

PLS 210
Political Science
Research Methods

Week 6:

Measurement and description

Research process in Political Science

- Literature, empirical puzzles, and other sources of inspiration —>
- Research questions —>
- Theories and hypotheses:
 - Concepts and variables —>
- Case selection —>
- Observation —>
- *Measurement*

Conceptual quagmire

- Operationalization vs. measurement
- Measurement vs. description
- Description vs. explanation
- Description vs. causation



Plan for this week

- Measurement
- Description

Measurement

- Definition:
 - Assignment of phenomena into classes
- Measurement vs. operationalization
- Levels of measurement:
 - Nominal
 - Ordinal
 - Interval
 - Ratio
- Reliability and validity of measurement



Measures from previous readings

- Stephan et al.:
 - Effectiveness of resistance campaigns
 - Regime defections
- Elfversson:
 - Peace agreement
 - Conflict intensity
 - Presence of legitimate mediators
 - Ethnoreligious distance
 - Separate districts

Measures: Soifer

- Infrastructural power:
 - “[I]nstitutional capacity of a central state [...] to penetrate its territories and logistically implement decisions”
- Attributes and their measures



Approach	State capabilities	Weight of the state	Subnational variation
Key relationship	Central state and society	Radiating institutions and society	Central state and radiating institutions
Sample components	Fiscal resources Size of army GNP per capita	Effects on identity Outcomes of state policy	Spatial spread of institutions of control

Measures: Risse and Stollenwerk

- Empirical legitimacy:
 - “[T]he population’s sense of obligation or willingness to obey the authority of a governance actor or a governance institution”
- Areas of limited statehood, “where the state lacks the ability to make and implement decisions and / or lacks a monopoly on the use of force”



Measures: Risse and Stollenwerk

- Attributes:
 - Legitimacy of external and non-state actors
 - Subnational variation in legitimacy
 - Sources and consequences of legitimacy

Table 1 Sources of legitimacy in areas of limited statehood

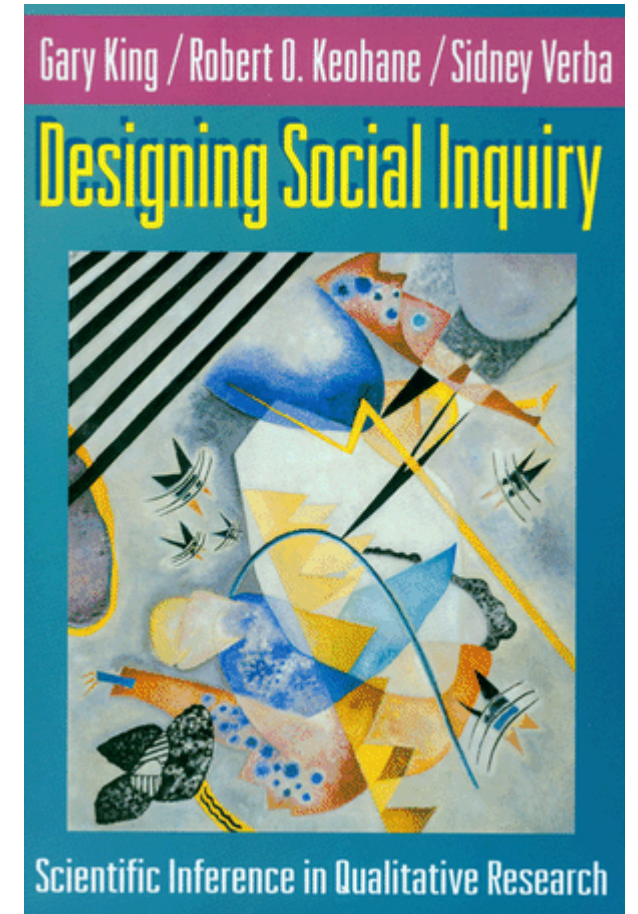
Sources of legitimacy	Examples for indicators
Input: participatory governance	Satisfaction with election procedures
Throughput: procedural justice/fairness/transparency	Perception of fair trials or transparent institutions
Output: effective governance	Satisfaction with service delivery
Social trust	Personal ties in local communities
“Traditional,” religious, or knowledge-based authority	High esteem for elders/chiefs, religious leaders, or leaders with particular claims to knowledge
Charismatic leadership	High esteem for leaders with particular charismatic characteristics
Ethnic belonging	Strong sense of ethnicized identity
Legal recognition	Recognition by international law

Description

- Gerring:
 - “[A]ny empirical proposition that attempts to answer a what, when, whom, out of what, or in what manner question is classified as descriptive”
 - “[H]ighly fragmented universe of work devoted to specific topics (often under special disciplinary nomenclatures) – concepts, measurement, descriptive statistics, inference from sample to population, ethnography, and so forth – with no recognition that these might add up to a coherent whole (despite their evident interconnections)

Importance of description

- King, Keohane, and Verba:
 - “[I]t is hard to develop [causal] explanations before we know something about the world and what needs to be explained on the basis of what characteristics”
 - King, Gary, Robert O Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Intrinsic importance of topics



Takeaways

- No description without:
 - Measurement, case selection, and data collection
 - Concepts and theories
- Intrinsic importance of description
- Description as a prerequisite for explanation