

Case Study Research

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ABSTRACT

This brief article reviews three books about case studies and announces a project to develop a second book about body psychotherapy case studies.

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There has been a recent surge of interest in case study research. In this article, I want to draw your attention to three books on this topic, and see where we, as body psychotherapists, can make use of this new interest to further our goals of establishing a scientific basis for body psychotherapy and somatic psychology without compromising our integrity as caring clinical practitioners.

First, there are three basic types of research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research. No one is better than the other: they have different philosophical assumptions and differing key elements of research process. They are based on different usage of theory in research application, differing ethical considerations, and are written up very differently. They are also not mutually exclusive, though “qualitative” tends to use words, and “quantitative” tends to use numbers – or “better yet, using closed-ended questions and responses (quantitative hypotheses) or open-ended questions and responses (qualitative interview questions)” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The focus of research includes emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis that inductively builds from the particulars toward general themes, and

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the researcher's interpretation of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of reporting the complexity of a situation.

When the case study is designed and eventually written, these points should be followed to give it depth and viability. All too often (hopefully in the past), the case study has had a certain quirky interest, but may have also been used for self-promotion as well as scientific demonstration.

... in planning a study, researchers need to think through the philosophical worldview assumptions that they bring to the study, the research design that is related to this worldview, and the specific methods or procedures of research that translate the approach into practice. (Ibid., 4-5)

Creswell and Creswell then outline the importance of considering four different worldviews that lie behind any choice of research design: postpositivism, constructivism, pragmatism, and transformative.

Grounded Theory

Before we focus more precisely on case studies, I would like to mention another form of qualitative research – grounded theory. Grounded theory is a qualitative research method concerned with the generation of theory. It is:

- Grounded in data that has been systematically collected and analyzed
- Used to uncover such things as social relationships and group behaviors, known as *social processes*. It enables the discovery of new theories based on the collection and analysis of real-world data. This generation of new theories from carefully observed data is radically different than the usual research concept of discovering data that then validates a theory. It is iterative and evolving, rather than defining, and can thus be of great use – particularly in social studies. This may be of interest to some body psychotherapy researchers.

The defining characteristics of grounded theory include:

- Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis

- Construction of analytic codes and categories from data, not from preconceived logical hypotheses
- Use of the constant comparative method/analysis, which involves making comparisons during all steps of the analysis
- Developing theory during each step of data collection and analysis
- Memo-writing to elaborate categories
- Theoretical sampling aiming toward theory construction (not representativeness)
- Conducting a literature review after performing the analysis and developing theory

When developing a theory, identification of a core category is central for the integration of other categories into a conceptual framework or theory grounded in the data. Most grounded theories are substantive theories because they address delimited problems within specific substantive areas (Bertero, 2012). Three relatively recently published or reissued books can help us do precisely this:

- *The Art of Case Study Research* by Robert E. Stake
- *Applications of Case Study Research* by Robert K. Yin
- *Case Study Research in Practice* by Helen Simons

The Art of Case Study Research

Robert Stake's *The Art of Case Study Research*, albeit somewhat dated, presents a disciplined, qualitative exploration of case study methods by drawing from naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological, and biographic research methods. He uses and annotates an actual case study to answer such questions as: "How is the case selected?", "How do you select the case which will maximize what can be learned?" "How can what is learned from one case be applied to another?", and "How can what is learned from a case be interpreted?". In addition, the book covers the differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches, data-gathering including document review, coding, sorting and pattern analysis, the roles of the researcher, triangulation, and reporting, etc.

Applications of Case Study Research

Robert Yin's *Applications of Case Study Research* is designed to help both graduate students and startup researchers with their own case study research.

This book presents 21 individual applications of the case study method, together with cross-referenced discussions of key methodological issues. Many of the applications – including a wide array of single-case studies useful as examples for solo researchers – have been shortened or rewritten expressly for this book. It brings the theory of case study research to life by presenting real-life illustrations of research techniques in practice.

Theory is helpful not only in designing a case study, but can also become the vehicle for generalizing a case study's results. This critical role of theory has been integral to the development of sound case studies, whether consisting of a single case study or multiple cases. Chapter Three has five applications showing how to integrate theoretical concerns in five different situations. If you derive no other benefit from this book, an understanding of the use of theory, and an appreciation of the five applications in Chapter Three can go a long way in helping you design implementable, useful, and generalizable case studies. (p. xxii)

The point that Yin makes about generalizability is hugely significant. Ideally, the case study – albeit an individual example – can be used to generalize an approach, or method, or give insights for similar cases. The five applications mentioned are 1) exploratory case studies and the need to create a framework; 2) criteria and procedures for case selection and screening; 3) descriptive case studies, including multiple-case design, the research issue, selection of cases, development of descriptive scenarios, results, and key lessons; 4) explanatory case studies: factor theories; and 5) how and why theories, with reference to the research issue, and how and why research findings get into practical use.

Case Study Research in Practice

Helen Simon's *Case Study Research in Practice* provides a comprehensive and practical account of how to design, conduct, and communicate case study research. It addresses often-raised questions and common misconceptions about case research. In four sections, the book covers: 1) rationale, con-

cept, and design of case study research; 2) methods, ethics, and reflexivity in case study; 3) interpreting, analyzing, and reporting the case; and 4) generalizing and theorizing in case study research. Rich with tales from the field and summary memos as an aide-mémoire to future action, the book has a very readable style, and provides fresh insights and challenges for researchers to guide their practice of case study research. This is an ideal text for those studying and conducting case study research in education, health and social care, and related social science disciplines – including psychotherapy, of course.

Should readers think that I am involved in promoting SAGE's publications, my motives are quite different. For the last couple of years, Christina Bader Johansson and I have been working on a training module for EABP FORUM Body Psychotherapy Training Schools on science and research. We will soon be writing up this module for publication. This article can add to that project.

As a member of EABP's Science & Research Committee, I have, for a long time, wanted more body psychotherapists to become involved in doing research. There are three basic ways ordinary clinical practitioners of body psychotherapy might become involved:

- Writing body psychotherapy case studies ... in ways that can be really useful
- Joining a practitioner research network (PRN), which I will describe in another article
- Joining in outcome research, which could be organized by EABP and USABP to demonstrate the efficacy and effectiveness of body psychotherapy and somatic psychology

Hopefully, this brief article will stimulate interest among body psychotherapists to become involved in research, and particularly in case study research. If you are not aware of the first volume mentioned above (*Body Psychotherapy Case Studies*), I have included it in the references.

I hope and pray to see a project like this at least start before I die. Maybe... *sweet dreams are made of this.*



*Call for Submissions
from Herbert Grassmann and Courtenay Young*

Body Psychotherapy Case Studies

Volume II

Case studies are a legitimate and most interesting form of qualitative or descriptive research, especially in the field of psychotherapy. Even the best theories are only tools if they are not refined through case study observation.

A Call for Case Studies

Having successfully published the first volume of *Body Psychotherapy Case Studies* in 2018, the EABP Science & Research Committee invites body psychotherapists to contribute to the second volume, to be published within the next year or two. We invite you – everyday, ordinary body psychotherapists and somatic psychologists – members of EABP, USABP, and all other body psychotherapy associations, to write up one or more of your everyday cases – your clients' stories and how you worked with them.

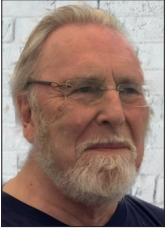
There are different types of case studies, therefore, we ask that you read through the *EABP Guidelines for Writing a Body Psychotherapy Case Study* (see <https://eabp.org/eabp-guidelines-for-writing-a-body-psychotherapy-case-study/>) before you begin writing so that there is a fairly consistent structure and format to the submitted cases.

Please consult:

- Stoecker, R. (1991). Evaluating and Rethinking the Case Study. *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 88-112. doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1991.tb02970.x
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To indicate your interest please contact:

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Courtenay Young, B.Sc., Dip.Psych., is a well-known UK Body Psychotherapist, author and editor. He originally trained with Gerda Boyesen and David Boadella in London (1979-1983), and has worked clinically throughout the last 40 years. He currently works in the NHS, and privately in and around Edinburgh, Scotland. He has edited many books, including *The Handbook of Body Psychotherapy & Somatic Psychology* (North Atlantic Books, 2015); *Being in the Body: The Handbook of Biosynthesis Psychotherapy* (Peter Lang, 2023, forthcoming); and the *New Collected Papers of Biodynamic Massage & Psychotherapy: 2022* (Body Psychotherapy Publications, forthcoming).

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