

# Qualitative Methods

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Newsletter of the  
American Political Science Association  
Organized Section on Qualitative Methods

## *Letter from the Transitional President*

**ANDREW BENNETT**

Georgetown University  
*bennetta@georgetown.edu*

This newsletter is the latest development in a trend that has been evident for some time now: qualitative methods are undergoing a renaissance unlike anything seen for the last 25 years. This resurgence has been demonstrated in a number of ways. Over one thousand members of the American Political Science Association, including twenty eight APSA Presidents and seven *APSR* Editors, signed the petition requesting that APSA create the new Qualitative Methods organized section (APSA-QM) that maintains this newsletter. In addition, not since the seminal works on qualitative methods in the 1970s by Harry Eckstein, Alexander George, Arend Lijphart, Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune, Giovanni Sartori, and Neil Smelser has there been such a concentrated outpouring of writings on qualitative methods. In the last half-dozen years alone, books published or soon forthcoming on qualitative methods and their philosophical underpinnings include those by Henry Brady and David Collier, Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, Alexander George and myself, Gary Goertz and Harvey Starr, John Gerring, Ted Hopf, Daniel Little, James Mahoney and Dietrich Reuschmeyer, Charles Ragin, Stephen Van Evera, Alexander Wendt, and Dvora Yanow (for citations to the books mentioned herein and many key articles as well, see the syllabi at [www.asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm/syllabi.html](http://www.asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm/syllabi.html)). In addition, these methods are being widely used to address theoretical and empirical puzzles. A survey I've done with colleagues in the July 2003 issue of *PS: Political Science and Politics* in a symposium on methodology co-edited with Peregrine Schwartz-Shea of the University of Utah, indicates that nearly half of the articles in top political science journals use qualitative methods.

While matching, and possibly exceeding, the level of development and application of qualitative methods seen in the 1970s, one development that distinguishes this new wave of productivity from its predecessor is a focus on developing institutions that can sustain and amplify it. APSA-QM is a vital part of this effort. It has the mission of promoting research and training in diverse qualitative methods; striving for an integrated understanding of these methods and their relationship to other approaches, including quantitative meth-

ods; and exploring the philosophical foundations of qualitative methods and of research design in general. The section defines qualitative methods broadly, including but not limited to case study methods, small-N analysis, comparative methods, concept analysis, the logic of inquiry, comparative-historical methods, the ethnographic tradition of field research, constructivist methods, interpretive methods, and relevant branches of social and political theory. This first issue of the newsletter exemplifies the goals of the new section and the ongoing renaissance in qualitative methods. I want to commend John Gerring for the outstanding job he has done in getting the newsletter off to a terrific start.

The APSA related group, the Committee on Concepts and Methods, served as one of two 'seed' organizations for APSA-QM. Let me take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Committee's chair, David Collier of the University of California at Berkeley, and to mention three ways in which his efforts had such an important influence in the creation of the new section. First, David's writings have been crucial in the recent revival in qualitative methods (for citations see [www.polisci.berkeley.edu/Faculty/bio/permanent/Collier,D/](http://www.polisci.berkeley.edu/Faculty/bio/permanent/Collier,D/)). Second, under his guidance, the Committee provided a venue in APSA for panels, roundtables, and short courses on qualitative methods. Finally, David's energy and enthusiasm in his

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role as the founding transitional president of the new section in 2002-03 were the focal point of the drive to create the section. Its officers and members, and indeed the discipline as a whole, owe him a great deal.

The second 'seed' organization is the Consortium on Qualitative Research Methods (CQRM), which is sponsored by leading departments and research institutes, and is located at Arizona State University. CQRM is dedicated to disseminating and teaching qualitative methods, and for the past two years it has sponsored a two-week training institute each January, attended by a total of over 100 advanced graduate students and junior faculty. Information on the institute and other CQRM activities can be found at [www.asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm/](http://www.asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm/) and in Colin Elman's essay in this edition of the newsletter. Although they remain separate entities, common goals will ensure that APSA-QM and CQRM cooperate closely on projects of common interest. This will include sharing a website, and jointly administering the annual institute.

New organizational efforts on qualitative methods have an international dimension as well. APSA-QM will continue to work closely with the International Political Science Association's Committee on Concepts and Methods (not to be confused with the APSA related group with a similar name discussed above that is being folded into APSA-QM). Other international efforts include the COMPASSS group (Comparative Methods for the Advancement of Systematic Cross-Case Analysis and Small-N Studies at [www.compassss.org](http://www.compassss.org)). This inter-university research initiative includes Benoit Rihoux in Belgium, Charles Ragin of the University of Arizona, and Dirk Berg-Schlosser of the University of Marburg.

Additionally, the Perestroika movement, while representing a diverse range of views and tackling issues beyond qualitative methods alone, has contributed to the renaissance in qualitative methods. In particular, this movement has helped encourage changes in the *American Political Science Review* that have made it more welcoming of qualitative research.

### **Officers of the Section (APSA-QM)**

Transitional President  
Andrew Bennett, Georgetown University  
Founding Transitional President (2002-03)  
David Collier, UC Berkeley  
Transitional Vice-President  
Elizabeth Kier, University of Washington  
Transitional Secretary-Treasurer  
Colin Elman, Arizona State University  
Newsletter Editor  
John Gerring, Boston University  
Transitional Executive Committee  
Henry E. Brady, UC Berkeley  
David Collier, UC Berkeley  
Theda Skocpol, Harvard University  
Kathleen Thelen, Northwestern University  
Alexander Wendt, University of Chicago  
Deborah Yashar, Princeton University

A second trend that distinguishes the current renaissance in qualitative methods from the landmark contributions of a generation ago is that the mix of methodological approaches in the field is not so sharply contested as it once was, and cross-method collaboration has become more common. In contrast to the behavioral revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, which involved tectonic shifts in the relative mix of qualitative, quantitative, and formal work published in top journals, and was accompanied by the intellectual and political tensions that might be expected in such circumstances, the current development of qualitative methods is taking place in a context in which qualitative, quantitative, and formal work are all secure in their continuing contributions to the field. Moreover, a new generation of scholars, often trained in more than one approach, is more cognizant of the limits and comparative advantages of different methodologies that make them far more powerful when applied together or sequentially than when any one method is used alone. Thus, part of the express mission of the new section on qualitative methods is to build bridges, and to encourage cross-method collaboration and research. The section's predecessor, the Committee on Concepts and Methods, cosponsored APSA panels and roundtables with various other organized sections, including Politics and History, Comparative Politics, International History and Politics, Normative Political Theory, and Political Methodology, as well as the Conference Group on Theory, Policy, and Society. The new section aims to continue such cosponsorship, focusing on

issues of common interest and concern, including research design, multimethod techniques, graduate and post-graduate training in methods, survey research, field work, and the philosophy of social science.

Sustaining the momentum of the ongoing renaissance in qualitative methods will require continuing and deepening the coordinated efforts of methodologists and practitioners of these methods across the social sciences and around the world. If you have not already done so, please ensure that you will continue to receive this newsletter by signing up for the new APSA Section on Qualitative Methods. To sign up for the section on the web, go to [www.apsanet.org](http://www.apsanet.org), click on the Member Log In tab at the upper right of the web page, and log in with your APSA member number (they will email it to you if you've forgotten it). Then on your individual APSA page click on Organized Sections. Then you click on the box for the Qualitative Methods section (currently listed as # 37), and continue through the subsequent menus until you complete the process with your credit card information to pay the \$8 membership dues for the section. Alternatively, you can call APSA at (202) 483-2512 and ask for membership services, and then sign up over the phone. Please note also that the new section's first business meeting at the APSA conference in Philadelphia is on Thursday, August 28, from 6:15 to 7:00, room 307, Marriott, and its inaugural reception will follow from 7:00 to 8:30, room Independence C, Marriott.

I hope to see you in Philadelphia.

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### *Letter from the Editor*

**JOHN GERRING**

Boston University  
[jgerring@bu.edu](mailto:jgerring@bu.edu)

The function of this newsletter is to facilitate discussion and debate on questions of methodology, broadly defined. While the focus is on qualitative methods, a primary purpose of this initiative is to foster greater interchange among researchers using qualitative and quantitative methods and formal models. The hope is that a careful consideration of method will lead to better studies and a more successful integration of studies generated by diverse approaches.

The relative neglect of qualitative methods within the discipline of political science means that an immense field of endeavor lies before us. As no academic journal currently focuses on these issues, the role of this newsletter is necessarily somewhat different than those of other APSA section newsletters. We are called upon, it seems to me, to serve as both a clearing-house of ideas as well as an initial publication venue for work on qualitative methods. In order to tackle this ground in a systematic fashion, each issue of the newsletter will focus its attention on one or two topics in the form of *symposia*. This issue's symposium is on Teaching Qualitative Methods. Our Fall issue will feature symposia on Interpretivism (with

contributions from Robert Adcock, David Dessler, Clifford Geertz, David Laitin, Dvora Yanow, and others) and Content/Discourse Analysis (coordinated by Bear Braumoeller and Yoshiko Herrera). Future symposia are envisioned on a variety of topics including (a) Positivism, (b) Field Research, (c) The Problem of Cumulation in Qualitative Methods, (d) The Perestroika Movement, (e) Philosophy of Science and Political Science, (f) Causation: Are there Different Logics of Causation?, (g) Boolean (QCA) Analysis, (h) Multi-Method Research, (i) Explaining Singular Events, (j) Statistical Methods for Small-N Analysis, (k) The Problem of Case Selection, (l) Ordinary Language and Political Science. I solicit your thoughts on which subjects to focus on first and which topics to add to this provisional list.

Evidently, these are complex subjects, and one cannot hope to offer a comprehensive ('textbook') treatment of any of them. Instead, the symposium format will offer an overview of an important topic, suitable to those without background in that area, followed by a discussion that highlights the most significant methodological debates connected with that issue or problem. Writers will include senior and junior scholars with a diverse range of views. However, it is not my intention to cultivate diversity for its own sake. Indeed, it is my hope that these debates will lead to greater consensus in an all-too-balkanized discipline, rather than simply a reaffirmation of contesting positions. I will do my best to ensure that arguments between authors are clarified and addressed. Ships should not pass in the night. Sometimes, a short concluding

essay will offer a summary of the debate that has unfolded on previous pages.

Other dimensions of the newsletter will include:

*Letters to the Editor and Linked Debates on the Web.* On occasion, debates will carry over from issue to issue of the newsletter. However, the primary forum for ongoing debate is the newsletter's web site and the QUALMETH listserv (both hosted by CQRM), which will feature open discussions on all matters taken up in these pages. The printed pages of this newsletter are properly regarded as offering points of departure, not final words. The web pages may also be used to post extended versions of shorter pieces written for the newsletter. Likewise, readers are encouraged to post their working papers on the CQRM website, regardless of whether they appear in these pages.

*New and Noteworthy.* In the second issue of the newsletter we begin a section focused on recently published books and articles or conference papers that focus on qualitative methods or employ qualitative methods in innovative ways. We solicit your suggestions on which pieces to feature in these surveys. Self-nominations are encouraged! Authors should provide a brief summary of their book, article, or conference paper totaling no more than five hundred words (a paragraph or two).

*State of the Field Essays.* While there are no current plans to publish formal book reviews in the newsletter, I am interested in publishing review essays which encompass a range of work and make broader arguments about the evolving state of the field. Authors considering undertaking such an essay should contact me prior to submission.

*Announcements.* I am keen to use the newsletter as a forum for announcements – conferences, workshops, courses, grants, fellowships, and so forth – that might be of interest to our readers. These will appear in long form in the body of the newsletter and in short form in the Calendar section of the newsletter (situated on the last page). Regular features will include a) reports on activity at APSA, including upcoming panels, roundtables, short courses, and the annual call for paper submissions, b) reports on activity at CQRM, including the program for the upcoming institute session (held in January each year), and c) reports on prizes and accomplishments, including the new Giovanni Sartori Book Award, the Alexander L. George Article Award, and the Sage Paper Award. Please send any additional announcements to me, via email, along with any other communication pertaining to these pages.

This venture is not an isolated one. Qualitative methods hold prominent positions within neighboring disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, and sociology. We hope to link our efforts to theirs. And as Andy Bennett's introductory essay indicates, qualitative methods are gaining ground within the discipline of political science. The *American Political Science Review* is more receptive to qualitative work. The introduction of a new journal, *Perspectives on Politics*, intended to reach out to broader (academic and non-academic) audiences, may foster greater appreciation of qualitative methods. Methodological issues specific to qualitative work have been highlighted in recent editions of *CP: The Comparative Politics*

*Newsletter* (e.g., 14:1, Winter 2003) and in well-attended APSA sessions hosted by the Committee on Concepts and Methods (the fore-runner to the new Qualitative Methods section). All in all, the trend-line is positive.

Yet these positive trends could not have happened, and cannot be sustained, without the active participation of qualitative researchers across the field. If this venture is to succeed, it will because it plays an important role in our teaching, our thinking, and our work. I do not wish to embark on a discussion of methodology for its own sake. Methods must matter. Please let me know your thoughts about how this newsletter can best address your needs and your concerns.

Note that, with the exception of this first issue, online access to current and recent issues of the newsletter will be restricted to members of the Qualitative Methods organized section (APSA-QM). We hope that you will encourage others who may not have been sent a print version of this first issue to download the newsletter in its entirety from the CQRM web site: <http://www.asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm/Newsletter.html>. To continue receiving access to current issues, please join the section. We need your support.

Finally, I gratefully acknowledge the support of the Institute of Governmental Studies and the Dean of the Social Sciences at the University of California, Berkeley. Boston University has generously provided staff support for the publication of this newsletter. Support from these two institutions played a crucial role in launching this newsletter. It is also my pleasure to acknowledge the important role of Maria Wolf and Gerald Lubenow at IGS and of Jennifer Jefferis at Boston University who serves as assistant editor in this inaugural issue.

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## *Qualitative versus Quantitative: What Might This Distinction Mean?*

**DAVID COLLIER, JASON SEAWRIGHT, &  
HENRY E. BRADY**

University of California, Berkeley  
*dcollier@garnet.berkeley.edu*  
*seawright@socrates.Berkeley.edu*  
*hbrady@csm.Berkeley.edu*

The founding in 2003 of the APSA Organized Section on Qualitative Methods provides a fitting occasion to reflect on this branch of methodology.<sup>1</sup> Given that the other APSA organized section concerned with methodology<sup>2</sup> is centrally focused on quantitative methods, the additional issue arises of the relationship between the qualitative and quantitative traditions.

Adopting a pragmatic approach to choices about concepts (Collier and Adcock 1999), we believe that the task here is not to seek the "true" meaning of the qualitative-quantitative distinction. Rather, the challenge is to use this distinction to focus on similarities and contrasts in research practices that pro-

vide insights into *how* to do good research, and into different *ways* of doing good research.

We have found it useful to think about the qualitative-quantitative distinction in four ways (see Table 1), focusing on the level of measurement, size of the N, use of statistical tests, and thick versus thin analysis. Each of these approaches is associated with distinctive forms of analytic leverage.

#### Four Approaches to the Qualitative-Quantitative Distinction

The first approach concerns the level of measurement.<sup>3</sup> Here one finds ambiguity regarding the cut-point between qualitative and quantitative, and also contrasting views of the leverage achieved by different levels of measurement. Some scholars label data as qualitative if it is organized at a nominal level of measurement and as quantitative if it is organized at an ordinal, interval, ratio, or other “higher” level of measurement (Vogt 1999: 230). Alternatively, scholars sometimes place the qualitative-quantitative threshold between ordinal and interval data (Porkess 1991: 179). This latter cut-point is certainly congruent with the intuition of many qualitative researchers that ordinal reasoning is central to their enterprise (Mahoney 1999: 1160-64). With either cut-point, however, quantitative research is routinely associated with higher levels of measurement.

Higher levels of measurement are frequently viewed as yielding more analytic leverage because they provide more fine-grained descriptive differentiation among cases. However, these higher levels of measurement depend on complex assumptions about logical relationships — for example, about order, units of measurement, and zero points — that are sometimes hard to meet. If these assumptions are not met, this fine-grained differentiation can be illusory, and qualitative categorization based on close knowledge of cases and context may yield far more analytic leverage.

The second approach focuses on the N, i.e., the number of observations regarding the main outcome or phenomenon of concern to the researcher. A paired comparison of Japan and Sweden, or an analysis of six military coups, would routinely be identified with the qualitative tradition. By contrast, an N involving hundreds or thousands of observations clearly falls within the quantitative approach. Although there is no well-established cut-point between qualitative and quantitative in terms of the N, such a cut-point might plausibly be located somewhere between 10 and 20 cases. Differences in

**Table 1. Four Approaches to Qualitative vs. Quantitative Research**

Criterion	Defining Distinction	Comment
<b>1. Level of Measurement</b>	Cut-point for qualitative vs. quantitative is nominal vs. ordinal scales and above; alternatively, nominal and ordinal scales vs. interval scales and above.	Lower levels of measurement require fewer assumptions about underlying logical relationships; higher levels yield sharper differentiation among cases, provided that these assumptions are met.
<b>2. Size of the N</b>	Cut-point between small N vs. large N might be somewhere between 10 and 20; yet this does not consistently differentiate qualitative and quantitative research.	A small N and a large N are commonly associated with distinctive sources of analytic leverage, which are summarized by the third and fourth criteria below.
<b>3. Statistical Tests</b>	In contrast to much qualitative research, quantitative analysis employs formal tests grounded in statistical theory.	Statistical tests provide explicit, carefully formulated criteria for descriptive and causal inference; a characteristic strength of quantitative research.
<b>4. Thick vs. Thin Analysis<sup>1</sup></b>	Central reliance on detailed knowledge of cases vs. more limited knowledge of cases.	Detailed knowledge associated with thick analysis is likewise a major source of leverage for inference; a characteristic strength of qualitative research.

<sup>1</sup>See the note 4 below concerning related terms.

the size of the N, in turn, are directly linked to the alternative sources of leverage associated with the third and fourth approaches.

The third approach to the qualitative-quantitative distinction concerns statistical tests. An analysis is routinely considered quantitative if it employs statistical tests in reaching its descriptive and explanatory conclusions. By contrast, qualitative research does not explicitly or directly employ such tests. While the use of statistical tests is generally identified with higher levels of measurement, the two do not necessarily go together. Quantitative researchers frequently apply statistical tests to nominal variables. Conversely, qualitative researchers often analyze data at higher levels of measurement without utilizing statistical tests. For example, in the area studies tradition, a qualitative country study may make extensive reference to ratio-level economic data.

Statistical tests are a powerful analytic tool for evaluating the strength of relationships and important aspects of the uncertainty of findings in a way that is more difficult in qualitative research. Yet, as with higher levels of measurement, statistical tests are only meaningful if complex underlying assumptions are met. If the assumptions are not met, alternative

sources of analytic leverage employed by qualitative researchers may in fact be more powerful.

Fourth, we distinguish between thick and thin analysis.<sup>4</sup> Qualitative research routinely utilizes thick analysis, in the sense that researchers place great reliance on a detailed knowledge of cases. Indeed, some scholars consider thick analysis the single most important tool of the qualitative tradition. One type of thick analysis is what Geertz (1973) calls “thick description,” i.e., interpretive work that focuses on the meaning of human behavior to the actors involved. In addition to thick description, many forms of detailed knowledge, if utilized effectively, can greatly strengthen description and causal assessment. By contrast, quantitative researchers routinely rely on thin analysis, in that their knowledge of each case is typically far less complete. However, to the extent that this thin analysis permits them to focus on a much larger N, they may benefit from a broader comparative perspective, as well as from the possibility of using statistical tests.

### Specializing and Bridging

Much valuable research fits squarely within either the qualitative or quantitative tradition, reflecting a specialization in one approach or the other. At the same time, other scholars fruitfully bridge these traditions.

Specialization *vis-à-vis* the qualitative-quantitative distinction is easy to identify. On the qualitative side, such research places central reliance on nominal categories, focuses on relatively few observations, makes little or no use of statistical tests, and places substantial reliance on thick analysis. On the quantitative side, such research is based primarily on interval-level or ratio-level measures, a large N, statistical tests, and a predominant use of thin analysis. Both types of study are common, and both represent a coherent mode of research. Correspondingly, it makes sense, for many purposes, to maintain the overall qualitative-quantitative distinction.

In addition to substantive studies, research on methodology often fits clearly in one tradition or the other. From the standpoint of the new APSA Qualitative Methods Section, it is particularly relevant that one can identify coherent traditions of research on qualitative methods.<sup>5</sup> For example, work influenced by Giovanni Sartori (1970, 1984) remains a strong intellectual current in political science.<sup>6</sup> This research places central emphasis on nominal categorization and offers systematic procedures for adjusting concepts as they are adapted to different historical and analytic contexts. Constructivist methods for learning about the constitution of meaning and of concepts now play a major role in the field of international relations (Wendt 1999; Finnemore and Sikkink 2001). In comparative politics, Schaffer’s (1998) book on *Democracy in Translation* is an exemplar of the closely related interpretive tradition of research, and interpretive work is also a well-defined methodological alternative in public policy analysis focused centrally on the United States (e.g., Yanow 2000, 2003). These various lines of research explore the contribution of thick analysis; the idea that adequate description is sometimes a daunting task that merits sustained attention in its own right;

and the possibility that the relation between description and explanation may potentially need to be reconceptualized. The strong commitment to continuing these lines of careful work on description, concepts, categories, and interpretation is a foundation of qualitative methods.

At the same time, an adequate discussion of the relation between qualitative and quantitative methods requires careful consideration not only of these polar types, but also of the intermediate alternatives based on bridging. For example, strong leverage may be gained by employing both thick analysis and statistical tests. This kind of “nested analysis” combines some of the characteristic strengths of both traditions.

An interesting example of bridging is found in new research — partially methodological, partially substantive — on necessary and sufficient causes. With this type of causation, both the explanation and the outcome to be explained are usually framed in terms of nominal variables. Yet the discussion of how to select cases and test hypotheses about necessary causation has drawn heavily on statistical reasoning. Thus, a tool identified with the quantitative tradition, i.e., statistical reasoning, serves as a valuable source of ideas for research design in testing hypotheses about nominal variables, which are obviously identified with the qualitative approach.<sup>8</sup>

Other areas of bridging include research based on a larger N, but that in other respects is qualitative; as well as research based on a relatively small N, but that in other respects is quantitative. For example, some non-statistical work in the qualitative comparative-historical tradition employs a relatively large N: Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens (1992; N=36), Tilly (1993; hundreds of cases), R. Collier (1999; N=27), and Wickham-Crowley (1992; N=26). Comparative-historical analysis has become a well-developed tradition of inquiry,<sup>9</sup> and the methodological option of qualitative comparison based on a larger N is now institutionalized as a viable alternative for scholars exploring a broad range of substantive questions.

By contrast, some studies that rely on statistical tests employ a smaller N than the comparative-historical studies just noted and introduce a great deal of information about context and cases. Examples are found in quantitative research on U.S. presidential and congressional elections, which routinely employs an N of 11 to 13 (e.g., Lewis-Beck and Rice 1992; J. Campbell 2000; Bartels and Zaller 2001). Other examples are seen in the literature on advanced industrial countries, for example: the study by Hibbs (1987) on the impact of partisan control of government on labor conflict (N=11); and the many articles (see note 10 below) that grew out of the research by Lange and Garrett (1985; N=15) on the influence of corporatism and partisan control on economic growth.

This literature on advanced industrial countries has stimulated interesting lines of discussion about the intersection of qualitative and quantitative research. On the qualitative side, Tilly (1984: 79), in his provocative statement on “No Safety in Numbers,” has praised some of this work for taking a major step beyond an earlier phase of what he saw as overly sweeping cross-national comparisons, based on a very large N. In some of this literature on advanced industrial countries he sees instead the emergence of a far more careful, historically

grounded analysis of a smaller N — thus in effect combining the virtues of thick analysis and statistical tests. On the quantitative side, the Lange and Garrett article has triggered a long debate on the appropriate statistical tools for dealing with a relatively small N.<sup>10</sup> Finally, Lange and Garrett's article has been a model within this literature for the innovative use of an interaction term in regression analysis. This step helps to overcome a presumed limitation of quantitative research by taking into account contextual effects. In the intervening years, the use of interaction terms in regression has become more common, and Franzese (2003: 21) reports that between 1996 and 2001, such terms were employed in 25 percent of quantitative articles in major political science journals. In sum, this literature points to diverse avenues for cross-fertilization.

### Conclusion

We are committed both to specialization and to bridging. With regard to specialization, one of the rationales for forming a Qualitative Methods Section is to provide coherent support for new research on qualitative methods. Such support is needed within political science, and the discipline will benefit from the emergence of a more vigorous research tradition focused on qualitative tools.

At the same time, bridging is valuable. The different components of qualitative and quantitative methods provide distinct forms of analytic leverage, and when they are combined in creative ways, innovative research can result. Bridging and specialization are therefore both central to the goals of the new section.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>We draw here on Chapter 13 in Brady and Collier (2003, forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup>The APSA Organized Section for Political Methodology was officially constituted in 1986.

<sup>3</sup>The four traditional levels of measurement (nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio) suffice for present purposes; we recognize that far more complex categorizations are available.

<sup>4</sup>This distinction draws on Coppedge's (1999) discussion of thick versus thin concepts; it is also closely related to Ragin's (1987) discussion of case-oriented versus variable-oriented research.

<sup>5</sup>Well-developed traditions of research on methods are of course found within the quantitative tradition as well.

<sup>6</sup>For example, Levitsky (1998); Gerring (1999, 2001); Kurtz (2000). For a related line of analysis, see Johnson (2002, 2003).

<sup>7</sup>This term is adapted from Coppedge's (2001) "nested induction" and from Lieberman's "nested analysis" (2003).

<sup>8</sup>Goertz (2003) has provided a strong demonstration of the substantive importance of necessary causes. Braumoeller and Goertz (2000: 846–47) have suggested that if hypotheses about necessary causes are treated within a standard regression framework, incorrect estimates of causal effects will result, and that alternative tests are needed. On case selection for testing necessary causes, see Ragin (2000); Seawright (2002a, b); Braumoeller and Goertz (2002); Clarke (2002); Goertz and Starr (2003).

<sup>9</sup>For a new synthesis and assessment of comparative-historical research, see Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003).

<sup>10</sup>Among many articles in this debate, see Jackman (1987), Alvarez, Garrett, and Lange (1991), Beck et al. (1993) Beck and Katz (1995), Kittel (1999), and Beck (2001).

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## Symposium: Teaching Qualitative Methods

Note: Syllabi for courses taught by the contributors to this symposium are posted at <http://www.asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm>.

### *Disciplinary Schizophrenia: Implications for Graduate Education in Political Science*<sup>1</sup>

**ROBERT KEOHANE**

Duke University  
*rkeohane-duke.edu*

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I believe that to analyze the key issues of graduate education in political science we have to begin with the basic intellectual issues of our discipline. This mini-essay begins, therefore, with a discussion of fundamental divisions in the discipline, then turns to observations about how these divisions affect graduate programs.

Rogers Smith has articulated very well ways in which political science has veered heavily, in recent years, toward methods at the expense of substance (Smith, 2002). "Substance" is the right phrase rather than "relevance." In my view, the issue is not one of "relevance" versus "science." My concern is rather that our discipline could become intellectually narrowed by an overemphasis on methods: that we could exclude fascinating political problems, which our discipline should help people understand, because we cannot deal with them.<sup>2</sup> It seems to me that graduate education in political science is in danger of being intellectually narrowed, and that this trend is exacerbated by certain structural features of the job market in political science.

Our discipline is divided, it seems to me, between those who identify "rigorous" scientific work with quantitative analysis, and those of us who define our field more broadly. The latter view includes political philosophy as part of our discipline, although it is a humanistic, text-oriented subfield. With respect to science, those of us in the latter camp define it not as requiring quantitative analysis but as research that seeks to make necessarily uncertain inferences by using publicly identified methods and through public procedures (King et al., 1994, pp. 7-9).

The schizophrenia that divides our field is based on a false dichotomy: that quantitative and qualitative work are antithetical to one another. Yet, although it is false, this dichotomy has, it seems to me, become institutionalized in our graduate programs, in a perverse and intellectually destruc-

tive way. It yields rituals of inclusion and rationales for exclusion, both of which should be questioned. The rituals of inclusion tend merely to be time-wasting, annoying, or amusing depending on one's position and perspective; but the rationales for exclusion genuinely hamper our understanding of important phenomena in contemporary politics, including those of leadership and of religious motivation. And they adversely affect graduate training in our field.

### **Rituals of Inclusion and Rationales for Exclusion**

I am fundamentally sympathetic with institutionalist and structural approaches to politics. We have learned a great deal by pursuing the method, pioneered by economists, of holding preferences constant and seeing how structures, including institutions, affect strategies and behavior. We have come to understand how outcomes that seem perverse may be accounted for perfectly well as a result of rational strategic action, given structural constraints (e.g., Olson 1965, Geddes 1994, Bates et al. 1998).

Recent advances in the technology of game theory, coupled with the power and accomplishments of rational-choice theory in general, have created a situation in which formal models have become almost *de rigeur* in certain parts of our discipline. In the hands of their most creative practitioners, these models have illuminated major issues, such as the role of information in strategic decision-making. In more pedestrian but still useful ways, they have been used to check on the correctness of the logic used in more informal treatments, by requiring authors to satisfy "the accounting standards inherent in specifying a formal model" (Powell 1999: 33). But one often sees formal models that perform neither role: they are inserted into an article or book even though they do not really track the argument being made. When tests are conducted, the operationalization used frequently conflicts with the model that has been presented.<sup>3</sup> When we observe such a pattern we are probably in the presence of a ritual – demonstrating fidelity to an unknown and unknowable, but perhaps capricious god that needs to be appeased.

Rituals of inclusion may be annoying, and time-consuming for the apprentice high priest who is forced to carry them out. But they may do no more harm than to divert intellectual energy from more significant tasks. Rationales for exclusion, however, do not have such benign effects.

It is not surprising that authors focused on institutional arguments, within a rational-choice framework, may treat other factors, such as public attitudes or the personality attributes of leaders, as parameters rather than variables. All theories focus their searchlights on certain problems, putting others in the

shadows. A perverse two-step, however, often follows. The first step is to draw a sharp dichotomy between “rigorous” and “scientific” methods, on the one hand, and “impressionistic” or “anecdotal” ones, on the other. Only the former, it is argued, are worthy of serious attention by political scientists. The second part of the two-step is to associate certain subjects, or particular types of theorizing, with particular methods, positively or negatively evaluated. The conclusion is then drawn that political scientists should focus on some political subjects rather than others, or rely on certain theories rather than others, for essentially methodological reasons.

To me, a leading example of a subject that is understudied (relative to its importance) because it does not respond to our methodological toolbox is political leadership. The third volume of Robert A. Caro’s biography of Lyndon B. Johnson is not a work of political science, but it seems to me to tell us more about leadership than most of the political science literature on this subject. According to Caro, Johnson transformed the office of majority leader of the Senate through two key changes that he instituted as minority leader, in 1953. The key maneuvers, which Caro chronicles closely, were to alter the senior rule for allocation of committee positions and to authorize the majority leader to coordinate Committee schedules through the Policy Committee (Caro 2002: 488-515). Johnson’s maneuvers were made possible by the institutional rules of the Senate and the power structures behind those rules; but they could by no means have been predicted on the basis of a structural model of rational behavior. Previous leaders, facing similar rules and structures, had been hobbled by them.

I do not have a formula for studying political leadership scientifically, nor do I want to overpersonalize it. When Johnson left the Senate for the Vice Presidency, he sought without any success to maintain his influence in the Upper Chamber. Institutions strongly affect opportunities for strategies. What I do suggest, however, is that we exercise some humility in light of our inability to examine, through our current scientific methods, many important problems of politics. What we should not do is to turn all those variables that we do not well understand into constants, conveniently banishing them from any explanatory role.

Donald Green and Ian Shapiro have made a similar point with respect to rational choice theory: “If one approaches explanation in a method-driven way (designed to vindicate some rational choice explanation), for all one knows one might be dealing with one percent of the problem” (Green and Shapiro 1995: 263). That is, in such theorizing attention may only be paid to arguments that can be derived from a rational choice framework. Science becomes equated with deductive logic according to certain premises. For practitioners of quantitative methods, the line is often drawn between subjects involving many observations and few. With many observations of homogeneous phenomena, science, in this view, is feasible. With only a few observations, or with strong historical path-dependence, it is not. Science becomes equated with the technology of regressions.

## The Disciplinary Schizophrenia of Political Science

A recent paper by Peter Hall (Hall, 2003) has brilliantly discussed the tension in our field between ontology (premises about deep causal structures) and epistemology (methods for understanding social causality).

Hall’s basic point is simply stated. Recent qualitative and historical work has re-emphasized the crucial role of contingency (“path-dependence”) in politics. Specific events and individual actions, including actions of courage or cowardice, leadership or failure to lead, can push events onto fundamentally different paths. This point is of course reinforced by recent events in the Middle East, as the failure of the peace process culminating at Camp David in 2000 tragically demonstrates. On the other hand, systematic epistemological work, including some of my own, has used as its working model statistical procedures, designed initially for large-n problems and based on structural assumptions about this sources of probabilistically-conceived human action. Hall argues that “the ontologies of comparative politics have substantially outrun its [epistemological] methodologies” (p. 375).

It is worth quoting Professor Hall at somewhat greater length:

Many important theories in the field are now based on ontological views that see political outcomes as the results of causal processes in which distant events, sequencing, and complex interaction effects play important roles. However, the most prominent methodologies in the field are still based on a standard regression model that was more appropriate to the ontologies of thirty years ago, when many theories implied that political phenomena are caused by a few powerful factors operating independently of context and with roughly similar force everywhere (Hall 2003: 398).

The tension identified by Hall is manifested in graduate programs, including our program at Duke.<sup>4</sup> Ontology suggests that students should study contingency, unintended consequences of historical conjunctures, leadership, and models of complexity. Yet we have made little epistemological progress in untangling causal relationships at this level of analysis. Hence epistemological commitments lead us to urge students to learn more sophisticated quantitative methods, or to model qualitative methods on quantitative work. The practical advice that follows is diametrically opposed.

The ontology-epistemology divide is reinforced by another split, which reinforces the schizophrenia of our graduate education. Major problems of politics require knowledge of several subfields of the discipline, and even sometimes of other disciplines as well. Consider a problem that fits well within the traditions of political science: democratization. It would be difficult to understand successes and failures of democratization at a deep level without drawing not only from comparative politics but from work on American government, political theory, and even international relations – since externally generated incentives are increasingly important in the contemporary world. The advice that follows is: “Be broad – work across subfields.”

At the same time, however, scientific understanding of causal relationships, at our current level of knowledge, seems to depend on defining problems precisely, and putting narrow bounds around them. “Democratization” is a poor candidate for such analysis. Perhaps one could define a narrow sub-problem of this general problem. So the epistemologically savvy advice to graduate students is: “Study more sophisticated methods, build on an established literature, define a precisely defined problem that has been identified by that literature, analyze it carefully.”

We speak of graduate training, but there is fundamental disagreement, and confusion, in the field about the proper content of such training. There is deep unease among people on the qualitative-historical side that our training is risking creating a generation of technicians who will be ill-equipped to address the most fundamental questions of political life. If political science became thus incapacitated, public discussion of these issues would be conducted at an even more amateurish level than is now the case – by journalists, historians and practitioners who have not seriously thought about basic issues of causal inference. I am sure that there is equally serious concern among quantitatively-oriented political scientists that our methods will be so feeble that economists will take over our subject-matter – so that only economists will be listened to.

My suspicion is that both concerns are justified. Political science may be in danger of being squeezed from both sides: too simplistic ontologically to fit observers’ intuitive understandings of political life, and too naive epistemologically to reach the standards of science held up to us by the natural sciences and espoused by economics and psychology.

### **Programmatic Implications of Disciplinary Schizophrenia**

Graduate students are subjected to the competing pressures that are observable in the discipline as a whole. Indeed, they are most vulnerable, since they have to make choices that will affect their life-chances.

On the one side, there is pressure for more training in sophisticated methods, including game theory, econometrics, and computer simulation. There is no limit to the sophistication that might be desirable, so the potential demands are only limited by the expertise available on the faculty (of other departments as well as political science). Gaining such sophistication is indeed highly desirable, particularly since it gives current graduate students an advantage over all but a relatively few faculty members who received their training earlier. Demands for methodological sophistication are typically accompanied by a narrowing of the problem to be addressed, so that it can be well-defined (as a problem generated by the existing literature) and amenable to quantitative analysis. Anyone who has been to job-talks in our field, particularly in American politics but also in international relations and to some extent comparative politics, understands the type of work that results. I will refer to this set of pressures as the “technical spe-

cialization” pole of the dichotomy that I think is perversely being constructed in our field.

On the other side, some faculty still press students to gain a great deal of substantive and contextual knowledge of their fields, by reading widely in descriptive and normative as well as explanatory literatures. They urge students to think about concepts and theorizing before grabbing onto operational indicators and running regressions. They also advise them to study research design and qualitative methods before plunging into sophisticated quantitative work – since the latter without the former may lead them to believe that good science is defined by a particular set of methods. At Duke, one manifestation of this pressure is the requirement for a “theme paper,” to be prepared by the end of the student’s third year, that makes use of literatures in more than one subfield of political science. Let’s call this the “contextual knowledge” pole of the dichotomy.

The pressures on these two sides are quite asymmetrical in strength: it is an unequal contest. Internally, the advocates of technical specialization get to know all new graduate students early, in obligatory methods sequences, and have the chance to proselytize for their point of view. Faculty members in their chosen specialties are likely to emphasize the importance of mastering these subfields and doing publishable research early – both worthy goals in themselves. The strongest argument of the advocates of technical specialization has nothing to do with curiosity about politics or the intellectual promise of different pathways of inquiry. On the contrary, it is market-driven. They say, correctly, that “the political science job market rewards specificity of topic and sophistication of methodology.” Such statements provide a powerful incentive. The incentive is reinforced by the fact that for a young, bright graduate student, competitive advantage over older colleagues exists in capacity to learn new methods, whereas the young scholar will long be at a disadvantage in depth of contextual knowledge.

The advocates of contextual knowledge speak from a weaker structural position. The selection effect of disciplinary specialization has been powerful over a number of years. Faculty members with a contextual knowledge orientation may have decided to teach at liberal arts colleges or may have put their emphasis on undergraduate rather than graduate teaching. Or they may be in political philosophy, which in all too many departments is a cloistered sub-discipline with few graduate students (again, because of the job market). And even faculty members who take a contextualist orientation may, when they advise graduate students in their field, emphasize the value of specialization. Even if they don’t, they will find it difficult to combat the market rewards argument.

The result, I think, is that the rituals of inclusion and exclusion that I have noted in our field, become powerfully reinforced at the graduate level. When being a member of the Church or the Party is a precondition for employment, Church and Party membership rise.

I suspect that we are powerless to affect this fundamental issue with any recommendations addressed to graduate education as such. Graduate education in political science is driven

by perceived market demand. Reforms in graduate education that would ameliorate the effects of disciplinary schizophrenia, or of methodological monism, will have to come at the level of hiring and promotion practices. At the moment, three features of hiring practices reinforce pressure toward the technical specialization pole:

- The almost exclusive emphasis on the job talk/dissertation, and other research products, as opposed to breadth of knowledge and originality of ideas.
- The pressure on job candidates to have published articles.
- The control by subfields of most hiring decisions.

These practices could be changed. In particular, there could be less deference to subfield preferences in hiring – less deference would in my view be a good thing in general.

As in game-theoretic backward induction, we can trace hiring practices to promotion practices. Typically, promotion decisions have to be justified to people (serving on university tenure committees) who are ignorant of the substance, theory, and method of the person being considered. So a dossier has to contain signals that can be interpreted by the ignorant. In view of the frequent unwillingness of colleagues rigorously to evaluate each others' work, this practice is probably necessary. But it does drive the pressure for signals, particularly in the form of refereed work.

I am not sure that all of this can be reformed, or that reform would lead to a superior outcome. The result of present practices is, at least, that scientific standards are applied: the refereeing process is crucial to promotion decisions, which drive hiring practices, which drive graduate education. But the overall result is that the specialization-sophistication pole of the dichotomy is reinforced, and that graduate education becomes simultaneously more professional and intellectually more constrained.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Many thanks to David Collier for encouraging me to write this essay and for helpful comments.

<sup>2</sup>I am indebted to Professor Bonnie Honig of Northwestern University for sharing with me the text of a talk that she gave, criticizing relevance as a criterion, before the "Perestroika" group at the American Political Science Association meetings, August 30, 2002.

<sup>3</sup>Examples are numerous, as any reader of recent Ph.D dissertations in international relations and comparative politics knows. And there are tradeoffs: in much of this work, the quality of empirical analysis, especially qualitative analysis, is markedly low. It seems unfair to select one or two examples of a phenomenon that is so widespread.

<sup>4</sup>This is hardly surprising, since some of us faculty members experience this tension internally.

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## *Teaching Qualitative Methodology: Rationale, State of the Art, and an Agenda<sup>1</sup>*

**GERARDO L. MUNCK**

School of International Relations,  
University of Southern California  
*munck@usc.edu*

The recent surge of interest in teaching courses on qualitative methods in political science departments is a welcome development that responds to the increased awareness of the value of methods among qualitative researchers. However, the drive to teach such courses brings to the fore some important shortcomings of the existing literature on qualitative methodology and gives urgency to the challenge of developing methods suited for qualitative research. Though courses on qualitative methods should indeed be taught, the success of such courses will hinge heavily on the development of distinctively qualitative methods, which is a task for methodologists.

### **The Rationale: Why Qualitative Methods Courses?**

Qualitative research is a distinct and established tradition in the social sciences, and there are good reasons to believe it will continue to coexist alongside other traditions. It is probably unequalled in terms of versatility, allowing for a fluid dialogue between ideas and observations that is uniquely attuned to the rich context of cases. It has been a source of some of the key substantive insights and information about pressing normative concerns used in research relying upon formal theory and quantitative methods. And it is a reservoir of real wisdom,

as manifested in the applied, case-specific knowledge that the academy contributes to public debates about the political process and public policy.

Yet these virtues have not been matched by an equal emphasis on rigorous methods. Indeed, compared to other traditions, which have developed parallel substantive and methodological literatures, scholars who do qualitative research have been far less concerned with methodological issues. And this oversight has had a heavy cost. Qualitative research has generated more ideas than *theories*, understood as entailing clearly specified measurement and causal models. It has presented a wealth of observations but rarely *data*, which consists of measures on all variables and all cases. Finally, compounding these limitations, it has offered analyses that usually lack a solid basis for drawing valid *inferences*.

The value of systematic attention to methods should not be exaggerated. Indeed, an awareness of methods may have a negative effect on the generation of knowledge, leading to a disconnect from substantive concerns and inducing a stifling bias against creativity. Thus, a mastery of methods is certainly not a sufficient condition for gaining knowledge of the social and political world and can actually be a hindrance to some kinds of understanding. Nevertheless, a weaker claim—that methods are a necessary condition for generating reliable substantive knowledge—is plausible. The development or refinement of a certain method is often associated with a burst of new research and new findings. Opportunities for advancing research are lost due to the failure to use adequate methods. And knowledge claims are often challenged on, and thus have to be founded on, methodological grounds. Thus, qualitative researchers stand to gain much from methodological training, and this potential payoff provides the rationale for teaching courses on qualitative methods.

### The State of the Art: What Are Qualitative Methods?

A more difficult task than articulating a rationale for teaching qualitative methods is to delineate precisely the methods that should be taught in such courses. A review of the literature and course syllabi on qualitative methods suggests that a certain degree of consensus has formed about a set of required readings. This emerging canon in the field of qualitative methodology includes older works, such as Mill (1874), Lazarsfeld and Barton (1951), Stinchcombe (1968, 1978), Sartori (1970), Przeworski and Teune (1970), Lijphart (1970), Eckstein (1975), Smelser (1976), George (1979), Skocpol (1984) and Ragin (1987), a literature usefully synthesized in Collier (1993). The emerging canon also includes newer works, such as King, Keohane and Verba (1994), Brady and Collier (forthcoming) and George and Bennett (forthcoming).

Moreover, it is possible to identify a standard repertoire of concepts used in research on qualitative methods. Some of the older concepts include methods of agreement and difference, ladder of abstraction, conceptual stretching, common and system-specific indicators, most similar and most different systems design, crucial case, deviant case and process tracing.

Newer concepts that are gradually becoming standard points of reference in work on qualitative methods include within-case analysis, causal mechanisms, counterfactual analysis, selection bias and endogeneity. Thus, students of qualitative methods can turn to a significant body of literature and learn a variety of central methodological concepts.

Nonetheless, two critical types of shortcoming characterize much of what is currently taught under the heading of qualitative methods. One shortcoming concerns the advice that is *not* dispensed. Although courses on qualitative methods have the great virtue of focusing on research design and giving students a shared language for addressing methodological issues, these courses have generally done little to instruct students about specific tools that they can use to tackle actual research problems. Thus, students develop sensitivity about methodological problems and risks, a valuable trait, yet they learn little about tools and techniques.

Another and probably more worrisome shortcoming concerns the advice that *is* dispensed. Some of the arguments in the literature on qualitative methods are either quite misleading or plainly erroneous. One example is the frequently invoked argument that qualitative researchers can get around the degrees of freedom problem and test certain theories with an N of 1 because they are interested in testing deterministic theories. Yet this claim rests on four assumptions that are untenable on methodological grounds and, ironically, are also contradicted by much of the thinking within the qualitative tradition itself.

First, the idea of deterministic causation runs counter to the fundamental insight that social processes are stochastic in nature and thus require probabilistic thinking, an insight that the qualitative literature embraces through its emphasis on the contingent role of human agency. Second, this claim rests on the faulty assumption that the posited theory is a complete theory, that is, one that includes all the variables that are needed to explain all the variation in the outcome of interest. This is also an assumption few qualitative researchers would probably support. Third, the notion that the degrees of freedom problem can be overcome with an N of 1 requires that all variables are measured without error, an implausible assumption that is contradicted by the frequent debates within the qualitative literature about how to categorize even the best known and well studied cases. Fourth, even if the prior three assumptions were met and a deterministic hypothesis could be tested, researchers would still face the problem of not being able to test such a hypothesis against plausible probabilistic alternatives with an N of 1.<sup>2</sup> Thus, students are often offered shaky advice that leads to a skewed sense of the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research.<sup>3</sup>

These shortcomings are important but do not undermine the rationale for teaching courses on qualitative methodology. After all, in all areas of inquiry knowledge evolves and is perfected at the same time that it is being taught. However, for such courses to succeed, what is required is the development of a set of sound and practical qualitative methods. The teaching of qualitative methods courses must go hand in hand with the building of the field of qualitative methodology.

## The Agenda: The Development of Qualitative Methods

The challenge of developing qualitative methods is a broad and exciting one that will require the dedication of much effort by a community of methodologists. Thus, it is obvious that any kind of detailed discussion of this challenge exceeds the scope of this short article. At best, some cursory remarks can be offered concerning how this challenge should be approached and what methodological issues merit attention.

Concerning the manner in which the challenge of developing qualitative methods should be approached, two points bear consideration. First, as the history of methodology has shown, methods have not been created in the abstract but in the context of attempts to solve substantive research problems. For example, the core statistical concepts and methods were developed by astronomers, social scientists, biologists and physicists rather than by mathematicians (Porter 1986). Although abstract thinking alone cannot be counted on to generate methodological advances, it is nevertheless important to avoid relying too heavily on texts that are considered exemplars. The value of exemplars is that they show how a certain method works in practice. Yet the logic-in-use in such texts is often so complex that they should be regarded more as sources of inspiration than as sources of clear methodological guidance. Moreover, when the authors of such texts do attempt to reconstruct the logic of their inquiry, such statements frequently misrepresent the actual logic-in-use or capture it only partially.<sup>4</sup> Thus, although new methods are usually developed in the context of substantively oriented research, such methods must be formalized, if they are to be broadly used by researchers, and such formalization is a distinctly methodological task.

Second, the way qualitative methodologists go about developing qualitative methods should reflect the fact that they are entering the field of methodology at a relatively late stage and that, due to this latecomer status, they have a distinct advantage and face a clear-cut danger. The advantage is that they can learn from the experience of other methodologists who have sought to develop methods appropriate to various research problems. The danger is that they could be tempted to borrow methods from other fields of methodology that contradict the key operating assumptions of basic qualitative research procedures. Though being able to draw on the vast resources in the existing methodological literature, qualitative methodologists have to explicitly formulate the assumptions of the procedures used in qualitative research, drawing on existing tools only when appropriate, and also highlighting the value added of qualitative research only in those cases when a clear methodological foundation for such claims has been established.

With regard to what issues should be addressed by qualitative methodologists, the key point to stress is that the agenda of qualitative methodology touches upon all the main steps of the research process, and that basic work remains to be done in each of these areas. Indeed, as the following admittedly sketchy and unsupported overview suggests, qualitative methodologists have a significant, though as yet not fully assumed role in discussions about the methodology of concept forma-

tion, causal theorizing, measurement and causal theory testing.

*Concept Formation.* Concept formation is a quintessential qualitative task and some important steps have been taken to develop a methodology of concept formation. In particular the discussion of a concept tree, a device used to organize families of concepts, has provided some useful insights. Yet we still lack a well-developed and formalized methodology that might guide efforts at conceptualization by qualitative thinkers. Relatedly, we lack a clear sense of how concept formation is distinct from, yet lays the foundation for, the tasks of causal theorizing and measurement.

*Causal Theorizing.* Qualitative research makes contributions to causal theorizing by identifying potential explanatory variables through a combination of deductive and inductive thinking and, more specifically, by focusing efforts at theory building on potential causal mechanisms gleaned from the study of processes. These are critical contributions and they point to one of the most firmly established comparative advantages of qualitative thinking. Yet little has been done to show how currently ad hoc thinking might be guided by formalized procedures, and to show how such causal theorizing might be turned into clearly specified causal models that go beyond assertions of mere association.

*Measurement.* Qualitative research contributes to measurement through the construction of simple scales (dichotomous and ordinal scales) and aggregate measures (typologies and taxonomies). And the discussion of measurement among qualitative researchers has placed a strong emphasis on establishing the equivalence of indicators. Yet a great deal of confusion still exists concerning levels of measurement and the construction of aggregate measures. Moreover, little attention has been paid to the need for rigorous rules of data collection.

*Causal Theory Testing.* Finally, qualitative research can contribute to the testing of causal theories. The recent literature on qualitative methods has stressed this point, usefully countering a widely held view that qualitative research contributes to causal theorizing mainly by generating hypotheses. Moreover, this literature has explored in depth the strengths and weaknesses of various cross-case and within-case methods qualitative researchers use to test theories. Nonetheless, the use of qualitative research for the purpose of causal inference remains one of the most poorly understood problems in the literature on qualitative methodology.

## Conclusion

The rationale for teaching qualitative methods will become more and more apparent as courses on qualitative methods are taught and become a regular part of graduate training. Indeed, the best response to skepticism about the need for such courses is likely to be the increasingly higher standards qualitative researchers set for themselves as they become more knowledgeable about methodology. For this to happen, however, a major and urgent challenge is the development of qualitative methods and the gradual codification of a set of sound

and widely accepted methodological precepts of relevance to qualitative research.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Useful comments were received from David Collier, Andrew Gould, Jason Seawright, Richard Snyder, Saika Uno and Jay Verkuilen.

<sup>2</sup>This fourth problem was brought to my attention by Jason Seawright.

<sup>3</sup>In an effort to overcome the two broad shortcomings discussed above, my own work has sought to catalog the tools qualitative researchers might draw on (Munck 1998, forthcoming) and offer a balanced view of the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research, compared to experimental and quantitative research (Munck and Verkuilen forthcoming).

<sup>4</sup>On the concepts of logic-in-use and reconstructed logic, see Kaplan (1964: 3-11). A prominent example of the disjuncture between the logic-in-use and the reconstructed logic is Skocpol's *States and Social Revolution* (1979), as is shown by Goldstone (1997) and Mahoney (1999).

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## *What Courses on Qualitative Methods Should be Offered in Political Science Graduate Programs?*

**JAMES MAHONEY**

Brown University

*James\_Mahoney@Brown.EDU*

Courses on qualitative methods are underrepresented in top political science graduate programs when compared to courses on quantitative methods (Bennett, Barth, and Rutherford 2003). This underrepresentation has led some political scientists to call for more qualitative methods courses in their curricula. However, "qualitative" methodology is a diverse field with many currents, raising the challenging task of deciding what material and what courses should be offered as basic components of graduate training.

In this essay, I begin to address this issue by arguing that top political science programs minimally should offer three basic courses on qualitative methods: a general course on qualitative data collection, a course on case study/small-N methods, and a course on interpretive methods. I suggest that each of these courses should be offered approximately once every other year, such that 1.5 qualitative methods courses appear

on the books each year. I do not recommend requiring that students take all three of these courses; however, departments might require that all students enroll in at least one qualitative methods course during their graduate years.

My goal in formulating this recommendation is to promote further discussion about how graduate curricula in political science can best serve the needs of all students. As the discipline continues to undergo rapid change and development, it is essential that departments keep pace with these trends in the courses they offer to graduate students.

### Data Collection versus Data Analysis

The proposal builds on a simple distinction between two kinds of methods courses: (1) courses about methods of data collection; and (2) courses about methods of data analysis. Data *collection* courses concern procedures for gathering what are considered qualitative forms of data (either because the data are understood as qualitative or because the procedures through which the data are gathered are regarded as qualitative). By contrast, data *analysis* courses focus on what are seen as qualitative procedures for developing concepts and theory as well as for evaluating and testing theory.

In qualitative research, the enterprises of data collection and data analysis encompass more specific methods. Hence, many different courses could be offered on each of these topics. However, in practice, it is not possible or efficient to offer entire courses on highly specific themes. For example, it may not be possible or efficient to dedicate a whole graduate seminar to archival research or to Mill's method of agreement. Rather, various specific methods must be grouped together within a single course for it to appeal to a wide range of students.

Given that resources are limited, I advocate offering a basic course on qualitative data collection that addresses multiple techniques that comprise this area of qualitative methodology. At present, the failure of departments to adequately train students in qualitative data collection is, in my view, one of the most glaring problems with most top programs.

By contrast, for qualitative data analysis, I advocate two courses as regular offerings in political science graduate programs. One course would focus on the strategies of concept formation, theory building, and theory testing in case study and small-N comparative research. The other course would be concerned with the ways in which concepts and data are used to build theory and elucidate meaning within the field of interpretive analysis. Part of my reasoning for offering separate courses on these topics grows out of the fact that there is a large epistemological split between case-study/comparative research and interpretive analysis, making it difficult to combine the two. Moreover, since many students will spend their careers working in one of these two areas, adequate training demands that they receive an entire course dedicated to their relevant methodology.

### A General Course on Data Collection

Qualitative methods of data collection might be viewed as encompassing nearly all modes of information retrieval outside of survey research, which is often identified with quantitative research. Thus, included within qualitative methods of data collection are elite and non-elite interviews, focus groups, participant and non-participant observation, ethnographic research, and secondary and primary source research. Each of these areas is characterized by its own specific methods of data collection, and each could no doubt receive a course of its own (though, as indicated, for pragmatic reasons I do not recommend that solution).

Quite likely, both quantitative and qualitative scholars appreciate the need for a course that covers this aspect of qualitative research. Moreover, there appears to be substantial demand for such a course from graduate students, who often are highly interested in learning about concrete procedures for gathering information. Yet graduate programs in political science usually do not offer such a course. As a result, students in the top programs may leave for the field or embark on their archival research without good ideas about how to efficiently gather data.

A necessary condition for offering a general course on qualitative data collection is the presence of a faculty member who is able and willing to teach such a course. Unfortunately, faculty may not be interested in offering such a course, focusing as it must on the seemingly more mundane aspects of research. Research-oriented faculty establish their reputations through work on substantive problems, and they no doubt generally prefer to teach these themes. In addition, some faculty may feel they lack the training themselves to cover a wide range of methods of data collection.

Yet a quite different situation prevails in the discipline of sociology, with instructive lessons for political science. Courses on qualitative data collection are common in sociology, so much so that some sociologists equate "qualitative methods" with data collection techniques. The many syllabi on the topic in sociology can easily be obtained by political scientists;<sup>1</sup> likewise, the various books on qualitative methods in social science provide ideas about how to teach in this area.<sup>2</sup> Beyond that, seasoned political scientists have successfully gathered data using different qualitative techniques, and they can obviously draw on their own experience. Moreover, when teaching qualitative methods, they can focus most closely on their areas of expertise and use exemplary studies from other scholars to help illustrate other approaches with which they may be less familiar.

A more complete remedy to the dearth of data collection courses would involve increasing incentives for faculty at all levels to offer these courses. In terms of the profession, more rewards could be designated to scholars who pursue data collection efforts. The Comparative Politics Section of APSA now offers an award for the development of publically-available quantitative data sets (Collier 1999). However, a similar prize does not exist for qualitative researchers who develop new data. More generally, political scientists might put greater

emphasis in their scholarly evaluations (e.g., peer reviews) on empirical data contributions. In addition, when making decisions about hiring job candidates, political scientists might put greater weight on data collection skills. Beyond that, department chairs could manipulate incentives in ways that would encourage more faculty to teach courses on qualitative data collection.

In the longer run, with or without incentives, it is possible that these courses will proliferate through a selection process in which departments offering the courses are rewarded by the more successful placement of their graduate students and those not offering the courses are punished in similar ways. To the degree that political scientists put more and more emphasis on rigorous methodological procedures, including forms of data gathering, this selection process becomes more likely. In any case, the possibility of such a selection process may lead graduate students increasingly to seek programs with better training in qualitative data collection.

### Two Courses on Data Analysis

In political science, qualitative methods are most commonly understood as a set of procedures for presenting and processing data, rather than gathering the data in the first place. In fact, the “qualitative-quantitative” disputation is primarily a debate about the relative strengths and weaknesses of alternative methods of descriptive and causal inference, not a debate about whether data sources should be numerical or not.

Within the qualitative camp, however, a number of different approaches for analyzing data exist, such that it is impossible to speak of a single qualitative method of theory construction and theory testing. I find it useful to distinguish between two main alternatives to qualitative data analysis: (1) approaches primarily oriented toward causal assessment in one or a small number of cases; and (2) approaches primarily oriented toward interpretive analysis. Obviously, as with any dichotomy, this distinction will not perfectly capture all research, and some research may fall in the middle. Yet, from the perspective of graduate training, I argue that the distinction is useful. Furthermore, I suggest that these different camps have quite distinct visions of what courses on qualitative methods of data analysis should entail. Currently, both approaches are important to knowledge production in political science, and thus both merit courses that are routinely offered.

*A Course on Case Study/Small-N Methods.* Case study and small-N methods represent one of the three most visible analytic approaches in political science (along with statistical analysis and rational choice analysis). A principle goal of those teaching comparative methods is to introduce the tools that scholars use to generate descriptive and causal inferences in their research. In this sense, an instructor teaching about small-N methods has concerns similar to those of an instructor teaching a statistical course: provide students with concrete procedures that can be used to produce rigorous and valid research.

Unfortunately, because of this overlap, statistically inclined researchers may fail to see the value added of a course on case study and small-N methods. Given limited resources,

why should departments use up a slot in the curriculum on case study/comparative approaches when a course on statistics could cover the same issues more rigorously? The problematic assumption underlying this kind of question (i.e., that case study/small-N research follows the same mode of inference as statistical research but does so in an inferior way) has led small-N researchers to devote substantial energy toward spelling out exactly how their research differs from and complements statistical research. Unfortunately, the message has not been taken seriously by all statistical researchers, such that adding classes on case study/small-N methods is often not considered a high priority and in fact still meets active resistance in some programs.

To help the cause of case study/small-N method courses, qualitative researchers must continue to engage statistical research through publications in high profile venues. The movement toward an increasingly respected place for qualitative research in political science has been generated in part through these publications, which have forced at least some statistical researchers to pay attention. Further movement in this direction is essential to promote qualitative methods courses in political science.

The good news is that, despite resistance at some departments, faculty increasingly seek to offer these kinds of courses.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, a substantial core of graduate students depend on these courses for their training. The trend line will almost certainly be toward increases in both the supply and the demand of classes on case study/small-N methods. The real challenge will then become overcoming the ambivalence or resistance of statistical researchers who are not knowledgeable about this mode of analysis.

*A Course on Interpretive Methods.* Recently, graduate students at Yale University’s Department of Political Science petitioned for a course on qualitative methods. In Fall 2001, the department responded by creating an experimental course entitled “Creativity and Method in Comparative Research,” co-taught by James C. Scott and Arun Agrawal.<sup>4</sup> The course focused significantly (though certainly not entirely) on interpretive methods and associated themes within the philosophy of science.

Interpretive methods include techniques designed to elucidate the symbolic dimensions of human behavior, including the social codes that make certain kinds of behavior and certain kinds of meaning possible. Included within this field are forms of discourse analysis, semiotics, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, and cultural analysis. Typically, courses in this area would also include a significant component on the philosophy of science.

Interpretive research in many ways has an ambiguous relationship with methodological training. Methodology is often associated with “science,” whereas interpretive researchers may seek to distance themselves from science, at least as the word is constructed in contemporary political science. In addition, unlike case study/small-N analysts, interpretive researchers may not see great value in statistical courses and standard methodological offerings for the kind of work they do.

For at least three reasons, classes on interpretive methods could be difficult to establish at a wide spectrum of political science programs. First, many researchers outside of the interpretive tradition – including both quantitative and non-interpretive qualitative researchers – are skeptical of the contributions of interpretive analysis and may dismiss the importance of methodology courses on this subject matter, given that they see it as lacking rigor and a distinctive method. Second, the number of faculty and students who work in this area is not as large as the case study/small-N group, which puts these researchers in a weaker bargaining position. Third, interpretive theorists may not always see the value in methods courses themselves. Indeed, their ambivalence toward methodology in part explains the comparatively limited publications on interpretive methods that can be found in the political science literature.

Nevertheless, as the Yale course suggests, there is some movement among interpretive analysts in political science to codify the procedures they use in research and to train graduate students in light of these procedures. In addition, most major political science programs have at least some students who are interested in interpretive analysis as a primary or secondary mode of research. Hence, insofar as there are both suppliers and demanders for these kinds of courses, and insofar as this kind of research needs to be more rigorously pursued, a course dedicated to interpretive methods is appropriate.

### Conclusion

Many political scientists believe that the discipline suffers because graduate students do not receive adequate training in the area of qualitative methods. One possibility would be for departments to offer a single, required qualitative methods course. Yet, because qualitative methodology represents a large and internally diverse field, it is hard to imagine such a course adequately training students across a wide spectrum of qualitative technique.

In this brief note, I have argued that an adequate graduate program would minimally offer three courses on qualitative methods: (1) a general data collection course; (2) a course on case study/small-N methods; and (3) a course on interpretive methods. If these courses were offered once every other year, the “cost” to departments would be 1.5 courses per year, which is less than the cost of training students in quantitative methods in most departments. If all students were required to take at least one of these qualitative methods courses, the next generation of political scientists would be more skilled at doing research discipline and far more competent at understanding one another’s work.

Whether or not one agrees with this specific proposal, the issue of how to create a teaching division of labor for alternative approaches within qualitative methods deserves discussion among political scientists. As departments increasingly recognize the need to include more qualitative methods in their curricula, they should proceed by carefully organizing the new course offerings rather than moving forward haphazardly.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>My colleague Phil Brown offers an excellent example of such a course. His syllabus can be downloaded at <[http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Sociology/classes/sem2\\_02-03/so221.pdf](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Sociology/classes/sem2_02-03/so221.pdf)>. For 27 other syllabi of qualitative methods courses in sociology, see Ballard 2001. In political science, Kathryn Sikkink of the University of Minnesota also offers a graduate course on these themes.

<sup>2</sup>I particularly call attention to the many Sage monographs on qualitative research methods.

<sup>3</sup>For several different examples, see the syllabi on the CQRM website: <<http://www.asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm/syllabi.html>>.

<sup>4</sup>The first draft of the syllabus is available at <<http://www.asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm/syllabi.html>>. The syllabus from Lisa Wedeen of the University of Chicago at the same webpage offers another good example of this type of qualitative methods course.

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## *Teaching Qualitative Methods: The Importance of Understanding Interpretive and Positive Epistemologies*

**MARTHA FELDMAN & ANN CHIH LIN**

University of Michigan  
*msfeldman@umich.edu*  
*annlin@umich.edu*

Many of our political science colleagues are surprised when they hear that the Political Science Department at the University of Michigan (!) has included a qualitative methods course in the core methods sequence for the last 8 years. In many ways, however, it is not surprising that a department known for its expertise in quantitative methods should take all methodologies – including qualitative methodologies – seriously. The course we designed and teach has been taken by students in all political science subfields as well as by students from other social science departments and a wide variety of professional schools.<sup>1</sup> It seems to work well for them all, preparing many to write dissertations that mix qualitative and quantitative methods, others to do exclusively qualitative research, and still others to read and derive theory from qualitative studies that inform their econometric, experimental, or formal theoretic work. We attribute this success to two guiding principles: (1) using the epistemological differences between positive and interpretive research to provide a theoretic-

cal base that organizes the skills we teach in the course; and (2) providing hands-on experience in the collection and analysis of qualitative data, rather than focusing only on the discussion of published work.

For a variety of reasons, we start our course by exploring the difference between interpretive and positive epistemologies. One is to dispel the notion that qualitative means interpretive and quantitative means positive. Another is because, in fact, qualitative researchers practice a variety of epistemological approaches, positive and interpretive being two of the most common. Exploring the differences between these approaches and their implications for research design, data gathering and data analysis enables the students to understand how to do qualitative research using the epistemological approach most appropriate for their research questions. It also allows them to assess the research designs, data gathering and data analysis of research they read, using standards relevant to the epistemology required by the research question.

The importance of matching research question and epistemology is the 1<sup>st</sup> lesson. We teach that interpretive and positive approaches are useful for exploring different questions. Lin has shown that an interpretive approach enables researchers to explore causal *mechanisms* while a positive approach enables them to explore causal *relations* (Lin 1998). Other distinctions that map, though not perfectly, onto the positive/interpretive distinction include deductive/inductive and theory validation/theory generation (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

The 2<sup>nd</sup> lesson is that all research consists of data gathering, data analysis, theorizing and writing (we understand that these may not be discrete categories) and that often these are carried out differently or undertaken at different times by interpretive and positive researchers. Interpretive questions, for instance, often require more open-ended field observations and interviews while positive questions do more structured field observations and interviews. Both approaches look at archival data, but interpretive approaches tend to focus on the mindsets revealed by documents and artifacts, while positive researchers tend to look for facts. Similarly, positive researchers tend to engage in their most extensive theorizing before data are gathered while interpretive researchers tend to engage in their most extensive theorizing after data are gathered.

A 3<sup>rd</sup> lesson is that what you do with your data depends on your epistemology. For the interpretive researcher, patterns need to emerge from the data while the positive researcher needs to verify if predefined patterns (based on prior theorizing) exist in the data. Different methods of analysis promote these different ends. Positive analysis usually involves coding and categorizing. Coding and categorizing may also be used by interpretive researchers, but the fundamental analytical move involves placing the data in relation to one another via theoretical or meta-theoretical constructs so that relations other than those defined by the informants can emerge (Feldman, 1995).

These theoretical lessons are enacted through their application in the course project. Each year the professor chooses a common research site, topic or event (e.g., Ann Arbor city

council, popular reactions to the tragedies of September 11, Ann Arbor's response to a Ku Klux Klan rally, Ann Arbor Reads,<sup>2</sup> etc.) and directs students in formulating research questions, gathering data, and conducting analysis around that topic. The students read and discuss each others' findings and debate their meaning as part of the class. Thus, like any class in a quantitative methodology, we have "problem sets": an assignment on interviewing, another on observation, a third on memoing as an analytical technique, and so forth. The professor comments on assignments approximately every other week, always with an eye to helping the student accomplish convincing and compelling research within their epistemological choice. The class concludes with a paper in which students, having defined a research question, use the data they have collected to offer a preliminary answer, analyze the validity of their findings, and then offer a research design for further investigation.

The class's first assignment points to the contribution that we believe this course has made to our students' doctoral education. The following is the version from this term:

Propose a theoretical question about Ann Arbor Reads. You will not be required to pursue this for your paper (though you may want to), so feel free to think broadly. Explain how this question or some aspect of it might be answered by taking a positivist approach, an interpretive approach, and a critical approach. Then, explain how you might answer this question or some aspect of it with a quantitative study. I am not looking for a full-blown research design, but for your understanding of the match between question and research approach.

As students struggle, first to structure a question, and then to propose four different ways to answer some aspect of it, they have a firsthand experience of thinking in different epistemologies. This enables them to examine their own presuppositions and predilections for research. It also allows them to see how different research approaches have unique strengths and limitations, and even how different approaches can be combined. Our course succeeds because students find that they are more equipped to do their own research, and more equipped to read and learn from the research of others, no matter the method or approach.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>At Michigan, we routinely have students from the Schools of Education, Business, Public Health, Public Policy, Information, Social Work, Urban Planning and Architecture, and Natural Resources in our class. We have also had at least one engineer. Feldman (with Richard Matland, University of Houston) has also taught a version of the course to students in Norway with equally satisfying results.

<sup>2</sup>A community read held in Ann Arbor in which many members of the community read and discuss the same book.

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## *Teaching the Metatheoretics of Qualitative Methodology*

**DAVID WALDNER**

University of Virginia

*daw4h@virginia.edu*

Logic, Bertrand Russell once wrote, teaches us "caution in inference." Russell believed that we avoided inferential errors by studying philosophy, or what he called the "art of rational conjecture."<sup>1</sup> Few contemporary social scientists would readily assent with Lord Russell's position. Today, we learn to avoid inferential errors by learning methodology. Methodology is a lineal descendant of philosophy, especially work on inductive logic. But as various techniques became codified, they acquired intellectual autonomy and could thus be further developed and taught without explicit reference to the philosophical understandings they embodied. Just as one can study and gainfully employ the central limit theorem without any familiarity with the philosophy of probability, one can master regression models without appreciating the bold epistemic shifts that permitted their development.

Yet I wish to argue that flavoring our methodological curricula with a dash or two of metatheoretical material can advance the goal of training our students to be methodologically adept; indeed, insofar as pedagogy has an ineradicably reflexive component, we teachers might profit as well. This is not the proper venue for an elaborate defense of a more philosophically inflected approach to methodology. But we have all heard the rising chorus of voices claiming that methodologies rest on prior presuppositions which must be elaborated and scrutinized before they can support often heavy inferential burdens; philosophy surely has a role to play in that procedure. And many of us have also heard or voiced concerns of creeping methodological dogmatism or expressions of alarm that the current generation of students who enter political science doctoral programs to produce policy-relevant understandings of politics approach methodological training not as an intellectually challenging and essential component of the generation and accumulation of knowledge, but rather as a disciplinary rite of passage to be endured or a rational response to job market signals. In my experience, teaching the philosophical foundations of methodology kindles greater enthusiasm for methodology as well as greater appreciation of its importance: it helps students to distinguish between discipline as punishment and discipline as a set of rules that sharpen mental faculties. This alone justifies including philosophy in our curricula.

Consider first the core methodological precept of falsification. Our students often come to us endowed with enthusiastic but naïve empiricism, a wish to acquire expert knowledge about the world. Yet one of the first demands upon them is to seek falsification. I have found that assigning David Hume's relentless assault on inductive knowledge profoundly unsettles students and leaves them wondering what an empirical social science has to offer; reading Popper's response to Hume is an intellectual tonic, one that fortifies students to grapple with Popper's elucidation of what we today call the "confirmationist bias," the understandable human predilection to seek confirming evidence while avoiding disconfirming evidence. Rising to Popper's challenge to hypothesize boldly but criticize ruthlessly is no less daunting a task, but counterposed to Hume's skepticism, it becomes less a trap to avoid at job talks and more an intellectually indispensable and fascinating challenge.

Turn next to the question of explanation. Many of us working with qualitative methods self-identify as seekers of knowledge about "big questions," usually understood as the origins and dynamics of the core elements of modernity. We are thus oriented towards providing specific explanations of structures and events; this quest for specific explanations need not—and typically does not—come at the expense of engagement with grander theoretical projects, but it does force an engagement with an issue that methodology itself cannot resolve: what constitutes an adequate explanation? Methodology, after all, is what I would call the disciplined deployment of data: it helps us to sort through data to make valid descriptive and causal inferences. But valid inferences do not automatically make powerful explanations. If, for example, a fellow political scientist were to strike me at next year's annual conference, I might reasonably infer that she was incensed at something I had said or done, but that inference alone would not suffice to explain the physical attack: I, at least, would want to know what had caused the anger and why the anger motivated assault. In at least some instances, in other words, a number of inferences must be made before explanatory adequacy is achieved. This topic is a properly philosophical one, for no methodology—no recipe for inferential validity—can also govern explanatory adequacy. Indeed, it is striking how many methodological textbooks contain almost no reference to explanations and the criteria of explanatory goodness.<sup>2</sup>

Leaving aside the debate between naturalist and interpretivist ontologies, we can identify a range of explanatory criteria. By some accounts, explanations of particulars consist of point predictions and error terms derived from the statistical analysis of samples and populations. In this view, the method—regression analysis—is also the criterion of explanatory goodness. But rival accounts exist. Perhaps most influential in the second half of the twentieth century was Carl Hempel's deductive-nomological model, in which particulars were explained by subsuming them under general laws.<sup>3</sup> An explanation thus consisted of one or more general laws along with one or more statements of initial conditions. While perfectly consistent with a statistical worldview, this statement of explanatory goodness also departs from it in meaningful ways.

Hempel's model, however, has been thoroughly criticized, not simply because of the absence of general laws to do much explaining in the social sciences, but also on the philosophical grounds that general laws are neither necessary nor sufficient for explanations. One crucial implication of the rejection of Hempel's model that all students must learn is that most philosophers no longer view explanation and prediction as equivalent forms of reasoning: we can explain without predicting and predict without explaining. A third account, one that is widely defended in the philosophical literature, grounds explanations in causal mechanisms. In the most demanding form of this approach, explanations require the identification of the cause or causes that, under particular conditions, are sufficient to produce the outcome.<sup>4</sup> I have claimed elsewhere that only this last formulation of explanatory adequacy is defensible. Students grappling with this issue need not agree, but grapple with it they should. Thinking about explanations, as opposed to inferences, can help students select the appropriate method, and it can also help them use those methods—or perhaps a combination of methods—more wisely.

But note how turning attention to questions of explanatory adequacy opens up a host of new concerns. We are all accustomed to gravely intoning “correlation is not causation,” and qualitatively inclined scholars have built a large part of their methodological edifice on the distinction, particularly by emphasizing causal mechanisms and the related methodology of process tracing.<sup>5</sup> For that project to work, it is necessary to go beyond current efforts to operationalize causation (in terms of non-spurious correlations or causal effects) and open up discussion of what precisely causation is and how it is to be distinguished from correlation.

Consider prevailing definitions of process tracing. Process tracing is all about identifying causal mechanisms; causal mechanisms distinguish causal from non-causal associations; and causal mechanisms are conventionally understood to be both processes and intervening variables linking cause and effect. This seemingly simple formulation is in fact quite problematic. Processes and intervening variables are not equivalent. Take, for example, the purported relationship between the degree of socioeconomic modernity and democracy. If we understand causal mechanisms as intervening variables, we might make reference to Seymour Martin Lipset's identification of changing values as the key causal linkage. In this case, however, statistical methods are perfectly appropriate. We might, on the other hand, define causal mechanisms as processes, understood as tethered historical events composed of bundles of actions that change the values of key variables. Qualitative methods fare much better under this interpretation of causal mechanisms. Because methodological decisions hinge on often-tacit presuppositions, it is necessary to go beyond methods into the realm of metatheoretics.

Consider finally the issue of determinism. If explanatory goodness requires causal sufficiency, then we must ask whether determinism is ontologically and epistemologically defensible. Adding adverbial modifiers to the terms necessary and sufficient, as Charles Ragin<sup>6</sup> recommends, does not relieve us of this responsibility: if the concept of determinism is incoher-

ent, as many philosophers argue, then labeling a set of causes “almost always sufficient” would seem to be almost always incoherent. It might prove to be possible to ground small-n methods in probabilistic assumptions, but that case has not yet been made and most qualitative work either explicitly or implicitly assumes determinism. Fortunately for those of us who defend qualitative methods, it turns out that many of the ontological critiques of determinism—those rooted in chaos theory and quantum mechanics—do not have direct relevance to the social sciences and that a defensible case for deterministic explanations can be made.<sup>7</sup> It seems to me that work of this sort is absolutely essential to placing qualitative methods on secure ground.

To be sure, I have omitted discussion of a host of other crucial philosophical questions that lurk just under the surface of empirical research. And it might be the case that “bringing philosophy in” only invites irresolvable debate, that thinking philosophically really is fruitless “navel gazing.” But that has not been my experience in the classroom. Introducing students to the fundamentals of intellectual inquiry elicits enthusiasm, not fatalism. It creates grounds for genuine methodological pluralism. Perhaps most importantly, it obliges students to make arguments in defense of their positions, rather than assuming certain explanatory criteria or ontological presuppositions. For a discipline that took too long to respond to Giovanni Sartori's call for methodological self-consciousness, this can only be a welcome development.

Let me end by noting that teaching these and other philosophical debates to students who, in a one-semester course, already must tackle material on research design and the mechanics of qualitative methods presents somewhat intractable challenges. I have tried to turn those challenges to my pedagogical advantage. I design my course readings so that the themes of research design and qualitative methods become the logical culmination of the antecedent philosophical readings. I present the texts we read as partial solutions to problems left unsolved by prior authors. I emphasize that these are partial solutions: much work remains to be done, and there are no guarantees that future efforts will yield consensual philosophical closure. I have found that rather than lowering expectations, this modest approach raises them. I have found that when students understand why current thinking places great emphasis on the explanatory virtues of causal mechanisms, they are better able to appreciate why and how quantitative methods and qualitative methods must be co-conspirators, not competitors. But they are also able to appreciate some of the limits of contemporary approaches to qualitative methods, and many of them are eager to be future contributors to the field, to be consumers and producers of philosophically sophisticated qualitative methods.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Bertrand Russell, “The Art of Rational Conjecture,” in *The Art of Philosophizing and other Essays* (Littlefield, Adams & Company, 1974).

<sup>2</sup>Excellent on this, and many other topics, is John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>3</sup>Carl Hempel, *Aspects of Scientific Explanation and other Essays in the Philosophy of Science* (Free Press, 1965).

<sup>4</sup>Richard Miller, *Fact and Method: Explanation, Confirmation, and Reality in the Natural and Social Sciences* (Princeton University Press, 1987).

<sup>5</sup>Two prominent examples are Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (University of Chicago Press, 1992), and Peter A. Hall, "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Research," in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>6</sup>Charles Ragin, *Fuzzy-Set Social Science* (University of Chicago Press, 1990).

<sup>7</sup>See my "Anti Anti-Determinism: Or What Happens When Schrödinger's Cat and Lorenz's Butterfly Meet Laplace's Demon in the Study of Political and Economic Development," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, September 2002.

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## *The Liabilities of Amnesia: Why a Course in the "History of Political Science"?*<sup>1</sup>

ARLENE SAXONHOUSE  
University of Michigan  
*awsaxon@umich.edu*

Psychology departments seldom take their students back to the thicket of Freud's *Collected Works*. Medical schools turn to Hippocrates mostly for his oath, not for his skills at analyzing the pathologies of female hysteria. Those learning to study the universe today do not work through the elliptical paths of the stars and planets that Ptolemy developed so that he might keep the earth at the center of things. So, why should the discipline of political science be any different? Why should we teach our students about those methods employed by political scientists generations ago, methods that often look quite primitive next to the sophisticated tools of analysis and measurement that dominate current political science curricula? Why should one resist the forces that drive a discipline and a society to a sort of methodological amnesia? History may repeat itself, as the adage suggests, but methods of analysis often build on themselves to correct past inadequacies or they are replaced by those more able to address with precision the concerns of the discipline.

Chris Achen and I have team-taught a course entitled "The History of Political Science" at the University of Michigan several times over the last six years. The goal of this course is in part to address the liabilities of an amnesia that allows students to enjoy a Whiggish belief that the methods they are learning have survived some imagined trial leading to the survival of the fittest.

Through mutual agreement (sometimes breached), Chris and I do not consider writings before 1850 or after 1965, though as the years pass, the end date seems to move, and a number of articles and books reflecting on this history have been written after the cut-off date. There is one non-negotiable exception to our agreement with each other: *Federalist* 10. Without a sure understanding of that document one cannot comprehend the challenges facing a discipline that has been largely concerned with the political institutions and processes of democracy. We also include some of the APSA presidential addresses that reflect on the methodology and goals of the discipline. We admit (and we regret) that we discuss only American political science, and we often fantasize about what we might be able to cover if we had two semesters for such a course.

The justification for the 1850 or so start date is that in 1857 Francis Lieber, a Prussian émigré who had been teaching for twenty years at the University of South Carolina, became the first professor of political science at an American university, Columbia. In 1880 John Burgess became the director of the School of Political Science at Columbia. Both events in a sense inaugurate the discipline of political science in the modern academic setting, though obviously the study of *politikê* begins well before the founding of Plato's Academy. The 1965 plus cut-off date protects us from surveying materials and methods that students are likely to encounter in greater detail in other courses.

While we start our semester with a recounting of the founding of the discipline in the mid-nineteenth century and while one might – if one looked very carefully – detect some chronological coherence to the syllabus, the course is thematically, not chronologically, structured. Lieber and Burgess are interesting for us not so much because they inaugurated the discipline of political science in American universities, but because they illustrate the impact of their European background and education on how they conceptualized and studied politics. (Burgess did post-graduate work in Germany.) With that European background and especially the influence of Hegelian thought, the founding of political science was deeply enmeshed in the study of "the state," a study that entailed scholarly research in the field of comparative constitutional law. Hegel gave to Lieber and Burgess the conceptual framework of "the state" that would define how they analyzed the political world of the America of their own time. While the reified state inherited from Hegel will move in and out of disciplinary focus over the following century, the concept of the state plays a special role in post-Civil War America. The threat of political dissolution challenged both Lieber and Burgess to explore the meaning of the state and, with Hegel looking over their shoulders, they and their colleagues developed the methodological and conceptual resources to do so specifically through the study of comparative constitutions.

The point we develop here and throughout the semester is the interplay between questions, methods, political events and the broader intellectual environment in which scholars are working. When one turns from "the state" which was at the core of political science work during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the scholars emerging during the Progressive

movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, very different concerns requiring very different tools emerge. The Progressive interest in rooting out the corruption infecting the political organizations of the time allowed the reified state to dissolve into the administrative state, to be studied not by poring over constitutional law books, but by the empirical examination of what is actually happening in the administration of the state functions. Progressivism believed in the capacity of science to improve our democratic system. The reforms the Progressives advocated to make America more democratic depended on the scientific methods they now brought to the study of politics. Empiricism was necessary; one could not attack corruption in government without showing it was there. And if one was concerned with pressuring a political system to improve the living conditions of its citizens, one had to show what they lacked and what services were needed. Such an agenda required different methodological skills than those needed by political scientists studying and speaking to a regime grappling with the crises of political unity. Rather than the abstract unifying conceptions of the state understood through the study of constitutional law, the reformist agenda enamored by the potential of science as the answer to improving social welfare developed the tools and the institutions for collecting data. The data collected were the “statistics,” what was needed by the state to perform its role of providing resources for its citizens.

Political science is inevitably a discipline enmeshed in the activities and political movements of the day and it has been throughout its history a parasitic (or, more generously, syncretic) discipline that often draws its methods of analysis from the intellectual climate of the academy and beyond. Today, we see this syncretism with disciplines as disparate as economics and literary theory, but the story in the past is a similar one. For Lieber and Burgess this meant the Hegelian analysis that helped address the challenges of a severely fractured state trying to reassert its unity. For the progressive political scientists of the early twentieth century, the tools of data collection as well as the institutional structures established by someone like Charles Merriam to gather such data allowed political science to see itself as serving a political system intended to address the social evils of the time. We find a quite different example in post-World War II comparative politics. No longer is comparative politics the study of constitutions, but now the field of anthropology offered tools of analysis for studying regimes which could not be neatly subsumed under the same rubric as the constitutional democracies to which attention had been paid previously. The absence of such analyses had taxed the intelligence capabilities of a United States at war with such regimes. And the stories are similar in the other subfields.

In large part, our course focuses then on both the social and political issues that force to the forefront particular political problems and concerns and on how the intrusions of assorted other disciplines has influenced how politics is studied – from the impact of logical positivism on Robert Dahl’s *Preface to Democratic Theory* to psychoanalysis on Harold Lasswell’s theories of propaganda (and much else) and Lucian

Pye’s country study of Burma to Lazarfeld’s original market research studies on public opinion surveys to systems analysis on Easton’s “political system” and Karl Deutsch’s studies of political integration. The story, of course, is never uniform, and an innovator like Arthur Bentley who insisted on the “felt facts” and “thought facts” as against “soul stuff” in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and who interpreted the process of government as the activities of groups needed to wait four decades for David Truman (who openly acknowledges his debt to Bentley’s book) to make his method and approach the coin of the discipline. More frequently, though, we point to the interplay between the research methods and the general political and intellectual environment at the time at which the work is done.

Because of the variety of methods that emerged over the century or so under scrutiny in our course, there is a certain a-historical jumping from week to week and thus, for example, the logical positivism that influenced Dahl comes at the beginning of the course and the Marxism that influenced Charles Beard comes at the end. There is no simple historical line that we could follow even if we wanted to do so. There is too much overlap among alternative approaches and methods. On the other hand, we do try to suggest that there are certain thematic continuities and shared questions that might otherwise not be visible behind the varied methodological styles of our predecessors. At present, debates about democracy, participation, citizenship, power, institutions may find themselves confined to subfields and even subfields within subfields, making work and the development of appropriate methods inbred, failing to taking advantage of the developments in other fields that was so important in nourishing the earlier developments in the discipline. We hope that the exposure to the methodological challenges that the different subfields faced over time encourages students to integrate themes across subfields and thereby understand how subfields can enrich each other – and how dependent each subfield is on the neighboring (and not so neighboring) disciplines.

Some of the methods of our disciplinary ancestors may see as quaint as Galen’s theories of the four humors or perhaps as socially dangerous as Hippocrates’ ascription of female maladies to a wandering womb and we certainly are not suggesting that our students necessarily turn, as did Laswell, to the records kept in psychiatric institutions of patients’ dreams as the appropriate resource for their study of politics. We hope the exposure to the range of methods employed in the discipline reveals the openness of the field to innovation, that whatever the dominant mode of analysis currently may be now is not what has to be and certainly that it is not the only way that political questions can be addressed.

Just as important as showing this openness, though, is the reminder that current methods may be simply old methods in new dresses and that by repeating a narrowness of perspective the new methods provoke the same kind of concerns raised a century ago. For example, procedural models applied to legislative behavior recall the emphasis on legal interpretation that marked the beginning of academic political science in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Those early studies similarly ignored the actual po-

litical forces such as the bargaining, compromises, negotiation, even the raw power that bring about decisions in legislative bodies, that define the constitutions studied. Scholars like Bentley, Wilson and Merriam needed to step in at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to suggest that politics was far more than rules and constitutional forms. Observation of the functioning of the administrative state taught much that was missing in the study of its structure. Or for those manipulating data about individual opinion or choice, Bentley's work from the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century warns that the "process" of government, the "how" of government, means that "the raw material we study is never found in one man by himself...It is a 'relation' between men, but not in the sense that the individual men are given to us first, and the relation erected between them. The relation is...the given phenomenon, the raw material" (Bentley 1908, 176). Or Mary Parker Follett similarly speaks to scholars of today when she warns (in 1918) that those who fail to acknowledge the "new psychology" with its emphasis on relation will understand politics only as contract and be ineffective in their efforts at building democratic regimes in a "genuine community of nations."

We include in the syllabus several of the classics of the field, path-breaking works at the time they appeared, though some may appear methodologically dated now. The goal is to have the students understand what it was that made these works stand out, what made them works that changed the field. The "heroes" and "heroines" of the field achieved their influence because they ventured beyond the methodological givens of the time and place. They challenged themselves to draw on new ways to understand and communicate about the political world, but in order to do so they themselves often call on their readings of earlier classics. In this sense, perhaps they serve as object lessons about the importance of memory as well as of methodological risks (and institutional risks, e.g. Merriam) of earlier scholars. From these classics in political science, we learn as well that key themes and approaches that were once so important often regrettably receive little attention by contemporary scholars and that a reliance on narrowly focused methods today tends to obscure the insights of earlier writers. As the life story of Arthur Bentley suggests, the contributions of innovators were not necessarily immediately recognized and the image of Bentley returning to rural Indiana, far away from the academic world, after writing his major work may offer little consolation to a student eager for his or her first job. But the goal of the course is to use the history of the discipline to shake the potential self-assurance that may arise from a failure to see today's methods as similarly products of the particular political life of the times and the syncretism born of an interaction with a range of intellectual and disciplinary endeavors. It is a failure that leads to the unfortunate resistance to reading, learning from and apply the insights of those earlier classics in the field.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Chris Achen may not have authored this piece, but the content derives entirely from our work together on develop-

ing and teaching the course; it has further benefited from his comments on an earlier draft.

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## *Designing a Qualitative Methods Syllabus*

**ELIZABETH KIER**

University of Washington  
ekier@u.washington.edu

After some initial trepidation, I was excited about teaching a graduate seminar in qualitative methods. It could hardly be a more interesting time. The publication of King, Keohane, and Verba's *Designing Social Inquiry* reinvigorated interest in qualitative methods, and I wanted to design the course to profit from this emerging debate. Whereas KKV appealed to qualitative researchers to do their best to adopt quantitative methodological guidelines, I wanted to encourage students to think about whether that is always the best prescription for qualitative research. What is gained, and what is lost from evaluating case-oriented, comparative research from the perspective of large-N, variable-oriented research? What are the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research, and what types of questions or issues are best addressed with it? How does a researcher make valid causal inferences about complex political phenomena on the basis of case-study or comparative case study methods? I hoped to teach students how to create and critique sophisticated case study and comparative research. I also wanted them to be able to explain their methodological decisions to quantitative researchers in terms that the latter could understand and appreciate.

Once I had a sense of the general themes of the course, the choices became much harder. This difficulty seemed surprising. I was teaching the course in the third quarter of a required methods sequence so I could assume that the students understood research design and introductory statistics. I could also assume that they had read some of the classic and recent foundational work, such as KKV's book and Sartori's article on concept formation. In addition, there are lots of terrific resources available, such as the Consortium on Qualitative Research Method's posting of over thirty qualitative methods syllabi (<http://asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm/syllabi.html>). Nonetheless, the constraints of teaching in a ten week quarter meant that important issues would inevitably be ignored; others discussed all too briefly. I discuss below the four central trade-offs I faced, how I resolved them, and whether after teaching the course, I think these decisions were the correct ones.

*Should the syllabus include a section on the philosophy of the social sciences?* Most Ph.D. students in political science will not develop expertise on broader epistemological issues, but they should be aware of the major debates in the philosophy of the social sciences. What are the different forms of social scientific explanation, the nature of human action and the forms of our knowledge of its causes and motives, and the scope and limits of scientific knowledge of society? How

do empiricist, positivist, interpretivist, and realist philosophers of science address these questions? What is critical social science and the basis of feminist critiques of the objectivity of science? Students should be introduced to these debates, and especially, have some understanding of the relevance of these issues to the conduct of their own social science research.

Unfortunately, the previous courses in my department's methods sequence do not cover the philosophy of social sciences. I reluctantly decided not to do so as well. I did not see how I could give these issues justice and still adequately cover central questions in qualitative research design, all within ten short weeks. Nor was I comfortable with the implicit message that the philosophy of social science is important to qualitative researchers, but that those relying on formal or quantitative methods need not consider it. Nonetheless, this was the most difficult choice I made, and the one that I have not found other ways to address. If students in my department wish to learn this material, they will do so outside our required courses.

*Should I include a section on the ethics of research?* This decision was similar to the one about the philosophy of the social sciences. I felt that a discussion about the ethics of research is a necessary foundation to any research in the social sciences, whether quantitative or qualitative.

It seems especially important that methodology courses not lose sight of the larger issue at stake – that good research designs are only useful to the extent that they address important questions. And figuring out what constitutes an important question is, in part, an ethical decision. Nor is it always clear whether our job is to be dispassionate or passionate scholars. Additionally, researchers face a variety of ethical issues in collecting evidence, ranging from the acceptability of deceiving research subjects, to issues of race, gender, and sexual orientation in participant observation. Finally, ethical issues arise about the products of research. For example, are we responsible for considering the ultimate use of our findings?

I decided to include a section on the ethics of research. Incorporating this discussion in a qualitative methods course, but not in other methods or research design courses, does risk sending an implicit message that researchers using other methodologies do not face ethical decisions, but that danger seemed minimal, especially when weighed against the importance of including some discussion of this crucial issue. Most important, and unlike the question of the philosophy of the social sciences, I felt that many of the important issues could be raised in one day's discussion.

*Should I focus on the design of qualitative studies or the collection of qualitative evidence?* Both directions seemed important. Concentrating on the varied issues involved in designing qualitative studies, such as the comparative method and case studies, case selection, concept formation, counterfactuals, and causal mechanisms and process-tracing, is a crucial first step. Yet discussing the varied ways of gathering qualitative evidence, such as participant observation, interviewing, and the use of archival and historical evidence, would also be beneficial. The latter seemed especially important as students often naively assume, for example, that good interview techniques are just common sense, only to later dis-

cover that they would have been much better off if they had thought through the issues involved prior to their fieldwork. Yet I decided to focus on the design of qualitative studies. I assumed that it would appeal to a wider range of students, and some design issues are more difficult to understand than those involved in collecting qualitative evidence. I also wanted to take advantage of the recent and innovative debate on qualitative research, and most of this work focuses on questions of research design. But the most important factor driving my decision was the sense that design issues are fundamental to good research. Sophisticated interviewing techniques are meaningless if the data is gathered for a problematic research design.

This decision has the disadvantage of not exposing students to the nuts and bolts of collecting qualitative evidence. To partially offset this gap, students can choose to write a literature review about one of the methods for collecting qualitative research. The students present their findings to the class and provide everyone with an annotated bibliography of the readings. These presentations cannot replace hands-on experience in collecting qualitative evidence, but they give students an overview of the issues involved in that particular method, and a list of relevant readings. The students can also choose to write literature reviews about some of the other important topics not covered in class, such as the debate in historical sociology about qualitative methods, or the contrasting approaches to qualitative methods in history and political science. Again, they present their findings to the class and provide an annotated bibliography. All together, these literature reviews provide everyone with a much broader introduction to qualitative methods than could sensibly be covered in a ten week quarter.

What is a good balance between discussions about qualitative methods, reading scholarship that uses qualitative methods, and students designing their own study using qualitative methods? I wanted to engage students in discussions about the design of qualitative studies in ways that seemed relevant to their own research interests. I did not want class discussions to lose sight of the reasons we care about good design: that there are pressing political, social, and economic issues to address, and that the better our research designs, the more useful our answers. I also wanted to insure that the discussion always returned to practical "how to" issues. In the hopes of achieving these goals, I paired readings that detailed abstract issues of research design with scholarly work that illustrated those methodological issues within studies addressing important political issues. Overall, this strategy worked, though it was difficult to find readings that appealed equally to students in American politics, political theory, international relations, and comparative politics. Finally, to insure some practical experience, each student is required to design a qualitative study, as well as read and comment on each of their colleagues' designs. The latter assignment was one of the most successful aspects of the course. We devoted a day's discussion to the draft research designs, and many of the final papers incorporated and responded to the suggestions made. Several students also commented that they found these discussions invaluable

in rethinking their designs and developing their research design skills.

Despite the difficulty of some of these choices, and my inability to adequately resolve some of them, this course was a lot of fun to teach. It gave me the chance to closely follow the burgeoning literature on qualitative methods, and the quality of the student's research designs seems to indicate that many of these decision were the correct ones. Philosophy of social science issues did come up periodically in our discussion, and it would have been best if we had addressed them systematically. For those of you "lucky" enough to have thirteen weeks of teaching, I would recommend adding several sessions on it.

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## Qualitative Methods Textbooks

**WILLIAM BARNDT**

Princeton University  
wbarndt@Princeton.EDU

Over the past few years, the number of political science departments offering qualitative methods courses has grown substantially. The number of qualitative methods textbooks has kept pace, providing instructors with an overwhelming array of choices. But how to decide which text to choose from this exhortatory smorgasbord? The scholarship desperately needs evaluation. Yet the task is not entirely straightforward: qualitative methods textbooks reflect the diversity inherent in qualitative methods itself. Consequently, evaluating qualitative methods textbooks consists more of weighing competing strengths than identifying weaknesses. I undertake just such an evaluation in the following survey, which should be useful both to teachers of qualitative methods and to researchers keen to brush up on specific techniques.

What counts as a textbook? In general, I have let existing teachers of qualitative methods decide. This sample includes texts that are regularly assigned in qualitative methods classes,<sup>1</sup> as well some additional recent publications. I have, however, restricted the sample to books published in the last twenty years; thus classics like Smelser (1976), Przeworski & Teune (1970), and Stinchcombe (1968) are not included. Moreover I have excluded books that, while quite useful for addressing particular topics, are not precisely teaching texts, such as Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003) and Goertz and Starr (2002). Finally, I do not include eagerly awaited, but still unpublished texts, like Brady and Collier (Fall 2003) and George and Bennett (Fall 2003). Nonetheless, the criteria I employ here should continue to be useful for evaluating future contributions to the field.

Much of the evaluation has been incorporated into a summary chart, which allows readers to quickly compare the strengths of the sampled textbooks. The letters that run along the top of the chart correspond to the first three letters of textbook authors' last names listed below (with full bibliographical information, price, and page-length). In closing, I com-

ment briefly on three authors whose work has proved exceptionally useful to qualitative-methods instructors and practitioners.

### Three Authors in Greater Detail

- Ragin, Charles. 1989 *The Comparative Method*, Berkeley: UCP. 218 pages. \$18.95.  
———. 1994. *Constructing Social Research*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge. 208 pages. \$29.95.  
———. 2000. *Fuzzy Set Social Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago. 352 pages. \$20.00.

Charles Ragin's methodological trilogy seems particularly ill-suited to the tabular evaluation used above. Though Ragin addresses many of the same issues as other authors (e.g., conceptualization, measurement, causation, and research design), his vision of social-science is rather different. In synthesizing qualitative and quantitative strategies, he provides probing comparative criticism of case-oriented and variable-oriented research. This discussion provides constructive interlocution for advocates from diverse methodological traditions. His treatment of causal complexity, combinatorial causation, and the dialogue between ideas and evidence should be useful at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Finally, graduate students and professional scholars alike will benefit from insightful instructions for qualitative comparative methods (QCA) from their chief advocate.

- Becker., Howard S. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago. 232 pages. \$9.65.

*Tricks of the Trade* provides a long-overdue and welcome complement to standard approach to methods. Becker provides graduate students with what we crave: practical knowledge (metis) about how research *is* done, rather than how research *should be* done. As a result, most scholars will probably find at least one – more likely several – pieces of advice they disagree with in the book, depending on their methodological and ontological tastes. Yet the book overflows with insight. Becker supplements his valuable discussions of sampling and conceptualization with less well-trodden topics, like how one's image of the world shapes one's own research. The book also spends a good deal of time discussing less familiar qualitative research strategies, such as truth tables and property space analysis. Adding to the book's charm, Becker's engaging informal writing style makes *Tricks of the Trade* a particularly accessible and pleasurable read.

- Lieberson, Stanley. 1987. *Making it Count: The Improvement of Social Research and Theory*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 272 pages. \$21.95

In this thoughtful book, Stanley Lieberson carefully dissects the differences between experimental and non-experimental research. His damning critique of scholars who misuse

	Babbie Booth et al. Cresswell Denzin et al. Donovan et al.	Emerson Ethridge Feldman Gerring Gubrium et al.	King et al. Johnson et al. Marshall et al. Maxwell Miles et al.	Monroe Neuman Newman et al. Patton Scholz et al.	Shively Stern et al. Van Evera Wolcott Yin
Politics as Science (Causality)	x	x	x x	x x x	x x
Builds to Large-N?	x	x	x	x x	x
Post-Modern Leanings?		x x	x	x	
Hypotheses, Law, Theory	x	x	x x	x x x	x x x
Research Questions	x x		x	x x	x x
Research Proposals				x x	x
Literature Review				x	x x
Research Design	<b>x</b>		x	<b>x x x x x</b>	<b>x x x</b>
Concept Formation	<b>x</b>	x		x x	x
Data Collection Prep	<b>x</b>	x		x x	x
Measurement	<b>x</b>	x	<b>x</b>	x x x	<b>x</b>
Case Selection/Sampling	<b>x</b>	x x	<b>x</b>	x x x x x	x x x
Case Studies		x x		x	<b>x x</b>
Observation	x	x x	x	x x	x x
Interviewing/Survey	<b>x</b>	x x	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>x x</b>
Field Research	<b>x</b>		<b>x</b>	x x	
Interpretivism		x		x	<b>x</b>
Ethnography		x x	<b>x</b>	x	x x
Content Analysis	x		<b>x</b>	x x	
Comparative-historical analysis	x				<b>x</b>
Grounded Theory		x x		x x	
Descriptive Stats	<b>x</b>	x	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	x
Bi-/Multivariate Stats	<b>x</b>	x	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>
Data Management	x	x x	x	x	x x
Writing	x <b>x</b> <b>x</b>			x	x <b>x</b> <b>x</b>
Validity/Evaluation/Verification/Testing	<b>x x x</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>x x x x</b>	<b>x x x</b>
Just Political Science?			x	x x	x x
Appropriate for Undergraduates?	x x	x	x x	x x	x x x
Exercises?	x	x		x x	x
Exceptionally readable	x		x		x x

Bold-face indicates an extensive discussion of the issue. Full citations are listed below.

the experimental analogy to describe and evaluate non-experimental research remains an important benchmark for thinking about the limits of research questions and design. More generally, this practitioner’s critique effectively debunks several long-standing myths of statistical research. In particular, this quite readable book’s discussions of case selection, counterfactuals, and control variables will provoke ample discussion among newcomers (and not-so-newcomers) to social-scientific methods.

**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup>Thanks to David Yang for his help compiling this sample.

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Babbie, Earl. 2004. *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing. 112 pages. \$82.95

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams. 1995. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago. \$15.00

Brady, Henry E. and David Collier (eds). 2003. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Creswell, John S. 1998. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 424 pages. \$47.95

Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds). 2000. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 1143 pages. \$140.00

- Donovan, Todd and Kenneth R. Hoover. 2000. *The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 224 pages. \$22.95
- Emerson, Robert M. 2001. *Contemporary Field Research: Perspectives and Formulations*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press. 433 pages. \$26.95
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- Goertz, Gary and Harvey Starr (eds). 2002. *Necessary Conditions: Theory, Methodology and Applications*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Gubrium, Jaber F. and James A. Holstein (eds). 2002. *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 996 pages. \$130.00
- Johnson, Janet Buttolph. and Richard A. Joslyn. 2001. *Political Science Research Methods*. Washington D.C.: CQ Press. 492 pages. \$59.95
- King, Gary, Robert Keohane, Sydney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton U. Press. 300 pages. \$24.95
- Mahoney, James and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds). 2003. *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Marshall, Catherine and Gretchen B. Rossman. 1999. *Designing Qualitative Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 240 pages. \$39.95
- Maxwell, Joseph. 1996. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. 168 pages. \$31.95
- Miles, Matthew B. and A. Michael Huberman. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 352 pages. \$52.95
- Monroe, Alan D.. 2000. *Essentials of Political Research*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. 250 pages. \$27.00
- Neuman, W. Lawrence. 2000. *Social Research Methods*. Allyn and Bacon. 592 pages. \$82.93
- Newman, Isadore and Carolyn R. Benz. 1998. *Qualitative-Quantitative Research Methodology: Exploring the Interactive Continuum*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press. 176 pages. \$20.00
- Patton, Michael Quinn. 2002. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 688 pages. \$72.95
- Przeworski, Adam and Henry Teune. 1970. *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*. New York: John Wiley.
- Scholz, Roland W. and Olaf Tietje. 2001. *Embedded Case Study Methods: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Knowledge*. Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications. 408 pages. \$48.95.
- Shively, W. Phillips. 1998. *The Craft of Political Research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. 162 pages. \$31.80
- Smelser, Neil J. 1976. *Comparative Methods in the Social Sciences*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Stinchcombe, Arthur L. 1968. *Constructing Social Theories*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- Stern, Paul C. and Linda Kalof. 1996. *Evaluating Social Science Research*. New York: Oxford University Press. \$34.95
- Van Evera, Stephen. 1997. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell U. Press. 144 pages. \$10.00

- Wolcott, Harry F. 2001. *Writing up Qualitative Research*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 208 pages. \$22.95
- Yin, Robert K. 2003. *Case Study Research*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications. 232 pages. \$26.95.

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## *Qualitative Methods Syllabi*

**DAVID D. YANG**  
Princeton University  
*dyang@princeton.edu*

The teaching of qualitative methodology covers a broad spectrum of courses ranging from the survey of philosophy of science to hands-on advice on conducting focus groups. This report focuses on courses that are designed to provide a general introduction to qualitative research, leaving aside more advanced seminars focusing on specific methodological topics. A total of 25 syllabi were selected for review from the list compiled by the CQRM website, all of which are from nationally renowned universities with substantial doctoral programs in political science. Included in the sample are contributions from some of the premier scholars in our discipline today. This summary provides a partial list of topics covered under the rubric of “qualitative methodology” and identifies some “essential readings” in this area of study. In addition, it will present a few examples of innovative assignments that other instructors might wish to adopt.

Broadly speaking, the topics covered can be categorized into three main areas: A macro area dealing with the philosophy and epistemology of social science; a meso area dealing with research design and strategies; and a micro area dealing with the practical nuts-and-bolts of research implementation. (Some recurrent topics in each area are provided in table 1.) I included in the “macro” category those topics relating to the philosophy of social science, overviews of various scholarly approaches, as well as the basic building-block concepts in social scientific methodology. In the “meso” category are basic strategies of qualitative research, topics in comparative methods, as well as entries in the quantitative-qualitative debate. Discussions of specific research techniques are placed in the “micro” category.

The categorization is somewhat arbitrary, as one can hardly separate issues of research design from their epistemological foundations, nor isolate problems of implementation from the overall blueprint of the study. Many of the syllabus items also defy simple categorization. Nonetheless, this schematic is a useful heuristic for organizing the large body of material, and is reflective of three major approaches to the teaching of methodology.

Not surprisingly, the areas receiving the most attention were the macro and meso areas dealing with epistemological issues and research design. While almost every syllabus in this sample touched upon the above two areas, only about half the syllabi covered practical research techniques. A few courses were obviously designed primarily as “how-to” courses em-

**Table 1. Selected Topics in Qualitative Methodology****Macro:***Philosophy of Science -*

Introduction to Philosophy of Science; Political Science  
– The history of the discipline; Political Science, History, and Social Science

*Overviews of Major Alternative Approaches -*

Positivism; Rational Choice; New Institutionalism;  
Causal Realism; Interpretivism; Constructivism and  
Ethnography; Narrativity and Hermeneutics; Critical  
Theory; Positive, Interpretive, and Critical Social  
Theory

*Key Methodological Concepts -*

Falsification and the Null Hypothesis; Causality;  
Counterfactuals; Descriptive Inference, Causal Inference  
and Over-Determination; Empirical Linkages –  
Causal and Relational; Evaluative Criteria for Research

**Meso:***Basic Qualitative Strategies -*

Concept Formation; Issues in Measurement; Theory  
Construction; Process Tracing; Experimental and Quasi-  
experimental Designs; Timing, Sequencing and  
Periodization; Fuzzy-set Analysis

*Comparative Methods –*

Comparative Methods; Single Case Study Design;  
Comparative Case Study Design; Case Selection;  
Millian Methods and Their Critics

*Quantitative-Qualitative Debate -*

Quantitative and Qualitative Research Designs; Quanti-  
tative Reasoning in Qualitative Research; Critiques of  
KKV; Small-N vs. Large-N Studies; Method Nesting

**Micro:**

Research Ethics; Coding Qualitative Data; National  
Surveys; Time Budgets; Demography and Geography;  
Participant Observation; Focus Groups; Interviewing  
Skills; Document Content Analysis; Event Analysis;  
Institutional History; Writing Research; Research  
Presentation

phasizing practical research skills (e.g. Martha Feldman's Proseminar in Qualitative Methods at Michigan). The rest were fairly evenly spread between more theoretical offerings emphasizing epistemological foundations (e.g. Hayward Alker's Social Scientific and Historical Research Methods at USC), hands-on courses walking the student through the design of a major research project (e.g. John Odell's Qualitative Research Design at USC), and those seeking to strike a balance between theory and practice (e.g. Joe Soss's Qualitative Research Methods at American University). Statistically, the "average" quali-

tative methodology course devoted about 4.5 sessions to epistemological discussions, another 4.5 to research design, about 2.5 sessions to specific research techniques, with introductions, conclusions and student presentations making up the rest of the semester. While the numbers should not be taken too literally given the disparate course formats and coding difficulties, they do provide some sense of topic distribution.

In terms of organization, a wide variety of approaches were employed by instructors in this sample depending on the emphasis of the seminar. Many instructors followed a top-down approach, beginning with fundamental philosophic discussions, moving on to considerations of research design, and perhaps ending with a few sessions on specific techniques (e.g. John Gerring's course at Boston University). Others began with a survey of major alternative qualitative approaches, then shifted gears to focus on recurrent issues in mainstream methods (e.g. Ted Hopf at Ohio State). Alternatively, a course may be structured around the drafting of a research proposal, starting with the selection of the research problem and moving on to consider various aspects of research design. A few syllabi included sessions on particular explanatory frameworks drawn from the substantive literature (e.g. Rational Choice, New Institutionalism etc.), so that methodological discussion could be grounded in actual research paradigms (e.g. Mark Blyth at Johns Hopkins). Along similar lines were sessions structured around "great books", in which well-known works in political science (and Russian literature!) were dissected methodologically (e.g. Mark Lichbach, formerly at University of Colorado).

Although no approach can claim hegemony, the mainstream pragmatic positivist tradition – to use the words of John Odell<sup>1</sup> – remains predominant. While alternative approaches such as interpretivism, constructivism and critical theory are mentioned in passing, these approaches receive substantial treatment (i.e. one or more full sessions) from only about a quarter of the courses surveyed. (Seminars offered by Ted Hopf, R.B. Hall, Jim Scott & Arun Agrawal were among those in this category.) Certainly the large part of the discussion about research design remains within the positivist framework, focusing on issues such as case selection, small-N vs. large-N studies, increasing inferential leverage in case studies etc.

Not surprisingly the positivist bias is reflected in the choice of readings. While the overlap in assigned readings is generally rather low, King, Keohane and Verba's *Designing Social Inquiry* is assigned by virtually every instructor. No other text or article even approaches *DSI* in its ubiquity. Even detractors of the "New Orthodoxy" assign *DSI* to their students, if only to serve as a foil for their alternative approaches. Classics in the philosophy of science make up a disproportionately large part of the most-often-assigned booklist. These include well-known works by Thomas Kuhn, Karl Popper and Max Weber, as well as contemporary classics by Larry Laudan, Daniel Little, C. Wright Mills among others. The rest of the books on the list were more narrowly-focused works on various methodological approaches, such as *Analytic Narratives* by Robert Bates and collaborators and *The Comparative Method* by Charles Ragin. In contrast, the most-frequently-assigned ar-

ticles generally deal with recurrent themes in research design and strategies such as case selection and methods of comparison. These likewise fall mostly within the positivist paradigm, with Clifford Geertz's piece on thick description being the most prominent representative of the interpretivist tradition.

In terms of course assignments, the most popular writing assignment by far is the detailed research design. The vast majority of instructors assigned such a project as the term paper, often supplemented by short review essays of class readings. An alternative assignment involves writing a methodological critique on a well-known scholarly work. Those instructors that emphasize practical research skills also tend to assign hands-on projects where students conduct interviews or practice participant-observation techniques.

Some instructors found interesting twists to these tried-and-true formulas. For instance, Betty Glad asked her students at the University of South Carolina to select an on-going project at the beginning of the term. As the term progressed and various methods were introduced, students were asked to discuss the applicability of each new method to their projects. At the end of the term, the students were expected to incorporate at least one new method into their projects. Joe Soss gave a different twist to the standard methodological critique assignment by asking his students to compare two studies dealing with the same common research question but employing different techniques. The students were then asked to consider how the difference in methodology might have affected the authors' conclusions. However, for sheer creativity and audacity, first prize goes to Jim Scott and Arun Agrawal of Yale University. Profs. Scott and Agrawal's students were asked to: 1) Peruse Karl Polanyi's *Great Transformation* and compose the research design that Polanyi might have written; 2) Translate the arguments made by Baumann in *Modernity and the Holocaust* into rational choice terms; and 3) Extract three or more propositions about political life from Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Then, for two of the foregoing, students were to outline how the validity of the research design might be tested. For anyone who imagines the study of methodology to be an intrinsically dull subject, Scott and Agrawal provide a resounding rejoinder.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Syllabus for IR 515, "Qualitative Research Design", Fall 1998. University of Southern California.

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## Books Frequently Assigned in Qualitative Methods Courses

*Note: This bibliography, compiled by David Yang, includes books focused on methodological issues. Books are restricted to those currently in print. Prices listed are those on Amazon. A list of books with a substantive, rather than methodological, focus as well as articles on methodological topics can be found at <http://www.asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm>.*

### Books with a Methodological Focus

- Abbott, Andrew. 2001. *Time Matters: On Theory and Method*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 296 pages. \$25.00.
- Ackerly, Brooke A. 2000. *Political Theory and Feminist Social Criticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press. 234 pages. \$22.00.
- Adler, Patricia and Peter Adler. 1987. *Membership Roles in Field Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications. 108 pages. \$14.95.
- Alker, Hayward R. 1996. *Rediscoveries and Reformulations*. Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press. 464 pages. \$32.00.
- Ayer, Alfred Jules. 1946. *Language, Truth and Logic*. New York: Dover. \$6.95.
- Bates, Robert, Avner Greif, Margaret Levi, Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, and Barry Weingast. 1998. *Analytic Narratives*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. 296 pages. \$24.95. (See also critique by Jon Elster and rejoinder by the authors in *American Political Science Review* September 200 pp. 685-702.)
- Bennett, Andrew and Alexander George. 2003 (forthcoming). *Case Studies and Theory Development*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality*. Anchor Press. 240 pages. \$9.56.
- Bowen, John. and Roger. Petersen (eds). 1999. *Critical Comparisons in Politics and Culture*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 240 pages. \$26.00
- Boyd, Richard, Philip Gasper, and J. D. Trout (eds). 1991. *The Philosophy of Science*. Cambridge: MIT Press. 816 pages. \$52.95.
- Brady, Henry E. and David Collier (eds). 2003 (forthcoming). *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Calhoun, Craig. 1995. *Critical Social Theory: Culture, history, and the challenge of difference*, Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers. 326 pages. \$33.95
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- Chalmers, Alan F. 1999. *What is This Thing Called Science?* Indianapolis: Hackett. 266 pages. \$14.95.
- Crosby, Alfred. 1997. *The Measure of Reality: Quantification and Western Society, 1250-1600*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 261 pages. \$18.00.
- Crothers, Lane and Charles Lockhart (eds). 2000. *Culture and Politics: A Reader*. New York: St. Martin's. 448 pages. \$29.95
- Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds). 1998. *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. 460 pages. \$34.95
- Diesing, Paul. 1991. *How Does Social Science Work?* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. \$19.95.
- Dreyfus, Hubert and Paul Rabinow. 1983. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 271 pages. \$16.00.
- Elman, Colin and Miriam Fendius Elman. 2001. *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists and the Study of International Relations*. Cambridge: MIT Press. 400 pages. \$26.95.
- Elman, Colin and Miriam Fendius Elman. 2003. *Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field*. Cambridge: MIT Press. 400 pages. \$24.95.

- Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago. 254 pages. \$11.20
- Farr, James and Raymond Seidelman (eds). 1993. *Discipline and History: Political Science in the United States*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 427 pages. \$24.95.
- Feldman, Martha S. 1995. *Strategies for Interpreting Qualitative Data*. Sage Publications. 80 pages. \$16.95
- Fenno, Richard. 1990. *Watching Politicians: Essays on Participant Observation*. Institute of Governmental Studies Press. 133 pages. \$11.95.
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- Foucault, Michael. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books. 352 pages. \$11.20
- Friedman, Jeffrey, ed. 1996. *The Rational Choice Controversy*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 307 pages. \$20.00.
- Galison, Peter and David J Stump, eds., *The Disunity of Science. Boundaries, Contexts and Power*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press. 567 pages. \$37.50.
- Gamson, William. 1992. *Talking Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 292 pages. \$22.00.
- Geddes, Barbara. 2003. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 304 pages. \$20.00.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books. 480 pages. \$25.00.
- Gerring, John. 2001. *Social Science Methodology: A Critical Framework*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 336 pages. \$22.00.
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- Hall, John R. 1999. *Cultures of Inquiry: From Epistemology to Discourse in Sociohistorical Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 300 pages. \$60.00.
- Hammersley, Martyn. 1992. *What's Wrong with Ethnography?* New York: Routledge. 240 pages. \$30.95.
- Harvey, Frank P. and Michael Brecher (eds). 2002. *Evaluating Methodology in International Studies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 216 pages. \$24.95.
- Hempel, Carl G. 1966. *Philosophy of Natural Science*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall. 100 pages. \$30.67.
- Hollis, Martin. 1994. *The Philosophy of Social Science: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 278 pages. \$19.00.
- Holstein, James and Jaber Gubrium. 1995. *The Active Interview*. Sage Publications. 96 pages. \$14.95.
- Hume, David. 1999. *Enquiry into Human Understanding*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 416 pages. \$12.95.
- Iggers, Georg G. 1997. *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, Hanover: Wesleyan U. Press. 194 pages. \$17.95.
- Juarrero, Alicia. 1999. *Dynamics in Action: Intentional Behavior as a Complex System*. Cambridge: MIT Press. 300 pages. \$22.00.
- Kinder, Donald and Thomas R. Palfrey (eds). 1993. *The Experimental Foundations of Political Science*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 512 pages. \$39.50.
- King, Gary. 1989. *Unifying Political Methodology*, New York: Cambridge U. Press. 274 pages. \$70.00
- Kirk, Jerome, and Marc Miller. 1986. *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications. 88 pages. \$16.95.
- Kuhn, Thomas. 1996. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press. 212 pages. \$9.60.
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- Lichbach, Mark Irving. 2003. *Is Rational Choice Theory All of Social Science?* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 315 pages. \$59.50
- Lichbach, Mark I. and Alan Zuckerman (eds). 1997. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 321 pages. \$22.00.
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- McCloskey, Donald N. 1990. *If You're So Smart: The Narrative of Economic Expertise*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. \$14.95.
- McKim, Vaughn and Stephen Turner, eds. 1997. *Causality in Crisis - Statistical Methods and the Search for Causal Knowledge in the Social Sciences*. Indianapolis: University of Notre Dame. 420 pages. \$22.00.
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## Announcements

### 2003 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association

Philadelphia, August 28-31, 2003

The following short course, panels, and roundtables are sponsored or co-sponsored by the APSA Organized Section on Qualitative Methods. Program chair: Cindy Skach, Harvard University.

#### APSA Short Course

#### Strategies for Field Research in Comparative and International Politics

Instructors:

Julia Lynch, University of Pennsylvania

*jflynch@sas.upenn.edu*

Marc Morjé Howard, University of Maryland

*mhoward@gvpt.umd.edu*

Evan Lieberman, Princeton University

*esl@Princeton.EDU*

Conducting field work abroad is often an essential component of research in comparative and international politics. However, the task of gathering data can present a host of practical problems and concerns. Even under the best of circumstances, with excellent collegial relations with local scholars, politicians, and administrators, key contacts may be unhelpful or unwilling to be interviewed. Valuable archives and other collections of primary materials may be organized in a way that is not helpful to the researcher. Both time and money may run out before essential data have been collected. Thus, ob-

stacles encountered in the field can derail even a well-thought-out research design.

This short course focuses on identifying, anticipating, and resolving some of the logistical problems frequently associated with overseas field research. Among the challenges we will consider are: how to prepare in advance so as to work as effectively as possible from the beginning of your field research; how to use new technologies (e-mail, web, cell phones) in the field; how to organize and manage vast quantities of information; how to interact constructively with scholars in the host country and gain access to key contacts; how to manage time; and how to cope with professionally, politically, and personally uncomfortable situations.

Participants will be provided with document templates that may be useful for carrying out field research, including sample correspondence. The course will be valuable for first-time field researchers, for scholars who would like to consider how to improve field techniques, and for those who teach classes on research methods.

For further information contact Professor Colin Elman, CQRM, Department of Political Science, Arizona State University, Box 873902, Tempe, AZ 85287-3902, Phone: (480) 965-6551, *consortium@asu.edu*.

Applications should be accompanied by a \$10 check made out to CQRM.

#### Panels and Roundtables

##### **Roundtable on Constructivist and Interpretivist Methods: A View from Four Subfields**

Chair: Kathryn Sikkink  
Public Policy Analysis, Dvora Yanow  
Political Theory, Mark Bevir  
International Relations, David Dessler  
Organizational Analysis, Christopher Ansell

##### **Causal Mechanisms**

Chair: John Gerring  
"Beyond Hempel and Back to Hume: Causal Mechanisms and Causal Explanation," Andrew Bennett  
"Covariation and Causal Mechanisms: Are They Divergent Forms of Investigation and Explanation?," John Gerring  
"Positivist Progress? Why Inference, Generalization and Prediction are Not Enough, Or the Necessity of Causal Mechanisms in Social Explanation," James Johnson  
"Causal Mechanisms and General Theories in Social Science Explanation," James Mahoney  
Discussant: Janet Box-Steffensmeier

##### **Measuring Democracy: Methodological Innovations and New Data Sets**

Chair: Gerardo L. Munck  
"Classifying Democracy: Indicators, Data, and Central America," Kirk Bowman and Fabrice Lehoucq  
"Measuring and Analyzing Key Concepts in Democratization: Liberalization, Transition and Consolidation," Philippe C. Schmitter and Carsten Schneider

"A New Democratic Regime Index. Latin America, 1960-2002," Gerardo L. Munck and Jay Verkuilen  
"A Continuous Schumpeterian Measure of Democracy," James R. Vreeland  
Discussants: Pamela Paxton and Larry Diamond

##### **Experiments in Political Research: Exploring New Substantive Domains**

Chair: Rose McDermott  
"How Do People Evaluate the Economic Consequences of their Political Choices?," Andrew C. Gould and Andrew J. Maggio  
"Does Information Technology Energize Voters? Experimental Evidence from the 2000 and 2002 Campaigns," Shanto Iyengar and Simon Jackman  
"Sex Differences in a Crisis Simulation Game," Rose McDermott and Jonathan Cowden  
"Bargaining Experiments in the Field: The Traveling Laboratory in Siberia," Rick Wilson and Donna Bahry  
Discussant: Paul Sniderman

##### **Roundtable: Teaching Qualitative Methods**

Chair: Elizabeth Kier  
Discussants: Elizabeth Kier, Gerardo Munck, Kurt Weyland, James Mahoney, Martha Feldman

##### **Roundtable: Can the Study of Politics be 'Scientific'? A Conversation on Interpretive, Qualitative, and Quantitative Methodologies**

Chair: Peregrine Schwartz-Shea  
Discussants: Andrew Bennett, Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, Laura Stoker, Dvora Yanow, Kirstie McClure

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### Call for Papers 2004 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association Chicago, September 2-5, 2004

Call for Papers, APSA Organized Section for Qualitative Methods. Program co-chairs: James Mahoney and Nina Tannenwald, Brown University

The new Organized Section for Qualitative Methods welcomes panel proposals and papers focused on the broad spectrum of research tools associated with qualitative methodology. These include but are not limited to: the case study method; small-N analysis; concept analysis; the logic of inquiry; comparative and historical methods; constructivism; and interpretive methods. We also encourage proposals that explore commonalities and contrasts among different qualitative methods, and among qualitative and quantitative methods. Finally, proposals of special interest include those that are centrally concerned with the linkage between issues in qualitative methodology and the analysis of substantive problems in political science.

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## COMPASSS Launching Conference

Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, September 16-17, 2003

A launching conference will be held for COMPASSS, a research group working to develop new methods and techniques to systematically compare cases, in Belgium, on September 16 and 17. The registration deadline is September 10. The aim of this conference is to examine the state-of-the-art of new research methods to analyze multiple cases, to build a middle road between qualitative and quantitative approaches, methods and techniques, and to establish comparative case-analysis as a genuine research strategy.

The conference will first provide a general introduction and debate on this 'middle road,' then examine applications in policy oriented studies, with a specific focus on Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Fuzzy Sets. One both days, we will have the privilege to welcome Charles Ragin as the main speaker, as well as other distinguished guest speakers from Europe and Japan.

This conference should appeal to all researchers and advanced students — from various disciplines — who are interested in comparative methods and in the combination of quantitative and qualitative research strategies.

For more information, see [www.compass.org](http://www.compass.org)

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## Consortium for Qualitative Research Methods (CQRM)

Arizona State University, January 5-16, 2004

CQRM was formed to promote the development, teaching and use of qualitative research methods in political science. While CQRM's mission is to promote qualitative methods, we proceed from the position that to produce policy-relevant knowledge, political science should employ the full range of available complementary qualitative, statistical and formal methods. Our concern is that very few political science departments offer graduate-level qualitative methods courses, and even fewer require them. As a consequence, the discipline is failing to take advantage of recent advances in qualitative methods, and in the long run risk losing an important component of its methodological heterogeneity.

CQRM's activities include the annual training institute for qualitative research methods, where leading scholars have so far taught advanced qualitative methods to over one hundred graduate students and junior faculty. The syllabus for the 2003 institute, and the 'face book' of those who attended, can be found at our website: <http://www.asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm/>

Institute attendees receive comprehensive instruction in qualitative methods. They regularly apply their skills in critiquing and improving each others' research designs, and receive constructive feedback on their projects. In addition to these immediate benefits, this interaction and peer evaluation acquaint attendees with their academic cohort, and serves as a

catalyst for future research and collaboration. The course also includes a series of master classes, where attendees have the opportunity to engage the authors of well known works which employ qualitative methods.

Our hope is that the institute will have a direct effect by improving its participants' use of qualitative methods; a multiplier effect when the faculty attendees offer their own courses in qualitative methods at their home institutions; a networking effect in building a more closely associated community of qualitative researchers; and a demonstration effect in showing the value of advanced training in qualitative methods.

Approximately three quarters of the attendees each year are nominated by subscribers to CQRM. These include departments and/or centers at Arizona State University, Brown University, University of California – Berkeley, University of California – Davis, University of California – Irvine, University of California - San Diego, University of Chicago, University of Colorado at Boulder, Columbia University, University of Connecticut, Cornell University, Duke University, George Washington University, Georgetown University, Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Michigan, University of Notre Dame, University of Oregon, Princeton University, Rutgers University, University of Southern California, Stanford University, University of Washington, University of Washington in St. Louis, University of Wisconsin- Madison and Yale University. The institute also admits students through an open pool admissions procedure.

The consortium is presently headquartered at Arizona State University.

Colin Elman

Executive Director, CQRM

## Third Annual Training Institute on Qualitative Research Methods

The Consortium for Qualitative Research Methods (CQRM) is pleased to announce its third annual training institute on qualitative methods for graduate students and junior faculty, which will take place at Arizona State University January 5-16, 2004.

The institute seeks to enable students to create and critique methodologically sophisticated qualitative research designs, including case studies, tests of necessity or sufficiency, and narrative or interpretive work. It will explore the techniques, uses, strengths, and limitations of these methods, while emphasizing their relationships with alternative approaches. Topics include research design, concept formation, methods of structured and focused comparisons of cases, typological theory, case selection, process tracing, comparative historical analysis, congruence testing, path dependency, interpretivism, counterfactual analysis, interview and field research (including archival) techniques, necessary and sufficient conditions, fuzzy set methods, and philosophy of science issues relevant to qualitative research. Attendees will receive constructive feedback on their own qualitative research designs, and the course will also include master class discussions led by the authors of well known works which employ qualitative meth-

ods. Examples will be drawn from exemplary research in international relations, comparative politics, and American politics. The syllabus from the second annual institute, available through the link above, indicates the range of the issues to be covered. Please note, however, that this syllabus will be revised for the third institute, and should be viewed with this in mind.

CQRM member institutions will use their own meritocratic criteria to select students or junior faculty to attend the institute, and must notify CQRM of their choices by October 17, 2003. Students, fellows and junior faculty not so selected, or who attend non-member organizations, may apply directly to CQRM (see application form below). These applications must be received by October 17, 2003, and will consist of: a curriculum vitae; a list of any courses taken in qualitative or other methodology; a short (300 word) personal statement indicating why they wish to attend the institute; and the name and contact information for a reference who is familiar with the applicant's training and research. Applicants will be notified of the outcome by November 7, 2003.

CQRM will cover the costs of tuition, lodging, and meals for successful applicants. Attendees will be responsible for their own transportation costs to and from Arizona State University. Participants for the institute will arrive on Sunday, 4 January, and depart Saturday, 17 January 2004. The seminar will meet daily, beginning on Monday, 5 January. The final meeting is scheduled for Friday, 16 January.

#### **Application form for the Institute on Qualitative Research Methods, offered by the Consortium for Qualitative Research Methods**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Inst. Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Discipline and Sub-field(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

*WHAT DO I HAVE TO SEND?* (1) this form, completed, or an email with the information requested above, (2) a cur-

riculum vitae; (3) a list of any courses taken in qualitative or other methodology; (4) a brief (300 words) personal statement indicating why you wish to attend the institute; and, (5) the names and contact information for a reference who is familiar with your training and research. As noted below, all this information can be sent in hard copy or emailed.

*WHO SHOULD COMPLETE THIS FORM?* CQRM member organizations for the 2003-2004 academic year will have spaces reserved at the institute. Members will choose their nominees using their own selection procedures. Students and/or faculty who are nominated for those slots *should not use this form*. Interested applicants who are: (a) from these institutions but are not so nominated; or (b) who are from non-member institutions, should use this form.

*WHERE SHOULD I SEND THIS FORM?* Please send application materials by October 17, 2003 to Colin Elman, Executive Director CQRM, c/o Political Science Department, Box 873902, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-3902. Alternatively, you can email your application to [consortium@asu.edu](mailto:consortium@asu.edu), and you can direct any questions about the institute to this same email address.

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### **Awards**

The following awards will be given to works published, or to papers given, in the calendar year prior to the year of the APSA meeting at which the award is presented. The copyright date of a book, or the formal publication date of a journal, will establish the relevant year. The award committees will be appointed each year by the President of the Qualitative Methods Section, in consultation with the Section Executive Committee.

#### **The Giovanni Sartori Book Award**

The Giovanni Sartori book prize will be awarded to the best single authored, multi-authored, or edited book published in the preceding calendar year which promotes, explains, develops and/or employs qualitative methods in the analysis of politics.

Books may be nominated by any interested parties, including publishers. Nominations should include four copies of the book, and a cover letter explaining why the nominator believes that the volume should be a candidate for the award.

Nominations must be received before January 30th of the year in which the prize is to be awarded. For example, nominations for 2003 copyrighted books to be considered for the 2004 award must be received by January 30th 2004. Nominations should be made, and copies of the book, should be sent, to the current Secretary-Treasurer of the section.

#### **The Alexander L. George Article Award**

This award honors Alexander George's contributions to the comparative case-study method, including his work linking that method to a systematic concern with research design, and his contribution of developing the idea and the practice of process tracing. This award may be granted to a journal article

or to a chapter in an edited volume that stands on its own as an article.

### **The Sage Paper Award**

This award honors Sara and George McCune, who founded and sustained Sage Publications as a leading publisher of social science methodology — including, very centrally, qualitative methods. The award will be given to a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in the previous year.

## *Calendar of Upcoming Events*

### **2003 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association**

Philadelphia: August 28-31, 2003.

### **COMPASSS Launching Conference**

Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium: September 16-17, 2003.

Registration deadline: September 10, 2003.

### **2004 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association**

September 2-5, 2004, deadline for submission of proposals: mid-November 2003.

### **Annual Training Institute on Qualitative Research Methods**

Arizona State University, January 5-16, 2004.

Deadline for applications: October 17, 2003.

## Qualitative Methods

Boston University  
Department of Political Science  
232 Bay State Road  
Boston, MA 02215  
USA

Address Service Requested