

Handout – Week 12: Small-N Research 2

Exercise 1: Selection issues

For each case study, answer the following questions:

- Does this study exhibit any selection issues?
 - If yes, identify the type of selection issue. (Selection on the Dependent Variable [DV], Selection on the Independent Variable [IV], or Selection Bias)
 - Provide a brief explanation of your identification of the selection issue and discuss the potential consequences of this issue.
1. In 2016, an MSNBC reporter attended a Trump rally in West Virginia. After interviewing 50 Trump supporters at the rally, the reporter observed that many expressed prejudiced views towards women and minorities. Based on these interviews, the reporter concluded that support for Trump is primarily driven by sexism and racism.
 2. To study the collapse of communist regimes in the late 1980s, a researcher focused on Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Romania in 1989. He conducted a case study for each country and concluded that communism collapsed due to bottom-up popular protests.

3. A researcher specializing in Middle Eastern politics sought to understand the shift in former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's foreign policy from a radical anti-American stance to a pro-US policy after 2000 during the war on terror. She posited that Gaddafi's policies in both periods were motivated by his desire to maintain power. Before the 2000s, an anti-US foreign policy helped him consolidate his regime by garnering public support, while post-2000s, cooperation with the US facilitated Libya's oil exports to the global market, enabling Gaddafi to bolster public support through social welfare.

4. The War on Drugs in the United States is a government initiative involving drug prohibition policies and military interventions, aimed at reducing illegal drug trade by imposing stiff penalties on drug offenders, focusing particularly on narcotics use and distribution. A study conducted in Baltimore interviewed both convicted drug dealers and those actively involved in drug dealing but not yet convicted. It revealed that the threat of conviction and subsequent imprisonment does not seem to deter those who are still free and un-convicted more than those who have already been convicted. From this case study, the researcher concluded that these harsh penalties do not effectively reduce drug crimes within communities.

Exercise 2: challenges of archival research

- Recall the common challenges of archival research discussed in the lectures.
 - Identify any potential challenges in each of the following studies.
 - Assuming the challenges you identified can be overcome is there any issue inherent in using the archival evidence they of their choice.
1. The 1919 Chicago race riot, a significant conflict between Black Americans and white Americans, began on July 27 and ended on August 3 in the South Side of Chicago, Illinois. This violent racial dispute resulted in the deaths of 38 individuals. A team of researchers from the University of Chicago is now delving into the dynamics of the conflict between European migrants and the incoming black migrant workers from the segregated South. Their primary resource is the archives of the 'Chicago Daily News.' However, they face a significant challenge: a considerable part of these archives, particularly those from 1915 to 1930, was destroyed in a fire in 1957.
 2. Researchers from the London School of Economics are exploring the impact of social policies in East Germany (GDR) during the Cold War, specifically from 1960 to 1985. They aim to understand how access to abortion under the socialist regime affected social stratification in post-communist Germany, particularly in the former GDR regions. However, they encounter a significant hurdle: many key government documents from this period are classified or heavily redacted due to the sensitive nature of the Cold War era and privacy concerns related to healthcare records. To circumvent this issue, the researchers plan to access alternative documents through the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, a left-leaning policy lobby group and educational institution in Germany affiliated with the socialist party Die Linke.

3. Dr. Maria Gonzalez, a sociologist from the University of Buenos Aires, is investigating the cultural and social impacts of the 1970s repressive policies in rural Argentina. The era is known for its political terror under military rule, leading to varied and strong opinions. Despite having access to a rich archive of diverse sources, including local newspapers, government documents, and interviews with policymakers and local residents, Dr. Gonzalez tends to give more weight to documents that support her theory suggesting that repression leads to poorer rural residents adopting more left-leaning political views. In addition, some records of secret police operations might have been destroyed during the fall of the Argentinian junta to avoid criminal prosecution of former military and police officers.

4. Dr. Nathaniel Smith, an anthropologist from Harvard University, is studying the cultural practices of the Karen people in Myanmar. The Karens have a complex and layered history, with extensive documentation available from British colonial officers, and Christian missionaries. This includes detailed field notes, diaries, photographs, and recordings. After decades of political upheaval, many of these documents have been scattered across the globe or lost. This has left gaps in the colonial archives, resulting in some villages and towns being less extensively covered than others. Dr. Smith's fascination with the more mystical and ceremonial aspects of Karen culture leads him to focus on these elements.

Exercise 3: Field Research

Imagine your group is part of a research team investigating the motivations behind individuals joining militia groups in the Midwest, focusing particularly on those in Michigan. The term 'militia movement' describes groups that are loosely organized and united by shared ideologies. These movements are increasingly prevalent in the United States, particularly in the Midwest. Michigan stands out for its significant history of militia activities. These groups typically function independently of official military or law enforcement agencies and embrace a range of activities, from self-defense training to political activism.

- a. As a come up with a theory that you think explain individual participation in the militia movement as well as what your group think is the most credible alternative explanation.
- b. Suppose you will carry out field research in Michigan. Think about what the three common techniques for data collection in field research are, and subcategories of each technique.

- c. Review each data collection technique, detailing the advantages and disadvantages of each. Then, select one or two techniques most appropriate for this study and explain how you would implement them in the research.
- d. Starting the Research: Outline the initial steps for commencing field research. Identify specific locations you intend to visit and potential groups or individuals you could contact for interviews. What steps would you take in your sampling or case selection process to minimize the selection biases discussed in Exercise 1, as well as other forms of researcher bias?
- e. Specific research strategy
- Interview Questions: If conducting interviews, what types of questions would you ask? In what order would you arrange these questions?
 - Observation Techniques: Discuss how you would use participant and non-participant observation techniques in your study. What are the potential benefits and challenges of each approach?

Some resources to get you started if you need more information:

Mapping Militants Project: <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants>

MilitiaWatch: <https://militia.watch/>

List of militia organizations in the United States:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_militia_organizations_in_the_United_States