The Practice and Problems of Social Research (2)

Benjamin Graham
Office Hours: M 11:30-12:30, W 10:30-12:30
SSB 447

Randall Munroe, xkcd.com
Dr. Cynthia Enloe
A leading Feminist Scholar, who has traveled & lectured all over the world:

Where are the Women in the Syrian War? And Why It Matters

Tyler Prize Pavilion
2/5/13
12:30pm-2:00pm

Dr. Jonathan Fine
Experienced Senior Israeli Scholar and Intelligence Official:

Counterterrorism and Democracy: Problems and Solutions from Israeli Experience

Doheny Lecture Hall
2/6/13
12:30pm-1:45pm
Submit an Article to SCIR

- The Southern California International Review (SCIR) is an undergraduate research journal of international studies and is managed by undergraduates at SIR.

- Deadline to submit is Friday, February 1, 2013!

- http://scinternationalreview.org

Read Listerv Emails/Facebook

- Recent announcements included info on:
  - New Bender Award to fund Summer Internships in Africa
  - Information Sessions on Brussels, Geneva, and DC

- Ask your SIR advisor if you are on the listerv email list

- Like us: http://www.facebook.com/uscsir
Housekeeping

- If you haven’t already, please hand in your homework to Alex now.
- Related to the homework -- USC students are volunteering to count the homeless in LA on Thursday.
- Office hours today: I have a talk at 3, so the will be cut short.
  - I’ll be available most of the day tomorrow and Friday.
Quick Clicker Question

- The outcome we are trying to explain is the:
  - A. Independent Variable
  - B. Dependent Variable
  - C. Modular Variable
  - D. Random Variable
  - E. The answer depends on the orientation of the axes in your scatter plot
Independent and Dependent Variables

• Tricks

• When you write the word “independent,” it CAUSES you to also write the word “dependent.”

• Independent is how come, dependent is outcome.

• The outcome is dependent on what you independently do.
Outline for This Week

Today:
• A bit more on research questions
• Research and Publishing in Academia
• Literature Reviews

Thursday:
• Types of Theories
• Research Philosophies
• Research Ethics

Next Week:
• Conceptualization and Measurement (1)
Picking Up Where We Left Off

- Last week we were working on moving from topic to research question

- Today we’re talking about literature reviews: reviewing what we (as a global academic community) already know.
Connection via example

• If our topic is Latino employment in the U.S.:
  • We might turn up this paper in our lit review: Pager, Western, and Bonikowski (2009) “Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market: A Field Experiment,” *American Sociological Review*.

  • If you send out resumes from Carol Jones, Shanikwa Jones, and Sofia Vasquez
    • Who gets invited for more interviews?

• From the literature we know that Latinos face employment discrimination.
  • This gives us a jumping off point for developing additional research questions.
Connection via example

- One potential research question: Why do Latinos face employment discrimination?
- One potential answer: employers may believe stereotypes about Latinos
From Topic to Question:

• Find a WHY question.

• Build an explanation. Now you have an independent variable.

• Try to reverse the causal order.

• Try to reverse the relationship that is implied.
Reversing the Causal Order

Employers believe stereotypes about Latinos

Employment discrimination against Latinos
Reversing the Causal Order

Employment discrimination against Latinos

Employers believe stereotypes about Latinos
Reversing the Causal Order

Employment discrimination against Latinos

Employers believe stereotypes about Latinos

?
Reversing the Relationship Implied

Positive Relationship: The more employers believe stereotypes about Latinos, the more employment discrimination Latinos face.
Clicker Question

• What would it mean to reverse the direction of the implied relationship?
  • A. Employers don’t believe stereotypes about Latinos.
  • B. Employment discrimination against latinos causes stereotypes about latinos.
  • C. Employers believing stereotypes about latinos causes less employment discrimination against latinos.
Reversing the Relationship Implied

Employers believe stereotypes about Latinos → Employment discrimination against Latinos

Negative Relationship: The more employers believe stereotypes about Latinos, the less employment discrimination Latinos face.
Clicker Question

• Why is it important to flip the causal direction and the implied relationship before we set up a research design?
  • A. To better understand the relationship between correlation and causation in this situation
  • B. To know whether our theory is correct
The Research Process in Academia

Research Topic → Research Question
The Research Process in Academia

- Research Topic
- Research Question
- Research Design
  - Interviews
  - Surveys
  - Experiments
- Conduct our Research
- ?
The Research Process in Academia: Publishing

• Write a draft
• Circulate to your colleagues
  • Then revise
• Present at a conference
  • Then revise
• Submit to a journal
  • Editor evaluates
  • 2-3 anonymous reviewers write reviews
  • Three possible results: Accept with revisions, revise and resubmit, or reject
• Revise until its published or (revise and) try another journal
The Research Process: What papers look like

• Academic articles have a standard format:
  • Intro
    • Sell the question: Why is this going to rock your world?
  • Literature review
    • Establish that previous scholars either haven’t answered this or haven’t answered it well.
      • Identify your allies and your enemies in the literature
  • Theory
  • Research Design/Methods
  • Data and Results
  • Conclusions
How to Read Academic Research

1 hour per book, 15 minutes per article

Step 1: Know why you’re reading the article

Always read the abstract

If you’re conducting a lit review
  • Read their lit review and conclusion
    • You can come back later to see if you agree with them

If you’re figuring out what method to use or looking for data
  • Read their research design section
    • Skim their results

If you’re building theory
  • Skim their lit review, read their theory, and read their conclusions
How to Read A Quantitative, Empirical Paper

- Abstract: Read.
- Intro
  - Skim. Looking for the research question and the answer.
- Literature review
  - Skip
- Theory
  - Skip (important stuff was in the intro)
- Research Design/Methods
  - Skim: External validity of the Study, Content Validity of the Measure
- Data and Results
  - Skim: Read tables only
- Conclusions
  - Read: Do they over-reach?
The Research Process: Literature Reviews

- Read the Literature
  - Research Topic
  - Research Question
    - Research Design
    - Conduct our Research
      - Publish
The Research Process: The literature review

• Always the first step in the research process.
  • Cumulative research

• Sometimes we don’t even need new research
  • Getting your answer from the literature is a lot easier and cheaper than conducting new research yourself.

• We see stand-alone lit reviews in academia
• We see a lot of them in the business and NGO community
  • Can get you $$$
  • Can change the world
Literature Review: How To

• Start with a keyword search in google scholar
• Find a few seminal articles/books on the topic
  • High citation count
  • Prestigious journal/press
• Search among articles citing that work
  • This is the “cited by” link.
• Find some recent work in your specific area
• Read the literature review section -- guide to the lit
• Look at the articles/books they cite
  • This is their bibliography
Grand Theories

• Theories about the way the world works. They provide an orientation.

• Rational Choice: Everything in society happens because of decisions people make on the basis of self interest.

• Realism: World politics is a domain in which unitary states, each seeking security, interact under conditions of anarchy.

• Liberalism: Global peace can be achieved once the correct international institutions, along with complementary norms, are in place.
Types of Social Theories

• Grand Theories
  • Theories about the way the international system works. These provide an orientation.

• Theories of the middle range
  • Theories about specific social phenomena

• Hypotheses
  • Empirically testable predictions