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QUALITATIVE CASE STUDIES

Robert E. Stake

Case studies are a common way to do qualitative inquiry. Case study research is neither new nor essentially qualitative. Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied. If case study research is more humane or in some ways transcendent, it is because the researchers are so, not because of the methods. By whatever methods, we choose to study *the case*. We could study it analytically or holistically, entirely by repeated measures or hermeneutically, organically or culturally, and by mixed methods—but we concentrate, at least for the time being, on the case. The focus in this chapter is a qualitative concentration on the case.

The physician studies the child because the child is ill. The child's symptoms are both qualitative and quantitative. The physician's record of the child is more quantitative than qualitative. The social worker studies the child because the child is neglected. The symptoms of neglect are both qualitative and quantitative. The formal record that the social worker keeps is more qualitative than quantitative.[1] In many professional and practical fields, cases are studied and recorded. As a form of research, case study is defined by interest in an individual case, not by the methods of inquiry used.

A majority of researchers doing casework call their studies by some other name. Howard Becker, for example, when asked (Simons, 1980) what he called his own studies, reluctantly said, "Fieldwork," adding that such labels contribute little to the understanding of what researchers do. The name "case study" is emphasized by some of us because it draws attention to the question of what specially can be learned about the single case. That epistemological question is the driving question of this chapter: What can be learned about the single case? I will emphasize designing the study to optimize understanding of the case rather than to generalize beyond it.

For a research community, case study optimizes understanding by pursuing scholarly research questions. It gains credibility by thoroughly triangulating the descriptions and interpretations, not just in a single step but continuously

Author's Note. This revision of my chapter in the 2000 second edition of this *Handbook* continues to draw heavily from papers on *What Is a Case?*, edited by Charles Ragin and Howard Becker (1992). Editorial review by Rita Davis, Norman Denzin, and Yvonna Lincoln is herewith acknowledged.

throughout the period of study. For a qualitative research community, case study concentrates on experiential knowledge of the case and close attention to the influence of its social, political, and other contexts. For almost any audience, optimizing understanding of the case requires meticulous attention to its activities. These five requirements—issue choice, triangulation, experiential knowledge, contexts, and activities—will be discussed in this chapter.

▣ The Singular Case

A case may be simple or complex. It may be a child or a classroom of children or an event, a happening, such as a mobilization of professionals to study a childhood condition. It is one among others. In any given study, we will concentrate on the one. The time we may spend concentrating our inquiry on the one may be long or short, but while we so concentrate, we are engaged in case study.

Custom has it that not everything is a case. A child may be a case, easy to specify. A doctor may be a case. But *his or her doctoring* probably lacks the specificity, the boundedness, to be called a case. As topics of inquiry, ethnomethodologists study *methods*, such as methods of doctoring, methods of cooking, examining how things get done, and the work and play of people (Garfinkel, 1967). Coming to understand a case usually requires extensive examining of how things get done, but the prime referent in case study is the case, not the methods by which the case operates. An Agency (e.g., nongovernmental organization) may be a case. But the *reasons* for child neglect or the *policies* of dealing with neglectful parents seldom will be considered a case. We think of those topics as generalities rather than specificities. The case is a specific One.[2]

If we are moved to study it, the case is almost certainly going to be a functioning body. The case is a "bounded system" (Flood, as reported in Fals Borda, 1998). In the social sciences and human services, most cases have working parts and purposes; many have a self. Functional or dysfunctional, rational or irrational, the case is a system.

It is common to recognize that certain features are within the system, within the boundaries of the case, and other features outside. In ways, the activity is patterned. Coherence and sequence are there to be found. Some outside features are significant as context. William Goode and Paul Hatt (1952) observed that it is not always easy for the case researcher to say where the child ends and where the environment begins. But boundedness and activity patterns nevertheless are useful concepts for specifying the case (Stake, 1988).

Ultimately, we may be interested in a general phenomenon or a population of cases more than in the individual case, and we cannot understand a given case without knowing about other cases. But while we are studying it, our meager resources are concentrated on trying to understand *its* complexities. Later in this chapter, we will talk about comparing two or more cases. We may simultaneously carry on more than one case study, but each case study is a concentrated inquiry into a single case.

Charles Ragin (1992) has emphasized the question of "What is it a case of?" as if "membership in" or "representation of" something else were the main consideration in case study. He referred to the casework of Michel Wieviorka (1988) on terrorism. Ragin and his coeditor, Howard Becker (1992), were writing for the social scientist seeking theoretical generalization, justifying the study of the particular only if it serves an understanding of grand issues or explanations. They recognized that even in formal experimentation and statistical survey work, there is interest in the illustrative or deviant case. But historians, program evaluators, institutional researchers, and practitioners in all professions are interested in the individual case without necessarily caring what it is a case of. This is intrinsic case study.

Even if my definition of the study of cases were agreed upon,[3] and it is not, the terms "case" and "study" defy full specification (Kemmis, 1980). A case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry. Lawrence Stenhouse (1984) advocated calling the product a

"case record," and occasionally we shall, but the practice of calling the final report a "case study" is widely established.

Here and there, researchers will call anything they please a case study,[4] but the more the object of study is a specific, unique, bounded system, the greater the usefulness of the epistemological rationales described in this chapter.

To move beyond terminology to method, I introduce Figure 17.1, a sketch of a plan for a case study. This was an early plan made by a small team of early childhood education specialists led by Natalia Sofiy in Ukraine. The case they chose was a boy in the Step by Step child-centered program for inclusion of children with disability in regular classrooms. They used Figure 17.1 to identify content and tasks, selecting three activities to be observed and noting several interviews needed. The researchers were deeply interested in the case but intended to use the report to illustrate their work throughout the country. With such further purpose, I call their research an *instrumental* case study.

Intrinsic and Instrumental Interest in Cases

I find it useful to identify three types of case study. I call a study an *intrinsic case study* if the study is undertaken because, first and last, one wants better understanding of this particular case. It is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but instead because, in all its particularity *and* ordinariness, this case itself is of interest. The researcher at least temporarily subordinates other curiosities so that the stories of those "living the case" will be teased out. The purpose is not to come to understand some abstract construct or generic phenomenon, such as literacy or teenage drug use or what a school principal does. The purpose is not theory building—though at other times the researcher may do just that. Study is undertaken because of an intrinsic interest in, for example, this particular child, clinic, conference, or curriculum. Books illustrating intrinsic case study include the following:

The Education of Henry Adams (1918), an autobiography,

God's Choice (1986) by Alan Peshkin,

Bread and Dreams (1982) by Barry MacDonald, Clem Adelman, Saville Kushner, and Rob Walker,[5]

An Aberdeenshire Village Propaganda (1889) by Robert Smith, and

The Swedish School System (1984) by Britta Stenholm.

I use the term *instrumental case study* if a particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization. The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else. The case still is looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized and its ordinary activities detailed, but all because this helps us pursue the external interest. The case may be seen as typical of other cases or not. (In a later section, I will discuss when typicality is important.) Here the choice of case is made to advance understanding of that other interest. We simultaneously have several interests, particular and general. There is no hard-and-fast line distinguishing intrinsic case study from instrumental, but rather a zone of combined purpose. Writings illustrating instrumental case study include the following:

"Campus Response to a Student Gunman" (1995) by Kelly Asmussen and John Creswell,

Boys in White (1961) by Howard Becker, Blanche Geer, Everett Hughes, and Anselm Strauss,

On the Border of Opportunity: Education, Community, and Language at the U.S.-Mexico Line (1998) by Marleen Pugach, and

"A Nonreader Becomes a Reader: A Case Study of Literacy Acquisition by a Severely Disabled Reader" (1994) by Sandra McCormick.

When there is even less interest in one particular case, a number of cases may be studied jointly in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition. I call this *multiple case study* or *collective case study*.[6] It is instrumental study extended

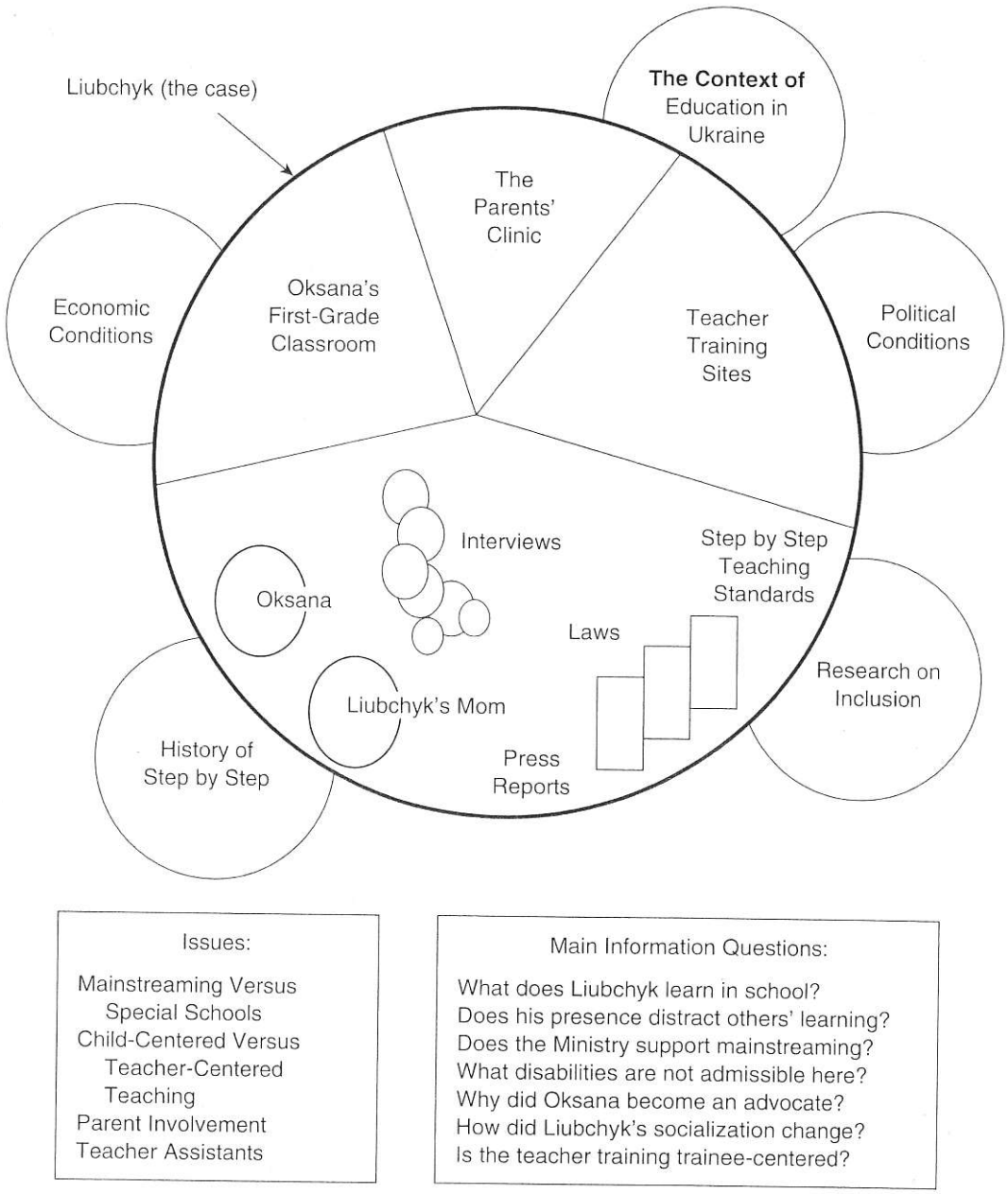

Figure 17.1. Plan for the Ukraine Case Study

to several cases. Individual cases in the collection may or may not be known in advance to manifest some common characteristic. They may be similar or dissimilar, with redundancy and variety each important. They are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, and perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases. Illustrations of collective case study include the following:

Teachers' Work (1985) by Robert Connell,

"Researching Practice Settings" (of medical clinics) by Benjamin Crabtree and William Miller in their edited volume *Doing Qualitative Research* (1999),

Savage Inequalities (1991) by Jonathan Kozol,

Bold Ventures: Patterns Among U.S. Innovations in Science and Mathematics Education (1997) edited by Senta Raisin and Edward Britton, and

"The Dark Side of Organizations" (1999) by Diane Vaughan.

Reports and authors often do not fit neatly into the three categories. I see these three as useful for thinking about purpose. Alan Peshkin responded to my classification of his book *God's Choice* (1986) by saying "I mean to present my case so that it can be read with interest in the case itself, but I always have another agenda—to learn from the case about some class of things. Some of what that will be remains an emergent matter for a long time" (personal communication).

For this fine work, for 3 years Peshkin studied a single school, Bethany Baptist Academy. Until the final chapter, he did not tell the reader about matters of importance to him, particularly unfair treatment of ethnic minorities. The first order of business was to understand the case. The immediate, if not ultimate, interest was intrinsic. The methods Peshkin used centered on the case, only later taking up his abiding concern for community, freedom, and survival.

Other typologies of case study have been offered. Harrison White (1992) categorized social science casework according to three purposes: case studies for identity, explanation, or control. Historians and political scientists regularly examine a singular episode or movement or era, such as Norman Gottwald (1979) did in his study of the emergence of Jewish identity. I choose to call these studies case studies when the episode or relationship—however complex, impacting, and bounded—is easily thought of as organic and systemic, heavy with purpose and self.

It is good to recognize that there is a common form of case study used in teaching to illustrate a point, a condition, a category—something important for instruction (Kennedy, 1979). For decades, professors in law schools and business schools have paraded cases in this manner. For staff development and management training, such reports constitute the articles of the *Journal of Case Research*, a key publication of the North American Case Research Association. Used for instruction and consultation, they come from pedagogically oriented instrumental case study.

Biography has its own history. William Tierney (2000) noted that, like case study, biography calls for special attention to chronological structures and to procedures for the protection of human subjects. Similarly, television documentaries, many of them easily classifiable as case studies, require their own methods. In law, the *case* has a special definition: The practice of law itself could be called case study. The work of ethnographers, critical theorists, institutional demographers, and many others has conceptual and stylistic patterns that not only amplify the taxonomy but also extend the foundation for case study research in the social sciences and social services. My purpose here in categorization is not taxonomic but to emphasize variation in concern for and methodological orientation to *the case*, thus focusing on three types: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective.

Seeking the Particular More Than the Ordinary

Case researchers seek out both what is common and what is particular about the case, but the end product of the research regularly portrays more of the uncommon (Stouffer, 1941), drawing all at once from

1. the nature of the case, particularly its activity and functioning;
2. its historical background;
3. its physical setting;
4. other contexts, such as economic, political, legal, and aesthetic;
5. other cases through which this case is recognized; and
6. those informants through whom the case can be known.

To study the case, to probe its particularity, qualitative case researchers gather data on all the above.

Case uniqueness traditionally has not been a choice ingredient of scientific theory. Case study research has been constrained even by qualitative

methodologists, who grant less than full regard to study of the particular (Denzin, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Herriott & Firestone, 1983; Yin, 1984). These and other social scientists have written about case study as if intrinsic study of a particular case were not as important as studies intended to obtain generalizations pertaining to a population of cases.[7] Some have emphasized case study as typification of other cases, as exploration leading up to generalization-producing studies, or as an occasional early step in theory building. At least as I see it, case study method has been too little honored as the intrinsic study of a valued particular, as it is in biography, institutional self-study, program evaluation, therapeutic practice, and many lines of work. In the 1994 first edition of this *Handbook*, I wrote, "insistence on the ultimacy of theory building appears to be diminishing in qualitative social science" (p. 238), but now I am not so sure.

Still, even intrinsic case study can be seen as a small step toward grand generalization (Campbell, 1975; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Vaughan, 1992), especially in a case that runs counter to a rule. But generalization should not be emphasized in all research (Feagin et al., 1991; Simons, 1980). Damage occurs when the commitment to generalize or to theorize runs so strong that the researcher's attention is drawn away from features important for understanding the case itself.[8] The case study researcher faces a strategic decision in deciding how much and how long the complexities of the case should be studied. Not everything about the case can be understood—so how much needs to be? Each researcher has choices to make.

Organizing Around Issues

A case study has (as has research of all kinds) some form of conceptual structure. Even an intrinsic case study is organized around a small number of research questions. Issues are not information questions, such as "Who initiated their advocacy of regional forestry planning?" or "How was their hiring policy announced?" The issues or themes are questions such as "In what ways did their changes in hiring policy require a change in performance standards?" or "Did the addiction therapy, originally developed for male clients, need reconceptualization for women?"

Issues are complex, situated, problematic relationships. They pull attention both to ordinary experience and also to the disciplines of knowledge, such as sociology, economics, ethics, or literary criticism. Seeking a different purview from that of most designers of experiments and testers of hypotheses, qualitative case researchers orient to complexities connecting ordinary practice in natural habitats to a few abstractions and concerns of the academic disciplines. This broader purview is applied to the single case, leaving it as the focus, yet generalization and proof (Becker, 1992) linger in the mind of the researcher. A tension exists.[9]

The two issues used as examples two paragraphs back were written for a particular case. A more general question would be "Does a change in hiring policy away from affirmative action require change in performance standards?" or "Does addiction therapy originally developed for male clients need reconceptualization for women?" Whether stated for generalization or for particularization, these organizing themes should serve to deepen understanding of the specific case.

Starting with a topical concern, researchers pose *foreshadowed problems*,[10] concentrate on issue-related observations, interpret patterns of data, and reform the issues as assertions. One transformation experienced in my work in program evaluation is illustrated in Figure 17.2, with an issue for a hypothetical case study of a music education program.

The selection of key issues is crucial. Researchers follow their preference for or obligation to intrinsic or instrumental study. They ask, "Which issue questions bring out our concerns? Which would be the dominant theme?" To maximize understanding of the case, they ask, "Which issues seek out compelling uniquenesses?" For an evaluation study, they ask, "Which issues help reveal merits and shortcomings?" Some researchers raise social justice issues (House & Howe, 1999). In general, they ask, "Which issues facilitate the planning and activities of inquiry?"

1. Topical Issue: The goals of the music education program.
2. Foreshadowed Problem: The majority of the community supports the present emphasis on band, chorus, and performances, but a few teachers and community leaders prefer a more intellectual emphasis, for example, history, literature, and critical review of music.
3. Issue Under Development: What are the pros and cons of having this teaching staff teach music theory and music as a discipline in courses required of everyone?
4. Assertion: As a whole, this community was opposed to providing the extra funding required to provide intellectually based school music.

Figure 17.2. An Example of Issue Evolution in a Study

Issues are chosen partly in terms of what can be learned within the opportunities for study. They will be chosen differently depending on the purpose of the study, and differently by different researchers. One might say a personal contract is drawn between researcher and phenomenon. Researchers ask, "What can be learned *here* that a reader needs to know?"

The issues used to organize the study may or may not be the ones used to report the case to others. Some cases will be structured by need for information, raising little debate. For example, what led to the change in operating policy? or "Has performance quality been dropping?" Issues often serve to draw attention to important functioning of the case in a situation of stress, as well as to tease out more of its interaction with contexts.

Contexts

The case to be studied is a complex entity located in a milieu or situation embedded in a number of contexts or backgrounds. Historical context is almost always of interest, but so are cultural and physical contexts. Other contexts often of interest are the social, economic, political, ethical, and aesthetic.

The case is singular, but it has subsections (e.g., production, marketing, sales departments), groups (e.g., patients, nurses, administrators), occasions (e.g., work days, holidays, days near holidays), dimensions, and domains—many so well-populated that they need to be sampled. Each of these may have its own contexts, and the contexts may go a long way toward making relationships understandable. Qualitative case study calls for the examination of these complexities. Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba (2000) pointed out that much qualitative research is based on a view that social phenomena, human dilemmas, and the nature of cases are situational, revealing experiential happenings of many kinds.

Qualitative researchers sometimes are oriented toward *causal explanation* of events (Becker, 1992) but more often tend to perceive events as Tolstoy did in *War and Peace*—multiply sequenced, multiply contextual, and coincidental more than causal. Many find the search for cause as simplistic. They describe instead the sequence and coincidence of events, interrelated and contextually bound, purposive but questionably determinative. They favor inquiry designs for describing the diverse activities of the case. Doing case studies does not require examination of diverse issues and contexts, but that is the way that most qualitative researchers do them.

▣ The Study

Perhaps the simplest rule for method in qualitative casework is this: "Place your best intellect into the thick of what is going on." The brainwork ostensibly is observational, but more critically, it is *reflective.*[11] In being ever-reflective, the researcher is committed to pondering the impressions, deliberating on recollections and records—but not necessarily following the conceptualizations of

theorists, actors, or audiences (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Local meanings are important, foreshadowed meanings are important, and readers' consequential meanings are important. In Figure 17.1, activities in the first-grade classrooms, parents' clinic, and teacher training sites are to be described and interpreted. The case researcher digs into meanings, working to relate them to contexts and experience. In each instance, the work is reflective.[12]

If we typify qualitative casework, we see data sometimes precoded but continuously interpreted, on first encounter and again and again. Records and tabulations are perused not only for classification and pattern recognition but also for "criss-crossed" reflection (Spiro, Vispoel, Schmitz, Samarapungavan, & Boerger, 1987). An observation is interpreted against one issue, perspective, or utility, then interpreted against others. Qualitative case study is characterized by researchers spending extended time on site, personally in contact with activities and operations of the case, reflecting, and revising descriptions and meanings of what is going on. Naturalistic, ethnographic, phenomenological caseworkers seek to see what is natural in happenings, in settings, in expressions of value.

Reflecting upon case literature, I find case study methods written about largely by people who hold that the research should contribute to scientific generalization. The bulk of case study work, however, is done by people who have *intrinsic* interest in the case. Their intrinsic case study designs draw these researchers toward understandings of what is important about that case within its own world, which is not the same as the world of researchers and theorists. Intrinsic designs aim to develop what is perceived to be the case's own issues, contexts, and interpretations, its "thick description." In contrast, the methods of instrumental case study draw the researcher toward illustrating how the concerns of researchers and theorists are manifest in the case. Because the critical issues are more likely to be known in advance and to follow disciplinary expectations, such a design can take greater advantage of already-developed instruments and preconceived coding schemes.[13]

In intrinsic case study, researchers do not avoid generalization—they cannot. Certainly, they generalize to happenings of their case at times still to come and in other situations. They expect their readers to comprehend their interpretations but to arrive, as well, at their own. Thus, the methods for case work actually used are to learn enough about the case to encapsulate complex meanings into a finite report but to describe the case in sufficient descriptive narrative so that readers can experience these happenings vicariously and draw their own conclusions.

Case Selection

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of case study in the social sciences and human services is the selection of cases to study. Intrinsic casework regularly begins with cases already identified. The doctor, the social worker, and the program evaluator receive their cases; they seldom choose them. The cases are of prominent interest before formal study begins. Instrumental and collective casework regularly requires cases to be chosen. Achieving the greatest understanding of the critical phenomena depends on choosing the case well (Patton, 1990; Vaughan, 1992; Yin, 1989). Suppose we are trying to understand the behavior of people who take hostages and we decide to probe the phenomenon using a case study. Hostage taking does not happen often; in the entire world, there are few cases to choose. Current options, let us imagine, boil down to a bank robber, an airline hijacker, an estranged father who kidnapped his own child, and a Shiite Muslim group. We want to generalize about hostage-taking behavior, yet we realize that each of these cases, each sample of one, weakly *represents* the larger group of interest.

When one designs a study in the manner advocated by Michael Huberman and Matthew Miles (1994) and Gery Ryan and Russell Bernard (2000) in the second edition of this *Handbook*, nothing is more important than making a representative selection of cases. For this design, formal sampling is needed. The cases are expected to represent some population of cases. The phenomenon of interest observable in the

case represents the phenomenon writ large. For Miles and Huberman, Yin, and Malinowski, the main work was science, an enterprise to achieve the best possible explanations of phenomena (von Wright, 1971). In the beginning, phenomena are given; the cases are opportunities to study the phenomena. But even in the larger collective case studies, the sample size usually is much too small to warrant random selection. For qualitative fieldwork, we draw a purposive sample, building in variety and acknowledging opportunities for intensive study.[14]

The phenomenon on the table is hostage taking. We want to improve our understanding of hostage taking, to fit it into what we know about criminology, conflict resolution, human relations—that is, various *abstract dimensions.*[15] We recognize a large population of hypothetical cases and a small subpopulation of accessible cases. We want to generalize about hostage taking without special interest in any of those cases available for study. On representational grounds, the epistemological opportunity seems small, but we are optimistic that we can learn some important things from almost any case. We choose one case or a small number of exemplars. Hostages usually are strangers who happen to be available to the hostage taker. We might rule out studying a father who takes his own child as hostage. Such kidnappings actually may be more common, but we rule out the father. We are more interested in hostage taking accompanying a criminal act, hostage taking in order to escape. The researcher examines various interests in the phenomenon, selecting a case of some typicality but leaning toward those cases that seem to offer *opportunity to learn.* My choice would be to choose that case from which we feel we can learn the most.[16] That may mean taking the one most accessible or the one we can spend the most time with. Potential for learning is a different and sometimes superior criterion to representativeness. Sometimes it is better to learn a lot from an atypical case than a little from a seemingly typical case.

Another illustration: Suppose we are interested in the attractiveness of interactive (the visitor manipulates, gets feedback) displays in children's museums. We have resources to study four museums, to do a collective study of four cases. It is likely that we would set up a typology, perhaps of (a) museum types, namely art, science, and history; (b) city types, namely large and very large; and (c) program types, namely exhibitory and participative. With this typology, we could create a matrix of 12 cells. Examples probably cannot be found for all 12 cells, but resources do not allow studying 12 anyway. With four to be studied, we are likely to start out thinking we should have one art, one history, and two science museums (because interactive displays are more common in science museums); two located in large; and two in very large cities; and two each of the program types. But when we look at existing cases, the logistics, the potential reception, the resources, and additional characteristics of relevance, we move toward choosing four museums to study that offer variety (falling short of structured representation) across the attributes, the four that give us the best opportunities to learn about interactive displays.[17] Any best possible selection of four museums from a balanced design would not give us compelling representation of museums as a whole, and certainly not a statistical basis for generalizing about interactions between interactivity and site characteristics. Several desirable types usually have to be omitted. Even for collective case studies, selection by sampling of attributes should not be the highest priority. Balance and variety are important; opportunity to learn is often more important.

The same process of selection will occur as part of intrinsic case study. Even though the case is decided in advance (usually), there are subsequent choices to make about persons, places, and events to observe. They are *cases within the case*—embedded cases or mini-cases. In Figure 17.1, two mini-cases were anticipated, one of the teacher Oksana and one of Liubchyk's mother. Later, a third mini-case was added, that of a clinic created by parents. Here again, training, experience, and intuition help us to make a good selection. The Step by Step early childhood program in Ukraine (Figure 17.1) aimed to get children with disability ready for the regular classroom,

avoiding segregated special education, the usual assignment.[18] The sponsors chose to study a child in the school with the most developed activity. Selecting the child was influenced largely by the activity of his parents, two teachers, a social worker, and the principal. With time short, the researchers needed to select other parents, teachers, and community leaders to interview. Which of them would add most to the portrayal?

Or suppose that we are studying a program for placing computers in the homes of fourth graders for scholastic purposes. The cases—that is, the school sites—already have been selected. Although there is a certain coordination of activity, each participating researcher has one case study to develop. A principal issue has to do with impact on the family, because certain expectations of computer use accompany placement in the home. (The computer should be available for word processing, record keeping, and games by family members, but certain times should be set aside for fourth-grade homework.) At one site, 50 homes now have computers. The researcher can get certain information from every home, but the budget allows observation in only a small number of homes. Which homes should be selected? Just as in the collective case study, the researcher notes attributes of interest, among them perhaps gender of the fourth grader, presence of siblings, family structure, home discipline, previous use of computers, and other technology in the home. The researcher discusses these characteristics with informants, gets recommendations, visits several homes, and obtains attribute data. The choice is made, ensuring variety but not necessarily representativeness, without strong argument for typicality, again weighted by considerations of access and even by hospitality, for the time is short and perhaps too little can be learned from inhospitable parents. Here, too, the primary criterion is opportunity to learn.

Interactivity

Usually we want to learn what the selected case does—its activity, its functioning. We will observe what we can, ask others for their observations, and gather artifacts of that functioning. For example, the department being studied provides services, manages itself and responds to management by external authorities, observes rules, adapts to constraints, seeks opportunities, and changes staffing. Describing and interpreting these activities constitutes a large part of many case studies.

These activities are expected to be influenced by contexts, so contexts need to be described, even if evidence of influence is not found. Staffing, for example, may be affected by the political context, particularly union activity and some form of "old boy network." Public announcement of services may be affected by historical and physical contexts. Budgets have an economic context. Qualitative researchers have strong expectations that the reality perceived by people inside and outside the case will be social, cultural, situational, and contextual—and they want the interactivity of functions and contexts as well described as possible.

Quantitative researchers study the differences among main effects, such as the different influences of rural and urban settings and the different performances of boys and girls, comparing subpopulations. Demographics and gender are common "main effects." Programmatic treatment is another common main effect, with researchers comparing subsequent performance of those receiving different kinds or levels of treatment. Even if all possible comparisons are made, some performance differences remain unexplained. A typical treatment might be personally accommodated work conditions. Suppose urban females respond differently to such a treatment. This would show up in the analysis of variance as an interaction effect. And suppose a particular city girl, Carmen, consistently responds differently from other city girls. Her pattern of behavior is unlikely to be discerned by quantitative analysis but may be spotted easily by case study. And on further analysis, her pattern of behavior may be useful for the interpretation of the functioning of several subgroups. As cases respond differently to complex situations, the interactivity of main effects and settings can be expected

to require the particularistic scrutiny of case study.[19]

Data Gathering

Naturalistic, ethnographic, phenomenological caseworkers also seek what is *ordinary* in happenings, in settings, in expressions of value. Herbert Blumer (1969, p. 149) called for us to accept, develop, and use the distinctive expression (of the particular case) in order to detect and study the common. What details of life the researchers are unable to see for themselves is obtained by interviewing people who did see them or by finding documents recording them. Part IV of this *Handbook* deals extensively with the methods of qualitative research, particularly observation, interview, coding, data management, and interpretation. These pertain, of course, to qualitative case study.

Documenting the unusual and the ordinary takes lots of time—for planning, gaining access, data gathering, analysis, and write-up. In many studies, there are no clear stages: Issue development continues to the end of the study, and write-up begins with preliminary observations. A speculative, page-allocating outline for the report helps anticipate how issues will be handled and how the case will become visible. For many researchers, to set out upon an unstructured, open-ended study is a calamity in the making. A plan is essential, but the caseworker needs to anticipate the need to recognize and develop late-emerging issues. Many qualitative fieldworkers invest little in instrument construction, partly because tailored (not standardized) questions are needed for most data sources. The budget may be consumed quickly by devising and field-testing instruments to pursue what turns out to be too many foreshadowing questions, with some of them maturing, some dying, and some moving to new levels of complexity. Even the ordinary is too complicated to be mastered in the time available.

When the case is too large for one researcher to know well or for a collective case study, *teaming* is an important option. Case research requires integrated, holistic comprehension of the case, but in the larger studies, no one individual can handle the complexity. Coding can be a great help, if the team is experienced in the process and with each other. But learning a detailed analytic coding system within the study period often is too great a burden (L. M. Smith & Dwyer, 1979), reducing observations to simple categories, eating up the on-site time. Often sites, key groups or actors, and issues should be assigned to a single team member, including junior members. The case's parts to be studied and the research issues need to be pared down to what can be comprehended by the collection of team members. It is better to negotiate the parts to be studied, as well as the parts not, and to do an in-depth study of a few key issues. Each team member writes up his or her parts; other team members need to read and critique these write-ups. Usually, the team leader needs to write the synthesis, getting critiques from the team, data sources, and selected skeptical friends.

Triangulation

With reporting and reading both "ill-structured" and "socially constructed," it is not surprising to find researcher tolerance for ambiguity and championing of multiple perspectives. Still, I have yet to meet case researchers unconcerned about clarity of their own perception and validity of their own communication. Even if meanings do not transfer intact but instead squeeze into the conceptual space of the reader, there is no less urgency for researchers to assure that their sense of situation, observation, reporting, and reading stay within some limits of correspondence. However accuracy is construed, researchers don't want to be inaccurate, caught without confirmation. Counterintuitive though it may be, the author has some responsibility for the validity of the readers' interpretations (Messick, 1989). Joseph Maxwell (1992) has spoken of the need for thinking of validity separately for descriptions, interpretations, theories, generalizations, and evaluative judgments.

To reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation, various procedures are employed, two of the most

common being redundancy of data gathering and procedural challenges to explanations (Denzin, 1989; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). For qualitative casework, these procedures generally are called *triangulation.*[20] Triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation.[21]

But acknowledging that no observations or interpretations are perfectly repeatable,[22] triangulation serves also to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the case is being seen (Flick, 1998; Silverman, 1993). The qualitative researcher is interested in diversity of perception, even the multiple realities within which people live. Triangulation helps to identify different realities.

▣ Learning From the Particular Case

The researcher is a teacher using at least two pedagogical methods (Eisner, 1985). Teaching *didactically*, the researcher teaches what he or she has learned. Arranging for what educationists call *discovery learning*, the researcher provides material for readers to learn, on their own, especially things about which readers may know better than the researcher.

What can one learn from a single case? David Hamilton (1980), Stephen Kemmis (1980), Lawrence Stenhouse (1979), and Robert Yin (1989) are among those who have advanced the epistemology of the particular.[23] Even Donald Campbell (1975), the prophet of scientific generalization, contributed. How we learn from the singular case is related to how the case is like and unlike other cases we do know, mostly by comparison.[24] It is intuition that persuades both researcher and reader that what is known about one case may very well be true about a similar case (Smith, 1978).

Experiential Knowledge

From case reports, we convey and draw forth the essence of qualitative understanding—that is, experiential knowledge (Geertz, 1983; Polanyi, 1962; Rumelhart & Ortony, 1977; von Wright, 1971). Case study facilitates the conveying of experience of actors and stakeholders as well as the experience of studying the case. It can enhance the reader's experience with the case. It does this largely with narratives and situational descriptions of case activity, personal relationship, and group interpretation.

Experiential descriptions and assertions are relatively easily assimilated by readers into memory and use. When the researcher's narrative provides opportunity for *vicarious experience*, readers extend their perceptions of happenings. Naturalistic, ethnographic case materials, at least to some extent, parallel actual experience, feeding into the most fundamental processes of awareness and understanding. Deborah Trumbull and I called these processes *naturalistic generalization* (Stake & Trumbull, 1982). That is, people make some generalizations entirely from personal or vicarious experience. Enduring meanings come from encounter, and they are modified and reinforced by repeated encounter.

In ordinary living, this occurs seldom to the individual alone and more often in the presence of others. In a social process, together people bend, spin, consolidate, and enrich their understandings. We come to know what has happened partly in terms of what others reveal as their experience. The case researcher emerges from one social experience, the observation, to choreograph another, the report. Knowledge is socially constructed—or so we constructivists believe (see Schwandt, 2000)—and through their experiential and contextual accounts, case study researchers assist readers in the construction of knowledge.

Case researchers greatly rely on subjective data, such as the testimony of participants and the judgments of witnesses. Many critical observations and interview data are subjective. Most case study is the empirical study of human activity. The major questions are not questions of opinion or feeling, but of the sensory experience. And the answers come back, of course, with description and interpretation, opinion and feeling, all mixed together. When the researchers are not there to experience the activity for themselves,

they have to ask those who did experience it. To make empirical data more objective and less subjective, the researcher uses replicative, falsification, and triangulating methods. Good case study research follows disciplined practices of analysis and triangulation to tease out what deserves to be called experiential knowledge from what is opinion and preference (Stake, 2004).

Understanding the case as personal experience depends on whether or not it can be embraced intellectually by a single researcher (or a small case study team). When the case is something like a person or a small Agency or a legislative session, a researcher who is given enough time and access can become personally knowledgeable about the activities and spaces, the relationships and contexts, of the case, as modeled in Figure 17.1. Possibly with the help of a few others, he or she can become experientially acquainted with the case. The case then is *embraceable*. Through observation, enumeration, and talk, the researcher can personally come to perceive the nature of the case. When the researcher can see and inquire about the case personally, with or without scales and rubrics, that researcher can come to understand the case in the most expected and respected ways. But when the researcher finds the case obscured, extending into too-distant regions or beyond his or her comprehension, and thus beyond personal encounter, that researcher conceptualizes the case differently. The case is likely to become overly abstract, a construct of criteria. Whether or not they want to, researchers then depersonalize the assignment, rely more on instruments and protocols, and accept simplistic reporting from people who themselves lack direct personal experience. Even if the researcher has extensive personal contact with parts of the case, that contact fails to reach too many extremities and complexities. This is a case beyond personal embrace, beyond experiential knowing.

Knowledge Transfer From Researcher to Reader

Both researcher and reader bring their conceptual structures to a case. In the literature, these structures have been called many things, including *advanced organizers* (Ausubel & Fitzgerald, 1961), *schemata* (Anderson, 1977), and an *unfolding of realization* (Bohm, 1985). Some such frameworks for thought are unconscious. Communication is facilitated by carefully crafted structures. Thought itself, conversation surely, and writing especially draw phrases into paragraphs and append labels onto constructs. Meanings aggregate or attenuate. Associations become relationships; relationships become theory (Robinson, 1951). Generalization can be an unconscious process for both researcher and reader.

In private and personal ways, ideas are structured, highlighted, subordinated, connected, embedded *in* contexts, embedded *with* illustration, and laced with favor and doubt. However moved to share ideas case researchers might be, however clever and elaborated their writings, they will, like others, pass along to readers some of their personal meanings of events and relationships—and fail to pass along others. They know that readers, too, will add and subtract, invent and shape—reconstructing the knowledge in ways that leave it differently connected and more likely to be personally useful.

A researcher's knowledge of the case faces hazardous passage from writing to reading. The writer seeks ways of safeguarding the trip. As reading begins, the case slowly joins the company of cases previously known to the reader. Conceptually for the reader, the new case cannot be but some variation of cases already known. A new case without commonality cannot be understood, yet a new case without distinction will not be noticed. Researchers cannot know well which cases their readers already know or their readers' peculiarities of mind. They seek ways to protect and substantiate the transfer of knowledge.

Qualitative researchers recognize a need to accommodate the readers' preexisting knowledge. Although everyone deals with this need every day and draws upon a lifetime of experience, we know precious little about how new experience merges with old. According to Rand Spiro and colleagues (1987), most personal experience is *ill-structured*, neither pedagogically nor

epistemologically neat. It follows that a well-structured, propositional presentation often will not be the better way to *transfer* experiential knowledge. The reader has a certain *cognitive flexibility*, the readiness to assemble a situation-relative schema from the knowledge fragments of a new encounter. The Spiro group (1987) contended that

> the best way to learn and instruct in order to attain the goal of cognitive flexibility in knowledge representation for future application is by a method of case-based presentations which treats a content domain as a landscape that is explored by "criss-crossing" it in many directions, by reexamining each case "site" in the varying contexts of different neighboring cases, and by using a variety of abstract dimensions for comparing cases. (p. 178)

Knowledge transfer remains difficult to understand. Even less understood is how a small aspect of the case may be found by many readers to modify an existing understanding about cases in general, even when the case is not typical.[25] In a ghetto school (Stake, 1995), I observed a teacher with *one* set of rules for classroom decorum—except that for Adam, a nearly expelled, indomitable youngster, a more liberal set had to be continuously invented. Reading my account, teachers from very different schools agreed with two seemingly contradictory statements: "Yes, you have to be strict with the rules" and "Yes, sometimes you have to bend the rules." They recognized in the report an unusual but generalizable circumstance. People find in case reports certain insights into the human condition, even while being well aware of the atypicality of the case. They may be *too* quick to accept the insight. The case researcher needs to provide grounds for validating both the observation and the generalization.

▣ Storytelling[26]

Some say we should just let the case "tell its own story" (Carter, 1993; Coles, 1989). The story a case tells of itself may or may not be useful. The researcher should draw out such stories, partly by explaining issues and by referring to other stories, but it is risky to leave it to the case actors to select the stories to be conveyed. Is the purpose to convey the storyteller's perception or to develop the researcher's perception of the case? Given expectations of the client, other stakeholders, and readers, either emphasis may be more appropriate. One cannot know at the outset what issues, perceptions, or theory will be useful. Case researchers usually enter the scene expecting, even knowing, that certain events, problems, and relationships will be important; yet they discover that some of them, this time, will be of little consequence (Parlett & Hamilton, 1976; L. M. Smith, 1994). Case content evolves even in the last phases of writing.

Even when empathic and respectful of each person's realities, the researcher decides what the case's "own story" is, or at least what will be included in the report. More will be pursued than was volunteered, and less will be reported than was learned. Even though the competent researcher will be guided by what the case indicates is most important, and even though patrons and other researchers will advise, that which is necessary for an understanding of the case will be decided by the researcher.[27] It may be the case's own story, but the report will be the researcher's dressing of the case's own story. This is not to dismiss the aim of finding the story that best represents the case, but instead to remind the reader that, usually, criteria of representation ultimately are decided by the researcher.

Many a researcher would like to tell the whole story but of course cannot; the whole story exceeds anyone's knowing and anyone's telling. Even those inclined to tell all find strong the obligation to winnow and consolidate. The qualitative researcher, like the single-issue researcher, must choose between telling lots and telling little. John van Maanen (1988) identified seven choices of presentation: realistic, impressionistic, confessional, critical, formal, literary, and jointly told. He added criteria for selecting the content. Some criteria are set by funding agencies, prospective readers, rhetorical convention, the

researcher's career pattern, or the prospect of publication. Some criteria are set by a notion of what represents the case most fully, most appreciably for the hospitality received, or most comprehensibly. These are subjective choices not unlike those that all researchers make in choosing what to study. Some are made while designing the case study, but some continue to be made throughout the study and until the final hours.

Reporting a case seldom takes the traditional form of telling a story: introduction of characters followed by the revelation and resolution of problems. Many sponsors of research and many a researcher want a report that looks like traditional social science, running from statement of problem to review of literature, data collection, analysis, and conclusions. The case can be portrayed in many ways.

Many researchers, early in a study, try to form an idea of what the final report might look like. In Figure 17.3, the topics of 16 sections of an anticipated 45-page report have been sequenced in the left column, with guesses of page limits provided for each. This is the plan of the researchers from Ukraine, Natalia Sofiy and Svitlana Efimova, with Liubchyk as their case. Liubchyk would have been sent to a special school for children of disability, but thanks to a diligent mother and an inclusion-oriented principal, he was "mainstreamed" in Mrs. Oxama's regular kindergarten. Strategically, Liubchyk is used as a pivot for examining the recent mainstreaming thrust in Ukraine. As seen in column headings, the most important issue was inclusion, followed by teacher training and child-centered education, then three other concerns. Where these issues may be developed in the report is predicted in the figure. In the last two columns, the researchers listed singular moments and quotations for placement in the sections. By forecasting the order and size of the parts of the story, one can lessen the chances of gathering much too much of any kind of data.

Comparisons

A researcher will report his or her case as a case, knowing it will be compared to others. Researchers differ as to how much they set up comparative cases and acknowledge the reader's own cases. Most naturalistic, ethnographic, phenomenological researchers will concentrate on describing the present case in sufficient detail so that the reader can make good comparisons. Sometimes the researcher will point out comparisons that might be made. Many quantitative and evaluation case researchers will try to provide some comparisons, sometimes by presenting one or more reference cases, sometimes providing statistical norms for reference groups from which a hypothetical reference case can be imagined. Both the quantitative and the qualitative approaches provide narrow grounds for strict comparison of cases, even though a tradition of grand comparison exists within comparative anthropology and related disciplines (Ragin, 1987; Sjoberg, Williams, Vaughan, & Sjoberg, 1991; Tobin, 1989).

I see formally designed comparison as actually competing with learning about and from the particular case. Comparison is a grand epistemological strategy, a powerful conceptual mechanism, fixing attention upon one or a few attributes. Thus, it obscures any case knowledge that fails to facilitate comparison. Comparative description is the opposite of what Geertz (1973) called "thick description." Thick description of the music program, for example, might include conflicting perceptions of the staffing, recent program changes, the charisma of the choral director, the working relationship with a church organist, faculty interest in a critical vote of the school board, and the lack of student interest in taking up the clarinet. In these particularities lie the vitality, trauma, and uniqueness of the case. Comparison might be made on any of these characteristics but tends to be made on more general variables traditionally noted in the organization of music programs (e.g., repertoire, staffing, budget, tour policy). With concentration on the bases for comparison, uniquenesses and complexities will be glossed over. A research design featuring comparison substitutes (a) *the comparison* for (b) *the case* as the focus of the study.

Regardless of the type of case study—intrinsic, instrumental, or collective—readers often learn

Issues appearing

Insertions	Topic Sections	pages	pages of context	Questionnaire info	Inclusion	teacher training	child-centered educ.	democratic play	program sustainability	choice vs. standard	minor topics	quotes, impressions
D, C, 3	Liubchyk	5			X			X			1. Teacher selection	A. Black today, green tommorrow
F, 1	Oksana	3	1		X	X	X			X	2. child protection	B. Director not bureaucrat
4	Tchr tng, Lviv	3	1	X	X	X					3. child view of disability	C. L's view of time & mgmt
	Press conf, Lviv	2			X				X		4. tchr view of disability	D. Body contact
	Tchr tng, Kiev	2				X					5. nature of disability	E. tchr staffing or potholes
	Tchr tng, Ukr.	2	2		X	X					6. role of church	F. Oksana's activity centers
3	Liubchyk	3		X	X						7. teacher unions	G. parents voted support
	His parents	2		X	X						8. European Union TACIS	H. psycholog'l assessment
	Parent Org's	2	2		X						9. Chernoble effects	I. aggression, affection
B, 9	LEA, Lviv	3	1								10. special ed alternatives	
	Ministry	2	2		X		X	X			11. preparing parents	
2, 8	SbS Ukraine	2	2		X		X	X		X		
10	Interpretation: Alt. ed. policy	4					X					
	Interpretation: Teacher training	4		X		X						
E, 5	Interpretation: Inclusion	4			X							
A	Liubchyk	2			X							
		45	11									

Figure 17.3. Plan for Assembling Ukraine Final Report

little from control or reference cases chosen only for comparison. When there are multiple cases of intrinsic interest, then of course it can be useful to compare them.[28] But often, there is but one case of intrinsic interest, if any at all. Readers with intrinsic interest in the case learn more about it directly from the description; they do not ignore comparisons with other cases but also do not concentrate on comparisons. Readers examining instrumental case studies are shown how the phenomenon exists within particular cases. As to reliability, differences between measures, such as how much the group changed, are fundamentally more unreliable than simple measurements. Similarly, conclusions about measured differences between any two cases are less to be trusted than are conclusions about a single case. Nevertheless, illustration of how a phenomenon occurs in the

circumstances of several exemplars can provide valued and trustworthy knowledge.

Many are the ways of conceptualizing cases to maximize learning from a case. The case is expected to be something that functions, that operates; the study is the observation of operations (Kemmis, 1980). There is something to be described and interpreted. The conceptions of most naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological case studies need accurate description and subjective, yet disciplined, interpretation; a respect for and curiosity about culturally different perceptions of phenomena; and empathic representation of local settings—all blending (perhaps clumped) within a constructivist epistemology.

Ethics

Ethical considerations for qualitative research are reviewed by Clifford Christians in Chapter 6 of this *Handbook* (and elsewhere by authors such as Coles, 1997, and Graue and Walsh, 1998). Case studies often deal with matters that are of public interest but for which there is neither public nor scholarly *right to know.* Funding, scholarly intent, or Institutional Review Board authorization does not constitute license to invade the privacy of others. The value of the best research is not likely to outweigh injury to a person exposed. Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict.

Along with much qualitative work, case study research shares an intense interest in personal views and circumstances. Those whose lives and expressions are portrayed risk exposure and embarrassment, as well as loss of standing, employment, and self-esteem. Something of a contract exists between researcher and the researched:[29] a disclosing and protective covenant, usually informal but best not silent, a moral obligation (Schwandt, 1993). Risks to well-being cannot be inventoried but should be exemplified. Issues of observation and reportage should be discussed in advance. Limits to access should be suggested and agreements heeded. It is important (but never sufficient) for targeted persons to receive drafts of the write-up revealing how they are presented, quoted, and interpreted; the researcher should listen well to these persons' responses for signs of concern. It is important that great caution be exercised to minimize risks to participants in the case. Even with good advance information from the researcher about the study, the researched cannot be expected to protect themselves against the risks inherent in participation. Rules for protection of human subjects should be followed (yet protested when they serve little more than to protect the researcher's institution from litigation). The researcher should go beyond those rules, avoid low-priority probing of sensitive issues, and draw in advisers and reviewers to help extend the protective system.

Ethical problems arise (both inside and outside the research topics) with nondisclosure of malfeasance and immorality. When rules for a study are set that prevent the researcher from "whistle-blowing" or the exercise of compassion, a problem exists. Where an expectation has been raised that propriety is being examined and no mention is made of a serious impropriety that has been observed, the report is deceptive. Breach of ethics is seldom a simple matter; often, it occurs when two contradictory standards apply, such as withholding full disclosure (as per the contract) in order to protect a good but vulnerable agency (Mabry, 1999). Ongoing and summative review procedures are needed, with impetus from the researcher's conscience, from stakeholders, and from the research community.

Summary

Major conceptual responsibilities of the qualitative case researcher include the following:

a. Bounding the case, conceptualizing the object of study;
b. Selecting phenomena, themes, or issues (i.e., the research questions to emphasize);
c. Seeking patterns of data to develop the issues;

d. Triangulating key observations and bases for interpretation;
e. Selecting alternative interpretations to pursue; and
f. Developing assertions or generalizations about the case.

Except for (a), the steps are similar to those of other qualitative researchers. The more intrinsic the interest of the researcher in the case, the more the focus of study will be on the case's idiosyncrasy, its particular context, issues, and story. Some major stylistic options for case researchers are the following:

a. How much to make the report a story,
b. How much to compare with other cases,
c. How much to formalize generalizations or leave such generalizing to readers,
d. How much description of the researcher to include in the report, and
e. Whether or not and how much to protect anonymity.

Case study is a part of scientific methodology, but its purpose is not limited to the advance of science. Populations of cases can be represented poorly by single cases or samples of a very few cases, and such small samples of cases can provide questionable grounds for advancing grand generalization. Yet, "Because more than one theoretical notion may be guiding an analysis, confirmation, fuller specification, and contradiction all may result from one case study" (Vaughan, 1992, p. 175). For example, we lose confidence in the generalization that a child of separated parents is better off placed with the mother than with the father when we find a single instance of resulting injury. Case studies are of value in refining theory, suggesting complexities for further investigation as well as helping to establish the limits of generalizability.

Case study also can be a disciplined force in setting public policy and in reflecting on human experience. Vicarious experience is an important basis for refining action options and expectations. Formal epistemology needs further development, but somehow people draw, from the description of an individual case, implications for other cases—not always correctly, but with a confidence shared by people of dissimilar views.

The purpose of a case report is not to represent the world, but to represent the case. Criteria for conducting the kind of research that leads to valid generalization need modification to fit the search for effective particularization. The utility of case research to practitioners and policy makers is in its extension of experience. The methods of qualitative case study are largely the methods of disciplining personal and particularized experience.

▣ Notes

1. Many case studies are both qualitative and quantitative. In search of fundamental pursuits common to both qualitative and quantitative research, Robert Yin (1992) analyzed three well-crafted research efforts: (a) a quantitative investigation to resolve disputed authorship of the Federalist Papers, (b) a qualitative study of Soviet intent at the time of the Cuban missile crisis, and (c) his own studies of the recognizability of human faces. He found four common commitments: to bring expert knowledge to bear upon the phenomena studied, to round up all the relevant data, to examine rival interpretations, and to ponder and probe the degree to which the findings have implications elsewhere. These commitments are as important in case research as in any other type.

2. Another specific one for targeting a qualitative study is the event or instance. Events and instances are bounded, complex, and related to issues, but they lack the organic systemacity of most cases. Media instances have been studied by John Fiske (1994) and Norman Denzin (1999). Conversation analysis is a related approach (Psathas, 1995; Silverman, 2000).

3. Definition of the case is not independent of interpretive paradigm or methods of inquiry. Seen from different worldviews and in different situations, the "same" case *is* different. And however we originally define the case, the working definition changes as we study. And the definition of the case changes in different ways under different methods of study. The case of Theodore Roosevelt was not just differently portrayed but was differently defined as biographer Edmund Morris (1979) presented him, one chapter at a time, as "the Dude from New York,"

"the Dear Old Beloved Brother," "the Snake in the Grass," "the Rough Rider," "the Most Famous Man in America," and so on.

4. The history of case study, like the history of curiosity and common sense, is found throughout the library. Peeps at that history can be found in Robert Bogdan and Sara Bicklin (1982), John Creswell (1998), Sara Delamont (1992), Joe Feagin, Anthony Orum, and Gideon Sjoberg (1991), Robert Stake (1978), Harrison White (1992), and throughout this *Handbook.*

5. *Bread and Dreams* is a program evaluation report. Most evaluations are intrinsic case studies (see Mabry, 1998).

6. Collective case study is essentially what Robert Herriott and William Firestone (1983) called "multisite qualitative research." Multisite program evaluation is another common example. A number of German sociologists, such as Martin Kohli and Fritz Schütze, have used collective case studies with Strauss's grounded theory approach.

7. In a thoughtful review of an early draft of this chapter, Orlando Fals Borda urged abandoning the effort to promote intrinsic casework and the study of particularity. In persisting here, I think it important to support disciplined and scholarly study that has few scientific aspirations.

8. In 1922, Bronislaw Malinowski wrote, "One of the first conditions of acceptable Ethnographic work certainly is that it should deal with the totality of all social, cultural and psychological aspects of the community . . ." (1922/1984, p. xvi). There is a good spirit there, although totalities defy the acuity of the eye and the longevity of the watch.

9. Generalization from collective case study has been discussed by Herriott and Firestone (1983), John and Lyn Lofland (1984), Miles and Huberman (1994), and again by Firestone (1993).

10. Malinowski claimed that we could distinguish between arriving with closed minds and arriving with an idea of what to look for. He wrote:

> Good training in theory, and acquaintance with its latest results, is not identical with being burdened with "preconceived ideas." If a man sets out on an expedition, determined to prove certain hypotheses, if he is incapable of changing his views constantly and casting them off ungrudgingly under the pressure of evidence, needless to say his work will be worthless. But the more problems he brings with him into the field, the more he is in the habit of moulding his theories according to facts, and of seeing facts in their bearing upon theory, the better he is equipped for the work. Preconceived ideas are pernicious in any scientific work, but *foreshadowed problems* are the main endowment of a scientific thinker, and these problems are first revealed to the observer by his theoretical studies. (1922/1984, p. 9)

11. I would prefer to call it *interpretive* to emphasize the production of meanings, but ethnographers have used that term to mean "learn the special views of actors, the local meanings" (see Erickson, 1986; Schwandt, 2000).

12. Ethnographic use of the term *reflective* sometimes limits attention to the need for self-challenging the researcher's etic issues, frame of reference, and cultural bias (Tedlock, Chapter 18, this volume). That challenge is important but, following Donald Schön (1983), I refer to a general frame of mind when I call qualitative case work *reflective.* (Issues "brought in" are called *emic* issues; those found during field study are called *etic.*)

13. Coding is the method of connecting data, issues, interpretations, data sources, and report writing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In small studies, this means careful labeling and sorting into file folders or computer files. Many entries are filed into more than one file. If the file becomes too bulky, subfiles need to be created. Too many files spoils the soup. In larger studies with files to be used by several team members, a formal coding system needs to be developed, possibly using a computer program such as *Ethnograph, ATLAS-ti,* or *HyperRESEARCH.*

14. Michael Patton (1990), Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1990), and William Firestone (1993) have discussed successive selection of cases over time.

15. As indicated in a previous section, I call them issues. Mary Kennedy (1979) called them "relevant attributes." Spiro et al. (1987) called them "abstract dimensions." Malinowski (1922/1984) called them "theories." In contemporary case research, these will be our "working theories" more than the "grand theories" of the disciplines.

16. If my emphasis is on learning about both the individual case and the phenomenon, I might do two studies, one a case study and the other a study of the phenomenon, giving close attention to an array of instances of hostage taking.

17. Firestone (1993) advised maximizing diversity and "to be as like the population of interest as possible" (p. 18).

18. The project is ongoing, and no report is yet available. The Step by Step program is described in Hansen, Kaufmann, and Saifer (n.d.).

19. For a number of years, psychologists Lee Cronbach and Richard Snow (1977) studied aptitude-treatment interactions. They hoped to find general rules by which teachers could adapt instruction to personal learning styles. At deeper and deeper levels of interaction they found significance, leading not to prespecifying teaching methods for individuals but supporting the conclusion that differentiated consistencies of response by individuals are to be expected in complex situations.

20. Laurel Richardson and Elizabeth St. Pierre speak similarly of *crystallization* in Chapter 38 of this volume.

21. Creative use of "member checking," submitting drafts for review by data sources, is one of the most needed forms of validation of qualitative research (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

22. Or that a reality exists outside the observers.

23. Among the earlier philosophers of science providing groundwork for qualitative contributions to theory elaboration were Herbert Blumer, Barney Glaser, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Robert Merton.

24. Yet, in the words of Charles Ragin, "variable oriented comparative work (e.g., quantitative cross-national research) as compared with case oriented comparative work disembodies and obscures cases" (Ragin & Becker, 1992, p. 5).

25. Sociologists have used the term "micro/ macro" to refer to the leap from understanding individual cases or parts to understanding the system as a whole. Even without an adequate epistemological map, sociologists do leap, and so do our readers (Collins, 1981).

26. Storytelling as representative of culture and as sociological text emerges from many traditions, but nowhere more than from oral history and folklore. It is becoming more disciplined in a line of work called narrative inquiry (Clandenin & Connelly, 1999; Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Heron, 1996; Lockridge, 1988; Richardson, 1997). The *Journal of Narrative and Life History* includes studies using such methods.

27. It may appear that I claim here that participatory action research is problematic. Joint responsibility for design, data gathering, and interpretation is possible, often commendable. It is important that readers know when the values of the study have been so shaped.

28. Evaluation studies comparing an innovative program to a control case regularly fail to make the comparison credible. No matter how well studied, the control case too weakly represents cases presently known by the reader. By comprehensively describing the program case, the researcher may help the reader draw naturalistic generalizations.

29. A special obligation exists to protect those with limited resources. Those who comply with the researcher's requests, who contribute in some way to the making of the case, should not thereby be hurt—usually. When continuing breaches of ethics or morality are discovered, or when they are the reason for the study, the researcher must take some ameliorative action. Exposé and critique are legitimate within case study, but luring self-indictment out of a respondent is no more legitimate in research than in the law.

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