

There has always been controversy about the proper role of students of politics

Intellectuals

- Repositories of eternal verities (Sor Juana*, Paz)
- Critics, questioners, gadflies (Socrates, Paz)

Activists and advocates for particular agendas (Marx, Luxemburg, Hayek)

Teachers

- Civics, public intellectuals (West)
- Specialized (e.g., public policy)

Researchers

- Very applied (D'): Policy analysts / auditors
- Applied (D); policy-relevant
- Basic (R); theoretical

Thinking like a social scientist

- *Alternative explanations, etc.*
- *From theory to barefoot empiricism*
- *Uncle Phil: "from "Missouri"*

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In theory, political *science* is a subset of “science”

Science consists of...

- Testability (falsifiability) and replicability
- Controls (including double-blind controls)
- Prima facie assumptions of honesty and competence

Social science: outcomes are human behaviors and opinions

- Imposes certain limits on scientific method
- None of these limits are unique to social sciences, just more common there

Impulse to apply methods to politics and society almost as old as civilization itself (Aristotle, Hume, etc.)

If so, political science will attempt to draw inferences using methods similar to other sciences

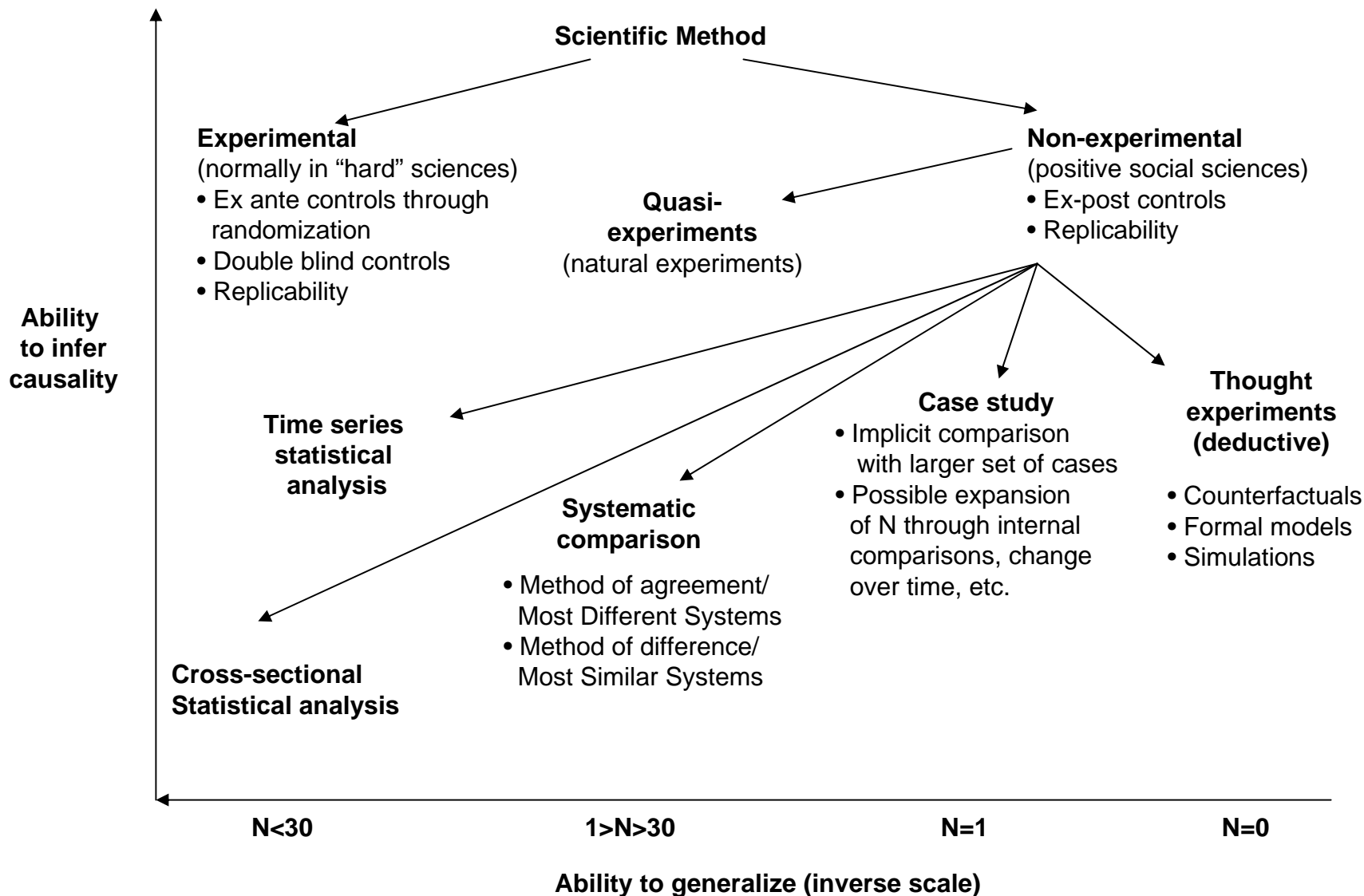
“[G]overnments differ in kind, as will be evident to any one who considers the matter according to the method that has guided us so far. As in other departments of science, so in politics, the compound should always be disaggregated into the simplest elements, or essential parts, of the whole. We must therefore look at the elements of which the state is composed, in order to see how the different kinds of rule differ from one another and whether any scientific result can be attained about each one of them.”

-- Aristotle, *The Politics*, Book 1, Chapter 1, c.350 BC

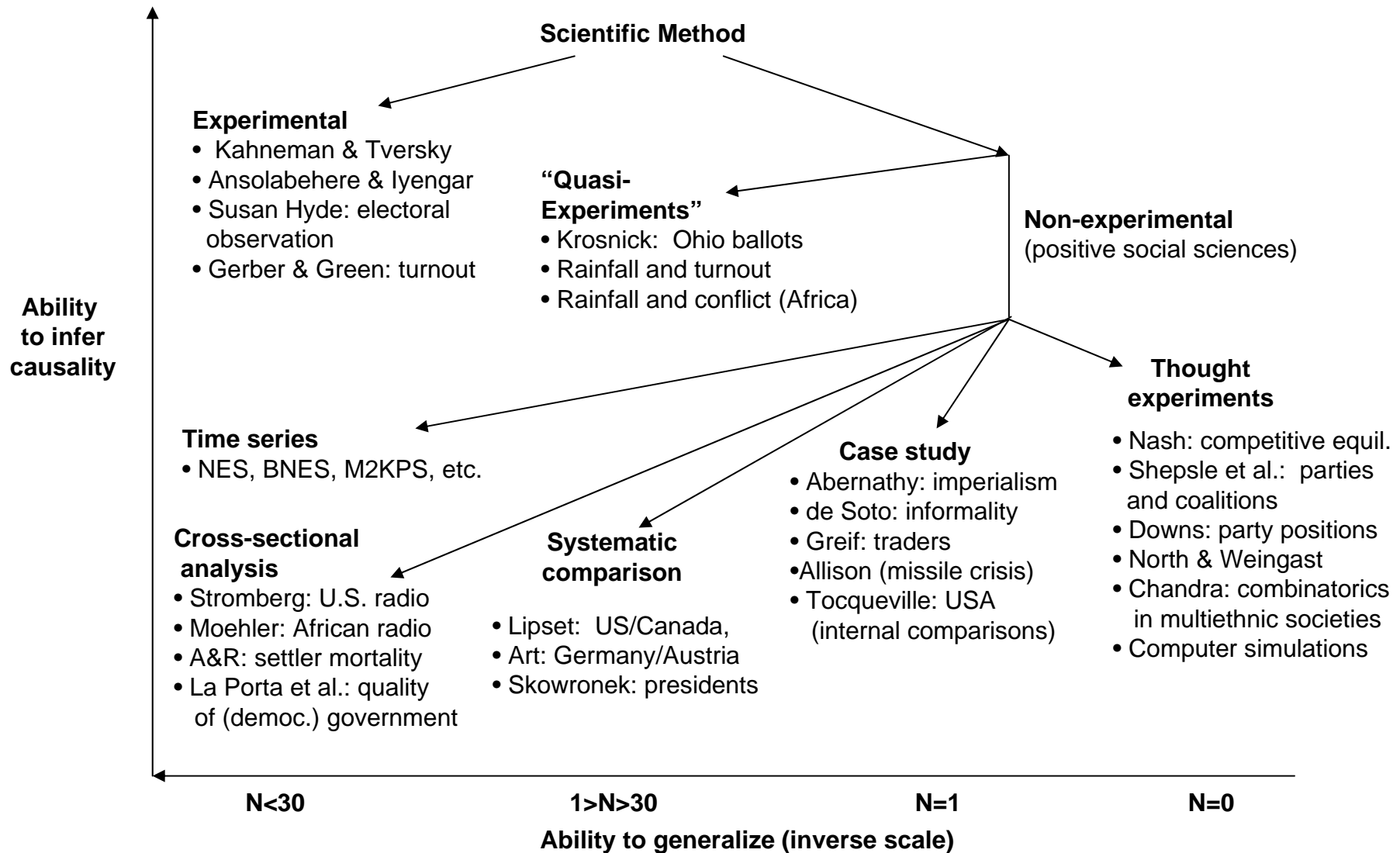
“So great is the force of laws, and of particular forms of government, and so little dependence have they of the humours and tempers of men, that consequences almost as general and certain may sometimes be deduced from them, as any which mathematical sciences afford us.”

-- David Hume, “That Politics May be Reduced to a Science,”
Essay III in *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, 1742.

If so, political science will attempt to draw inferences using methods similar to other sciences (2)



Excellent research has been done with all these methods



Hybrids: E.g., Putnam combines case study, natural experiment, large-N, systematic comparison, etc.

Doing research in the real world

Problems and tradeoffs in selecting your topic

