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THE ANATOMY OF THE CASE STUDY

FIVE

A typology for case study

In this chapter, we go into detail on the typology introduced in Chapter 1. We disaggregate the various layers of classificatory principle for case studies which are discussed in the literature. We first distinguish two parts of the case study: (i) the *subject* of the study, which is the case itself; and (ii) the *object*, which is the analytical frame or theory through which the subject is viewed and which the subject explicates. Beyond this distinction the case study is presented as classifiable by its purposes and the approaches adopted – principally with a distinction drawn between theory-centred and illustrative study. Beyond this, there are distinctions to be drawn among various operational structures that concern comparative versus non-comparative versions of the form and the ways that the study may employ time.

The need for a typology

Case study research is one of the principal means by which inquiry is conducted in the social sciences. Reviewing work in economics and political science (Acemoglu et al., 2003; Rodrik, 2003; Bates et al., 1998), Gerring (2004: 341) concludes that the use of case study is 'solidly ensconced and, perhaps, even thriving.' Bennett et al. (2003) showed that in 14 journals focusing on two areas of research in social science, the proportion of articles in which a case study was employed remained broadly stable at around 20 per cent over the period 1975–2000.

Despite the popularity of the case study design frame, there is little in the way of organizational structure to guide the intending case inquirer. Gerring continues

his review with the telling comment with which we began this book: 'Practitioners continue to ply their trade but have difficulty articulating what it is that they are doing, methodologically speaking. The case study survives in a curious methodological limbo' (2004: 341). de Vaus (2001: 219) agrees, in discussing the way that the case study is explained: 'Most research methods texts either ignore case studies or confuse them with other types of social research.'

If 'methodological limbo' exists it is not for lack of methodological discussion. Indeed, this has been extensive over the last 50 years across the social sciences – see, for example, Simons (2009), Yin (2009), Flyvbjerg (2006), Mitchell (2006), George and Bennett (2005), Stake (2005), Hammersley and Gomm (2000), Bassey (1999), Ragin and Becker (1992), Merriam (1988), Eckstein (1975) and Lijphart (1971). The problem is perhaps that methodological discussion of case study has tended to focus on its epistemological status, its generalizing 'power', or on various aspects of study construction. Less conspicuous, though, has been any synthesis of the discussion which might offer classificatory schemata for intending researchers: there have been only limited attempts to offer intending inquirers a Gestalt, mapping out the terrain and potential routes to travel. By way of response to this state of affairs, we overview here some of the ways in which case study is discussed and defined in order to propose a framing structure and typology for case study. In doing this we attempt to disentangle the threads and layers of classificatory principle that have become interwoven in dialogue about the place and use of the case study.

Back to definitions

In Chapter 1, in discussing what a case study is, we introduced the idea of the difference between the subject and the object of a case study. We won't repeat that discussion here, but it is important to stress the significance of the separateness of the subject and the object in case study since the distinction between the one and the other is characteristic of all social inquiry, yet relatively neglected in discussion of the case study. It is defined variously in different kinds of research. In his classic work on sociological theory, Wallace (1969: 3) pinpointed the significance of the distinction between (i) the thing to be explained and (ii) the explanation in a piece of research, by calling the thing to be explained the *explanandum* and the thing doing the explaining the *explanans*. Some time earlier, Hempel and Oppenheim (1948) had drawn attention to the need for such a differentiation to account for the ability of science to answer 'why' rather than simply 'what' questions. In social science – where we also want to answer 'why' rather than 'what' questions – one of the more straightforward means of making this distinction is by differentiation between dependent and independent variables, yet this of course is not the only way of doing it, and case inquirers need to be aware of this.

Case inquirers need to be aware of it because Wallace went further, aligning the explanandum with the dependent variable, and the explanans with the independent variable, and Eckstein (1975) refers to the analytical frame *in a case study* as a single measure on *a variable*. But one surely needs to be guarded in the use of terms associated with variable-led research when thinking about idiographic research. The extension of explanandum and explanans to putative variables by Wallace (and many after him) is, perhaps, metaphorical. But if this is so – if it is indeed a metaphor – it is a dangerous one if extended to all kinds of research, including the idiographic. In fact, here it becomes more like catachresis than metaphor: let us take the example again of the Second World War (subject) as a case study of a 'just war' (object). Here, the notion of justness is the explanandum (the thing to be explained), and the thing doing the explaining – the explanans – is WWII. This is a quite valid use of the explanandum/explanans distinction as promoted by Hempel and Oppenheim and Wallace. But the idea that the explanans can be seen as an independent variable so grossly violates expectations of an independent variable (for example, singular rather than complex; manipulable experimentally) that it ceases to be tenable.

Likewise, use of the similar term 'unit' is confusing, being adopted by Wieviorka (1992) to refer to the case (the subject), while VanWynsberghe and Khan (2007: 87), for example, use it to mean the object. (They say: 'the interplay between the unit of analysis and *the case* is a constitutive element of case study research' [emphasis added].) These confusions have arisen partly because of the neopositivist discourse surrounding so much methodological discussion concerning case study, of which the 'variable-led' discussion of explanans and explanandum is an example. As another example, look at Lijphart's (1971: 684) distinction between experimental, statistical and comparative method in social science, in which he asserts that, in areas such as political history, comparative method has to be 'resorted to' because of the small number of potential cases and the invalidity of 'credible controls'. Lijphart's analysis is discussed in more detail later.

The ostensible looseness of the case study as a form of inquiry and the conspicuous primacy given to the case (the subject) is perhaps a reason for inexperienced social inquirers, especially students, to neglect to establish any kind of *object* (literally and technically) for their inquiries. Identifying only a *subject*, they fail to seek to explain anything, providing instead, therefore, a simple description in place of a piece of research. For the study to constitute research, there has to be something to be explained (an object) and something potentially to offer explanation (the analysis of the circumstances of a subject).

In brief, as a conclusion to this discussion, we are suggesting that a case study must comprise two elements:

1. a 'practical, historical unity', which we shall call the *subject* of the case study; and
2. an analytical or theoretical frame, which we shall call the *object* of the study.

Taking account of this, we repeat here the definition of case study that we gave in Chapter 1 and which we shall adopt for the typology:

> Case studies are analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions or other systems which are studied holistically by one or more methods. The case that is the subject of the inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytical frame – an object – within which the study is conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates.

We give below an explication of some of the elements and dimensions just discussed, noting points about the kinds of selection and decision likely to be necessary during the case study. This is done to provide a rationale for the typology ultimately summarized in Figure 5.1.

The subject and object

Subject

In making a central distinction between subject and object of study, the definition at which we have arrived leads us first into questions about how the subject is identified – whether that subject is a Glasgow gang (Patrick, 1973), the Head Start education programme (Zigler and Muenchow, 1992), or an international coffee organization (Bates, 1998). The subject is in no sense a sample, representative of a wider population. Rather, the *subject* will be selected because it is an interesting or unusual or revealing example through which the lineaments of the *object* can be refracted. In this, its scope is not restricted: as White (1992) points out, the subject may be as broad as Lenin's analysis of peasant social formations, or as narrow as one of Goffman's smiles. There are three potential routes for selection of the subject.

The first route in its selection may be followed because of the researcher's familiarity with it – a *local knowledge case* – and this will be relevant particularly for the practitioner or student researcher. In one's own place of work, one's placement, or even one's home, there will be intimate knowledge and ample opportunity for informed, in-depth analysis; ample opportunity for identification and discussion, in the words of Bates et al. (1998: 13–14), of '… the actors, the decision points they faced, the choices they made, the paths taken and shunned, and the manner in which their choices generated events and outcomes.' The local knowledge case is eminently amenable to the 'soak and poke' of Fenno (1986, 1990) since the inquirer is already soaked, and in a good position, one hopes, to poke.

Second, the subject may come into focus because of the inherent interest of the case – it may be a *key case* of a phenomenon or, third, may illuminate the object by virtue of its difference, its *outlier* status. The latter is what Lijphart (1971: 692) refers to as the *deviant* case. The essence in both types is in gaining what we call elsewhere in this book 'exemplary knowledge:' the 'key-ness' or 'outlier-ness' of the case is manifested in its capacity to exemplify the analytical object of the inquiry. This ability to exemplify draws its legitimacy from the phronesis of the case inquirer

(together with that of the reader of the case inquiry) and we have argued that the exemplary knowledge thus drawn is distinct from the generalizable knowledge associated with induction. While opinions on the significance of generalization in case study differ (compare Gomm et al., 2000; de Vaus, 2001; Flyvbjerg, 2006; and Yin, 2009) – with discussion of varieties of generalization spanning naturalistic generalization (Stake, 1995) to holographic generalization (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) to fuzzy generalization (Bassey, 2001) – we have argued that the validity of the case study cannot derive from its representativeness since it can never legitimately be claimed to form a representative sample from a larger set. The essence of selection must rest in the dynamic of the relation between subject and object. It cannot rest in typicality.

In this choice of the subject, then, we disagree with Yin (2009: 48) when he suggests that a case may be selected because it is '*representative* or *typical*'. Even if we know that a case is following some empirical work to show that it is typical – a typical Chicago street, say, in terms of the ethnicity and age distribution of its inhabitants – we cannot draw anything meaningful from this typicality in a case study, for the typicality will begin and end with the dimensions by which typicality is framed. We cannot say from having studied this street that its circumstances will have in any way contributed *by their typicality* to the particular situation in which it finds itself (whatever that situation, that 'object' is). We could study the street and be informed about its problems, its tensions, its intrigues, hostilities and kindnesses and while these may in some way be of interest by virtue of the analytical object of the study they would not be of interest by virtue of the street's typicality, since the next typical street would, in terms of such dynamics, in all probability, be very different. In short, the notion of typicality may give an unwarranted impression to any reader that the significance of the analysis rests in the representativeness of the subject. It does not.

The subject is identified, then, in one of three principal ways – as:

- a local knowledge case; or
- a key case; or
- an outlier case.

Objvect

The object is less straightforwardly identified, and, as Ragin (1992) notes, it need not be defined at the outset but, rather, may emerge as an inquiry progresses. Whether it is set at the outset or is emergent, it will be this analytical focus that crystallizes, thickens or develops as the study proceeds: it is the way that this 'object' develops that is at the heart of the study.

Whichever – 'emergent' or set at the outset – it is important to have some notion of a potential object in mind when the study begins and not to confuse it with the subject. As Wieviorka puts it:

> If you want to talk about a 'case', you also need the means of interpreting it or placing it in a context … Regardless of the practical approach for studying it, a case is an opportunity of relating facts and concepts, reality and hypotheses. But do not make the mistake of thinking that it is, in itself, a concept. (1992: 160)

The object constitutes, then, the analytical frame within which the case is viewed and which the case exemplifies. For example, in Ball's (1981) case study of a school, *Beachside Comprehensive*, the school itself is the subject that exemplifies the analytical frame, the object, which was the process by which change was effected in schools in the movement to comprehensive education in the UK. Beachside Comprehensive – the school – was the prism through which 'facts and concepts, reality and hypotheses' about this change were refracted, viewed and studied.

Becker (in Ragin, 1992) shows how important it is to see the process of employing the object as a dynamic one: as a study proceeds the inquirer should be asking the question 'What is this a case *of* over and over as evidence accumulates around potential explanations or 'theories'. Theory is thus *forged* – it is malleable, rather in the way that Bourdieu talked about theory (in Wacquant, 1989, cited in Jenkins, 1992: 67) being a 'thinking tool'. As Bourdieu put it: '[theory is] a set of *thinking tools* visible through the results they yield, but it is not built as such … It is a temporary construct which takes shape for and by empirical work.' Eckstein (1975: 133) makes the same point, noting that the theoretical enterprise of case study is not about testing probabilistically stated theories. Rather, it is about discovering or testing tools of explanation.

The focus on the development of theory in case study is closely linked with the explication of the analytical object. Bourdieu's emphasis on the theory as tool therefore reminds us that the elaboration of theory is a means to an end, with that end being explanation. It is not an end in itself. The development of theory, whether this be in 'theory-testing' or 'theory-seeking', is central to the dynamic of the relation between *subject* and *object* in case study and we explore it further in the next section.

Beyond subject and object: purpose, approach and process

Methodological discourse stresses a number of themes on the direction and organization of case studies – their design – and we summarize some of the better-known analyses in Table 5.1. Constraint of space prohibits full discussion of all of these, but we will outline in a little more detail one of the most recent – the analysis from George and Bennett (2005: 75–6) – for the purposes of explicating the general themes raised by Table 5.1. Theirs is an especially useful analysis, drawing heavily as it does

on the widely used typologies of Lijphart (1971) and, principally, Eckstein (1975). George and Bennett emerge with six types of case study. These are:

1. *Atheoretical/configurative-idiographic* case studies – that is to say, illustrative studies which do not contribute to theory.
2. *Disciplined configurative* case studies, where established theories are used to explain a case.
3. *Heuristic* case studies wherein new causal paths are identified. Outlier cases may be especially valuable here.
4. *Theory testing* case studies, assessing 'the validity and scope conditions of single or competing theories'.
5. *Plausibility probes* – preliminary studies to determine whether further study is warranted.
6. *'Building block' studies* of particular types, or subtypes 'of a phenomenon, identify common patterns or serve a particular kind of heuristic purpose'.

In the establishment of these six types, a core distinction is being drawn between theoretical and non-theoretical studies and this is a feature of several of the other classifications in Table 5.1. Beyond this, the classification draws attention to illustrative and exploratory studies of one kind or another, as do the other classifications in Table 5.1. Unlike Yin and de Vaus, George and Bennett do not expand their discussion to a further layer of organization: the operationalization of the study – for example, into 'parallel', 'longitudinal' or 'embedded' studies.

Notwithstanding these commonalities and differences, the principal feature to emerge from a listing of this kind is that there is a mixture of criteria for classification. The aim in developing a typology is to synthesize by drawing out strands of commonality while also integrating, where appropriate, classificatory layers and themes – and noting, hopefully to understand, differences. Within and between the commentaries we have selected, purposes are mixed with methods which are mixed with kinds of subject which are in turn mixed with what might be called different operational 'shapes' of case study. These layers of analysis will be examined in turn.

Purpose

There is first a layer of criteria that is about *purpose*. For example, the terms 'intrinsic' and 'instrumental' used by Stake, and the term 'evaluative' as used by Merriam and Bassey, point to a reason for doing the study: its purpose. Likewise, the term 'plausibility probes' used by Mitchell, and George and Bennett points to a purpose – of exploration. And Eckstein uses the term 'heuristic' to refer to exploration; he suggests that heuristic studies can be about arriving at notions of problems to solve. The purpose is intimately connected with the object of the study: the understanding that is required – the explanation that is needed – will be related to the reason for doing the study, that is to say, the purpose.

Table 5.1 Kinds of case studies, as enumerated by different analysts

George and Bennett (2005) (drawing on Eckstein, 1975)	Merriam (1988)	Stake (1995)	Bassey (1999)	de Vaus (2001)	Mitchell (2006) (drawing on Eckstein, 1975)	Yin (2009)
Theory testing	Descriptive	Intrinsic	Theory-seeking	Descriptive/explanatory	Illustrative	Critical
Atheoretical/configurative-idiographic	Interpretative	Instrumental	Theory-testing	Theory testing/theory building	Social analytic	Extreme/unique
Disciplined configurative	Evaluative	Single/collective	Story-telling	Single/multiple case	Extended (over time)	Longitudinal
Heuristic			Picture-drawing	Holistic/embedded	Configurative-idiographic	Represent-ative
Plausibility probes			Evaluative	Parallel/sequential	Disciplined-configurative	Revelatory
'Building block' studies				Retrospective/prospective	Heuristic	
					Plausibility probes	

Approach and methods

Next, there is the approach that is adopted. It is in this 'layer' that there are the clearest distinctions between kinds of study, reflecting the broad nature of the object and the purpose of the study. Even though those differences exist, a centrality is given in the commentaries to the significance of theory in the conduct of the study, wherein studies that are not in some way theoretical are specifically labelled as such. Thus, in the categorizations of George and Bennett and that of Mitchell (both borrowing from Eckstein), case studies that have no theoretical element are termed 'atheoretical/configurative-idiographic', in part to highlight the illustrative nature of the work in hand. As Lijphart (1971: 691) puts it, these non-theoretical studies '… are entirely descriptive and move in a theoretical vacuum.' Likewise, Bassey makes a distinction between, on the one side, two kinds of theoretical case study (theory-seeking and theory-testing), and on the other those he labels 'picture-drawing' and 'story-telling.'

Thus, one might say that the object of a study may be taken to be, essentially, (i) theoretical or (ii) illustrative. As far as the former is concerned – the theoretical study – the distinction Bassey draws between theory-testing and theory-seeking highlights the different kinds of stance that may be taken about the object: it may be set clearly at the outset (theory-testing), or developed throughout the study (theory-seeking).

After a decision about approach, there are choices to be made about the methods to be adopted. Will the study be entirely interpretative in orientation: will it be an ethnography? Will it use a combination of methods, possibly incorporating experimental (for example, using 'repeated measures' as in Stake's example), survey or cross-sectional elements? Will it involve documentary analysis? Given the methodological pluralism noted earlier, the choices here are abundant. They will, in turn, lead to questions about the operational process of the study – the means by which it is constructed and the means by which the object is understood and refracted through the subject. It is this operational process to which we now turn.

Process

In this classificatory layer, case inquirers are making decisions about the operational processes of their studies. For this, they need first to return to their subjects (as distinct from the object) and to the boundary decisions made at the outset. There has to be an examination of the nature of the choices that were made at that time about the parameters that delimit the subject of the study. These may fall around a number of loci: the case may be defined by one or more of a range of boundary considerations: person, time period, place, event, institution or any of a range of singular phenomena that can be studied in their complexity. The first consideration, though, concerns an important distinction that has been raised by Stake (2005: 445) that will determine the process of the case study, and this is about whether there is to be a comparative element to the study: should it be single

or multiple? This single/multiple distinction is at the base of much discussion – and confusion – about the case study, emerging principally from Lijphart's exclusion of what he called (and is still sometimes called) 'comparative research' from the case study family. The latter will be discussed in a moment, after consideration of the central distinction.

Single or multiple

The case study, while it is of the singular, may contain more than one element in its subject and if this is so – that is, if there are two or several cases – each individual case is less important in itself than the comparison that each offers with the others. For example, a study might be conducted of two schools' different capacities for making effective use of a visiting education support service. By contrasting the schools' 'biographies' – their histories, catchments, staff relationships and other characteristics – light would be thrown on the relative dynamics affecting the reception and use of the support service. The key focus would not be on the nature and shape of relationships per se in one school, but rather on the nature of the difference between the one and the other and what this might tell us about the dynamics that were significant in this difference. This comparative element is why Schwandt (2001) calls this kind of case study, *cross-case analysis*.

But one now needs to raise the methodological issue alluded to a moment ago concerning the firm distinction that Lijphart (1971) posited between comparative study and case study. It is a differentiation that has been troubling for subsequent discourse about the nature and 'shape' of case study. Lijphart's influential typology – his six types of case study, distinguished, as they are, from comparative study – presents to us, if we do not read them in the context of four subsequent decades of methodological discussion, some profound misunderstandings. Not many would now agree with Lijphart, for example, that '… the analytical power of the comparative method increases the closer it approximates the statistical and experimental methods' (1971: 693). Lijphart's epistemological stance, disclosed by comments such as this throughout his seminal article, perhaps betrays the methodological tensions existing at the time he was writing (see Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000 for a discussion). Whatever the reason for his stance, the legacy of his disaggregation of the comparative study from the case study has been confusion about the nature of the case. Suffice it to say that the comparative study is more straightforwardly seen as part of the case study family if one puts the emphasis on *the subject* – which can be singular *or plural* – rather than *the case*.

The boundary and the shape

The choice about single or multiple studies determines what follows in the shape of the case study. Single studies, containing no element of comparison, will take essentially three forms, wherein personal or systemic features of the subject are bounded

by time in some shape or form. The case inquirer notices change as it happens and seeks its antecedents and its consequences. We have to find the 'sequence of steps' as Becker puts it (1992: 209) and understand cause in relation to time, with 'each step understood as preceding in time the one that follows it.' In doing this we conjecture not only about how one thing is related to another, but also about how cause and effect change with time as other elements of a situation also change.

We suggest (drawing on other commentators) that the varieties of time-use lead to three kinds of study: *retrospective*, *snapshot* and *diachronic*. The *retrospective* study is the simplest, involving the collection of data relating to a past phenomenon of any kind. The researcher is looking back on a phenomenon, situation, person or event or studying it in its historical integrity. With the *snapshot* the case is being examined in one defined period of time: a current event; a day in the life of a person; a month's diary of a marriage. Whether a month, a week, a day or even a period as short as an hour, the analysis will be aided by the temporal juxtaposition of events. The snapshot develops, the picture presenting itself as a Gestalt over a tight time-frame. The *diachronic* study shows change over time. We use the term 'diachronic' to refer to change over time in preference to the word 'longitudinal' principally to avoid confusion with other kinds of longitudinal research. The essence, though, is the same as that in 'longitudinal': data-capture occurs at points 'a, b, c → n' and one's interest is in the changes occurring at the two or more data collection points.

For multiple studies the researcher considers additional features of the situation. How can the different studies be used for comparison – for cross-case analysis in Schwandt's (2001) terms? There are two principal means of doing this: first by straightforward comparison between clearly different examples, as in Burgess's (1984) ten case studies of research in educational settings, and the contrast between and among the cases throws the spotlight on an important theoretical feature. Second, comparison may be of elements within one case – comparison, in other words, of *nested* elements. With nested studies the breakdown is *within* the principal unit of analysis – for example, wards within a hospital. A nested study is distinct from a straightforwardly multiple study in that it gains its integrity, its wholeness from the wider case. For example, a researcher might be looking at three wards within one hospital, but if the one hospital had no significance other than its physical housing of these three wards then the cases would not be seen as nested. The elements are nested only in the sense that they form an integral part of a broader picture.

A further subdivision may be drawn in the multiple study and this is between parallel and sequential studies. In the former, the cases are all happening and being studied concurrently, while with the sequential study the cases happen consecutively and there is an assumption that what has happened in one or in an intervening period will in some way affect the next.

Integrating the layers: a typology

Having separated the classificatory layers drawn in discourse about case study, we now propose a typology in which they are organized and re-integrated. The typology, incorporating considerations about these layers – concerning subject and object, purpose, approach and process – is summarized in Figure 5.1. While this perhaps implies sequencing to the choices being made, in most cases much of the decision making will in fact occur simultaneously, particularly in relation to the subject, object and approach. The typology offers a 'flattened out' view of the thinking that occurs in the process of research design.
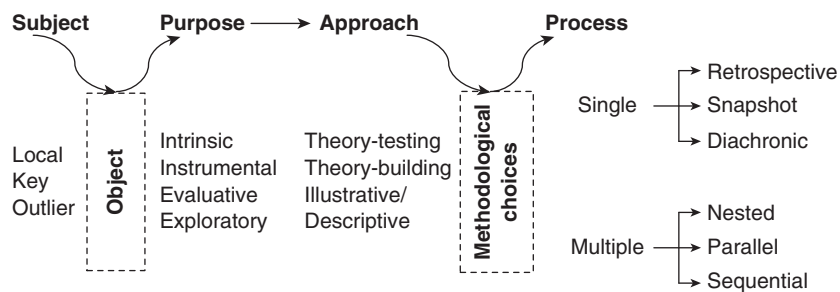

Figure 5.1 A typology of case study

As the typology in a sense 'unrolls' the various considerations being made in the design of a case study it perhaps implies that a series of separate design choices are being made during the planning of the study. So, at first glance it perhaps denies the coherence and simultaneity of the design decisions of which we have just spoken. But for the researcher new to case study the mere existence of these decisions may not have occurred. As a consequence, the variety of design paths will be restricted. A typology encourages a clear articulation of the distinctness and necessity of both subject and object, it encourages consideration of theoretical or illustrative approaches, methodological decisions, and decisions about process: can the research question be addressed by a single focus on one person or situation, or would a comparison be better? Is there a time element that will be addressed by looking at a sequence of events, or is it better to examine one tightly defined period in time? Would it be helpful to extract a number of nested elements from the main focus and to examine these in detail? It is useful to explore all of these considerations alongside thought about subject, object, theory and method.

That last consideration, method, is one that we have not discussed at length in this chapter. It will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8, where we consider issues of theorization in relation to the discursive elements of the study. Suffice it to say here, though, that methodological considerations will occur throughout the design of the study, remembering that methodological eclecticism is the hallmark of the case study. Case study, as we have been at pains to point out throughout, is not

a method in itself. Rather it is a design frame – a scaffold that supports and guides inquiry. Within that scaffold the most appropriate methods for collecting and analyzing data will be employed. Perhaps an ethnographic stance will be taken; perhaps various kinds of observation will be used. A wide variety of methods may be used. The consideration of which will prove most fruitful will be taken in the light of the questions being asked at the outset of the study. That variety of methods is exemplified in some of the examples in Chapter 6, and an even broader selection of methods and epistemological stances is given in Thomas (2013a, 2013b).

Conclusion

The 'weak sibling' status of the case study noted by Yin (2003: xiii) is due at least in part to the uncertainty felt by intending researchers about structure and method. As the design of the case study is presented often as open-ended and untethered – and methodological eclecticism is emphasized in commentary on design – researchers may feel unguided about structure: open-endedness is extended to an unwarranted expectation of structural looseness, and in the absence of a structure that maps out potential routes to follow, important pointers may be missed. We have, therefore, suggested a typology that foregrounds a number of features – classificatory layers – of the study: the distinction between subject and object; the importance of clarifying the purpose of the study; an awareness of the likely analytical approach to be pursued, and an identification of the likely process to be followed in conducting it. By helping to disclose the anatomy of the case study, we hope that the typology will assist in both the construction and analysis of this form of inquiry.