

Introduction to Sociology

I. Chapter 2's Global Focus: Mexico and the Border Wall



II. Three Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

III. Sociology and Scientific Method



IV. Six Steps in the Research Process

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Berlin Wall

The Mexican Border Wall as a sociological subject

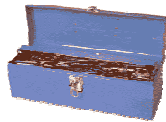
- *in terms of theories*
- *in terms of methods*



Mexican Border "Fence"

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Thinking about Theory and Methods



- *theories and methods are both part of a sociologist's toolkit*
- *theories are things to be used at every stage of research—not just an outcome at the end*
- *most sociologists draw on different theories for different purposes*

Core Concept 2: Functionalist Theory

Discussion: what is the core idea of this sociological perspective?



Emile Durkheim

Some Key Concepts in Functionalist Theory

- manifest vs. latent functions
- functions vs. dysfunctions

	Manifest	Latent
Functional	Manifest function	Latent function
Dysfunctional	Manifest dysfunction	Latent dysfunction

How do these concepts contribute to our understanding of the Mexican border wall?

Core Concept 3: Conflict Theory

Discussion: what is the core idea of this sociological perspective?



Karl Marx



Max Weber

Some Key Concepts in Conflict Theory

- *social inequality—the most important social fact in society*
- *Inequality gives rise to social classes and other social groups*
- *Conflict between classes and other social groups is the main engine of social change*
- *Dominant classes try to disguise inequality and exploitation through “facades of legitimacy” (also called “ideologies”)*

Discussion: How do the concepts of conflict theory contribute to our understanding of the Mexican border wall?



Core Concept 4: Symbolic Interactionist Theory

Discussion: what is the core idea of this sociological perspective?



George Herbert Mead



Herbert Blumer

Some Key Concepts in Social Interactionist Theory

- a focus on *meaning*, on how people make sense of the world
- meaning is created through an active process of social interaction
- a process of interpretation and response
- a focus on symbolic communication
- “negotiated order” and definition of the situation

Discussion: How do the concepts of symbolic interactionist theory contribute to our understanding of the Mexican border wall?



Summary of Strengths and Weaknesses of these three perspectives

Figure 2.3 (p. 39)

Core Concept 5: what's the key point?

An additional issue: sociology's "moving target"



Six Steps in the Research Process

Step 1: Defining the Topic for Investigation

- *sociological investigation generally begins with wondering about something*
- *most research involves a research question*
- *Discuss: Examples of research questions about undocumented immigrants*

Step 2: Reviewing the Literature

- *generally done before the research process begins—why?*
- *researcher returns to the literature—to do what?*
- *what does "the literature" generally consist of?*

Step 3: Identifying and Defining Core Concepts

- *what might be useful concepts for research on undocumented immigrants?*



Step 4: Choosing a Research Design and Data Gathering Strategies

- *what the researcher is going to study*
- *how the researcher is going to collect data*
- *identifying variables and specifying hypotheses*

What the researcher is going to study

What unit of analysis?

What units of analysis might a researcher sample for research on Mexican immigrants?

What population of cases is targeted?

Why sociologists use samples

Representative samples

Random samples

Do sociologists ever use non-representative samples?

Methods of Data Collection

Self-administered questionnaires

Interviews (structured vs. unstructured)

Observation (participant vs. non-participant)

Secondary Sources and Archival Data

The issue of the Hawthorne Effect



Identifying Variables and Specifying Hypotheses

Variables

Dependent and independent variables

Hypotheses (note proper form)

Operationalization and Operational definitions

Reliability

Validity

Steps 5-6: Analyzing Data and Drawing Conclusions

Special Focus on making causal arguments



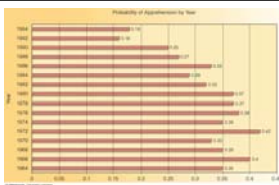
Step 5: Analyzing the Data and Drawing Conclusions

• *Ch. 2 says little about data analysis—but you'll learn a lot about it through the MicroCase exercises*

• **Data Presentation**

- *mean, mode, median (Table 2.1)*
- *ways of visualizing data (Figure 2.4)*

Year	Probability of Apprehension
1964	0.35
1966	0.40
1968	0.35
1970	0.33
1972	0.42
1974	0.35
1976	0.38
1978	0.37
1980	0.37
1982	0.32
1984	0.29
1986	0.33
1988	0.27
1990	0.25
1992	0.16
1994	0.18



Three ways of presenting the same data

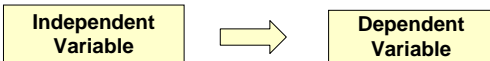
Generalizability

- *what is this issue about?*
- *Discuss: the importance of sample and response rate*



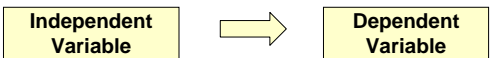
Drawing Conclusions

- *Description. Gives us the conceptual tools to “see” social reality more fully. E.g. a typology of border crossing strategies, a description of how Mexicans perceive the border wall, etc.*
- *Explanation. Most sociological theory attempts to identify causal interrelationships*

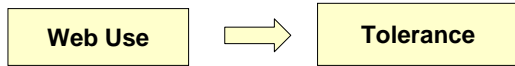


Criteria of Causation

- 1) *Time Order*
independent variable must be an antecedent variable
- 2) *Correlation*
a necessary but not sufficient condition
- 3) *Non-spuriousness*
ruling out alternative explanations



Time Order is Not Always Obvious

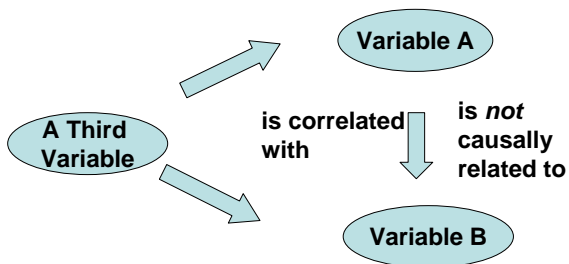


*A finding from the 2000 General Social Survey
But which comes first?*

Measuring Correlations

- *Measures of correlation measure the strength of the association of two or more variables*
- *Correlation coefficients vary from -1.0 to +1.0*
- *They must be examined for statistical significance*
- *Positive and negative correlations can both indicate causal relations*
- *But correlation does not always indicate causation*

Nonspuriousness: Is the correlation “spurious”?



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What is “spurious” about a spurious correlation is not the correlation. The correlation is real. It is the causal interpretation which is spurious.

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Question: Is this a causal relationship or a spurious correlation?

Fire Trucks



Amount of Fire Damage



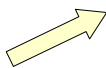
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Some Spurious Correlations



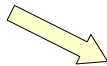
• marijuana use and health

Youth



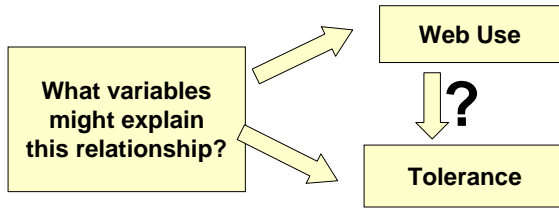
Marijuana Use

X

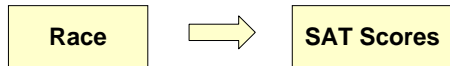


Good health

Is this correlation spurious?



What about this?



Ferrante: be especially wary about imputing causal influence to ascribed characteristics
