

MicroCase exercise #5:
An exploration of control theory

INTRODUCTION

In this data analysis exercise, we will use Wave VII data from the National Youth Survey to test some of the ideas in control theory, which is discussed in Part VI.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DATASET

See MicroCase exercise #3 for a description of the NYS dataset. Before we start our analyses, we'll need to load up our dataset, 'NYSCRIME.'

EXPLORING CONTROL THEORY: GETTING A HANDLE ON THE DATA AND USING CROSSTABULATION TABLES

Control theory, as posed by Travis Hirschi, assumes that people form bonds to others and that these bonds control their behavior. If I am attached to my parents, I will not want to do things that would incur their disapproval. If I am psychologically distant from my parents, however, their opinions will have less of a hold on me, thus allowing me up to violate laws without shame. Later researchers extended Hirschi's theory to include bonds people form with friends, teachers, and school in general.

Testing control theory will require us to find suitable measures as we have done for the previous theories. Among the questions in the NYS survey were two that seem appropriate for our purposes. The respondents were asked how much they agreed with two statements regarding their parents: (1) "Sometimes it's necessary to lie to your parents in order to keep their trust" [LIE_PAR] and (2) "It may be necessary to break some of your parents' rules in order to keep some of your friends" [BREAKRUL]. Presumably, those who agree with these statements are more likely to act against their parents' wishes, making them more psychologically distant from their parents. Arguably, the actions taken by the respondents may appear, on the surface, to be considerate of parental wishes (e.g., lying to protect parents from stress), but the statements still reflect acting against the desires of one's parents. To see if the theory holds, run frequencies for LIE_PAR and BREAKRUL, then run crosstabulation tables with USED MJ as the dependent variable and LIE_PAR and BREAKRUL as the independent variables.

What do you notice about the LIE_PAR --> USED MJ table? About a fourth (26.4%) of the respondents who strongly disagreed with the statement smoked marijuana during the past year. Compare this to those who had less negative opinions about lying to their parents, ignoring the "strongly agree" column because it involves too few cases. Can we say that those who agree with the statement are more likely to have smoked marijuana during the previous year? To learn the strength of the relationship between opinion regarding lying to parents and marijuana use, look at the Cramer's V and the significance level.

What about the BREAKRUL --> USED MJ table? Again, about a fourth (25.1%) of the respondents who strongly disagreed with the statement smoked marijuana during the past year. Compare this to those who had less negative opinions about breaking parental rules, ignoring the "strongly agree" column because it involves too few cases. Can we say that those who agree with the statement are more likely to have smoked marijuana during the previous year? To learn the strength of the relationship between opinion regarding lying to parents and marijuana use, look at the Cramer's V and the significance level.

FURTHER EXPLORATION OF CONTROL THEORY

We have now explored two relationships relevant to control theory as they apply to smoking marijuana. To see if the theory helps explain crimes other than marijuana smoking, you will apply it to thefts of goods valued at more than \$50.00 and violent offenses for the "further exploration" questions.

CONTROL THEORY ON YOUR OWN

Now that we have briefly examined Hirschi's control theory, you could devise other ways of measuring and testing the ideas in the theory. For example, attachment to parents could be measured through the level of satisfaction the respondents assign to their relationship with their parents (SATISPAR). Once again, this is a difficult assignment, but try to think of other ways to measure the ideas behind control theory. If any of your ideas appears in the NYSCRIME dataset, run some analyses to test it. Otherwise, run some tables for SATISPAR.

While you are further examining control theory, reflect on the how it helps us explain why some people break the law and why others don't. Think also about crimes and/or situations that control theory cannot adequately address or other weaknesses of the theory. By now, you are well on your way to understanding how theories work and don't work!

[PLEASE DO NOT TURN IN THESE PRECEDING SHEETS WITH YOUR ASSIGNMENT- THEY ARE FOR YOU TO KEEP]

Homework for MicroCase #5: General questions
(control theory)

Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Answer the following questions by filling in the blanks or circling the appropriate responses. A couple of answers have been filled in for you to make sure you're on the right track.

Exploring control theory: Getting a handle on the data and using crosstabulation tables:

1. Complete the following table using the percentage of respondents who fell into the following agreement categories for LIE_PAR and BREAKRUL:

	% of respondents who fell into the following agreement categories				
	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
"Sometimes it's necessary to lie to your parents in order to keep their trust"					
"It may be necessary to break some of your parents' rules in order to keep some of your friends"					

2. Complete the following table using the percentage of respondents who smoked marijuana during the past year and statistics from the crosstabulation tables for LIE_PAR --> USED MJ and BREAKRUL --> USED MJ:

state-ments	% of respondents who smoked marijuana during the past year by level of agreement with statements				
	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
LIE_PAR Cramers' V= _____ sig=_____	26.4%				ignore: not enough cases
BREAKRUL Cramers' V= _____ sig=_____	25.1%				ignore: not enough cases

3. As their agreement with the statement about lying to their parents increases, respondents are

more / less likely to have smoked marijuana during the previous year. This relationship is *weak / moderate / strong*. This relationship *is / is not* statistically significant.

4. As their agreement with the statement about breaking parental rules to keep friends increases, respondents are *more / less* likely to have smoked marijuana during the previous year. This relationship is *weak / moderate / strong*. This relationship *is / is not* statistically significant.
5. Overall, it appears that our findings using the Wave VII of the NYS *support / do not support* control theory.
6. What does all of this mean? Please answer in essay form, summarizing what you have learned about control theory from this part of the MicroCase.

Homework for MicroCase #5: "Further exploration" questions
(control theory)

Name: _____

Date: _____

TASK: See if the measures we have developed for control theory (LIE_PAR and BREAKRUL) are statistically related to either THEFT50 or VIOLENCE.

Answer the following questions by filling in the blanks or circling the appropriate responses.

1. Complete the following table using the percentage of respondents who committed theft or acts of violence and statistics from the crosstabulation tables for LIE_PAR --> THEFT50/VIOLENCE and BREAKRUL --> THEFT50/VIOLENCE:

state-ments	% of respondents who committed <i>theft / violence</i> by level of agreement with statements				
	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
LIE_PAR Cramers' V= _____ sig=_____					
BREAKRUL Cramers' V= _____ sig=_____					

2. As their agreement with the statement about lying to their parents increases, respondents are *more / less* likely to have committed *theft / violence*. This relationship is *weak / moderate / strong*. This relationship *is / is not* statistically significant.
3. As their agreement with the statement about breaking parental rules to keep friends increases, respondents are *more / less* likely to have committed *theft / violence*. This relationship is *weak / moderate / strong*. This relationship *is / is not* statistically significant.
4. Overall, it appears that our findings using the Wave VII of the NYS *support / do not support* control theory.

5. What does all of this mean? Please answer in essay form, summarizing what you have learned about control theory from this part of the MicroCase.

6. Design your own study to test control theory. Please answer in essay form, summarizing what variables would you include and why. What sample would you use and why? What do you expect to find, under control theory?

Affirmation of Independent Work

Submission of this assignment constitutes a statement on your part that apart from technical help, you completed this assignment on your own. Plagiarism will be reported to University authorities and can result in expulsion from the University.

Your Name: _____ Signature: _____

Homework for MicroCase #5: "On your own" questions
(control theory)

Name: _____

Date: _____

TASK: Try to think of other ways to measure the ideas underlying control theory. If any of your ideas appears in the dataset, run some analyses to test it. Otherwise, run some tables SATISPAR.

Directions: Answer the following questions. NOTE: Please print out and include your tables with these questions so your work can be graded.

Control theory on your own:

1. Which variable did you choose as your independent variable and which idea does it attempt to measure/test?
2. How did your independent variable affect marijuana use? Make sure to provide a description that includes the percentages, Cramer's V value, the strength of the relationship, and the significance value.
3. How did your independent variable affect thefts of goods worth more than \$50.00? Make sure to provide a description that includes the percentages, Cramer's V value, the strength of the relationship, and the significance value.
4. How did your independent variable affect violent offenses? Make sure to provide a description that includes the percentages, Cramer's V value, the strength of the relationship, and the significance value.

5. How does the finding for SATISPAR --> USED MJ (or whatever variable you chose) affect your assessment of control theory? Can you explain this finding?

6. Can you say your testing supports control theory? Why/why not?

If you included more than independent variable, you may summarize the findings here for future reference.