**Student Version**

**Title:** What drives policy experimentation is happening in the states?

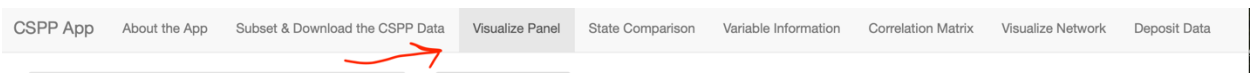
**Abstract:** The United States is a federal democracy and one of the supposed upsides of federalism is "policy experimentation" - that different states can pursue different policies. In this view states are "laboratories of Democracy." The purpose of this assignment is for students to see what factors drive policy experimentation in the states? Is policy experimentation driven by political ideology? partisanship? demographic factors? or some other factors? In this assignment students will look at correlations between variables measuring policy experimentation in the states and variables for state level measures of ideology, partisanship and demographics along with others. Although correlation is not causation the purpose of the assignment is for students to see what factors may influence which states pursue what types of public policies and set them up to further study those relationships

**Individual or Group Project:** This project can be done by individual students or pairs of students

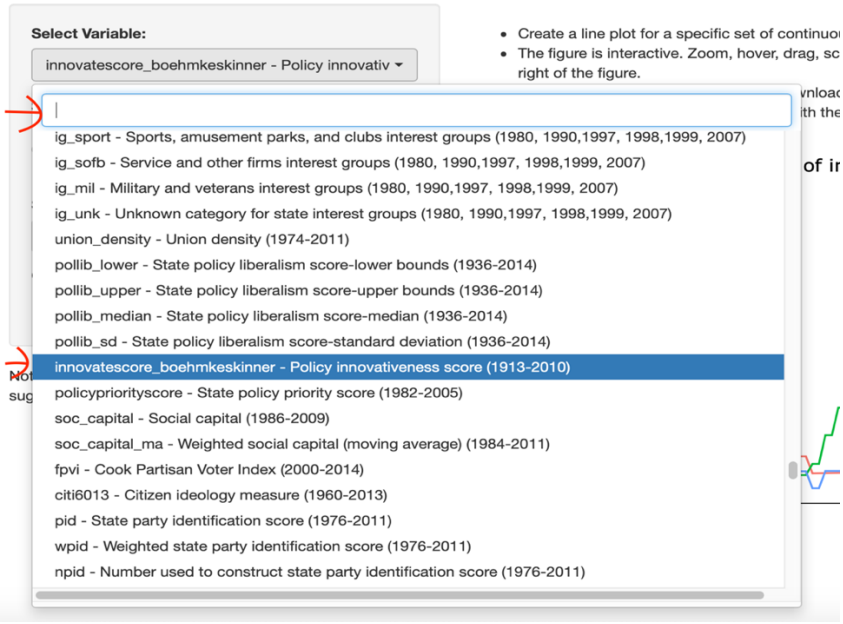
**Data:** students will use the Correlates of State Policy App https://cspp.ippsr.msu.edu/cssp/ and the State Politics Dataset Codebook (see Supplemental Material)

**Procedures:** This project will take place in conjunction with the section on Federalism (which is discussed as part of American Politics I). If the project is done in pairs, students will be paired off. From here the assignment will proceed in 3 steps:

**1) The first step** is to get a sense of how much policy experimentation there is in the 50 states overall. There are two main variables in the dataset that measure policy experimentation. The first is *innovatescore_boehmkeskinner* otherwise known as the "policy innovativeness score". This variable measures how fast states adopt policies based on 180 policies passed at the state level from 1913-2010. Higher scores in this scale mean the state is more innovative (in other words a state with a high innovativeness score will adopt a policy faster than a state with a low score). The other variable measuring policy innovativeness is *policyprioritysscore* which is also known as the "State policy priority score" which is "a yearly score, from 1982-2005, for each state which summarizes the degree to which that state's governmental spending is devoted to policies that provide collective goods (e.g., education and highways) rather than particularized benefits (e.g., health care and welfare)". With this variable higher scores refer to states that spend more on collective goods and lower scores are those states that spend more on particularized benefits. If students want to read more about these variables please refer to the State Politics Dataset Codebook. Students should choose one of these two variables to use as their measure of policy innovativeness in the 50 states. Once they have chosen their policy innovativeness variable then students should create a map using that variable that shows the geographic variation in policy innovativeness. To create the map, students should select the Visualizing Panel tab (see below)

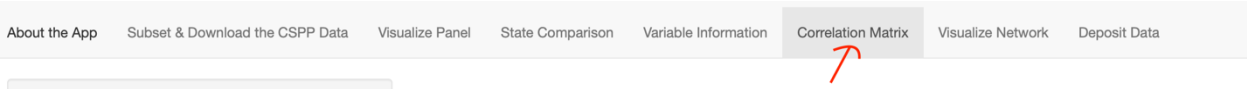


From there you can search for the variable you have chosen:

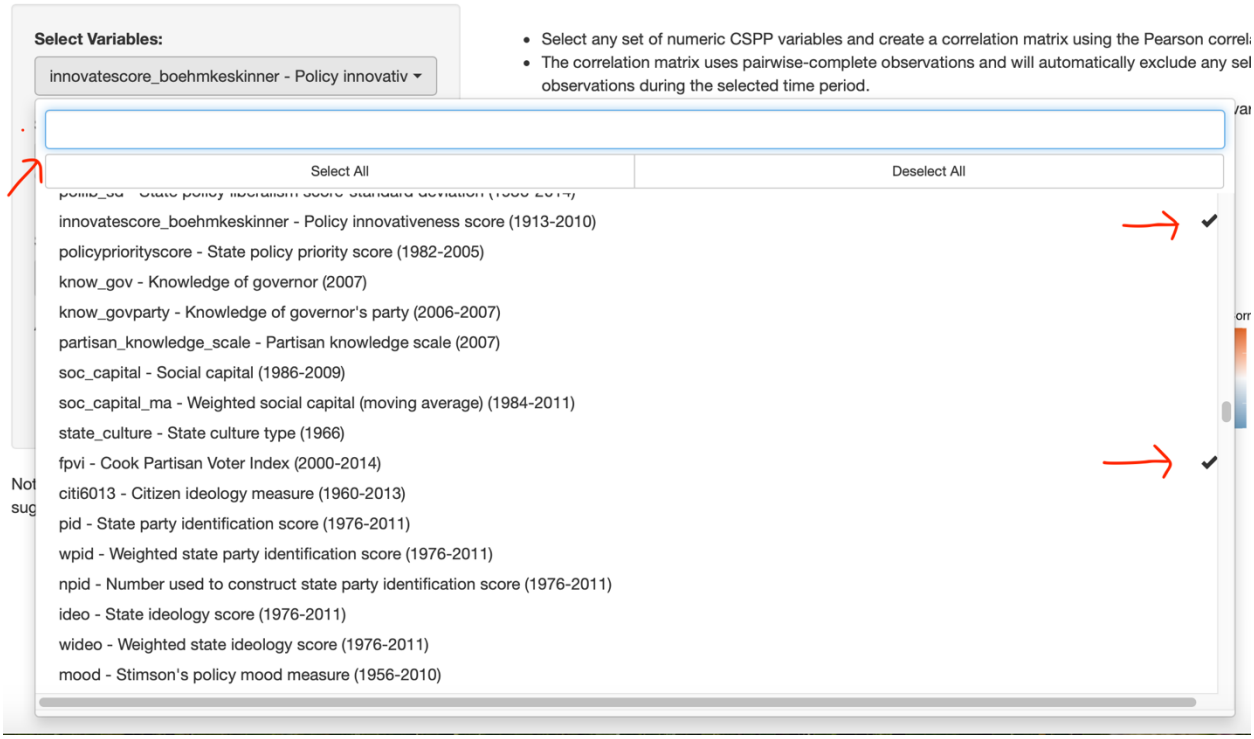



Once you find the variable you are searching for make sure the "Create Static Map" tab is selected and then download the map you created to include in your assignment. Also make note of the scale of the map and they year range of the variable you selected, understanding what these mean is essential for accurately completing the assignment.

**2) The second step**. The map created in step one shows students the overall distribution of policy experimentation across the U.S. In step two students will see how ideology, partisanship, demographics, and other policy views may influence how innovative a state is. To do this students will create a correlation matrix. To create the correlation matrix, select the Correlation Matrix tab.




Next, to create the correlation matrix students will need to input five variables. The first is the policy innovative variable that they used to create the map in step 1. The second variable should be an ideological variable, the third should be a partisan variable, the fourth a specific policy opinion variable, and the final one should be a demographic variable. To find the specific variables in these categories to choose from and what those variable measure see the attached document to this assignment titled State Politics Dataset Codebook. When you see the check mark next to the variable it means the variable is selected (see below).

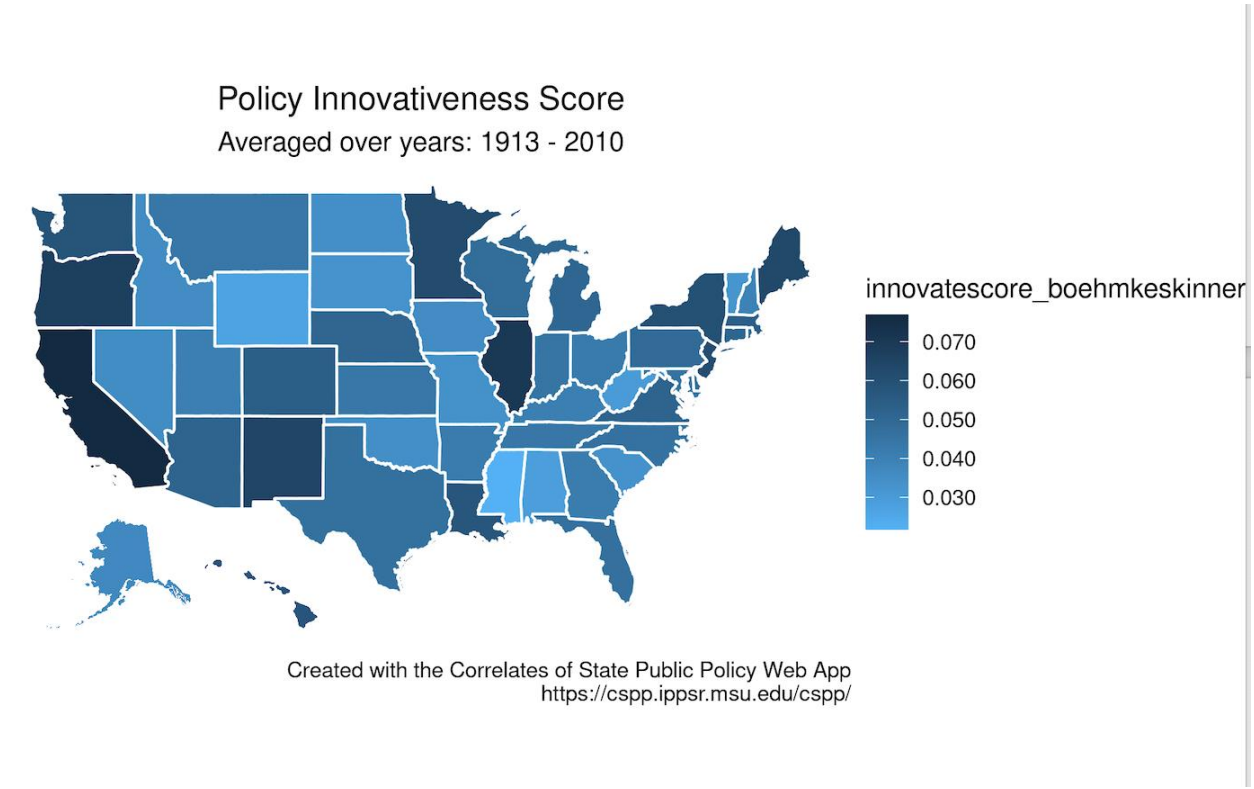



Once you have selected the variables the correlation matrix will automatically be created. For this matrix we will include all the states so you do not have to select any specific states. Note that the correlation matrix reports the Pearson Correlation Coefficient which ranges from -1 to 1. -1 would indicate a perfect negative correlation between the variables while 1 indicates a perfect positive relationship. A Pearson correlation coefficient of 0 indicates no relationship between the variables. The number in the middle of each block in the matrix is the correlation coefficient and since there are 5 variables in this matrix there will be 10 coefficients produced. You can download the graphic to include in your assignment as you did above with the other graphics created for this assignment.

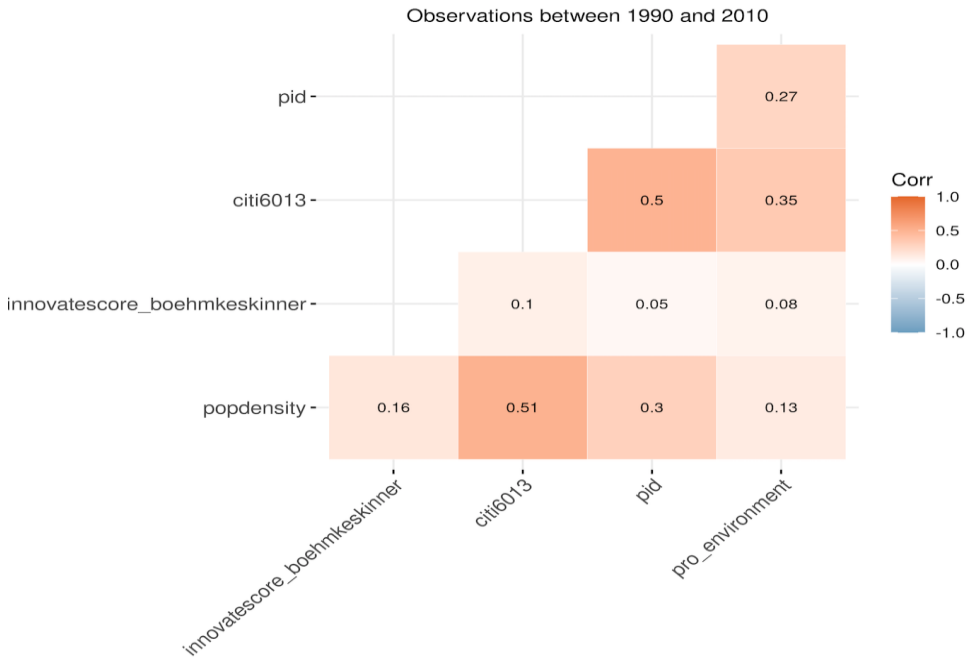
**3) Step 3**. The last step in the assignment is to write up the results of your analysis. You must include the map created in step 1 and the correlation matrix created in step 2 in the assignment. In the written part of the assignment students must describe the distribution of policy innovativeness across the U.S. they see in the map they produced. A couple of questions to help are – what state appears to be the most innovative? What one appears the least? Are there any regional variations? Overall, does it seem like there are large differences across the state or rather small differences? Students are also required to explain the correlation matrix they created in step 2. Some questions to consider: what variables have the strongest correlations? Which ones have the lowest? What factors correlate strongest with policy innovation and how strong is the correlation? Finally, students should conclude the assignment with a reflection on how innovative the states are? Is it true that the states represent "laboratories of democracy" or is there a a lot of uniformity in policies across the states?

**Example:**

Example of Map created in step 1




Example of Correlations Matrix creates in step 2



**Duration:** 1 class period

**Deliverables and evaluation:** Students will submit a short-written paper answering the specific questions address above. Evaluation of the paper is done by using a rubric which includes scoring for three components: content, organization, and writing style.

**Supplemental Material:** The State Politics Dataset Codebook attached to this assignment describes the variables that will be used in the analysis,