Discussion (Whole Class): Experimental Design Considerations

Experimental designs attempt to limit the possible number of alternative extraneous influences (confounds) so that

what is observed as outcomes can be considered to be representative of a direct relationship between input (e.g., a

training experience) and output (knowledge and skills gained through the training). The gold standard for

experiments is random assignment to condition. However, in the real world we often can’t decide who does and does

not receive the training or intervention. There are constraints on whether an intervention can be withheld from

someone (such as those assigned to a control or no treatment/intervention group) if that person might be harmed by

not receiving it. Also, ethical standards safeguard informed consent, which limits most experimental designs to those

who volunteer, which then means we don’t know if the same outcomes would apply to those who would not volunteer

for such a program. Thus, much goes into designing and executing a true experiment for program evaluation, but as

long as you are following best practices and the conditions are right to carry it through, it is a strong approach to

effective program evaluation.

As before, this is another opportunity to think beyond the specifics of the RFP you may be working on for your team

project. Even if your RFP would not be appropriate for an experimental design, given the general topic (e.g., school

anti-bullying program), think about what kind of situation might exist for which an experimental design might be

applicable to evaluate program effectiveness or other outcomes of interest.

To prepare:

Review Chapter 11 from your course text listed in this week’s Learning Resources

Review at least one of the examples of program evaluation in this week’s Learning Resources.

By Day 3

Post your comprehensive response to each of the following:

Briefly restate the general nature of your team’s RFP’s program (e.g., school anti-bullying program).

How might you use an experimental design to test a question that would be relevant to your program evaluation

(e.g., compare an outcome for a group that received the program versus one that did not during the same time

period, especially if the participants are randomly assigned to be in the program/no program groups)? What is a

specific question you could address for your example?

Describe the specifics of your design for addressing this question. What is your independent variable? What might

be a viable dependent variable to answer the question? What hypothesis would you be testing for the proposed

evaluation?

What would be one method you might use to reduce threats to internal validity with this design?

Please copy and past the question with the answer and make sure to answer ALL the questions.

We are doing group project for program evaluation proposal I will send you the files that have the needed information

and you let me know ASAP if you have any question. also we have finished section 1&2 of the proposal let me know

if you need the files for those sections.

Here are the required reading that you need for the discussion and the reference page as well.

Required Readings

Course Text

Linfield, K. J., & Posavac, E. J. (2019). Program evaluation: Methods and case studies (9th ed.). London: Routledge.

Chapter 11, “Using Experiments to Evaluate Programs”

Articles

Tanner-Smith, E. E., Lipsey, M. W., & Wilson, D. B. (2016). Juvenile drug court effects on recidivism and drug use: A

systematic review and meta-analysis. Journal of Experimental Criminology, 12, 477–513. doi:10.1007/s11292-016-

9274-y

This article provides a very informative summary of the various evaluation designs that have been used by various

evaluators / researchers to study juvenile drug court outcomes. Further, it provides an example of how meta-analysis

may be used as another approach to program evaluation that combines results from various separate evaluations.

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Examples of Program Evaluations Using Experimental Designs

Choose at least one of the following three to review.

McCarthy, A. E., Young, J. F., Benas, J. S., & Gallop, R. J. (2018). School-related outcomes from randomized

controlled trial of adolescent depression prevention programs. Journal of Emotional & Behavioral Disorders, 26(3),

170–181.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NIH). (2009). The evaluation of the “Media-Smart Youth”

curriculum. Washington, DC: Author.

Zimmerman, M. A. (2017). Youth empowerment solutions: Evaluation of an after-school program to engage middle

school students in community change. Health Education & Behavior, 45(1), 20–31. doi:10.1177/1090198117710491

Required Media

Institute of Education Sciences (IES). (2016b, December 15). Module 1, Chapter 2: Randomized control trials [Video

file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\_0cy7CjZPwQ

Note: The approximate length of this media piece is 16 minutes.

MIT OpenCourseWare. (2010, March 17). Ses 2 | MIT Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab executive training

[Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?

v=a7sDTYmqdSY&index=2&list=PL99840E3D83A52240

Note: The approximate length of this media piece is 93 minutes.