14A), and the interfacing of MANOVA (Chapter 18A) with discriminant function analysis (Chapter 19A).

## 1.6 The General Organization of the Book

The domain of multivariate research design is quite large, and selecting which topics to include and which to omit is a difficult task for authors. Most of the multivariate procedures we cover in this book are very much related to each other in that they are different surface ways of expressing the same underlying model: the general linear model. The general linear model can be generally represented by the weighted linear composite discussed in Section 1.4. For example, multiple regression analysis involves generating a weighted linear composite of quantitatively measured variables to predict the value of a single outcome variable and canonical correlation analysis involves generating a weighted linear composite of quantitatively measured variables to predict the value of a weighted linear composite of other quantitatively measured variables.

Separating the chapters into groupings (Parts) is therefore done as a convenience for the readers. The groupings that we use, and even the ordering of the chapters within the groupings, is more of a matter of personal expression than a true classification system. The organizational structure of the multivariate domain is sufficiently fluid that we have opted for a somewhat different grouping of our chapters and chapter order in this third edition compared to our previous edition.

### 1.6.1 The Chapters Are in Pairs

Beginning with the third chapter, each topic is presented in the form of a pair of chapters labeled “A” and “B.” The “A” chapter of the pair treats the topic at a relatively broad, conceptual level, focusing on the uses to which the design is often put, the rationale underlying the procedure, a description of how the procedure works, some of the decisions that are likely to be encountered in performing the analysis, and some issues of controversy when they are germane to the discussion. The “B” chapter of the pair describes a step-by-step procedure or set of procedures to perform the analysis in IBM SPSS (or, in most of the Part III chapters, IBM SPSS Amos), and how to interpret the output of the analysis. Some of the data sets that we use for our examples are modified versions (sometimes very substantially) of ones our students have collected in their research, and we use them with the permission of those students.

For each procedure that we perform in our “B” chapters, we present an example of how the results might be reported. It should be emphasized that there is no one best way to report results—we just

wanted to illustrate one (hopefully) acceptable way to accomplish this. Readers are encouraged to consult Cooper (2010) for his suggestions on preparing results sections for dissemination. SAGE has established a place for the data files for the analyses demonstrated in each of the “B” chapters on their website ([www.sagepub.com/meyers](http://www.sagepub.com/meyers)).

### *1.6.2 Part I: Fundamentals of Multivariate Design*

The chapters in this part of the book introduce readers to the foundations or cornerstones of designing research and analyzing data. Our first chapter—the one that you are reading—discusses the idea of multivariate design and addresses the structure of this book. The second chapter on fundamental research concepts covers both some basics that readers have learned about in prior courses and possibly some new concepts and terms that will be explicated in much greater detail throughout this book. Data screening is covered in Chapters 3A and 3B. These issues are applicable to all the procedures we cover later, and so we cover them once in this pair of early chapters. We discuss ways to correct data entry mistakes, how to evaluate statistical assumptions underlying the data analysis, and how to handle missing data and outliers.

### *1.6.3 Part II: Basic and Advanced Regression Analysis*

Regression procedures are used to predict the value of a single variable. Pearson correlation (used to describe the degree of linear relationship that is observed between two measures) and ordinary least squares simple linear regression (where we use one quantitative variable to predict a single outcome variable) are covered in Chapters 4A and 4B. Multiple regression analysis is an extension of simple linear regression when we use multiple measures to predict the outcome variable. The basics of this procedure are covered in Chapters 5A and 5B, and some (more advanced) variations of it are discussed in Chapters 6A and 6B.

Canonical correlation analysis, presented in Chapters 7A and 7B, is an extension of multiple regression analysis in which a set of quantitative independent variables is used to predict the values of a set of quantitative dependent variables. In many ways the process of interpreting the results strongly resembles and thus anticipates what we do in principal components and factor analysis.

When the limitations of ordinary least squares regression are exceeded, alternative regression techniques need to be initiated. Two such alternatives are presented in the next two pairs of chapters. Ordinary least squares regression assumes that the cases in the analysis are independent of each other, an assumption that is violated where cases are nested, that is, hierarchically organized. Examples of such organization are students within separate classrooms and clients of particular mental health clinics in a larger health system. In predicting an outcome variable, such as standardized test scores of the students, the children within a given classroom may be more related to each other on the outcome variable than they are to other students selected at random from the entire school or school district. To the extent that the children within a classroom are more alike than students selected at random, that is, to the extent that nesting is important, the assumption of independence is violated and we must use multilevel modeling in predicting the outcome variable. This topic is presented in Chapters 8A and 8B.

Ordinary least squares regression also assumes that the variable being predicted is measured on a quantitative scale of measurement. Yet it is often the case that we wish to predict to which group cases in the data file belong; here, group assignment is represented as a categorical variable. For example,

we might want to predict whether an individual is likely to succeed or not succeed in a given program based on a set of variables. This type of prediction can be performed using binary or multinomial logistic regression, topics discussed in Chapters 9A and 9B. Prediction of a binary variable entails setting a decision point so that cases are classified or predicted as belonging to either one group or the other based on their score on a continuum. One powerful and commonly used procedure used to facilitate the trade-offs in selecting that decision point is receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve analysis, and this topic is included within the logistic regression chapters.

### *1.6.4 Part III: Structural Relationships of Measured and Latent Variables*

We very generally mean by structure some underlying relationships among the variables that can be brought to the surface by the statistical analysis or incorporated within a model specified by the researchers that can then be evaluated against the data. Often, but not always, these underlying relationships are organized into themes or dimensions. This is the realm of latent variables.

Principal components analysis and exploratory factor analysis, discussed in Chapters 10A and 10B, both describe the dimensions (latent variables) underlying a set of variables. For example, although a paper-and-pencil inventory may contain more than two dozen items, these items may tap into only three or four latent main themes or dimensions. Principal components analysis and exploratory factor analysis can be used to identify which items relate to each dimension.

Principal components analysis and exploratory factor analysis (both are discussed in Chapters 10A and 10B) are analogous to an inductive approach in that researchers employ a bottom-up strategy by developing a conclusion from specific observations. That is, the researchers determine the interpretation of the factor by examining the variate that emerged from the analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis (presented in Chapters 11A and 11B) seeks to determine if the number of factors and their respective measured variables as specified in a model hypothesized by the researchers is supported by the data set—that is, they determine the extent to which the proposed model fits the data.

Path (sometimes called causal) structures are presented in the next two sets of chapters. Such structures extend the thinking behind a multiple regression design to consider relationships and lines of influence among the predictors rather than just between a set of predictors and the outcome variable. When the variables in the hypothesized structure are all measured variables, we speak of path analysis, which can be analyzed through ordinary least squares regression (treated in Chapters 12A and 12B) or through structural equation modeling using IBM SPSS Amos (treated in Chapters 13A and 13B). When we have included latent variables in the path structure, the analysis becomes one of structural equation modeling and must be done in IBM SPSS Amos (or comparable specialized software); this topic is treated in Chapters 14A and 14B.

It is also possible to ask if a confirmatory factor structure and/or a structural equation model are equally applicable to two or more groups (e.g., males and females; Asian American, White American, and Latino/a American students). To address such a research question, we perform an invariance analysis on the structural configuration, and this topic is addressed in Chapters 15A and 15B.

### *1.6.5 Part IV: Synthesizing/Categorizing Data*

Chapters 16A and 16B are devoted to multidimensional scaling. Objects or stimuli (e.g., brands of cars, retail stores) are assessed using a paired comparison procedure to determine the degree to which they are dissimilar. These dissimilarity data are analyzed in terms of the distance between the objects.

In turn, the distances between the objects are arrayed or represented in a space defined by the number of dimensions specified by the researchers who then attempt to interpret these dimensions along which the objects appear to differ.

Cluster analysis is presented in Chapters 17A and 17B. Rather than using common demographic variables to define groups (e.g., females and males), we group the cases (e.g., participants in a research study, presidents of the United States, brands of beer) on the basis of how they relate based on a set of quantitative variables. These groupings are called clusters. Two different approaches, hierarchical cluster analysis and  $k$ -means clustering, are described in the chapters.

### ***1.6.6 Part V: Comparing Means***

Part V addresses comparison of means. Chapters 18A and 18B cover analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), and multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) using one-way and two-way between subjects designs. Discriminant function analysis is the flip side of MANOVA in which variates are generated to distinguish and characterize the groups in the analysis, and it is covered in Chapters 19A and 19B. Chapters 20A and 20B examine several techniques variously labeled as survival analysis. Survival analysis examines in a general sense the time interval between two events, often in the form of how long cases remain in one state (e.g., obtain their first full-time job) before changing to another state (e.g., change jobs). Three approaches are covered in these chapters: life tables, the Kaplan–Meier method, and Cox regression.



## Some Fundamental Research Design Concepts

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We start our treatment of multivariate research design with a discussion, and for many readers a review, of some fundamental concepts that will serve as building blocks for the general arena of research design as well as some advanced concepts that are relevant to some of the material we cover in this book. These advanced concepts will be revisited in greater depth in later chapters.

### 2.1 Populations and Samples

A *population* is composed of all entities fitting the boundary conditions of whom or what we are intending to subsume (generalize to) in our research. Populations are typically made up of people or other entities meeting certain criteria. In basic behavioral science research, the population of interest is often “all humans.” Some applied research may target smaller and more specific populations, such as “all breast cancer survivors” or “all senior citizens in community outreach programs.” Some disciplines may focus on different types of entities such as schools in a given school district, hospitals meeting certain criteria, stores or offices of a given corporation, and so on.

In most situations, it is not possible to include all the population members in a research study. Instead, we select a workable number of individuals or entities (*cases* is the most general label) to represent the population. That set of cases in the study is the *sample*. Very often, the intention of the researchers is to study some process or phenomenon in the sample in order to generalize their conclusions to the population from which the sample was drawn.

Generalizing from the sample to the population is a delicate matter resting so strongly on a set of technical issues (e.g., sampling can be completely random or random based on some stratification of the population) that most research methods textbooks cover this topic in detail; indeed, there is enough complexity in procedures used for sampling that entire books have been written on it (e.g., Fuller, 2009; Levy & Lemeshow, 2008; Lohr, 2010; S. K. Thompson, 2002).

One issue affecting generalization concerns the extrapolation of the statistical results to the population and is strongly related to tests of statistical significance. Most tests of statistical significance are based on the data obtained from the sample, but they are really testing the null hypothesis stating (a) that there is no relationship in the population between or among the variables that we are studying or (b) that the sample means we are comparing were drawn from the same population. The null

hypothesis is almost always different from the research hypothesis, which typically asserts that there will be significant correlations between the variables or there will be a significant difference between the treatment conditions. Statistical significance is part of a larger and more complex picture that is described in Sections 2.7 and 2.8.

Extrapolation of the statistical findings from the sample to the population presumes that the sample is representative of the population. The representativeness of a sample is itself a complex issue. In most situations, we prefer to randomly sample cases from the population, trusting that such randomness will result in the sample strongly resembling its parent population; however, randomness works in the very long run and concerns about such representativeness tend to be of greater concern with increasingly smaller sample sizes.

Another issue that affects generalization from the sample results to the population is attrition within the sample. Attrition is usually thought of as a loss of cases over time in a longitudinal design, but multivariate analyses are subject to this concern as well. Most of the multivariate statistical procedures require the cases to have valid values on all the measures (variables in the data analysis). With multiple measures taken on each case, it is possible that some of the cases will have missing data on at least one of the variables. When a particular case has a missing value on even one measure, that case will in many instances be removed from the entire multivariate analysis. If many participants are excluded in this manner, the possibility exists that those cases remaining in the analysis will comprise a subsample somewhat or even quite different from the sample as a whole (e.g., participants of one of the two sexes may be disproportionally dropped). Under such a circumstance, conclusions based on the results of analyses on the cases remaining may not be properly generalized back to the main sample and, by extension, to the original population. Much of Chapters 3A and 3B are devoted to dealing with the issue of missing values.

## 2.2 Variables and Scales of Measurement

### 2.2.1 Variables

It is difficult to read a textbook on research design or statistics without immediately encountering the notion of a variable. It is truly one of our fundamental concepts, and it tends to take on increasingly enriched meaning to students as they progress into more advanced coursework.

As a general characterization, *a variable is a construct that can take on different values*. When we assign values to variables, we speak of *measurement*. These values can be, and very often are, numbers that have *quantitative* meaning. Examples of quantitatively based variables include grade point average, which can take on numerical values between 0 and 4; the number of dollars in weekly vehicle sales, which can take on values in hundreds of thousands of dollars; and a score on a standardized test such as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) revised General Test, which can range from 130 to 170. In data files, these values will be reproduced in the same form (e.g., a case would have 3.68 recorded for grade point average, 527,000 dollars recorded for weekly vehicle sales, and 161 recorded for test score).

Alternatively, the different values that variables can take may simply be names or identifiers for classes (categories) of individuals or entities. For example, breeds (e.g., collie, golden retriever) represent different types of dogs and sex labels (e.g., female, male) represent biologically different individuals. Categories can also be assigned arbitrary numerical codes, a strategy commonly used in representing these categories in data files. For example, we might code females as 1 and males as 2 under the variable of sex of participant.

Whether quantitatively based or categorically based, all the values for variables have been assigned through a set of rules defining a measurement operation. These measurement operations represent different scales of measurement.

### 2.2.2 Five Scales of Measurement

Although the essentials of measurement scales were known for some time before he formalized our treatment of them, it was S. S. Stevens who impressed this topic on the consciousness of behavioral scientists. As Stevens (1951) tells us, he initially broached this issue in a 1941 presentation to the International Congress for the Unity of Science. Stevens published a brief article addressing scales of measurement a few years later in *Science* (Stevens, 1946), but it was the prominent treatment of this topic in his lead chapter in the *Handbook of Experimental Psychology*, which he edited (Stevens, 1951), that most writers cite as the primary historical source.

Measurement (of variables) comprises sets of rules governing the way that values are assigned to entities. Each set of rules defines a scale of measurement, affecting both the kinds of manipulations we can appropriately perform on the values as well as the meaning we can derive from those values. Stevens (1951) identified four ordered scales: nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio in that fixed order. Each scale includes an extra feature or rule over the one in the scale before it. We add a fifth scale to Stevens's treatment—the summative response scale—placing it between the ordinal and the interval scale. We summarize below the essence of each scale.

#### 2.2.2.1 Nominal Scales

A *nominal* scale of measurement, sometimes called a *categorical* scale, a *qualitative* scale, or a *classification system*, has only one rule underlying its use: Cases will be identified as being different on the variable that is measured by assigning them to different predefined categories of the variable. There is no quantitative dimension implied here at all, no implication that one entity is in any way “more” or “less” than another. Examples of nominal scales include sex and race/ethnicity categories, types of businesses where people work, and medical conditions people have.

Differences between the cases are defined by the nominal or classification system. For example, individuals may be classified as female or male based on biological features. Within this classification system, the set of individuals identified as one of the two sexes may still represent a very diverse group who may differ substantially on a host of other characteristics. Although they are all classified as the same sex, it does not mean that they are identical in any other respect.

Numerical coding of categorical variables is regularly done when we are entering data into an IBM SPSS data file. Thus, in a study comparing students who enjoy reading different kinds of books for leisure, we might use 1 to denote a preference for science fiction, 2 to indicate a preference for mystery novels, and 3 to signify a preference for humor. In this situation, the numeric codes do not imply anything quantitative; they are used exclusively to represent different categories of preference.

#### 2.2.2.2 Ordinal Scales

An *ordinal* scale of measurement uses numbers exclusively to represent the quantitative standing of cases on a variable. As was true for nominal scales, different numbers represent different information. But ordinal scales add this additional rule: The numbers convey “less than” and “more than” information,

and so apply to variables that have features that can be quantitatively indexed (e.g., extension, intensity). Ordinal information translates most easily to a rank ordering of cases where 1 represents “the most” of whatever quantity is being measured, 2 represents “less than 1 but more than 3,” 3 represents “less than 2 but more than 4,” and so on.

Cases may be ranked in the order in which they align themselves on some quantitative dimension, but it is not possible from the ranking information to determine how far apart they are on the underlying dimension. For example, if we were ranking the height of three people, the one 7 feet tall would be ranked 1, the one 5 feet and 2 inches tall would be ranked 2, and the one 5 feet and 1 inch tall would be ranked 3. From the ranked data, we could not determine that two of the individuals were quite close in height.

### 2.2.2.3 Summative Response Scales

A *summative response* scale requires respondents to assign values to entities based on an underlying continuum defined by the anchors on the scale. The numbers are ordered, typically in an ascending way, to reflect more of the property being rated. Most common are 5-point and 7-point scales (Gamst, Meyers, Burke, & Guarino, 2015). These scales originated in the classic work of Louis Thurstone in the late 1920s (1927a, 1927b, 1928, 1929; Thurstone & Chave, 1929) in his pioneering work to develop interval-level measurement scales to assess attitudes. Based on Thurstone’s time-consuming and resource-intensive scale development techniques, summative response scales were developed by Rensis Likert (pronounced “lick-ert” by the man himself) in the early 1930s to make the process more efficient (Likert, 1932), and he and his colleagues widely disseminated this scaling process later that decade (Likert, Roslow, & Murphy, 1934; Murphy & Likert, 1937). Derivatives of Likert’s scale have become increasingly popular ever since.

It is called a summative scale because it is possible to add (sum) the ratings of a set of items together and to divide that sum by a constant (usually in the process of taking a mean) to obtain an individual’s score on the set of items (an inventory). We will address this in a little more detail after introducing all the scales, but we wish to briefly illustrate here that the average (mean) derived from a summative response scale is meaningful, thus rendering this type of scale closer to interval-level than to ordinal-level measurement. The values may not represent equal distance between adjacent numbers (as required by interval scales), but the spacing is close enough to equal to meaningfully interpret averages of the values.

To illustrate that interpreting a mean of the scale values is meaningful, let’s say that we administered a short self-esteem inventory to a class of medical students. Let’s further say that one item on the inventory read, “I feel that I am a worthwhile person.” Assume that items were rated on a 5-point scale with higher values indicating more endorsement of the statement. Let’s further say that the mean for this item based on all the students in the class was 4.75. Is that value interpretable? Yes, it indicates that the individuals in the sample on average believed pretty strongly that the content of the item was quite true for them—namely, that they were worthwhile people.

### 2.2.2.4 Interval Scales

An *interval* scale of measurement has all the properties of nominal, ordinal, and summative response scales but includes one more important feature. Fixed intervals between the numbers represent equal intervals on the variable. It is also worthwhile noting that interval scales may have zero points, but the zero value is an arbitrary point on the scale (this contrasts with ratio scales as noted in Section 2.2.2.5).

The most common illustration of an equal interval scale is the Fahrenheit or Celsius temperature scale. These are interval scales in the sense that a 20° difference in one region of the scale represents the same amount of difference represented by a 20° difference in another region of the scale. According to Stevens (1951), “Equal intervals of temperature are scaled off by noting equal volumes of expansion” (p. 27). As an example of the arbitrariness of a zero value on an interval scale of measurement, consider that 0° does not mean the absence of temperature but is the temperature on the Celsius scale at which water freezes.

As was true for summative response scales, it is meaningful to average the data collected on an interval scale of measurement. We may therefore say that the average high temperature in our hometown this past week was 51.4 °F.

#### 2.2.2.5 Ratio Scales

A *ratio* scale of measurement has all the properties of nominal, ordinal, summative response, and interval scales but includes one more important feature. Ratio scales have an absolute zero point on the variable, where zero means absence of the property that is measured. Common examples of ratio scales are time (e.g., minutes, years) and distance (e.g., centimeters, miles). Further, because the zero value is absolute, it is possible to interpret ratios of the numbers in a meaningful way. We can thus say that 4 hours is twice as long as 2 hours or that 3 miles is half the distance of 6 miles.

#### 2.2.3 Algebraic Properties of the Scales

As we suggested above, the sorts of algebraic operations or manipulations that we can legitimately perform on data obtained from each of the scales of measurement is different and will thus limit the kind of data analysis we are able to appropriately use. We will discuss Stevens’s classic set of four scales first and then fit summative response scales into what we have said.

Nominal measurement is not quantitatively based. Because of that, the only operations that can legitimately be performed on the data would be that of determining equality or inequality. For example, if we were going to classify entities in our world as either “animals” or “trees,” then skunks and chipmunks would be classified as animals (and thus defined as being equal or comparable in this measurement or classification system), whereas redwood trees and birch trees would be classified as trees (and thus also defined as being equal). However, diamonds and phosphorus would not be classified in this system. Based on our classifying operation, it is legitimate to count the number of occurrences we observed in each category and to compare the counts to determine which is greater. We could thus say that in a given area, there were 25 animals and 41 trees. We can also assess the observed frequencies against some predetermined expectations (as is done in a chi square analysis).

Ordinal measurement allows us to compare cases in a quantitative manner but only to the extent of making greater-than or less-than determinations. If students are ranked in terms of their height, we may say that one student is taller than another. But it would not make much sense to identify two students whose ranks were 1 and 7 and to add those ranks together (to say that their total rank was 8 makes no sense) or take an average of the two ranks (to say that their average rank was 4 likewise makes no sense).

Interval measurement, where the quantitative scale is marked in terms of equal intervals, allows us to perform adding (subtracting) and averaging to the operations of equality/inequality and greater-than/less-than judgments. Thus, we can legitimately add the daily temperatures for the past 7 days and divide by 7 to arrive at a meaningful value: the average temperature for the week. It is also meaningful

to compute a measure of dispersion of the scores, so that we could legitimately calculate a standard deviation.

Ratio measurement, with its absolute zero point, allows us to divide and multiply values to arrive at meaningful results in addition to doing all the above-mentioned operations. We cannot meaningfully interpret ratios on any of the other scales. To use Fahrenheit temperature (interval measurement) as an example, we would be incorrect in asserting that 40° is twice as warm as 20° because there is no absolute zero point to ground us. If you are not sure about this, just remember that a Celsius temperature scale is a transformation of the Fahrenheit scale. These Fahrenheit temperatures would have different values on the Celsius scale but would represent the same temperatures. And the Celsius ratio would yield a different value. This can be contrasted to the Kelvin scale of temperature where zero really does mean the absence of any heat. Using this latter scale with its absolute or true zero point, one can make ratio assertions about temperatures.

Now consider the scale we added to Stevens's list—summative response scales. It allows more operations than an ordinal scale because we can add (and subtract) its values and obtain a meaningful average. Despite this feature, however, some authors (e.g., Allen & Yen, 1979) have unequivocally placed these ratings scales within the province of ordinal measures. Historically, however, the scales have been treated more liberally. Likert (1932) himself argued that his scaling technique correlated close to 1 with the results of Thurstone's (1928; Thurstone & Chave, 1929) much more elaborate method that appeared to generate an equal interval scale assessing attitudes toward a particular issue. Guilford (1954), in his book *Psychometric Methods*, allowed summative response scales to at least have more interval-like properties than rank order scales, and Edwards (1957) goes a bit further, stating, "if our interest is in comparing the mean attitude scores of two or more groups, this can be done with summated-rating scales as well as with equal-appearing interval scales" (p. 157). Summarizing a study by Spector (1976), Ghiselli, Campbell, and Zedeck (1981) tell us, "Of particular interest with regard to Spector's research results is the finding that a majority of existing attitude scales *do* use categories of approximately equal intervals" (p. 414). Given the summary by Ghiselli et al., it is thus possible that people might treat summative response scales psychologically (cognitively) as approximating interval measurement.

Although it may be the case that some researchers will question the degree to which the points on a summative response scale are precisely evenly spaced (Velleman & Wilkinson, 1993), the vast majority of research published in the behavioral and social sciences over the past half century or more has used summative response scales as though they met interval properties. Researchers have added the scale points, have taken means and standard deviations, and have used these measurements in statistical analyses that ordinarily require interval or ratio measurement to properly interpret the results. In our view, this treatment of summative response scales is acceptable, appropriate, and quite useful. We therefore recommend that data analysis procedures that are ordinarily applied to interval and ratio measured variables also be applied to variables measured on a summative response scale.

#### 2.2.4 Qualitative Versus Quantitative Measurement

It is possible to identify two categories into which we can classify subsets of these measurement scales: qualitative (categorical) and quantitative measurements. Qualitative measurement characterizes what we obtain from the nominal scale of measurement. There is no implied underlying quantitative dimension here even if the nominal values are numerical codes. Researchers sometimes call qualitative variables by other names, such as the following:



- Categorical variables
- Nonmetric variables
- Dichotomous variables (when there are only two values or categories)
- Grouped variables
- Classification variables

It is useful for our purposes to think of quantitative measurement in a somewhat restrictive manner. Although the ordinal scale certainly presumes an underlying quantitative dimension, we would generally propose thinking in terms of those scales for which it is meaningful and informative to compute a mean and standard deviation. With the ability to compute a mean and standard deviation and all that this ability implies, the gateway is open to performing a whole range of parametric statistical procedures, such as Pearson correlation and analysis of variance (ANOVA), as well as the host of multivariate procedures we discuss in this book. As we have seen, summative response, interval, and ratio scales meet this standard. Researchers sometimes call quantitative variables by other names, such as the following:

- Continuous variables (although technically, many quantitative variables can be assessed only in discrete steps even if the steps are very close together)
- Metric variables
- Ungrouped variables

### 2.2.5 Criticisms of Stevens's Schema

Most textbooks and common practice use the scale types Stevens proposed as part of the shared language of behavioral sciences. However, there may be pitfalls in accepting some of the details of the schema, and other classification systems (e.g., Mosteller & Tukey, 1977) of scale types have been proposed. Velleman and Wilkinson (1993) have provided an interesting history of many of the critiques of Stevens's notions of scale types. For example, some (e.g., Guttman, 1977; Lord, 1953a) have forcefully argued that the kinds of mathematical operations we perform on our data depend more on the sorts of questions that we are asking than on the particular level of the scale that best describes the data (but see Scholten & Borsboom, 2009). The approach to Stevens's scales that we have outlined should therefore be treated as a good starting point for understanding some basics of the scale types and implications for the sorts of data analysis that are appropriate to each.

## 2.3 Independent Variables, Dependent Variables, and Covariates

The concept of a variable is so central to research design, measurement, and statistical analysis that we find it applied in several different contexts. Especially in multivariate analyses, variables can play different roles in different analyses. Sometimes, variables can even assume multiple roles within a single analysis (e.g., as described in Chapters 6A, 12A, and 13A, a mediator variable in a path analysis is simultaneously a predicted/dependent variable in one portion of the analysis and a predictor/independent variable in another portion of the analysis). We therefore encourage readers to think of the variables in an analysis in this way—as entities specified by researchers to play their roles in a particular analysis, one role in this analysis, perhaps a second role in another analysis, perhaps multiple roles in some other analysis. The following sections present some of these different roles.



### 2.3.1 Independent Variables

In the prototypical experimental study, the independent variable represents the manipulation of the researchers. In a simple sense, it represents the treatment effect (what the researchers manipulate, vary, administer, etc.) contrasted with a control condition. Some of its features are as follows:

- It could have only two levels (e.g., control and experimental), but it could easily have three (e.g., control, placebo, and experimental) or more.
- It is only a single entity or continuum no matter how many levels represent it.
- In an experimental context, it is often, but not always, based on qualitative measurement; in a prediction (regression) context, it is almost always based on quantitative measurement.

Variables are also specifically identified as independent variables in the analysis of data. In a regression analysis, for example, the variables used as the predictors are the independent variables.

### 2.3.2 Dependent Variables

In the prototypical experiment, the dependent variable represents the outcome measure (response or performance) of the participants that is measured by the researchers. In a correlation/prediction design, all the measures can be thought of as dependent variables because researchers do not actively intervene by manipulating any variables (although we can also just think of them as measured variables). In general, dependent variables may be assessed on any scale of measurement. For the types of designs that we cover in this book, the dependent variables are almost always measured on one of the quantitative measurement scales.

Variables are also specifically identified as dependent variables in the analysis of data. In an ANOVA, for example, it is the variance of the dependent variable that is to be explained by the independent variables in the study. It is the variable representing the behavior of the participants. That is, when we say, “The mean for females was 3.52,” what we are really saying is, “The mean value on the dependent variable for females was 3.52.” As another example, in multiple regression analysis, the criterion variable—the variable being predicted by the independent variables—is known as the dependent variable.

### 2.3.3 Covariates

A covariate is a variable that either actually or potentially correlates (covaries) with a dependent variable. It is important to recognize the possible influence of a covariate because, without taking it into account, the relationship we observe between two dependent variables or between a dependent variable and an independent variable may lead us to an incorrect conclusion. That is, we would ordinarily infer from the existence of a relationship between two variables that they are directly associated. But that association may be mediated or caused by a third variable—the covariate.

A classic but simplified example is the relatively strong correlation between ice cream sales and crime rate. Higher crime rates are associated with greater quantities of ice cream being sold. Yes, the two variables are correlated; conceptually, however, they are not directly but only coincidentally associated. What mediates this relationship is the weather or the season of the year. For a variety of reasons, certain types of crimes are more likely to occur—or are facilitated by—the warmer weather during the summer months. Presumably, these crimes would take place whether or not ice cream was