Part 1- Methodology

Courses

* Socl 345

Key concepts:

Logical explanations are what theories seek to provide

* Theories prevent our being taken in by flukes
* Theories make sense of observed patterns
* Theories shape and direct research efforts
* Macro theory- aimed at understanding the big picture of institutions, whole societies and the interactions among societies
  + Ex: class struggles, international relations
* Micro theory- aimed at understanding social life on the intimate level of individuals and their interactions
  + Ex: dating behavior, jury deliberations
* Meso theory- referencing an intermediate level between macro and micro: studying organizations, communities and social categories

Methodology

* Knowledge from agreement reality
  + Assertions must be both logical and empirical
  + Science examines how things are and why
  + Epistemology: the science of knowing

Ordinary human inquiry:

* Humans want to predict the future why?
  + We recognize that the future is caused in part of the present
  + Cause and effect patterns are probabilistic in nature
* Errors in inquiry and some solutions
  + Inaccurate observations
    - Measurement devices offer accuracy
  + Overgeneralizations
    - Large and representative samples are a safeguard against overgeneralization
  + Replication
    - Repeating a research study to test and either confirm or question the findings of an earlier study
* Concepts and variables
  + Variable—logical groupings of attributes
  + We study variables to understand the relationships between them
  + Attributes—characteristics or qualifies that describe an object
* Independent variable
  + A variable that values things that are not problematical in an analysis but are taken as simply given
* Dependent variable
  + A variable assumed to depend on or be caused by another

Purpose of research

* + The purposes of social research
    - Mapping out a topic that may warrant further study later (exploratory)
    - Describing the state of social affairs (descriptive)
    - Providing reasons for phenomena, in terms of causal relationships (explanatory)

Ethical issues in social research

* Conforming to the standards of a conduct of a given profession or group

The basics

* Voluntary participation
* Informed consent
* Anonymity and confidentiality
* Deception
* Analysis and reporting

Research design

3 purposes

* Exploration
* Description
* Explanation

Evaluation research

* Research undertaken for the purpose of determining the impact of some social intervention such as a program aimed at solving a social problem

Qualitative field research

* Topics
  + Defy simply quantification
  + Attitudes and behaviors best understood in their natural setting
  + Social process overtime
* Elements
  + Practices
  + Episodes
  + Encounters
  + Roles and social types
  + Social and personal relationships
  + Groups and cliques

Conducting qualitative field research

* Be familiar with relevant research
* Discuss your plans with others in the area
* Identify and meet informants
  + First impressions
  + Establish open and trusting relationship

Unobtrusive research

* Methods of studying social behavior without affecting it

Qualitative analysis

* The non- numerical examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationship

4 stages of constant comparative method

* Comparing incident application to each category
* Integrating categories and their properties
* Delimiting the theory
* Writing theory

Qualitative data processing

* Coding
  + Open coding
  + Axial coding
  + Selective coding