Sociology 201: Social Research Design

7. Research Design I
Workbook assignments due:
  - 4.2 (20 pts)

From last time, any further thoughts about determinism?

Purposes of Research
  - Will do some computer analyses

Topics of research

The time dimension

Motivations for research
Three Purposes of Research

- Exploration
- Description
- Explanation
Exploration

- Get more grounded in a topic
- Uncover some of the dimensions
- Gain insights into it
- Get clearer about where to look
Description

- Ethnography
- Can be very rigorous
  - Sampling critical
  - Precisely what are you saying and about whom?
- Census reports
- Political Polls
- Nielsen ratings
Example: Attitudes toward Abortion

- General Social Survey, 1996
- National Opinion Research Center, Univ. of Chicago
- Random sample of 2,090 Americans, 18 and older
- Representative of the adult population of the USA
Explanation

REVIEW: Criteria of causation

- Correlation
- Time order
- Non-spurious
False criteria of causation

- Doesn't have to be 100%
- Even if few Xs are Y, if Xs are more Y than non-Xs are, then it may be a causal relationship
- Fundamentalism $\Rightarrow$ anti-semitism
- Broken homes $\Rightarrow$ delinquency
Necessary and sufficient causes

• Necessary: gender => pregnancy
• Sufficient: Skip the exams => fail the course
  – Could have skipped the workbooks
• Necessary and sufficient best but rare
• Can explain when we can’t even describe
Topics for Research

- Conditions
- Orientations
- Actions
- Not important to split hairs about these
The Time Dimension

- Cross-sectional
- Longitudinal
  - Trend
  - Cohort
  - Panel
Cross-sectional

- Snapshot in time
- Pick a sample from a population and measure them
Longitudinal Trend

- Select different samples over time
- Compare them to detect changes in the population

May

June

July

--> Time -->

Total = 18 slides
Longitudinal: Panel

- Examine the *same sample* of people over time
- Detect processes of change at work

May       June       July
---> Time -->

Total = 18 slides
Longitudinal: Cohort

- Select different samples from the same age group (cohort)

✓ Detect maturation processes in the cohort
Approximating longitudinal

- Compare people of different ages at one point in time
- Infer that their differences are a result of aging
- Compare:
  - Freshmen
  - Sophomores
  - Juniors
Motivations for Research

- Testing formal theories
- Testing limited hypotheses
- Exploring unstructured interests
- Contracted research
- Involuntary research
Next Time

- Research Design II
- Review Chapter 4