
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. Methodology

A. *Sample*

1. Describe how you plan to obtain your 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.
 - b. The sampling frame will consist of those cases for which probation case files and/or court case files can be located, approximately 90% ($n = 400$).
 - c. A stratified random sample will be utilized, drawing 50% from the sampling frame ($n = 200$). Upon obtaining lists of relevant adjudicated cases, the study sample will be stratified on the basis of court type.
 - d. The total sample will be obtained from Northern California
 - 1) 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
 - 2) 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).
2. Recruitment of subjects and obtaining their informed consent:
 - a. 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
 - b. 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

- 2) The research design
- 3) The methodology to be employed
- 4) Methods to ensure anonymity regarding the names of the juvenile offenders' cases to be reviewed
 - a) Subjects will be assigned study ID numbers
 - b) Coding forms will not contain names of subjects
 - c) Coding forms will further be identified only by petition and probation numbers
- 5) 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
- 6) Assurance that research assistants will be held to the highest level of ethics regarding:
 - a) Following proper procedures for obtaining case files to be reviewed
 - b) Employing due diligence in recording data on the coding forms
 - c) Abstaining from ever revealing the names of juvenile participants to unauthorized individuals
 - d) Maintaining detailed and accurate records of data collection progress, potential issues that arise, and the solutions employed
- c. 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
- d. 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

- e. 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
- f. Response Rate and Attrition
 - 1) The research design for the present study is quasi-experimental in nature, and will be conducted via document analysis.
 - a) Actual human subjects will not be interviewed or provided with surveys to complete
 - b) 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

3. Procedure:

- a. The method of data collection for the present study, with regard to the juvenile data, will be via document analysis of juvenile domestic and/or family violence probation or court case files from Santa Clara and Contra Costa counties.
- b. A coding form will be developed that will capture the data relevant to the demographic, independent, dependent, and background variables.
- c. Research assistants will be responsible for providing their own transportation; however, research grant funds will be used for reimbursement purposes based upon reported miles each month.
- d. Research assistants will be responsible for documenting time spent reviewing files each day a site is visited, and will submit time sheets each month. Research grant funds will be used for stipend purposes based on reported work hours each month.
- e. Probation and/or court case files will be reviewed on-site at Juvenile Probation Offices in both Santa Clara County and Contra Costa County by trained graduate students working as research assistants on the project.
- f. Prior to beginning data collection, research assistants will be required to meet with the Principal Investigator (PI) for a training session which will cover: (1) proper procedures for accessing and reviewing files, (2) a review of study variables, (3) documentation of data, (4) tracking of data collection progress, (5) submission of data, and (6) documentation and submission of travel and work time.
- g. Data collection will take place over the course of 2 years, consisting of multiple site visits until all relevant files have been reviewed.

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[Date of submission]

- h. Each month, data will be transmitted electronically to the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) in Williamsburg, Virginia for data cleaning and data entry. Following the completion of all data collection, the data will be analyzed by a research assistant at NCSC and in Santa Clara County (i.e., a graduate student at San Jose State University, San Jose, California).
- i. Following the collection of all juvenile data, adult criminal records (i.e. printed reports) corresponding to the juvenile cases will be reviewed to document adult recidivist offenses. The same data submission procedures will be followed as described for the submission of juvenile data to NCSC.
- j. The data for each of the variables will be collected in the following manner:
 - 1) Demographic Variables
 - a) Date of birth
 - (1) A place will be provided on the coding form for recording the juvenile's date of birth in the mo/dd/yy format
 - (2) Date of birth will be obtained from official documentation within the probation or court files
 - b) Ethnicity/Race
 - (1) Check boxes corresponding to following ethnicities/races will be provided on the coding form
 - (a) African American
 - (b) American Indian
 - (c) Asian
 - (d) Caucasian
 - (e) Hispanic
 - (f) Pacific Islander
 - (g) Multi-racial
 - (h) Other (with a line to specify)
 - (2) Ethnicity/Race will be obtained from official police reports within the probation or court files and/or other official documentation specifying such information
 - (3) Ethnicity/Race will be measured at the nominal level
 - c) Gender
 - (1) Check boxes corresponding to either Male or Female will be provided on the coding form

- (2) Gender will be obtained from official police reports within the probation or court files and/or other official documentation specifying such information
- (3) Gender will be measured at the nominal level
- d) Age at the time of the offense
 - (1) A place will be provided on the coding form for recording the age of the juvenile at the time of the offense
 - (2) Age at the time of the offense will be obtained from official police reports within the probation or court files and/or other official documentation specifying such information
 - (3) Age at the time of the offense will be measured at the ratio level
- e) Living situation
 - (1) Check boxes will be provided on the coding form corresponding to answers of “yes”, “no”, “don’t know”, and “not applicable” for the following living situations
 - (a) There is no information
 - (b) Living at home?
 - (c) Living with both mother and father?
 - (d) If yes to living with both mother and father, is mother a stepmother?
 - (e) If yes to living with both mother and father, is father a stepfather?
 - (f) Living with mother only?
 - (g) If yes to living with mother only, does mother live with a cohabitating partner
 - (h) Living with father only?
 - (i) If yes to living father only, does father live with a cohabitating partner?
 - (j) Are there other primary caretakers?
 - (k) If yes to other primary caretakers, are the caretakers: (check boxes will be provided with options)
 - (2) Living situation will be measured at the nominal level

- 2) Independent Variable: Juvenile delinquency court
 - a) As Santa Clara County (SC) corresponds with a specialized juvenile domestic and family violence court, and Contra Costa County (CC) corresponds with a general jurisdiction juvenile court, check boxes will be provided on the coding form with the options of either SS or CC.
 - b) The independent variable will be measured at the nominal level (i.e., categorical)
 - c) Research assistants will check the appropriate box depending on which county they are collecting data
- 3) Dependent Variable: Level of recidivism
 - a) To measure the dependent variable, data will be collected for six questions pertaining to juvenile recidivism and adult recidivism
 - (1) Number of probation violations related to a prior juvenile domestic or family violence offense
 - (2) Number of probation revocations related to a prior juvenile domestic or family violence offense
 - (3) Number of recidivist arrests for juvenile domestic or family violence offenses
 - (4) Number of convictions for juvenile domestic or family violence offenses
 - (5) Number of adult arrests for domestic or family violence offenses
 - (6) Number of adult convictions for domestic or family violence offenses
 - b) Each of the questions related to the dependent variable will be measured at the ratio level (i.e., the actual number)
 - c) Research assistants will count and record the actual number of occurrences for each of the six questions related to the dependent variable
- 4) Background Variables
 - a) Probation
 - (1) Check boxes will be provided on the coding form with the options of either Informal or Formal
 - (2) The probation variable will be measured at the nominal level

- (3) Research assistants will check the appropriate box based upon official documentation contained within the probation or court file
 - b) Out-of-Home Placement
 - (1) Check boxes corresponding to the following out-of-home placement options will be provided on the coding forms
 - (a) Group home
 - (b) Juvenile hall
 - (c) County ranch
 - (d) CYA camp
 - (e) CYA institution
 - (f) Foster care
 - (g) Other
 - (h) Not applicable if placement not outside home
 - (2) The out-of-home placement variable will be measured at the nominal level
 - (3) Research assistants will check the appropriate box based upon official documentation contained within the probation or court file
 - c) Custody
 - (1) A place will be provided on the coding form to record the number of days the juvenile was held in custody
 - (2) Number of days held in custody will be obtained from official probation officer reports
 - (3) The custody variable will be measured at the ratio level
 - d) Programs
 - (1) Check boxes corresponding to “yes” or “no” will be provided on the coding form in answer to whether the juvenile was ordered to complete an anger management or domestic violence program
 - (2) The programs variable will be measured at the nominal level
 - (3) Research assistants will check the appropriate box based upon official documentation contained within the probation or court file

- e) Program Completion
 - (1) Check boxes corresponding to “yes”, “no”, “don’t know”, and “not applicable” will be provided on the coding forms in response whether the juvenile successfully completed any court ordered programs
 - (2) The program completion variable will be measured at the nominal level
 - (3) Research assistants will check the appropriate box based upon official documentation contained within the probation or court file
- f) Counseling
 - (1) Check boxes corresponding to “yes”, “no”, “don’t know”, and “not applicable” will be provided on the coding forms in response to whether the juvenile was ordered to participate in individual, group, or family counseling
 - (2) The counseling variable will be measured at the nominal level
 - (3) Research assistants will check the appropriate box based upon official documentation contained within the probation or court file