האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

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

Lesson 3

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Structure of the Class

1. **Finding research puzzles.**
2. **Defining independent and dependent variables.**
3. **Writing research questions.**
4. **Suggesting hypothesis.**
5. **Causal and constitutive mechanisms.**

Characteristics of the scientific approach:

1. VERIFICATION
2. FALSIFIABILITY
3. FACTS-BASED
4. TRANSMISSIBLE
5. CUMULATIVE
6. GENERALIZATION
7. EXPLANATORY
8. PARSIMONY

Finding Research Puzzles

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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?

Research Puzzles

- When selecting a topic, we think about how to turn it into a **research puzzle**.
- Many interesting topics, but much less **relevant** research puzzles.
- Research puzzles are complex, limiting, but allow to advance to the **next step**.
- Empirical studies look for **patterns** in the human world and try to understand them, assuming that there are **connections** between phenomena, **with implications**.

Research Puzzles

- Most of the time the puzzle stems from existing **information**
  - Something that intrigues you.
  - News, Articles.
  - Courses.
- Puzzles usually start with something that is missing (**gap**): **in**comprehensible, **un**expected, **un**known.
- Yet, puzzles can also stem **from gap in theories**: a theory that seems problematic / limited to you.

Defining Independent Variables (IV) and Dependent Variables (DV)

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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**).

Writing Research Questions

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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.

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).

Next Class

- **Lesson 4)**
  - Testing hypothesis.
  - Research design.
  - Case selection.
  - Methodology.
  - Sources.

Thanks!

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