

TEACHING MATERIALS FROM THE HENRY A. WALLACE POLICE CRIME DATABASE

**Worksheets developed for an
undergraduate research methods course**

Chloe A. Wentzlof

Last Updated: August 26, 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
QR CODE	2
STUDENT WORKSHEETS	3
Introduction to Research	4
Measurement.....	6
Sampling.....	7
Variable Relationships	10
Content Analysis	12

INTRODUCTION

The Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database is the product of a research project conducted by the Police Integrity Research Group at Bowling Green State University. Support for this project was provided by the Wallace Action Fund of Tides Foundation.

The purpose of the Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database is to improve policing and inform the public about crimes committed by nonfederal sworn law enforcement officers across the United States.

The following materials are designed to be utilized within an undergraduate research methods course. These worksheets are intended to provide students with real-life examples of how research is conducted.

The Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database can be found at the following URL: <https://policecrime.bgsu.edu/>

THE
HENRY A. WALLACE
POLICE CRIME
DATABASE
CAN BE FOUND
HERE:

<https://policecrime.bgsu.edu/>



STUDENT WORKSHEETS

Introduction to Research	4
Measurement.....	6
Sampling.....	7
Variable Relationships	10
Content Analysis	12



INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

Navigate through the Henry A. Wallace Database and answer the following questions. This worksheet is designed to help you become familiar with the database and begin to understand the details of which go into conducting a large-scale research project.

HOME

1. *The Henry A. Wallace database includes information regarding the arrests of people within a specific profession. What profession?*
2. *How many criminal arrest cases are included within this database?*
3. *What are the three options in which you can search for cases using the database?*

ABOUT

4. *What is the purpose of this research?*
5. *Who funds this research?*
6. *What does the database version change log tell you about the database?*

METHODS

7. *This research project utilizes Google News' publicly available news articles to gather information about the officers' arrests. When looking through the articles, research assistants code the name of the officer, the employing agency, victim characteristics, and more. What is this process called?*
8. *What is the primary unit of analysis for this research project? Provide an example of how one officer may have two criminal arrest cases.*



9. *What are the five crime types included in Stinson's typology?*
10. *This research project pulls secondary data from two sources. What are these sources?*

GLOSSARY

11. *How is adverse employment outcome defined?*
12. *How is criminal case disposition defined?*

FAQ

13. *Describe two aspects of the inclusion criteria.*
14. *Is the database available for downloading?*
15. *How should you cite the database?*



MEASUREMENT

In order to correctly understand the research conducted and provided by the Henry A. Wallace police crime database, you first need to understand the individual elements or variables.

Crime can be defined in many of ways. For example, crime can be defined as the act of breaking the law (ex. speeding, underage drinking, assault, and more) or crime could be measured by the act of being arrested.

1. *Based on the methodology of this research project, how would you define police crime? (Hint: think about the inclusion criteria and how crime is measured.)*

Beyond the criteria for inclusion, each variable within the database has a coding protocol which defines the variable and how it is measured. See the Glossary page for these definitions.

Variables can be categorized into four levels of measurement: Nominal, Ordinal, Interval, or Ratio.

Which level of measurement are the following variables?

- a. *Reason for Nonconviction*
- b. *Most Serious Sentence*
- c. *Race of Victim/Arrested Officer*
- d. *Sex*
- e. *Age*
- f. *Rank*
- g. *Years of Service*
- h. *Duty Status*



SAMPLING

Sampling is the process of selecting a group of elements from the larger population. This process often seems mysterious and complex without seeing a real-world example. The following worksheet intends for you to use two forms of sampling to select a sample from the Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database.

NON-PROBABILITY-BASED SAMPLING: CONVENIENCE SAMPLE

A convenience sample selects elements which are readily available. This sample may not be representative of the population. To select a convenience, very little thought needs to be put into your selection. For example, you might just choose the first 20 cases which appear from your home state.

1. *Select a convenience sample ($n=20$) from the Henry A. Wallace Database and describe your method for selecting the cases.*

For each criminal arrest cases selected, you will want to document the following variables: State, Age, Years of Service, Sex, Type of Crime, Duty Status, Adverse Employment Outcome, and Criminal Case Disposition.

An example of how to best format your sample is provided at the end of this worksheet.



PROBABILITY-BASED SAMPLING

Now, you will draw a sample using a combination of different probability-based sampling techniques. As you become more familiar with data, you will realize combining multiple techniques may be what works best for the data available.

The following steps are going to help you select your probability-based sample.

1. *Using a random state generator, select 5 states at random. (<https://randomlistgenerator.com/us-states>)*
2. *For each state, you will randomly select 4 cases. Using the Map tab on the Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database, select your first state. Near the bottom of the page, it will read "Showing 1 to 10 of ____ entries," this tells you the total number of cases from that state. You will need to random select four numbers out of that total number of cases. A random number generator should be used to select these four numbers (<https://g.co/kgs/gAovgB>).*
3. *Once you have four random numbers, you will need to find case with the subsequent number. For example, if you randomly select the number 34, you will need to find the 34th case of your designated state. This case is likely found on Page 4, 4th case from the top.*
4. *Once you have found a case which should be included in your sample, you will want to document the following variables: State, Age, Years of Service, Sex, Type of Crime, Duty Status, Adverse Employment Outcome, and Criminal Case Disposition. An example of how to best format your sample is provided at the end of this worksheet.*



QUESTIONS

You have now selected two samples. Reflect on these processes and answer the following questions.

1. *What is the target population, sampling frame, and coverage error associated with these samples?*
2. *Which sample is better and why?*
3. *Why might researcher use a convenience sample over a probability-based sample?*
4. *What might restrict a researcher from selecting a probability-based sample?*

Case	State	Age	Years of Service	Sex	Type of Crime	Duty Status	Adverse Employment Outcome	Criminal Case Disposition
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								
14								
15								
16								
17								
18								
19								
20								



VARIABLE RELATIONSHIPS

Learning about the relationship between variables is a crucial part of research and developing a research question. In prior worksheets, you have explored variables of the Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database. In this worksheet, you will build on your existing knowledge and develop a research question which could be explored through specific variables.

Navigate to any case on the Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database so you are able to see the case details. On this page, you are able to see the variable available for each case. You may want to explore several cases to see the different values of each variable or utilize the Glossary tab to explore the specific variable definitions.

From decades of working with these data, the Police Integrity Research Group has found *Adverse Employment Outcome* and *Criminal Case Disposition* to be the two most logical dependent variables. In this worksheet, you will explore an independent variable which might be associated with one of these variables.

In this worksheet, you will choose another variable which you believe may be associated with either *Adverse Employment Outcome* or *Criminal Case Disposition*.

EXAMPLE 1

You may speculate that officers who committed their crimes in their official capacity would be more likely to be fired from their jobs.

Official Capacity → Adverse Employment Outcome

Is whether an officer committed the crime within their official capacity associated with the adverse employment outcome?



EXAMPLE 2

You may hypothesize that violence-related crime would more likely lead to a conviction.

Type of Crime → Criminal Case Disposition

Is type of crime related to whether the arrested officer would be convicted?

ASSIGNMENT

1. Which is your dependent variable? (*Adverse Employment Outcome or Criminal Case Disposition*)
2. Which level of measurement is this variable?
3. Choose an independent variable?
4. Which level of measure is this variable?
5. How do you hypothesize these variables would be associated?
6. What is your research question?
7. Find one scholarly academic article which may help answer your research question. Provide the citation.



CONTENT ANALYSIS

On the Methods tab of the Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database, you can explore the methodology used by the Police Integrity Research Group when developing and maintaining these data. The process of content analysis is used to gather information about each criminal arrest case. This worksheet is designed to simulate the content analysis used by our researchers on a smaller scale.

1. *Using Google News, search for an article which discusses an arrest of a law enforcement officer. (Hint: Use search terms such as "Boston police arrested" or "Los Angeles law enforcement charged.")*
2. *Once you have identified an arrest, search for more articles using Google News. Now, you have the officer's name so it may be easier. (Hint: Now you can use search terms such as "John Doe Boston police" or "Jane Doe driving under the influence.")*
3. *Using these articles, determine the values for the following variables. Remember to use the Glossary or example cases from the Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database if you need to better understand the possible values for each variable.*

<i>a. Age</i>	<i>h. Date of Arrest</i>
<i>b. Years of Service</i>	<i>i. Type of Crime</i>
<i>c. Sex</i>	<i>j. Duty Status</i>
<i>d. Race and Ethnicity</i>	<i>k. Adverse Employment Outcome</i>
<i>e. Rank</i>	<i>l. Criminal Case Disposition</i>
<i>f. Employing Agency</i>	
<i>g. State (of employment)</i>	
4. *Reflect on your experience conducting content analysis. Were certain variables easier to identify than others? Were you unable to find any variable? Did you utilize the variable definitions to help you code any variables?*

