The Basics

- Design Your Project
- Collect and Code the Data
- Analyze the Data
  - Summarize the Data
  - Make Inferences
Designing Research

- Research Questions
- Theories and their Observable Implications
- Rival Hypotheses
- Measurement

Two things to Keep in Mind

1. Dynamic process but fixed standards
2. Replication, replication, replication
Jurors who sat in forty-three South Carolina murder cases were randomly sampled with a goal of four juror interviews per case. The sample includes twenty-three cases resulting in sentences and twenty cases resulting in life sentences. The cases in the study consist of all South Carolina capital cases brought from enactment of the South Carolina Omnibus Criminal Justice Improvements Act of 1986 to when interviews were terminated in the summer of 1993. A total of 153 live interviews were completed by interviewers trained to work with the [fifty-one page] interview instrument. Jurors were interviewed after they had served, not before.

• What do the authors mean by “randomly sampled”? How did they obtain the random numbers? Was it a simple random sample with equal probability of selection, a stratified sample, or something else?

• How did they approach the jurors? Did they tell them that they were doing a study on juror responsibility? How many times was each juror contacted, and at what point did they give up? Were they contacted by telephone or in person? Did someone of the same sex and race contact each?

• What does “a goal of four juror interviews per case” mean? If they could not get four, how did they proceed? If more than four volunteered, where they all interviewed? Were the jurors who were ultimately contacted those who felt responsible for their decision and comfortable talking about it? What was the refusal rate?
Original: Jurors who sat in forty-three South Carolina murder cases were randomly sampled with a goal of four juror interviews per case. The sample includes twenty-three cases resulting in sentences and twenty cases resulting in life sentences. The cases in the study consist of all South Carolina capital cases brought from enactment of the South Carolina Omnibus Criminal Justice Improvements Act of 1986 to when interviews were terminated in the summer of 1993....A total of 153 live interviews were completed by interviewers trained to work with the [fifty-one page] interview instrument.... Jurors were interviewed after they had served, not before.

Revised: Jurors who sat in forty-three South Carolina murder cases were randomly sampled with a goal of four juror interviews per case. We began by contacting, in alphabetical order, all jurors in all South Carolina capital cases. We told them that we were conducting a study on whether jurors take responsibility for their decisions; we also told them that we wanted to interview them, with an eye toward completing a fifty-one page survey. If we received no response, we followed up three times. If a juror declined or did not respond, we went to the next juror on the list. We gathered 34 pieces of information from the public record on jurors who did not fill out our survey and performed an analysis that we report below indicating that those jurors we interviewed were similar (in all measurable respects) to those we did not interview.
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The Research Question

- Virtually all empirical research starts with a question you want to answer.

- But many questions are conceptual—that is, they are in a form that are difficult to answer empirically.
  
  - Can we predict judges’ votes in ideologically contested areas on the basis of the judges’ ideology?
  
  - Can we predict judges’ votes in 13 areas of the law on the basis of the political party of the President who appointed them?
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