

Research Methods in the Study of Europe and Germany (54699)

Lesson 4

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Structure of the Class

1. Writing Research Questions
2. From Research Questions to Hypotheses



The Scientific Process

- Developing an idea for research - PUZZLE
- Elaborate a question to answer – RESEARCH QUESTION.
- Consolidate expected responses - HYPOTHESES
- Design research & define strategy - METHODOLOGY
- DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS – are findings consistent with hypothesis?
- CONCLUSIONS - Change and expansion? Is it possible to confirm the hypothesis? Make changes? Further research?



Writing Research Questions



Writing Research Questions

- Most of the questions seek **causality** (why, how, what is the effect of x on y ...).
- Sometimes descriptive-factual questions are also asked (what, how much...), yet this is mostly used as a basis for causal questions.
- In other cases, a descriptive-factual study is carried out because it is data that is difficult to collect, or there is a dispute about the way to measure it.
- In this case, the study will show how another measurement method is meaningful for understanding the phenomenon.



IV and DV

- From theories, predictions emerge, which can be verified or refuted.
- Theories are based on causality (IV affects DV).
- Research questions thus focus on the relationship between variables (what is the effect of x on y?)
- This opens the possibility that there are several potential answers (hypotheses).



Examples of Research Questions

- *What is the effect of joining international conventions on the behavior of countries in the field of human rights?*
- *What is the effect of economic development on the level of democracy?*
- *What is the effect of negative publications about candidates on voters?*
- *What is the effect of interest groups on government activity?*



Examples of Research Questions

- What do you think about this research question?
 - *Should Israel adopt rules regarding the term limit of the Prime Minister?*
 - *Why did the Oslo agreement fail?*



Research Questions to Avoid:

- RQ that can be **answered in one sentence or with a simple and easy-to-obtain fact** (for example, *what is the voting rate in Israel?*)
- RQ with **specificity to an individual or single case** (*why the US invaded Iraq?*). we usually try to find broad patterns (why countries initiate wars) - even if we check them in the end on one case.
- RQ that can be **answered by one correct answer** - usually there are several answers that seem logical at first - and the purpose of our research is to see what the evidence supports (ex. *how economic development affects the quality of the environment?*).



[How to Develop a STRONG Research Question | Scribbr](#) 

[How To Write A Research Question: Full Explainer With Clear Examples](#) (Grad Coach)

[Developing Good Research Questions](#)



From Research Questions to the Hypotheses



From Research Questions to Hypotheses

- From theories, **predictions** emerge, which can be verified or refuted (*hypotheses*).
- Hypotheses thus explain how/why IV affect DV.
- **Hypothesis**: A statement that reflects the relationship between variables (in the researcher's opinion).
- This is only a proposed connection:
 - There might be several potential answers.
 - the evidence may not support the hypothesis and it will be falsified.



Hypotheses and Research Types

- *Explanatory research* is designed to explain phenomena - to examine whether a phenomenon causes/affects another one.
- However, often researchers do not have much idea in advance about the relationships between variables, so they learn about the phenomenon, and looking for connections - *Exploratory research*.
- Usually, researchers have some hypothesis that they are trying to test - *Confirmatory research*.



Testing Hypotheses



Establishing a causal hypothesis

1. **Is there a relationship between the variables?** The relationship can be direct or inverse, linear or not - but to establish causality you need a relationship first.
2. **Is this a real relationship or a fake relationship?** (have I ruled out, as far as possible, alternative explanations?)
3. **Does the independent variable (A) precede the dependent variable (B) in time?** Is there a convincing "causal mechanism" linking the two variables?

There are those who believe that conditions 1-3 are sufficient for the basis of causality.



Next Class

- **Lesson 5)**
 1. **Testing Hypotheses (Assignment)**
 2. **Causal Mechanisms**
 3. **Research Design**
 4. **Methodology**



Thanks!

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