



1: Introduction. Causal thinking and research designs

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[Introduction to Qualitative Methods]

Schedule – *Welcome!*



Introduction

- Content and structure
- Requirements and organisation

Does poverty take people to the streets?



How would you explore whether poverty has caused the summer 2011 riots in England?



- (1) What information would you need? How would you collect the data?
- (2) How would you analyse the data?

Example: Study by **theguardian**

- a. Quantitative large-N analysis
- b. Qualitative interviews with participants

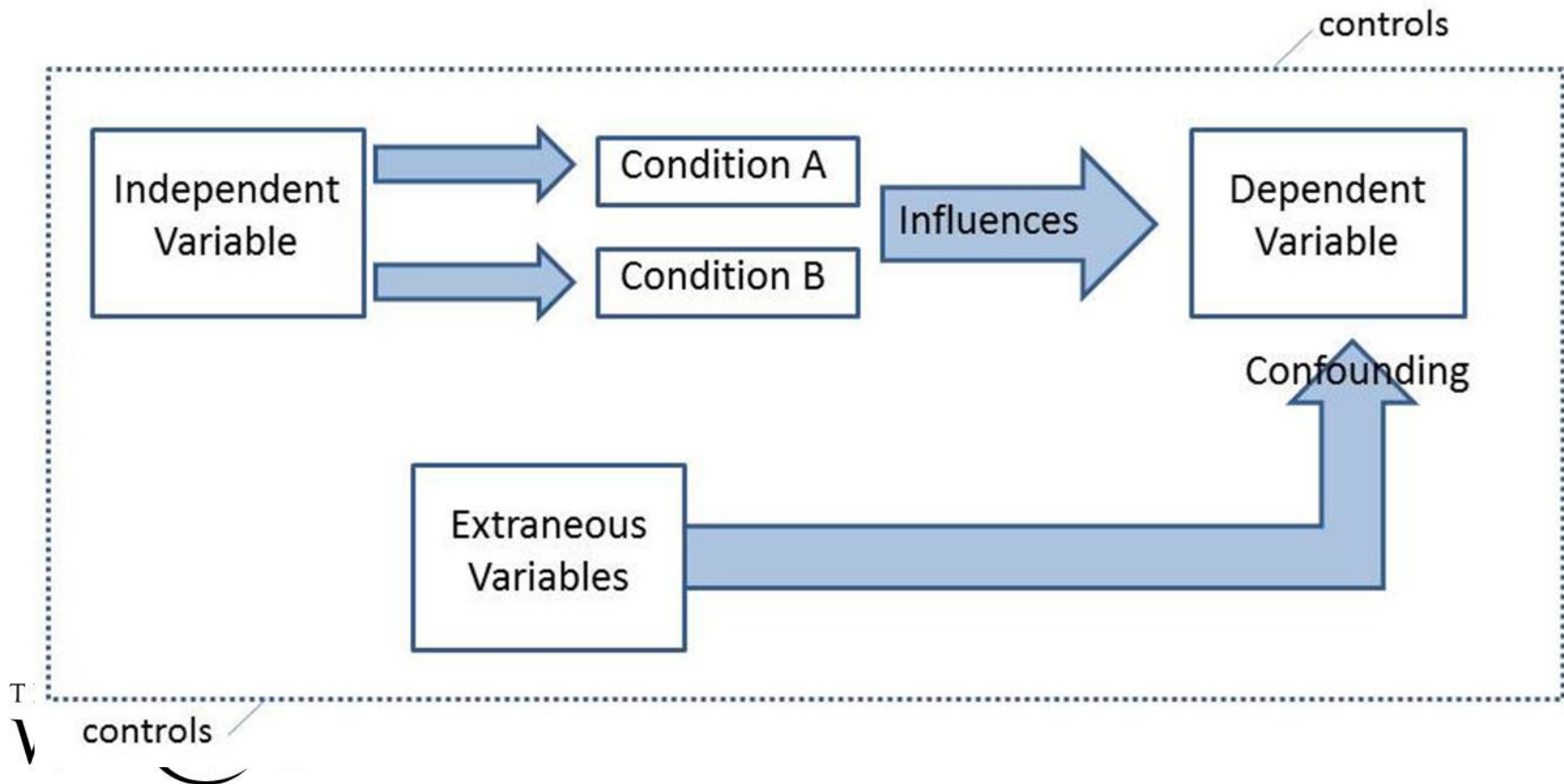


Variables



= any entity that can take on different values, i.e. anything that can vary.

Examples: *Age*: it can take different values for different people or for the same person at different times || *Country*: a person's country can be assigned a value.



Correlation vs. causation



The relationship between smoking and lung cancer death seems quite confirmed, by observation

OR?



More info on the British Doctor Study:



theguardian



→ Original study by Doll & Hill (1954) in British Medical Journal

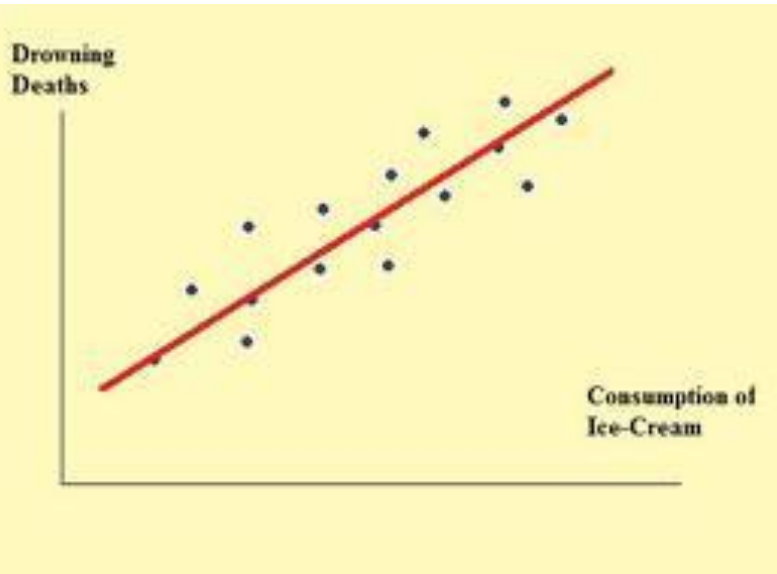
Correlation vs. causation



The fact that two variables vary simultaneously (e.g. smoking and lung cancer death) does not necessarily mean that they are logically correlated!

The relationship among two variables is only confirmed through theoretical considerations and careful consideration of the potential influence of any third variables.

Correlation vs. causation

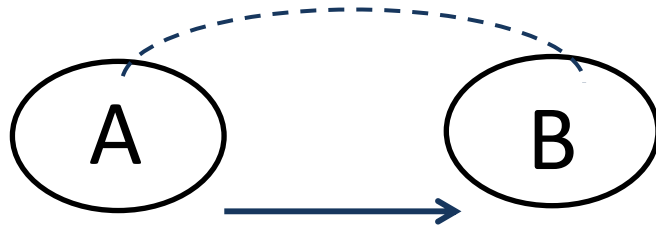


Three conditions of causality

1. Cause precedes the effect
2. Cause and effect must correlate
3. No third variable involved



Establishing causality

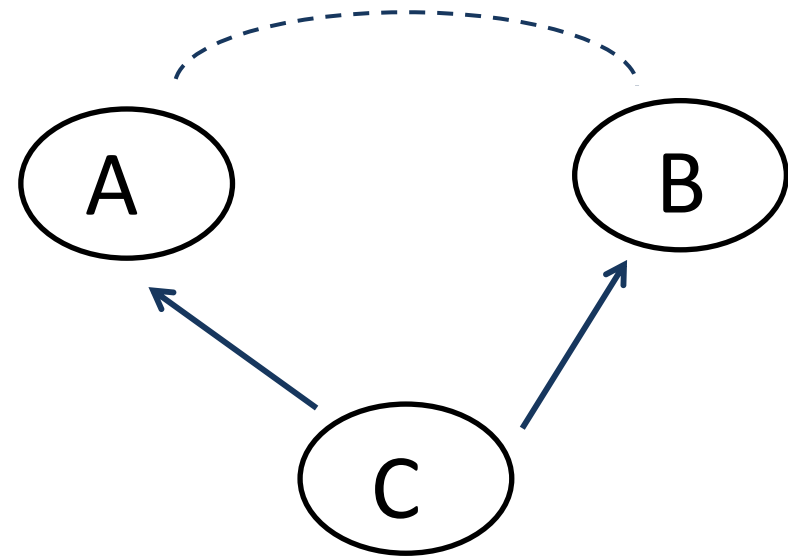


CAUSATION

= changes in A causes changes in B

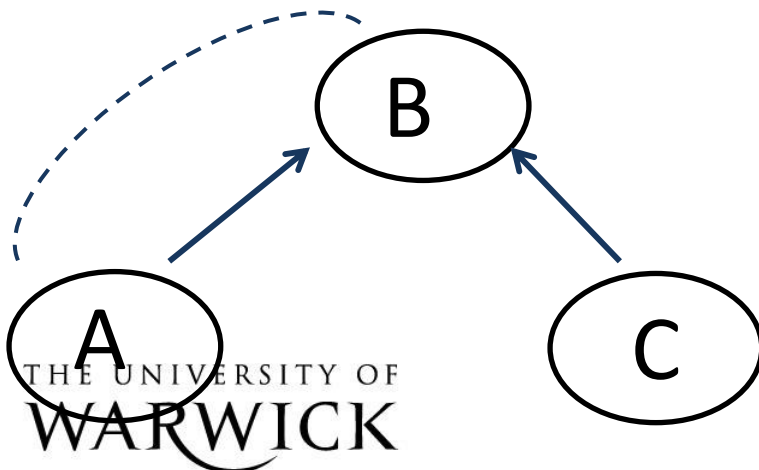
COMMON RESPONSE

= changes in A and B are caused by changes in a third variable, C



CONFOUNDING

= changes in B are caused both by changes in A and by changes in third variable, C

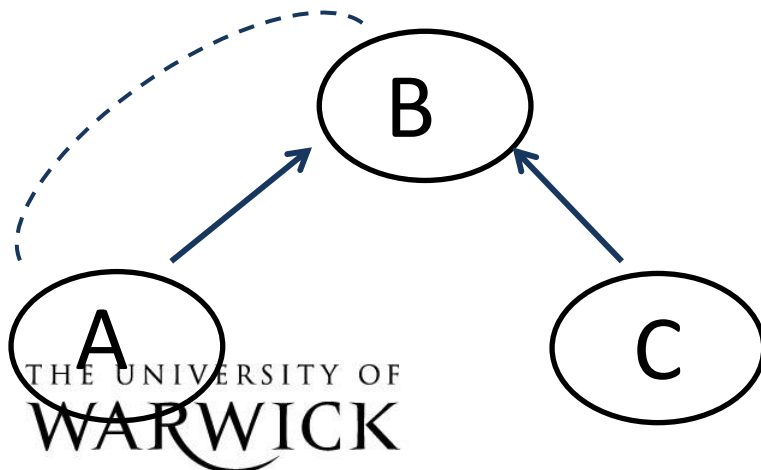


Establishing causality



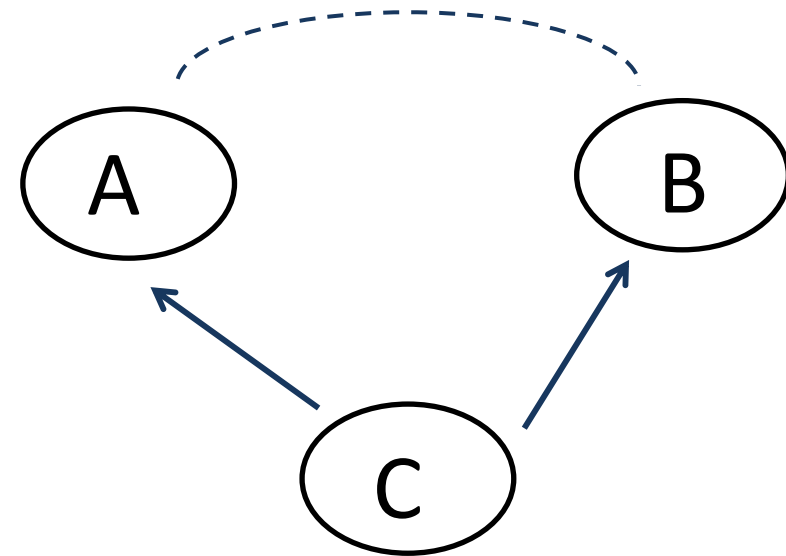
SPURIOUS RELATIONSHIP

The relationship between IV and DV is “explained away” by the third variable



COMMON RESPONSE

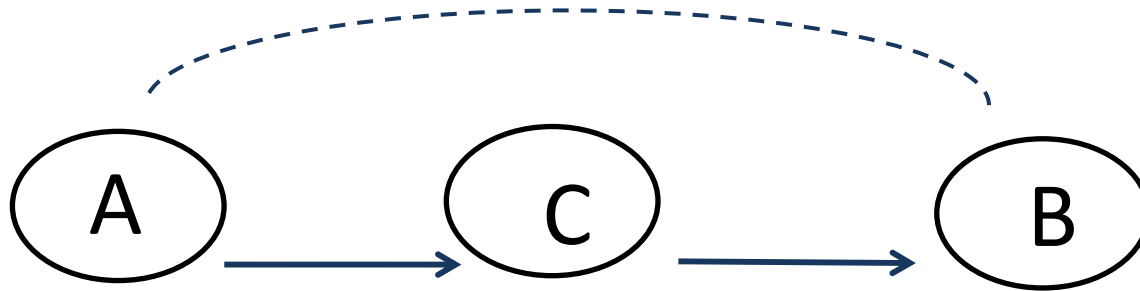
= changes in A and B are caused by changes in a third variable, C



CONFOUNDING

= changes in B are caused both by changes in A and by changes in third variable, C

Establishing causality



INTERVENING

= changes in A causes changes in B
but only if there is C

CONTROL

The researcher's efforts to remove the influence of any extraneous variables that might have an effect on the dependent variable.

The goal is to ensure that the only difference between groups is that related to the independent variable.

What are the core criteria of empirical research?



(1) Reliability

(2) Validity

Reliability



Any significant results must be more than a one-off finding and be inherently repeatable, i.e. the same data would have been collected and the same findings would have been achieved each time over repeated tests/ observations

Would a particular technique (or question) yield the same result each time?

“Did you go to your support group last week?”

vs.

“How many times have you been to these support groups in your life?”

Reliability does not ensure accuracy.

Internal Validity



Internal Validity

The degree to which the results are attributable to the independent variable and not some other rival explanation

- confidence that changes in Dependent (DV) Variable are actually caused by the Independent Variable (IV)
- If a study shows a high degree of internal validity then we can conclude we have strong evidence of causality

External Validity



The extent to which the results of a study can be generalized, depends on the representativeness of sample, setting and procedures and the selection of cases



Qualitative vs. Quantitative Research



Both are types of observational studies applied in order to establishing causal relationships that explain (political) phenomena.

Quantitative research

- measures *differences in number* for variables,
 - studies a large number of cases (Large “N”)
 - yields conclusions that can be generalized
- external validity

Qualitative research

- measures *differences in kind* for variables,
- studies a small number of cases (Small “N”)
- traces causal pathways

→ measurement validity and internal validity

Different goals, different techniques



‘We [...] believe that [quantitative and qualitative] scholars pursue different specific research goals, which in turn produce different norms about research practices. [...] Having said this, [...] we wish to stress that our intention is not to criticize either quantitative or qualitative researchers. In fact, we argue throughout that the dominant practices of both traditions make good sense given their respective goals’

(Mahoney, J. and Goertz, G. 2006:228)

TABLE 1: Contrasting qualitative and quantitative research



Module structure



Part I - **RESEARCH DESIGN**

Causal thinking and research designs | Comparative analysis and case selection

Part II - **DATA COLLECTION**

(Semi-)Structured Interviews | Observational research and ethical questions | Observational research and ethical questions

Part III - **DATA ANALYSIS AND CAUSAL INFERENCE**

Case studies and process-tracing | Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) | The mixed-methods approach

We will focus on doing qualitative exercises rather than just talking about qualitative research

Readings



Methodological readings

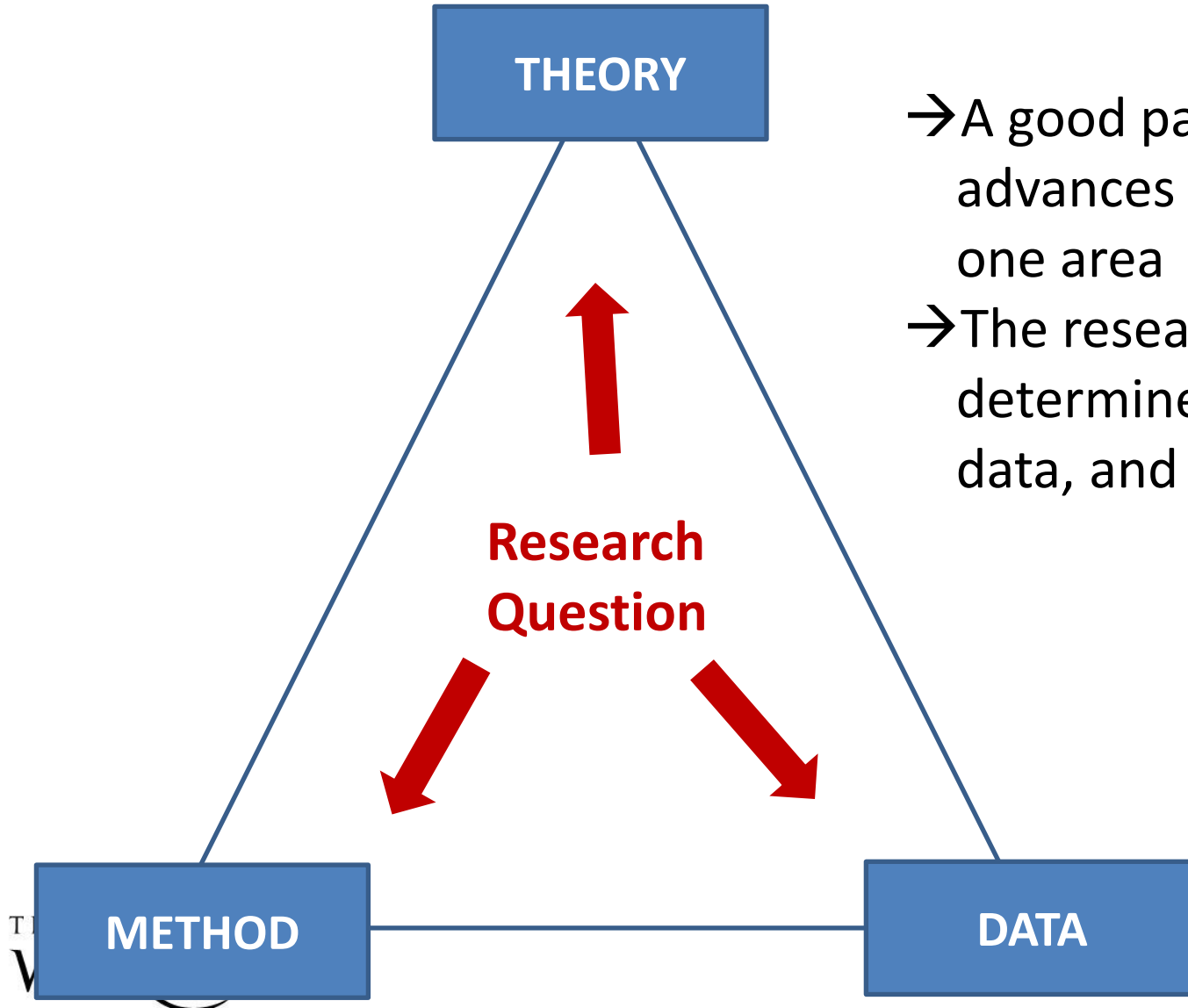
Theoretical issues related to each method

Applied readings

Examples of original research using each method, often in the field of *socialization research*



Triangle of scientific work

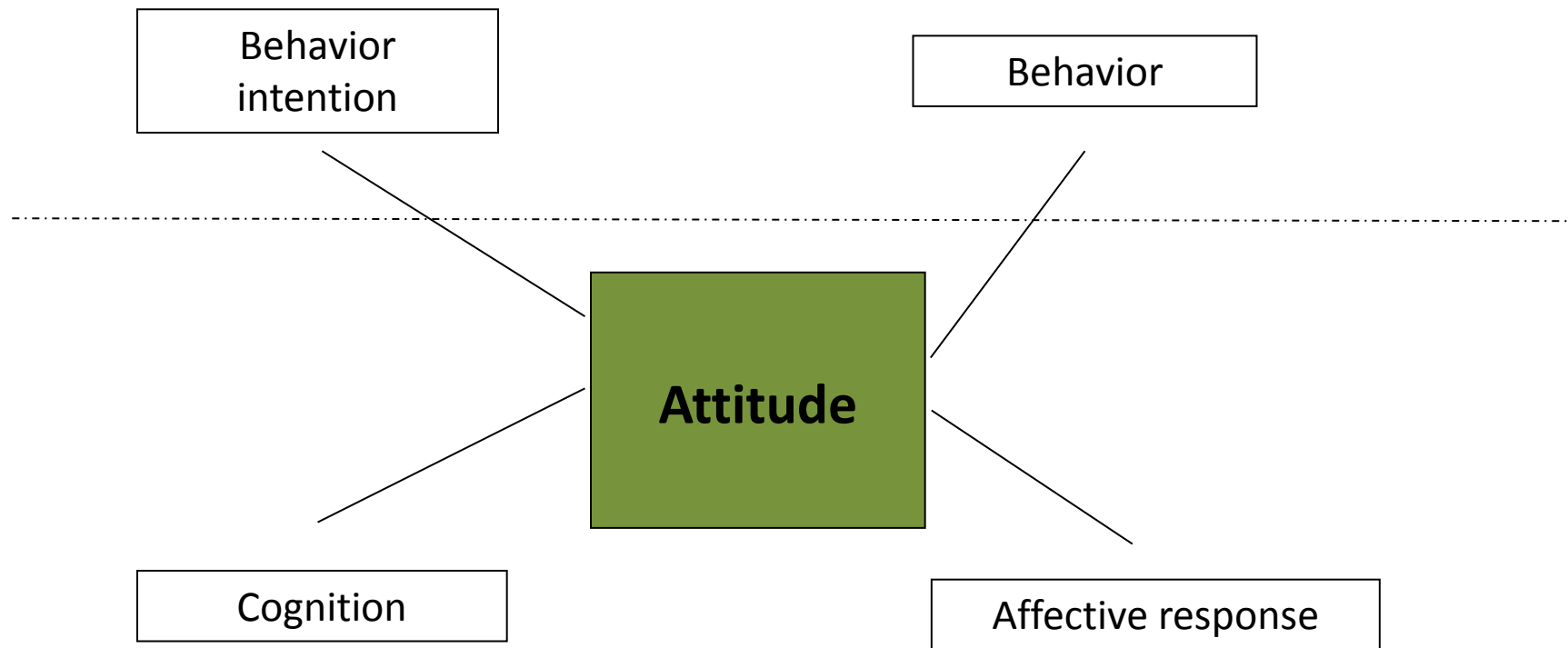


- A good paper advances in at least one area
- The research question determines theory, data, and method

The Attitude System



Positive or negative evaluation of people, objects, events, activities, ideas, or just about anything in your environment



Attitude change



Learning

→ Cognitive change

-Strategic learning

→ Adaptation to norms

-Social learning

→ Adoption of norms

Type I socialization

Identification

→ Cognitive and
affective change

→ Internalization of norms

Type II socialization

Attitudes toward



- UK EU-membership
- Democratic rules and procedures
- Capitalism
- Trade unions
- Political islam
- Development aid
- Military interventions
- Women wearing headscarves
- ...



Requirements / assessment

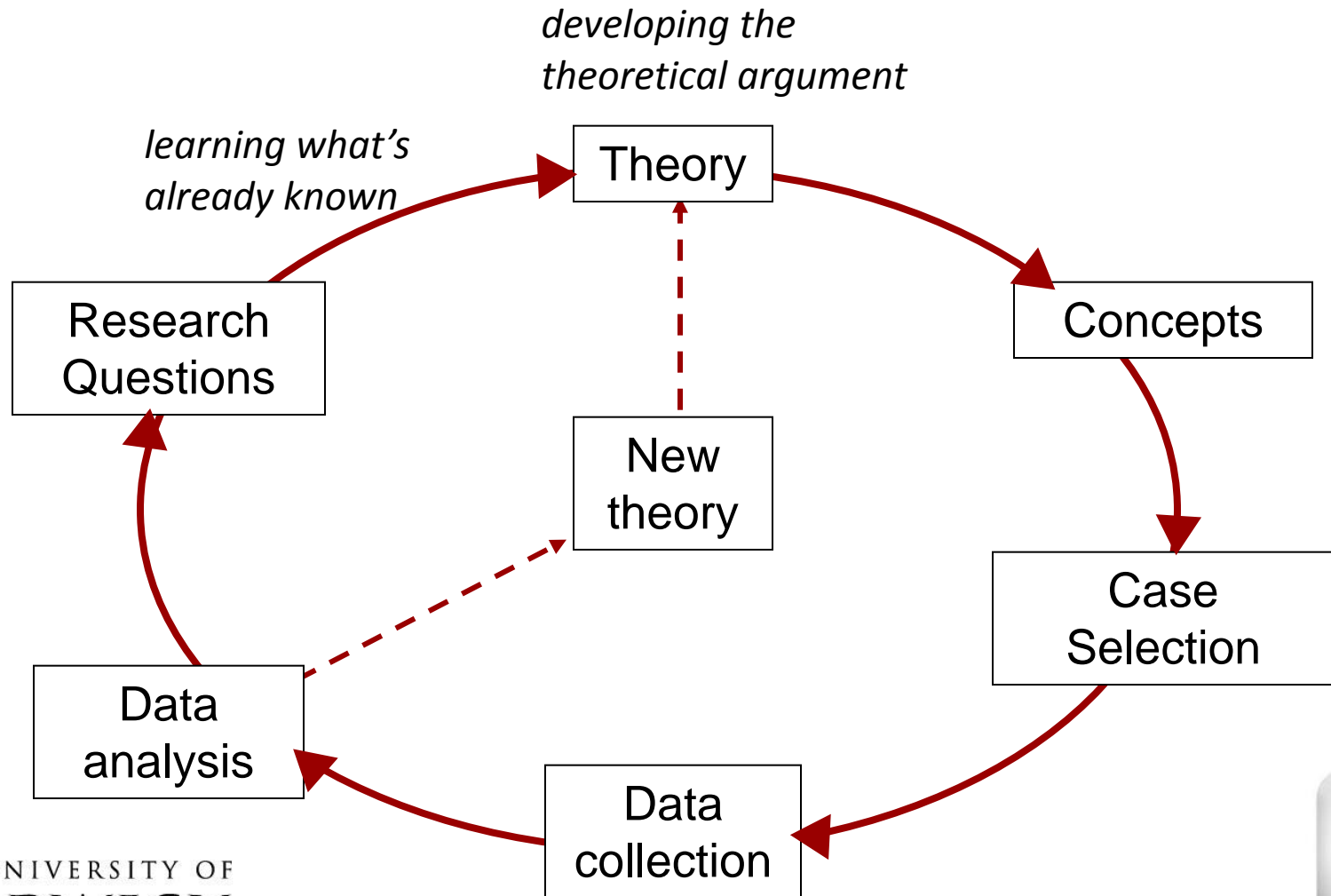


Step-wise process

- (1) Short article reviews
- (2) Research plan (formative essay)
- (3) Mini-symposium
- (4) Assessed essay



Designing political science research



A typical session



- (1) We get to know a specific technique
- (2) We have a look at how others applied this technique in their research; discuss it and think about improvements and alternatives
- (3) We apply the technique in our own research project and discuss different ways of how to implement it including the disadvantages and advantages of this technique compared to its alternative.

Roadmap



Part I - **RESEARCH DESIGN**

- Causal thinking and research designs

- **Comparative analysis and case selection**

Part II - **DATA COLLECTION**

- (Semi-)Structured Interviews
- Observational research and ethical questions
- Observational research and ethical questions

Part III - **DATA ANALYSIS AND CAUSAL INFERENCE**

- Case studies and process-tracing
- Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)
- The mixed-methods approach

Exercise for next week



- 1) Explain, as best you can, the question you would like to explore. Include relevant context (< 250 words)
- 2) Based on the methodological readings for week 2 (but also week 1), explain how the implications of Geddes (1990) regarding selection on the dependent variable can (or cannot) be reconciled (< 1000 words)

Departmental seminar workshops



Speakers at departmental seminar zoom into a particular aspect of their work and discuss it with students and members of staff.

A screenshot of the Politics and International Studies (PAIS) departmental seminar series webpage. The page features a blue header with the 'WARWICK' logo and a search bar. Below the header is a green banner with the text 'Politics and International Studies'. A navigation menu includes links for 'Study with us', 'Research', 'People', 'News', 'Calendar', 'Employability & Alumni', and 'PAIS Intranet'. The main content area is titled 'Events & Seminars' and features a prominent grey box with the text 'PAIS DEPARTMENTAL SEMINAR SERIES All Welcome!'. Below this, there is a paragraph describing the seminar series as the focal point of the department's research culture, followed by a paragraph about presentations and a final paragraph mentioning small workshops. The page ends with the text '- We warmly invite PAIS students and staff to attend the series! -'.



2: Comparative analysis and case selection

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