

Methodology Pt. 1

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Methodology

Research Ethics

After years of questionable and harmful research studies conducted on humans, exacerbated by the Tuskegee study, laws were put into place to protect individuals involved in research studies. There are four components of ethical consideration, including voluntary participants and deception. Voluntary participation refers to the idea that a person must be involved in research of their own volition and without the use of coercion. They must also be aware that they are able to leave at any point in the study without repercussion, they are not obligated to see the study out to its conclusion. This is achieved through informed consent, where a participant is informed of the nature of the study and how they will be involved, and told of their rights as a participant, before they give their consent to the researchers to participate and collect their data to be studied. If this is not done, there is the potential that the participant does not know all that the study entails, in the case there is no deception, and that there is no harm occurring to participants. In cases where this is absent, like the Tuskegee trials, researchers are able to conduct experiments without regard to the participants' lives, as these studies left many men to suffer and die because they were not getting treated for the syphilis that the researchers were studying, only acting as guinea pigs for the researchers to expand knowledge. This is also important because those participating in the Tuskegee trials were not told what they were participating in, and so could not voluntarily participate.

Deception is when the researchers do not tell participants the true purpose of the study because their knowledge may influence their reactions and create false results. The use of deception in research studies is allowed, with conditions. When it is necessary for deception to

be present, researchers need to, after the study is complete, debrief the participants about the true purpose of the study and provide access to therapists if necessary. If deception is used, and participants are not debriefed, there may be an increased and unnecessary risk of harm. For example, in Milgram's obedience study, the participants believed they were actually shocking another person, in some cases to fatal degrees. This was necessary for accurate results on whether participants would continue shocking what they believed to be a real person, and if they were not debriefed afterwards they may continue to believe they severely harmed another, causing psychological harm.

Variables and Hypothesis

The independent variable (IV) in research studies deals with the variable being manipulated. There can be one or more IVs in a given study, and each IV can have multiple levels. The dependent variable (DV) in research studies deals with the results of the IV, or what is being manipulated. It is what results from what is being tested, and like the IV, a given research study can have multiple DVs. Another way to think of the relationship is cause and effect, where the IV causes an effect in the DV. An example of this is a study evaluating the effectiveness of a treatment on levels of anxiety. In this study, the variable being manipulated is the treatment given, and there can be multiple levels tested for this. The change in anxiety is affected by the treatment, and therefore is the DV.

The independent variable for the present study is biological sex, which will be operationalized by either male or female. The dependent variable for the present study is level of fear of being wrongfully convicted of sexual assault, which will be operationalized through a scale questionnaire.

It is important in studies to not only look at what is being manipulated, but also what is not being manipulated but that may also influence results. These are known as control variables. For our study, we have identified a few potential control variables, including race/ethnicity, religion, culture, age, and socioeconomic status (SES). The proposed study will evaluate whether sex influences the rate of fear of being wrongfully convicted of sexual assault. It is hypothesized that men will be more fearful of being wrongfully convicted of sexual assault compared to women.

Research Design

Time dimension refers to how many times the DV is tested at points in time. There are two levels for this, either testing once or more than once. A cross-sectional time dimension design involves research which is only tested at one point in time. A longitudinal time dimension design involves research tested over multiple points in time. This study will use a cross-sectional time dimension design as we are just interested in how an individual feels about the potential of being wrongfully convicted of sexual assault. We are not interested in the changes in individuals based on their fear of being wrongfully convicted of sexual assault, but rather asking how a person feels about being wrongfully convicted at that point in their lives.