



# 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?)

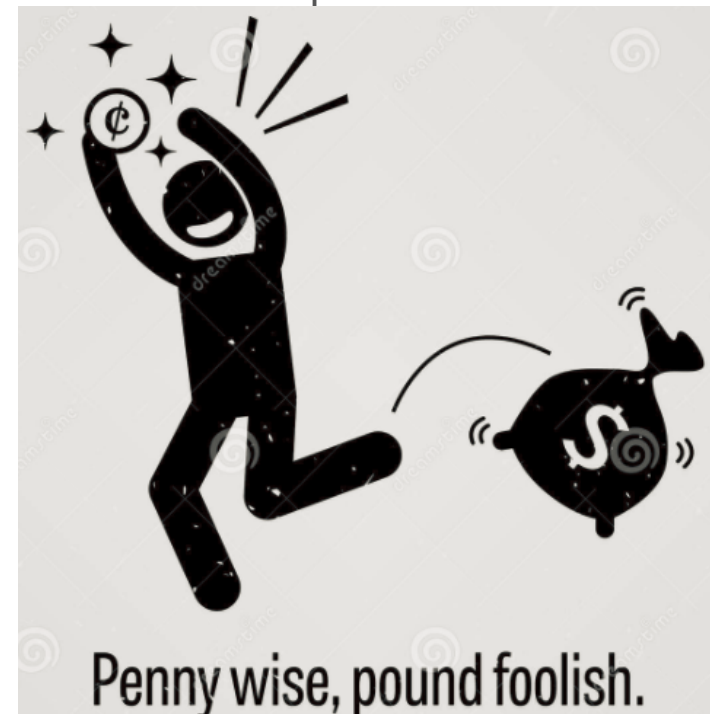
# Why does Geddes feel they are useless?

"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? Lego bricks, Spore (evolution)

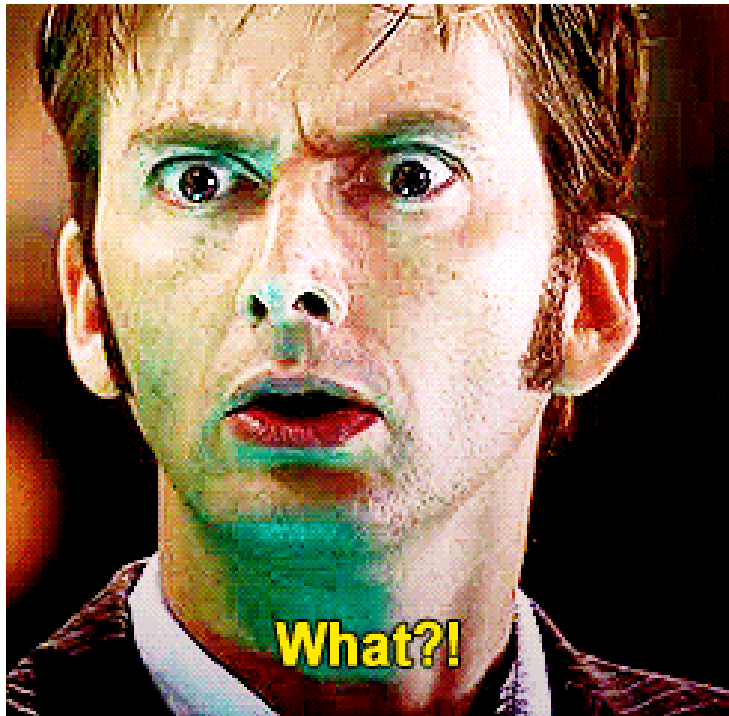
为何？为找到真凶提供动力

what really causes things to happen that leads to good research.

但文献就真的没用吗？

# When is the literature useful? Take literature back

- Stimulus



- Expectation



有了incentive, how to do it? What's the plan? Research strategy (connect obj with method)

# 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

Most nobel prize winners are men doesn't mean women cannot do science.

# Example: Step 1. Question Hunting

[博士蛙](#)

"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 [What dish to cook](#)
  - 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 want 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.

说到emotion, 你如何知道emotionally是个好问题?

# A practical way to identify a good question

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

