

Case Studies

Political Science

What a single case can and cannot establish.

Types and uses.

Types

Typical — illustrates a general pattern

Deviant — does not fit the theory

Critical — a hard test for a claim

Most likely and least likely cases

Process tracing within a case

What they establish

How a mechanism operated

Whether a theory holds in a hard case

New hypotheses for wider testing

Not: how common the pattern is

Educational reference. A least-likely case that confirms a theory is strong evidence; a most-likely case that disconfirms it is too.