

GV249 Research Design in Political Science

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Lecture Notes

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1 Module

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2 Introduction to Research Design

Aims of this module:

- Make you competent consumers of research: how do you tell whether you can trust a study's results?
- Enable you to design your own studies and conduct your own research.

What does it mean to be fair?

- The deck should not be stacked in favour of your preferred hypothesis!
- Choose a method that is *unbiased*.
- If you find the opposite to what you expect to find, you need to say so and you need to report it.

2.1 Causes of effects

These questions are never answerable beyond a reasonable doubt because the event has already happened and the number of potential causes can be infinite.

Take the example of Hilary Clinton and the 2016 Presidential Election:

- What is the effect of misogynistic remarks on voters' evaluation of political candidates?
- What is the effect of anti-trade rhetoric on party support?

Manipulation is also a key factor in cause and effect.

Manipulation is the assignment to different values of the treatment/explanatory variable.

2.1.1 Terminology

Variables Categorical Ordinal Continuous

Outcome and Explanatory Variables:

- Outcome: dependent variable (DV) and denoted by Y .
- Explanatory: independent variable (IV) or "treatment" and denoted by X or Z .

2.2 Description

Sometimes political science is concerned with describing rather than finding cause and effect. Examples include:

- Did the share of marriages
- From 1990 to now, how

Try to look for questions that ask 'what is'.

2.3 Research Integrity

Research as the search for the truth. Challenges related to bad science:

- Underreporting: researchers do not report all the tests that they conducted
- P-hacking: researchers choose the model specification based on which model gives the best results
- Biased research outputs that are unethical

Here are some steps to maintain integrity.

- Pre-register our hypotheses
- Report null findings
- Replicate each others studies
- Correct mistakes
- Learn together