7 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Case Study Designs

As we pointed out in the previous chapter, a research design is a plan that shows how one intends to study an empirical question. Many factors affect the choice of a design. One is the purpose of the investigation. Whether the research is intended to be exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory will influence its design. The project's feasibility or practicality is another consideration. Some designs may be unethical, while others may be impossible to implement for lack of data or insufficient time and money. Researchers frequently must balance what is possible to accomplish against what would ideally be done to investigate a particular hypothesis. Consequently, many common designs entail unfortunate but necessary compromises, and thus the conclusions that may be drawn from them are more tentative and incomplete than anyone would like.

This chapter explores **case study designs**. These designs involve either a single case or a small number of cases. Recall from chapter 6 that qualitative research is often referred to as small *N* research, whereas quantitative research is referred to as large *N* research. (Note the term *case* is used rather than *unit of analysis*, which is used with large *N* studies.) Research designs associated with quantitative analysis are the subject of chapter 10. The emphasis in both chapters is on understanding how design choices affect the type of empirical claims that can be made, particularly whether they are causal claims or not. Establishing causal connections is the gold standard of modern empirical political science. But this is no easy task. Thus, this chapter and chapter 9 address the logic behind the search for causation and how to design or plan research to make legitimate causal inferences.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

7.1 Explain the importance of case study designs to the study of political phenomena.

7.2 Identify the purposes of case study designs.

7.3 Describe the logic underlying the selection of cases and case comparison.

7.4 Explain the difference between a counterfactual and a mechanistic understanding of causation.

7.5 Describe how process tracing is used to establish causation.

7.6 Understand the limits to generalizing from case studies.

CASE STUDY METHODS

Case study research is an important type of research and, in fact, the only type of research that can be used to answer questions about important, but rare or singular, events. For

example, why did the United Nations fail to stop the genocide in Rwanda?[1] Why did democratic consolidation occur in European countries after 1945 where it had not before?[2] And why did rural people support the leftist insurgency in El Salvador at considerable risk to themselves?[3] Two of the research examples introduced in Chapter 1 are case studies. S. Erdem Aytaç, Luis Schiumerini, and Susan Stokes compare the cases of Brazil, Ukraine, and Turkey to investigate why some governments escalate their use of force against citizen protests but others do not.[4] John D'Attoma compares the cases of northern and southern Italy to identify why tax compliance in the two regions differs.[5]

Before we discuss different types and purposes of case study research designs, a brief review of the history of case study research and debate over its contribution to the scientific study of political phenomena will help you to understand current views about the purpose and use of case study research.

Very briefly, the method enjoyed a privileged position in political science research for many years, fell into disfavor, and is now experiencing a newfound appreciation and resurgence. The comparative method (e.g., the systematic comparison of cases) is often traced back to John Stuart Mill's 1843 *A System of Logic* in which he presented several methods of making comparisons including "the method of agreement" and the "method of difference."[6] We will have more to say about the logic of comparisons shortly.

There are several reasons why case studies were the dominant approach to studying politics in the past and why they are still a useful research strategy today. Absent the availability of powerful computing, which has enabled the collection, storage, and analysis of large data sets, researchers were limited to analyzing a single case or comparing a relatively few cases. That is no longer the situation, but there remain significant reasons for engaging in case study research. For example, experimental manipulation of key variables thought to be relevant in explaining past events is not possible, and their manipulation in contemporaneous research is often very difficult or unethical. Thus, researchers must still compare and contrast cases with respect to the presence or absence of causes and outcomes. Furthermore, as pointed out above, some events are relatively rare; therefore, there are not enough observations for statistical analysis. However, case studies were criticized, especially after the advent of large-scale computing, for failing to sufficiently contribute to an accumulation of scientific knowledge about politics and to the development of general theories that were useful in explaining political phenomena. As Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett state:

> Following the end of World War II, many political scientists were quite favorably disposed toward or even enthusiastic about the prospect of undertaking individual case studies for the development of knowledge and theory. Many case studies were conducted, not only in the field of international relations but also in public administration comparative politics, and American politics. Although individual case studies were often instructive, they did not lend themselves readily to strict comparison or to orderly cumulation. As a result, the initial enthusiasm for case studies gradually faded, and the case study as a strategy for theory development fell into disrepute.[7]

Currently, advocates of case study research contend that case studies have much to contribute to the scientific understanding of politics. While descriptive, relatively atheoretical case studies are recognized as having valid purposes, the emphasis is now on using case studies to test theories and to elucidate causal mechanisms in ways that quantitative methods cannot. As we pointed out in chapter 6, qualitative methods are particularly useful for discovering the *causes of effects*. They differ from quantitative methods in that their purpose is *not* to measure mathematically how variation in a dependent variable is related to variation in an independent variable or variables, or to measure the average value of the dependent variable given specific values of an independent variable for a large number of cases. Rather, case studies may be designed to understand and expose the causal mechanisms that lie behind statistical associations between variables discovered in large *N* studies. To emphasize the difference between small *N* and large *N* studies, case study designs typically refer to causes (C) and outcomes (O) instead of referring to independent and dependent variables.

CASE STUDY TYPES

Case study designs can be categorized according to their purpose or research objective and the logic behind the selection of a case or cases.[8] Here we adopt the typologies put forth by Jack S. Levy.[9]

Purposes of Case Studies

Case studies can be distinguished according to their purpose. Levy suggests a typology with four types: idiographic, hypothesis generating, hypothesis testing, and plausibility probes.

Idiographic case studies aim to describe, explain, or interpret a singular historical episode with no intention of generalizing beyond the case. Idiographic case studies can be further distinguished according to whether they are *inductive or theory-guided*. Inductive case studies lack an explicit theoretical perspective and simply have the purpose of describing all aspects of a case. Another way to think of this type of case study is as a narrative or recounting of events. Theory-guided case studies "are explicitly structured by a well-developed conceptual framework that focuses on some theoretically specified aspects of reality and neglects others."[10] An example of this would be using Anthony Downs's "issue attention cycle" or John W. Kingdon's "three streams" model of policy making to structure a description of the politics of a particular policy.[11] This type of case study is analytical, rather than simply descriptive, yet it does not intend to generate or test hypotheses.

Hypothesis-generating case studies "examine one or more cases for the purpose of developing more general theoretical propositions" that can be tested in future research.[12] For example, researchers might study several cases of conflicts between nations to identify the key factors that seem to have led either to the outbreak of war or to peaceful resolution of the conflict. **Hypothesis-testing case studies** entail testing hypothesized empirical relationships. These types of case studies include investigations of causal mechanisms, an application of case study methods contributing to the resurgence of and respect for case

study research. Finally, **plausibility probes** serve several research purposes: "to sharpen a hypothesis or theory, to refine the operationalization or measurement of key variables, or to explore the suitability of a particular case as a vehicle for testing a theory before engaging in a costly and time-consuming research effort."[13]

In idiographic case studies, the researcher typically chooses a case for its historical importance, intrinsic interest, or heuristic value in illustrating a particular analytical framework or theoretical perspective. But, for the latter three types of case studies, the selection of cases is a critical decision in the research process.

The Logic of Case Selection and Case Comparison

Case study research often uses the comparison of cases and logical arguments to make inferences about relationships between causes and outcomes. As stated above, the comparative method is often traced back to the English philosopher John Stuart Mill, who described two comparative strategies. In the **method of difference**, the researcher selects cases in which the outcomes differ, compares the cases looking for the single factor that the cases do not have in common, and concludes that this factor is "the effect, or cause, or a necessary part of the cause, of the phenomenon."[14] The method of difference also applies to situations where the researcher is investigating outcomes that vary in degree (e.g., high, medium, and low levels of an outcome) and identifies a factor that also varies in degree. The method of difference assumes a simple world in which there is a single factor that the cases do not have in common. If there is more than one, which one(s) are causal? Further studies will be needed to settle this question. For this reason, a case study using the method of difference is generally of the hypothesis-generating variety. In the **method of agreement**, the researcher selects cases that share the same outcome and identifies those conditions or causal factors that the cases also have in common. Conditions that the cases do not share are eliminated as possible causal factors.

The information gained from these types of comparisons is limited, however. In the method of agreement, it is possible that some other factor shared by the cases, but not identified by the researcher, accounts for the similarity in outcome. There may be prior or antecedent conditions that account for the shared factor. If the researcher has selected cases in which the antecedent condition is present, further research may involve selecting cases in which it is not. It is also possible that the "causal" factor shared by the cases will be found in another case in which the outcome is not present. In the method of difference, it is possible that the cases differ on some other, unidentified factor. Nevertheless, comparison of cases can lead to the generation of hypotheses and theoretical propositions that can be tested using more cases.

Researchers also rely on logic to improve the strength of their conclusions by selecting a **most likely case** or **least likely case**. A most likely case is one in which theory predicts an outcome is most likely to occur. When the outcome fails to occur, the theory is cast into doubt as it has failed an easy test. The case may suggest important revisions to the theory. An example of a most likely case analysis is the 1973 study by Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky in which they examine the implementation of a federal program possessing all of

the attributes suggested by theories of implementation to be important for successful implementation, yet the program failed.[15] In a least likely case, a theory faces a difficult test. If, in fact, the theory still appears to explain the outcome, the test provides strong support for the theory. Another selection strategy is to select a **deviant case**. A researcher may choose a case that does not conform to a theory or fit a normal pattern. For example, suppose a researcher looks at the relationship between the average spending per pupil on primary and secondary education and educational outcomes among the states and observes that for the most part as spending increases so do positive educational outcomes, but finds there is a state that achieves very high outcomes while its spending is quite modest in comparison to that of other states. This case would then be carefully examined to identify the reason(s) why it does not fit. Thus, deviant case studies generally contribute to the revision and refinement of theories.

Aytaç et al.'s research on the response of democratic regimes to citizen protests introduced in chapter 1 is an example of a comparative case study using the method of difference.[16] They compare three countries, Brazil, Ukraine, and Turkey, each of which experienced uprisings in 2013. In all three cases, the governments repressed early protests, which led to the mass mobilization of protesters. In two of the countries, Brazil and Ukraine, authorities pulled back the police and made concessions to the protesters. In the third, Turkey, authorities responded by upping the level of repression. The authors then set about systematically comparing the three countries to identify a factor present in Turkey, but absent in Brazil and Ukraine, that might account for Turkey's divergent behavior.

Drawing from previous research into why democracies in general are less repressive, Aytaç et al. suggest that electoral security shapes governments' responses to protest. A key feature of democracy is accountability: In a democracy, authorities can be voted out of office if citizens disapprove of government actions. However, if a government is electorally secure and perceives that there will be no adverse electoral consequences for pursuing a particular action, it will take that action. The researchers present evidence showing that Turkey's regime was much more electorally secure than the regimes in Brazil and Ukraine. In Turkey, party allegiances and important social cleavages coincided. The government's supporters were not among the protesters, and the government was confident that its supporters would not object to the use of violence against the protesters. Furthermore, the authors argue that the "Turkish government did not passively rely on their supporters to reject the protesters; it led its followers to interpret the uprising as a conspiracy against the nation, instigated from abroad."[17]

In the course of their analysis, the researchers investigate and rule out several rival explanations for divergent extrication strategies: They systematically compare the three countries with respect to democratic consolidation, decentralization, incomplete civilian control over the police, ideological orientation of the government, the nature of the threat posed by protesters, and the social class of protesters. These comparisons are shown in table 7-1, which you may remember from chapter 1.[18] The authors were particularly concerned about democratic consolidation as a rival explanation. The authors note that previous scholarly research on the response of democratic regimes to citizen protests concluded that transitional regimes, ones that are neither fully authoritarian nor consolidated democracies, are especially prone to violence against their populations. A consolidated democracy

is one that is not expected to revert to authoritarianism. The authors selected countries that were similar in their level of democratic consolidation. In fact, Ukraine's level of democratic consolidation was slightly lower than Turkey's, yet Ukraine resolved its crisis peacefully. Thus, the authors argue that differences in the level of democratic consolidation cannot account for the difference in extrication strategies.

What are the implications of these findings? The authors present their research as a "plausibility probe" and state that it contributes to theory building about the relationship of democracy to governments' use of repression by demonstrating how electoral security shapes governments' responses to protest in democratic settings. They suggest that future cross-national research could test their claim that variation in electoral insecurity explains variation in the response to protests by governments in new democracies.

TABLE 7-1 ■ Extrication Strategies: Where the Cases Fall on Favored and Rival Explanations

	Security of Office	Centralization	Democratic Consolidation	Control over the Police	Extrication Strategy
Turkey	High	High	Low	High	Repression
Brazil	Low	Low	High	High	Restraint
Ukraine	Low	High	Low	Medium	Restraint

	Ideology of Government	Nature of Threat	Social Class of Protesters	Extrication Strategy
Turkey	Conservative	Low	High	Repression
Brazil	Leftist	Medium	High	Restraint
Ukraine	Conservative	High	High	Restraint

Source: S. Erdem Aytaç, Luis Schiumerini, and Susan Stokes, "Protests and Repression in New Democracies," *Perspectives on Politics* 15, no. 1 (2017): table 4, pp. 74–75.

USING CASES TO EXPLORE CAUSAL MECHANISMS: PROCESS TRACING

Comparative case analysis with the purpose of testing hypotheses relies on a **counterfactual understanding of causation**. It is based on the idea of difference-making: by studying "whether the *absence* of the cause results in the *absence* of the outcome, all other things being equal," we can claim that the cause produced the outcome.[19] Some case studies, however, seek to delve into the connection between cause and outcome and do not rely on counterfactuals to establish causation. Instead, they are based on a **mechanistic understanding**

of causation: "Difference-making provides evidence of the cross-case effects of changing values of a posited cause, whereas mechanistic evidence sheds light on causal process within individual cases."[20] Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen see a single case study whose purpose is a "mechanism understanding" of causation as a significant method furthering a scientific understanding of political phenomena.[21]

Process tracing refers to case studies that "explicitly unpack mechanisms and engage in detailed empirical tracing of them."[22] Process tracing studies use deductive reasoning and ask, "If an explanation is true, what would be the specific process leading to the outcome?"[23] Process tracing case studies often involve only one case because of the copious amount of information and detail that is required to trace a causal mechanism and to show that rival explanations do not account for an outcome. Process tracing studies may differ from other types of case studies, especially idiographic case studies: due to their intense focus on tracing steps in the causal process and testing evidence, they may not provide a highly readable narrative of events, although the two are not mutually exclusive.

Process tracing depends on logic and has been compared to a detective sifting through evidence in order to solve a mystery. Evidence needs to be tested for its usefulness in reaching conclusions. Stephen Van Evera points out that a strong test of a hypothesis is one in which evidence is *uniquely* predicted by a theory and is *certain* or unequivocal in the prediction. Tests of evidence vary to the extent to which they make unique or certain predictions. From the four possible combinations of uniqueness (or not) and certainty (or not), Van Evera identifies four tests.[24] For simplicity's sake, let us assume we are trying to evaluate a suspect in a murder case in which the victim was shot. *Hoop tests* involve evidence that is certain, but not unique. Hoop tests are useful in weeding out suspects. Thus, we might ask, "Was the suspect in the vicinity of the crime?" Failing the hoop test disqualifies a suspect. How much passing the hoop test points to a particular suspect depends on how many people there were in the vicinity of the crime—if there were many, a suspect passing the hoop test does not greatly increase the probability that our suspect is the murderer. *Smoking-gun tests* provide unique evidence, but not certain evidence. If we find gunpowder residue on the hands of the suspect, this is fairly strong evidence that implicates the suspect. Yet, we cannot rule out a suspect if she does not have gunpowder residue on her hands—after all, she may have worn gloves and disposed of them right away. *Doubly decisive tests* provide both certain and unique evidence. If the police find CCTV footage that shows the suspect holding a gun in the alley where the victim was found, this is very strong evidence pointing to the suspect. *Straw-in-the-wind tests* provide evidence that is neither unique nor certain. Suppose the main suspects are the deceased's sisters and it is discovered that the deceased was planning to sell his share of a family-run business to an outside entity, something the sisters were known to oppose. This evidence provides a motive for the crime, but it doesn't indicate which sister, nor does having a motive prove that someone is a killer. Furthermore, other people may have had other motives for killing the deceased. Process studies frequently use Bayesian logic, which involves probability calculations, to evaluate evidence from tests and update beliefs about competing explanations.[25]

Researchers also talk about causal conditions in terms of whether they are necessary or sufficient. A **necessary cause** is a condition that must be present in order for the outcome to

occur. A **sufficient cause** is a condition with which the outcome is always found. The presence of a necessary condition does not guarantee an outcome: A condition may be necessary, but not sufficient. For example, in order to be pregnant, one must be a female, but being a female is not sufficient for the pregnancy outcome. Similarly, a condition can be sufficient but not necessary: The outcome may also be found in the absence of that condition because there are other conditions that cause the outcome. For example, swimming for thirty minutes three times a week may be sufficient to ensure cardiovascular fitness, but it's not necessary. Other forms of exercise performed regularly also lead to fitness. Lastly, there are INUS conditions. An INUS condition is a condition that is an individually necessary part of an unnecessary, but sufficient, condition. For example, having access to a pool or body of water is a necessary condition for swimming, which is an unnecessary, but sufficient, condition for achieving physical fitness.

Let us take a look at the initial steps of a process tracing study by Elizabeth N. Saunders, who traces the effects of beliefs held by presidents on their behavior. Specifically, she hypothesizes that how presidents perceive threats to national security (their causal beliefs about the nature of the threat) shapes both their willingness to engage in international military interventions involving smaller nations and the nature of those interventions.[26] Her research illustrates several important features of process tracing. First, she defines two types of causal beliefs: *Externally focused leaders* believe "that threats are associated with other states' foreign and security policies or international orientation. Such leaders do not see a causal connection between the outcomes and the domestic institutions of smaller powers.[27] *Internally focused* leaders "believe that a smaller power's foreign and security policies are intimately connected to its domestic institutions."[28] Second, she clearly describes how presidents' causal beliefs are linked to military intervention decisions—that is, she outlines the causal mechanism as shown in figure 7-1.

Third, she identifies two competing, alternative explanations, one of which she labels the structural/material conditions hypothesis:

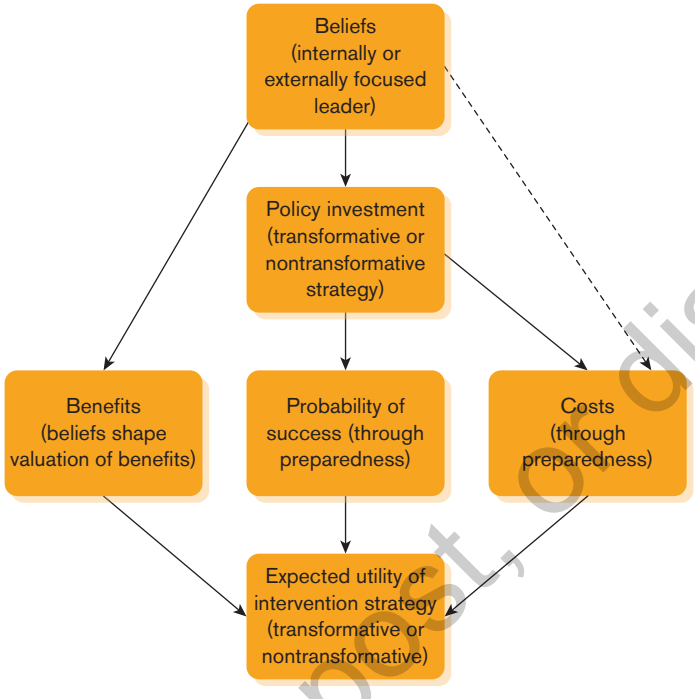
> Leaders evaluate intervention opportunities based on structural and material conditions in the international environment, within their own state, and within the potential intervention target. Given a set of conditions, leaders will make similar cost-benefit calculations about whether and how to intervene, regardless of their own personal beliefs.[29]

The other she labels the domestic competition hypothesis:

> Competition among domestic actors, including not only leaders but also the bureaucracy, the public, advisors, parties, and advocacy groups, drives intervention policy. Intervention decisions, including the choice of strategy, are a product of political interaction among these actors rather than leaders' preferences.[30]

Saunders does not argue that these alternative explanations don't matter; rather, she contends that they are insufficient to explain the intervention choices of presidents. Furthermore,

FIGURE 7-1 ■ How Leaders' Causal Beliefs Influence the Expected Utility of an Intervention Strategy



Source: Elizabeth N. Saunders, *Leaders at War: How Presidents Shape Military Interventions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), fig. 2.1, p. 37.

as shown in table 7-2, she makes specific predictions based on the competing explanations about what she would expect to observe.

These predictions form the basis of tests and structure the evaluation of evidence.

Fourth, she clearly describes how she chooses a set of cases. She selects three presidents (Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson) who provide variation in causal beliefs but who governed under similar international conditions: each governed "when the superpower conflict was well underway and the international system was relatively stable."[31] She then identifies cases of potential interventions and explains why she excludes others. For example, she excludes cases in which there was a risk of nuclear escalation. In essence, she is not claiming that her theory would hold up in such cases. She also clearly defines what constitutes an intervention. For each president, she selects one intervention and one nonintervention, closely spaced in time and within the same region. She also includes in her analyses the approaches of all three presidents to the Vietnam War. Finally, she develops a standard set of questions to be asked in each case and a standard set of indicators to code leaders' beliefs,

TABLE 7-2 ■ Summary of Predictions

	Structural/material conditions hypothesis	Domestic competition hypothesis	Causal beliefs hypothesis
Do leaders vary in how they make cost-benefit calculations?	No: Given a set of conditions, leaders make similar cost-benefit calculations.	Maybe, but not decisive: Cost-benefit calculations result from interaction among domestic actors.	Yes: Leaders' causal beliefs systematically influence their cost-benefit calculations.
Do leaders vary in threat perception and how they value benefits?	No: Threat perception and the valuation of benefits are driven by international security factors.	Maybe, but not decisive: Threat perception and the valuation of benefits result from interaction among domestic actors.	Yes: Leaders vary systematically in threat perception and how they value benefits.
Do attempted policy investments reflect causal beliefs?	No: Policy investments are driven by anticipated security needs.	Maybe, but not decisive: Policy investments are the product of competition among domestic actors.	Yes: Leaders attempt to invest in the capabilities that reflect their threat perception.
Does a leader's preferred strategy influence the decision to intervene?	No: Strategy may influence the decision to intervene but it is driven by structural and material factors.	Maybe, but not decisive: Leaders' preferences are only one input into domestic competition.	Yes: A leader will be more likely to intervene if he estimates his favored strategy to be feasible.
Do leaders' causal beliefs affect the choice of strategy?	No: Strategy is driven by the situation on the ground and available capabilities.	Maybe, but not decisive: Strategy is a product of interaction among domestic actors.	Yes: Internally focused leaders are more likely to intervene transformatively. Externally focused leaders are more likely to intervene nontransformatively.
If there are multiple crises, do leaders' causal beliefs affect intervention targets?	No: Target selection results from available capabilities, the target environment, and the security importance of targets.	Maybe, but not decisive: Target selection is a product of interaction among domestic actors.	Yes: Leaders choose targets based on threat perception and where they estimate their favored strategy to be more likely to succeed.
Do leaders considering the same ongoing crisis differ in their evaluations?	No: Any variation results from changes in capabilities or the situation on the ground.	Maybe, but not decisive: Any variation results from changes in interactions among domestic actors.	Yes: Leaders may not agree that there is a threat or may disagree about the source of the threat and choose different strategies.

Source: Elizabeth N. Saunders, *Leaders at War: How Presidents Shape Military Interventions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), table 2.1, pp. 44–45.

policy investments, and intervention choices. To avoid confusing beliefs with behavior, her measurement of a president's beliefs is based on information about those beliefs *before* he became president. Each of these steps is essential to setting up a valid test of her claims.

GENERALIZING FROM CASE STUDIES

Process tracing studies can provide strong support for theories by specifying what evidence would need to be found to support a theory or rule it out and sifting through information for that evidence. In addition, process tracing studies offer the opportunity to make and test revisions to theories during the research process. But, to what extent can the relationships observed in process tracing case studies be generalized to other cases? Beach and Pedersen argue that in order to generalize to other cases from within-case causal analysis, the other cases must be causally homogeneous, not heterogeneous. A **causally homogeneous population** is "one in which a given cause can be expected to have the *same* causal relationship with the outcome across cases in the population," whereas a **causally heterogeneous population** is "one where a given cause might have many different effects across different cases or the same cause is linked to the same outcome through different causal mechanisms."[32] So, for example, as noted above, Saunders excludes cases involving the risk of nuclear escalations because she expects these cases to be causally different. The presence of the nuclear risk is expected to change the decision-making calculations of presidents, leaving less room for their personal beliefs about threats to play a role in decisions to intervene internationally. It would be interesting to expand her research to these cases. They would constitute a least likely test of her theory.

Generalization from individual case studies or case studies based on counterfactual reasoning may be limited, but this criticism does not mean the information gleaned from them is not important. In fact, as Robert K. Yin pointed out, the same criticism can be leveled against a single experiment: Scientific knowledge is usually based on multiple experiments rather than on a single experiment.[33] Yet people do not say that performing a single experiment is not worthwhile.

In addition to the issue of generalizing from case studies, there are two other drawbacks of case studies to consider. One is that case studies may require long and arduous efforts to describe and report the results owing to the need to present adequate documentation. (Think about the documentation that Saunders would need to present in her comparison of three presidents.) A related, and more serious, criticism is the potential problem of researcher bias and subjectivity in the selection of cases and interpretation of evidence. To better understand the potential for evidentiary bias, it is necessary to know more about the data collection techniques associated with qualitative research, which is the subject of chapter 8.

Despite these concerns, case study designs can be an informative and appropriate choice. Case study designs permit a deeper understanding of causal processes, the explication of general theory, and the development of hypotheses regarding difficult-to-observe phenomena. Much of our understanding of politics and political processes comes from case studies of individuals (presidents, senators, representatives, mayors, judges), statutes, campaigns, treaties, policy initiatives, political movements, democratization, countries, peace,

and wars. The case study design should be viewed as complementary to, rather than inconsistent with, other experimental and nonexperimental designs.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have discussed case study research designs, their purposes, and their important contribution to understanding political phenomena. The purpose of some case studies is simply to illustrate a political phenomenon or to provide an account of an event. Other case study designs aim to explore connections between causes and effects. Thus, this chapter included a discussion of the comparative method and the logic behind the method of difference and the method of agreement and the selection of cases for comparison. Case study research is particularly well suited to exploring causal mechanisms, which connect causes and outcomes. Process tracing involves testing hypothesized connections by explicitly unpacking causal mechanisms and systematically weighing evidence to see if it conforms to predictions based on theory and contradicts predictions based on competing explanations. Where to obtain evidence and how to present it are the subjects of the chapters to follow.

TERMS INTRODUCED

Case study design. A comprehensive and in-depth qualitative study of a single case or several cases. A nonexperimental design in which the investigator has little control over events. 135

Causally heterogeneous population. A population in which a given cause might have many different effects across different cases or the same cause is linked to the same outcome through different causal mechanisms. 145

Causally homogeneous population. A population in which a given cause can be expected to have the *same* causal relationship with the outcome across cases in the population. 145

Counterfactual understanding of causation. The logical argument that support for the claim that A causes B is demonstrated by a case in which A is absent and B does not occur. 140

Deviant case. A case that exhibits all of the factors thought to lead to a particular outcome, but in which the outcome does not occur. 139

Hypothesis-generating case study. A type of case study that attempts to develop from one or more cases some general theoretical propositions that can be tested in future research. 137

Hypothesis-testing case study. A type of case study that attempts to test hypothesized empirical relationships. 137

Idiographic case study. A type of case study that attempts to describe, explain, or interpret a singular historical episode with no intention of generalizing beyond the case. 137

Least likely case. A case in which it is expected that a theory is least likely to apply. 138

Mechanistic understanding of causation. An approach to demonstrating or understanding causation by focusing on the mechanism by which a cause leads to an outcome. 140

Method of agreement. A comparative strategy wherein the researcher selects cases that share the same

outcome and identifies those conditions or causal factors that the cases also have in common. 138

Method of difference. A comparative strategy wherein the researcher selects cases in which the outcomes differ, compares the cases looking for the single factor that the cases do not have in common, and concludes that this factor is causal. 138

Most likely case. A case in which theory predicts an outcome is most likely to occur. 138

Necessary cause. A condition that must be present in order for the outcome to occur. 141

Plausibility probes. A case study that is not expected to provide a definitive test of the connection between a cause and an outcome, but is expected to contribute to conducting such a test in the future. 138

Process tracing. A case study in which a causal mechanism is traced from causal condition to final outcome. 141

Sufficient cause. A condition with which the outcome is always found. 142

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8. Stephen Van Evera identifies five main purposes of case studies—testing theories, creating theories, identifying antecedent conditions, testing the importance of these antecedent conditions, and explaining cases of intrinsic importance—in his *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).
9. Jack S. Levy, "Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, no. 1 (2008): 1–18. For a more

elaborate typology, see John Gerring, "Case Selection for Case-Study Analysis," *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, ed. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 647–48.

10. Levy, "Case Studies," 4.
11. Anthony Downs, "Up and Down with Ecology—the 'Issue Attention Cycle,'" *Public Interest* 28 (Summer 1972): 38–50; and John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2011).
12. Levy, "Case Studies," 5.
13. Ibid., 6.
14. John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation* (New York: Harper, 1850), 225. Accessed February 15, 2019. Available at http://www.archive.org/details/systemoflogicrat01milliala.
15. Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, *Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland; or, Why It's Amazing That Federal Programs Work at All, This Being a Saga of the Economic Development Administration as Told by Two Sympathetic Observers Who Seek to Build Morals on a Foundation* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1973).
16. Aytaç et al., "Protests and Repression in New Democracies."
17. Ibid., 76.
18. Ibid., 73–74.
19. Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Causal Case Study Methods: Foundations and Guidelines for Comparing, Matching, and Tracing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 28.
20. Ibid., 41.
21. Ibid., 31.
22. Ibid., 34. Beach and Pedersen distinguish between congruence studies, which provide only a minimalist understanding of mechanisms, and process tracing studies.
23. Ibid., 21. Induction is also an aspect of process tracing, as researchers may revise expectations about causal processes based on evidence discovered during the research process.
24. Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, 31–32.
25. A discussion of Bayes' theorem is beyond the scope of this text. For an introduction to the application of Bayes' theorem to process tracing, see the appendix in *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, ed. Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015). See also Andrew Bennett, "Process Tracing: A Bayesian Perspective," *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, ed. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 702–21.
26. Elizabeth N. Saunders, *Leaders at War: How Presidents Shape Military Interventions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).
27. Ibid., 30.
28. Ibid., 31.
29. Ibid., 27.
30. Ibid., 27–28.
31. Ibid., 14.
32. Beach and Pedersen, *Causal Case Study Methods*, 50–51.
33. Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, rev. ed., Applied Social Research Methods Series, vol. 5 (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989), 21.

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