

Case Studies

1

- Research design—to ensure that the **evidence** obtained enables us to answer the **initial question** as **unambiguously** as possible.
- Research Method—the way the data is collected
- Case Studies are NOT:
 - Only Qualitative data
 - A Data Collection Method:
 - Ethnographies, Participant-observation...

David de Vaus, 2001, *Research Design in Social Research*

Case Studies

- Confusion:
 - ▣ types of evidence (e.g., qualitative data)
 - ▣ types of data collection methods (e.g., ethnography)
 - ▣ research strategies (e.g., case studies)
- Goal of Case studied: establish the parameters which can be applied to all research. Thus, even a single case could be considered acceptable.

Yin (2003), *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*.

Yin (1981), "The Case Study Crisis: Some Answers," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 58-65.

Different Research Strategies

Strategy	Form of Research Question	Requires Control of Behavioral Events?	Focuses on Contemporary Events?
Experiment	How, Why	Yes	Yes
Survey	Who, What, Where How Many/Much?	No	Yes
Archival Analysis	Who, What, Where How Many/Much?	No	Yes/No
History	How, Why	No	No
Case Study	How, Why	No	Yes

Yin, 2003, Case Study Research: Design and Methods, Figure 1.1

Case Studies vs. Grounded Theory

- Case study research must have a theoretical dimension otherwise it will be of little value for wider generalization.
- 3 ways theory is used in case study design:
 - Theory testing case studies
 - Theory building case studies → **Grounded Theory Method**
 - Clinical case studies—case centered

Grounded Theory Method

- Sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss
- The split of Glaser and Strauss—Strauss published *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (1987).
 - ▣ Glaser—induction, emergence, and the individual researcher's creativity within a clear frame of stages.
 - ▣ Strauss—validation criteria and a systematical approach.

Grounded Theory Method

- All is data
- Open coding (substantive coding)
- Selective coding
 - ▣ theoretical sampling—selectively sample new data with the core in mind.
- Memoring
- Sorting and Writing up
- No pre-research literature review, no taping and no talk

Building Theories from Case Study

- Start with no theory, no hypothesis.
- Just start with Research Questions
- Use Case Studies to build theory.
- 4-10 case studies ideal
- Series of cases is a series of experiments
 - ▣ Not a series of results from single experiment.
 - ▣ Don't use statistics to compare results.

Building Theories from Case Study

□ Strengths

- Increased likelihood of novel theory
 - Juxtaposition of contradictory or paradoxical evidence
 - Less bias from previous research
- Theory is testable with measurable constructs and hypotheses proven false.
 - Constructs measured during theory building
 - Hypothesis verifiable because created during theory building.
- Empirically valid.
 - Theory building intimately tied with evidence

Building Theories from Case Study

- Weakness
 - ▣ Empirical evidence yields overly complex theory
 - Rich in detail, lacking simplicity of overall perspective
 - ▣ Narrow and idiosyncratic theory
 - Unable to raise generality of theory

Step	Activity	Reason
Getting Started	Definition of research question Possibly a priori constructs	Focuses efforts Provides better grounding of construct measures
Selecting Cases	Neither theory nor hypotheses Specified population Theoretical, not random, sampling	Retains theoretical flexibility Constrains extraneous variation and sharpens external validity Focuses efforts on theoretically useful cases—i.e., those that replicate or extend theory by filling conceptual categories
Crafting Instruments and Protocols	Multiple data collection methods Qualitative and quantitative data combined Multiple investigators	Strengthens grounding of theory by triangulation of evidence Synergistic view of evidence Fosters divergent perspectives and strengthens grounding
Entering the Field	Overlap data collection and analysis, including field notes Flexible and opportunistic data collection methods	Speeds analyses and reveals helpful adjustments to data collection Allows investigators to take advantage of emergent themes and unique case features
Analyzing Data	Within-case analysis Cross-case pattern search using divergent techniques	Gains familiarity with data and preliminary theory generation Forces investigators to look beyond initial impressions and see evidence through multiple lenses
Shaping Hypotheses	Iterative tabulation of evidence for each construct Replication, not sampling, logic across cases Search evidence for “why” behind relationships	Sharpens construct definition, validity, and measurability Confirms, extends, and sharpens theory Builds internal validity
Enfolding Literature	Comparison with conflicting literature Comparison with similar literature	Builds internal validity, raises theoretical level, and sharpens construct definitions Sharpens generalizability, improves construct definition, and raises theoretical level
Reaching Closure	Theoretical saturation when possible	Ends process when marginal improvement becomes small