

Combining case study designs for rigorous research

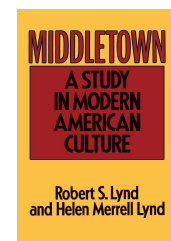
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Case study research



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Background – the two Roberts



R. Stake



R. Yin

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Main advocate	Yin	Stake
Philosophical orientation	Positivist	Interpretive/ constructionist
Nature of research process	Objective search for causes	Subjective search for meaning
Case study outcome	Explanation in the form of cause-effect linkages	Understanding of actors' subjective experiences
Strength of case study	Internal validity	Thick description
Attitude to generalisation	Generalisation to theory (analytic generalisation)	"Particularisation" not generalisation

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What is a case study?

A case study is an

- empirical inquiry
(Investigation is based on collected data)
- that investigates a contemporary phenomenon
(Why are green HR initiatives not successful amongst remote workforces?)
- within its real-life context;
(In remote workforce-friendly companies post 2020)
- when the boundaries between phenomenon & context are not evident;
(Success of green HR initiatives & changing workforce)
- and in which multiple sources of evidence are used
(interviews, observations, focus group discussions)



(Yin, 2009)*

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What is a case study?

Focused study of a bounded phenomenon through intensive exploration

- Multiple causal conditions, relatively lower number of data points
- Multiple sources of evidence
- Purposive sampling techniques

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Case study designs

Building blocks of case study designs

- Research questions (exploratory & explanatory)
- Context (as a condition, as a control)
- Induction, deduction, and abduction

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Cases - defining the case

- What are the conditions that make an entity your case?
 - Comparable to the unit of analysis in a quantitative study
- Terminology
 - Relatable to prior studies OR
 - Innovative in clear, operationally defined ways

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Case = Unit of Analysis?

- Cases
 - organizations
 - departments
- Sometimes “cases” are individuals
 - juvenile delinquents,
 - working mothers,
 - women entrepreneurs
- Some cases have less “well defined boundaries” ...
 - groups of people
 - relationships



Is unit of analysis the same as unit of data collection?

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Unit of Analysis v/s Unit of data collection

- Example

Study is about	Data is collected from an		Case?
	Individual	Organization	
Individual			Case is an individual
Organization			Case is an organization

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Cases - bounding the case

- Why?
 - Determines scope of data collection
 - Distinguishes the subject (phenomenon) from external entities
 - Tightens connection between research question and case
- Whom or what to include and exclude
 - Persons, services, geographical area..
- Time boundaries
 - Estimated beginning and end

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Designing a case study – Building blocks

Embedded vs holistic

- Embedded = presence of sub-cases
- Holistic = no sub-cases

Single vs multiple

- Single = only one main case
- Multiple = two or more main cases

Basic case study designs – 4 types

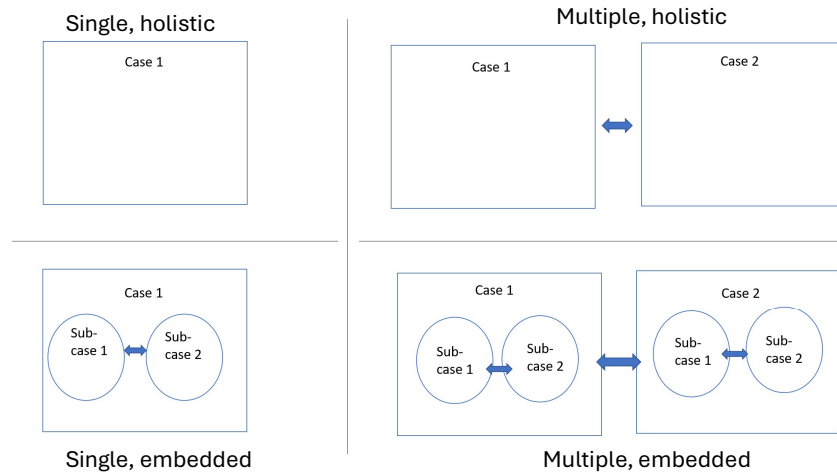
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Yin's case study designs



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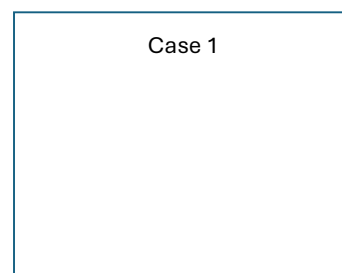
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Single holistic design

- No sub-cases
- A single case is analyzed
- No comparison involved



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Single holistic design

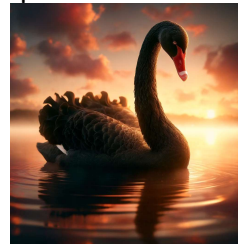
- Unique cases: critical, revelatory

E.g.: Phineas Gage

- Phenomenon-driven: Presents a jigsaw of the process

- Falsifiability: outliers

- Data access



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Single holistic design - Example

By Crosina and Pratt (2019)

- Single holistic case - Lehman brothers



- Five stages of organizational mourning –

(1) experiencing the death event, (2) remembering the organization, (3) assessing loss, (4) salvaging: evaluate and restore, (5) creating continuity and detaching

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Single holistic design

Type of case study design	Strengths	Weaknesses
Single holistic	In-depth exploration/explanation	Internal validity (cannot analyze the variance across different cases or sub-cases)
	Falsification	External validity (cannot generalize to a population of cases)
	Data access	

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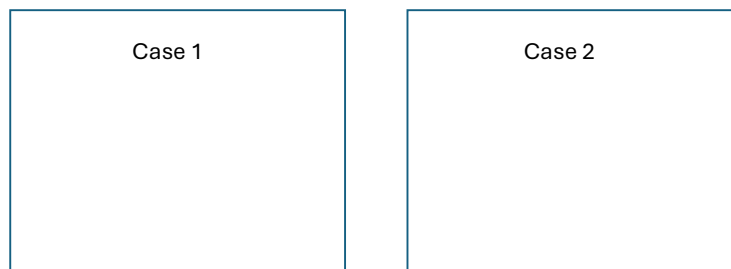
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Multiple holistic design

- No sub-cases
- More than one case is involved



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Replication logic

- Literal replication (LR) – Cases are selected to predict similar results
- Theoretical replication (TR) – Cases are selected to predict contrasting results but for theoretical reasons

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Multiple holistic design - Examples

- How do companies perform strategic planning in increased environmental turbulence? (Grant, 2003)

Literal Replication – 10 vertically integrated, diversified, large multinational oil and gas companies in a turbulent environment

- How do pharmaceutical companies integrate biotech companies to gain access to its technology, innovative capabilities, and expertise? (Schweizer, 2005)

Theoretical Replication – 5 successful and unsuccessful biotech and pharmaceutical company M&A deals

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Multiple holistic design

Type of case study design	Strengths	Weaknesses
Multiple holistic	Literal replication (enhances reliability)	Depth of observation is compromised
	Theoretical replication (enhances internal validity)	Difficult to control for context
	Theoretical replication (enhances external validity, comparatively)	

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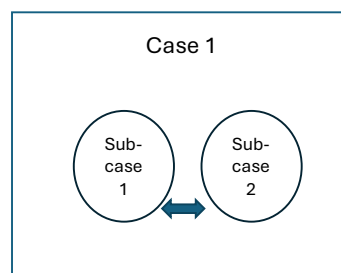
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Single embedded design

- Single case (no between-case comparison)
- More than one sub-case (within-case comparison)



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Single embedded design

- Within-case replication
- Embeddedness can be longitudinal or cross-sectional
- More rigorous – naturally controlled for the context

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Single embedded design – Example (Cross-sectional)

- Slater & Ziblatt (2013) - Government performance in Italy (Putnam, 1993)

Variation in government performance across Northern and Southern Italy

- Naturally controlled for national-level variables (e.g.: Catholicism, parliamentarism, fascist legacies etc.)
- Full range of variation in industrialized democracies
- Findings: Role of social capital and civic engagement on government performance

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Single embedded design – Example (Longitudinal)

- How do managerial cognition affect the adaptive intelligence of organizations? (Tripsas and Gavetti, 2000)

One company (Polaroid), with three different phases (sub-cases) illustrating how it shifted from analog to digital imaging...

...And the corresponding changes in organizational capabilities and adaptation

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Single embedded design

Type of case study design	Strengths	Weaknesses
Single embedded	High internal validity compared to single holistic and LR multiple holistic designs	Smaller number of explanatory variables, when compared to single holistic design
	TR single embedded design has higher external validity compared to single holistic design and LR multiple holistic design	TR single embedded design has lower external validity than TR multiple designs

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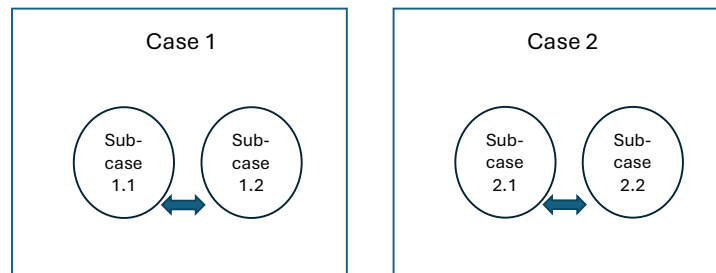
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Multiple embedded case design

- Sub-cases are present
- Multiple cases
- Within and cross case comparison involved – most rigorous of Yin's designs!



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Multiple embedded case design

- Within-case & between-case replication
- Embeddedness can be longitudinal or cross-sectional
- Most rigorous of Yin's designs

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Multiple embedded design - Example

- How do small companies execute their design processes within their new product development activities? (Löfqvist, 2010)

- Cases:

Company 1	Company 2	Company 3
Manufacturer B2B, owner-managed	Software B2B, owner-managed	Manufacturer B2B and B2C, owner-managed

- Sub-cases: Design processes
- Relative novelty <-> Design process relationship

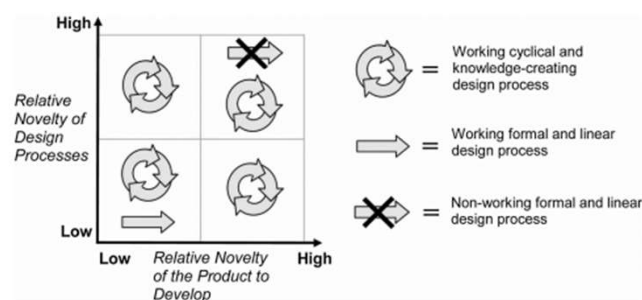
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Multiple embedded design – Example (2)



Working and Non-Working Design Processes in Relation to Different Kinds and Grades of Relative Novelty

(Löfqvist, 2010, p: 414)

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Multiple embedded design

Type of case study design	Strengths	Weaknesses
Multiple embedded	Increased internal validity through between- and within-case comparisons	Lack of depth (comparatively) Difficult to get access to all the selected cases and embedded sub-cases

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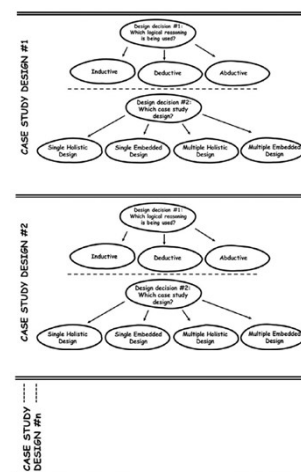
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Sequencing of Yin's designs

- Inductive-deductive
- Deductive-inductive



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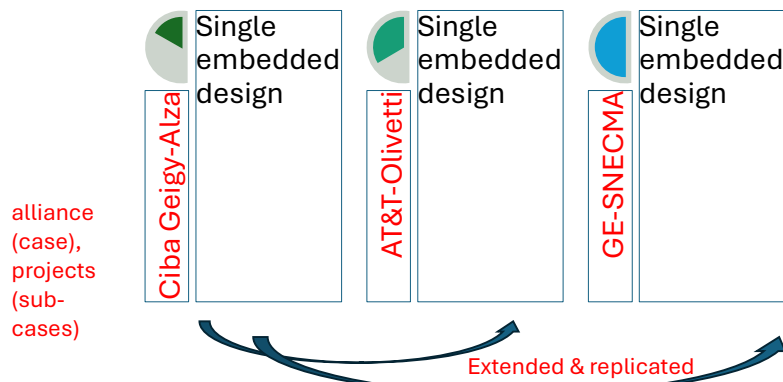
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Inductive-deductive sequencing

Example: Doz 1996

Role of learning processes in the success of strategic alliances



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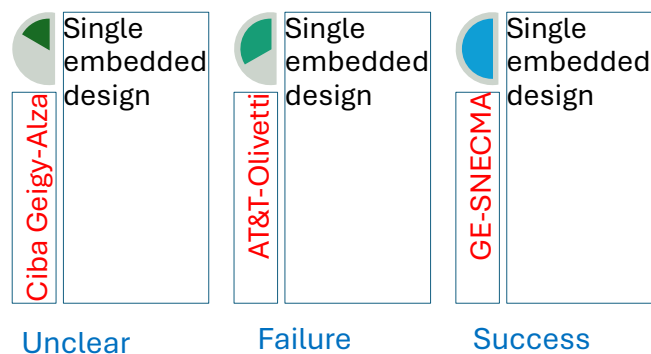
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Inductive-deductive sequencing

Example: Doz 1996

Role of learning processes in the success of strategic alliances



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Deductive-inductive sequencing

Example: Robinson and Acemoglu (2012). "Why nations fail: The origins of power, prosperity, and poverty"

Starting point: "Culture hypothesis" - world inequality stems from the culture of a region, namely the religion, national ethics, social norms, and values

Outlier spotted: Korean peninsula



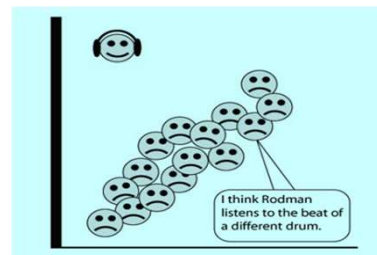
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Outliers

- An empirical phenomenon, where one or more case(s) are different from other similar cases in some relevant dimension
- May reveal boundary conditions, new causal conditions (variables), contingencies, and conditional effects (Gerring, 2007)



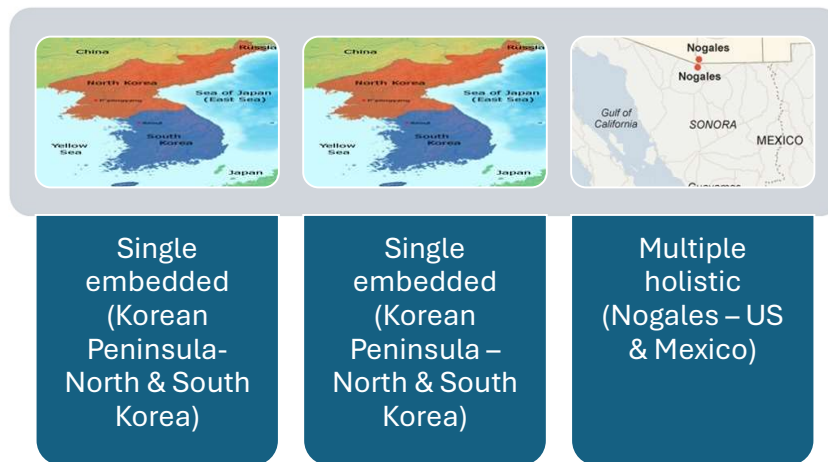
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Deductive-inductive sequencing



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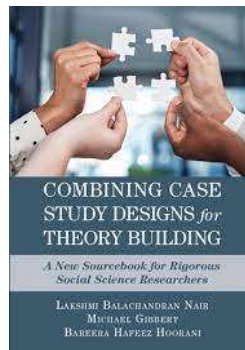
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