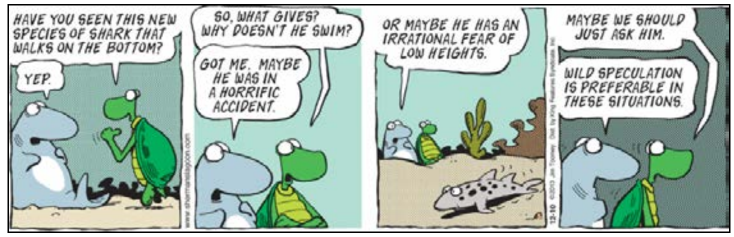
SOCIOLOGY 5:
EVALUATION OF EVIDENCE
FALL 2015
PROFESSOR IRENE BLOEMRAAD



Lectures: Tues & Thurs. 9:30-11am, 100 Lewis Hall
Sections: two discussion sections per week, M/W or T/Th
Office Hours: TH 1:30-3:15pm, Barrows 442; http://www.wejoinin.com/bloemr@berkeley.edu
Email: bloemr@berkeley.edu **Phone**: 510-642-4287

WHAT WILL YOU LEARN?

We are bombarded by information – a torrent of facts, opinions, and analyses circulated in blogs, books, newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and social media, not to mention word of mouth. The pressure to make sense of this information is intense.

This course will improve your ability to evaluate appeals to empirical information by giving you the tools to evaluate research. Social science research is used to challenge or lend credence to public policies, political positions and personal opinions. Should you believe people who argue that "the evidence shows" that we should abolish affirmative action, support single-payer health care, reduce welfare, or establish air pollution markets? You will learn to evaluate that data behind such claims critically and how to design your own research to investigate them. We will balance skepticism of poor research design and bad data with readings and assignments to learn smart social science.

By semester's end, you will be able to assess the soundness of research by evaluating concepts, measurement, research design, data collection and data analysis. To learn these skills, we will read examples of sociological research, including from graduates and faculty of Berkeley's Sociology Department. You will also do a series of 'hands-on' assignments to learn by doing. This course will demand significant time and effort, but it is an investment that will pay off in other courses, and build skills that can be transferred to various occupations and to deliberations, from juries to the ballot box.

DISCUSSION SECTIONS AND GRADUATE STUDENT INSTRUCTORS:

Each student must be registered for the lecture and one of the 12 sections below. For those enrolled, you must attend lecture and section the first three weeks of classes to confirm your enrollment. If you are on the waitlist, you have a better chance of getting into the class if you pick sections with shorter waitlists. Sections and the six graduate student instructors helping with this course are:

Section	Meeting Time/Location	GSIs *(subject to change)*
S 101	TuTh 4-5P, 35 EVANS	Tom Gilbert
S 102	TuTh 3-4P, 47 EVANS	Fatinha Santos
S 103	TuTh 1-2P, 80 BARROWS	Zawadi Rucks Ahidiana
S 104	TuTh 2-3P, 80 BARROWS	Zawadi Rucks Ahidiana
S 105	TuTh 8-9A, 51 EVANS	Tom Gilbert
S 106	TuTh 2-3P, 55 EVANS	Fatinha Santos

S 107	MW 8-9A, 233 DWINELLE	Santiago Molina
S 108	MW 9-10A, 262 DWINELLE	Santiago Molina
S 109	MW 3-4P, 35 EVANS	Caleb Scoville
S 110	MW 4-5P, 72 EVANS	Caleb Scoville
S 111	MW 1-2P, 475 BARROWS	Fabiana Silva
S 112	MW 2-3P, 475 BARROWS	Fabiana Silva

GRADING:

You will be graded on your engagement with and understanding of class material—readings *and* lecture—as well as your ability to apply knowledge in section assignments and hands-on projects.

Quizzes and Exams	
On-line quizzes – best 5 scores	15%
Final exam (Tues, December 15, 2015, 3-6pm)	20%
"Doing Research" Projects	
1. – Evaluating a Commonly Used Measure	5%
2. – Using Empirical Data to Develop Concepts	5%
3. – Social Hierarchy in Public Space (partial partner project)	10%
4. – Questionnaire Development (group project)	10%
5. – Reporting Survey Results (group project)	15%
Section assignments (5, graded P/NP) and participation	20%

LECTURES, SECTION ASSIGNMENTS AND PARTICIPATION:

I have worked hard to integrate learning across lecture and sections. I expect you to attend both lectures and both discussion sections each week. You are responsible for all material discussed in lecture, and all announcements. I will post lecture slides, so focus on understanding lecture material rather than note-taking. I also will use lecture to work through assignments, projects and discuss quiz or exam questions. Regular attendance correlates with higher grades.

Section provides space for further discussion of material in a smaller group and support for projects. Twenty percent of your grade will be assigned by GSIs based on participation and work in section. "Participation" means attendance, contributing to discussions and asking pertinent questions. Quality of contribution is valued over sheer quantity. Section work includes five Pass/No Pass assignments to structure your reading of course material and learning. More detailed information on section assignments follows the schedule of readings.

RESEARCH PROJECTS:

A key part of understanding research methods is through learning-by-doing, that is, applying textbook or lecture knowledge to the real world. Your GSI will instruct you to load projects to bCourses or submit them to your GSI's mailbox in 410 Barrows Hall. Late projects will be graded down a full letter grade for each day late (e.g., A- → B-), up to three days late. Note that 410 Barrows closes at 4pm; anything submitted after then will be considered a day late. Detailed information on each project, including deadlines, is found after the schedule of readings.

QUIZZES:

I will post 7 quizzes to bCourses over the semester. Your best 5 scores will be counted and you will have two tries on each to review mistakes or material that is unclear. Each quiz is worth 3% of your final grade. Quizzes will be available for 24 hours starting at 6pm Thursday on days I specify in lecture and via email. They will ask 5-15 multiple choice or short answer questions based on lecture and readings. My aim is to keep you on track with course material. Research by cognitive psychologists (e.g., Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel 2014 *Make It Stick*) indicates that students should be evaluated frequently to maximize learning.

Quizzes are open-book and can be done in discussion with a study group. BUT if I think someone is taking quizzes for you – for example, if your quiz scores are very different from the rest of your performance – I will quiz you orally in my office.

FINAL EXAM:

The final exam will be Tuesday, December 15, 2015, 3-6pm. There will be no alternative exam; make sure you are there. The final will integrate everything you have learned over the course, asking you to put together a research design and evaluate findings for two research projects. I will give you a practice question at the end of the semester as an example.

READINGS:

Class readings cover both 'how-to' guides and examples of actual research conducted by social scientists. I also highlight the intersection of social science and policy that affects you directly. You have one required textbook, *Real Research* by Liahna Gordon. It is available at the campus bookstore or as an ebook at http://www.coursesmart.com/9781452299365. All other required readings are available electronically on bCourses.

Doing the reading is integral to deep learning - I expect you to do all readings. I include "reading questions" in the syllabus (*in italics*) to help guide you. Use the reading guide at the end of the syllabus for each reading that reports on empirical research. An electronic copy of the reading guide is on the bCourses website. I also encourage you to consult the department's guide to reading and writing in Sociology: http://sociology.berkeley.edu/undergraduate-writing-resources.

Tips: Becoming a successful college student (or professional in many fields) requires efficient reading: identify key arguments, the reason for those arguments, and the evidence to back it up. Some readings are more difficult than others in ideas, methods, and empirical materials. *I do not expect you to understand every point*. Approach the readings strategically: how do they elaborate on topics or methods discussed in class? I advise a three-step process:

1) ***Skim*** the reading (5-10 minutes) to get a general idea of the material. Read the introduction, skim headings, look at figures, and read the conclusion. Always do this before lecture.
2) After skimming, ideally before lecture, and definitely before section, ***read*** the material carefully, highlighting key terms, arguments and methodological points on hard or e-copy. Note parts of the reading that you don't understand, so you can ask me or your GSI.
3) After class, ***summarize*** by filling out the reading guide, incorporating information from lecture on why the reading is important and what you should remember for assignments and quizzes/ exams. These completed reading guides can also prove helpful in other classes.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

I expect the highest standards of academic honesty. “Misconduct” includes having someone take an exam or quiz for you; copying another person’s exam, quiz, assignment or project; allowing someone to copy your exam, quiz, assignment or project; or paying someone (including an internet business) to produce an assignment for you. Those who engage in misconduct will receive an F, be reported to the Center for Student Conduct, and may face other sanctions. Cheating isn’t fair to your peers, or your opportunity to get a world-class education at Berkeley.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

Those requiring accommodations for any aspect of the course should speak to me early in the semester. Requests for exam accommodations must be accompanied by a letter from DSP: http://dsp.berkeley.edu.

WEBSITE:

The class website for Soc 5 is on bCourses: bCourses.berkeley.edu. This is where quizzes will be posted, and you will find all readings (except for the textbook), as well as lecture slides. All registered students are automatically added to this site.

COURSE READINGS, REFLECTION QUESTIONS and SCHEDULE

Sociological Research: What Is It, and Why Do It?

Aug 27: Introduction to the Course

Listen to (or read the transcript for) these two short radio stories about recent social science research. (One reports research by Berkeley grads.)

http://www.npr.org/2015/04/16/400052239/students-work-ethic-affected-by-peer-groups-desire-to-be-popular

http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2014/02/11/275087586/study-stereotypes-drive-perceptions-of-race

Do you believe these reports? Why (not)? What information would you want to see to better evaluate the claims reported by the journalist? Would you recommend that schools or parents change their practices as a result of this research? If so, in what ways?

Sept 1: What is Science? What is Sociology?

What is science? What makes something scientific? What is sociology? About a century ago, Durkheim and Weber—two “fathers” of sociology—tried to answer these questions in ways still relevant today. What, for Weber, are some of the key elements of the scientific endeavor? What, for Durkheim, distinguishes sociology as a field of study from other fields? What sort of evidence does Durkheim imply is particularly useful for studying “social facts”? What other types of evidence might you use in a sociological study? Why? Weber quotes Tolstoi as pronouncing, “Science is meaningless…” Does Weber agree with Tolstoi? Why? Why bother doing science?

Durkheim, Emile. [1895]. “What is a social fact?” Pp. 50-59 in *Rules of Sociological Method.*

Weber, Max. [1918] 1958. “Science as a Vocation.” Pp. 140-147, 150-151 in *From Max Weber*, edited by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills.

Sections start Wed Sept 2 and Thurs Sept 3. You must attend to stay enrolled.

<u>Sociological Data, Methods and Research Questions</u>

Consider Gordon’s first chapter and lecture notes – what do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of the various types of data and methods used by sociologists? Make sure you understand the main parts of an academic research article and why they are important: introduction, theory/literature, methods & research design, data collection, data analysis, and discussion of results. Identify these elements in the Saperstein & Penner article, one of the studies behind the NPR report you listened to.

Sept 3: Sociological Data and Methods

Gordon, Liahna E. 2016. *Real Research*, Chapter 1, pp. 1-10.

Sept 8: Research Questions and Components of Research

Gordon, Liahna E. 2016. *Real Research*, Chapter 1, pp. 10-19.

Saperstein, Aliya and Andrew M. Penner. 2012. “Racial Fluidity and Inequality in the United States.” *American Journal of Sociology* 118(3): 676-727.

Section assignment #1, “Annotating a research article,” to hand-in Sept 9 or 10.

<u>Concepts and Measurement</u>

The scientific study of “race” or “poverty” is a cornerstone of sociology, and key for social policy. But doing research on these topics is very difficult. Sociologists need to (i) define key concepts (conceptualization), and (ii) translate concepts into measurement (operationalization) that links the concept to empirical data. How should we do this for race and poverty?

Review the Saperstein & Penner reading and identify how they measured race. How does their measurement relate to their conceptualization of race? Do you find the concept and measurement convincing? Why (not)? Do you think Barack Obama is “black”? Consider Mora’s argument about the political and social construction of “Hispanic” as an ‘ethnicity’ in the United States. Are Latinos a “race”? How do <u>you</u> think we should measure race?

Sept 10: Conceptualization, Operationalization and Measurement: Race

DaCosta, Kimberly McClain. 2008. “Is Barack Obama Black?” BBC News Viewpoint: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/us_elections_2008/7735503.stm

Mora, Cristina. 2014. "Cross-field Effects and Ethnic Classification: the Institutionalization of Hispanic Panethnicity, 1965 to 1990." *American Sociological Review* 79(2): 183-210.

Gonzalez-Barrera, A. & M.H. Lopez. 2015. “Is being Hispanic a matter of race, ethnicity or both?” http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/06/15/is-being-hispanic-a-matter-of-race-ethnicity-or-both/

Sept 15: More on Conceptualization and Measurement: Poverty

National Research Council. 1995. *Measuring Poverty: A New Approach.* First read pp. 24-25 ("Development of the Measure"), then pp. 19-24 ("What is Poverty?").

Worstall, Tim. 2015. "The True US Poverty Rate is 4.5%, not 14.5%." http://www.forbes.com/sites/timworstall/2015/03/15/the-true-us-poverty-rate-is-4-5-not-14-5/

National Center for Children in Poverty. 2014. "Measuring Poverty." http://www.nccp.org/topics/measuringpoverty.html

Gordon, Liahna E. 2016. *Real Research*, skim Chapter 6.

Thinking Like a Sociologist: Deductive and Inductive Thinking

Sept 17: Inductive Theorizing – Grounded Theory & Generalizing from Evidence

How do concepts develop from a "grounded theory" approach? Why do proponents favor this approach? Do you agree? In what ways does Becker take an inductive sociological approach? In what ways does he depart from a "pure" grounded theory approach? How might a researcher build on Becker's findings in a contemporary study of drug users?

Dey, Ian. 1999. Introduction. In *Grounding Grounded Theory: Guidelines for Qualitative Inquiry*. Academic Press, pp. 1-12, only.

Becker, Howard S. 1953. "Becoming a Marihuana User." *American Journal of Sociology* 59(3): 235-242.

Project #1, "Evaluating a Commonly Used Measure," DUE 3pm, Monday Sept 21.

Sept 22: Deductive Theorizing – Hypothesis-Testing

Compare how Stinchcombe believe sociological research should be conducted to the grounded theory approach. What are the differences? Understand what is meant by the terms variable, correlation, causal relationship, cumulative testing and crucial experiment. How is Crabb & Marciano's article an example of a deductive approach to research? How does it fall short of Stinchcombe's argument regarding best practices for sociology?

Stinchcombe, Arthur. 1968. "The Logic of Scientific Inference." Pp. 15-37 in *Constructing Social Theories*. Harcourt Brace and World.

Crabb, Peter B. & Deb L. Marciano. 2011. "Representations of Material Culture and Gender in Award-Winning Children's Books: A 20-Year Follow-Up." *Journal of Research in Childhood Education* 25(4): 390-398.

Sept 24: Integrating Deductive and Inductive Approaches: Coding Content Analysis

Read Ch. 7 in Gordon and then re-read the Crabb and Marciano reading. How did they translate illustrations in picture books into sociological data? What do you think about their measurement strategy? Could you replicate their study on picture books published in 2014? If you wanted to do a variation of their study, what research question might you ask? How would you do the coding?

Gordon, Liahna E. 2016. *Real Research*, Chapter 7.

Section assignment #2, "Concepts and Coding," to hand-in Sept 28 or 29.

Sept 29: Integrating Deductive and Inductive Approaches: Coding Interview Data

Evaluate the discussion of methods in Warikoo and Bloemraad. What are their key concepts and how do they measure them? Is their approach inductive or deductive? Do you think you could replicate their analysis with interviews of Cal students? Do you think Cal students would be more like the Ivy League students or more like the immigrant-origin teens? Why?

Warikoo, Natasha and Irene Bloemraad. 2015. ""Opportunities to Succeed" or "Money and more Rights": Social Location and Young People's Views on American Identity." (Article under review.)

<u>Establishing Causality – Social Experiments and Observation</u>

After reading Gordon, Pager and either Correll, et al. OR Willer, et al., and make sure you understand key terms such as random assignment, control group, treatment, and internal/ external validity. Apply these terms to the Pager article first, and identify the dependent and independent variables. How do the variables relate to theory? Is this deductive or inductive thinking? Do the same for either Correll, et al. OR Willer et al. Pay attention to the links between theory, concepts, measurement and data collection/analysis. Do you find these experiments convincing? Why (not)? Why do some researchers argue experiments are best suited to identifying causality? What does causality even mean? What are the benefits and limits of lab and field experiments for sociology?

Oct 1: Experiments and Experimental Logic – NO LECTURE – work on project #2

Gordon, Liahna E. 2016. *Real Research*, skim Chapter 8.

Oct 6: Experiments in Sociology

Pager, Devah. 2003. The Mark of a Criminal Record. *American Journal of Sociology* 108: 937-975.

***Project 2, "Using Empirical Data to Develop Concepts," DUE 3pm, Wed, Oct 7. ***

Oct 8: More Experiments in Sociology, in the Lab and in the Field

Correll, Shelley J, Stephen Benard & In Paik. 2007. "Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty?" *American Journal of Sociology* 112(5): 1297-1338.

OR

Willer, Robb, Christabel Rogalin, Bridget Conlon, & Michael T. Wojnowicz. 2013. "Overdoing Gender: A Test of the Masculine Overcompensation Thesis." *American Journal of Sociology*. 118(4): 980-1022.

Section assignment #3, "Understanding Experiments," to hand-in Oct 12 or 13.

Ethnography and Participant Observation

Adler and Adler highlight some of the benefits and problems with ethnographic research, while Gordon goes over how it is done. How does Lara-Millán's research highlight both the benefits and limits of this method? How does he translate theory and concepts into data? Does he take an inductive or deductive approach? Do you believe his findings? Why (not)? Can you imagine an alternative analysis of his data? What sort of follow-up project might you do to extend his work?

Oct 13: "Natural Observation" – Promise and Pitfalls

Gordon, Liahna E. 2016. *Real Research*, pp. 62-80 in Chapter 3.

Adler, Patricia A. and Peter Adler. 2003. "The Promise and the Pitfalls of Going into the Field." *Contexts* Spring: 41-47.

Oct 15: Doing and Analyzing Participant Observation Data

Lara-Millán, Armando. 2014. "Public Emergency Room Overcrowding in the Era of Mass Imprisonment." *American Sociological Review* 79(5): 866-887.

Gordon, Liahna E. 2016. *Real Research*, pp. 80-90 in Chapter 3.

"Self-Report" Data: The Benefits and Problems of Interviewing

Hochschild uses some observational data but mostly interview data in Second Shift. What is the benefit of "self-report" data over observations? Pay attention to how Hochschild and Waters' indepth qualitative interviewing differs from survey-based interview data. Consider, for example, how Waters uses both open and closed ended questions. How does the type of questioning affect her research findings on identity? Thinking back to the article by in Saperstein and Penner, would in-depth interviewing have added to their research or been a distraction? When is one type of questioning better than the other?

Oct 20: Combining Observation with People's Own Accounts

Hochschild, Arlie. 2012 [1989]. *The Second Shift: Working Families and the Revolution at Home*. Penguin. Chapters 1 and 4.

Oct 22: Self-Reports: Comparing Survey-style and In-depth Interviews

Gordon, Liahna E. 2016. *Real Research*, pp. 21-29 in Chapter 2.

Weiss, Robert S. 2004. "In Their Own Words: Making the Most of Qualitative Interviews." *Contexts* (Fall): 44-51.

Schuman, Howard. 2002. "Sense and Nonsense about Surveys." *Contexts* (Summer): 40-47.

Oct 27: You Don't Necessarily Get What You Ask For – Open & Close-Ended Questions

Waters, Mary C. 1999. *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Introduction and Chapter 3.

Project 3, “Social Hierarchy in Public Space,” DUE 3pm, Wednesday Oct 28.

Oct 29: Actual Research and Ethical Considerations

Consider Waters’ methodological appendix, especially her discussion of the obstacles she faced in interviewing (finding people to interview, establishing rapport, interviewer effects, etc.). How different do you think her findings would have been if the study had been done by an African American man? What if the researcher had been a visiting Chinese scholar studying New York? If findings might be somewhat different, does this mean that sociology is inherently unscientific? Alternatively, given the social nature of research, how can we be sure our research is “right”?

More broadly, all social scientists must be aware of their ethical and professional obligations. Define confidentiality and informed consent. In what ways do the research studies you have read about—whether using experiments, ethnography or interview-based studies—raise ethical issues? Did the authors adequately deal with these issues? Would you have done something different?

Waters, Mary C. 1999. *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Appendix.

Gordon, Liahna E. 2016. *Real Research*, pp. 30-35 in Chapter 2.

Section assignment #4, “Ethical Considerations,” to hand-in Nov 2 or 3.

Nov 3: How-to: Doing Interview Research

Gordon, Liahna E. 2016. *Real Research*, pp. 36-61 in Chapter 2.

Gordon, Liahna E. 2016. *Real Research*, pp. 91-110 in Chapter 4.

Who Should We Interview? The Logic of Sampling

Warikoo and Bloemraad, Hochschild and Waters do not use a random sample to recruit interview subjects. How might their sampling methodology bias their findings? Why do Michael, et al. argue that a random probability sample is the only ‘scientific’ sampling technique we should use? Do you agree? Why (not)? When should you use probability sampling, and when are other sampling methods appropriate? Even when using probability sampling, research can be flawed or have problems. For example, the “Sex Survey” had the same challenge highlighted in the Kolata article: differential reporting of sexual partners between men and women. What does this finding suggest about the limits of sampling? (Consider also the Schuman and Weiss articles from before the break.) How do you explain the puzzle of ‘sex and the math’?

Nov 5: Debating Data Quality: Populations, Samples and Selection Bias

Michael, R., J. Gagnon, E. Lauman, and G. Kolata. 1994. “The Sex Survey.” Pp. 15-41 in *Sex in America*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Kolata, Gina. 2007. “The Myth, the Math, the Sex.” *New York Times*, August 12.

Gordon, Liahna E. 2016. *Real Research*, pp. 110-133 in Chapter 4.

Reading, Understanding and Doing Statistical Analysis

Read through the requirements of Project 5 and make sure you understand the sorts of calculations you will have to do. The goal of this section on statistics is to help you be a "producer" of some very basic descriptive statistics and bivariate tables, and to teach you to be a "consumer" of statistical research studies – that is, someone who understands what statistical significance is, and how to make a broad conclusion about whether the data support the argument. I do not expect deep understanding of complex statistical methods.

Nov 10: Introduction to Statistics and Measures of Central Tendency

Gordon, Liahna E. 2016. *Real Research*, pp. 133-143 in Chapter 4.

Frankfort-Nachmias, Chava and Anna Leon-Guerrero. 2009. "Measuring Central Tendency." In *Social Statistics for a Diverse Society.* Chapter 4, pp. 95-122.

Project 4, "Questionnaire Development," DUE 3pm, Thursday, Nov 12.

Nov 12: Bivariate Analysis and Correlation

Frankfort-Nachmias, Chava and Anna Leon-Guerrero. 2009. "Relationships Between Two Variables." In *Social Statistics for a Diverse Society.* Chapter 10, pp. 307-339.

Miller, Jane. 2004. Creating effective tables. Chapter 6 in *The Chicago Guide to Writing about Numbers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [*For reference with project #5*.]

Nov 17: Statistical Analysis, Inference and "Control"

Frankfort-Nachmias, Chava and Anna Leon-Guerrero. 2009. "Sampling and Sampling Distributions." In *Social Statistics for a Diverse Society.* Pp. 215-228.

Babbie, Earl. 2007. *The Practice of Social Research, 11th ed.* Thomson Wadworth. Chapter 16, pp. 460-470.

Section assignment #5, "Reading Statistics in Sociology," to hand-in Nov 18 or 19.

Nov 19: Debating Data Quality: Observation vs. Self-reports

On what basis do Jerolmack and Khan criticize interview data? Identify a few specific critiques, and evaluate whether you agree. What is Vaisey's response, in defense of (survey-based) interview data? How should a researcher decide between observation and interviewing?

Jerolmack, Colin and Shamus Khan. 2014. "Talk Is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy." *Sociological Methods & Research* 43(2): 178-209.

Vaisey, Stephen. 2014. "The "Attitudinal Fallacy" is a Fallacy: Why We Need Many Methods to Study Culture." *Sociological Methods & Research* 43(2): 227-231.

Nov 24 & 26: NO LECTURE – Happy Thanksgiving!

Work with your partner on Assignment 5!

<u>Macro-Comparative Research Design and Mixed Methods</u>

Many of the techniques we have looked at so far focus on individuals, either with data collected through interviews or observations (in the field or in experiments). Why might a sociologist focus instead on cross-national comparisons or study "macro-level" phenomenon over time? How do geographic and temporal comparisons help us see social structures? What are some pitfalls we should avoid, according to Best?

Dec 1: Cross-National Comparison, and Cautions in Statistical Comparison

Best, Joel. 2001. *Damned Lies and Statistics*. University of California Press. Introduction & Ch. 1, pp. 1-29 and Ch. 4, pp. 96-127.

Zuberi, Dan. 2006. *Differences that Matter: Social Policy and the Working Poor in the United States and Canada.* Chapters 1 and 5.

Dec 3: Putting it all Together: Integrated Research Design and Course Review

Bloemraad, I. 2012. "What the Textbooks Don't Tell You: Moving from a Research Puzzle to Published Findings." Pp. 502-520 in *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*, edited by Carlos Vargas-Silva. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Project 5, "Reporting Survey Results," DUE 3pm, Friday Dec 4.

***** FINAL EXAM – Tuesday, December 15, 2015, 3-6pm. *****

HANDS-ON RESEARCH PROJECTS

Project 1 – Evaluating a Commonly Used Measure **5%**
(individual project, DUE 3pm, Monday, Sept. 21)

GOAL: *To evaluate how a measure commonly used in social science and social policy is constructed.*

1. *Pick ONE of the following measures*:
   - US poverty threshold: https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html
   - “Hispanic” ethnicity: http://www.census.gov/population/hispanic/about/faq.html
   - US unemployment: http://www.bls.gov/cps/cps_htgm.htm

2. *BEFORE doing further research, develop a* ***conceptual definition*** *of this term that makes sense to you.* Write down a one sentence definition that is clear and precise enough that you could use it in empirical research or communicate it to others so that they could use it.

3. *Research the actual measurement of this concept by the US government.* Start with the links above and consult extra resources listed on these webpages, as well as relevant class readings.

4. *Write down, as precisely as possible, the operationalization of the concept into a quantitative measure.* Consider, for example, whether people self-report poverty, Hispanic ethnicity or unemployment, or whether someone else determines this. For self-reports, specify the exact question(s) asked. If someone else determines this, identify the formula or instructions used.

5. *Evaluate this measure, as related to your conceptual definition*. Who is left out of this measurement, or who is included who should not be? Is the measure inaccurate or biased in some way? Does it have ‘construct validity’ – is it a good measure of your concept? If there are problems, what alternative measurement do you propose?

HAND IN: A 2-3 page memo, double-spaced, in which you:

- *(1st paragraph)* Provide your conceptual definition (one sentence) and justify it in one or two additional sentences.
- *(2nd paragraph)* Report on the actual empirical measure mandated for official US government use. Be as specific as possible.
- *(3rd paragraph)* Provide your evaluation of the measure, as it relates to your conceptual definition. Discuss strengths and weakness of the measure. (2 paragraphs are okay)
- *(last paragraph)* If you think the US government should adopt an alternative measure, provide your alternative here. Be as precise as possible (e.g. provide exact question wording, if your measure will be based on people’s self-reports).

Project 2 – Linking Empirical Data to Concepts **10%**
(individual project, DUE 3pm, Wednesday, Oct. 7)

GOAL: To use an empirical analysis of some visual material to understand conceptualization and measurement in social science research, as well as inductive and deductive thinking.

1. *Pick a visual material that can be photocopied or printed to hardcopy*, e.g., a magazine ad, a picture book illustration, a greeting card, a billboard, a mural, a movie poster, etc. (It has to be a still image that you can attach to your assignment.) The visual should, to your mind, provide some sense of social distinction between two (or more) "types" of people. You can use one visual with both types appearing, or two similar visuals with one type each (e.g., two car ads).

2. *Examine the visual and analyze the elements* that seem to communicate, to you, social distinctions. Consider all elements in the visual, including dress, sense of action, placement of images, symbols and any other techniques used to convey the message of distinct types of people.

3. *Identify two general concepts* from the visual that you could use to name the social distinctions you perceive. You could think of these concepts as roles or labels people might use to define a certain class of individual. Examples might be "rich professional," "deviant," "soccer mom," "jock," "queer," "model minority," "foreigner," etc. Define these concepts as a sociologist would define a theoretical concept.

4. *Provide a set of "measures" that someone could use to identify your concepts in another visual*. [These measures do not need to be in your advertisement.] Another researcher should be able to use your general definition and your specific measures to analyze other images consistent with your conceptualization.

HAND IN: The visual(s) and a 2-3 page analysis, double-spaced, in which you:

- *(1-2 paragraphs)* Identify and define your two general concepts for the social categories or distinctions that you have constructed from your visual.
- (*2-3 paragraphs*) Explain which elements in the visual(s) signal these concepts. You should carefully and concretely explain what "empirical data" (visual elements) lead to your conclusions regarding the social distinctions communicated.
- *Discuss how you would apply these general concepts elsewhere* by giving a list of at least five things you could concretely "measure" (i.e., look for) in another visual to see whether your concepts apply elsewhere. Someone should be able to easily apply your measurement strategy to another visual.

Project 3 – Social Hierarchy in Public Space **10%**
(partial partner project, DUE 3pm, Wednesday October 28)

GOAL: To practice participant observation by doing careful observation of human interaction, writing field notes, sorting through observations and drawing conclusions from observations.

One of the central concerns of sociology is the idea of social hierarchy and inequality. How are hierarchy and inequality manifested in our social world? For this project, we will define social hierarchy as differential access to some thing, e.g., to public space, to people's concern or attention, to resources, or to a social position based on social characteristics.

1. *Decide, with a partner, what type of public space you will observe together.* You must go at least three blocks away from campus! You can ride on a bus line or some other public transit, or go to a public place like a coffee shop, airport, sporting event, farmers' market, etc. Choose a place where you can legitimately stay *at least* 45 minutes. Be attentive to the time that you observe; different people use public space at different times. Consider, before going into the field, what observations might be examples of social hierarchy. Once in the field, be open to any interactions, facial expressions, verbal comments or other phenomena that might indicate social hierarchy. For example, who sits where? How do people react to those around them? Do reactions vary by gender, race, age, style of clothing or other factors?

2. Visit the public place with your partner and *unobtrusively take short notes*, if you can. These can be written or oral, on paper, computer, or phone. Each partner should take his/her own notes. These will form the basis for the detailed field notes you will write after leaving the site.

3. *Write up your field notes immediately after leaving the field*. Your field notes should be a **detailed narrative** of what you observed. The more detail, the better.

4. *Code your field notes*. Read through your field notes and code (with different colored pens or pencils) important observations that highlight social hierarchy. For coding, underline or highlight a particular observation and write the related code in the margins.

5. *Share your detailed notes and coding with your partner*. Discuss similarities and differences in what you saw and how you interpreted your observations.

HAND IN: Your detailed field notes and coding, and a 3-5 page report, double-spaced, in which:

- (*1st paragraph*) – Describe your field site and explain why you chose it to study social distinctions, as well as your timing, and how this might affect your observations.
- (*3-5 paragraphs*) – Considering the definition of social hierarchy, above, discuss how you identified social hierarchy in the field. Be specific and give examples from your observations. What did you look for as markers of social hierarchy, and why?
- (*2-3 paragraphs*) Reflect on similarities and differences between your observations and coding as compared to your partner's. If there are differences, why might these occur? Do these differences undermine the 'scientific' nature of ethnography? Why or why not?

Each partner hands-in their own field notes and write-up, but you are encouraged to share ideas for the write-up to produce a more thoughtful reflection. Being frank about things you missed, or things you learned as you considered your partner's notes, is as important as good field notes.

Project 4 – Questionnaire Development **(group project, DUE 3pm Th., Nov. 12)** **10%**

<u>GOAL</u>: To practice writing an interview questionnaire and think through research design and measurement for self-report data.

General research question: How do our actions and the institutions around us reinforce or breakdown the formation of particular social groups?

Building on prior projects, we will ask people about their actions (e.g., their choice of housing or the clubs they join) and the institutions around them (e.g., being part of a particular religious faith or going to UC-Berkeley versus another school) to see how actions and institutions reinforce or undermine the creation of social groups. There are two parts to this assignment.

Part I: Further specify the research question and develop a questionnaire:

1. *Further specify the research question.* Working in groups of two or three, further specify a research question. For example, "Do Latinos have more friendships with non-Latinos at Berkeley than in their high schools?" Or, "Are sorority members' friends more likely to be of the same socio-economic background than non-sorority students' friends?" This question will be the basis for your study.
2. *Speculate about possible answers and write these up at hypotheses.* Come up with at least one hypothesis (or two competing hypotheses) about the possible answer. E.g., "Latino students at Berkeley will have more non-Latino friends than in high school because California high schools tend to be segregated, so they will have fewer opportunities for non-Latino friendships in high school than at college." OR "Latino students will have fewer non-Latino friendships at Berkeley because feelings of alienation at Berkeley will push Latino students to invest in supportive friendships with other Latinos." These hypotheses should be testable – you should be able to collect interview data that will help test whether your proposed answers are correct or not.
3. *Design a questionnaire to evaluate your research question and test your hypotheses.* The questionnaire must collect data for the dependent variable (e.g., How many non-Latino friends did the respondent have in high school? At Berkeley?), and it must gather data to test the hypothesized independent variables (e.g., What was the demographic makeup of the respondent's high school? Does the respondent feel alienated at Berkeley?)

The questionnaire should contain the following:

- *3-10 questions of your own creation, including at least one open-ended question and one closed-ended question.* In developing your questions, be clear about the purpose of each question. You may want to try out two similar questions with different wording to see whether responses vary, or you can ask completely distinct questions. If you want to provide respondents with response options, think about which options you will give them and why. You may consult other research studies to look at examples used by others.
- *Include the 2010 Census questions on race, Hispanic ethnicity and age.* (For exact wording, see https://www.census.gov/schools/pdf/2010form_info.pdf.) You can put these questions anywhere on your questionnaire. Think about the effects of question order.

Part II: Write up an explanation of the questionnaire, to be handed-in:

1. Begin with an *introductory paragraph* that explains the research question you are trying to answer and your hypotheses. Define the main concepts underlying your question and analysis (e.g., “friendship”, “alienation”).

2. Next, *for each question on your questionnaire* (other than the census questions) discuss:

- **Question wording:** Explain why you included the question. What concept or aspect of a concept are you measuring? Why did you word the question this way?
- **Question measurement:** Why did you measure the question this way? Specify why open or close-ended, and for closed, what type of variable are you using (nominal, ordinal, interval or ratio) and why.

3. *For each of the census questions*, list what type of variable it is: nominal, ordinal, interval or ratio.

4. At the end of your assignment, discuss *question order*. Why did you put these questions (yours and the Census questions) in the order presented?

→ You must also hand-in the *questionnaire in the format you will use for the research study*. This can be a hardcopy survey on paper that you will distribute, or printed screen shots of an on-line survey, using SurveyMonkey or something similar. Make sure that the format is easy to read and will not be difficult for respondents to answer.

Each research team will hand in one copy of the questionnaire and one explanation of the questionnaire. You will be graded on the soundness of your questionnaire, the accuracy of your identification of open/close-ended, nominal/ordinal, etc., and the thoughtfulness of your explanation for the questionnaire. Do you make a good argument for having each question, and is the questionnaire well-constructed given your research question and hypotheses?

Project 5 – Reporting Survey Results **(group project, DUE 3pm, Friday, Dec. 4) 15%**

GOAL: This assignment asks you to administer, code and report data from an interview project.

1. *Administer the questionnaire*. With the same partner(s) as in Project 4, administer your questionnaire to at least 20-30 people (you each interview 10 people, perhaps in different institutions). You may choose respondents in any way, consistent with your research question. You can have people fill out hard-copies of the questionnaire, use an electronic format, or do in-person interviews where you record their answers. Keep track of your sampling procedures.

2. *Code and summarize your data.*
   - For *closed-ended questions*, add up how many people gave a response for each offered category. If you allowed respondents to answer "other," you must decide whether you want to add categories or just keep the "other" category.
   - For *open-ended questions*, you must decide whether quantitative coding is useful. If not, assign qualitative codes to the answers.

3. Write a *report of your findings (maximum 10 pages, including tables)*. Include:
   - An introduction that summarizes (in one or two paragraphs) your research questions and your hypotheses. Here you introduce the reader to your topic and project.
   - Describe your sampling & data collection methods: Who did you interview and how?
   - Describe your data. Present a table(s) that summarize the answers for each question asked and provide a ***brief*** narrative description of the data in the text.
     - For each closed-ended question, you need a univariate summary:
       - Nominal variables: % of respondents for each category
       - Ordinal variables: % of respondents for each category
       - Interval variables: median response
       - Ratio: median or mean response
     - For open-ended questions, describe data you cannot code quantitatively.
   - Present at least one bivariate (or multivariate) table cross-tabulating two (or more) variables related to your research question (a DV and IV). You must include an explanation of what the results of the bivariate analysis suggest.
   - Compare your data for the three census questions with the values for the total Berkeley population. [Find Berkeley population data using the US Census QuickFacts webpage: http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06000.html.] Explain why your sample does not represent the general population of Berkeley (think about sampling methodology). What population might it be closer to?
   - Finally, discuss your findings more broadly (1-2 pages). Was your hypothesis supported? Why (not)? What was noteworthy? What might a future study test?

You must submit your report and **all** survey responses (completed questionnaires). You will be graded on your ability to correctly code and present the responses, your explanation of the survey's limitations and your discussion of your findings.

SECTION ASSIGNMENTS (P/NP)

#1 – Annotating a research article

DUE: Wed Sept 9/ Thurs Sept 10

GOAL: To help you read and understand academic research articles.

ASSIGNMENT: Print out the Saperstein/Penner 2012 AJS article and show that you have taken steps to identifying key parts of a research article. You can use electronic mark-ups or highlighter and pen. You must hand in a **hard copy** of the article (2-pages per sheet or double sided is fine) with annotations. Write your full name and student ID on the first page of the article to get credit.

ANNOTATIONS (listed in order as it appears in the text):

- Highlight or star key research question(s)
- Highlight or star key argument(s) as stated in introduction
- Identify where literature review/ theory section starts
- Highlight definition of two key concepts: racial identification & racial classification
- Identify the correlations (relationships) they investigate: what might be linked to what?
- Highlight core empirical data used in the analysis
- Identify the type of data: observation, self-reports, documents/artifacts, “social accounting”
- Highlight where they talk about the actual measurement of their DVs (outcomes)
- Highlight where they talk about or list the actual measurement of “social position” IVs
- Highlight where the authors begin to talk about the findings from their analysis

#2 – Concepts and Coding

DUE: Mon Sept 28/ Tues Sept 29

GOAL: To explore the relationship between concepts and coding in a systematic way.

ASSIGNMENT: Review the Crabb & Marciano reading, lecture materials and Gordon’s chapter on content analysis (Ch. 7). On **one** piece of paper that you load to bCourses and bring to the start of section, answer the questions below; bullet-points are fine.

SUMMARIZE the link between concepts and coding in this article by:

- Quote the conceptual definition of “production artifact” in the article (with page #)
- Provide examples from the article about coding for production artifacts (with page #)
- Quote the conceptual definition of “household artifact” in the article (with page#)
- Provide examples from the article about coding for household artifacts (with page #)
- Quote the conceptual definition of “character gender” in the article (with page #)
- Provide examples from the article about coding for gender (with page #)
- Evaluate and explain in 2-4 sentences whether the authors provide enough information that you feel that you could replicate their coding or extend it to more recent books.

#3 – Understanding Experiments DUE: Mon Oct 12 or 13

GOAL: To help you read sociology articles using an experimental design.

ASSIGNMENT: Review the readings and lecture materials about experiments to understand how they work, their strengths and their limits. Read EITHER the Correll, et al. reading OR the Willer, et al. reading. Fill out the reading summary sheet (on bCourses) for this article by hand or electronically; bullet points are fine. Upload your summary to bCourses and bring a hardcopy to the start of section.

#4 – Ethical Considerations DUE: Mon Nov 2 or 3

GOAL: To have you to think through the ethical responsibilities of social science researchers.

ASSIGNMENT: Review the Gordon book and lecture notes on ethical considerations, and review the Introduction and Chapter 3 of Waters's book *Black Identities*. Then read and reflect on Waters's discussion of doing the research in her methodological appendix. Upload your 1-2 page memo (single-spaced) to bCourses and bring a hard copy to the start of section.

The memo should do the following:

- Identify and define two ethical issues raised in lecture and/or the Gordon textbook.
- Apply these ethical issues to Waters's appendix: what did she decide to do (or not do)?
- Evaluate her choice – do you think this was the right choice? Why (not)?
- Identify one additional ethical issue that struck you in Waters's candid discussion of the research process. Why did this issue jump out at you?

#5 – Reading Statistics in Sociology DUE: Wed Nov 18 or 19

GOAL: To apply lecture material and readings on statistics to sociological research.

ASSIGNMENT: Print out p. 970 of the Pager reading and analyze Table B1.

Upload and hand-in, on a separate sheet of paper, answers to the following questions:

- What is the dependent or outcome variable(s)?
- What is the independent or explanatory variable(s)?
- What control variables were included in the model? What does this mean, in ordinary words?
- In ordinary words, what does it mean that the coefficients in this table are negative?
- What does "SE" mean in "Robust SE," the heading of the last column?
- In ordinary words, what does it mean that the numbers .24 and .28 have *** beside them?
- What does "P < .001" mean at the bottom of the table?

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I. READING

Author(s)	
Title	

II. SUMMARY

Research question(s) asked (can include background information & motivation)	
Existing Literature/ Hypotheses (including the explanatory [IV] and outcome [DV] variables, if applicable, or key concepts of interest)	
Data set & Methodology (type of data: social artifacts, self reports, observations, social accounting) (source & description of data) (type of research – experiments; survey [type of sampling?]; in-depth interviews; participant observation; historical/ comparative)	
Analysis & Argument (identify how the argument is made, e.g., through inductive coding, through statistical analysis) (replicate the key argument(s) in your own words)	

III. EVALUATION /CRITIQUE

Is the research sound? Are you convinced? (Look carefully at conceptualization, measurement, data collection, sampling, type of analysis and alternative explanations.) (Do the conclusions seem reasonable? If not, how might the findings differ if the research had been done differently or by thinking differently?)	