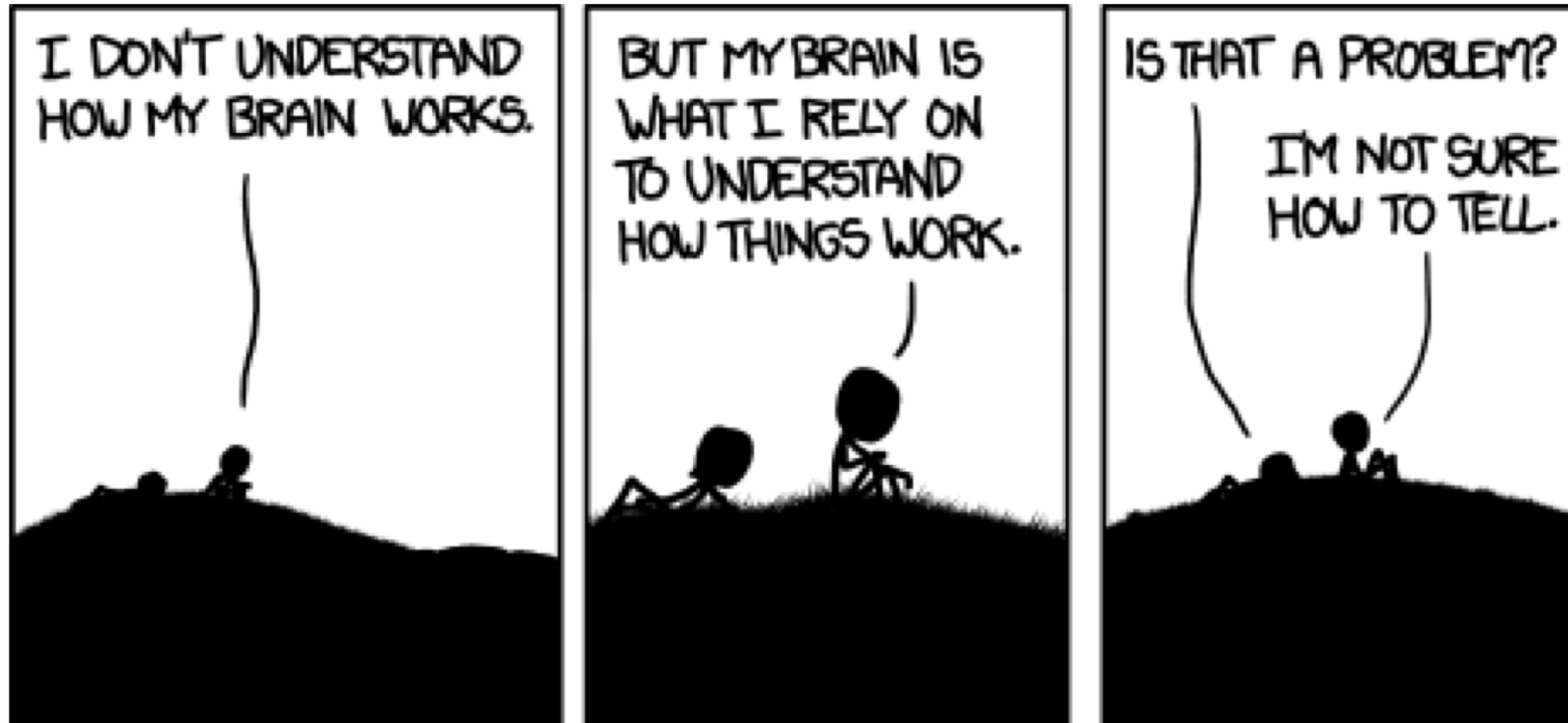

POLS 352: RESEARCH METHODS & QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

COMPARATIVE METHOD



WHEN LAST WE MET...

What are good theories and why do we need them?

- The world is complicated; theories help us make sense of reality and facilitate interactions
- Fundamentally, they are assertions about expected relationships between variables and the mechanism(s) linking them
- They make certain assumptions about the world that are not true/false, but rather more/less useful

TYPES OF STUDIES (ENDS)

Descriptive

- e.g., percentage of regular exercisers

Relational

- e.g., link between age and exercise

Causal

- e.g., effect of behavior change intervention on exercise participation

AGENDA

- The comparative method
 - Types of studies (means): Qualitative vs. Quantitative

THE COMPARATIVE METHOD

The comparative method: analyzing a set (or sets) of cases in order to draw general conclusions

- What exactly does it mean to compare?
 - What are we comparing?
- Why do we want to compare?
 - We don't want to describe the world, we want to *understand* it

THE COMPARATIVE METHOD

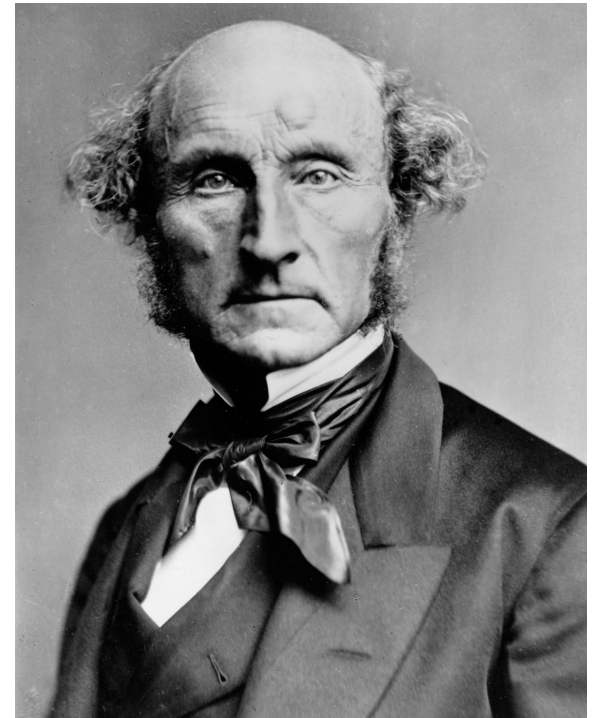
Qualitative method:

- The use of data where the variables are in non-numeric form (e.g., text, photographs, sound bytes, etc.)
- Common types: interviews; historical analysis; ethnographies
- Often uses in-depth investigation of a limited number of cases
 - Associated with the inductive reasoning (although can be used to deductive ends, as well)

THE COMPARATIVE METHOD

John Stuart Mill (19th cen British philosopher)

- Method for discerning actual causes among some possible causes
- Start with variables assumed to include possible causes
 - Simply eye-balled correlations at this point
- If a possible cause doesn't correlate with the effect in the right way, then you can conclude a lack of causation



THE COMPARATIVE METHOD

Mill's method of agreement

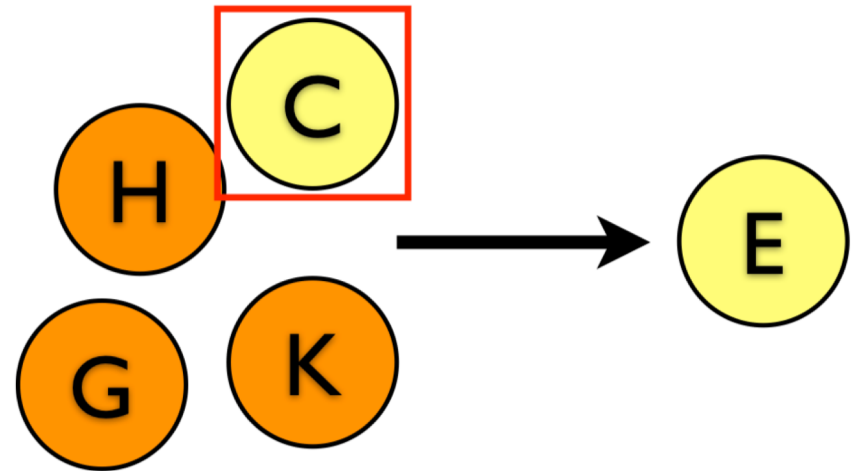
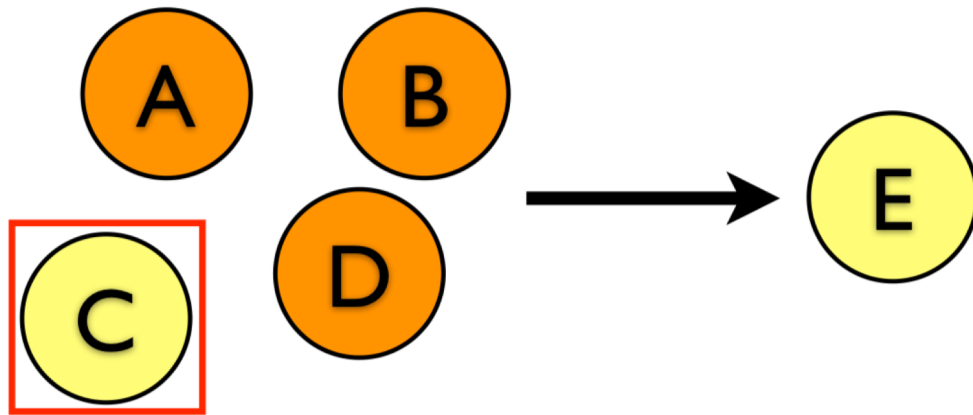
- “If two or more instances of the phenomenon under investigation have only one circumstance in common, the circumstance in which alone all the instances agree, is the cause (or effect) of the given phenomenon.”

~ A System of Logic (Vol. 1)

- Find cases in which the effect has occurred
 - Determine if there is only one thing that they all share
 - If there is, that is (the likely) cause

THE COMPARATIVE METHOD

- Mill's method of agreement



THE COMPARATIVE METHOD

Mill's method of agreement

- Example: some cities have markedly lower rates of tooth decay
 - Is there anything these cities share in common?
 - If so, that is the likely cause of lower rates of tooth decay

Table for Method of Agreement

	Dental Education Program	Free Dental Clinics	Fluoride in Water	High salaries for dentists	Low rates of tooth decay
Dullsville	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bedroom Town	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Golfville	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Megacity	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

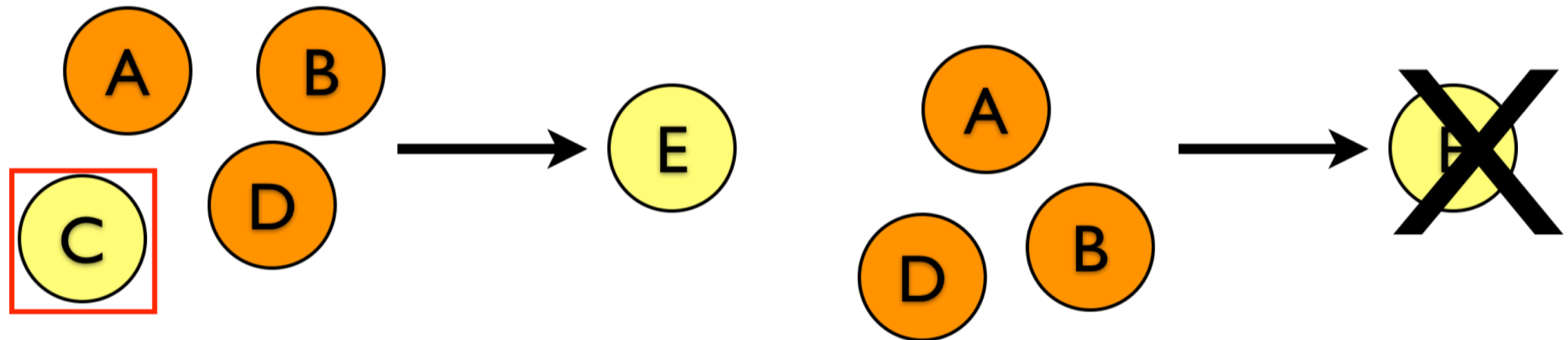
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THE COMPARATIVE METHOD

Mill's method of difference

- Find cases in which the effect has occurred in one, but not the other



Why do these contiguous countries in Africa have different *Regime Types*?



Variables	Case 1: Togo	Case 2: Ghana
Similarities		
Climate	Hot / tropical	Hot / tropical
Income	Low	Low
Ethnic demography	Heterogeneous	Heterogeneous
Largest religion	Christianity	Christianity
Other religions	Islam, traditional	Islam, traditional
Outcomes		
Regime Type	Authoritarian	Democracy
Cause		

Why do these contiguous countries in Africa have different *Regime Types*?



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Hypothesis: Colonizer	France	United Kingdom