

Introduction

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS ANTHOLOGY

This anthology takes you on two tours. The first tour is substantive: to experience the panorama of topics covered by some of the best case studies that may ever have been done, including a case study that is now 75 years old and still in print! The second tour is methodological: to see how case study research¹ has been practiced—by some of the best social scientists, past and present, in the country.²

Together, both tours take you through an exciting terrain. The substantive tour investigates such topics as:

- A mass vaccination of the American public in the 1970s—of the sort now envisaged to combat bioterrorism;
- Nuclear confrontation between the United States and the former Soviet Union, threatening life on the entire planet;
- The emergence of social class in American society in a New England city;
- The operation of the country's major computer chip firm—a Fortune 100 firm, in Silicon Valley;
- Civil disorder in Los Angeles in the 1990s (not 1960s);
- The reform of major urban school systems in Houston, Texas, and Chicago, Illinois;
- The reduction of serious crime in New York City under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani;
- Competition in the global marketplace by South Korea's major manufacturing firm;
- The workings of the country's major preschool program, *Head Start*;
- A methadone maintenance (drug treatment) clinic in Syracuse, New York; plus
- Eight additional topics.

The methodological tour shows how case studies investigate real-life events in their natural settings.³ The goal is to practice sound research while capturing both a phenomenon (the real-life event) and its context (the natural setting). One strength of the case study method is its usefulness when phenomenon and context are not readily separable, a condition that occurs in real-life but cannot easily be duplicated by laboratory research. Another strength is that the method enables you, as a social scientist, to address “how” and “why” questions about the real-life events, using a broad variety of empirical tools (e.g., direct field observations, extended interviews, and reviews of documents and archival and quantitative records).

Completing the two tours successfully will increase your ability to bring a powerful social science method to bear on significant social events. Could you ask for more?

Audiences for the Anthology. Regardless of your field of interest, you are likely to have been exposed to case studies of one form or another. Whether your field is an academic discipline (e.g., sociology, political science, or psychology) or a practice field (e.g., education, urban planning, community psychology, public administration, business management, health sciences, communications, or international affairs), your encounters should have included case studies done for research purposes (i.e., collecting and analyzing empirical evidence to address some research question).

Disappointingly, not all of these encounters may have been happy ones. Some researchers, based on their encounters, may have subsequently vowed to refrain from doing case studies and relying on case study evidence. These researchers may have been frustrated by the apparent lack of rigor in case study research. Other researchers remain willing to be swayed but cannot readily find or cite better case studies for their own or others' review. Yet other researchers already are satisfied with their use of the case study method but would like more examples.

The present anthology tries to meet the needs of all three audiences and also recognizes that the same individual may have suffered through all three variants at some point within the same career.

The Anthology's Selections. The anthology has 19 selections. They span a broad variety of topics and different social science disciplines, striving to demonstrate the applicability of the case study method to the bulk of social science research. Besides the breadth of the selections, they also were chosen as good examples of social science writing. Some of the selections represent excerpts from classic case studies. A good number of selections cover conditions in specific locales across the country (see Box 1).

Before going further, let's stop for a moment. Go to one of the 19 selections and read (or browse) it. If you want a contemporary topic, try the selections in Chapters 1, 12, or 19. If you want a sample of what

Box 1 Locales Covered by Anthology's Selections

Atlanta, GA (Chapter 8)*
Cambridge, MA (Chapter 9)
Chicago, IL (Chapter 11)
Clinton Township, MI (outside of Detroit) (Chapter 8)
Houston, TX (Chapter 19)
Los Angeles, CA (Chapter 13)
Louisville, KY (Chapter 8)
Merced, CA (Chapter 18)
Muncie, IL (Chapter 3)
New Bedford, MA (Chapter 8)
New York, NY (Chapter 17)
Oakland, CA (Chapter 5)
San Antonio, TX (Chapter 8)
San Francisco, CA (Chapter 8)
Silicon Valley, CA (Chapters 12 & 14)
Syracuse, NY (Chapter 16)
Washington, DC (Chapter 8)

*Note that Chapter 8 covers seven locales, but none in great depth. Missing from the list is the suburb just north of Boston, MA, which was the scene for the *Yankee City* study (Chapter 4).

might be a classic case study, try Chapters 2, 3, or 4. If you want to see how case study research has been reported in academic journals, as opposed to books, Chapters 7 or 18 are good examples. After reading or perusing any of this anthology's selections, you can return to this Introduction.

As with most anthologies, no one should expect to read the book from cover to cover. You hopefully have either looked through or read at least one of the selections. It should have piqued your interest. However, try not to limit your subsequent choices for reading additional selections to only your substantive topics of interest. The anthology does not concentrate on any particular subject matter (e.g., Box 2 shows how the selections might be categorized according to one scheme⁴.) Rather, the anthology deliberately covers diverse topics, and its organizing principles are methodological.

Box 2 Distribution of Anthology's Selections, by Academic Subjects

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Chapter Numbers</i>	
	<i>Primary Designation</i>	<i>Secondary Designation</i>
Community development	3, 4, 18	5, 8, 13
Criminal justice	13, 17	
Education	9, 11, 15, 19	
Health	1, 16	
International affairs	2, 6	
Businesses and organizations	10, 12, 14	6, 19
Public policy	5, 7, 8	1, 2, 15

USING THIS ANTHOLOGY

Methodologically, the selections fall into five sections. Covering all five will not only help you to appreciate the existing case study literature but also may help you to design and conduct your own case study. To assist in this process, each selection has an individual introduction that highlights both the methodological issues and the substantive significance of the selection. The introductions should give you an idea of what you can learn by reading each of the selections. The broader themes underlying all of the selections and the anthology's five sections are as follows.

Section I: Theoretical Perspectives and Case Selection. This first section deals with the challenge of starting your case study. You must establish its rationale. The process includes both defining the ideas to be examined (“theoretical perspectives”⁵) and selecting the specific “case” to be the subject of your case study (“case selection”). You must satisfy both parts of the process as you start.

Note the distinction between the “case” and the “case study.” The “case” is the real-life set of events from which data will be drawn. The case can be a concrete affair (e.g., a national crisis, as in Chapters 1 and 2 of the anthology, or the social life in a community, as in Chapters 3 and 4). The case also can be an abstract process (e.g., the implementation process, as illustrated in Chapter 5). In contrast, the “case study” is the substance of your research inquiry, consisting of your research questions, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, interpretations, and conclusions.

Some investigators have benefited by having access to important cases (e.g., Chapters 1 and 2). The investigators have then developed significant case studies about these cases. One way of making your own case study significant is to embed it in a larger research literature (i.e., by examining

hypotheses and covering theoretical issues identified as important to your field). In this manner, any lessons learned from your case study can then contribute to the building of new knowledge in your field.

Other investigators have benefited by defining an important topic for their case study. They have then selected a relevant case to be investigated (e.g., Chapters 3, 4, and 5).⁶ Of course, the investigators still had to have access to the case, in order to collect the needed data. However the case itself was not necessarily a momentous or extraordinary set of real-life events. In fact, the case might have reflected an “average” circumstance.

You can succeed by having a good “case” or by designing your “case study” to address important theoretical considerations that will yield important new ideas. The more that you have both an important case and a well-designed case study—and follow data collection and analysis procedures carefully—the more likely your research will make an important contribution to a field and also attain a high level of professional recognition.

Section II: The Strength of Multiple Cases. The five chapters in Section I all have single cases as the subjects of their case studies. Relying on single cases, however, is not the only way of doing case study research. You also might have two or more cases as the subject of your single case study—what would then be called a “multiple-case study.” Thus, in defining your case study, another early consideration is whether you will limit it to a single “case,” or whether your case study will consist of two or more cases. The three selections in Section II all represent multiple-case studies. One apparently single case (Chapter 6), in fact, comes from a book that covered eight other cases. The other selections cover two cases (Chapter 7) and seven cases (Chapter 8) respectively. The selections show different ways of treating the multiple cases.

Collecting and analyzing data from two (or more) cases requires much more work than working on a single case. At the same time, the rewards can be greater, especially if you have the opportunity to choose your multiple cases to satisfy an important consideration from the standpoint of research design (e.g., by choosing extremely contrasting cases; potentially replicating cases [Chapter 7]; or some other desired variation among the cases [Chapters 6 and 8]). With such designs, the data from the multiple cases can strengthen your case study findings and make your interpretations more robust.⁷ Having multiple cases also provides a side benefit. If your case study depends on a single case and your data collection encounters some unexpected difficulty, you may not be able to complete a case study of any sort. When such difficulties arise with a case that is only one of your multiple cases, you would still have the other case(s) to fall back upon.

Section III: Quantitative Evidence and “Embedded” Units of Analysis. Case studies can rely on both quantitative and qualitative evidence. The quantitative evidence can come from coded behaviors (Chapter 9), surveys

(Chapter 10), or archival information about an array of organizations, such as a large number of schools (Chapter 11). The analysis of the quantitative evidence also can range from simple tallies (Chapter 9) to state-of-the-art statistical techniques (Chapter 11).

Interestingly, case studies that involve more quantitative data also may more frequently involve “embedded units of analysis.” Such units reside within (and are smaller than) the main unit of analysis—the whole “case.” For instance, in a case study about a single school, the behavior of teachers within individual classrooms would be the embedded units (Chapter 9). Alternatively, in a case study about a single organization, the members of the organization would be the embedded units. These members also might have been the subjects of a formal survey (Chapter 10). Similarly, a case study may be about the reform of a whole system of schools. Then the individual schools within the system would be the embedded units whose characteristics could be tallied and statistically manipulated (Chapter 11).

Especially challenging under these circumstances is to avoid losing sight of the original case. For instance, if the results of a member survey only are used to investigate member behavior and characteristics, the original inquiry regarding the organization as a whole may not be well addressed. One of the selections in this section (Chapter 10) devotes considerable attention to this problem of balancing the whole case and its subunits, although, as the authors point out, there are no easy solutions.

Section IV: More Illustrations of Case Study Evidence. Section IV contains yet additional examples of different types of case study evidence: observations of physical facilities (Chapter 12); intensive use of documents such as newspapers (Chapter 13); reliance on data from open-ended interviews (Chapter 14); and a mixture of traditional evidence, such as quoted materials from interviews and documents, citation to findings from related research, and direct participation in the case (Chapter 15).

Many textbooks already tell you how to deal with these types of evidence. The selections in Section IV, however, go beyond the textbooks and show how evidence is put together around a particular case study. The data are still presented so that they can be reviewed and interpreted by the reader, apart from the author’s own interpretations. A constant challenge is knowing how, nevertheless, to integrate the discussion of the evidence to make it an integral part of your case study.

Section V: Analyses and Conclusions. Analyzing case study data can assume many forms. In addition, rather than following the traditional linear sequence of doing laboratory research (e.g., defining hypotheses, collecting and presenting data, analyzing data, and then offering interpretations and conclusions) case study analysis can occur while you are still in the middle of collecting data. For example, when doing fieldwork, you may make a decision to search for additional field evidence on a particular topic, based

on a preliminary analysis of your field data. In fact, an emerging realization is that analysis may occur at a variety of junctures when doing case studies. Such a pattern, rather than the neatly packaged step implied by the traditional linear sequence, might be one reason why analyzing case study data—especially qualitative data—has been an elusive craft.

The selections in Section V highlight the varieties of analyses used in case studies, ranging from the use of chronologies and analysis of behavior in clinical settings (Chapter 16), to the linking of crime-control initiatives with subsequent crime trends (Chapter 17), to an extensive analysis of economic development outcomes associated with the closing of a military base (Chapter 18). However, many of the chapters in the first four sections of the anthology, although intended to illustrate other procedures in the case study method, also already contained considerable amounts of analysis. You may especially want to revisit Chapters 7, 8, 11, 13, and 15, to see if you can isolate additional examples of relevant analytic techniques.

Providing a summative analysis and citing the major accomplishments from a case can be one way of bringing your case study to conclusion. The anthology's final selection (Chapter 19) shows, in exemplary fashion, how this part of the case study method can be practiced.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ABOUT THIS ANTHOLOGY

Methodological anthologies are a challenge to assemble. One challenge, already observed, is to mediate between the breadth of covering multiple substantive topics—versus the thinness in covering any single topic. A parallel challenge is to mediate between methodological breadth and depth.

Regarding the methodological challenge, this anthology deliberately favors depth rather than breadth. The depth—and thus the anthology's methodological niche—reflects the case study method described in an earlier text, first published in 1984 and now in its 3rd edition (*Yin, 2003b*). The method applies the norms of doing empirical research to the conduct of case study research. Moreover, the desired research can rely on quantitative or qualitative data.⁸ The sacrifice in breadth arises because the anthology does not cover related methods, such as other forms of qualitative research or the conduct of field-based inquiries more generally.⁹ The anthology also is not a “how-to” book, providing concrete guidance to carry out specific research procedures, such as gaining the approval for a case study investigation from an institutional review board (IRB), or arranging the logistics to conduct case study fieldwork.

Yet another challenge arose in the editing process. Whether appearing in books or as journal articles, most of the selected works needed to be pared down, to allow the anthology to cover a variety of selections without becoming cumbersome in length. The older selections also

were edited for language (related to gender, race, and technology) that American society no longer favors.

SUMMARY

So, in various ways this anthology compromises breadth, depth, length, and language—in all, a possibly steep price—just to go on two tours. My bet is that you will still feel good about taking them.

Notes

1. The entire anthology emphasizes the use of case studies as a *research* tool, whether to study individuals (e.g., see Bromley, 1986) or groups and organizations (e.g., Yin, 2003b). Case studies also enjoy extensive use as a *teaching* tool (e.g., Bock & Campbell, 1962; and Christensen & Hansen, 1981), as a way of improving *practice* (e.g., Pigors & Pigors, 1961), and as a form of clinical or *archival record*, but none of these latter uses is the subject of the anthology.

2. Interestingly, the array of authors includes eminent social scientists who have not necessarily specialized in using the case study method. In fact, at least two of the authors have gained widespread recognition in doing state-of-the-art statistical research.

3. All the methodological definitions and terms used in this anthology can be found and are elucidated in a textbook on case study research that has been widely used since its first edition in 1984 (see Yin, 2003b). A companion text (Yin, 2003a), now in its second edition, contains case applications of the methodology.

4. Of course, many selections are cross-cutting, and using other categories would result in different schemes. For instance, another scheme might distinguish between the selections dealing with the delivery of *local* public services (e.g., Chapters 5, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, and 19) and the selections dealing with the policies and programs of the *federal* government (e.g., Chapters 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 15, and 18).

5. This term is not intended to suggest that you need any formally articulated theory. For instance, if you start with a “discovery” motive, that is your theoretical perspective. However, you should not settle for an oversimplified theoretical perspective, either.

6. The real-life research process is not so cut and dry (i.e., either selecting a case first or defining a case study first). Case selection and case study design may be interactive processes, whereby you iteratively arrive at the final choices. The entire situation has its parallel in laboratory research, where an investigator also has a dual need—to select and design a specific experiment but also to establish the broader (theoretical) significance of the experiment that is to be done.

7. An important assumption here is that you are interested in generalizing the findings from your case study, to go beyond the specific circumstances of the cases that you studied. The recommended generalization process relies on *analytic*, not *statistical* generalization and is discussed in Mitchell (1983), Gomm, Hammersley, &

Foster (2000), and Yin (2003b), although these authors use different labels for the same concepts. The logic underlying the desired generalization process is discussed in an incisive but little known article by Donald Campbell (1975).

8. However, the case study method does not fall cleanly within the province of either quantitative or qualitative methods. In fact, how the case study method is to be categorized among other social science methods has been the subject of extensive writing. For instance, while no method of social science research, by definition, can replicate the scientific method in the natural sciences, the present anthology has been organized from the perspective that *emulating* the principles of scientific research (e.g., starting with explicit research questions, using a research design to address these questions, collecting and fairly presenting evidence to support interpretations, and referencing related research to aid in defining questions and drawing conclusions) will produce strong case study research. At the same time, an international handbook on education research divides the various social science methods into scientific and humanistic research, and places the case study method under the latter (Keeves, 1998, p. 7). The humanistic tradition offers such strengths as an emphasis on prolonged engagement in the field, “thick” description, and the celebration of the particular rather than the general (e.g., Stake, 1994; and Simons, 1996).

Despite the terms “scientific” and “humanistic,” which are too stereotypic, the two orientations to doing case study research are not necessarily conflicting. They may be seen as differences in emphasis (e.g., Stenhouse, 1988; and Yin, 1994). However, in designing a new case study, you should be sensitive to these differences in orientations and whether key members of your audience have particular preferences.

9. For example, the anthology does not have any selections on the use of participant-observation, in which a research investigator adopts a “real-life” role while also investigating the topic at hand. See Platt (1992) for an extended discussion of the relationship between participant-observation (and sociological fieldwork) and the definition of the case study method as it has been used in this anthology.

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