

Name: _____

Student ID: _____

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO AT BOULDER
RESEARCH METHODS COMPREHENSIVE EXAM
SUMMER 2004

Please answer each of the following questions. Our recommended time allocations for each question are in parentheses, and we suggest that you read the entire exam before beginning.

1. Consent and ethics (45 minutes)

As part of a study of girls in the criminal justice system, you have obtained permission to interview inmates and administrators in a medium-security prison. You intend to collect qualitative data on the experiences of the girls before incarceration in various contexts of their lives – home, school, neighborhood, and in prison.

- 1a. Please prepare, based on the attached sample, the simple assent form for minors you will submit to the human research committee to obtain permission for your study if the girls you intend to interview will be 17 or under, or the consent form you will submit if your intended interviewers are 18 or older.
- 1b. You have obtained permission to carry out the study. In the course of interviewing inmates, one of the girls tells you she has been raped by a prison official. You have promised her complete confidentiality and she does not want you to reveal what she has told you. What do you do and why? Please remember, there is no single answer to this question.
- 1c. In the course of the study you ask girls about their drug use, within and outside prison. A year into the study, the administrator finds out that one of the guards has been selling drugs within the prison. She demands your information on drug use and threatens to have you arrested if you do not comply. What do you do and why?

2. You're the reviewer (45 minutes)

Imagine that you have been asked to review a manuscript for the journal *Social Problems*. The manuscript reports on survey research examining the effects of domestic violence on women's employability. The researchers surveyed 400 women in California, selecting 300 women from the state's population and 100 women identified through domestic violence support groups. Following are key descriptive statistics, provided by the researchers, for the sample:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Key Variables

	Mean Or Percentage
Age	32.3
Education	
Less than high school	17%
High school graduate	30%
Some college	22%
College graduate	31%
Employment status	
Employed full-time	65%
Employed part-time	20%
Unemployed	
Looking for work	7%
Not looking for work	8%
Violence	
No domestic violence experience	72%
Domestic violence experience	
Prosecuted	12%
Not prosecuted	16%

The authors go on to report multivariate models predicting employment status as a function of age and education, with a focus on the difference between women who have, and have not, experienced domestic violence.

As a reviewer, would you have any concerns about these analyses? Is there additional information you would require to be certain of the accuracy of these analyses and their ability to respond to the research objective?

3. Quantitative Interpretation (60 minutes)

Please note: some of your answers to this question will be written directly on this sheet, so please be certain to put your name at the top and to turn this in with your word-processed responses.

According to the contact hypothesis, feelings of racial antipathy are predicated on the extent to which individuals interact with members of different racial and ethnic groups. For example, the contact hypothesis predicts that whites who have regular social interactions with blacks in both public and private arenas will be less likely than whites with little to no contact with blacks to characterize blacks in generally negative terms. Using a sample of 1,000 non-Hispanic white adults (ages 18-65) a

researcher examines the contact hypothesis with a simple OLS regression model. Respondents are asked if they agree or disagree with the following five statements: (1) blacks are less intelligent than whites; (2) whites work harder than blacks; (3) most blacks are criminals; (4) I do not support interracial marriages; (5) I would never vote for a black president. Each response is coded (1) strongly disagree; (2) disagree; (3) agree; and (4) strongly agree. The dependent variable (Y), *traditional bigotry*, is measured by summing these responses across the five items. The independent variable (X), *interracial contact*, taps the frequency with which whites have contact with blacks in the following five areas: (1) in your family; (2) in your neighborhood; (3) at your place of work; (4) at stores; (5) at your church, temple, or place of worship. For each item, responses options ranged from (1) Never to (5) Very often. This variable is the sum of these five responses.

- 3a. In the description above, *traditional bigotry* is measured by summing the five responses. Suppose the researcher wanted to express this measure as the sum of standardized scores. In your own words, explain how the researcher might accomplish this.
- 3b. Suppose the researcher performs a simple OLS regression model where traditional bigotry (Y) is modeled as a function of interracial contact (X) and the researcher correctly decides to reject the null hypothesis. Complete the table below in a way that supports the Contact Hypothesis. In other words, create (i.e., just make them up) values for the intercept and slope and their corresponding standard errors that indicate support for the Contact Hypothesis. Be sure that the test statistic and probability estimates correspond with the parameter estimate and standard error that you specify. Both variables should be measured in their original (unstandardized) metric.

	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	Test Statistic t	Prob> t
Intercept				
Interracial Contact				

- 3c. Using the estimates from 3b above, please graph the relationship between interracial contact and traditional bigotry. Be sure to properly label the axes for the independent and dependent variable. You should also label the value of the Y-intercept. Last, please explain your graph in words.
- 3d. In ancillary analyses the researcher finds that the effect of interracial contact on traditional bigotry is significantly moderated by socioeconomic status. Specifically, she finds that poor persons not only express more traditionally bigotry compared to non-poor persons, but the effect of interracial contact is more pronounced among poorer respondents as well. Using the same graph from 3c, please include two additional lines describing the relationship between contact and bigotry; one for poor respondents and one for non-poor respondents. Please explain your graph in words.

4. *Design a Qualitative Study (about 60 minutes)*

Patrick M. Krueger and colleagues recently published an article in *Social Forces* entitled “To Help or To Harm? Food Stamp Receipt and Mortality Risk Prior to the 1996 Welfare Reform Act.” The abstract is provided below.

Imagine that you have received a small grant of \$2500 to design a qualitative study to further explore Krueger et al.’s findings with regard to the role of food stamps in the maintenance of health. Within this broad topic, please outline specific research question(s) you aim to explore and clearly describe your study design, strategies for respondent recruitment and maximization of participation. Also specify your approach to data analysis. Included in your response, please critically evaluate the strengths and limitations of your study design, including your decisions with regard to use of your funding. Krueger, Patrick M., Richard G. Rogers, , Cristóbal Ridaó-Cano, and Robert A. Hummer. 2004. “To Help or To Harm? Food Stamp Receipt and Mortality Risk Prior to the 1996 Welfare Reform Act.” *Social Forces*. Vol. 82, No. 4.

Abstract:

We use data from the National Health Interview Survey-Family Resources Supplement to examine the relationship between Food Stamp receipt and prospective adult mortality, among eligible households. We specify a switching probit model to adjust for observed and unobserved factors that correlate with selection into the Food Stamp Program and mortality, and to estimate mortality under counterfactual conditions that we do not observe. The average individual, based on observed characteristics, has higher mortality when participating than when not participating. But due to unobserved differences between participants and non-participants, those who self-select into participation experience lower mortality than if they did not participate. Our findings suggest that Food Stamps provide an important safety net that protects the health of those who are most likely to participate.

Background Information for Question #1 on Consent and Ethics

- **Types of Informed Consent**

There are three types of Informed Consent:

1. **Written consent.** A Consent Form signed by each of a project's subjects is normally required for protocols submitted for either regular or expedited reviews. Projects qualifying for exempt review normally require only the subject's oral consent to participate unless the researcher intends to audio- or video-tape the subject.
2. **Assent.** Projects involving children (up to 17 years) undergo regular review. In addition to written consent forms for parents, these proposals require written assent forms from the children aged 7- 17. Minors aged 15 to 17 cannot give adult consent but are normally asked to sign an assent form using the same language and information contained in their parent's consent form. Any project involving minors requires a signed consent form from either the child's parents or legal guardians *before* approaching the child for assent.
3. **Oral Consent.** Certain populations, such as non literate or vulnerable individuals, may require special informed consent procedures. A statement of oral consent must include the elements of a Written Consent Form and be signed by the participant and by a witness who observes the oral presentation of the material and the participant's signature.

- **Sample Assent Form for Minors**

I am willing to take part in the study called (name the study). I understand that the researchers from (name the institution) are hoping to (describe the purpose of the study in simple terms). I understand that I will do (describe the actions that will be undertaken by a subject, where they will take place, and other situational factors such as audio- or video-taping). I will be asked about (describe the sorts of questions the subject will be asked). This study will take place (name the location of the study) and should take about (estimate of time involvement) of my time. I know that I can leave this study at any time. If I do not like a question, I do not have to answer it, and if I ask, my answers will not be used in the study. No one will know my answers, including (name people that will not have access to answers, i.e. strangers, parents, other children, etc.).

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Age _____



- **Sample Consent Form**

Informed Consent Form for (Project Title)

You are being invited to participate in a research project conducted by John Doe, a graduate student in the University of Colorado's Department of (name of PI's department), Campus Box (number), Boulder, CO 80309. This project is conducted under the direction of Professor (name of faculty sponsor), Department of (name of faculty sponsor's department), Campus Box (number). (If available, the researcher must supply a business telephone number. If the researcher does not have a business telephone number, the researcher is not required to provide their home phone number.)

You are invited to participate in a research study about (describe project in language the subject can easily understand).

You will be asked to (explain specifically what the subjects are going to be asked to do) that will take about (give time commitment) of your time. (If applicable, sample questions or description should be inserted here.) We will ask you to come to the (name building) building on the (provide location of research) to participate in this research.

The potential risks associated with this study are (include any foreseeable risks or discomforts to subject). We expect the project to benefit you in these ways (include any foreseeable benefits including class credit, etc.). You will receive (describe any reimbursement) as compensation for your participation.

If you decide to participate in this project, please understand that your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time. You have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason.

In addition, your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from this study. (Describe the methods you intend to take in order to protect your subjects' confidentiality or anonymity or explain that subjects' names may be used in the final research document. If you conduct an experiment where the subjects will be audio and or video tape-recorded you must explain what the disposition of the tapes will be at the conclusion of the study.)

(If federally funded, include the following.) This study is being funded by a federal agency which requires that data be collected in a format that may be analyzed for differences between men and women and races or ethnic groups.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a subject, any concerns regarding this project or any dissatisfaction with any aspect of this study, you may report them -- confidentially, if you wish -- to the Executive Secretary, Human Research Committee, Graduate School, Campus Box 26, Regent 308, University of Colorado-Boulder, Boulder, CO 80309-0026 or by telephone to (303) 492-7401. Copies of the University of Colorado Assurance of compliance to the federal government regarding human subject research are available upon request from the Graduate School address listed above.

A signed copy of this consent form will be provided to the participant within (state time limit).

I understand the above information and voluntarily consent to participate in the research project entitled (title of project).

Signature of Subject _____ Date _____.

