

Graduate Student Association Methods Workshop:

Case Studies and Quandaries: The Rebels' Agency Problem

Autumn Perkey, September 15, 2021

Outline

1. The logic of case studies

1. What are case studies and how do we use them?
2. Definition of a case study
3. Different types of case studies

2. The Rebels' Agency Problem

1. ETA
2. Chinese Revolution
3. Cuban Revolution
4. Where we are now
 1. Afganistan

The Logic of Case Studies

Case studies allow us to understand causation and preserve the features of individual cases that might be lost in large-N cross case analysis.

Case studies in essence are regression model's qualitative best friend.

What are case studies and how do we use them?

- Case studies can refer to a variety of things:
 - The method is qualitative
 - Small-N
 - The research is holistic
 - Non-survey based
 - Process tracing
 - Historical
 - Textual
 - Field Research

Definition of a Case Study

- Case study:
 - “the intensive study of a single unit or a small number of units (cases), for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units” (Gerring 2007)
 - “an attempt to understand and interpret a spatially and temporally bounded set of events” (Levy 2008)
 - Case studies can be understood to incorporate substantial statistical analysis with the aim of generalizing to other cases.

Different types of case studies

Ideal types

- Idiographic case studies - “aim to describe a particular case”
- Hypothesis generating case studies and Hypothesis testing
- Plausibility probes - illustrative cases (inbetween hypothesis testing/generating)

Additional ways to handle case studies

- Optimal sequence matching: a method that maps cases across cases (Abbott 2001)
- Counterfactual thought experiments: useful in the analysis of individual case histories (Fearon 1991; Lebow 2000)
- Typological Method of Case studies (Elman 2005)

The Rebels' Agency Problem

Background: The Rebels' Agency Problem

Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA - Spain)

- Issues with this case study:
 - Addressing the theory for a group that is predominately considered a terrorist organization
 - Language barriers

The Chinese Revolution

- Wait...context and time matter!
 - Issues arose over lack of temporal specificity

The Cuban Revolution

- Issues
 - Archives, digitization, and COVID-19

Where we are now - Afghanistan

- Current events matter

Resources (Literature)

- Gerring, J. (2007). The case study: what it is and what it does. In *The Oxford handbook of comparative politics*.
- Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for?. *American political science review*, 98(2), 341-354.
- Levy, J. S. (2008). Case studies: Types, designs, and logics of inference. *Conflict management and peace science*, 25(1), 1-18.
- Travers, M. (2001). *Qualitative research through case studies*. Sage.

Resources (MISC)

- The Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research ([IQMR](#))