

CONDUCTING CASE STUDY RESEARCH

for BUSINESS *and* MANAGEMENT STUDENTS


**BILL LEE &
MARK N.K. SAUNDERS**

 **SAGE**

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC | Melbourne



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC | Melbourne

SAGE Publications Ltd
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP

SAGE Publications Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320

SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd
B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road
New Delhi 110 044

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd
3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

Editor: Kirsty Smy
Assistant editor: Lyndsay Aitken
Production editor: Sarah Cooke
Marketing manager: Alison Borg
Cover design: Francis Kenney
Typeset by: C&M Digital (P) Ltd, Chennai, India
Printed in the UK

© Bill Lee and Mark Saunders 2017
Series Editors' Introduction © Bill Lee, Mark N.K. Saunders
and Vadake K. Narayanan 2017

First published 2017

Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of research or private study, or criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form, or by any means, only with the prior permission in writing of the publishers, or in the case of reprographic reproduction, in accordance with the terms of licences issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside those terms should be sent to the publishers.

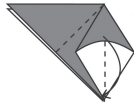
Library of Congress Control Number: 2016959993

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data

A catalogue record for this book is available from
the British Library

ISBN 978-1-44627-416-3
ISBN 978-1-44627-417-0 (pbk)

At SAGE we take sustainability seriously. Most of our products are printed in the UK using FSC papers and boards. When we print overseas we ensure sustainable papers are used as measured by the PREPS grading system. We undertake an annual audit to monitor our sustainability.



2

UNDERSTANDING CASE STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an understanding of the ways in which case studies contribute to knowledge. The discussion will build on the distinction between orthodox and emergent approaches to case studies made in the previous chapter. In that context, the issues below may be seen either as aspects of a case study research strategy in orthodox approaches, or as additional strategic choices that will be made while conducting a case study in an emergent approach. It should be emphasized that the purpose for making the distinction between orthodox and emergent approaches is to highlight that there are different ways to conduct case studies and both have been - and may be - used in a wide variety of successful research projects. It is important to utilize the best resources that are available to answer the chosen research questions given the starting position of the researcher.

As this chapter is about how case studies may be used to contribute to knowledge, it is helpful at this point to identify at which stages the theory that will make the contribution to knowledge will be developed by reference to Figure 1.1 and 1.2. In the orthodox approach, the initial statement of the theories that are being examined will be developed at the time of the literature review. This will help to define the types of questions that are asked, of whom, from what populations and under which conditions the theory being examined may or may not apply. Once the data are collected, they will be analysed and the extent to which the theory has been confirmed or refined will be established so that the findings and the theoretical contribution to knowledge can be written up. By contrast, in an emergent approach, while the start of the development of the theoretical contribution may commence from the beginning



of the study, the idea may simply be at the level of being experiential or empathetic and at least partially tacit as the researcher is aware of a problem, but he or she does not know - and is not yet able to articulate - its exact nature to allow a theoretical contribution to be made. Some empirical research may need to be conducted before the tacit understandings of the relationship are made explicit and research questions are formulated. It is only after the research questions have been fully defined, however, that the nature of the theoretical contribution will start to take shape. It is also likely that further new ideas will appear in the course of fieldwork and so theory will be extended at that point and systematized as the analysis of the data proceeds.

The rest of the chapter seeks to elaborate on the basis of knowledge generated by case studies and will progress in the following way. The first section provides a general classification of philosophical approaches as a means of elaborating on the different assumptions about the nature of knowledge and the world that is studied in orthodox and emergent approaches to case studies. The following section considers the implications of the underlying philosophy for the development of concepts and their linkages to the case through different types of logic to provide additions to knowledge. The next section will reflect on the type of contribution that your research may make by elaborating on the concepts of particularization and generalization. We then consider how to select appropriate cases to ensure the objectives of your contribution are met. The final substantive section considers the ways in which research involving case studies may be evaluated according to your specific philosophical predilections and choices.

DEFINING THE CASE: SAYING WHAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO STUDY AND WHAT THE CASE CONVEYS

In seeking to understand the nature of the knowledge that you may obtain from a case study, it is important to define your ontological and epistemological positions. Ontology refers to your understanding of the nature of reality. Epistemology refers to your view of what constitutes valid and legitimate knowledge. It is possible to classify different epistemological and ontological positions along a two axes schema with the ontological positions shown on the vertical axis and the epistemological positions shown on the horizontal axis, as represented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Relationship between epistemological and ontological positions and approaches to case studies

Epistemology →	<i>Positivist</i>	<i>Interpretivist</i>
Ontology ↓		
<i>Realist</i>	Orthodox most likely	Both orthodox and emergent studies possible
<i>Constructivist</i>	Not possible	Emergent more possible

The epistemological and ontological positions shown in the table will be explained briefly. A positivist epistemological perception that a phenomenon is external and independent of the researcher allows that phenomenon to be known objectively by utilizing scientific methods, while an interpretivist epistemology recognizes that there may be different interpretations of the same event. At an ontological level, realists view external phenomena to be independent of their participation. In contrast, constructivists view reality as constructed through social interactions between those participating. The quarter of Table 2.1 that represents the intersection between positivist epistemology and constructivist ontology may be discounted as it is not possible to reconcile the external independent existence of phenomena with a reality that has been constructed socially in interactions. In seeking to build on the distinctions that were made in Chapter 1 between an orthodox and an emergent approach, it is useful to state that the combination of viewing reality as independent and external and researchers as able to be objective in conducting research encourages a tendency towards orthodox case study approaches as indicated by the upper left-hand quarter in Table 2.1. In contrast, a researcher's acceptance that research participants contribute to the construction of reality and there are different ways of interpreting that reality may lend itself to a more emergent case study approach as indicated in the bottom right-hand quarter of Table 2.1. It is possible to combine realist ontology with beliefs in external structures that may help to shape actions - in different situations - with an interpretivist epistemology that acknowledges that different participants can give different meanings to activities and structures that constrain them and to then take actions to change and modify the structures, producing a new reality over time. A predilection for realist ontology may allow a researcher to conduct an orthodox case while subscription to an interpretivist epistemology may lead the same researcher to undertake an emergent case. Both possibilities are presented in the upper right-hand quarter of Table 2.1.

If an orthodox case study approach is adopted, it is likely that it will proceed in the way outlined previously in Figure 1.1. It is, thus, necessary to conduct a literature review to identify a gap that may be addressed, at least partially, by conducting one or more case studies. The literature review will also include you familiarizing yourself with a number of different theories that can help to explain the phenomenon of interest. Once the research question has been articulated, it will be broken down into component propositions around which empirical evidence may be collected. Relevant cases - or units of analysis - will be identified according to some form of selection logic that will be discussed later in this chapter, and methods for collecting evidence that addresses the propositions will be selected and built into a research protocol. The research protocol will also include a detailed description of how the methods are to be used such as how the questions are to be asked in an interview - for discussion of methods, see Chapters 3 and 4. An example of such an approach is illustrated in Box 2.1.

Box 2.1 An example of an orthodox approach to designing case study research

Susan has decided to do her Masters dissertation on whether large companies in the energy-related industries adopt an effective 'green' human resource management (HRM) strategy by instituting practices that promote the saving and re-use of resources by their employees. Susan has previously read some literature on green HRM and she has found an academic study that indicates how many companies have introduced recycle bins, movement-sensitive lighting, etc. However, she theorizes that companies in the energy-related industries are less likely to engage in 'green', energy-saving practices because they profit most from maximum energy usage and she formulates the following proposition for investigation: 'Companies that supply energy as a core component of their business are less likely to pursue energy-saving initiatives through their employees than are companies that do not supply energy as a core component of their business.' As Susan has data about the latter from the existing literature, she intends to focus her case studies on companies in the energy sector.

She starts by ensuring the validity of her concepts of energy-saving - which she defines as a net reduction in the usage of finite resources by the organization through less energy-consuming methods, recycling, re-use and re-fashioning of resources - and HRM - which she defines as policies that are designed to promote employees of an organization pursuing specific goals, in this instance, energy-saving policies.

Susan decides to focus her attention on the gas industry and she compiles a list of gas suppliers from which she selects one large and one small corporation. Susan then identifies the sources of data which will enable her to answer her research questions. She decides that the data that she will need from her research to answer her question are: (i) Specific policy documents that each corporation has prepared around recycling and saving of energy; (ii) An interview with the Human Resource Director or Senior Human Resource Manager to identify the existence and objectives of any policies and practices to motivate their respective workforces to recycle materials, etc. and to save energy; and (iii) A tour of a site to look at the implementation of policies.

At this stage, she outlines her research protocol, prepares information sheets and consent forms for prospective participants and applies for ethical approval to conduct her research.

By contrast, the decision to use a case study with an emergent approach may arise from a range of considerations, many of which start off as unarticulated and are slowly drawn out to form a research question and knowledge of different literatures

may come together in a way not anticipated at the outset as the researcher starts to articulate the idea and the sources of knowledge to which they have access. This approach might be used when a researcher combines an interpretivist epistemology with either a constructivist or realist ontology, but it may be more likely to emerge in situations where the researcher is already familiar with the ethnographic context of the research. For an example of such an approach, see Box 2.2 below. In other words, the case may be more likely to proceed in the way outlined previously in Figure 1.2.

Box 2.2 An example of an emergent approach to designing case study research

Pietar is an office manager at an office of a medium-sized firm of Chartered Accountants in Dresden. He has been given a sabbatical from his job to study for a Masters in Accounting and Finance. In his job, he has been impressed by the approach of the professional accountants in his practice, who talk about the exercise of their professional judgement to realize valued goals of stewardship and proper observation of the rules for economic activity. Such ideas resonate with his understanding of what constitutes a profession which he learned about during his time as a social science undergraduate when he encountered theories that suggested a profession was an institute whose members pursued higher values, or their members were people who exhibited qualities that could not be codified when making decisions.

In the course of his MSc in Accounting and Finance, Pietar has been introduced to a range of accounting scandals, such as Enron, where firms of accountants have been implicated for not operating with the highest moral standards when auditing organizations. He has also heard a number of his peers express a desire to become accountants because of the high salaries that some accountants earn, rather than because of higher moral values. Pietar starts to wonder whether the values that his peers are expressing are consistent with the values that prevail at a medium-sized firm of accountants like the one from which he has his sabbatical.

Pietar takes stock of what he knows already. He already has access to ethical statements from the accounting professional bodies and he has sometimes looked at them when changes to ethical standards and codes have been made to understand why the changes have been introduced. He has the accumulated knowledge of the values that have existed in the organization where he works and knowledge of the ways in which his firm induct trainee accountants. Similarly, he knows some aspects of the attitudes of his student peers that he has experienced

(Continued)

during his Masters programme up to that date. Pietar formulates a research question that asks whether the education of Masters-level students in accounting contain sufficient ethical content to prepare them for employment in medium-sized firms of accountants like his own.

He decides that he will conduct a case study of the ethical component in the education of Masters-level students at the university where he is studying and a case study of ethics at the firm from which he has a sabbatical to see the extent to which they correspond. He proposes to do the former by analysing the content of the syllabus for his course and conducting a group interview with some of his student peers and an interview with the director of the programme. He plans to do the latter by looking at the ethical statements from the accounting professional institutes of which accountants in his firm are members, documenting the induction process for new accountants at his firm and interviewing the partner responsible for overseeing training. He prepares a formal outline of his research protocol, his research instruments, information sheets for participants and consent forms and he applies for ethical approval. Having decided on his research question, he then conducts a literature review about ethical formation of accounting entrants through both the curriculum and through professional training to help him put his study into an intellectual context.

APPROACHES, CONCEPTS AND EXPLANATIONS

As with any approach to data collection, when researchers use a case study, they inevitably make assumptions about their capability to use concepts to represent the phenomenon that is to be studied and to generate explanations about how and why that phenomenon occurs. These assumptions will differ according to the type of epistemological and ontological ideas that tend to underlie orthodox and emergent case studies. While some orthodox approaches might acknowledge that it is not possible to separate out parts of a case study in practice, the parts are deemed analytically separable and so capable of being represented by different concepts. This analytical separation and attribution of separate concepts then permits explanations of causal links between them (see, for example, Yin, 2014: 20). Once the causal links have been identified in a case, replication of findings in different contexts will allow the construction of nomothetic knowledge – that is, generalizable statements.

In comparison, while some of the ontological and epistemological assumptions that permit the emergent approach acknowledge that it might be possible to suggest concepts to represent parts of the same phenomenon as different components, that is neither the same as those components being practically separable nor does it provide evidence of a causal relationship between the reputed separable components.

In effect, while those ideas may purport to represent an empirical reality, they may not do so. Perceptions of components as different and separable deny the extent to which they may be inextricably linked in a phenomenon in a specific naturalistic setting. It is the perceptions that order the understanding of the empirical reality rather than the empirical reality producing the perceptions. As any phenomenon or system is multidimensional, different participants will have different understandings of it, so it is important to acknowledge that there could be multiple understandings of the topic which makes it necessary to specify from which vantage point the reality of the phenomenon or system is to be understood. Furthermore, given the capability of human actors to choose a range of different options, it is not possible to talk in absolute causal terms and there is no reason to expect any phenomenon to appear in exactly the same format elsewhere. The key objective is, thus, to explain why the particular case appeared as it did; that is to generate an ideographic form of knowledge. This is not to deny the existence of concepts, but it is to state that for some authors the concepts are inseparable from the phenomena which they purport to represent and are themselves embedded in a wider cultural context and broader sets of meanings.

When considering the development of concepts to help explain a phenomenon, the level at which the concept or explanation will be developed, should be identified. In addressing this issue, it is of value to refer to Llewelyn's (2003; c.f. Yin, 2014: 41) helpful classification of five levels of understanding. The five levels are: metaphor; differentiation; conceptualization; context-bound explanation within settings; and context-free 'grand' explanations. A metaphor is a familiar form of experience or knowledge which may be used to make sense of something unfamiliar. For example, someone may feel a tension when encountering a new situation at work in a way that makes him or her apprehensive about addressing that situation or completing his or her work. By using the metaphor of tension, that person would have succeeded in bringing to the surface parts of his or her knowledge that when something is new in the workplace, he or she experienced a similar feeling of tension. In effect, the metaphor served as a tool through which the person's own tacit knowledge was articulated. In the same way, researchers may gain access to understanding research participants' tacit and experiential knowledge about a phenomenon that is being studied by asking those others whether they can liken what the researcher is studying to everyday things that the researcher may be familiar with. Differentiation involves marking off a metaphor from others, often through a pairing of two metaphors, comparing and contrasting them and stating the nature of their relationship to one another. So, to continue the example above, the person could use the metaphors of both tension and excitement to seek an understanding of what happens to him or her. For example, the person may know that he or she experiences excitement when he or she is about to play a competitive sports game. So, the person could compare the tension that he or she feels when confronted with new circumstances in the work situation and the excitement experienced when about to play a competitive sports game. The person might recognize similarities in the two metaphors by noting that while they each have

a combination of something that is known of the workplace and the sports game, they also have something unfamiliar in terms of the new circumstance in the workplace and a different team against which the sports match is being played. The person might start to distinguish between the different experiences by noting that while one involves something which he or she is paid to do, the other involves an activity that is voluntary. Also, while the tension experienced at work is unpleasant, the excitement experienced in anticipation of playing sport is enjoyable.

The third level in Llewelyn's schema is that of conceptualization. This classification marks a shift away from external comparisons of qualities of a phenomenon with other things to start to articulate a phenomenon's intrinsic qualities by defining the different ways in which a concept is distinct. To continue with the example, the person may start to note that when the state of tension is experienced at work, he or she also experiences some physical changes such as his or her heart racing faster, his or her hands starting to sweat and the experience of finding it difficult to concentrate. The person might, thus, conceptualize that what he or she has experienced is workplace stress. The fourth level of context-bound explanations within settings link social, organizational or individual phenomena to their settings, thus, drawing a range of differentiations and concepts into a broader schema. In the example provided, the person may realize that the reason why he or she experienced workplace stress is because he or she is worried about failing in his or her paid employment and the reason for that fear is because the employer has not provided any training to help cope with this situation. The final level of grand explanations provides a meta-narrative that is applicable to a range of different institutions. In the example above, the person might theorize all the circumstances when somebody is likely to feel stress and the reasons for that. While all these different levels above may feature in your dissertation research if you choose to use case studies, it is most likely that you will focus on the third and fourth of the levels above, namely, an individual phenomenon which it is necessary to study in its context such as a particular type or cause of stress; or a type of institution in which particular types of phenomena of interest are manifest such as microenterprises.

At this stage, it is appropriate to introduce different types of logic that may be used to link ideas and explanations to empirical observations. To do this, it is first necessary to understand two types of knowledge. Etic knowledge is that which originates from outside. An example is theories that already exist in the literature prior to the researcher conducting a case study. Etic knowledge may be contrasted with emic knowledge or that which is internal to a situation. The pattern of empirical observations at a case study site provides an example of emic knowledge. Given that orthodox case studies rely on propositional knowledge, it may be that they have a greater propensity to start from etic knowledge related to the higher levels of understanding in Llewelyn's framework and use deductive logic to identify propositions that may be examined by studying a case. For example, one statement in the academic literature may be that workers are always dissatisfied when their pay is low compared with

workers in similar jobs elsewhere in the area. Another statement in the academic literature may be that organizations whose workers are dissatisfied experience a high level of labour turnover. We may deduce from these two statements that organizations that pay their employees less than that paid to other equally skilled employees in the area will experience higher levels of labour turnover. We may then undertake case study research at a number of organizations to establish whether there is evidence of the relationship between low pay and labour turnover.

By contrast, an emergent case study will have a greater propensity to work from emic knowledge inductively, perhaps using a metaphor to interpret a particular piece of evidence and to build understanding from there. For example, it may be that office workers interact with each other several times each day. A metaphor that might be used is that those workers are like an association football team whose players are often interacting with each other in the course of a match. If we then observe that the office workers' interactions are activities that help them each to complete their respective jobs successfully and that their organization is in direct competition with another organization in their sector, we may conclude that the office workers are in many ways like a football team. We could then proceed to the stage of differentiation to identify ways in which the office team is different from a football team until we can state clearly what constitutes the 'office team' concept to be fitted into explanations or theories about why the team operates as it does. Both an orthodox and an emergent approach may use abductive reasoning by choosing - from a range - the most likely explanation or theory for a piece of evidence.

In order to make a link between a possible explanation and empirical research in a case study, it is necessary to define an applicable unit of analysis - which will be discussed further in Chapter 3 - to which the explanation or theory relates. For example, assume that the context of a case study is an organization. If the research question that is formulated relates to the organization as a whole, the whole organization will be the unit of analysis and data relating to the research question should be collected from anywhere within the organization to help derive an understanding of the case in ways that relate to the research question. If, on the other hand, the research question is about how a particular organizational change affects two specific departments, the focus will be on the change that has taken place and the two departments. Units of analysis then exist at two different levels, namely: (i) the change; and (ii) the two individual departments. Data collection will be directed towards understanding the change and its impact on the two departments. If instead the phenomenon is simply the change and an understanding sought is the nature of the change that is taking place not only in this organization, but at other organizations, the unit of analysis will be the change, but there will be multiple units of analysis of prospective comparable changes at different organizations.

While an orthodox approach will see the definition of the case(s) or unit(s) of analysis taking place in advance of the research data collection process being started, an emergent approach allows the boundaries to the case or the unit of analysis to

be defined as the research progresses. However, even in an emergent approach, it is important for both the final research question and the unit of analysis to be defined before the data collection process is completed, to allow the researcher to check that he or she has collected sufficient information from sources that illuminate what is taking place with the unit of analysis to answer the research question which she or he has set.

In this section, we have considered different levels at which theories may be constructed, the types of logic that may be used to link theory to empirical evidence in case studies and the importance of defining the contours to the case when theorizing. The next section discusses different levels of scope for the theories.

DEFINING THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

Both Undergraduate and Masters dissertations will be enhanced by the chosen case(s) contributing to the development of theory. When making such a contribution, it is important to define the scope of the theory. In orthodox approaches, a common objective of theorizing about the case that is being observed is to think about the implications that the case may have for elsewhere and how to add to nomothetic knowledge or general statements that have wider applicability. While emergent approaches acknowledge that the theories developed may have implications for elsewhere, this is less of an end *per se* than it is for orthodox approaches. Instead, the focus is upon the particular case and generating ideographic knowledge or explanations of the specific reasons for the phenomenon found in the case. Thus, there are different strategies for defining the scope of the contribution from case study research. In order to understand this, it is necessary to return to the concepts of particularization and generalization.

A strategy of *particularization* seeks to develop deep understanding about the case and explanations that capture the complexity of the case. Any situation, organization or phenomenon that constitutes a case will have its own unique characteristics. These, in turn, will give rise to unique combinations that manifest in a specific phenomenon or a particular manifestation of a broader phenomenon in that case. Particularization entails reporting on why some of the characteristics or events that comprise the case or phenomenon are how they are in the specific context that is being studied. The focus of particularization is to understand and explain the uniqueness of the case. As Stake (1995: 4) says: 'Case study research is not sampling research. We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case.'

Stake (1995) suggests that one of the things that arise from a deep understanding is a capacity to recognize when dimensions of the phenomenon appear in new and foreign contexts. This permits what Stake (1995: 7) describes as a *naturalistic generalization*. Generalization is the development of a general statement

or proposition by inference of observation of a particular manifestation of a phenomenon or system (Tsang, 2014: 371). Naturalistic generalization is 'arrived at by recognizing the similarities of objects and issues in and out of context and by sensing the natural co-variations of happenings' (Stake, 1995: 7). As some of the researcher's understandings of a previous case may remain tacit and unarticulated, naturalistic generalization to a subsequent case is both intuitive and empirical. Stake (1995: 8) goes on to say that:

Naturalistic generalizations develop within a person as a product of experience. They derive from the tacit knowledge of how things are, why they are, how people feel about them, and how these things are likely to be later or in other places with which this person is familiar. They seldom take the form of predictions but lead regularly to expectation. They guide action, in fact they are inseparable from action. These generalizations may become verbalized, passing of course from tacit knowledge to propositional; but they have not yet passed the empirical and logical tests that characterize formal (scholarly, scientific) generalizations.

In this regard, it might be that a researcher conducts an emergent case study based on their own workplace and then they observe a similar workplace and find resonance of the same. That would allow them to develop propositional knowledge about both cases.

The development of propositional knowledge would move the naturalistic generalization towards the status of an *analytic* or *theoretical generalization*. As indicated above, orthodox cases tend to seek this type of generalization. Yin (2014) discusses theoretical or analytic propositions that are not generalized statistically to populations - as is sought in quantitative research through probability sampling methods - but which may be generalized to similar situations. Yin (2014: 21) distinguishes between statistical and analytic generalization in suggesting 'in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to extrapolate probabilities (statistical generalization)'. Tsang (2014) provides a number of ways in which analytic or theoretical generalization may be developed if one is starting from propositional knowledge. One way is through the practice of *falsification*; that is if an author in the literature has indicated that a proposition has law-like characteristics and that one event always accompanies another, the study and provision of a counter-case would provide a refutation of the universality of the theory. However, simple falsification of an existing theory might not be considered as sufficient by some examiners, even for a Masters dissertation.

There are ways in which case studies can make a more positive contribution even if there is a dimension of falsification of one theory. For example, Tsang (2014: 377) suggests they can be used to *examine the relative merits of different theories* around the same subject and their applicability to particular situations. For example, in the

discipline of Change Management, organizational justice theory states that the way employees react to change depends on them being treated fairly. However, within organizational justice theory there is a divergence of views regarding one of the components: interactional justice. One group argues that interactional justice should be considered holistically; the other argues it is perceived by employees as two discrete types of just treatment - treatment of people or interpersonal justice and the explanations provided to them or informational justice. By studying the issue of employees' treatment during a managed change, the two theories can be compared in practice and a choice made.

There are additional ways in which cases may contribute to theoretical generalization (Tsang, 2014: 374). Firstly, they can be used to *extend a theory*. To take the example above, it may be that it has been observed that employees perceived the change had been managed poorly, despite them having been treated justly. However, it could be that the researcher observes that the case study organization was performing poorly and this was not something that had been reported in other cases. In this instance, the extension of the theory from the case study could be that employees' perceptions of their treatment are likely to be influenced by the organization's performance. A second way in which a counter instance could help to develop theory is by *defining boundaries* to a finding. To take the organizational justice example, it may be that all the cases where treatment is considered fair are either public sector or not-for-profit organizations. If the counter finding arises in a commercial, for profit organization, it could be that the boundary to the generalization has been found.

Another form of generalization discussed by Tsang (2014: 371) is that of *empirical generalization*. With an empirical generalization, a number of cases are observed with the purpose of seeing whether there is an empirical regularity or pattern in the population of phenomena or systems from which the cases are drawn; that a pattern is being observed rather than explained. Tsang suggests that the merit of this type of approach is that by identifying a pattern - even if it is not necessarily explained - a specific context may be discounted. The observation or pattern could then become the subject of subsequent theory building. If such an empirical generalization is attempted in a Masters dissertation, you should offer suggestions for the reasons for the pattern in the context of existing literature.

A final form of generalization that might be adopted with case studies is that of *small population generalization*. It may be that a new form of work system is so advanced and expensive that only a small number of organizations have yet to purchase the system. All the organizations with those systems may be known through the trade press making it easy to identify and research all or a high proportion of that population. In this type of instance, it may be possible to generalize the findings relating them to a specific number of that population. Again, the conclusions may simply be empirical to provide the focus for subsequent theory building.

When explaining your research, it is important to express the nature of your contribution - whether it can be considered as common to all institutions of a

particular type, to some of that type of institution under specific circumstances, or only to a particular institution - and the limits of that contribution. Thinking about the concepts of different types of generalization and particularization should help you to do this.

SELECTION OF CASES

To theorize successfully about the empirical evidence that has been gathered from the cases studied, it is necessary to consider how those cases fit into the theories that you use or develop. It is, thus, important to consider the rationale for - or ways of selecting - cases. There have been a number of different ways proposed for selecting cases (see for examples, Patton, 2015; Saunders et al., 2016). In outlining the bases for selection, we build on earlier distinctions in relation both to the different case studies of orthodox and emergent and the types of contribution through theorization that might be achieved. Not all the bases of selection are mutually exclusive, nor will their use be confined to either orthodox or emergent case studies, or different forms of contribution, but they may be more associated with one rather than another, which we highlight below.

One approach is that of *opportunistic selection* which will entail picking cases on a basis of on-the-spot decisions about the cases fitting in with the important criteria for the research, or with the new criteria that become apparent in the course of the research. Alternatively, there might be unforeseen opportunities of access to a case that enables the researcher to address the problem under consideration. This type of selection is most likely to be found in emergent case studies and used either for particularization or developing a naturalistic generalization. Many people reading for a Masters degree are either studying part-time because they are in full-time work, or are studying full-time after being awarded sabbatical leave from work. It may be that there is a problem in their workplace that they have always wanted to dedicate time to resolving. The requirement to write a dissertation might provide them with the time to address such a problem and the willingness of their work colleagues might provide them with the opportunity to do so. This type of situation will constitute an opportunistic form of selection.

A second approach is that of *extreme or deviant case selection*. Extreme or deviant cases are selected because they are unusual or extreme and offer the potential to learn most either in a positive or a negative way. To some extent, to define a case as extreme or deviant is to accept a realist ontology and positivist epistemology that allow cases to be identified as part of a wider population and to define a norm for a case which allows others to be defined as deviant. By contrast, a constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology could lead to an assumption that all cases will be different rendering the idea of deviance invalid. Nevertheless, if the idea of extreme or deviant is accepted, they could be used to illuminate explanations of why a particular case is performing well or badly and provide opportunities for particularization in the explanation.

A third approach is a variant of the idea of an extreme case and that is the *politically important case selection*. This involves choosing cases that are politically sensitive as they allow illumination of particular types of problems that are also considered to be manifest elsewhere, but have come to light in a particularly damaging way in the politically important case. The dangers of an overly close relationship between a firm and its auditors, such as that which occurred at the American energy, commodities and services company Enron in the late 1990s is a particular instance of this. Again, the opportunities for particularization in the explanation of why such a relationship developed in the way that it did at Enron are considerable, although drawing comparisons between Enron and other companies would require some analytic generalization.

A fourth approach is that of *criterion selection*. This involves identifying criteria in advance that distinguish cases from others that make up the majority of a population and using those criteria to select cases. A particular way of using this approach in management research would be to investigate one or more companies that had doubled in size or turnover, or that had encountered an unusually high number of industrial relations problems. The opportunities for particularization in the explanation of why an organization's performance materialized in this way are extensive, although drawing comparisons between the company that meets the criterion and others that did not would require some analytic generalization about the absence of the level of performance at those other companies.

A fifth approach is that of *theory-based selection*. Theory-based selection is similar to criterion selection, but it involves picking cases on the bases of the recognition of evidence of important theoretical constructs at one or more cases. A common form of use of this method in management research is that of early adopters - or innovators - of a particular management practice. The concept of innovators is then used to explain the performance of those cases, as well as others who are not innovators, in relation to the wider population. The cases picked and explained will involve a degree of particularization, although there will also be an underlying form of analytic or theoretical generalization that expresses the way that the cases relate to the wider population.

A sixth approach is that of *snowball or chain selection*. It entails asking people who are knowledgeable of the area or research participants whether they are aware of other cases that fit the selection criteria. The consequence is that the researcher is much more likely to find cases that are information-rich than if they were to select the cases by most other means. This form of selection is perhaps most likely to be used as researchers move from particularization to a naturalistic generalization, although it could also be used for the purpose of developing an empirical generalization.

A seventh approach to selection is that of *census selection* where the aim is to study the entire population. When a population is either new, or may be tightly defined for other reasons, it may be possible to study the entire population of one or a small number of cases. This approach is particularly suitable if the objective is to make a small population generalization, although it could also be used for the

purposes of making an empirical or an analytic generalization. A similar type of selection is *homogenous selection*. Homogenous selection involves picking a small sub-group of a wider population, but which have definite shared characteristics or identity, to examine how those characteristics are affected by a particular phenomenon or lead to the development of a phenomenon. This form of selection will be particularly suitable for empirical generalization or analytic generalization.

A ninth approach is that of *intensity selection*. Intensity selection involves picking information-rich cases that exhibit a lot of the qualities of the phenomena that are under consideration. Intensity selection can be particularly valuable at the early stages of developing an analytic generalization as the depth of the information about a case may allow development of explanations of extensive patterns. The study of subsequent cases may be used to extend and refine the analytic generalization and to identify the boundaries to its applicability. Of course, if the research stops with the initial case, the theory of the case will be particularization.

A tenth approach that is suited to the development of analytic generalizations is a *maximum variety* or *heterogeneous selection*. This will entail identifying many different characteristics that are found in the population of cases as a whole. The researcher will then select as many cases as possible with each case having a different configuration of some of the characteristics. For example, organizations could be distinguished on the basis of their size, their patterns of ownership, the sector in which they are situated, their geographical location, etc. The extent to which it is possible to select a wide variety of different cases for a Masters dissertation is questionable, but it may be possible for you to study two or three cases and employ the principle of maximum variety. Any theme that is common across the different cases that were selected will then take on increased importance and could provide the basis for an analytic generalization. Also, if the theme is absent from one of the cases, the absence could provide the basis for developing an explanation of the boundary to the analytic generalization.

Although analytic generalization is not related to statistical generalization, the eleventh approach of *purposeful random selection* involves the statistical logic of choosing cases according to a systematic method that has been predetermined to afford all relevant cases equal chance of inclusion. Advocates of this method claim that it can reduce bias in the selection of cases and enhance the credibility of the generalizations that are made. This, of course, will only apply if all the cases support the analytic generalization. As analytic generalization is not based on frequencies, but on theoretical applicability, any counter cases found in the selection may only be useful if they can be used to contribute to defining the boundaries of the analytic generalization.

A twelfth approach, *stratified purposeful selection*, may be used to help refine an analytic generalization or define its boundaries. Stratified purposeful selection involves identifying distinct clusters of cases within a population systematically and then studying them. For example, it might have been found that all family-owned firms with less

than 20 employees are able to function without a formal Human Resource Department because of the ways in which the founding family is able to construct an amenable work environment. The idea could then be extended by choosing a cluster of firms with 25 employees. If the findings from cases from each of the clusters are the same, the analytic generalization will be extended. If the findings from each of the clusters are slightly different, it will provide an opportunity to define the boundaries to the initial propositions in the analytic generalization and extend the analytic generalization by identifying reasons why the findings are different in the two different clusters.

A thirteenth approach is *confirming or disconfirming case selection*. This type of approach fits in with the pursuit of analytic generalization and extending the ideas of the theory or identifying the boundaries to its application. If the case confirms the proposition, the analytic generalization is extended; if the case disconfirms the proposition, a boundary of the analytic generalization is found. If the proposition had claimed to be universal, then the theory has been falsified. A fourteenth approach offers a particular type of confirming or disconfirming case and that is *critical case selection*. Critical case selection involves selecting cases where theoretical propositions lead to the assumption that a phenomenon will either be present or absent. The maxim when selecting a critical case is: If a phenomenon is happening anywhere, it is likely to be here; and if it is not happening here, it is unlikely to be happening anywhere else. If the phenomenon is present, a degree of particularization will have taken place about why the phenomenon was likely to be present in the critical case and it will also provide the basis for developing analytic generalization. If the case does not support the proposition, then the proposition will have been falsified.

The fifteenth and final approach to selecting cases that will be considered here - simply because other writers use it, but it should not be used in the design of a Masters dissertation - is that of the typical case. The typical case is not different in notable ways from those others that have been found. If a typical case is found in the course of research, it is likely simply to extend the analytic generalization. However, the usefulness of the typical case is limited. As Stake (1995: 4) says 'The first criterion [of case study selection] should be to maximize what we can learn'. The main use of a typical case would be for illustrative or teaching purposes.

Table 2.2 summarizes the relationship between the strategic choice involving the selection of cases and the best approach to developing a contribution when theorizing having made a particular choice. When deciding on the selection choice, it is important to decide on the amount of time that is available to conduct the data collection stage of the research. It may be that this is limited to only about a month. In such a situation, the capability to adopt one or other of the different selection approaches - for example, stratified random selection - may be precluded. Nevertheless, a decision will remain of whether to opt for a single case, or more than one case. If you are going to adopt an emergent approach, it is more likely that a single case will be selected, although it may be that a subsequent case will be chosen to engage in a form of naturalistic generalization and to offer propositions that might provide the basis

for an analytic or theoretical generalization if you are tending towards a positivistic epistemology and/or a realist ontology. If you are adopting an orthodox approach, it is more likely that more than one case will be adopted, although only one case may be selected if the selection is of an extreme or deviant, politically important, criterion, theory-based, intensity or a critical case.

Table 2.2 Relationship between choice of selection approach of cases and the form of theorizing that is most likely to be pursued

<i>Method of selection</i>	<i>Form of theorizing most likely to be pursued</i>
Opportunistic	Particularization
Extreme or deviant	Particularization on the basis of assumption of prior analytic generalization
Politically important	Particularization on the basis of assumption of prior analytic generalization
Criterion-based	Particularization on the basis of assumption of prior analytic generalization
Theory-based	Particularization on the basis of assumption of prior analytic generalization
Snowball or chain	Particularization leading to naturalistic generalization and empirical generalization
Census	Small population and empirical generalization
Homogenous	Empirical generalization and analytic generalization
Intensity	Initial stages of analytic generalization
Maximum variety or heterogeneous	Analytic generalization
Purposeful random	Analytic generalization
Stratified purposeful	Extension of the analytic generalization and definition of its boundaries
Confirming or disconfirming	Extension of the analytic generalization and definition of its boundaries
Critical case	Initial stages of analytic generalization or falsification
Typical case	Best used only for teaching or illustrative purposes

EVALUATING YOUR CASE(S)

When your research is completed, it will be evaluated. It is important to think about the criteria by which the work will be assessed. The idea of what constitutes good research when it is written up links to what has become known as the criteriology debate. Proponents of approaches that tend towards orthodoxy suggest four criteria by which all work should be evaluated. For example, Yin (2014: 45-49) provides four criteria that he believes all case studies should seek to meet. Firstly, there

is construct validity which defines how well the construct relates to the empirical reality and facilitates its measurement. Secondly, there is internal validity which relates to the accuracy of description of causal relationships. Thirdly, there is external validity which is the extent to which a finding may be generalized to elsewhere. Fourthly, there is reliability, which is the idea that if another investigator was to follow the same procedures and conduct the same case study as a previous investigator, he or she would replicate the earlier findings and arrive at the same conclusions. It will suffice to say at this point that these different criteria have been criticized - either explicitly or implicitly - by a range of authors from a variety of standpoints (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Stake, 1995: 4; Tsang, 2014: 370-372). If an orthodox approach is adopted with an underlying positivist epistemology, then these are the criteria you should seek to observe.

They are not, however, suitable for all approaches to case studies. As Johnson et al. (2006:132) have suggested, there is a need for evaluative criteria to take account of the increasing diversity of research approaches. Johnson and colleagues propose what they describe as contingent criteria which will be dependent on the epistemological and ontological position of the researcher. While the four criteria adopted by Yin and others may be appropriate if the researcher has combined positivist epistemology with realist ontology, other criteria will be more appropriate for alternative epistemological and ontological approaches. If the research embodies an interpretivist epistemology, the evaluation criteria will include credibility of the account in place of construct validity, evidence of reflexivity in place of internal validity, transferability or the extent of applicability in place of external validity and confirmability through the researcher's own self-criticism and a clear audit trail in place of reliability. If the research embodies constructivist ontology, the evaluation criteria will include the evidence of multiple voices removing the researcher from the centre of the account.

SUMMARY

This chapter has introduced a number of considerations that are involved in a case study research strategy or the strategic choices that are involved in conducting a case. It has organized those considerations or choices around the classifications of orthodox and emergent cases that were introduced in Chapter 1. We have proceeded through an outline of the underlying philosophies of the different approaches through consideration of levels of theorization and the linkage of those theoretical ideas to empirical evidence through different types of logic. Consideration has been given to the scope of a theory through the concepts of different types of generalization and particularization. We have identified different ways of selecting cases to help build an explanation and we have suggested ways in which cases may be evaluated. Table 2.3 summarizes these considerations and choices.

Table 2.3 Summary of different aspects of orthodox and emergent approaches

	<i>Orthodox</i>	<i>Emergent</i>
Assumptions of design of case - see Chapter 1	Quasi-experimental	Naturalistic
Underlying philosophy	Primarily positivist and realist, although potentially interpretivist and realist	Tendency towards constructivist and interpretivist although also realist and interpretivist
Perceived relationships of concepts to empirical reality	Tendency to view as either a single or one of many possible interpretations or representations of external reality	Tendency to view as either one of many possible interpretations or representations of external reality or one of many possible accounts of reality that has been constructed
Source of initial knowledge	Etic	Etic
Type of logic employed to build theory	Primarily deductive or abductive	Primarily inductive or abductive
Type of knowledge sought	Probably nomothetic	Probably ideographic
Objective of theorizing or contribution from case(s)	Primarily theoretical or empirical generalization	More likely to be particularization, but different forms of generalization possible
Basis of selection of cases	Potential for analytic generalization	Probably particularization
Criteria for evaluation	Positivist criteria to help ensure consistency and generalizability across cases	Contingent

In the next chapter, the components of case study data collection methods are introduced.