

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

This advanced graduate course is designed to help social science doctoral candidates gain the greatest possible value from qualitative research designs. Illustrative publications come primarily from political science and political economy especially at the international level, and to lesser degrees from education, history, and sociology. It concentrates on case study methods, with due attention to concepts and theorizing as well as inductive reasoning. See appendix 2 for references to other qualitative methods.

Prerequisite: IR 513 or another basic course in philosophy of science and research design, and a course in statistics. **Requirements:** Throughout the semester the student works on two levels--studying methods in general, and developing a particular original proposal as an exercise for experimenting with the techniques. If you have already selected a topic for dissertation research, you may use it for these exercises so long as they are consistent. If they are not, use a different topic that does fit the exercise. **Grades:** Ten percent will reflect earlier short papers and ninety percent will correspond to the final proposal. The latter should demonstrate how much you have learned from this course and will be graded accordingly, as usual.

In class, members will be expected to answer questions about the required readings or exercises for that week. Two books have been ordered at the University Bookstore and placed on reserve. Many other required readings and additional guidance are on Blackboard or available for copying. I will loan optional titles when I have them. In VKC 42D you may read a file of successful past proposals including winners of national fellowship competitions.

For an elementary of research design, you could peruse a textbook such as J. B. Johnson and R. A. Joslyn, *Political Science Research Methods*, E. Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, 6th ed., or another comparable text.

I. CONCEPTS, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AND RESEARCH PROGRAMS

1. 1/11 **Objectives, assumptions, and tips for success.**

2. 1/18 **Mapping and improving concepts**

1. Study:

- J. Maxwell. 1996. *Qualitative research design*, chap. 1-4

- J. Gerring. 2001. *Social Science Methodology*, 35-86.
- D. Collier and S. Levitsky. 1997. Democracy with adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research. *World Politics* 49:430-51.

2. Start selecting a research program and research question for your proposal exercise. Read “Recommended steps in writing your research-program essay” on Blackboard. Read 2 specialized articles or books that come the closest to answering your main research question as you think of it today. For each, draw a concept map (Maxwell chapter 3) representing the main concepts and main relations among them in the author’s arguments. A simpler diagram is better for this purpose. Indicate the direction in which causality or influence is thought to run between concepts, when the author makes this clear. Record your evaluations of the study. Turn in copies of your 2 diagrams at class time.

3. Write Maxwell’s exercise 3.2, creating a first primitive concept map for your own prospective study. Pull this first try out of your own mind rather than turning to published studies or evidence. Identify one clear dependent variable or main effect to be explained. Turn it in at class. This exercise will not be graded or circulated without your permission.

- Recommended: Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," in Lakatos, ed., *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 91-138 and 173-180.

3. 1/25 **From naïve questions to research questions**

1. Read 4 additional specialized works for the essay due next week, recording concept maps and evaluative notes on each. Report orally what you have read since last week.

2. Read KKV, chap. 1. Generate one research question using each of the techniques on pp 16-17 and turn in your list of questions at class time.

3. Complete Maxwell’s exercise 4.1, developing your research questions. Follow his six steps as faithfully as possible, and bring to class a copy of your research questions for each member. Bear in mind his wise advice that “a good set of research questions will evolve over time, after you have considered and reconsidered your broad research theme. . . Be wary of the desire to push forward before going through this process.” In this spirit prepare to pose orally at least one plea for assistance arising from this assignment.

4. 2/1 **Due: Critical essay reviewing your research program** (graded; maximum 2000 words not counting references)

First read “Recommended steps in writing your research-program essay” on Blackboard. A later draft of this essay can become part 2 of your proposal. For guidance on proposal writing, see “Writing a Proposal for an Empirical Social Science Dissertation” on Blackboard.

A. What are the program’s primary dependent variables today? B. What are the program’s most influential theories and methods used to explain these dependent variables or solve its puzzles? C. What are the program’s main accomplishments and most significant shortcomings to date--confusions, empirical anomalies, gaps? D. What is your provisional research question – one sentence ending in a question mark? E. List the 10 publications that come closest to answering this question. (In my office you are welcome to look at some outstanding past student essays.)

II. ALTERNATIVE RESEARCH DESIGNS AND ANALYTICAL TECHNIQUES

5. 2/8 Cross-case comparison

1. Study:

- KKV, causality and causal inference, 75-114
- J. S. Mill. 1872. *A System of Logic*, 8th ed., book 3, Induction, ch. VIII, “Of the four methods of experimental inquiry” (skip paragraph 5 on the method of residues). What logic is at the heart of the method of agreement? the method of difference? the method of concomitant variations?
- Odell, J. 2001. Case Study Methods in International Political Economy. *International Studies Perspectives* (for now especially note passages on the method of difference).

2. Read 3 of the following items and prepare to summarize your assessment orally: What is the study’s main thesis? What method(s) does it illustrate? By what criteria did the author select the cases? How strong are the study’s causal inferences?

- M. Fiorina. 1977. *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment*, selections comparing two congressional districts.
- T. Skocpol 1979. *States and social revolutions: a comparative analysis of France, Russia, and China*, chap. 1-4. Note the statement of her method (pp 33-42) and the summary of her argument (pp 5 and 154-57).
- R. Mitchell. Summer 1994. Regime design matters: intentional oil pollution and treaty compliance,” *International Organization (IO)* 48:425-458.
- J. Odell. 2000. *Negotiating the World Economy*, pp 1-6, 20-23, chapter 6.

- A. Tsygankov. 2000. Defining state interests after empire: national identity, domestic structures and foreign trade policies of Latvia and Belarus. *Review of Intl Political Economy* 7:101-37.

3. Graded memo: Invent an original research project using Mill's method of difference or method of concomitant variation for purposes of causal inference. Define the method briefly, especially the logic of inference you must use. Formulate a hypothesis *before* selecting 2 or more historical cases of some phenomenon. Give theoretical and methodological reasons for selecting them and rejecting 2 other cases. If your favorite project does not fit this assignment, invent a different application, giving priority to showing that you have learned this method.

Supplements:

- Weber, M. Objective possibility and adequate causation in historical explanation. In Weber, *Methodology of the social sciences*.
- Collier, D. 1991. The Comparative method: two decades of change. In *Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives*, ed. D. A. Rustow and K. P. Erickson.
- Mahoney, J. 1999. Nominal, Ordinal and Narrative Appraisal in Macro-Causal Analysis. *Am J. of Sociology* 104:1154-96.

6. 2/15 **Alternative single-case designs**

1. Study:

- H. Eckstein. 1975. Case study and theory in political science. In *Handbook of Political Science*, vol. 7, ed. Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, 94-137.
- J. Odell. 2001. Case Study Methods in International Political Economy. *International Studies Perspectives* or in *Models, Numbers, and Cases* 2004.
- Not required: S. Van Evera 1997. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, pp. 49-95

2. Study 3 works--each from a different category below--and prepare to report orally on them. What is the study's main thesis? What research design does it use and how effectively does it exemplify that method? How good or bad is the result?

Deviant case study:

- A. Lijphart. *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*
- B. Russett. 1967. Pearl harbor: deterrence theory and decision theory. *Journal of Peace Research* 2: 81-106. Rpt. in *Theory and research on the causes of war*, ed. D. Pruitt and R. Snyder, pp. 127-135.

- B. Russett. 1993. *Grasping the Democratic Peace*, chapter on Greek states.

Least likely case study:

- E. L. Morse. 1970. *Foreign Policy and Interdependence in Gaullist France*, chap. 5 on monetary policy

Most likely case study:

- W. LeoGrande. July 1979. Cuban dependency. *Cuban Studies*.

Disciplined-configurative case study:

- J. Berejekian. 1997. The Gains Debate: Framing State Choice. *Am. Pol. Sci. Rev.* 91:789-805
- A. and J. George. 1956. *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: a personality study*

Constructivist interpretation:

- R. Price. 1995. A genealogy of the chemical weapons taboo. *International Organization* 49:73-103.

3. Turn in a memo (to be graded) presenting original illustrations of any two of these five designs, referring to actual historical cases. Don't forget the Big Lesson. For each illustration, *formulate a hypothesis first* and only then select a single case that, if studied, is likely to generate that type of contribution. Again the top priority is on showing you have learned the method rather than applying it to your favorite subject, should there be any conflict between the two.

7. 2/22 Selecting and increasing observations to reduce threats to valid causal inference (too few observations, selection bias, endogeneity, reciprocal causation)

1. Study the following and be prepared to explain the pitfalls they identify:
 - Maxwell, chap. 6 (validity)
 - KKV 1994, pp. 115-230
2. In a graded memo due at class time, briefly define the problem identified by KKV on the following pages and invent one possible social science example of each remedy they suggest:
 - (p. 140) selecting observations to insure variation in the explanatory variable,
 - (p. 141) selecting a range of values of the dependent variable (retrospective contrast),
 - (pp 191-93) one remedy to correct for endogeneity.

Do not take your examples from previous literature. Think of concrete historical cases that could be included in a research design to solve this type of problem. You might have to read a little about a candidate case to know whether it would in fact illustrate this remedy.

3. Increasing observations by theorizing more implications
 - Study C. Lave and J. March. *An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences*, an introduction to speculation, pp. 9-49 [omit 25-34]. I suggest you take seriously the notes saying “stop and think.” It’s fun. Do problem 12 p. 49 in Lave and March. Present your 4 predictions orally in class.
 - Study D. Campbell. 1975. “‘Degrees of Freedom’ and the Case Study.” *Comparative Political Studies* 8: 168-93. Rpt. in D. Campbell. 1988. *Methodology and Epistemology for Social Science*. Note the parallel techniques in KKV, 217-28. Write a one page graded memo illustrating how you could use Campbell’s recommendation to ask yourself what other implications your theory ought to have (predictions of other effects) in a single case study, and to keep a box score for each implication.
 - Recommended supplement: *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, ed. H. Brady and D. Collier (2005) offers a comprehensive critique of *Designing Social Inquiry*, from the standpoint of quantitative as well as qualitative methods.

8. 3/1 **Within-case techniques: process-tracing and counterfactual argument**

1. Causal mechanisms and process tracing
 - George and Bennett 2005, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, chs. 7 and 10
 - Review examples of process tracing from weeks 5 and 6.
 - L. Martin. 1992. *Coercive Cooperation*, chs. 1 and 6 (EC sanctions during Falklands war)
 - Additional recommended exemplars:
 - D. W. Larson. 1997. *Anatomy of Mistrust: U.S. Soviet Relations during the Cold War*
 - J. M. Owen. 1997. *Liberal Peace, Liberal War*
 - Turn in a one page memo describing how you could use process tracing for theoretical purposes in a single case study on a social science subject of your choice (pass/fail).
2. Counterfactual argument
 - Study P. Tetlock and A. Belkin. 1996. “Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological, and

Psychological Perspectives,” pp. 1-38 in *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics*, ed. Tetlock and Belkin.

- Read Y. F. Khong. 1996. “Confronting Hitler and Its Consequences,” in Tetlock and Belkin, 95-118.
- Read P. Haas, R. Keohane and M. Levy, eds. 1993. *Institutions for the Earth*, chap 1 – 2 (ozone case). Turn in two brief original illustrations of counterfactual arguments about a single case that might strengthen a causal claim about your subject. Consider the logical steps followed in these articles (pass/fail).

9. 3/8 Structured focused comparison and typologies

1. Study:

- George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, chap 3 and 11 (chaps 4-6 are recommended for later study)
- A. Bennett, J. Levgold, and D. Unger. 1994. Burden-Sharing in the Persian Gulf War. *International Organization* 48:39-75.
- C. Elman. 2005. Explanatory Typologies in Qualitative Studies of International Politics. *International Organization* 59:293-326.
- Additional recommended exemplars:
 - A. George and Smoke. 1974. *Deterrence and American Foreign Policy*
 - M. Krepon and Caldwell, eds. 1991. *The Politics of Arms Control Treaty Ratification*
 - A. Bennett. 1999. *Condemned to Repetition? The Rise, Fall, and Reprise of Soviet-Russian Military Interventionism, 1973-1996*

2. Graded memo: Invent a proposed research project by creating a simple typological theory deductively (as explained by George and Bennett) and use this framework to identify at least 3 cases for research. How does this design differ from one using the method of difference?

3. Work on your final proposal. With your research question and research program in mind, draft a first outline of the empirical methods section of your project proposal (building blocks 3, 4 and 5 in “Writing a Proposal . . .” on Blackboard). Select at least one research design from the menu in 515 part II, for attacking your main research question, citing cases you are currently considering. You may change your mind later. Turn in at class time.

III. COLLECTING EVIDENCE AND AND STRENGTHENING DESCRIPTIVE INFERENCES

This part provides brief initial exposure and further references to selected techniques of observation and classification. These techniques are not detailed in proposals, but they are needed in subsequent phases of research projects.

10. 3/22 **Interviewing.** Study either A or B depending on your interests.

A. Interviewing average people

- Spradley, James. 1979. *The ethnographic interview*, pp. vii-39
- Hochschild, J. L. 1981. *What's fair? American Beliefs about distributive justice*, pp. 17-45 and 148-191
- Scott, James. 1985. *Weapons of the weak: everyday forms of peasant resistance*, pp. 1-27.

Other resources: Devereaux, S. and J. Hoddinott, ed. 1993. *Fieldwork in Developing Countries* (lessons from experience especially at the village level); C. Barrett and J. Cason. 1997. *Overseas Research: A Practical Guide* (a synthesis of lessons about the practical challenges from experiences of 63 social science doctoral candidates, replete with quotations; also relevant for interviewing elites); M. Patton. 2002. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3d ed., chap 7.

B. Interviewing elites. L. A. Dexter. 1970. *Elite and specialized interviewing*, pp. 3-138.

Other resources: Symposium on interview methods in political science. 2002. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35:662-88, on Blackboard.

11. 3/29 **Making descriptive claims more rigorous and enhancing accumulation: operational definitions and ordinal indicators**

1. Study:

- Babbie, E. 1992. *The practice of social research*, 6th ed., pp. 120-146.
- KKV, pp. 34-71 & 150-168

2. Read these 3 exemplars to get an understanding of how qualitative studies have attempted to make descriptive claims more rigorous. How did the author create operational definitions and ordinal scales to classify evidence? How transparent, precise and reliable is each indicator? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this form of measurement?

- Putnam, R. and N. Bayne. 1984, 1987. *Hanging together: cooperation and conflict in the seven-power summits*, chap 11 (esp. p 270, the degree of cooperation achieved in summit meetings).
- Odell, J. 1985. The outcomes of international trade conflicts: the US and South Korea 1960-1981. *International Studies Quarterly* 29:263-286 (who gained how much from 13 trade disputes).
- Smith, J. M. Winter 2000. The politics of dispute settlement design: explaining legalism in regional trade pacts. *International Organization* 54:137-180 (the degree of legalism in international agreements).

Other examples:

Butterworth, R. L. 1976. Managing interstate conflict, 1945-74: data with synopses, pp. 481-98. An example of a coding manual for creating both quantitative and qualitative data for questions such as “which type of powers exercised leadership in conflict management?” “how wide was agreement in the international organization on the management actions it took?” “what was the strongest action it took?”

Underdal, Arild. 1993. Measuring and explaining regime effectiveness. In *Complex cooperation*, ed. H. Hveem, pp. 92-124.

Haggard, S. and S. Maxfield. Winter 1996. The political economy of financial internationalization in the developing world. *International Organization* 50:35-68. 4 ordinal indicators for a country’s level of financial openness, whose scores are summed to create an interval scale.

3. Graded exercise due at class: Create 2 original ordinal scales to measure any two concepts that could vary by degrees (your own inventions, not quoted from others). Your memo should define each concept generally, and then create an operational definition for it. The latter should define the possible categories or values of your scale, and include rules telling your research assistants how to sort evidence into these categories. Give a real concrete example that fits each category of the scale. Anticipate at least two situations that will fall along the border between categories, and spell out how to classify them, since otherwise your assistants will rely on private intuitions, which might vary from one to the other and contaminate your data. You will not be able to do this assignment well without spending some time working with raw evidence.

12. 4/5 Individual consultations. Now that you have a more concrete sense of alternative methods, revise and turn in a preliminary draft of parts 1, 2, and 3 of your proposal, stating the adjusted research question and how your project will add to the research program. Use ideas from Lave and March to generate predictions of other related observable implications of your main idea. Then improve the preliminary outline of your methods section and bring the outline as well to your meeting with me.

IV. DISCUSSION OF PROPOSALS

Classes 13, 14 & 15

Your final proposal is due not later than 2 May 2007. Please follow the guidance in “Writing a Proposal” on Blackboard. This paper should be less than 3,500 words in length apart from notes and references. Please provide a word count. In grading it I will place the greatest weight on the second half after the literature critique—the methods. You will circulate your first draft for comments during the seminar, and will have the option of revising it in light of those suggestions.

Note: Students requesting academic accommodations based on disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:00. The office is in Student Union 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.

Appendix 1. Other textbooks and practical advice

Becker, H. W. 1986. *Writing for social scientists: how to start and finish your thesis, book or article*. University of Chicago Press. How bad writing really is *not* required to make social science good--contrary to the impression you get from too many journals.

Booth, W. C., *et al.* 1995. *The Craft of Research*. University of Chicago Press. The writing process--asking questions, making a claim and supporting it, pre-drafting and drafting, revising, and introductions.

Becker, H. 1996. *Tricks of the Trade: Thinking about your Research while Doing It*

Appendix 2. Additional interpretivist references

The term “qualitative” is used by diverse scholars who disagree on epistemological basics. Assuming some prior exposure to these debates, this seminar works within what could be called pragmatic positivism, the mainstream in the USA. This inclusive position will be discussed briefly at the outset. This seminar does not attempt to teach how to use methods that regard themselves as alternatives to this mainstream. IR 516 and Sociology 520 are recommended supplements or alternatives. Here are a few additional references.

Miles, M. B. and A. M. Huberman. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 2d ed. Sage.

Alker, H., Jr. 1996. *Rediscoveries and reformulations: humanistic methodologies for international studies*.

Denzin, N. K. and Y. S. Lincoln, eds. 1998. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2d ed. Vol. 1, The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues; Vol. 2, Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry; Vol. 3, Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials.

McKeown, T. 1999. Case Studies and the Statistical Worldview: Review of King, Keohane, and Verba's *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. *International Organization* 53:161-90.