

# Introduction to Case Studies and Comparative Case Study Methods

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May 18-20, 2016

9:00am – 4:30pm

## **Outline**

The aim of this introductory workshop is to provide students with a framework for understanding and using case study methods in your own research. A constant theme throughout the workshop will be on debating the strengths and limitations of different small-n methods, illustrating the types and scopes of inferences that are possible, and whether and how they can be nested into mixed-methods research designs. The core text is a forthcoming book on causal case study methods co-authored by the instructor – the text will be distributed to participants prior to the workshop.

The workshop can either be followed as a stand-alone three day module, or preferably as part of a two-week introduction to case study methods in the WSSR.

The workshop starts by introducing the debate on whether there is a divide between quantitative, large-n, variance-based and qualitative case study methods. This is followed by a discussion of different understandings of causality that underpin different methodologies, developing the foundations for three different variants of case-based methods.

Day 2 begins with an introduction to comparative logic, focusing in particular on Mill's methods of agreement and difference, and the most-similar and most-different systems designs. The afternoon discusses how we can make inferences using non-variational, within-case evidence in case studies.

Day 3 introduces the two most prevalent within-case methods: congruence and process-tracing. The workshop concludes with a discussion of selection bias and how we can map populations of relatively causally homogeneous cases in case-based research.

Workshop prerequisites: Students are expected to have encountered basic qualitative, case study research methods in their graduate-level education (e.g. King, Keohane and Verba's *Designing Social Inquiry* (1994) is a good starting point).

### Note on readings:

If you are registered for credit, you can find these readings on course reserve: <http://reserves.concordia.ca/>

If you are registered for non-credit and are unable to locate the readings, please contact us at [wssr@concordia.ca](mailto:wssr@concordia.ca)

### Day 1 – Wednesday, 18 May, 2016

#### Session 1 - Introduction – are case-based methods different?

9.30 – 12.00 Introductory lecture and discussion

- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane & Sidney Verba (1994), *Designing Social Inquiry. Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University press, Chapter 3, pp. 75-114 (SKIM)
- Mahoney, James and Gary Goertz (2006), “A Tale of Two Cultures”, *Political Analysis*, vol. 14, no. 3, p. 227-249.
- Beach and Pedersen (2016) *Causal Case Studies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Chapter 1.

#### Session 2 - What are causes? How can we study them empirically?

Key terms: causal theories, causal mechanisms, probabilistic theories, deterministic theories, regularity, counterfactuals, manipulation and mechanism accounts of causality, asymmetric causation, types of causal claims.

1.30 – 2.30 Lecture

3.00 – 4.30 Group work on exercise #1 and class discussion

- Beach and Pedersen (2016) *Causal Case Studies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Chapters 2, 3.

#### Class exercise #1 - mechanisms

1. How can economic development produce democratization?
2. Develop a causal mechanism linking economic development with democratization.

## **Day 2 – Thursday, 19 May, 2016**

### Session 1 – The tools of comparative methods

*Key terms: Method of agreement, Method of difference, Most-similar-systems design, Most-different-systems design, causal homogeneity/heterogeneity.*

9.30 – 10.30 Lecture

10.45 – 12.00 Group work

- Beach and Pedersen (2016) *Causal Case Studies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Chapter 7.
- Risse-Kappen, Thomas (1991) 'Public Opinion, Domestic Structure, and Foreign Policy in Liberal Democracies.', *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 4, pp. 479-512.

### Class exercise #2 – comparative methods

1. Describe Risse-Kappen's theoretical model. Are there any necessary or sufficient conditions?
2. Describe his research design (briefly). Is the study a most-similar or most-different systems design?
3. What role does process-tracing play in his analysis? In your opinion, does Risse-Kappen's research shed light on the causal mechanism(s) linking public opinion and foreign policy?

### Session 2 – Within-case studies – making inferences

*Key terms: cross-case inferences, within-case inferences, frequentist logic of inference, comparative logic of elimination, Bayesian logic of inference, prior, Bayesian updating, empirical tests.*

1.30 – 2.30 Lecture

3.00 – 4.30 Group work on exercise #3

(review KKV pp. 75-97 from day 1)

- Beach and Pedersen (2016) *Causal Case Studies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Chapter 6 (on causal inference and Bayesian framework)
- Doyle, Arthur Connan (1894) *Silver Blaze* can be downloaded free at:  
<http://www.wesjones.com/doyle1.htm>

### Class exercise #3 – inferences and updating

1. Describe an empirical test used by Holmes in the Silver Blaze story. Describe what hypothesis is being tested, and then provide justifications for the value of the prior and the theoretical certainty and uniqueness of the test.
2. What type of test have you described? A straw-in-the-wind, hoop or smoking gun?

### **Day 3 – Friday, 20 May, 2016**

#### **Session 1 – within-case studies (congruence and process-tracing)**

*Key terms: Congruence / matching, Empirical tests, Empirical predictions, Theory-testing PT, Theory-building PT, Explaining outcome PT.*

9.30 – 10.30 Lecture

10.45 – 12.00 Group work on class exercise #5

- Beach and Pedersen (2016) *Causal Case Studies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Chapters 8 and 9.
- Shpaizman, Ilana. 2014. Ideas And Institutional Conversion Through Layering: The Case Of Israeli Immigration Policy, *Public Administration*, Volume 92, Issue 4, pages 1038–1053, December 2014.

#### **Class exercise #4 – Process-tracing and inferences**

1. Describe Shpaizman’s research design.
2. Discuss how Shpaizman utilizes process-tracing, focusing in particular on: a) is there a causal mechanism theorized, and b) are the empirical ‘tests’ clearly described.

#### **Session 2 – Defining and mapping populations**

*Key terms: causal homogeneity, differences in kind versus differences of degree, selection bias.*

13.30 – 14.30 Lecture and discussion

15.00 – 16.00 Group work on exercise #5

16.00 – 16.30 Concluding discussions

- Geddes, Barbara (1990), “How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: selection bias in comparative politics”, *Political Analysis*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 131-150.
- Collier and Mahoney (1996) ‘Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research’, *World Politics*, Vol. 49, pp. 56-91.
- Beach and Pedersen (2016) *Causal Case Studies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, (REVIEW SECTIONS ABOUT COMPARATIVE AND CONGRUENCE/PT)

#### **Class exercise #5 – defining a population**

1. Develop a simple X->Y theory that describes a single causal factor (X) that plausibly enable lobbyists to influence political decision-makers.
2. Develop a case-based research design to investigate the theorized X->Y relationship using a (relatively) causally homogeneous population. Discuss different boundaries of the population and what tradeoffs regarding internal and external validity there might be.