**Hand Link 50 Cases**

*SOC 4881 – Population Studies Research Practicum*

**DUE**

*February 13*

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Complete this assignment on your own.

All of the data we will use this semester are based on linked records for children in the 1920 U.S. Census. Children in 1920 are located in the 1940 U.S. Census (where we can see their educational attainments, occupations, incomes, and marital statuses) and then in mortality records. Computers will do most of the linking, but it is crucial that you understand the data and how the linking works. So, you will link some cases by hand!

1. In class on Wednesday, January 30 I will show you how to hand link records using the resources at Ancestry.com.
2. Download the Excel file for this assignment from the “Individual Assignments” section of the course webpage.
3. Go to <https://www.ancestry.com/> and sign up. You’ll see a “Free Trial” on the top right. You should be able to sign up, do your assignment, and then cancel your membership before you get charged (so, don’t sign up until you are about to start on the assignment).
4. In the Excel file, each row tells you about a real child in the 1920 Census—including their name, approximate birth year, race, place of birth, place of residence in 1920, parents’ names, and siblings’ names. Before you start to search for a person, study up on them.
5. Start by searching for the person in the 1920 Census. Look at the image with the Census form. Do you agree with how names are spelled? With the birth year? Is there anything else you can learn about the person and their family?
6. Then, search for the person in the 1940 Census. Use what you know about them, their family, and their location in 1920 to find them in 1940. If you are not immediately successful, you might try searching for them in 1930 (which can help a lot if they moved or started their own household). If you find them in 1940, write down their educational attainment (e.g., “H2” or “C4”) in the spreadsheet. If you can’t find them, leave educational attainment blank.
7. Finally, search for the person in Social Security Death records. You may find it useful to recall the person’s place of birth, age, and parents’ names. If you find them in death records, write down their year of death in the spreadsheet. If you can find them, leave year if death blank.

Obviously, it’s unfortunate if you can’t find someone in both the 1940 Census and in mortality records. Those people can’t be included in any real analyses. But it is much, much worse to find the wrong person! Then, we get incorrect results. Unless you are highly confident that you have found the exact right person, always err on the side of not declaring a link! In many, many cases you will not be able to decide which one of multiple possible records are for the person you are looking for; in those cases, don’t guess … just give up. False links are deadly!

Work through all of the cases in the spreadsheet. It may go slowly at first, but you’ll get faster at it.

When you are done, upload the spreadsheet to Canvas.

**GRADING**

This assignment is worth 10 points.

Your score will not depend on exactly how many records you link, or even if you get the same answers as I would. Instead, your score will be based on the degree to which you try. To earn all 10 points, get through all the cases in the spreadsheet and do your best to link the records. Be conservative about declaring links so as to avoid false links (and thus bad data).

You may not find exactly the same number of records as other people—but it should be close. Likewise, you may not always agree with others on which link is the right one— but you usually should.

Assignments turned in up to 48 hours late will receive half credit; those turned in beyond 48 hours late will not be accepted.