

PLS 210
Political Science
Research Methods

Week 7:
Explanation and causation

Recap

- Description —>
- Descriptive inference —>
- Explanation

Plan for this week

- Explanation and types of explanation
- Causation, causal explanation, and causal inference

Types of explanation

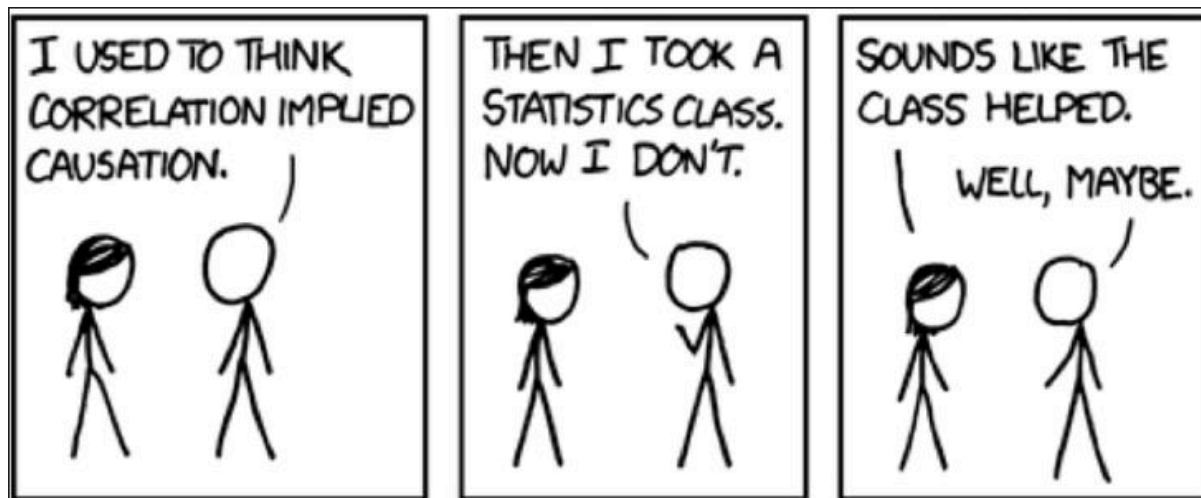
- Nomological:
 - Deterministic (= deductive-nomological; covering laws)
 - Probabilistic
- Tautological:
 - Functional
 - Intentional
- Mechanistic

Mechanistic explanation and mechanisms

- Tilly:
 - “Mechanisms form a delimited class of events that change relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations.”
 - “Processes are frequently occurring combinations or sequences of mechanisms.”

Causation and causal inference

- Causal inference and its challenges:
 - Existence of causal relationships
 - Mechanisms
- Causation vs. association



Causes of democratization and causal mechanisms according to Tilly

- Three categories of causal mechanisms:
 - Inequality
 - Public politics
 - Networks of trust

TABLE 1 Sample mechanisms and processes promoting democratization^a

Inequality

Dissolution of coercive controls supporting current relations of exploitation and opportunity hoarding

Education and communication that alter adaptations supporting current relations of exploitation and opportunity hoarding

Education and communication that supplant existing models of organization and hence alter emulation of inequality in formation of new organizations

Equalization of assets and/or well-being across categories within the population at large

Insulation of existing categorical inequalities from public politics

Networks of Trust

Creation of external guarantees for government commitments

Incorporation and expansion of existing trust networks into the polity

Governmental absorption or destruction of previously autonomous patron-client networks

Disintegration of existing trust networks

Expansion of the population lacking access to effective trust networks for their major long-term, risky enterprises

Appearance of new long-term, risky opportunities that existing trust networks cannot handle

Substantial increase of government's resources for risk reduction and/or compensation of loss

Visible governmental meeting of commitments to the advantage of substantial new segments of the population

Public Politics

Coalition formation between segments of ruling classes and constituted political actors that are currently excluded from power

Brokerage of coalitions across unequal categories and/or distinct trust networks

Central co-optation or elimination of previously autonomous political intermediaries

Bureaucratic containment of previously autonomous military forces

Dissolution or segregation from government of nongovernmental patron-client networks

Imposition of uniform governmental structures and practices through the government's jurisdiction

Mobilization-repression-bargaining cycles during which currently excluded actors act collectively in ways that threaten survival of the government and/or its ruling classes, governmental repression fails, struggle ensues, and settlements concede political standing and/or rights to mobilized actors

Extraction-resistance-bargaining cycles during which governmental agents demand resources that are under control of nongovernmental networks and committed to nongovernmental ends, holders of those resources resist, struggle ensues, and settlements emerge in which people yield resources but receive credible guarantees with respect to constraints on future extraction

Next steps

- Within-case inference
- Cross-case inference