

Comparative Urban Political Research:

Topics and suggested module readings for an introductory course:

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This note may be considered as an appendix to our research note

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A METHODOLOGY FOR COMPARATIVE URBAN POLITICAL RESEARCH

Introduction: The goals of comparative research

Core Reading

1. Peters, B. Guy (1998) Chapter 1, The Importance of Comparison. In *Comparative Politics: Theory and Methods*, New York: New York University Press, 1-27.
2. G. King, R.O. Keohane and S. Verba (1994), *Designing Social Inquiry*; Princeton UP, 1994: pp. 3-33.

Supplementary Reading

Dogan, Mattei and Dominique Pelassy. 1990. Chapter 1. Comparing to Escape from Ethnocentrism, in *How to Compare Nations: Strategies in Comparative Politics*. 2nd ed. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, pp. 5-13.

Dogan, Mattei and Dominique Pelassy. 1990. Chapter 2. Comparing to Find Sociological Rules, in *How to Compare Nations: Strategies in Comparative Politics*. 2nd ed. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House. pp. 15-23.

Rose, Richard. 1991. Comparing Forms of Comparative Analysis. *Political Studies* 39 (3): 446-62.

NOTE ON SUPPLEMENTARY READING:

Dogan and Pelassy provide a more detailed description of the advantages of comparison, and the role of comparison in theory-building. Rose also covers some of the same issues as Dogan and Pelassy and Peters, but emphasises the role of concepts as building blocks of comparison. Rose also discusses “lesson-drawing” or learning as a reason for having a comparative perspective.

The Essence of Comparative Analysis: Dealing with Multiple Levels of Analysis

Core Reading

3. J. Coleman (1990) *Foundations of Social Theory*, Belknap Press, Harvard, pp. 1-23.
4. A. Przeworski & H. Teune (1970), *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*, Krieger, Malabar (reprint 1982), 74 - 87.

Supplementary Reading

P.M. Gregg (1974), Units and levels in analysis: A Problem of Policy Analysis in Federal Systems; *Publius* 1974 (4), 59-86.

Lidstrom, Anders. 1999. The Comparative Study of Local Government Systems – A Research Agenda. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice* 1: 97-115.

Mahoney, James. 1999. Nominal, Ordinal, and Narrative Appraisal in Macrocausal Analysis. *American Journal of Sociology*. 104 (4): 1154-96. (Suggested pp. 1154-69, and conclusion 1188-1193).

Teune, Henry. 1990. "Comparing Countries: Lessons Learned," in *Comparative Methodology: Theory and Practice in International Social Research*, Else Oyen, ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

NOTE ON SUPPLEMENTARY READING:

We have included several supplementary readings that build on Coleman (1990) and Przeworski and Teune (1970) in particular. Lidstrom discusses similar issues as the core readings, but through a survey of comparative local government research. He finds that few local government comparisons are deductive, and recommends that researchers consider this approach more often. Gregg, summarized above, is particularly relevant for research involving intergovernmental contexts. Mahoney offers some interesting observations on constructing causal explanations, but the concrete illustrations of the framework in the beginning and the concluding thoughts are more useful than the broad review of the literature in the midsection of the article. Finally, Teune (1990) provides an updated overview of the potential and problems of the comparative approach, reviewing the history of the field's research questions and theory.

Improving Study Design

Core Reading

5. Peters, B. Guy (1998) Chapter 2, The Logic of Comparison. In *Comparative Politics: Theory and Methods*, New York: New York University Press, 28-57.
6. G. King, R.O. Keohane and S. Verba (1994) *Designing Social Inquiry*, Princeton UP, 1994: pp. 208-230.
7. King, Keohane and Verba (1994) Determining What to Observe. In *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 115-149.
8. Yin, Robert K. (1994) Chapter 2, Designing Case Studies. In *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 18-54.
9. Yin, Robert K. (1994) Chapter 5, Analyzing Case Study Evidence. In *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 127-154.

Supplementary Reading

Lijphart, Arend. 1971. Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method. *American Political Science Review* 65 (3): 682-693.

Snyder, Richard. 2001. Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method. *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36 (1): 93-110.

Jackman, Robert W. 1985. Cross-National Statistical Research and the Study of Comparative Politics. 29 (1): 161-82.

Eckstein, H. (1975) Case Study and Political Theory. In: F.I. Greenstein and N. Polsby (ed.) *Handbook of Political Science*, Addison-Wesley, pp. 79-137..

NOTE ON SUPPLEMENTARY READING

For those who want to pursue these issues further, the supplementary reading includes Lijphart's article on the "small n" problem and the need to increase observations, as well as Eckstein's argument for use of crucial case studies. Both of these are widely-quoted classics in the field. Snyder's more recent (2000) article focuses on problems of using subnational variation as a strategy, and Jackman's article on cross-national statistical comparisons is a widely-cited reference in many comparative syllabi. Snyder mentions inclusion of subnational variation as a way of controlling for "Galton's problem" or the problem of diffusion, which can cast doubt upon whether national factors are significant in accounting for phenomena. If there are common trends in cities across countries, then globalization or diffusion are more likely explanations than national phenomena.

Improving the quality of measurement

Core Reading

10. Peters, B. Guy (1998) Chapter 4, Measurement and Bias. In *Comparative Politics: Theory and Method*, New York: New York University Press, 80-108.
11. Van Deth, J.W. 1998. Equivalence in comparative political research , in J.W. van Deth (ed.) *Comparative politics: the problem of equivalence*, Routledge: pp. 1-19.

Supplementary Reading

Kaiser, A. 1998. Institutional regimes , in J.W. van Deth (ed.) *Comparative politics: the problem of equivalence*, Routledge: pp. 205-221.

Sellers, Jeffrey. 2003. National Local Political Economies and Varieties of Capitalism: A Classification and Analysis of Twenty-One OECD Countries. Paper presented at the American Political Science Association Meeting, Philadelphia, PA, 28-30 August 2003.

King, G., C.J.L. Murray, J.A. Salomon, and A. Tandon (2004) Enhancing the Validity and Cross-Cultural Comparability of Measurement in Survey Research (corrected version). *American Political Science Review* 98 (1): 191-207.

Mossberger, Karen and Gerry Stoker. 2001. The Evolution of Urban Regime Theory: The Challenge of Conceptualization. *Urban Affairs Review* 36 (6): 810-835.

A. Przeworski & H. Teune (1970), *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*, Krieger, Malabar (reprint 1982), 91-131.

Sartori, Giovanni. 1991. Comparing and Miscomparing. 1991. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 3: 243-67.

Sartori, Giovanni. 1970. Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics. *American Political Science Review*. 64 (4): 1033-1053.

Collier, David and James E. Mahon, Jr. 1993. Conceptual "Stretching" Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis. *American Political Science Review* 87: 845-55.

NOTE ON SUPPLEMENTARY READING:

Because of the overviews available in Peters and Van Deth, key articles by Sartori, Collier, Przeworski and Teune and Mahon, are included as supplementary rather than core reading. These contributions provide useful detail, however, for analyzing or applying concepts. The Mossberger and Stoker paper describes the problem of concept stretching in urban regime analysis, provides minimal criteria for regimes, and also describes the Dowding et al. use of the family resemblance strategy as an alternative to the Sartori/Mossberger and Stoker approach. A recent article by King et al. on new strategies for cross-national survey research is included as a supplementary reading, because it introduces a promising new approach to coping with systematic measurement errors in comparative research. This article would be most useful for the advanced student or specialist. A special category of variables in comparative research pertains to variations in political institutions. The paper by Sellers deals with the measurement of institutional characteristics of local governments, and provides a number of indices. Sellers demonstrates the way in which many variables important to multi-level analysis can be measured. The supplementary readings include a paper by Kaiser who provides an alternative approach of measuring relevant aspects of the institutional context in which local governance is situated. Both the Sellers and Kaiser works would be most interesting in relation to the section on Context in this course.

For a more comprehensive list of many excellent references on comparative research, see syllabi located at the website of the Consortium on Qualitative Research Methods (a consortium of American universities) at <http://www.asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm/>. Not all of the comparative syllabi are qualitative only.