



Principles of Case Study

Design Political Research: Week 11

Yue Hu

Confusions of case study

- Small-N
- Ethnographic analysis in the field
- Process-tracing
- Single-phenomenon investigation
- Are they complete definitions of case study?

Gerring's definition

An intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units (2004, 342).

- Unit:
 - boundaries?
 - Spatial?
 - Temporal?

Observations? Variables? Cases? Unites?

Observed

Observation 1

Observation 2

Observation 3

Observed

- Is the U.S. a case, an observation, a unit, or a population?

Cells = observation

Variable = column

Case = row

Unit = group of case or individual cases

Design a case study

- What are we looking for?
 - Covariational relations
- How can we do it?
 - Type I: one unit over time
 - Type II: n subunit at one time
 - Type III: n subunit over time

Alternative choices

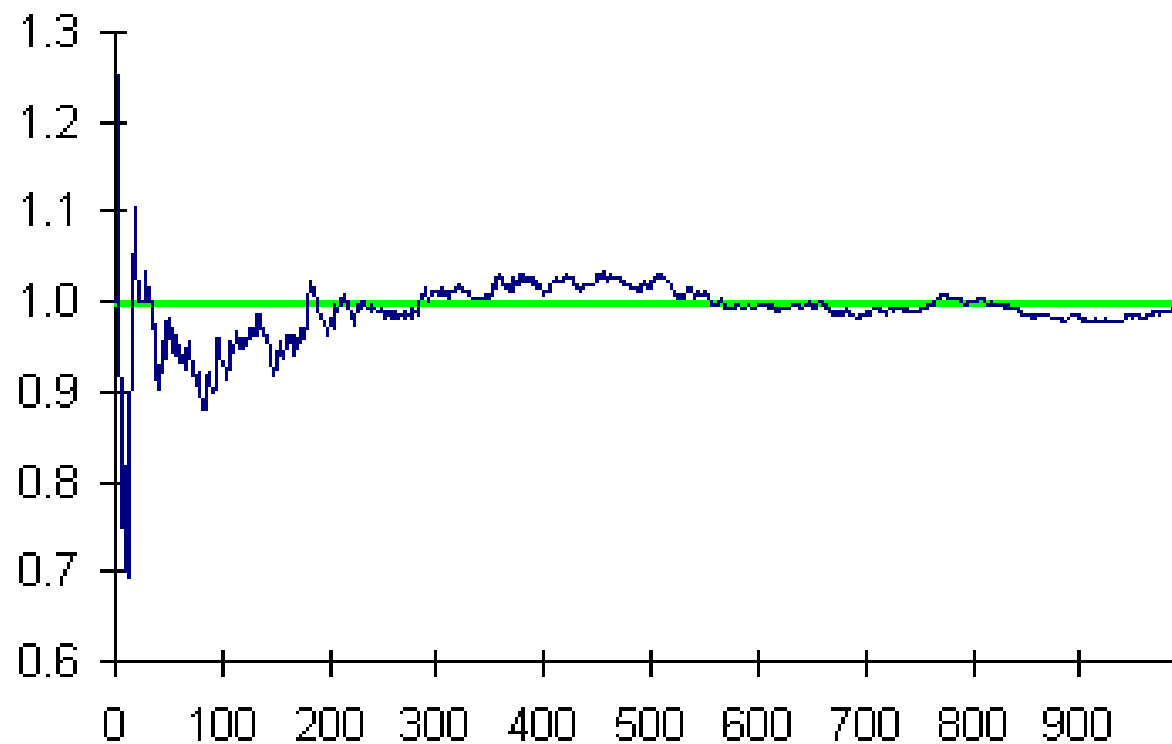
- cross-sectional
- Time-series cross-sectional
- Hierarchical
- Comparative historical

When are case studies useful?

- Descriptive rather than causal inferences
- Deep rather than broad, bounded scope of proposition
- Comparing rather than represent other cases
- Causal mechanism rather than effect
- Deterministic rather than probabilistic relations
- Exploring rather than confirmatory test
- Implication: **what's a like/unlike case?**

Why don't we let the case be representative?

Randomization?



PRINCIPLES of case comparison

- Most similar system
- Most different system

Concomitant variation (most similar system)

"The belief that systems as similar as possible with respect to as many features as possible constitute the optimal samples for comparative inquiry (Przeworski and Teune 1970, 32)."



Why is some democracy's leader more powerful?

Theory: Legislature structure.

##	US	Canada
## Position	American continent	American continent
## Size	Broad territory	Broad territory
## Culture	Anglo-Saxon	Anglo-Saxon
## Polity	Democracy	Democracy
## Government	Federal	Federal
## Legislature	Parliamentary	Presidential

Application

- Focus: *intersystemic* similarities and differences
- Assumption: characteristics shared by one group of systems, such as can be removed (control).
- Explanatory: Differences

Practice

- What's an origin of water conflicts? (G 1,3)
- What make two states apply the same policy? (G 2,4)
- How does a government determine its environmental policy? (G 5,7)
- What forms the political correctness of a society ? (G 6,8)

Most different system

- Focus: *intrasystemic* similarities and differences
- Assumption: systemic factors do not play any role in explaining the observed behavior.
- Control: Common systemic characteristics
- Explanatory: Differences

Practice

- What's an origin of water conflicts? (G 1,3)
- What make two states apply the same policy? (G 2,4)
- How does a government determine its environmental policy? (G 5,7)
- What forms the political correctness of a society ? (G 6,8)

Comparison

Item	MSS	MDS
Assumption	Similarity is irrelevant	Differences is irrelevant
Focus	Difference	Common Characteristics
Control	Shared properties	Different features
Target	Sufficiency	Necessity

- The first question to ask: whether the systems are the same or different on the dependent variable?

Schedule

- Within, then cross-system
- Main, then secondary variables
- Stop: number of variables or degrees of freedom is exhausted