POL 51: Casual Claims and Variables

Please answer the following questions. Devote no more than one to two type-written
paragraphs to each question. This assignment is due Tuesday, Oct. 16 in class. No late
assignments will be accepted.

The following claims are made. Please evaluate the claim’s veracity and explain whether
or not there may be antecedent, intervening, or lurker variables involved in the claim.

1. Operation Gatekeeper directly led to an increase in the in-flows of undocumented
migrants.
2. Countries that are highly democratic never go to war with other highly democratic
countries. Therefore, level-of-democracy is causally related to the probability of
going to war.
3. People who are more highly educated tend to vote at higher rates than when
compared to people who are less highly educated. Therefore, we conclude that
education is directly related to voting turnout.

Evaluate the following scenario. How would you interpret these data and the
relationship between gender and hiring practices?

4. Suppose a company seeks to expand. It solicits applications for 299 positions, 70
of which require extensive computer skills (Job A) and 229 of which require no
special training (Job B). Suppose for Job A, 200 males and 200 females apply. Of
this group, 15 percent of the males are hired and 20 percent of the females are
hired. Suppose for Job B, 300 males apply and 70 females apply. Among the
males, 60 percent are hired and among the females, 70 percent are hired.

A government official notes that because the denial rate (the percentage of people
who are not hired) is higher among women compared to men, there is evidence of
gender discrimination in the company’s hiring practices.

A company official balks at this claim noting that for both Jobs A and B, the
percentage of women who were hired is greater than the percentage of men.

Evaluate the following claim. What are the problems with the claim made in the second
sentence?

5. High income inequality in a state is positively correlated with Democratic vote
share (i.e. the percentage of votes won by Democratic candidates compared to
Republican candidates) and negatively correlated with voter turnout. Since the
Democrats do so well in these states compared to Republicans, it must be the case
that elite rich individuals as well as comparatively poor individuals are highly
responsive to Democratic campaigns and less responsive to Republicans.