

# Case-oriented research strategies:

- Are intended to show how specific social processes develop and combine to produce particular outcomes in certain settings
- are implicitly or explicitly comparative
- examine multiple, interdependent causes
- are insensitive to the frequency of cases
- require detailed knowledge of cases

# CASES DIFFER IN THEIR ABSTRACTION AND GENERALITY

## Degree of Generality

Low

High

## Degree of Abstraction from Concrete Instances

Low

Emerge as specific phenomena in the course of research, e.g. occupational communities

Are generic conventional objects, e.g. university departments

High

Are theoretically constructed as particular phenomena, e.g. collective acts of rebellion

Are general theoretical constructs, e.g. firms as rational actors

## **Intensive research involving case studies differs from extensive, variable oriented research**

**Intensive** research studies particular phenomena in depth to understand how and why specific processes generate particular outcomes in particular circumstances.

**Extensive** research studies how particular properties of social phenomena are distributed and associated in a population or sample.

They vary in terms of:

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Questions:</b>         | What are the central goals of the research?                      |
| <b>Relationships:</b>     | How are elements connected?                                      |
| <b>Groupings:</b>         | How are phenomena grouped?                                       |
| <b>Knowledge:</b>         | What kinds of understanding are produced?                        |
| <b>Methods used:</b>      | How formal, standardised, closed and interactive are techniques? |
| <b>Appropriate tests:</b> | Corroboration of accounts, replication                           |
| <b>Limitations:</b>       | Explanatory power, generalisability                              |

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## INTENSIVE

## EXTENSIVE

Research Questions

Nature of generative processes and actions in particular cases

Nature of regularities and distribution of properties in a population

Relations between elements

Substantive connections

Formal relations of similarity of properties

Groupings

Causal

Taxonomic

Nature of accounts

Causal explanations of how objects and events were produced

Descriptive generalisations of relations between properties

Appropriate tests

Corroboration of accounts

Replicability

Limitations

Generalisability of phenomena, closure of system

Contextual differences between populations, limited explanatory power.