
Example Assignment #3: Methodology, Part II

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

III. Sample

- A. The population of interest is juvenile offenders arrested for domestic and/or family violence offenses between September of 1999 and August of 2003 in two Northern California counties, whose cases were adjudicated, and dispositions were pronounced.
 - 1. The sampling frame will consist of those cases for which probation case files and/or court case files can be located, estimated to be approximately 90% (n = 400).
- B. The total sample (N = 200) will be obtained from Northern California via the use of a stratified random sampling method, inclusive of cases from domestic and family violence courts representative of the comparison groups.
 - 1. Groups
 - a. The research sample (n = 100) will consist of cases adjudicated within Santa Clara County, which employs a specialized domestic and family violence court for juvenile offenders
 - b. The comparison sample (n = 100) will consist of cases adjudicated within Contra Costa County, which does not employ a specialized domestic and family violence court for juvenile offenders (i.e., general jurisdiction).
- C. Sampling Method: Stratified random sample
 - 1. A stratified random sample will be utilized, drawing 50% from the sampling frame (N = 200).
 - a. Upon obtaining lists of relevant adjudicated cases, the study sample will be stratified on the basis of court type.
 - b. While reviewing case files, the court type will be identified and documented.
 - c. Upon completion, juvenile offender cases will be classified as either part of the research sample or the comparison sample.
- D. The present study is focused on the western geographic region of a larger national study. Upon completion of all major geographic regional studies, the data will be aggregated into a national sample, thus achieving a high level of external validity.

IV. Recruitment of Subjects and Obtaining Informed Consent

- A. As the present study will utilize document analysis, the data needed will be obtained from juvenile domestic and family violence probation case files and/or court records in Santa Clara and Contra Costa counties.
- B. Standing orders from the presiding judges in Santa Clara and Contra Costa counties will be obtained to secure access to relevant probation and/or court files to be reviewed
- C. The presiding judges in Santa Clara and Contra Costa counties will be provided with a proposal detailing the following:
 - 1. The purpose of the study (i.e., importance)

- a. Importance of evaluating the efficacy of a specialized court in light of the cost and manpower necessary to institute and run such a court
- b. Importance of comparing the efficacy of a specialized court with that of a comparable county that does not utilize such a court in terms of recidivism
- c. The research design
- d. The methodology to be employed
- e. Methods to ensure anonymity regarding the names of the juvenile offenders' cases to be reviewed
 - 1) Subjects will be assigned study ID numbers
 - 2) Coding forms will not contain names of subjects
 - 3) Coding forms will further be identified only by petition and probation numbers
- f. Assurance that only closed cases will be utilized, so as to not interfere with any ongoing cases, and to obtain relevant information regarding dispositions and outcomes
- g. Assurance that research assistants will be held to the highest level of ethics regarding:
 - 1) Following proper procedures for obtaining case files to be reviewed
 - 2) Employing due diligence in recording data on the coding forms
 - 3) Abstaining from ever revealing the names of juvenile participants to unauthorized individuals
 - 4) Maintaining detailed and accurate records of data collection progress, potential issues that arise, and the solutions employed
- h. The presiding judges and related-court staff will be provided with assurances in writing stating that:
 - 1) All questions and concerns will be addressed in a timely manner
 - 2) Data collection will interfere as little as possible with the daily routines of court-related staff
- i. The presiding judges and related-court staff will be provided with a detailed report following the conclusion of the study. The report will provide them with an analysis of how the two counties differ or do not on levels of recidivism
 - 1) Should it be determined that the outcomes for Santa Clara County are more favorable than for that of Contra Costa County, that information may be instrumental in obtaining future funding for a specialized juvenile domestic and family court. In addition, it may provide Contra Costa County, or other counties that do not presently operate such a specialized court, to consider implementing one

- 2) Should it be determined that the outcomes for Santa Clara County are not significantly better than that of Contra Costa County, the key administrators for Santa Clara County may utilize the information to re-evaluate whether or not to continue with such a specialized court
 - j. The respective District Attorney's offices will be provided with a copy of the standing order issued by the presiding juvenile court judges, and the proposal for the present study in order to obtain printouts of existing adult criminal records corresponding to the juvenile cases reviewed
2. Response Rate and Attrition
- a. The research design for the present study is quasi-experimental in nature, and will be conducted via document analysis.
 - 1) Actual human subjects will not be interviewed or provided with surveys to complete. As such, response rate as it pertains to the present study, is not a factor.
 - 2) It is anticipated that attrition in the case of the present study will only potentially occur if a needed probation or court file cannot be located, or if the probation or court file does not contain sufficient information to properly fill out the coding form.