Case Studies

Department of Government
London School of Economics and Political Science

1. Conclude Hypothesis Testing

2. Problem Set 1

3. Case Studies

4. Group Activity

1 Conclude Hypothesis Testing

2 Problem Set 1

3 Case Studies

4 Group Activity

A Good Test

- Correct level of analysis
- Within scope conditions of theory
- Well-defined concepts
- Measures of high construct validity, accuracy, and precision
- Possible to observe any correlation between potential cause and outcome
- Consistent with or an improvement upon past methods
- Test using different data than data used to generate theory

Some Testing Challenges

1. Deterministic and probabilistic causality

2. Effect heterogeneity

3. Multiple causation

4. Equifinality

5. Confirmation or disconfirmation bias

Small Points

1. Follow the formatting guidelines

2. Do not copy the questions into the assignment

3. Be succinct but expressive and clear

4. Be anonymous (filename and contents)

Strengths and "Wish For"s

Strengths

- Classical approach
- Case Identification

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- Classical approach
- Case Identification

Wish For

- Clarity of family resemblance definitions
- Completeness of measurement and operationalization

Concept Definition I

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  "the **illegal use of violence or threat** by an individual or a group in service of a political agenda with the intention of creating a climate of fear or insecurity"

- Essential features:

    - **Illegal use of violence or threat**

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- Example of classical definition:
  "the illegal use of violence or threat **by an individual or a group** in service of a political agenda with the intention of creating a climate of fear or insecurity"

- Essential features:
  - Illegal use of violence or threat
  - **Carried out by individual or group**

Concept Definition I

- Example of classical definition:
  "the illegal use of violence or threat by an individual or a group **in service of a political agenda** with the intention of creating a climate of fear or insecurity"

- Essential features:
    - Illegal use of violence or threat
    - Carried out by individual or group
    - **Service to a political agenda**

Concept Definition I

- Example of classical definition:
  "the illegal use of violence or threat by an individual or a group in service of a political agenda with the **intention of creating a climate of fear or insecurity**"

- Essential features:
  - Illegal use of violence or threat
  - Carried out by individual or group
  - Service to a political agenda
  - **Intention to create climate of fear or insecurity**

Concept Definition II

- Sufficient features?
    1. Illegal use of (violence or threat)
    2. Carried out by (individual or group)
    3. Service to a political agenda
    4. Intention to create (climate of fear or insecurity)

Concept Definition II

- Sufficient features?

    1. Illegal use of (violence or threat)
    2. Carried out by (individual or group)
    3. Service to a political agenda
    4. Intention to create (climate of fear or insecurity)

- Examples of sufficiency:

    - 1,3,4 (allows state actions to be terrorism)
    - 2,3,4 (allows non-violence to be to be terrorism)
    - 1,2,4 (allows criminal activity to be terrorism)
    - 1,2,3 OR 1,2,4 (can be political or fear-inducing)

Operationalization

1. Measure features
   - Level of measurement
   - How to score each case on each feature
   - Be concrete (e.g., carbombing versus railway bombing)

2. Aggregate feature measurements
   - Sum? Average? AND logical?
   - Level of measurement of final scale
   - Range of possible values
   - Justify against criticisms/alternatives

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Overview

- Consistently the most dominant method of social research

- Often poorly executed (and poorly understood)

- Three weeks on this topic
  - Logic and case selection
  - Case comparisons
  - Process-tracing methods

What is a case study?

- Definition: "an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units" (Gerring 2004, 342)
- Broad uses:
  - Description
  - Induction/Theory development
  - Theory testing
  - Exploration of mechanisms
  - Concept definition and measurement

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    - What is Sep. 11th a case of?
    - What is Wales a case of?

1: Description

- Case study might be descriptive

- Historical or interpretive

- Think "biography"

2: 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"[1]

- Pieces of evidence that help you inductively generate hypotheses about potential causal relationships

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[1]Brady and Collier 2004, p.277

3: Theory testing

- "Actual case" comparisons

- Fearon's "Counterfactual method"

- Process tracing

4: Mechanisms

- Imagine you already have evidence for a causal relationship

- A case study can help you explore or test for "mechanisms" of that effect

5: 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

Collection of CPOs

- Qualitative analysis
  - Direction observation
  - Focus groups
  - Interviews
  - Archival/documentary analysis
- Quantitative analysis
  - Surveys
  - Experiments
  - Statistical methods
  - Data mining (e.g., "big data")
  - Data coding

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Activity

- Think of the UK 2015 General Election
- What factors might explain the outcome of the election?
- What kinds of CPOs would you collect for each factor?
- Are any of those factors potentially generalizable causes? What is each factor a case of?
- What is the UK election itself a case of?