

**Research Design  
Hilary Term  
2017**

From week 2 the group will split into two sections after the 10.00-11.00 lecture.

Group A	Group B
Everyone with <b>family name</b> A-L	Everyone with <b>family name</b> M-Z

Group A      11.00-12.00 Weeks: 2, 4, 6, 8  
                   12.00-13.00 Weeks: 3, 5, 7  
 Group B      11.00-12.00 Weeks: 3, 5, 7  
                   12.00-13.00 Weeks: 2, 4, 6, 8

Please always come to the seminar you are allocated to and I particular do not try to sneak into the 11.00-12.00 slot when you should be in the later class. If you do, it's not playing fair with your colleagues and I'll ask you to leave! You may however change groups by mutual agreement i.e. unilateral changes are not allowed but if somebody agrees to swap with you, that is OK.

**Week 1:** 2 Hour Lecture

**Week 2** 1 hour lecture, 1 hour seminar.

Is it useful to think of the randomized controlled trial as a “gold standard” for the discovery of causal effects?

J. J. Heckman and J. A. Smith (1995) ‘Assessing the Case for Social Experiments’, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 9, 2, 85-110.

D. Kaplan (2007) ‘Causal analysis in educational policy research’. Downloadable at:  
<http://itp.wceruw.org/Fall%2007%20seminar/Kaplancausalinference.v1a.pdf>

J. Worrall (2007) ‘Why there’s no cause to randomize’, *British Journal of the Philosophy of Science*, 58, 451-488.

**Week 3:** 1 hour lecture, 1 hour seminar

Does QCA solve the small N problem?

J. Goldthorpe (1997) ‘Current issues in comparative macrosociology’ in *Comparative social research*, 16, 1-26

S. Lieberman (1991) ‘Small N’s and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases’, *Social Forces*, 70, 2, 307-320.

S. Lieberson (1994) 'More on the uneasy case for using Mill-type methods in small-N comparative studies' *Social Forces*, 72, 4, 1225-1237.

B. Rihoux (2006) 'Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) and related systematic comparative methods' *International Sociology*, 21, 5, 679-706.

G Rohwer (2010) 'Qualitative comparative analysis: a discussion of interpretations', *European Sociological Review*,

**Week 4:** 1 hour lecture, 1 hour seminar.

Can a convincing case be made for the aspiration to discover the causes of effects? If not, why not? If so, what is that case?

Ni Bhrolcháin, M. and Dyson, T. (2007) 'On causation in demography: issues and illustrations' *Population and Development Review*, 33, 1, 1-36.

Lieberson, S. and Horwich, J. (2008) 'Implication analysis: a pragmatic proposal for linking theory and data in the social sciences', *Sociological Methodology*, 38, 1-50. See also the comments that follow the article.

**Week 5:** 1 hour lecture, 1 hour seminar

Questions for discussion:

1. Sherman and Berk (1984) draw the reader's attention to a number of threats to the internal and external validity of their field experiment. List the threats that they mention and discuss the seriousness of each threat to the integrity of the causal inferences that may be drawn from the study.

2. Are there any (inexpensive) ways in which Sherman and Berk's research design might be improved?

Sherman, L. and R. Berk (1984) 'The specific deterrent effects of arrests for domestic assault', *American Sociological Review*, 49, 261-272.

Berk, R., A. Campbell, R. Klap and B. Western (1992). 'The deterrent effect of arrest in incidents of domestic violence: A Bayesian analysis of four field experiments.' *American Sociological Review*, 57, 698-708.

**Week 6:** 1 hour lecture, 1 hour practical exercise.

For this exercise you are asked to imagine (suspend your disbelief) that you have been asked to advise a senior Ministry of Justice official on the case for introducing transitional payments to ex-offenders. In particular you have been asked to read the following four articles:

Berk, Richard A., Kenneth J. Lenihan, and Peter H. Rossi. Crime and Poverty: Some Experimental Evidence from Ex-Offenders. *ASR*. Vol.45. No.5. pp.766-786.

Zeisel, Hans. Disagreement over the Evaluation of a Controlled Experiment. *AJS*. Vol.88. No.2. pp.378-389.

Rossi, Peter H., Richard A. Berk and Kenneth J. Lenihan. Saying It Wrong with Figures: A Comment on Zeisel. *AJS* Vol.88. No.2. pp.390-393.

Zeisel, Hans. Hans Zeisel Concludes the Debate. *AJS*. Vol.88. No.2. pp.394-396.

The official you are liaising with confesses that he is bewildered by the content of these articles. Well qualified academic experts appear to disagree about what the results of an experimental study on recidivism show. Your task is, **on the basis of the evidence of these four articles alone**, to clarify the differences between the two sides of the debate **and answers the question**: does paying ex-offenders a transitional allowance reduce their probability of reoffending?

For the purposes of this exercise you can ignore the American context of the articles. You should concentrate only on the main intellectual issues at stake. For example whether there are 3 or 4 experimental conditions is not a **major** intellectual difference between the two sides. In the course of reaching your conclusion you will have to set out clearly why it is that the two sides seem to reach very different conclusions.

**Week 7:** 1 hour lecture, 1 hour seminar.

Is it possible to make meaningful comparisons of subjective phenomena?

Gary King; Christopher J.L. Murray; Joshua A. Salomon; and Ajay Tandon. "Enhancing the Validity and Cross-cultural Comparability of Measurement in Survey Research," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 4 (December, 2003), 567-584; reprinted, with printing errors corrected, Vol. 98, No. 1 (February, 2004): 191-207.

**Week 8:** 1 hour lecture, 1 hour seminar.

Come to class prepared to discuss the methodological strengths and weaknesses of the empirical work reported in the article.

L. F. Schwartzman (2007) 'Does Money Whiten? Intergenerational Changes in Racial Classification in Brazil', *American Sociological Review*, 72, 940-963.