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Political Parties in a Comparative Perspective
Research Design

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Logistics

Do you have any thoughts on the syllabus and the course?

- Course requirements
- Literature
- Other things

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Logistics

Do you have any thoughts on the syllabus and the course?

- Course requirements
- Literature
- Other things

This is a dynamic syllabus which <u>can</u> change during the semester.
If any questions come to your mind in the course of the term,
please let me know!

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Event announcement

Next week, we'll start with a new round of our speaker series on *Understanding Democracies: Challenges and Solutions*.

- Gefjon Off will be our guest
- She contributes significantly to our understanding of gender in politics
- Presentation on "Do gender patterns differ between the ethnic majority and Muslim minorities? Intersectional and cumulative effects of multiple identities on political behaviour"
- you are all invited to join us next Wednesday, 12-13 in GraSP 101

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Plan for today

Today, we've got two points on the agenda:

1. introduction into different components of an academic article
2. discussion about the comparative method

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What's good academic research for you?

In pairs, please discuss what's good academic research to you? If you have already read one, think of an academic article you've recently read and elaborate what you liked about it. [3 minutes]

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Academic Research

Good research

Figure: Mind-mapping (https://flinga.fi/s/FFC6HHP)

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Good research defined by KKV (1994)

According to King et al. (1994), is there anything like perfect research? Which criteria should good research contain?

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Good research defined by KKV (1994)

King et al. (1994, pp. 16–17) define scientific research based on the following criteria:

1. Descriptive and causal Inference
2. Transparency
3. Probabilistic conclusions
4. Science is not the content, it's the *method*

Science is more than mere description (still important!), it's about identifying causal explanations of political phenomena.

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The components of an academic paper

Let's collect, which ingredients should empirical research contain?

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The components of an academic paper

Let's collect, which ingredients should empirical research contain?

1. Research question
2. Literature review
3. Theory
4. Research design
   - Case description
   - Data
   - Method
5. Analysis

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The components of an academic paper

Today, we focus on two of these components, we'll talk about the
other sections in the remaining sessions

1. Research question
2. Literature review
3. Theory
4. Research design
   - Case description
   - Data
   - Method
5. Analysis

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Theory

What's a theory in the social sciences?

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Theory

*"A social science theory is a reasoned and precise spec-
ulation about the answer to a research question, including
a statement about why the proposed answer is correct."*
(King et al. 1994, p. 25)

Which components does a theory consist of?

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Theory

Theories consist of four components:

1. **Expectations**: An expected relationship between X and Y
2. **Causal mechanisms**: Theoretical reasoning of why X leads to Y
3. **Assumptions**: Underlying (untested) claims of how subjects behave
4. **Scope conditions**: Limits in the applicability of the theory

And what's a good theory?

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Theory

A good theory:

- can be wrong
- contains observable patterns which we can study
- is specific
- should not be made more restrictive after data was analysed

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Research design

Which research design have you heard of? Is there any superior to
the other?

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Research design

In the empirical social sciences, we can choose between two types of research designs:

1. quantitative designs
2. qualitative designs

The design should be selected based on your research question and theory and not the other way around!
What are the advantages of quantitative and qualitative approaches?

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Research design

Often, both types of designs are possible, both allow to test causality and follow a positivist-empirical approach to the social sciences. Their research goals might, however, slightly differ:

Quantitative designs

- ...aim to identify systemic patterns across cases; disregards non-systemic, residual part
- ...focus on average effects
- ...zoom in on how on a specific cause X that leads to outcome Y
- ...often involves large-N (many cases)

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Research design

Qualitative designs

- ...emphasize more often on the non-systemic, idiosyncratic part

- ...dedicate more space to case/event knowledge

- ...establish nuances, seeks to explain within-case variation and occurrence of rare cases

- ...typically involve small- to medium-N

How to judge data quality?

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Research design

- trace data generation process
- collect data on observable implications
- ensure validity, reliability and replicability of data

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Examples to practice

In the room, you find four different posters with a research question. Try to formulate a theory on the question and a research design to study it. [10 minutes]

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Examples to practice

1. Why do people vote against their interests? (Walsh 2012)
2. Does accommodating the far-right work for mainstream parties? (Krause et al. 2023)

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What we've learned today...

- ...at least in theory: what constitutes 'good research' (in terms of theory and research design)
- ...which components empirical articles should contain

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To prepare for next week...

- Next week, we'll talk about whether and why parties are central to democracy and define them
- **Main reading:**
  - Saffon, M. P., & Urbinati, N. (2025).Parties As Agents of Equal Political Freedom. *Political Theory, 53*(3), 380–406. https://doi.org/10.1177/00905917251350108
- **Complementary readings:**
  - Schattschneider, E. E., & Pearson, S. A. (2004). *Party Government: American Government in Action* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315126050

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To prepare for next week...

- Müller, W. C. (2000).Political parties in parliamentary democracies: Making delegation and accountability work. *European Journal of Political Research, 37*(3), 309–333. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.00515

Thank you for your attention!
Any further questions?

Literature

Cunningham, S. (2021). *Causal Inference: The Mixtape*. Yale
        University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1c29t27

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        Edition*. Princeton University Press.

Krause, W., Cohen, D., & Abou-Chadi, T. (2023).Does
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