Appendix

The Fun and Value of Case Study Research

For this section we asked our contributors and other scholars involved in case study research to tell us, from their perspective, what they enjoy about engaging in case study research and what value they see in the approach. We hope that it will encourage readers to further explore case study research.

The Stories We Tell

We live by the stories we tell each other. Stories tell us how things happened, why things are as they are, and what to expect if we play the role of hero, or good parent, or responsible citizen. Stories let us live a hundred different lives, walk in curious worlds, and hope alongside characters we would be pleased to call companions of the heart. Stories let us see the good in others, acknowledge the bad, share the triumphs of strength and the suffering that comes from error. So it is with cases. To be a good case writer is, first and foremost, to be a good storyteller. When crafting a case you’ve got an opportunity not only to describe the dusty and cobweb-filled facts of a situation but to tell a living story, creating a memorable event that lets someone else live—if ever so briefly—a different life; to let them be part of a happening that shows the good, or the bad, or the foolishness of business—and yes, to show the quiet courage that’s always part of the human condition. As a case writer you create examples, you teach and explain, and you tell others what it was like when you were there. But above all, when you tell these stories you have a chance to argue for the right, to illustrate the good, to praise quiet courage, and especially to show others why they should care.

Jim Tolliver

Feasting on the Benefits of Case Study Research

I enjoy getting involved in foreign social lives while carrying out case studies with qualitative methods. By conducting narrative interviews, one gets in touch with absorbing stories and experiences interwoven with emotions that bring the stranger and social researcher closer together. Having the chance to learn about the life of normally distant persons and about different social worlds is exciting. Where else can we become a part of foreign social worlds and have the chance to become aware of the unexpected? While analyzing and reflecting on the data of case studies, researchers can also learn a bit about their own lives. This is especially true if they bear in mind that they are neutral but have some impact on the research progress. Alongside self-reflexivity about our own perspective and our role in the research process, I find the relative openness of some qualitative research methods used in case study to be stimulating. This is because handling the unexpected is like a playful game of further adapting and developing the methods during the research. These appealing features of qualitative case studies are regrettably accompanied by some drawbacks. Conducting case studies is also a strenuous and sometimes frustrating activity. This is because it is hard to follow through on previous plans, and initial expectations can be troubled by unexpected incidents. Sometimes it is very difficult to get in touch with interviewees or get involved in foreign social environments. Moreover, without doubt, analyzing and writing case study research can be frustrating if one suffers from writer’s block. However, for me it has always been worthwhile to face up to these difficulties and to feast on the benefits of case study research.
Satisfaction Through High Commitment and High Involvement: The Global Companies Development Programme

A longitudinal multiple-case study design was used to undertake an innovative evaluation of the Global Companies Development Programme (GCDP), a public policy initiative provided by Scottish Enterprise, the regional development agency in Scotland, United Kingdom. The program aims to help Scottish small- and medium-sized enterprises internationalize. This qualitative case study design was an alternative approach to evaluation that is often survey based, and aimed to look deeply and broadly at the impact of the program over time, capturing new insights and the complex and dynamic process of firm internationalization. The study involved both in-depth interviews with CEOs of firms participating in the program over 3 years and the collection of performance-related data each year. In addition, access was gained to expertise within Scottish Enterprise (program executives, account managers, internal evaluation) and archival records of the firms that provided corroboration of the interviews. The evaluation involved feedback through regular monthly meetings with the GCDP executives, as well as formal presentations and twice-yearly reports. The case study method was supported by an action research context and process approach to evaluation, where regular feedback and meetings formed part of the development of the evaluation and program.

This case study approach involved high commitment by both the researchers and the policy-makers; it was costly and time-consuming. However, it was able to unravel chains of events, entrepreneurs’ responses and outcomes at the enterprise level, and provide deep understanding of long-term impacts of the program.

Margaret Fletcher

The Creative Potential of Case Studies

We humans seem to live our lives as stories. Stories are understandable and yet they preserve nuance and complexity. When we recount stories well, they are always accompanied by some giving of context, yet the context itself does not capture the essence of the story. Just as good fiction involves a tension between a sense of the inevitable and the simultaneous potential of the unexpected, case studies offer us the thrill of the possibility of chance constrained by tight narration. Thus, there is a certain situated freedom to be found in the crafting and the analysis of cases in all their different forms.

This freedom is what Sartre referred to as committed literature when he described an existentialist approach to writing plays and novellas. What if this bold idea, that the content and the form and the intent of our work define the story we tell, was considered central to our work as researchers? Of course, many researchers do believe and commit themselves to such an ideal, yet relatively few seem to talk openly about this aspect of the crafting of their work and fewer still openly mentor their student apprentices in such.

Surely the artistic component of choosing how and what to reveal (or conceal) in our research has meaning, if for no other reason than to reaffirm that we have some freedom of choice in the matter. I wonder about the unknown number of insights that we have rejected and lost because they were written differently than convention dictates or were seen as not being immediately and directly applicable to the existing literature. In a world of constraints, case studies offer researchers creative potential in terms of form and content; a space where storytelling is valued, preserved, and interrogated. While this freedom carries with it profound responsibility, at its core it is also what makes case study work a whole lot of fun to do.

Anthony R. Yue
The Joy and Privilege of Collaboration

When I was an undergraduate student, the most exciting thing to me about sociology and anthropology was reading case studies. As a young, white, middle-class Canadian these readings opened my imagination to other social worlds. The early days of urban sociology in Chicago and publications like the *Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, the many symbolic interactionist studies of deviance, and social anthropological monographs on distant cultures enticed me into becoming a professional sociologist. Since writing my PhD dissertation many years ago on west coast commercial salmon fishers, and spending 5 months on a commercial fishing boat, I have conducted participant observation research. Today I am researching the creative process among visual artists. All of these projects have given me the great personal pleasure of meeting many hardworking, kind, and exciting people who have opened my eyes to the great social diversity of the human enterprise. Doing case studies takes research out of the laboratory and into everyday lived experience where researchers and researched become collaborators, share knowledge, and strive toward building a better world.

*Janet M. C. Burns*

Contributors’ Favorite Case Studies

In this section we asked contributors to tell us about their favorite case studies. In order to encourage a range of responses we didn’t offer any criteria for choosing cases. They could be the most instructive, the most readable, the most groundbreaking. As you will see below, most contributors nominated those cases that were a combination of all three. We hope they will provide readers with clues and insights to good case writing.

Markku Jahnukainen writes:

My all time favorite is:


It is still relevant.

This article is groundbreaking in my own field (special education) because it defines the survival of high-risk adolescence:


Clem Adelman’s favorite cases include:


Any documentary films by Fred Wiseman or by Roger Graef.

Lars Meier lists his favorite case studies as:


Waquant’s ethnographic study explores the social structure within a boxing gym in a poor black neighborhood in Chicago. The author participates in the gym and reflects on his own experiences and
body changes. The study is an excellent read and is important because it demonstrates the existence of social organizations and networks in a neighborhood mostly stereotyped and equated with social disorganization and anomie.


Whyte’s study is a lively participant observation of street gangs in Boston.

**Kam Jugdev** writes:

I have found three classics to be useful in research methods courses. The Eisenhardt (1989) paper offers an eight-step framework on the process of building theory from case study research. The paper also discusses different perspectives on case study research. Gersick’s (1988) paper exemplifies unconventional case study research, the time-intensive nature of case study analyses, and how the approach can lead to a new model of group development, albeit unexpected. Using these two articles along with excerpts from Yin’s book has enabled me to draw out different aspects of case study research in group discussions.


**Shripad Pendse** singles out the following teaching case for attention:

“Dashman Company” is just one and one-half pages long, but it is endlessly fascinating and versatile. Written in the 1940s, it continues to be included in anthologies today. Fritz Roethlisberger, of Hawthorne studies fame, devotes several pages to the case in his wonderful biography, *The Elusive Phenomena.* *Harvard Business Review* surveyed its readers to see how they analyzed the problems in the case. The series of three articles published in 1997 was based on 1,400 responses to the survey.

The case describes the actions of a newly appointed vice president of purchasing, Mr. Post, who is an experienced purchasing executive but a newcomer to Dashman Company. He has been recruited because of shortages of raw materials that may occur during the war. The plant managers traditionally have been given wide autonomy in making their decisions, and the peak buying season is only 3 weeks away.

Mr. Post sends out letters to the 20 purchasing managers of widely dispersed plants, instructing them to “clear” with him any purchase contracts over $10,000. “I am sure that you will understand that this step is necessary to coordinate the purchasing requirements of the company in these times,” he tells them.

Almost all the managers write to express their agreement, but almost nobody follows up by advising Mr. Post of any forthcoming orders over $10,000. Reports from the plants indicate that the plants were busy and “the usual routines for that time of year were being followed.”

The discussion thus turns to how effective a manager Mr. Post has been, and why the purchasing executives did not seem to obey Mr. Post’s directions.

Students (and the experienced managers surveyed by *HBR*) focus on three issues: Mr. Post’s timing was wrong (just before the peak buying season); his medium of communication was wrong (writing rather than personal contact); and he was going against the tradition of autonomy enjoyed by the plant managers. Some students also wondered whether the managers began to split orders so that they remained under $10,000.

While these comments are not wrong, they miss some deeper issues. This is what makes the case so interesting to teach. Here are three of them.

First, was there a need for any action on Mr. Post’s part? While there was some fear that raw materials might be in shortage, the fact that usual routines were being followed suggests that the shortages had not actually materialized. What could Mr. Post have done to find out if there really
were shortages, and if so in what materials?
Second, even if the shortages had been real, Mr. Post’s solution did not make sense. It could give
him only data that were the opposite of what he needed—about materials that were being ordered, and
thus not in short supply.
Finally, the case illustrates the use of various sources of power. How can a manager, especially a
new one, generate power? Use of command did not work for Mr. Post. Perhaps if he asked which raw
materials were in short supply and found ways to obtain them, he would discover expert and referent
sources of power and be much more likely to elicit cooperation from his subordinates.

Saville Ian Kushner’s best cases:
Read this and you will learn that a case researcher’s self-knowledge is a critical resource for
understanding the case: see how Kennedy’s failure to take her own life counterpoints with the
matador’s persistent flirtation with death; see how the self can be used to understand and not displace
empathetic representation of others. Look at this case to learn the overriding importance of recording
detail.
Case study offers what I think of as the “democratic inversion.” We know a great deal about how the
citizen fits into our social programs; we know too little about how social programs fit into people’s
lives. Lewis’s classic study of a family living in poverty in Puerto Rico and New York gives us a
strong sense of what that inversion can look like.

Another good case is the movie, The Third Man. It shows the sweep from personal struggle and
pathos to institutional, political, and even geopolitical contexts that case study calls for—not just
good stories but comprehensive and analytical stories. This film leaves you with an analysis of how
morality (what this is a case of) has to be contextualized—and how context imposes itself as an
ever-present and overriding contingency. It also reminds us of something that case study so often
reveals—the impossibility of disentangling success from failure.

David Michael Boje’s favorite case studies:
Nike shoes. Uppsala, Sweden: Global Publications Foundations and International Coalition for
Development Action.
Roy, D. F. (1959). Banana time: Job satisfaction and informal interaction. Human Organization, 18,
.org/search.php?query=title%3Athe%20jungle%20creator%3AUpton%20Sinclair%20-contributor
%3Agutenberg%20AND%20mediatyp%3Atexts%20
http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch10.htm

Dvora Yanow’s top picks for case studies are:
published 1955)
published 1960)

**Sierk Ybema’s** list includes:


**Frans H. Kamsteeg’s** picks for best cases:


Detailed case study of the organization of urban street gangs in the context of American society.


Case study on the impact of culture change politics on the daily life of employees in a Silicon Valley company.


Ethnographic case study of managers struggling over identity in an organizational change process.


A shop-floor study of the interplay of church and NGO politics of cultural change.

Some of *Marilyn Porter’s* favorite case studies:

In the early 1970s there was a dawning of feminist awareness about how male centered all the disciplines were. In this context, I came across *Guests of the Sheik: An Ethnography of an Iraqi Village* (New York: Doubleday, 1969) by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea. She had gone to a remote village in southern Iraq as the wife of a “proper” male anthropologist. Bored, she began to spend time with the sequestered women in the households. The resulting book opened my eyes, and those of many others, to the possibilities of focusing on women’s everyday lives and the advantages of building on shared identities and problems.

Another moment of awakening came when I read *Female Sexualization: A Collective Work of Memory* (London: Verso, 1987) by Frigga Haug et al. This penetratingly honest collective examination of themselves and their bodies opened up a whole new way of looking at ourselves as “cases.”

On this same theme of focusing on individuals as cases and looking at different forms of representing experience, I suggest *The Woman Who Mapped Labrador: The Life and Expedition Diary of Mina Hubbard* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005) by Roberta Buchanan, Anne Hart, and Bryan Greene. In this case study of one remarkable woman, the three authors have combined and triangulated different skills and different kinds of sources—the diary and letters of Mina Hubbard, documentary and interview evidence about her life after her famous expedition, and the scientific mapping and topographical context of her trip.

**Hezekiah Uba Orji** points out that
One case that is on the Social Science Research Network’s (SSRN) Top Ten download list on “Bad Leadership” is:


Janet M. C. Burns recommends:


Tony Elger’s top five case studies:

The possibilities are endless, so I have decided to be parochial and select a top five from my own area of specialist knowledge, namely British/European workplace studies, especially those of management–worker relations in modern manufacturing. Even there I was spoiled for choice, but nominate as established or emergent classics:

This is an influential study of life on the line in the Ford factory at Halewood, Merseyside, that explores shop-floor responses to intense assembly line production and management’s attempted marginalization of union representation. At the heart of the book is an analysis of shop-steward organization and activity in the plant, drawing out the pressures and dilemmas they faced and the efforts required to sustain and develop a strong work-place trade unionism from a complex matrix of local working class traditions and day-to-day worker survival strategies. This also provides the prism through which analyses of wider relations are developed, between different levels of corporate management and different levels and strands of trade unionism.

The employees in this study are primarily managers and technical staff rather than the manual workers considered in my other choices, but it is a stimulating and illuminating study for all those interested in power relations and the internal politics of organizations. The book is based on a series of case studies of manufacturing (mainly electronics) firms and looks particularly at the management of technical innovations and the role of R & D departments. The cases were researched in varied depth and detail and are analyzed through a cumulative series of cross-cutting comparisons that defy easy codification. The authors begin by constructing an influential contrast between mechanistic and organic forms of organization, then deconstruct this contrast by focusing on the varied micropolitical dynamics and diverse outcomes of power relations between top managers and varied cliques, cabals, and departmental clusters of middle management.

Durand, J.-P., & Hatzfeld, N. (2003). Living labour: Life on the line at Peugeot France (D. Roberts, Trans.). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. This is a study that demonstrates that there are still valuable new things to say about a well-researched topic, namely line work in the auto industry. In particular, it combines a fine analysis of the negotiation of work activity and effort on the line with a sophisticated discussion of intergenerational relations among workers, based on a combination of participant observation and other case study methods.

Westwood, S. (1984). All day, every day: Factory and family in the making of women’s lives. London: Pluto. One of a set of influential British socialist–feminist ethnographies of women factory workers produced in the 1980s, this book is based on a year-long participant observation study of women workers in a hosiery factory. It analyzes the ways these workers experience management–worker relations and the labor process, the role of male-dominated trade unionism, and the relationships between paid work and family relations. Key themes concern the complex interplay among class, gender, and ethnicity in the patterning of experiences and responses, and the relationship between resistance and celebration in shop-floor culture.