Sociology as a Science
Sociology as a Social Science

- Social Sciences focus on human social behavior and institutions and study the functions of human society in a scientific manner.
  - Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, Economics, Political Science, and History all focus on different aspects of human society
  - Sociology focuses on Society and individuals’ roles within society
Sociological Research

• As a science the study of Sociology uses the Scientific Method to come up with an issue and actually test it
  • Uses an objective, systematic, logical way of collecting and analyzing data to test a hypothesis.
  • A hypothesis is an educated guess of the types of results an experiment will produce
Purpose of Sociological Research

• Experiments are designed to reaffirm prior research or test a new hypothesis.
• New experiments are usually designed to discover new causations or correlations between variables (traits)
  • Correlations are connections between changes in one variable that leads to changes in another variable
  • Causation is when something happens because of something else
    • (ex. Introduction to new cultures causes greater cultural awareness)
Quantitative and Qualitative Research

• **Quantitative Research** – Collects numerical data that can then be used to find trends and patterns in the responses
  • Most common forms are surveys and polls

• **Qualitative Research** – Asks questions geared towards finding opinions, underlying reasons, and motivations
  • Most common forms are focus groups, interviews, and observations
Research Methods: Survey

• To test theories and gather information a popular form of research is a survey
  • Allows researchers to get large amounts of data from a wide range of sources
  • Researchers can use all data or Sample Groups of selected results

• Sociological researchers use Questionnaires and interviews to conduct surveys
  • Use a variety of methods including mail surveys, group administered questionnaires, and interviews
Research Methods: Existing Source Analysis

• Sociologists do not always have to create new data, or they can compare new data to studies that have already been done
  • Sociologist do **Archival Research** where they look at information that has already be collected in past studies
    • Trying to look at change or compare to find trends
    • Archival research is done before a new study and helps develop a base to build a central question to conduct a new study

Key Forms of Sources

**Primary Sources**: The raw data or results from a prior study

**Secondary Sources**: An analysis done by someone who did not collect the data themselves
Research Methods: Observational Study

• Sociologists come up with schedule and plan to systematically watch and record behaviors
  • **Naturalistic Observation**: Researcher observes participants in a natural setting without influencing participants
    • Often times participants do not know they are being involved in the study
  • **Structured Observation**: Planned situation where researcher controls the environment and observes participants’ behaviors
  • **Participant Observation**: Researchers fully immerse themselves in a social situation over a long period of time and record observations
    • Researcher will usually become part of the environment and get to know participants
  • **Non-Participating Observation**: Researcher acts an outsider looking in and not immersing themselves in the social situation
    • Observes from afar or uses secondary sources to make observations
Research Methods: Experiment

- Sociologists will design experiments in a controlled environment
  - Will use a control group and an experimental group
  - Usually designed to see how an individual or group will behave in a social situation
Research Methods: Statistical Analysis

• Sociologists use statistical mathematical data
• Entails taking quantitative data collected from surveys, observations, and experiments and analyzing it
  • Trying to find relationships, causation, and correlation between variables