

Paradigms and Sand Castles

Analytical Perspectives on Politics

ADVISORY EDITORS:

John Aldrich, Duke University

Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Hoover Institution and New York University

Robert Jackman, University of California, Davis

David Rohde, Michigan State University

Political Science is developing rapidly and changing markedly. Keeping in touch with new ideas across the discipline is a challenge for political scientists and for their students.

To help meet this challenge, the series Analytical Perspectives on Politics presents creative and sophisticated syntheses of major areas of research in the fields of political science. In each book, a high-caliber author provides a clear and discriminating description of the current state of the art and a strong-minded prescription and structure for future work in the field.

These distinctive books provide a compact review for political scientists, a helpful introduction for graduate students, and central reading for advanced undergraduate courses.

Robert W. Jackman, *Power without Force: The Political Capacity of Nation-States*

Linda L. Fowler, *Candidates, Congress, and the American Democracy*

Ole R. Holsti, *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy*

Scott Gates and Brian D. Humes, *Games, Information, and Politics: Applying Game Theoretic Models to Political Science*

Lawrence Baum, *The Puzzle of Judicial Behavior*

Barbara Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*

Paradigms and Sand Castles

**Theory Building and Research Design
in Comparative Politics**

BARBARA GEDDES

The University of Michigan Press
Ann Arbor

Copyright © by the University of Michigan 2003
All rights reserved
Published in the United States of America by
The University of Michigan Press
Manufactured in the United States of America
⊗ Printed on acid-free paper

2006 2005 2004 2003 4 3 2 1

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, or otherwise, without the written permission of the publisher.

A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Geddes, Barbara.

Paradigms and sand castles : theory building and research design
in comparative politics / Barbara Geddes.

p. cm. — (Analytical perspectives on politics)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-472-09835-7 (cloth : alk. paper) — ISBN 0-472-06835-0
(pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Comparative government. 2. Political science—Research.

I. Title. II. Series.

JA86 .G35 2003

320.3—dc21

2003002160

To John

Contents

Acknowledgments	ix
1. Research Design and the Accumulation of Knowledge	I
2. Big Questions, Little Answers: How the Questions You Choose Affect the Answers You Get	27
3. How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias and Related Issues	89
4. How the Evidence You Use Affects the Answers You Get: Rigorous Use of the Evidence Contained in Case Studies	131
5. How the Approach You Choose Affects the Answers You Get: Rational Choice and Its Uses in Comparative Politics	175
6. Conclusion	213
Appendix A	225
Appendix B	233
Appendix C	247
Bibliography	289
Index	307

Acknowledgments

I wrote the first fragment of what has become this book with my youngest daughter, a colicky infant, screaming in the background. She is thirteen now. My first thanks go to her for growing up, turning into a quirky and delightful person, and allowing the resumption of more or less civilized life.

In working on a project that has taken so long, I have acquired more debts of gratitude than I am likely to remember. Over the years, many UCLA graduate students (one of them has tenure now) helped with research on various aspects of the project. I thank Allyson Benton, Hanna Birnir, Kimberly Niles, John Quinn, Tatiana Rizova, and Cathy Sweet for their help and area expertise. Special thanks to Cheryl Schonhardt-Bailey, without whose persistence at the library I could not have written the first fragment during the summer of the colicky baby; and to Eduardo Alemán, Liz Stein, and Marisa Kellam, whose intelligent, conscientious, and good-natured toil at the end made all the difference.

I have been using this book to teach my graduate class in research design since before I started writing it. Many of the ideas in the book emerged in response to students' research projects. The examples, originally developed to convey abstract ideas to the students in these classes, have been honed in response to their questions and bewildered looks. I thank my students for their thoughtful questions and their enthusiastic response to the class. It has been my favorite class to teach for many years.

I have also benefited from the comments of more colleagues than I can remember, both individually and during seminars. I would especially like to thank David Laitin for his challenging and very helpful comments on much of the manuscript; David Collier for his critique of an early version of the selection bias chapter; Bob Jackman for his discussion of an early version of the test of the Lipset and Rokkan argument and for encouragement on the project as a whole; and Ellen Lust-Okar for sharing

her expertise on the Middle East. Seminars at UC San Diego, the University of New Mexico, and Yale stand out in my mind as having been especially stimulating, and I thank Miles Kahler, Karen Remmer, and Ivan Szelenyi for arranging them.

Much of the financial support for this project was provided by Dean Scott Waugh of UCLA, and I thank him for this and his many other contributions to the quality of intellectual life at UCLA.

Finally, I thank my greatest fan, John Zaller, who read all of the manuscript and pounded mercilessly at its logic and organization, while at the same time maintaining an exuberant enthusiasm for the project. I thank him for sharing and reinforcing the commitment to “science as a vocation” that motivates this book. And I also thank him for the cheerful, good-natured, and energetic way he shares the other domains of my life.