

PUBLIC POLICY AND STATISTICS: CASE STUDIES FROM RAND

Sally C. Morton and John E. Rolph, Editors.

New York: Springer, 2000, pp. xii + 243.

Contents:

Why you should read this book

COLLECTING DATA 1. School-Based Drug Prevention: Challenges in Designing and Analyzing Social Experiments

2. The Health Insurance Experiment: Design Using the Finite Selection Model

3. Counting the Homeless: Sampling Difficult Populations

DETECTING EFFECTS

4. Periodicity in the Global Mean Temperature Series?

5. Racial Bias in Death Sentencing: Assessing the Statistical Evidence

6. Malpractice and the Impaired Physician: An Application of Matching

UNDERSTANDING RELATIONSHIPS

7. Supply Delays for F-14 Jet Engine Repair Parts: Developing and Applying Effective Data Graphics

8. Hospital Mortality Rates: Comparing with Adjustments for Case Mix and Sample Size

9. Eye-Care Supply and Need: Confronting Uncertainty

10. Modeling Block Grant Formulas for Substance Abuse Treatment

References

Contributors

Index

Intended Readership: Advanced undergraduate and graduate students of Statistics and/or Public Policy; Empirical researchers and policy makers (especially at government and other research institutes).

RAND is an research institute created by the U.S. Air Force originally with a mandate “to provide objective research on national security issues.” It is now an independent research organization that through grants and contracts from a variety of sources provides a research resource for public policy makers. The RAND Statistics Group was formed in 1976 and this book is a collection of some of their case studies.

Authored by the statistical investigators, each chapter lays out a statistical case study in a common seven section format: Executive Summary, 1. Introduction (always comprised of A. Policy Problem, B. Research Questions, C. Statistical Questions, and D. Summary of Data and Methods), 2. Design, Data Collection, Description of Data Sources and Description of Data, 3. Datafile Creation, Descriptive Stats and Exploratory Analysis, 4. Statistical Methods and Model, 5. Results, 6. Discussion (covering policy implications and statistical issues), 7. Exercises and finally Further RAND Reading (accessible at www.rand.org). Datasets for each chapter and errata are available on the Web (www.rand.org/centers/stat/casebook).

As with any collection of papers, some chapters are better than others; as with any statistical investigation, different approaches might have been taken

in each case. Rather than detract from the book, these make the book a more interesting resource to be enlivened by an instructor of an advanced undergraduate or graduate course in Statistics. Students of Public Policy might find the statistical aspects of the case studies somewhat challenging.

I strongly recommend it as a resource to instructors in Statistics. Its breadth of applications and its organization of topics within papers make the book an important contribution to the growing collection of books on case studies in statistics.

R.W. Oldford

University of Waterloo
Waterloo, Canada