Reading Summery 1

Mercyhurst University

Intl 501 – Research Methods and Analytics

Prof :- Orlandrew Danzell

Sub :- Overview of case Selection and Case Study Research 1 and 2

Reading :- Lavy - case studies

By

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In the presented readings, Jack s. Lavy (28 April,2008) focus on the case studies in developing casual explanations. He tries to explain the relation between the theoretical purposes of case studies and the case selection strategies used to advance those objectives. For that he constructs different types of case studies with attention to their different purpose and logics of inference. By using that he addresses the issue of selection bias and the utility of multi-method research. (p. 1)

Lavy(2008) asserts that the study of war and peace are defined theoretically and methodologically in research communities of political science. This is true for method as well as for theory, and we see a growing trend toward multi-method research in the study of international conflict and in international relations more generally. (p. 2) This is evident in the continued integration of formal and statistical approaches and in the growing interest of each in incorporating case study analyses into multi-method research design. The best qualitative research is more theoretically driven and methodologically self-conscious. So, what is the meaning of case study? By George and Bennett (2005: 5, 17) case study is just “the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events.” By Gerring (2007: 13, 19–20) defines “case study” as “the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is—at least in part—to shed light on a larger class of cases. (p. 2) Most typologies of case studies reflect some variation of Lijphart’s (1971: 691) categories and Eckstein’s (1975: 96–123) categories. Such case studies Such typologies contain research objectives and case selection techniques, and they result in nonparallel categories. A deviant case study is a research design and they serve the objective of hypothesis generation (p. 3). There are some other multi-stage research methods that includes other kind of case studies like Idiographic Case Studies (p. 4), Inductive Case Studies (p. 4), Theory-Guided Case Studies (p. 4), Hypothesis-Generating Case Studies (p. 5), Hypothesis Testing (p. 6), Plausibility Probes (p. 6).

After looking of different types of case studies, there are varieties of case study design in research methods and selection criteria. If we want to work on single case study, but there might be some advantages to add additional cases as an evidence. Because Evidence is always better than the examples (George & Bennett, 2005; Maoz, 2002), which is logically equivalent to controlling for extraneous variables (p. 7). For more details of nomothetic research goals, there are fewer rules of case selection for hypothesis generation than for hypothesis testing, corresponding to the notion that there is a logic of scientific confirmation but not of scientific discovery (Popper, 1965). One common strategy for exploratory case studies on independent or dependent variables based on the logic that causality ought to be clearest in cases where variables take on their extreme values. Selection bias is important factor in case studies. Random selection will often generate serious biases in small-N research, and that the analysis of a small number of cases requires the careful selection (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994: 124–128; Collier et al., 2004; Gerring, 2007: 87–88). In another form of selection bias, researcher should select cases where the predictions of alternative interpretations contradict the explanation (p. 9).

In Comparable-Case Research Designs of case studies, there are number of variables for theory testing like number of cases, creating a degrees of freedom problem that leaves outcomes causally underdetermined. Most qualitative methodologists now accept this conception of the comparative method as a strategy for conducting research. Different case selection designs involve different strategies of matching. The method case selection with different values on the dependent variable and similar values on all but one of the possible causal variables, while the method of agreement focuses on cases that are similar on the dependent variable and different on all but one of the independent variables. Comparable case designs also face the problem of causal complexity. Casual complexity involves complex causation involving interaction effects, and particularly if there are several different sets of conditions that may lead to the same outcome. (p. 10)

Process tracing has a comparative advantage in the empirical analysis of decision making at the individual, small group, and organizational levels, including the analysis of leaders’ perceptions, judgments, preferences, internal decision-making environment, and choices. Process tracing is useful in various forms of complex causation, which have been attracting growing attention by qualitative methodologists. Process-tracing also make a critical contribution in providing a more precise measurement of these critical junctures and tipping points in individual cases (Tarrow, 1995: 474)(p. 11).

Crucial case studies, based on most-likely or least-likely designs, it is useful for the purposes of testing certain types of theoretical arguments, it checks whether the theory provides relatively precise predictions and measurement error is low (Eckstein, 1975: 113–123). Inferential leverage from a most likely case is maximized if our priors make the case least likely for the alternative theory. The logic of inferential leverage is asymmetric. The inferential logic of least likely case design is based on the “Sinatra inference”—if I can make it there I can make it anywhere. The logic of most likely case design is based on the inverse Sinatra inference—if I cannot make it there, I cannot make it anywhere (Levy, 2002: 442) (p. 12). Deviant case study research designs focus on observed empirical anomalies in existing theoretical propositions, with the aim of explaining why the case deviates from theoretical expectations and in the process refining the existing theory and generating additional hypotheses. Thus, deviant case designs serve the primary purpose of refining existing hypotheses. (p. 13)

Jack s. Lavy argued about the case study methodology reflects an increasing theoretical orientation and methodological self-consciousness among case study researchers. The role of theory is particularly evident in the criteria for case selection and logics, deviant case strategies, and comparable-case designs.

References

Jack S. Levy 2008. Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference, Princeton University Press.