Comparative Analysis

MEVIT4800 11 February 2009

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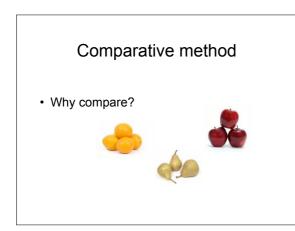
Expectations MEVIT4800 Spring 2009

 In general

 How useful do you expect this course to be for you?

 15 Very useful
 17 useful
 1 not very useful
 2 waste of time

Lanceage What do yubink about having this course in English 10 Good. I don't speek Norwegian. 16 Good. I speek Norwegian, but my English is good enough 9 Challenging





- · Four basic empirical methods:
 - Experiments
 - Statistics
 - Comparative methods
 - Case studies

Many variables, small N

- · Suggested strategies (Lijphart):
 - Increase the number of cases.
 - Reduce the number of variables.
 Combine variables (reduce property space)
 Focus on key variables
 - Focus on "comparable cases".

What are comparable cases?

 Similar in a large number of important characteristics (variables) which one wants to treat as a constant, but dissimilar as far as those variables are concerned which one wants to relate to each other.

(Lijphart 1971)



- Competing research strategies:
 Most similar systems design (Lijphart's comparable cases)
 – Most different systems design
- Suggests third strategy: – Mixed systems

Mos	t sin	nilai	rsy	ster	ns			
		Cases						
Variables		1	2	3	4	5		
	X1	0	0	0	x	х		
	X2	0	0	0	0	0		
	X3	0	0	0	0	0		
	X4	х	x	х	x	x		
	X5	х	x	х	x	x		
	Y	0	0	0	x	х		

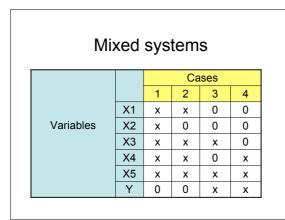
Most	diffe	erer	nt s	yste	ms	
	Cases					
Variables		1	2	3	4	5
	X1	х	х	х	х	х
	X2	х	x	0	0	0
	X3	0	x	х	х	0
	X4	0	0	0	x	х
	X5	х	0	х	0	x
	Y	х	x	х	x	х





Frendreis' critique of the two competing strategies

- Several causal explanations may still be tenable after all irrelevant factors are eliminated.
- The researcher must systematically include and exclude certain cases.
- Difficult to find comparable cases.
- A dataset systematically selected for these strategies will be less useful if interest turns to phenomenon that is not "correct" for the design.
- Suggests a mixed systems approach.



David Collier 1993

• 3 goals of comparison:

- Causal analysis (as above)
- Parallel demonstration of theory
- Contrast of contexts

Justifications for small N

- Pursue disciplined configurative approach
- Avoid problem of conceptual stretching
- Facilitate thick descriptions
- Achieve analytic **depth** of case-oriented approach
 - Collier 1993

Compare what, why, how?

Possible research questions:

- · What do broadcasters do on the web?
- To what degree does level of economic development matter for freedom of speech in a country?
- Your project...

Next time: Case studies

· Collier:

- Case studies are the basis of most comparative research.
- Much can be learned from making explicit the comparisons that are often implicitly built into case studies.