

**lecture 12:**

*participant observation, interviews,  
and other qualitative methods*

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**how do we know the social facts?**

- **3 basic sources**
  - **government and official statistics**
    - FBI's UCR, EEOC, Census...
  - **surveys**
    - GSS, MTF, NLSY,
  - **qualitative approaches**
    - field research, intensive interviews, archival work ...
- **Bias, validity and reliability**

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**official statistics**

- **Adlers:**
  - cheap/easy (?)
  - often include population/not sample
  - validity and systematic biases
  - "shallow and unreliable"
- **Uggen:**
  - extremely valuable
  - often very reliable
  - changes tell us a lot about deviance

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### examples

- EEOC - equal employment opportunity commission
  - discrimination as deviance
  - changes in who files and why
- UCR - uniform crime reports
- Imprisonment
- Suicide (NIMH)
- Priest sexual abuse (?)
- MN voting and recidivism records

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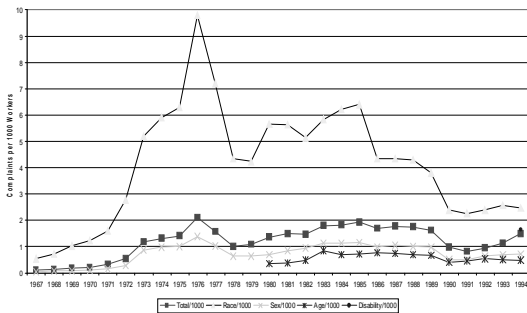
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EEOC Complaints 1967-1994 (Wakelield & Uggen 2004)



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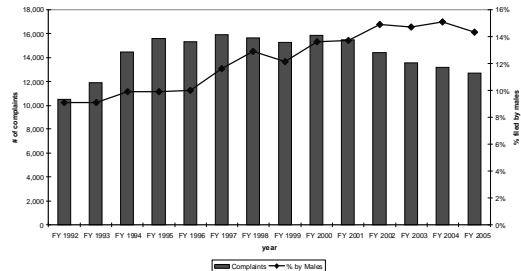
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sexual harassment complaints to EEOC



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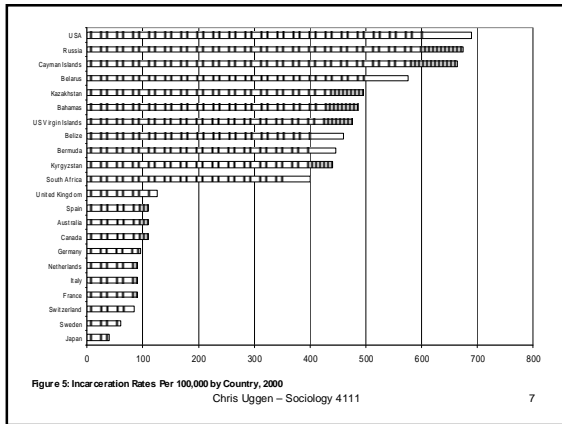
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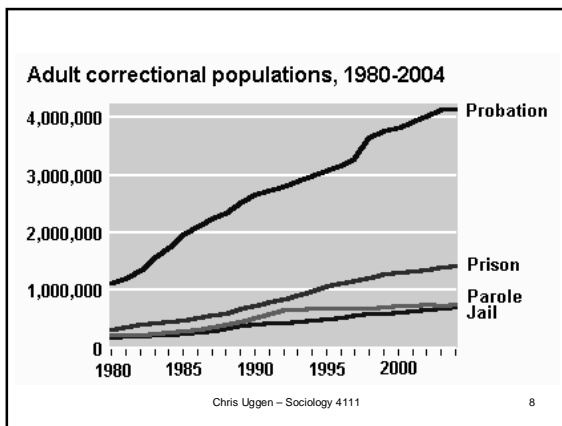
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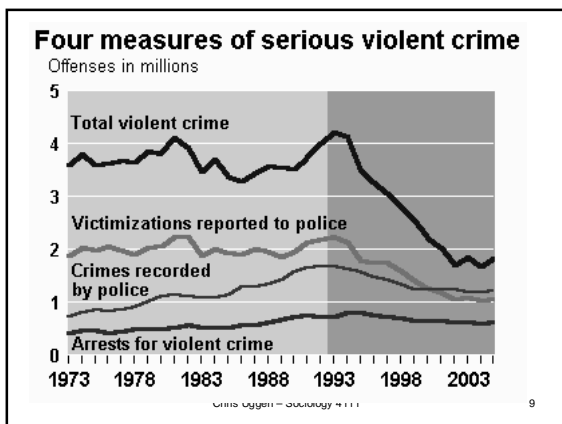
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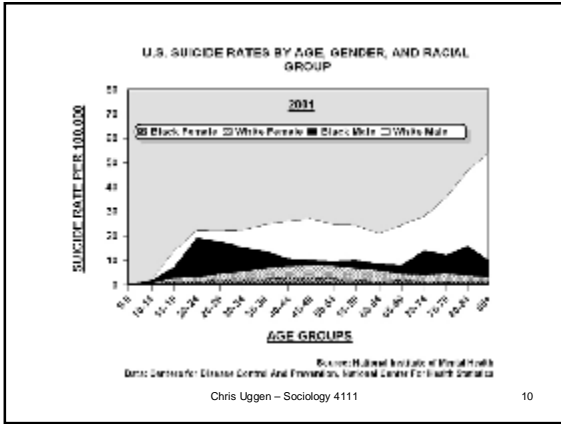
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### child abuse reporting

Douglas Besharov and Lisa Laumann 1996

- “measurement artifact” in reporting trends
  - legal change: professionals (who?) must report physical abuse and neglect, sexual abuse, maltreatment
  - reported cases rose from 150,000 in 1960 to 3,000,000 in 1993
  - but deaths fell from 5,000 to 1,000 per year
- Underreporting (50%?) vs. rising number of unsubstantiated cases (65%)
- 25-50% of child abuse deaths were cases previously known to authorities

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### summary

- value of “official data”
  - a “baseline” that must be addressed
  - managing bias
    - magnitude and direction
  - need for social science data series
  - deviance and deviance statistics are both social constructions
  - weak or non-existent for some purposes
- supplementing with independent sources of data

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**II. surveys on deviance**

- sampling
- response bias and internal validity
- "operationalization"
  - "drinks or dinner"
- Causality: Adlers v. Uggan (p. 99)
  - Experiments best, but longitudinal surveys can speak to causality (drugs cause crime)

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**(Ed.) Laumann's 1992 Sex Survey**

- National Health and Social Life Survey
  - sampling: EPSEM
  - sample size (n) = 3,432
  - response rate: 80%
  - mode: face-to-face
  - cost: \$450/interview; 220 interviewers
  - training: neutral
  - terminology: non-technical
  - confidentiality
- General public will talk about sex

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**Sexual norms in NHLS (% agree)**

1. Premarital sex is always wrong:	20%
2. Premarital sex among teenagers is always wrong	61%
3. Extramarital sex is always wrong	77%
4. Same-gender sex is always wrong	65%
5. There should be laws against the sale of pornography to adults	34%
6. I would not have sex with someone unless I was in love with them	66%
7. A woman should be able to obtain a legal abortion if she was raped	88%
8. A woman should be able to obtain a legal abortion if she wants for any reason	52%

-source: Michael et al., 1994

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**substance use - Michigan's  
"Monitoring the Future" survey**

- **Sample:** 50,000 students in 400 schools each year since 1975
- **Data:** use, availability, perceived dangerousness, and disapproval
- **Trends:** illicit use peaked around 1980, declined until 1992, rose to 1996, decline since
  - Lifetime meth use declining - from 8.2% in 1999 to 4.5% in 2005 (<1% in past 30 days)

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**lifetime use: 2003 12<sup>th</sup> graders**

• Alcohol	77%
• Cigarettes	54%
• Any illicit drug	51%
• Marijuana	46%
• Amphetamines	14%
• Tranquilizers	10%
• Cocaine	8%
• MDMA (X)	8%
• LSD	6%
• Methamphetamine	6%
• Steroids	4%

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**summary**

- **critique**
  - Internal validity (sometimes external)
  - Reporting biases
- **value**
  - External validity/generalizability
  - Independent of social control
  - How else would we know?

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**qualitative methods**

- **Adlers:**
  - Problems with surveys and official
  - Need "deeper" or "richer" data
- **Field research - observe deviance in its natural setting**
  - degrees of participation
    - *Tearoom Trade* and covert participation
  - degrees of subjectivity

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**varieties**

- case studies (e.g., a life history)
- focus groups (e.g., community standards)
- passive observation
- intensive interviewing (e.g., harassers or harassed)
- qualitative historical and comparative work (but hist/comp can also be quantitative)
- many more...

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**adler: dealers and smugglers**

- **Field research - "only way to acquire accurate knowledge about deviant behavior" (?)**
  - "difficult hours and dangerous situations"
  - participation and lawbreaking
  - safety and trust
  - 1 ton pot/week; 40 kilos of coke every few months
- **taped life histories (10-30 hours; 6 yrs)**
- **sampling: snowball**
- **managing bias?**

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**jody miller – girls in gangs**

- **Multi-method: survey and intensive interviews with 46 female gang members and non-members**
  - Learning from interviews v. surveys
- **Violence: protection and victimization**
  - Status: violence and connections
  - Gender inequality and devaluation
    - Consequences of “sexed in” v. beat in;
    - violent gang rape – “could have just killed her”
  - Subcultural norms: “weak” v. “hard”

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**methods summary**

- **Judge method and data**
  - relative to existing knowledge
  - likely magnitude and direction of bias
  - right tool for the job?
- **More multi-method work today**
  - **Sexual harassment:** survey (1000), plus interview with 33 based on responses
  - **Voting:**
    - official statistics on those affected
    - surveys to predict voting; attitudes; recidivism; public opinion
    - qualitative historical research to get laws, interviews with prisoners to get meaning

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**methods exercise**

- **Work together in groups of 3-5 to answer the questions**
- **The goal is to get you thinking concretely about how we learn the social facts in (your) specific area of deviance**
- **Turn in one sheet signed by all**

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**Best: labeling's legacy**

- social constructionism
- medicalization
- social movements
- transactions
- deviant careers
- emotions
- discourse and culture
- street ethnographies
- criminology

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**next - exam**

- **Review Session**
  - Read Best: 5. Revival of Criminology & Neglect of Deviance pp. 71-87
- **Midterm Examination** covering material through week 6

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