

University of Oxford

Research Methods in Politics: Lecture Two

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Today's Lecture: Overview

- ▶ Causality

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- ▶ Natural Experiment without pre-measurement

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- ▶ Example: Caught in the Draft

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- ▶ A **theory** is a tentative conjecture about the causes of some phenomenon of interest.
- ▶ A **hypothesis** is a theory-based statement about a relationship that we expect to observe.

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- ▶ Bear in mind that establishing causal relationships between variables is not at all akin to hunting for DNA evidence like some episode from a television crime drama.
- ▶ Social reality does not lend itself to such simple, cut-and-dried answers.
- ▶ Is there a “best practice” for trying to establish whether X causes Y ?

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- ▶ Could Y cause X ?
- ▶ Is there some **confounding variable** Z that is related to both X and Y , and makes the observed association between X and Y **spurious**?

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- ▶ So long as a credible case can be made that some uncontrolled-for Z might be related to both X and Y , we cannot conclude with full confidence that X indeed causes Y
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- ▶ So long as a credible case can be made that some uncontrolled-for Z might be related to both X and Y , we cannot conclude with full confidence that X indeed causes Y
- ▶ Since the main goal of science is to establish whether causal connections between variables exist, then failing to control for other causes of Y is a potentially serious problem.
- ▶ Statistical analysis should not be disconnected from issues of theory (model) and research design.

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- ▶ Lets explore three generic strategies

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- ▶ measure the dependent variable (Y) again
- ▶ if between measurements the group that was exposed (called the test group) has changed relative to the control group, ascribe this to the effect of the independent variable (X) on the dependent variable (Y)

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Table: Some Research Designs

Type	Graphic Representation
Observation with no control group	Test group: $M * M$
Natural experiment no pre-measurement	Test group: $* M$ Control: M
Natural experiment	Test group: $M * M$ Control: $M 5M$
True experiment	Test group: $R M * M$ Control: $RM M$

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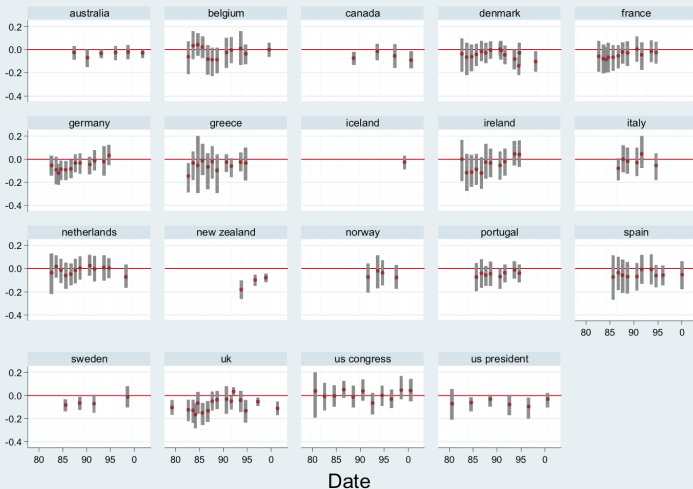
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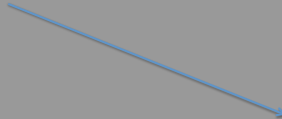
Figure 3.2. Chief Executive Party Economic Vote by Country



Note: One Greek upper confidence interval is truncated

ECONOMIC VOTE

Reported
Economic
Evaluation



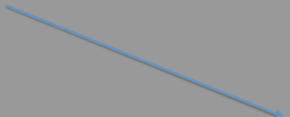
Vote for
Labour
Incumbent

Economic Evaluations and Vote, U.K. April, 2010

Economy	Much Better	Better	Same	Worse	Much Worse
Labour	58%	49%	23%	14%	4%
Tory	6%	14%	35%	43%	56%
Lib-Dem	33%	29%	30%	28%	21%
Other	3%	8%	12%	15%	19%
Total	36	1,000	1,469	1,693	1,229

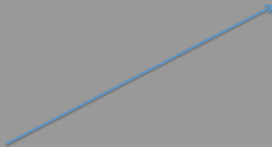
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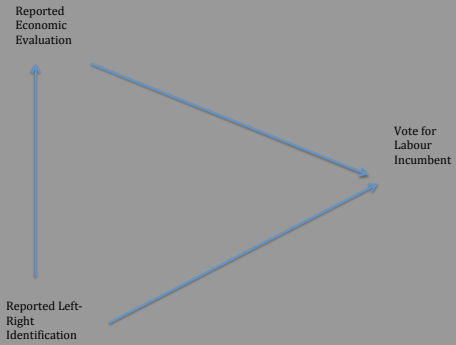
Reported Left-
Right
Identification



Ideology and Vote, U.K. April, 2010

Left-Right	Left	Centre	Right
Labour	42%	22%	5%
Tory	6%	28%	70%
Lib-Dem	41%	33%	12%
Other	12%	17%	13%
Total	1,491	1,242	2,069

THE ECONOMIC VOTE



Economic Evaluations and Ideology, U.K. April, 2010

Left-Right	Left	Centre	Right
Much Better	1%	1%	1%
Better	33%	17%	10%
Same	28%	34%	34%
Worse	26%	34%	34%
Much Worse	12%	21%	31%
Total	1,541	1,341	2,140

Left: Economic Evaluations and Vote, U.K. April, 2010

Economy	Much Better	Better	Same	Worse	Much Worse
Labour	69%	61%	41%	29%	15%
Tory	0%	1%	6%	10%	12%
Lib-Dem	31%	32%	43%	47%	50%
Other	0%	6%	10%	15%	23%
Total	13	498	410	381	178

Centre: Economic Evaluations and Vote, U.K. April, 2010

Economy	Much Better	Better	Same	Worse	Much Worse
Labour	50%	51%	24%	16%	4%
Tory	0%	9%	25%	32%	43%
Lib-Dem	50%	30%	38%	32%	29%
Other	0%	10%	12%	20%	24%
Total	10	205	354	410	256

Right: Economic Evaluations and Vote, U.K. April, 2010

Economy	Much Better	Better	Same	Worse	Much Worse
Labour	55%	19%	6%	4%	1%
Tory	18%	50%	67%	71%	77%
Lib-Dem	18%	22%	15%	13%	7%
Other	9%	9%	12%	12%	15%
Total	11	197	522	692	645

Table: Logit Model of UK Vote Choice: 2010

Variable	Model 1
Economic Evaluations	-0.79 (0.04)
Left-Right	-0.45 (0.02)
Constant	3.34 (0.16)
Obs	4,782
R-Square	0.24

THE ECONOMIC VOTE

