

# Case Study Research Design

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Case study admittedly does not enjoy equal esteemed status in the pantheon of social science's research methodologies relative to its sisters such as the cross-units regression analysis or experimental research design. And yet, case study remains popular in a researcher's toolkit as evidenced by a steady production of studies relying on an intensive examination of a single unit of analysis. This module clarifies several important points in the following: (i) What is a case study? (ii) What is it good for? (iii) When is it best to employ it? And (iv) whether it could be deployed to establish causal inference instead of mere descriptive inference.

1. Case Study: Interpretive vs Positivist Paradigm
  - 1.1 What is a case study? Understanding unit, case, and observation.
  - 1.2 What is it good for?
  - 1.3 Can there be inference/generalization in a case study?
  - 1.4 Nomothetic vs idiographic paradigm
2. The Merits and Pitfalls of Case Study
  - 2.1 Too many variables, too few cases
  - 2.2 External validity vs internal validity
  - 2.3 Selecting on the dependent variable?
  - 2.4 Opening the black box: causal processes and mechanism
3. Case Selection Menu
  - 3.1 Confirmatory or disconfirmatory?
  - 3.2 The crucial case: most-likely and least-likely
  - 3.3 Method of difference
  - 3.4 Method of agreement
  - 3.5 Pathway case
4. Case Study and Theory Building
  - 4.1 Hypothesis testing or hypothesis generating?
  - 4.2 Descriptive inference with case study
  - 4.3 Causal inference with case study:
    - 4.3.1 Deterministic vs probabilistic explanation
    - 4.3.2 Exploratory
    - 4.3.3 Diagnostic
  - 4.4 Case study in a mixed-method design
    - 4.4.1 Nested strategy – case study *after* cross-sectional regression
    - 4.4.2 Refining a theory with a new variable:  
case study *before* cross-sectional regression

## Reading List

### Session I

1. Gerring, John. "What is a case study and what is it good for?" *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 2 (2004): 341-354.
2. Elman, Colin, John Gerring, and James Mahoney. "Case study research: Putting the quant into the qual." *Sociological Methods & Research* 45, no. 3 (2016): 375-391.
3. Bennett, Andrew, and Colin Elman. "Complex causal relations and case study methods: The example of path dependence." *Political Analysis* 14, no. 3 (2006): 250-267.
4. Bennett, Andrew, and Colin Elman. "Qualitative research: Recent developments in case study methods." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 9 (2006): 455-476.

### Session II

1. Collier, David & James Mahoney. "Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research." *World Politics* 49, No. 1 (1996): 56-91.
2. Geddes, Barbara. "How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: Selection bias in comparative politics." *Political analysis* 2 (1990): 131-150.
3. Gerring, John. "Internal Validity", Ch. 9 in *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*, Cambridge University Press (2017): 195-217.
4. Gerring, John. "External Validity", Ch. 10 in *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*, Cambridge University Press (2017): 219-239.
5. Brady, Henry E. "Data-set observations versus causal-process observations: The 2000 US presidential election." In Brady and Collier (eds), *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse tools, Shared Standards*, Rowman & Littlefields (2004): 267-272.

### Session III

1. Seawright, Jason, and John Gerring. "Case selection techniques in case study research: A menu of qualitative and quantitative options." *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2008): 294-308.
2. Gerring, John, and Lee Cojocar. "Selecting cases for intensive analysis: A diversity of goals and methods." *Sociological Methods & Research* 45, no. 3 (2016): 392-423.
3. Gerring, John. "Overview of Case Selection", Ch. 3 in *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*, Cambridge University Press (2017): 39-55.
4. Eckstein, Harry. "Case Studies and Theory in Political Science." In Gomm et al (eds), *Case Study Method: Key Issues, Key Texts* (2000): 119-164.

#### **Session IV**

1. Lieberman, Evan S. "Nested analysis as a mixed-method strategy for comparative research." *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 3 (2005): 435-452.
2. Lieberman, Stanley. "Small N's and big conclusions: an examination of the reasoning in comparative studies based on a small number of cases." *Social Forces* 70, no. 2 (1991): 307-320.
3. Gerring, John. "Descriptive Case Studies", Ch. 4 in *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*, Cambridge University Press (2017): 56-62.
4. Gerring, John. "Causal Case Studies", Ch. 5 in *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*, Cambridge University Press (2017): 63-117.