

Methods for Field Research

GOVT 6523, Fall 2009

Mondays 7:30-9:25pm, White Hall B14

<http://blackboard.cornell.edu>

Professor David Siddhartha Patel
Department of Government
White Hall 218
patel@cornell.edu

Office hours: Wed 2-4
or by appointment

Overview. This graduate seminar introduces students to methods currently used by political scientists to develop and test for observable implications of theoretically-derived arguments using data collected in the field. The course is designed primarily for students working on dissertation proposals or early stages of dissertation field research, but may be helpful for students at other stages as well. A goal is to encourage students to specify a field research strategy that links testable hypotheses with methods of data gathering and analysis *before* commencing field work. Students, therefore, will develop their own research projects as the semester progresses.

Course Requirements. The requirements of the course are fivefold.

- You are required to attend all class meetings, to come to seminar having read and thought about the assigned material for the week, and to participate actively in class discussions.
- For three of the weeks in which empirical work is presented (class 4-10, 12), you must submit a 1-2 page analysis of one of the empirical papers or books assigned that week. The analysis should, at a minimum, (1) briefly summarize the puzzle, central hypothesis or causal proposition, and the proposed mechanism that links cause to effect; (2) discuss how the author(s) operationalized the dependent and independent variables and assess the quality of evidence used; and (3) offer thoughts about additional empirical tests that might further prove or disprove the author's core proposition by testing direct observable implications or indirect ones that follow from the logic employed. These papers must be e-mailed to me by Monday at 8:00 a.m. on the days they are assigned.
- Complete all eight research design assignments described below, and be prepared to discuss these ideas in class. Five of these eight assignments consist of 1-2 page written assignments.
- By the third meeting, I will divide the class into research support groups of 3-4 students. Read the five written assignments of the other members of your group as you receive them and e-mail constructive comments to at least two of them for each assignment. Alternatively, groups can choose to meet weekly and discuss each other's ideas.
- Present to the class a 15 minute summary of your research question, theory and observable implications, and field research strategy.

Your memos and research design assignments will be assessed on the quality of thinking that went into the project, rather than the proposed theory.

Readings. Three books are available for purchase at the Cornell Bookstore, Kraftees, and online. All three are also on reserve in Olin Library. All others readings will be available via the GOVT 652 Blackboard site. The books are:

- Laitin, David D. 1998. *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Wedeen, Lisa. 2008. *Peripheral visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Wood, Elisabeth Jean. 2003. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Weekly meetings and assignments

Class 1. August 31. Introduction

Wood, Elisabeth Jean. 2007. "Field Methods." In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, eds. Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 123-146

Collier, David. 1999. "Data, Field Work and Extracting New Ideas at Close Range." *APSA-CP* 10, 1: 1-2, 4-6.
<http://www.nd.edu/~apsacp/pdf/APSA-CP20Winter201999.pdf>

Loaeza, Soledad, Randy Stevenson, and Devra C. Moehler. 2005. "Symposium: Should Everyone Do Fieldwork?" *APSA-CP* 16, 2:8-18.
http://www.nd.edu/~apsacp/documents/Summer2005_001.pdf

Green, Donald and Alan Gerber. 2002. "Reclaiming the Experimental Tradition in Political Science." In *Political Science: State of the Discipline*, eds. Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner. New York: Norton. pp. 805-832.

Class 2. September 7. Theory and Field Research

Shapiro, Ian. 2002. "Problems, Methods, and Theories in the Study of Politics, or What's Wrong with Political Science and What to Do about It." *Political Theory* 30, 4: 596-619.

O'Brien, Kevin J. 2006. "Discovery, Research (Re)design, and Theory Building." In *Doing Fieldwork in China*, eds. Maria Heimer and Stig Thøgersen. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. pp. 27-41.

Adcock, Robert, and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement validity: A shared standard for qualitative and quantitative research." *American Political Science Review* 95, 3: 529-546.

Bates, Robert H., Chalmers Johnson, and Ian S. Lustick. 1997. "Symposium: Controversy in the Discipline: Area Studies and Comparative Politics." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 30, 2: 166-179.

Snow, David A. Calvin Morrill, and Leon Anderson. 2003. "Elaborating analytic ethnography: Linking fieldwork and theory." *Ethnography* 4, 2: 181-200.

Assignment #1: First, choose a puzzle (e.g., variation in outcomes across time or space, a Pareto sub-optimality, or a phenomenon that doesn't "make sense" and you simply "don't get") that (a) you think is important; (b) you think our understanding of is inadequate; (c) you have an intuition of how to improve our understanding of; and (d) you believe it is possible to collect data with which to explore your intuition. Describe your puzzle without using jargon. Second, identify and briefly summarize at least one central hypothesis or causal proposition that you think might resolve this puzzle. State the proposition in a clear, testable and falsifiable form. A falsifiable proposition is one that can be shown to be wrong. If you can't think of any evidence that would convince you that the proposition is wrong, you need to reformulate the proposition. If possible, render the proposition (and its falsifiability!) in a diagram or equation or both. Be clear about the mechanism that links the cause (independent variable(s)) and effect (outcomes you are trying to explain). E-mail me a 1-2 page summary by 8 a.m., September 7; be prepared to briefly describe your puzzle in seminar.

Class 3. September 14. Choosing what to observe

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
pp. 115-149.

Gerring, John. 2007. *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
pp. 86-150

Geddes, Barbara. 2003. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
pp. 89-129.

Collier, David, and James Mahoney. 1996. "Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research." *World Politics* 49, 1: 56-91.

Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. N.d. "Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods." *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Forthcoming.

Dunning, Thad. 2008. "Improving Causal Inference: Strengths and Limitations of Natural Experiments." *Political Science Quarterly* 61, 2:282-93.

Laitin, David D. 1986. *Hegemony and Culture: Political and Religious Change Among the Yoruba*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
pp. 185-205.

George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. 2004. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
pp. 67-72, 205-232.

Assignment #2: First, identify several (or, ideally, as many as possible...) direct observable implications of the proposition that you wish to test and indirect ones that follow from the logic employed. Second, identify the types of data you will need to confirm or disconfirm your hypothesis. What would be 'ideal' data to assess your conjectures? Describe as completely as possible the data you will need to gather and how you plan to collect it. Third, identify cases that you will use to test the observable implications of your theory. Think about what cases(s), different from the one that informed your initial intuition, would be most productive to study in greater depth to add confidence that your proposition is correct or incorrect. E-mail me and your group a 1-2 page summary by 8 a.m., September 14.

Class 4. September 21. Ethnography and Participant Observation

Bernard, H. Russell. 2006. *Research methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, 4th edition*. New York: AltaMira Press.
pp. 342-386 (Chapter 13)

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
pp 1-38, 142-168 (Chapters 1, 2, & 6)

Aunger, Robert. 1995. "On Ethnography: Storytelling or Science?" *Current Anthropology* 36, 1: 97-130.

Becker, Howard S. 1958. "Problems of inference and proof in participant observation." *American Sociological Review* 23, 6: 652-660.

Wedeen, Lisa. 2008. *Peripheral visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
All (focus on the field data and methods)

Fenno, Richard F. 1978. *Home Styles: House Members in Their Districts*. Boston: Little Brown.
pp. 249-293.

Class 5. September 28. Interviews

Bernard, H. Russell. 2006. *Research methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 4th ed. New York: AltaMira Press.
pp. 210-250 (Chapter 9).

Leech, Beth L, et al. 2002. "Symposium: Interview Methods in Political Science." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35, 4: 663-688.

Goode, William J., and Paul K. Hatt. 1975. "The Interview/Questionnaire Schedule: An Example and Comments." In *Fist-fights in the Kitchen: Manners and Methods in Social Research*, ed. George H. Lewis. Pacific Palisades, CA: Goodyear Publishing Company, Inc. pp. 217-224.

Wood, Elisabeth Jean. 2003. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
pp. 1-87, 193-256 (focus on the author's research strategy)

Laitin, David D. 1998. *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
pp. 1-35, 83-198, 394-397 (focus on the author's research strategy)

Wolford, Wendy. 2006. "The Difference Ethnography Can Make: Understanding Social Mobilization and Development in the Brazilian Northeast." *Qualitative Sociology* 29, 3:335-352.

Further reading

Rubin, Herbert J., and Irene S. Rubin. 2005. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Assignment #3: Choose one or more of the cases identified in assignment #2. For that case, develop a research strategy employing participant observation or interview techniques or both to gather data to test observable implications of your theory. Your written research strategy should include: (1) a list of the 'types' of respondents (and, if possible, the specific respondents) you will need to observe or speak with; (2) a list of questions that you will need to have answered, either from behavioral observation or through face-to-face interviews; and (3) a discussion of how these data will help you to accept or reject competing theories. E-mail me and your group a 1-2 page summary by 8 a.m., September 28.

Class 6. October 5. Surveys

Keeter, Scott. 2005. "Survey Research." In *Doing Research: Methods of Inquiry for Conflict Analysis*, ed. Daniel Druckman. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
pp. 123-162

Posner, Daniel N. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98, 4:529-545.
http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/posner/pdfs/political_salience.pdf

Laitin, David D. 1998. *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
pp. 201-216, 372-394.

Teitelbaum, Emmanuel J. 2006. "Mobilizing Restraint: Unions and the Politics of Economic Development in South Asia." Ph.D. diss. Cornell University.
pp. 102-121, 240-266 (page numbers refer to dissertation page numbers, not the pdf)

Miguel, Edward, and Daniel N. Posner. 2006. "Sources of Ethnic Identification in Africa." Manuscript. UC Berkeley and UCLA.
http://elsa.berkeley.edu/~emiguel/miguel_identification.pdf

Further reading

Curtice, John. 2007. "Comparative Opinion Surveys." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*, eds. Russell J. Dalton and Hans-Dieter Kingemann. New York: Oxford University Press.
pp. 896-907

Tessler, Mark, and Amaney Jamal. 2006. "Political Attitude Research in the Arab World: Emerging Opportunities." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39.
<http://polisci.lsa.umich.edu/documents/TesslerJamal.pdf>

No class. October 12. Fall Break.

Class 7. October 19. Sub-national data collection

Putnam, Robert D., Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Y. Nanetti. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
pp. 63-82, 187-192.

Tsai, Lily L. 2007. "Solidary Groups, Informal Accountability, and Local Public Goods Provision in Rural China." *American Political Science Review* 101, 2: 355-372.

Laitin, David D. 1998. *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
pp. 263-299, 397-399.

Wilkinson, Steven I. 2004. *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
pp. 137-171, 243-262.

Varshney, Ashutosh. 2001. "Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society: India and Beyond." *World Politics* 53, 3: 362-98. (read to understand research strategy)

Assignment #4: Outline a 'large-n' dataset that would produce some statistical test of your theory using survey or sub-national data. Develop a research strategy for building this dataset. Describe the hypotheses amenable to quantitative tests and how the data gathered would allow you to assess those hypotheses. If appropriate, outline a strategy to collect those data in the field. E-mail me and your group a 1-2 page summary by 8 a.m., October 19.

Class 8. October 26. Field Experiments

Humphreys, Macartan, and Jeremy M. Weinstein. 2009. "Field Experiments and the Political Economy of Development." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12:367-78.

Gerber, Alan S. and Donald P. Green. 2000. "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 94, 3:653-663.

Olken, Benjamin A. 2007. "Monitoring Corruption: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia." *Journal of Political Economy* 115, 2: 200-249.
<http://www.nber.org/~bolken/corruptionexperiments.pdf>

Wantchekon, Leonard. 2003. "Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin." *World Politics* 55, 3: 399-422.
http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/politics/faculty/wantchekon/research/WP_0331.pdf

Habyarimana, James, Macartan Humphreys, Daniel N. Posner, and Jeremy M. Weinstein. 2007. "Why Does Ethnic Diversity Undermine Public Goods Provision?" *American Political Science Review* 101, 4:709-725.

<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/posner/pdfs/HHPW.pdf>

Hyde, Susan D. 2007. "The Observer Effect in International Politics: Evidence from a Natural Experiment." Manuscript. Yale University.

Further reading

Posner, Daniel N. 2006. "African Borders as Sources of Natural Experiments." presented in the Colloquium Series of the Yale Program in Agrarian Studies, New Haven.

<http://www.yale.edu/agrarianstudies/papers/18africanborders.pdf>

Banerjee, Abhijit Vinayak, et al. 2006. "Making Aid Work" and responses. *Boston Review* (July/August).

<http://bostonreview.net/BR31.4/contents.html>

Bill Easterly's critique of RCTs.

http://blogs.nyu.edu/fas/dri/aidwatch/2009/07/development_experiments_ethica.html

Duflo, Esther, Rachel Glennerster and Michael Kremer. 2007. "Using randomization in development economics research: a toolkit." Centre for Economic Policy Research Discussion Paper No. 6059.

<http://econ-www.mit.edu/files/806>

Duflo, Esther. 2005. "Field Experiments in Development Economics." BREAD Policy Paper No. 012.

<http://ipl.econ.duke.edu/bread/papers/policy/p012.pdf>

Deaton, Angus. 2009. "Instruments of development: Randomization in the tropics, and the search for the elusive keys to economic development." The 2008 Keynes Lecture at the British Academy.

http://www.princeton.edu/~deaton/downloads/Instruments%20of%20development%20v1d_mar09_all.pdf

Habyarimana, James, Macartan Humphreys, Daniel N. Posner, and Jeremy M. Weinstein. N.d. "Proctor's Instructions for the Experimental Games described in Habyarimana et al (2007)."

http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/posner/pdfs/HHPW_protocols.pdf

Hutchings, Vincent L., and Ashley E. Jardina. 2009. "Experiments on Racial Priming in Political Campaigns." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12:397-402.

Assignment #5 (option a): Write a 2-3 page memo describing a lab or field experiment that could be used to put some aspect of your theory or the mechanisms underlying it to an empirical test. E-mail it to me and your group by 8 a.m., October 26.

Class 9. November 2. GIS and 'space'

Brody, Howard, et al. 2000. "Map-making and myth-making in Broad Street: the London cholera epidemic, 1854." *Lancet* 356, 9223: 64-68.

Tarrow, Sidney. 2006. "Space and Comparative Politics." *APSA-CP Newsletter*. 17, 1:1-4.
<http://www.nd.edu/~apsacp/documents/APSA-CPWinter2006Issue.pdf>

Kocher, Matthew and David Laitin. 2006. "On Tarrow's Space." *APSA-CP Newsletter*. 17, 2:25-28.
<http://www.nd.edu/~apsacp/documents/Summer2006.pdf>

Sinton, D. and J. Lund. 2007. "What is GIS? A very brief description for the newly curious." In *Understanding Place*, eds. D. Sinton and J Lund. Redlands, CA: ESRI Press. pp.xiii-17.

Lyall, Jason M.K. N.d. "Landscapes of Violence: A Comparative Study of Insurgency in the Northern Caucasus." Manuscript. Princeton University.

Assignment #5 (option b): Write a 2-3 page memo describing a spatial dataset that could be used to put some aspect of your theory or the mechanisms underlying it to an empirical test. Consider how such data might be acquired or collected in the field. E-mail it to me and your group by 8 a.m., November 2.

Class 10. November 9. Student symposium or 'There and Back Again Guests TBA

Lieberman, Evan S. et al. 2004. "Symposium: Field Research," *Qualitative Methods*. 2, 1: 2-14.
<http://www.asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm/Newsletter/Newsletter2.1.pdf>

Read, Ben, Lauren Morris MacLean, and Melani Cammett. 2006. "Symposium: Field Research: How rich? How Thick? How Participatory?" *Qualitative Methods* 4, 2:9-18.

Kapiszewski, Diana, and Sara E. Watson. 2008. "Designing and Conducting Fieldwork: From Theory to Practice." The Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research.

Roth, Julius. 1975. "Hired Hand Research." In *Fist-fights in the Kitchen: Manners and Methods in Social Research*, ed. George H. Lewis. Pacific Palisades, CA: Goodyear Publishing Company, Inc. pp. 380-395.

Further reading

Barrett, Christopher B. and Jeffrey W. Cason. 1997. *Overseas Research: A Practical Guide*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Feldman, Martha S., Jeannine Bell and Michele Tracy Berger. 2003. *Gaining Access: A Practical and Theoretical Guide for Qualitative Researchers*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Lofland, John and Lyn H. Lofland. 1995. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis* 3rd edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

Van Maanen, John. 1988. *Tales of the Field*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Assignment #6: Pick a country in which you could do field research for your project and write at least 3 pages listing or describing practical and logistical issues that you might face. These might include identifying and entering specific sites, setting up to live and work, acquiring research permissions, funding concerns and preparations to take your family to the field. If possible, identify at least three other scholars who have worked in that country and see if their books or dissertations contain logistical information that might help you cope with these issues. This assignment is for your own reference and is not to be submitted.

Class 11. November 16. Research ethics and human subjects

ASA Board of Directors. 2005. "Guidelines of the African Studies Association for Members' Ethical Conduct in Research and Other Professional Undertakings in Africa." African Studies Association.

http://www.africanstudies.org/?page=guidelines_2005

or, in pdf, http://www.africanstudies.org/files/asa_guidelines2005.pdf

American Anthropological Association. 1998. "Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association." American Anthropological Association.

<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm>

or, in pdf, <http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethicscode.pdf>

Familiarize yourself with Cornell University's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects.

<http://www.irb.cornell.edu/>

Complete the Training Program for Researchers in the Use of Human Participants.

<http://www.irb.cornell.edu/training/>

Elisabeth Jean Wood. 2006. "The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones."

Qualitative Sociology 29, 3:373-386.

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/jt788305t71u7187/fulltext.pdf>

Packer, George. 2006. "Knowing the enemy: Can social scientists redefine the 'war on terror'?" *The New Yorker*, December 18.

http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/12/18/061218fa_fact2

Mervis, Jeffrey. 2009. "DOD Funds New Views on Conflict With Its First Minerva Grants," *Science* 323, 5914 (January 30):576-77

Asher, Thomas. n.d. "Making Sense of Minerva Controversy and the NSCC."

<http://essays.ssrc.org/minerva/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/asher.pdf>

SSRC page on "the Minerva Controversy"

<http://essays.ssrc.org/minerva/>

González, Roberto J. 2007. "Towards mercenary anthropology? The new US Army counterinsurgency manual *FM 3-24* and the military-anthropology complex." *Anthropology Today* 23, 3:14-19.

Kilcullen, David. 2007. "Ethics, politics and non-state warfare: A responses to González in this issue." *Anthropology Today* 23, 3:20.

Assignment #7: First, complete Cornell's Training Program for Researchers in the Use of Human Participants and, if appropriate for your project, draft an initial approval request and consent form or script. Second, write 2-3 pages on any ethical or subject privacy concerns associated with one your previous assignments for this class. This assignment is for your own reference and is not to be submitted.

No class on November 23. To be rescheduled the week of November 30th.

Class 12. November 30 and rescheduled session (date and time TBD). Project presentations.

Przeworski, Adam, and Frank Salomon. 1995. "The Art of Writing Proposals: Some Candid Suggestions for Applicants to Social Science Research Council Competitions." Social Science Research Council.

http://fellowships.ssrc.org/art_of_writing_proposals/

Tufte, Edward. 2003. "PowerPoint is evil." *Wired* 11, 9 (September)

<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/11.09/ppt2.html>

Assignment #8: Present a 15 minute summary of your research question, theory and observable implications, and overall field research strategy in class. Students should prepare transparencies, PowerPoint slides, or printed handouts for their presentation.