

Goode Chapter 6

Studying Drug Use

Social Research on Drug Use

- There are lots of data sources on drug use; each has its own strengths and limitations
- Hard to find reliable/creditable information
- Hard to find people who use drugs or to get them to talk to you and tell you the truth
- Two research methods
 - Triangulation = examining a phenomenon by using two or more independent data sources
 - Multiple Confirmation = verifying that a given proposition is true through the use of two or more data sources

Rates of Drug Use

- Social scientists want to know who use drugs, why, with what frequency, and with what consequences
- 4 main sources of information on drug use/abuse:
 1. ADAM
 2. DAWN
 3. MTF
 4. National Survey on Drug Use and Health
- 5th source of information on drug use/abuse is Pulse Check

1. ADAM

- Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program (ADAM) = a federally sponsored, ongoing data-collection program that drug tests (urine sample) and interviews a sample of persons arrested in jails located in metropolitan areas; high response rate - no legal consequences of testing positive or admitting use
- Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program (ADAM) = a federally sponsored, ongoing data-collection program that drug tests (urine sample) and interviews a sample of persons arrested in jails located in metropolitan areas; high response rate - no legal consequences of testing positive or admitting use
- ADAM gets at populations that are inaccessible by means of more conventional research methods, such as surveys; may not live in conventional households
- What does ADAM data tell us?
 - Compared with cross-section of population at large - most of whom are not criminal - arrestees (criminal offenders) are more likely to use psychoactive drugs
- Limitations of ADAM?

2. DAWN

- Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) = an ongoing, federally sponsored data collection program that tabulates the number of drug-related admissions to emergency

departments (ED reports), as reported by metropolitan hospitals and clinics, and the number of drug-related deaths, as reported by metropolitan medical examiners (ME reports)

- ED episode = a specific incident reported to the DAWN of an untoward, drug-related experience that results in the user presenting him/herself to metropolitan clinics and hospitals for medical or psychiatric treatment
- ED mention = the mention of a specific drug in a specific incident reported to the DAWN program
- ED report = reports issued by DAWN emergency departments on drug episodes
- ME episode = a specific incident reported to DAWN of a drug-related death
- ME mention = the mention of a specific drug in a specific incident reported to DAWN of a drug-related death
- ME reports = reports issued by medical examiners on the number of drug-related deaths that took place in a given metropolitan area
- DAWN reports not standardized; becoming more so in recent years
- DAWN tabulates only acute drug reactions; does not tally chronic effects of drugs
- 3 drugs appear consistently in both ED and ME figures; DAWN's Big Three = cocaine, heroin, and alcohol-in-combination

3. MTF

- Monitoring the Future (MTF) Survey = an ongoing, federally sponsored data collection program that entails administering questionnaires on drug use to high school seniors (since 1975), young adults not in college (since 1977), college students (since 1980), and eighth and tenth graders (since 1980); measures use of and attitudes toward legal/illegal drugs
- Conducted by University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research
- Surveys conducted in classrooms; self-administered questionnaires
- For each drug, 4 levels of use surveyed: lifetime prevalence (ever used), annual prevalence (past year), 30-day prevalence (past month), daily use (20 or more days in past month)
- MTF data doesn't include absentees from school and dropouts
- MTF samples are huge and reasonably representative of target population

4. NSDUH

- National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) = an ongoing, federally sponsored door-to-door or telephone interview and questionnaire study on drug use of a representative sample of the American population ages 12 and older
- Sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- Provides national estimates of the rates of use, number of users, and other measures related to the use of illicit drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, and other tobacco products

- Like MTF, NSDUH asks about lifetime prevalence, annual prevalence, 30-day prevalence, daily use; divides sample into 3 groups: youths ages 12 to 17, young adults ages 18 to 25, older adults ages 26 and older
- Sample large enough to provide reliable estimates of drug use in each state
- NSDUH is less useful for subsamples in the population of drug users that are statistically rare

Summary

- All data sources are flawed or incomplete, meaning we have to examine them carefully and critically.
- Researchers use “triangulation” to put multiple sources together, and “multiple confirmation” is when the sources agree.
- Researchers are interested in “incidence figures”, or the occurrence of drug use within a specific period of time.
- Sample size and representativeness are a more serious problem than respondent lying.
- “Descriptive” statistics describe something in quantitative terms and “inferential” statistics measure “cause-and-effect” relationships.
- Sales records help answer how many people use legal drugs, and ADAM II, DAWN, MTF, and NSDUH measure illicit drug usage.