

IR 515, Fall 2004
Office hours W and Th 2 to 4 pm
Office VKC 42C

Professor John Odell
odell@usc.edu, 740-4298
Web page www-rcf.usc.edu/~odell

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

This seminar offers to help advanced social science students get the greatest possible value from qualitative empirical research designs. The emphasis is on case study methods, which seem to be in greatest demand. See appendix 2 for references to other qualitative methods. Illustrative publications tend to come primarily from political science and political economy especially at the international level, and to lesser degrees from education, sociology, and history.

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

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

To refresh your memory of elementary research design, you could peruse a textbook such as J. B. Johnson and R. A. Joslyn, *Political Science Research Methods*, or E. Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, 6th ed., which is on reserve in Leavey Library, or another comparable text.

I. PURPOSES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH PROGRAMS

1. 8/24 **Objectives, assumptions, and tips for success.**

2. 8/31 **Your purposes and your research program**

1. Study:

- King et al. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry* (KKV), pp. 3-33
- J. Maxwell. 1996. *Qualitative research design*, pp. ix-85
- Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," in Lakatos, ed., *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 91-138 and 173-180. [R]

- Optional supplement: *Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field* (2003), ed. C. Elman and M. F. Elman, uses the Lakatos criteria to assess five “research programs” in international relations, while also discussing the difficulties of identifying such programs in IR.
2. Write Maxwell’s exercise 2.1, reflecting on your personal purposes for doing this study. If your only purpose is as a learning exercise for this course, that one sentence will be sufficient. Otherwise your memo can be in outline form or text. It can be as brief or as long as you find useful, but make it honest and omit no significant goal. Do your purposes match any of Maxwell’s list (pp. 17-24) of the particular strengths of qualitative methods? Turn in a copy at class. This document will not be graded or shown to anyone else without your permission.
 3. Write Maxwell’s exercise 3.2, creating a first primitive concept map for your prospective study. Pull this first version out of your own mind--as it is right now--rather than by turning to additional published studies or evidence. Turn it in at class. This exercise will not be graded or circulated without your permission.
 4. Select a particular research program within your discipline for your exercise this semester. Come prepared to give a preliminary oral description of the research program you have selected. That is, tell us the main questions or puzzles and the main ideas or approach for answering them that unify this body of scholarship, and name some of the most influential studies. I am happy to help evaluate your options in the office.
 5. Select the three or more specialized articles or books that come the closest to answering your main research question as you think of it today. For each study, draw a concept map representing the main concepts and main relations among them in the author’s arguments. A simpler diagram is better for this purpose. Indicate the direction in which causality or influence is thought to run between concepts, when the author makes this clear. Record your evaluations of the study in some way. Turn in copies of two or more of your diagrams at class time.

3. 9/7 **From naïve questions to research questions**

1. Continue studying specialized literature in your research program, recording concept maps and evaluative notes on each important work, preparing for the short paper due in week 4. No need to turn in these maps or notes but prepare to report briefly what you have read since last week.
2. Complete Maxwell’s exercise 4.1, developing your research questions (pp. 49-62). Follow his six steps as faithfully as possible, and bring to class a copy of your research questions for each member. Bear in mind the wise advice (p. 60) that “a good set of research questions will evolve over time, after you have considered and reconsidered your broad research theme. . . Be wary of the desire to push forward before going through this process.” In this spirit be prepared to pose orally at least one plea for assistance arising from this assignment, challenging your group to suggest next steps for you. This might be a report of a dilemma between conceptual options, a confusion, or another uncertainty you feel at this particular moment.

3. Review the list of ways to make a contribution in KKV, pp. 16-17. Generate one research question using each of those techniques and turn in your list of questions at class time.

4. 9/14 Due: Critical essay on your research program (graded; maximum 2000 words not counting references)

A. What are the program's primary puzzles or questions today? B. What are its primary conceptual and methodological approaches to solving the puzzles? C. What are its main accomplishments and its most significant shortcomings to date--confusions, empirical anomalies, gaps? D. State your research question – one sentence ending in a question mark. E. List the 10 publications that come closest to answering your question. A later draft of this essay can become part 2 of your proposal (see Odell, "Writing a Proposal . . ."). (In my office you are welcome to look at some outstanding past student essays.)

Supplements:

Sartori, Giovanni. 1970. Concept misformation in comparative politics. *Am Pol Sci Rev* 64:1033-53.

Collier, David and Steven Levitsky. 1997. Democracy with adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research. *World Politics* 49:430-51.

II. METHODS FOR STRENGTHENING CAUSAL INFERENCES AND MAKING OTHER THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

5. 9/21 Causal inference and the method of difference

1. Study:

- KKV, causality and causal inference, pp. 75-114
- Mill, J.S. 1888 [1970]. Two Methods of Comparison. In A. Etzioni and F. Dubow, eds., *Comparative Perspectives: Theories and Methods*, 205-213. (Taken from Mill, *A System of Logic*, book 3, chap. VIII, "of the four methods of experimental inquiry.") What logic is at the heart of the method of agreement? of the method of difference?
- Bennett, A. 2004. Case Study Methods, pp. 30-32, in *Models, Numbers, and Cases*, ed. D. Sprinz and Y. Wolinsky-Nahmias
- Odell, J. 2004. Case Study Methods in International Political Economy, pp. 56-80, in *Models, Numbers, and Cases* (at least the section on the method of difference).
- Optional supplement: *Models, Numbers, and Cases*, chaps. 4 & 5 give parallel assessments of and advice regarding case study methods in the subfields of international security and international environmental politics.

2. Read of the following chapters and articles exemplifying the method of difference and prepare to summarize your assessment orally, briefly answering these questions: what is the study's main thesis? What method(s) does it illustrate? By what criteria did the author select the cases? How convincing are the study's conclusions?

- R. Mitchell. Summer 1994. Regime design matters: intentional oil pollution and treaty compliance,” *International Organization (IO)* 48:425-458.
- J. Odell. 2000. *Negotiating the World Economy*, pp 1-6, 20-23, chapter 6.
- A. Tsygankov. 2000. Defining state interests after empire: national identity, domestic structures and foreign trade policies of Latvia and Belarus. *Review of Intl Political Economy* 7:101-37.
- Optional alternative: T. Skocpol 1979. *States and social revolutions: a comparative analysis of France, Russia, and China*, chap. 1-4. Note the statement of her method (pp 33-42) and the summary of her argument (pp 5 and 154-57).

3. **Graded memo:** Invent a proposed research project using Mill’s method of difference. Define the method briefly, especially the logic of inference you must use. *Formulate a hypothesis before* selecting two or more historical cases of some phenomenon. Give *theoretical and methodological* reasons for selecting them and rejecting others. (The Big Lesson is that you should select cases for these rather than other reasons if you aim to contribute rigorously to theory development.) If your favorite project does not fit this assignment, invent a different application, giving priority to showing that you have learned this method.

Supplements:

- Weber, M. Objective possibility and adequate causation in historical explanation. In Weber, *Methodology of the social sciences*.
- Przeworski, A. and H. Teune. 1970. *The logic of comparative social inquiry*.
- Collier, D. 1991. The Comparative method: two decades of change. In *Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives*, ed. D. A. Rustow and K. P. Erickson.
- Mahoney, J. 1999. Nominal, Ordinal and Narrative Appraisal in Macro-Causal Analysis. *Am J. of Sociology* 104:1154-96.

6. 9/28 **Structured focused comparison**

1. Study:

- A. George. 1979. Case studies and theory development: the method of structured, focused comparison. In *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy*, ed. Paul Lauren. (Optional supplement: For the original concrete description of this method, see A. George and R. Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, chap. 4.)
- A. Bennett. 1999. *Condemned to Repetition? The Rise, Fall, and Reprise of Soviet-Russian Military Interventionism, 1973-1996*, chap 1, pp. 75-84, 88-112, any one chapter from 4 through 8, and chap. 9.
- A. Acharya. 2004. How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism. *IO* 58: 239-276

2. **Graded memo:** Invent a proposed research project illustrating this method for the same research question as last week. What is the logic of case selection and of inference here? Spell out how this proposed project differs from the one using the method of difference.

7. 10/5 **Single-case designs**

1. Study:

- C. Geertz. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Thick description: toward an interpretive theory of culture, pp. 3-30.
- H. Eckstein. 1975. Case study and theory in political science. In *Handbook of Political Science*, vol. 7, ed. Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, 94-137.
- J. Odell. 2004. Case Study Methods in International Political Economy. In *International Studies Perspectives 2001 or Models, Numbers, and Cases 2004*)
- Recommended (not required): S. Van Evera 1997. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, pp. 49-95

2. Study 3 articles from different categories below and prepare to assess them orally. What is the study's main thesis? What research design does it use and how effectively does it exemplify that method? How convincing is the conclusion?

Deviant case study:

- B. Russett. 1967. Pearl harbor: deterrence theory and decision theory. *Journal of Peace Research* 2: 81-106. Rpt. in *Theory and research on the causes of war*, ed. D. Pruitt and R. Snyder, pp. 127-135.
- B. Russett. 1993. *Grasping the Democratic Peace*, chapter on Greek states.

Least likely case study: E. L. Morse. 1970. *Foreign Policy and Interdependence in Gaullist France*, chap. 5 on monetary policy

Most likely case study: W. LeoGrande. July 1979. Cuban dependency. *Cuban Studies*.

Disciplined-configurative case study:

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

Constructivist interpretation:

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

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

8. 10/12 **Selecting observations to reduce threats to validity**

(how much prestructuring, selection bias, endogeneity, too few observations, reciprocal causation, other threats to validity)

1. Study the following and be prepared to explain the common methodological flaws they identify:

- Maxwell, pp. 86-98 (validity)
- KKV 1994, pp. 115-230

2. In a graded memo due at class time, briefly define the problem identified by KKV on the following pages and invent one possible social science example of the remedy they suggest:

- (p. 140) selecting observations to insure variation in the explanatory variable,
- (p. 141) selecting a range of values of the dependent variable (retrospective contrast). and
- (pp 191-93) one remedy to correct for endogeneity.

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

3. Getting more observations from a single case (relevant next week too)

- Study C. Lave and J. March. *An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences*, an introduction to speculation, pp. 9-49 [omit 25-34]. I suggest you take seriously the notes saying “stop and think.” It’s fun.
- Do problem 12 p. 49 in Lave and March, applying these exercises to a social science subject. Present yours orally at class time.
- Study D. Campbell. 1975. “‘Degrees of Freedom’ and the Case Study.” *Comparative Political Studies* 8: 168-93. Rpt. in D. Campbell 1988. *Methodology and Epistemology for Social Science*. Note the parallel techniques in KKV, 217-28.
- Write a one page graded memo illustrating how you could use Campbell’s technique to gather more observations from a single-case study to test a theory on your subject.

Supplements:

- B. Geddes. 1990. How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: selection bias in comparative politics. *Political Analysis*, vol. 2, J. A. Stimson, ed.

9. 10/17 **Within-case methods of analysis**

1. Process tracing and causal mechanisms

- Read A. George and T. McKeown. 1985. Case studies and theories of organizational decision-making. *Advances in Information Processing in Organizations* 2: 21-58.
- L. Martin. 1992. *Coercive Cooperation*, chap 1 and on EC sanctions during Falklands war
- Review A. Bennett, *Soviet Interventionism*, 1999 on “testing” with process tracing
- Optional: S. Rock. 1997. Anglo-U.S. Relations, 1845-1930: Did Shared Liberal Values and Democratic Institutions Keep the Peace? In *Paths to Peace: Is Democracy the Answer?*, ed. M. F. Elman, pp. 101-150.
- Turn in a one page memo describing how you could use process tracing for theoretical purposes in a single case study on a social science subject of your choice.

2. Counterfactual argument

- Study P. Tetlock and A. Belkin. 1996. “Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological, and Psychological Perspectives,” pp. 1-38 in *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics*, ed. Tetlock and Belkin.
- Read Y. F. Khong. 1996. “Confronting Hitler and Its Consequences,” in Tetlock and Belkin, 95-118.
- Read P. Haas, R. Keohane and M. Levy, eds. 1993. *Institutions for the Earth*, chap 1 – 2 (ozone case)
- Turn in two brief illustrations of counterfactual arguments about a single case that might strengthen a causal claim about your subject. Consider the logical steps followed in these articles.

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

III. CARRYING OUT THE DESIGN: TECHNIQUES OF OBSERVATION AND STRONGER DESCRIPTIVE INFERENCES

This section should help you see more clearly how you could implement one of the above research designs. This part provides brief initial exposure and further references to selected techniques of observation and classification. Real proposals rarely discuss these technical issues in detail. But if you have not grasped them, your text will probably show it. Discuss these techniques in your final proposal for this course.

10. 10/26 Operational definitions, classification, and indicators: Making descriptive claims more rigorous and enhancing cumulation

1. Study:

- Babbie, E. 1992. *The practice of social research*, 6th ed., pp. 126-146 and 165-189. A review of elementary measurement and scale construction. [R]
- KKV, pp. 34-71 & 150-168

2. To get a better understanding of how operational definitions are used in IR and political science, check one or two of the following exemplars. (Also recall Bennett's ordinal measurements of Soviet intervention cases.) While many of these studies also assign numbers to various categories, all illustrate techniques whose logic can be used without quantification. How careful, precise, and reliable is each indicator?

- Smith, J. M. Winter 2000. The politics of dispute settlement design: explaining legalism in regional trade pacts. *International Organization* 54:137-180. An ordinal indicator for the degree of legalism in international agreements.
- Haggard, S. and S. Maxfield. Winter 1996. The political economy of financial internationalization in the developing world. *International Organization* 50:35-68. An ordinal indicator for level of financial openness.
- Henning, C. R. 1994. Currencies and politics in the United States, Germany, and Japan, chap. 3. [classifies the degree of central bank independence from the government in three countries]
- Hudec, R. E. 1993. *Enforcing International Trade Law*. The appendix reports reliable, consistent descriptions of all 207 legal complaints brought under the GATT between 1948 and the end of 1989, including indicators of how well the legal system functioned. Included are the data entry form used to create case descriptions (pp. 588-89). Concepts include the procedural outcome (legal ruling by a panel v. settled or conceded by the defendant v. withdrawn or abandoned), substantive outcomes of rulings (defendant violated v. did not violate the rules), and how countries responded to adverse rulings against them (gave full satisfaction v. partial satisfaction v. negative outcome).
- Putnam, R. and N. Bayne. 1984, 1987. *Hanging together: cooperation and conflict in the seven-power summits*, chap 11 [the degree of cooperation achieved in summit meetings].
- Odell, J. 1985. The outcomes of international trade conflicts: the US and South Korea 1960-1981. *International Studies Quarterly* 29:263-286. Rates outcomes of 13 trade disputes comparably to reflect who gained how much.
- Snyder, G. and P. Diesing. 1977. *Conflict among nations*, pp. 340-361 [types of decision-making structure]
- Butterworth, R. L. 1976. Managing interstate conflict, 1945-74: data with synopses, pp. 481-98. An example of a coding manual for creating both quantitative and qualitative data for questions such as "which type of powers exercised leadership in conflict management?" "how wide was agreement in the international organization on the management actions it took?" "what was the strongest action it took?"
- Hopmann, P. T. Summer 1974. Bargaining in Arms control negotiations: the Seabeds denuclearization treaty. *International Organization* 28: 313-344. Bargaining strategies, styles, and outcomes.

- Gurr, T. R. 1974. Persistence and change in political systems, 1800-1971. *Am.Pol.Sci. Review*, 68: 1482-1582. Classifies each into one of six ordered types, based on index combining several regime characteristics.
- Cox, R. W. and H. K. Jacobson. 1974. *The anatomy of influence: decision-making in international organization*. Pp. 437-465. Indicators for state power, state power in three special issue-areas, and classifications of countries according to type of political regime and level of economic development

3. Graded exercise due at class: Read more facts of some cases to help case selection for your final proposal, and use cases you study to learn to create operational definitions and coding rules. Turn in a memo that provides coding rules for three key concepts (your own inventions, not quoted from other studies). Your memo should give your research assistant (me) rules that will answer all possible questions on how to sort the evidence we collect into conceptual “bins.” Try to anticipate as many difficult boundary cases as possible, since otherwise we assistants will rely on our intuitions, which might vary and contaminate your data. To anticipate my likely questions, experiment with your rules on several concrete examples before turning in the memo. You will not be able to do this assignment well without spending some time working with raw evidence. Also try to express the concepts as matters of degree rather than qualities that can only be present or absent, unless doing so seems misleading. For example, “democratic” and “authoritarian” might be replaced with “degree of political openness.” The memo should contain:

- for each concept, your best nominal definition;
- for each, your best operational definition (classification rules). The set of categories (“bins”) constituting your indicator may be either nominal, rank-ordered but not quantitative, or quantitative. Define the boundaries of each “bin.” Include at least one ordinal indicator.
- Concrete examples from history illustrating how I should code evidence using your indicator.

Supplements:

- Webb, Eugene et al. 1966. *Unobtrusive measures: Non-reactive research in the social sciences*
- Lazarsfeld, Paul. 1972. Development of a test for class-consciousness. In *Continuities in the Language of Social Research*, ed. Lazarsfeld, Pasanella, and Rosenberg, pp. 41-43. [The famous scholar reveals how he created this indicator for an early study of American voters by recalling what he and others believed as young members of the Austrian Social Democratic party]
- Underdal, Arild. 1993. Measuring and explaining regime effectiveness. In *Complex cooperation*, ed. H. Hveem, pp. 92-124.
- George, A., and W. Simons, eds. 1994. *The limits of coercive diplomacy*, 2d ed., pp. 267-294 for summary, and passim for concepts and definitions [coercive diplomacy, its success and failure, and presence or absence of conditions favorable for success]

11. 11/2 Observing indirectly through interviews

1. Study either A or B depending on your interests:

A. Interviewing ordinary people

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

B. Interviewing elites

- Dexter, L. A. 1970. *Elite and specialized interviewing*, pp. 3-138 [R]

2. Work on your proposal (see what is due on 11/9).

Supplements:

- Seldon, A. and J. Pappworth. 1983. *By word of mouth: elite oral history*.
 Rubin and Rubin. 1995. *Qualitative Interviewing*.
 Kvale, Steinar. 1996. *InterViews: an introduction to qualitative research interviewing*.
 Symposium on interview methods in political science. 2002. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35:662-88
 Patton, M.Q. 2002. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3d ed., chap. 7

12. 11/9 Individual consultations. Now that you have a more concrete sense of recognized methods, revise and turn in a preliminary draft of parts 1, 2, and 3 of your proposal, stating the adjusted research question and how your project will add to the research program. Use ideas from Lave and March to generate predictions of other observable implications of your main idea. Then improve the preliminary outline of your methods section and bring both to a meeting with me.

IV. DISCUSSION OF PROPOSALS

Classes 13, 14, & 15

Please follow the guidance in “Writing a Proposal.” Your final proposal is due not later than 7 December 2004. It should be less than 3,500 words in length, apart from notes and references. Please provide a word count. In grading yours for this course I will place the greatest weight on the second half after the literature critique—the methods. Remember that any comparative or single case method introduced here can be an excellent choice; the most ambitious technique is not necessarily better if you cannot defend it well for your purposes and empirical domain. In any case remember to propose one example each of an operational definition with coding rules, process tracing, and counterfactual argument.

Note: Students requesting academic accommodations based on disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be

sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:00. The office is in Student Union 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.

Appendix 1. Other textbooks and practical advice

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

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

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

Appendix 2. Additional interpretivist references

The term “qualitative” is used by diverse scholars who disagree on epistemological basics. Assuming some prior exposure to these debates, this seminar works within what could be called broad or pragmatic positivism, the mainstream in the USA. This inclusive position will be discussed briefly at the outset. This seminar does not attempt to teach how to use methods that regard themselves as alternatives to this mainstream. IR 513 introduces historical and humanistic methods and discussed prospects for synthesizing methods, and IR 516 is devoted to discourse and text analysis. Here are additional references from interpretivist traditions.

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

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

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

Crabtree, B. F., and W. L. Miller, eds. 1999. *Doing Qualitative Research*, 2d ed.

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