Urban Sociology Lab # 3

Developing and Refining Spreadsheet Skills (2)

Today’s lab will extend your work from last week’s worksheet/dataset. Use multiple (data) sources to make sense of what you are looking at trying to understand/explain. Give you (more) practice with Arithmetic functions in Excel, and practice building tables and charts. Introduce you to graphing in Excel.

Today’s lab has (as usual) a couple parts:

a) We want you to look at and think about the data you got on last week’s worksheets. E.g., what is it, what does it do, does it mean, and what does it tell you? What trends can you identify in that data? You’ve got here more than a decade in consecutive yrs. of (Jan.) home sales in towns in the Syracuse metropolitan area (Onondaga County, Oswego and Madison counties included). 

Using charts to illustrate (copy and paste them from Excel to Word), write brief descriptions of the trends you see (i.e.):

First – flag for them the problem last yr. (’05) with the duplicated sales info from previous yr.
1) Which towns/townships had the largest/least number of home sales over this period?
2) Over this period, which town had the highest/least average sales price?
3) For Onondaga County, which town had the largest percentage price change?
4) Is there an overall price trend for the county for the past 5 yrs; for the city? Do separate charts for the city and Onondaga County.
5) What causes can you think of for these changes? How would you begin to test this?∗

b) For next week, i.e. Wed. (2/6), we want you to repeat the analysis, but this time for the whole series going back to ’94. You now have a 14yr. data series for home sales in this area.

c) Turn in pages showing graphically the trends, e.g., largest/lowest number of home sales; the highest/lowest average sale price, etc. Note carefully: Instead of just speculating on the reasons for the trend, tell us whether your trends from using 2K-2009 of data, (Mon.) hold up over 15 yrs. & what makes you think so? For Wed., turn in your descriptions of the trends (including integrated charts) that have been adjusted for the additional years. This assignment shouldn’t be more than a couple pages – no need to have full-page charts.

∗ Your insights as a social scientist will often come from being able to put together disparate groups of data, ideas, and analyses. In this case you have the housing sales data and can go to Bird library and consult maps, census and other data and match it up against the housing data for a more powerful analysis. E.g., we suggest you consult maps to see just where the various towns in the county are and what insights re. housing sales and prices you can glean from their different locations. Talk also with classmates from the area. Other tools in Bird will enable you to figure out other things. For example (in case the 1990/2000 Census Zip Code look up engine is down), ZIP Code Demographics (big red volume, behind the Reference Desk) will give you demographic, income/spending, etc. data, for all the Onondaga county zip codes (plus the rest of the country). You can also use the Zip Code Atlas & Market Planner (3rd floor, Maps & Gov. Docs.) or Zip Codes for Onondaga County, Greater Central New York Atlas. These and other tools will give you maps with the township lines and also indicate the zip codes, so you can see if there is sufficient overlap between them to use the zip codes as descriptors for the towns. Remember, Ms. Ryan is the Sociology librarian; Mr. Olsen, Mr. Bern & the other staff in Gov. Docs. are also helpful. Don’t wait for evening hours on this. The librarians tend to keep normal business hours. Call ahead if you’re going to go to Gov. Docs. (x4176), so they’ll be prepared.
d) Form work teams for this assignment, working together will be helpful. Put all 3 names on the assignment. If you have questions/problems, etc., send in an email query about your problem(s) using the class list. We encourage you to respond to one another’s queries & problems.

The pointer below is for a page on the US Census website and has some housing data for the towns and places in Onondaga County for 2000. There is an equivalent file for 1990, if you’re interested.

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/GCTTable?_bm=y&_geo_id=05000US36067&-_box_head_nbr=GCT-H5&-_ds_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U&_redoLog=false&_mt_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U_GCTH5_US9&_format=CO-2 (url for OnonCty table of housing)