

# DATA COLLECTION +

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Government 3990: Statistics in the Social Science

# DATA COLLECTION + OBSERVATIONAL STUDIES AND EXPERIMENTS

USE A SAMPLE TO MAKE INFERENCES  
ABOUT THE POPULATION

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## Your Turn

Suppose we want to know how many offspring female lemurs have, on average. It's not feasible to obtain offspring data from on all female lemurs, so we use data from the Cornell Lemur Center. We use the sample mean from these data as an estimate for the unknown population mean. Can you see any limitations to using data from the Cornell Lemur Center to make inferences about all lemurs?

# SAMPLING IS NATURAL



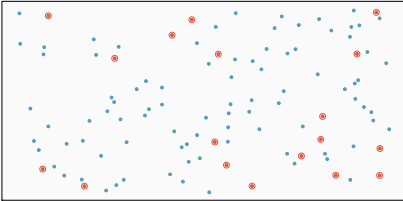
- When you taste a spoonful of soup and decide the spoonful you tasted isn't salty enough, that's **exploratory analysis**
- If you generalize and conclude that your entire soup needs salt, that's an **inference**
- For your inference to be valid, the spoonful you tasted (the sample) needs to be **representative** of the entire pot (the population)

IDEALLY USE A SIMPLE RANDOM SAMPLE,  
STRATIFY TO CONTROL FOR A VARIABLE,  
AND CLUSTER TO MAKE SAMPLING EASIER

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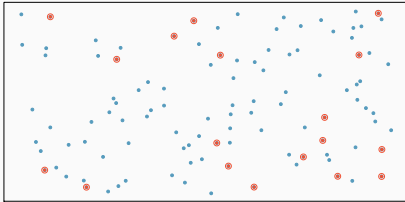
Simple random:

Drawing names from a hat



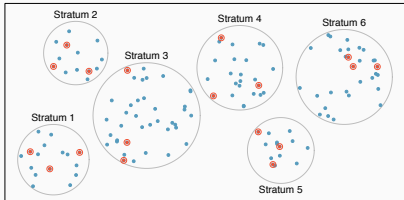
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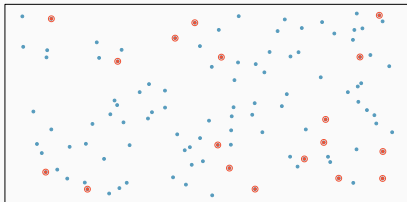
## Stratified: homogenous strata

Stratify to control for SES



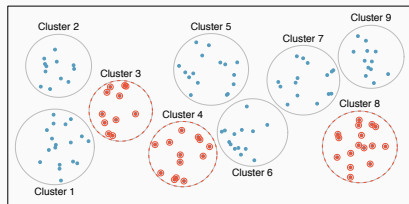
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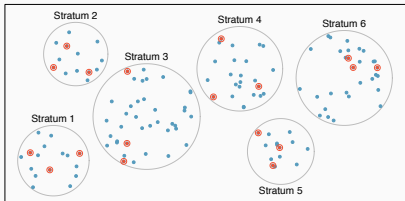
## Cluster: heterogenous clusters

Sample all chosen clusters



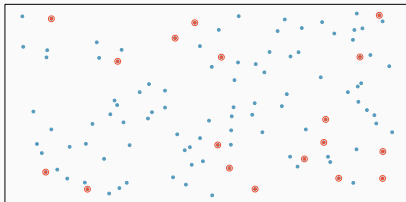
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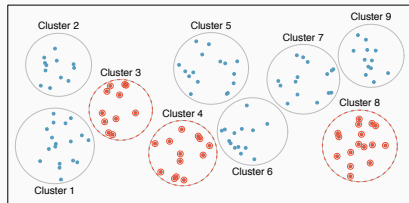
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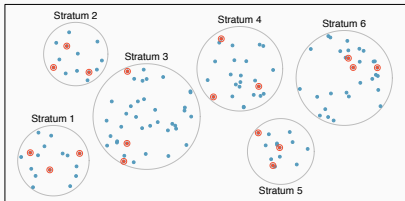
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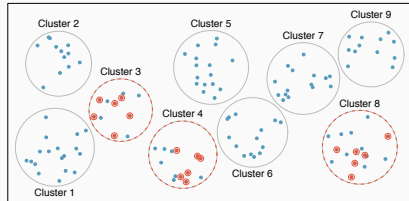
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## Multistage:

Random sample in chosen clusters



## Your Turn

A city council has requested a household survey be conducted in a suburban area of their city. The area is broken into many distinct and unique neighborhoods, some including large homes, some with only apartments, and others a diverse mixture of housing structures. Which approach would likely be the *least* effective?

- (a) Simple random sampling
- (b) Stratified sampling, where each stratum is a neighborhood
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- **Convenience sample:** Individuals who are easily accessible are more likely to be included in the sample

## Your Turn

A school district is considering whether it will no longer allow high school students to park at school after two recent accidents where students were severely injured. As a first step, they survey parents by mail, asking them whether or not the parents would object to this policy change. Of 6,000 surveys that go out, 1,200 are returned. Of these 1,200 surveys that were completed, 960 agreed with the policy change and 240 disagreed. Which of the following statements are true?

- I. Some of the mailings may have never reached the parents.
- II. Overall, the school district has strong support from parents to move forward with the policy approval.
- III. It is possible that majority of the parents of high school students disagree with the policy change.
- IV. The survey results are unlikely to be biased because all parents were mailed a survey.

(a) Only I      (b) I and II      (c) I and III      (d) III and IV      (e) Only IV

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EXPERIMENTS USE RANDOM  
ASSIGNMENT TO TREATMENT GROUPS,  
OBSERVATIONAL STUDIES DO NOT

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What type of study is this? What is the scope of inference (causality / generalizability)?<sup>1</sup>

## ***Facebook Tinkers With Users' Emotions in News Feed Experiment, Stirring Outcry***

By VINDU GOEL JUNE 29, 2014

**The New York Times**

In [an academic paper](#) published in conjunction with two university researchers, the company reported that, for one week in January 2012, it had altered the number of positive and negative posts in the news feeds of 689,003 randomly selected users to see what effect the changes had on the tone of the posts the recipients then wrote.

The researchers found that moods were contagious. The people who saw more positive posts responded by writing more positive posts. Similarly, seeing more negative content prompted the viewers to be more negative in their own posts.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/30/technology/facebook-tinkers-with-users-emotions-in-news-feed-experiment-stirring-outcry.html>

## 4. EXPERIMENTS USE RANDOM ASSIGNMENT TO TREATMENT GROUPS, OBSERVATIONAL STUDIES DO NOT

### Your Turn

A study that surveyed a random sample of otherwise healthy adults found that people are more likely to get muscle cramps when they're stressed. The study also noted that people drink more coffee and sleep less when they're stressed. What type of study is this?

What is the conclusion of the study?

Can this study be used to conclude a causal relationship between increased stress and muscle cramps?

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*Muscle cramps might also be due to increased caffeine consumption*

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Why is this important? Can you think of other variables to block for?

RANDOM SAMPLING HELPS  
GENERALIZABILITY, RANDOM  
ASSIGNMENT HELPS CAUSALITY

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## 6. RANDOM SAMPLING HELPS GENERALIZABILITY, RANDOM ASSIGNMENT HELPS CAUSALITY

<i>ideal experiment</i>	Random assignment	No random assignment	<i>most observational studies</i>
Random sampling	Causal conclusion, generalized to the whole population.	No causal conclusion, correlation statement generalized to the whole population.	Generalizability
No random sampling	Causal conclusion, only for the sample.	No causal conclusion, correlation statement only for the sample.	No generalizability
<i>most experiments</i>	Causation	Correlation	<i>bad observational studies</i>

## SUMMARY

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## SUMMARY OF MAIN IDEAS

1. Use a sample to make inferences about the population
2. Ideally use a simple random sample, stratify to control for a variable, and cluster to make sampling easier
3. Sampling schemes can suffer from a variety of biases
4. Experiments use random assignment to treatment groups, observational studies do not
5. Four principles of experimental design: randomize, control, block, replicate
6. Random sampling helps generalizability, random assignment helps causality