

# 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



1 Conclude Hypothesis Testing

**2 Problem Set 1**

3 Case Studies

4 Group Activity

# 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

# Strengths and “Wish For”s

## Strengths

- Classical approach
- Case Identification

## Wish For

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

# 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”

# 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:

# 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**

# 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**

# 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 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



- 1 Conclude Hypothesis Testing
- 2 Problem Set 1
- 3 Case Studies**
- 4 Group Activity

# 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

# What counts as a case?



# What counts as a case?

- The more important question is what is something a *case of*
- Cases are instances of a concept or phenomenon

# What counts as a case?

- The more important question is what is something a *case of*
- Cases are instances of a concept or phenomenon
  - What is the Brexit referendum a case of?

# What counts as a case?

- The more important question is what is something a *case of*
- Cases are instances of a concept or phenomenon
  - What is the Brexit referendum a case of?
  - What is Islamic State a case of?

# What counts as a case?

- The more important question is what is something a *case of*
- Cases are instances of a concept or phenomenon
  - What is the Brexit referendum a case of?
  - What is Islamic State a case of?
  - What is Angela Merkel a case of?

# What counts as a case?

- The more important question is what is something a *case of*
- Cases are instances of a concept or phenomenon
  - What is the Brexit referendum a case of?
  - What is Islamic State a case of?
  - What is Angela Merkel a case of?
  - What is Sep. 11th a case of?

# What counts as a case?

- The more important question is what is something a *case of*
- Cases are instances of a concept or phenomenon
  - What is the Brexit referendum a case of?
  - 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?

# 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”<sup>1</sup>
- Pieces of evidence that help you inductively generate hypotheses about potential causal relationships

---

<sup>1</sup>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



- 1 Conclude Hypothesis Testing
- 2 Problem Set 1
- 3 Case Studies
- 4 Group Activity**

# 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?



