

Case study I

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Lecture outline

- Case study theory
- Generalization from case studies
- Exercises: outlining a case study

Case study

- One of the most frequent qualitative methods.
- Supposes detailed analysis of just one/a few cases.
- Large dataset related to just one/a few cases.
- Targets holistic assessment of the complexity of the case.
- Only as good as well focused.

Definitions (Rohlfing)

Definition of 'case':

A bounded empirical phenomenon that is an instance of a population of similar empirical phenomena

Definition of 'case study':

Empirical analysis of a small sample of cases

Definition of 'qualitative case study':

Empirical analysis of a small sample of cases based on the analysis of a wide variety of (non-comparable) observations

Defending case study: cases in human learning

- Common expertise in everyday social, technical, or intellectual knowledge and skills: cooking, driving, carrying a conversation, interpreting new information.
- Specialized skill stemming from job or personal life devotion: flying a fighter jet, playing instrument.
- Common to all expertise: building on intimate knowledge of several thousand concrete cases.
- In social science, context-independent knowledge make textbooks while context-dependent knowledge make experts.

The induction problem

What is „The induction problem“?

The induction problem

Poppers' „black swan“

The induction problem

= Induced generalization or mere speculation?

- Do we know the extent of the population?
- Do we have access to the data regarding the population?

The solution

- Substantial knowledge (phenomena, cases)
- Focusing of cases

Example:

- Policies of small, democratic states towards regional hegemons
- *Small, democratic state* vs. black swan

Typology

- According to the study's relation to theory
- Atheoretical: exploratory research, case-specific research
- Building hypothesis (theory): generalizing knowledge about certain class of phenomena
- Modifying hypothesis (theory): sharpening the hypothesis
- Testing hypothesis (theory): deductive approach

Relations to theory

		Hypothesis is formed	
		After empirical analysis	Before empirical analysis
Existing theory on which one builds	No	Building hypothesis	-
	Yes	Modifying hypothesis	Hypothesis testing

Generalization

- Concepts, hypotheses, and theories do emerge from empirical studies. Case study seems to be the basis of many of them.
- Hypothesis/theory testing is a form of gaining general knowledge.
- Generally possible within population (knowledge applicable across the class of phenomena)

Exercises

Exercises

- Introduce briefly your area of interest.
- Suggest research topic suitable for a qualitative analysis.
- Identify a case (*what is this a case of?*) suitable for qualitative case understanding and focus it.
- Suggest the class of cases for which your outcomes may be generally valid.