



WORKSHOP II:
Research Design

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RULES CHANGE. THE GAME REMAINS THE SAME.

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HBO

SESSION OUTLINE:

- Research Question
- Hypothesis and Research Design
(example)
- Group work
- Discussion and critical review

II: RESEARCH QUESTION:

Why are there clusters of “red” and “blue” towns in eastern Massachusetts rather than a more “random-looking” distribution?

In other words, why do Republicans appear to cluster in certain parts of eastern Massachusetts, while Democrats choose other parts?

III: TESTING HYPOTHESES: AN EXAMPLE

- Hypothesis: **Ideological homophily** (i.e., individuals want to live in a community with others who share their political ideologies and specifically consider politics when choosing towns)
- How would you test this proposition?

III: TESTING HYPOTHESES: AN EXAMPLE

1.) **Define and measure** your variables:

- *Dependent variable*: Residence in a “blue” or “red” town
- *Independent variable(s)*: “political leaning” of the community
 - How can this be measured?

III: TESTING HYPOTHESES: AN EXAMPLE

2.) Choose a research design, considering:

- *Feasibility* (2 months)
- *Methodological accuracy* (is this design oft-used and well-respected or is it known to be problematic?)
- *Generalizability* (how much will *this design* tell us about the *larger research question*?)

III: TESTING HYPOTHESES: AN EXAMPLE

3.) Design the design: E.g., a **survey experiment**

- *How many **respondents** ($n=?$) and what **type** of respondents?*
- *What is the **experimental treatment**?*
- *How will you **compare** the treatment and control groups?*
- *How will you **present** the results?*

III: TESTING HYPOTHESES: AN EXAMPLE

- Treatment: A **phony real-estate listing** that emphasizes which presidential candidate the town voted for
- Control: A phony real-estate listing identical to the treatment's but that **does not mention town's political affiliation**
- Would you make an offer on this house?

III: TESTING HYPOTHESES: AN EXAMPLE

- Possible **survey questions**:
 - Did you vote for Obama or Romney?
 - How would you “rank” yourself ideologically on a scale from 1-10?
 - Do you consider politics an important part of your life?
 - Do you consider politics an important factor in choosing where to live?

III: TESTING HYPOTHESES: AN EXAMPLE

4.) Present the **results**:

- People **with** knowledge of the town's politics made **more offers** than people without that knowledge
- Of the people who made offers, 75% shared the politics of the prospective town
- Respondents were more likely to share the town's politics **if** they knew who the town "voted for"

III: TESTING HYPOTHESES: AN EXAMPLE

- 5.) Analyze the results and **draw a conclusion**
- People were significantly more likely to make an offer on a house if their politics conformed to the prospective town's
 - These results, applied to eastern Massachusetts, predict homogenous clusters of red/blue communities

IV: ALTERNATIVES

- H_1 : **Ideological homophily** (i.e., individuals want to live in a community with others who share their political ideologies and specifically consider politics when choosing towns)
- What are some other research designs that could be employed to test this hypothesis?
- What are their strengths? Their limitations?

V: GROUP WORK

- Research question: Why are there clusters of “red” and “blue” towns in eastern Massachusetts rather than a more “random-looking” distribution?
- What are **some other hypotheses**?
 - Come up with one or two others
- How would you test them?