

# Case Studies

Department of Government  
London School of Economics and Political Science

- 1 Problem Set 3
- 2 Elite Interviewing
- 3 Case Studies
- 4 Group Activity

# 1 Problem Set 3

2 Elite Interviewing

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4 Group Activity

# Problem Set 3

How did this go? What was challenging?

# Problem Set 3

- Please, use my office hours!
- Use Moodle to ask questions (esp. about R)!



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# Elite Interviewing

- Rules of questionnaire design style apply
- Unique challenges/opportunities:
  - Time constraints
  - Guarantees of anonymity?
  - Public information may be available
  - Often exempt from research ethics review



# Structured versus Unstructured

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  - Strict order of questions
  - Questions are precisely worded
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- “Structured” interviews
  - Strict order of questions
  - Questions are precisely worded
  - Often, closed set of response categories
- Elite interviews often “semi-structured”
  - Greater use of open-ended questions
  - More flexible ordering of questions
  - More respondent-driven



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# Overview

- Consistently the most dominant method of social research
- Often poorly executed (and poorly understood)
- Four weeks (partially) on this topic
  - Today: What is a case study?
  - MT10: Representative sampling
  - LT4: Case comparisons
  - LT5: Process-tracing methods

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- Different ways to choose cases:
  - Purposive
  - Representative (MT10)
  - Matched (next term)

# What kinds of evidence?



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- Non-DSOs

- DSOs

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  - Focus groups
  - Interviews
  - Archival/documentary analysis
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  - Interviews
  - Archival/documentary analysis
- DSOs
  - Surveys
  - Statistical methods
  - Data mining (e.g., “big data”)
  - Content analysis
  - Experiments

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- An in-depth investigation of a case that follows from a “large-N” study of many cases



# Case as DSO

What is the score for this case for a variable?

How can we best measure this variable?

Case	Measure1	Measure2	Measure3
UK	1	10	2
France	?	5	2
Germany	0	4	2
Spain	1	7	2
...			

# Case to observe DSO

What does the score on this case *mean*?

Case	Measure1	Measure2	Measure3
UK	1	10	2
France	<b>1</b>	5	2
Germany	0	4	2
Spain	1	7	2
...			

# Case as induction

*Why* does this case have this score?

*What* effects does that score have?

Case	Measure1	Measure2	Measure3
UK	1	10	2
France	<b>1</b>	5	2
Germany	0	4	2
Spain	1	7	2
...			

# Case as induction

What is this a *case of*?

What are the variables that matter?

Case	Measure1	Measure2	Measure3
?	?	?	?
<b>“France”</b>	?	?	?
?	?	?	?
?	?	?	?
...			

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  - What is Islamic State a case of?
  - What is Angela Merkel a case of?
  - What is Sep. 11th a case of?
  - What is Wales a case of?

# Case Studies Have Different Functions

- 1 Description
- 2 Concept definition and measurement
- 3 Induction/Theory development
- 4 Theory testing

What kinds of evidence do we gather for each?

# Gerring's Typology

		Temporal Variation	
		<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<b>Spatial Variation</b>	<i>No</i>	?	Type I
	<i>Yes</i>	Type II	Type III

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- Type I: sequence

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- Type I: sequence
- Type II: lower unit of analysis

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Spatial Variation	No	?	Type I
	Yes	Type II	Type III

- Type I: sequence
- Type II: lower unit of analysis
- Type III: “panel” of lower-level units



# 1: Description

- Case study might be descriptive
- Historical or interpretive
- Think “biography”
- Gerring: Type I–III case studies

## 2: Concept Definition

- Sometimes you don't know what you are studying
- Case studies can clarify what something is a *case of*
- This helps you to:
  - Refine your concept definition
  - Improve measurement

# 3: Theory development

- Case is an instance of a phenomenon
- There is some outcome to be *explained*
  - Outcome is case itself
  - Outcome of a case
  - Outcome as part of case
- Look for “Causal Process Observations”
- Attempt to identify generalizable explanations

# Causal Process Observations

- Definition: “An insight or piece of data that provides information about the context, process, or mechanism, and that contributes distinctive leverage in causal inference”<sup>1</sup>
- Pieces of evidence that help you inductively generate hypotheses about potential causal relationships

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<sup>1</sup>Brady and Collier 2004, p.277

# 4: Theory testing

- Descriptive theories/frameworks

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- Descriptive theories/frameworks
- Causal theories
  - “Actual case” comparisons
  - Fearon’s “Counterfactual method”
  - Process tracing



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# Activity

Think of the June 2016 British Referendum on EU Membership and discuss the following:

- 1 What kinds of DSOs could you collect about the referendum?
  - What unit of analysis?
  - What variable(s)?
  - What kinds of evidence can you use?
- 2 What other kinds of non-DSO descriptions could you make?
- 3 What is the referendum *a case of*?

