



What's A Good Question

Design Political Research: Week 3

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KKV's List

1. Choose a hypothesis seen as **important** by scholars in the literature but for which **no one** has completed a systematic study. ("literature"?)
 2. Choose a hypothesis in the literature that we **suspect** is been adequately confirmed and investigate whether it is indeed false.
 3. Attempt to resolve or provide further **evidence of one side** of a controversy in the literature—perhaps demonstrate that the controversy was unfounded from the start.
 4. Design research to illuminate or evaluate **unquestioned assumptions** in the literature.
 5. Argue that an important topic has been **overlooked** in the literature and then proceed to contribute a systematic study to the area.
- A question that
 - people care (and/or?)
 - has not been studied (and/or?)
 - the existing confirmation might be wrong (and/or?)
 - relates to one side (and/or?)
 - the premise is wrong (and/or?)
 - something is missing (and/or?)

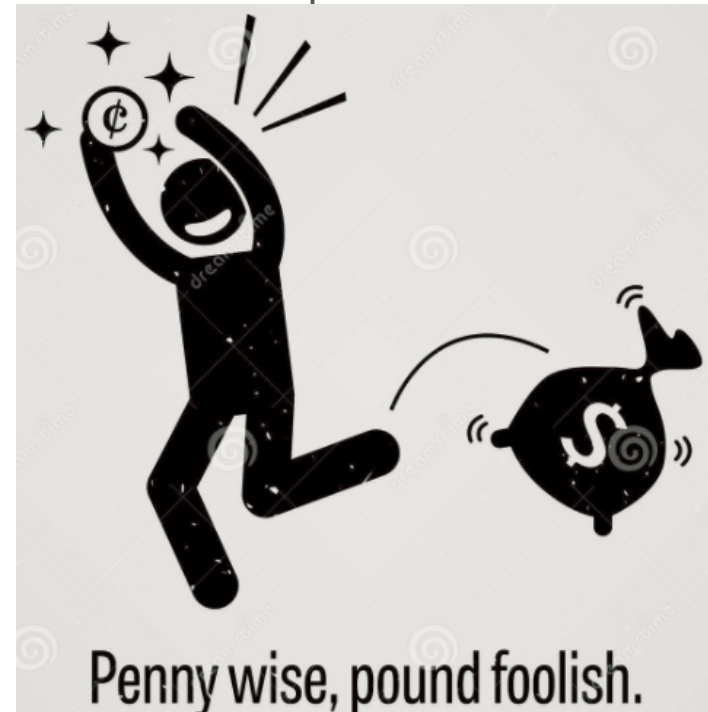
Why does Geddes feel they are useless?

"It assumes, however, that the relevant literature really does contain a considerable accumulation of theory and stylized facts." (Geddes 2010, 29)

- Why does this bother Geddes? (GT)
 - The literature contains only a little consensus.
 - Vague in definition and empirics.
 - Opinions rather than theory.

• What's the dangers?

- Lost the main points.

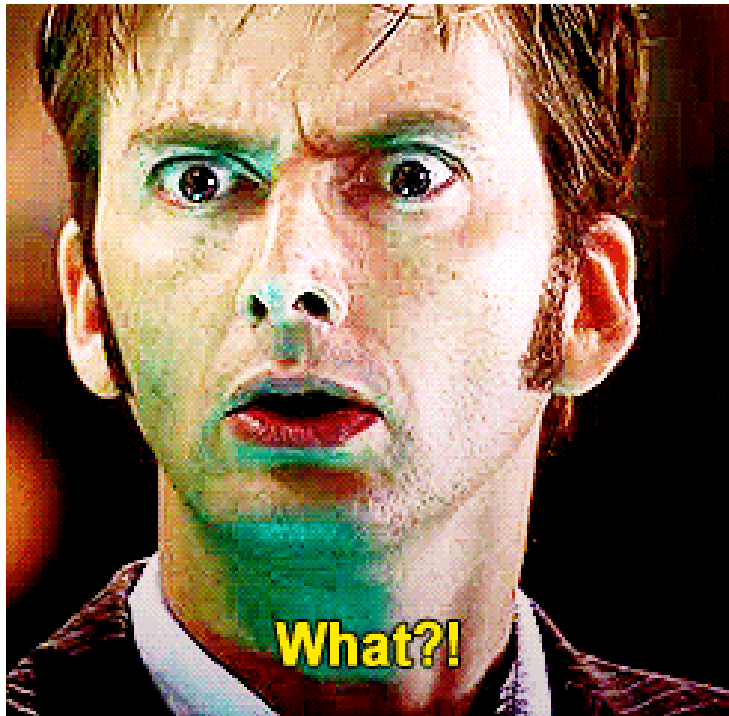


So, Geddes suggested

- An intense but unfocused curiosity, intuition, or indignation (GT)
- Being creative: observation \times conjecture
 - Model?

When is the literature useful?

- Stimulus



- Expectation



Why is inductive research useful?

- Inductive?
 - prevailing?
 - Danger?
 - Correlation is not causation.
- Analytic narratives
 - Tracing the mechanism
 - Focusing on the fundamental unit (contrary to Babbie?)
 - Next step?
 - Empirical evidence

Example: Step 1. Question Hunting

"No bourgeois, no democracy" (1966, 418): The likelihood of democracy increases once the size of the bourgeoisie has passed a certain threshold.

- When
 - Democracies would not be expected to occur **before** the industrial and commercial revolutions.
- Where
 - The establishment of democracies would be expected first in the countries that **industrialized** first.
 - Democracy would be less likely in countries in which wealth comes mainly from the **export** of mineral resources.
 - Democracy would be less likely in countries in which **foreigners or pariah capitalists** excluded from the political community own most enterprises.
- How
 - In the contemporary world, democracy would be more likely in **more industrialized** countries.
 - The likelihood of democracy would decline as **state ownership** of economic resources rose.

Step 2. Research Strategy

- Big question to rigorous investigation
- One process at a time
- Research your question like cooking a dish



Let's cook it



Dish: Authoritarianism transition

- Literature: cook book
 - Expectation: Transition are determined by the important groups
 - Stimulus:
 - no cross-national study, no systematic comparison
 - no complete process
- Narrow down (Simplification)
 - Key of transition: battles between winning and losing groups
 - How?
 - Bargaining and negotiation
 - Overtime, multiparty
 - Why?
 - Internal? External?

- One piece at a time:
 - The politics within authoritarian governments, that is, how political rivalries, policy disagreements, and bargaining within different kinds of authoritarian regimes affect the incentives of authoritarian rulers to liberalize.
 - Method requirement: comparison
- Build the theory:
 - Literature (again) in
 - Not important divisions within the regime
 - Officials wants to maintain in office
 - Get sufficient supports from the constituents
- Further narrow down
 - Different leaders, different interests.

Wrap up

- A question with emotional response.
- Use the literature cautiously.
- One piece at a time.

A practical way to identify a good question

- "Do you want to talk it with your friends?"

