
Example Assignment #2: Methodology, Part I

Hypothesis: State your hypothesis (hypotheses) here. If you have more than one hypothesis, please number them (i.e., Hypothesis₁, Hypothesis₂, Hypothesis₃, and so on).

I. Research Design

- A. Quasi-Experimental: Ex post facto control group, post-test only design
1. Ethical, legal, and feasibility constraints preclude the use of a true experiment approach.
 2. The nature of the study is based upon documentary research of an existing program.

B. Groups

1. The research sample will consist of those juveniles residing within a specific county that employs the use of a domestic and family violence court.
2. The comparison sample will consist of those juveniles residing in a specific county that only utilizes a general jurisdiction court.

X _____ O₁ *Research Sample* (e.g., experimental)

_____ O₁ *Comparison Sample* (e.g., control)

C. Random Assignment

1. The quasi-experimental nature of the study design does not allow for the use of random assignment.

D. Matching

1. In lieu of random assignment, aggregate matching will be employed based upon a carefully chosen set of demographic characteristics.
2. Research and comparison sample characteristics
 - a. Profiles of general demographic characteristics for Santa Clara County and Contra Costa County will be obtained from data gathered for the year 2000 by the U.S. Census Bureau. Data from the year 2000 will be utilized as it falls within the research time frame of September 1999 through August 2003.
 - b. In light of the difference in population sizes (i.e., Santa Clara County having a larger population than Contra Costa County), the percentages for certain characteristics will be reviewed and compared for aggregate matching purposes.
 - c. The characteristics that will be reviewed and compared are:
 - 1) Gender
 - 2) Percentage of those ranging in age from 10 to 14 years
 - 3) Percentage of those ranging in age from 15 to 19 years
 - 4) Race
 - 5) Percentage of households with own child under 18 years
 - 6) Percentage of households with other relative under 18 years

- 7) Percentage of Family households with own children under 18 years
- 8) Percentage of Married-couple family households with own children under 18 years
- 9) Percentage of Female householders (no husband present) with own children under 18 years

E. Data collection instrument(s)

1. No pre-test will be utilized due to the protocol for subject selection. Only closed cases will be used, and selection for inclusion in the present study will be based upon first offense of either a domestic or family violence incident.
2. A post-test will be used for data collection purposes, inclusive of all study variables.
3. The data collection instrument will be a pre-coded, coding form which will be utilized by the research assistants to gather all relevant study data.

F. Causal (internal) validity

1. Selection bias: Although selection may be a threat to the internal validity of the present study, the use of aggregate matching will help to ameliorate research and comparison group differences.
2. Endogenous change: Due to the fact that subjects are adolescents, the possibility of endogenous change is present given the population; however, little can be done to prevent endogenous change.

G. Generalizability (external validity)

1. Although the findings from the present study may not have a high level of generalizability, the data gathered will later be merged with data collected from other regions of the United States, thus creating a national sample.

H. Ethical issues

1. The primary ethical issue for the present study will be maintaining anonymity of sensitive information. In order to accomplish this: (1) files will only be coded on the premises; (2) subjects will not be identified by name on the coding forms; and (3) research assistants will be properly and thoroughly trained.

II. Variables

A. Independent, dependent and back ground variable information

1. Independent variable: Juvenile delinquency court (categorical)
 - a. Level 1: General jurisdiction juvenile court
 - b. Level 2: Specialized juvenile domestic and family violence court
2. Background variables
 - a. Gender (categorical)
 - 1) Male
 - 2) Female

- b. Ethnicity (categorical)
 - 1) Caucasian
 - 2) African American
 - 3) Hispanic
 - 4) Asian
 - 5) Other
 - c. Age (continuous)
3. Dependent variable: Level of recidivism (continuous)
- a. Number of probation violations related to a prior juvenile domestic or family violence offense
 - b. Number of probation revocations related to a prior juvenile domestic or family violence offense
 - c. Number of recidivist arrests for juvenile domestic or family violence offenses
- B. Measurement Validity and Reliability of the Dependent Variable
- 1. The validity of the dependent variable will be determined via construct and concurrent methods.
 - a. With respect to construct validity, independent analysis will be performed with regard to whether the measure logically fits with the proposed definition of recidivism.
 - b. With respect to concurrent validity, a comparison with other existing measures of recidivism will be performed on the basis items contained within the measure.
 - 2. The reliability of the dependent variable will be tested via the inter-rater method.
 - a. Research assistants responsible for filling out coding forms will all code a sub-sample of five cases from each county
 - b. Upon completion, answers provided by the research assistants will be compared to ensure that consistency in data extraction is maintained amongst all coders