**Social Science Research Methods  
Content Analysis Exercise**

*Instructions for professors:**The purpose of this exercise is for students to practice doing a content analysis project from beginning to end, but in a quick and fun way. Find a data source appropriate for content analysis; it is best if that source can be shared in real-time so that the activity can be done together in class. I use a film of commercials such as “London International Awards: World's Best Commercials[[1]](#footnote-1).”*

*Watch the first five commercials together, so that students can start to think about what they want to examine. Then have students fill out the first part of the worksheet (questions 1-4) and discuss each element as a class. Then watch 30 more commercials and have students each code for their own projects.*

*Afterward, have students follow the instructions to do work on their own. When all analysis has been completed, the class can discuss together both the questions and findings as well as what the students learned from doing this type of data collection and analysis.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What might be sociologically interesting about award-winning international commercials? Why?
2. Articulate this interest in a research question (researchable with content analysis). State a hypothesis.
3. Identify several key variables (the dependent variable, the key independent variable(s), and at least two control variables—up to six total):
4. Define these variables and insert them into your coding sheet (both attached).

**Variable Attributes**Define your variables on this page. An example is provided.

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| **Name** | **Label** | **Values** | **Level of Measurement** |
| Ex. ANIMA | Commercial has animation | 1. Not animated 2. Partially Animated 3. Animated | Ordinal |
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**Coding Sheet**

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1. Enter your data into an Excel or SPSS spreadsheet.
2. Using Excel or SPSS, do the following. On a separate sheet of paper, describe your findings for each and attach your output.
   1. Use at least two appropriate measures of central tendency and/or dispersion to describe your data (each variable).
   2. Use appropriate measures of association (e.g. Gamma, Lambda, Pearson’s R, linear regression) to examine the strength of relationships between your variables.
   3. Use the appropriate tests of significance (e.g. Chi-Square, t-test, ANOVA) to determine statistical significance of these relationships.
3. Did you find evidence in support of you hypothesis?
4. What was surprising? What was not surprising?
5. If you wanted to pursue this issue further, how would you go about doing it (what research methods and with what kind of data)?
6. What did you learn from doing this “speed” content analysis? What would you do differently next time?

1. Note that for this particular film, the commercials are already sorted by award category. You can give students the award categories so they can avoid using these as variables. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)