

Robert K. Yin. (2014). *Case Study Research Design and Methods (5th ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 282 pages. (ISBN 978-1-4522-4256-9).

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Robert K. Yin's *Case Study Research Design and Methods* (2014) is currently in its fifth edition and continues to be a seminal text for researchers and students engaged in case study research. Since the book's first release 30 years ago (1984), case study research has gained considerable acceptance as a research method, likely a result of Yin's unyielding position that case study be considered a separate and all-encompassing method with its own research design. This current edition of the book is heavily influenced by the advances in case study research and remains a definitive guide on how to design more rigorous and methodologically sound case studies that will stand up to questions of validity and reliability. Importantly, Yin manages to link theory and practice by presenting the breadth of case study research and its historical significance at a practical level. It is Yin's view that, when "the process has been given careful attention, the potential result is the production of a high-quality case study" (p. 199). Thus, a comprehensive and systematic outline for undertaking the design and conduct of a case study is presented in a very straightforward and readable manner throughout the book's 282 pages. Ultimately, Yin argues that case study research is a challenging endeavour that hinges upon the researcher's skills and expertise. As such, this edition includes more difficult concepts to guide researchers and students in the work of carrying out more rigorous case study research, thereby retaining Yin's ultimate goal "to improve our social science methods and practices over those of previous generations of scholars" (p. xxvi).

Building on the key strengths of earlier editions, the book's crisp structure has benefited from numerous editions with reviewer feedback, and it continues to serve as an exemplar for other methodological guides. The book shows the case study research process as a "linear but iterative process" (p. xxii) and provides practical and technical discussions on each of the six elements of case study research: the plan, design, preparation, data collection, analysis and reporting. Each of these features forms the topic of the book's six chapters and together are represented by an overarching six-circled visual display. For those researchers interested in going a little deeper into some elements, Yin also provides practical exercises with challenging methodological questions or situations that can be addressed. Through these structural features, as well as the book's enhanced headings and subheadings, numerous supporting resources, and the excellent cross-referenced index in Appendix C, Yin makes a complex methodology much more approachable.

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Essentially, Yin is a methodologist who states: “Readability, credibility, and concern with confirmability all matter” (p. 192). The essence of this book can be found in the first chapter, which not only establishes the basis for case studies as a research method but also provides a twofold operational definition, covering both its scope and its features, that clearly distinguishes it from other methods. Most simply, case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context” (p. 16). From here, Yin shows how case study research constitutes an all-encompassing method that covers the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis, which ultimately informs the structure of the book. Because this definition has been reworked over the four previous editions, it is a useful reference for the novice researcher and an important contribution to the field of research methodology. Throughout the text, Yin emphasizes the power of high-quality case study research that focuses on rigour, validity, and reliability. Clearly a proponent for case study research, Yin openly addresses its enduring criticisms as a methodology and urges the researcher to carefully consider whether a case study is the most appropriate method for their inquiry project.

As a student of program evaluation, I was extremely pleased to see the addition of the role of case study in the field of evaluation in this fifth edition. In an attempt to retain the compactness of the original text, Yin makes scattered reference to evaluation throughout the book, such as in his discussion of [Patton's \(2002\)](#) four types of data triangulation (Chapter 4) and the logic model (illustrated as three types) as an analytic tool that can use both qualitative and quantitative case study data (Chapter 5). I found Yin's definition of the logic model as a tool that “stipulates and operationalizes a complex chain of occurrences or events over an extended period of time” (p. 155) particularly useful. Yin posits that the use of logic models in case study research can help explain the ultimate outcomes because the analysis technique consists of matching empirically observed events to theoretically predicted events. However, beyond these two references to evaluation within the framework of case study research, the bulk of Yin's focus on the role of case study in evaluation is found in Appendix B. There he states that, as evaluation textbooks have given case study spotty recognition to date, it is his position that “case study research has a functional and legitimate role in doing evaluations” (p. 219). In evaluation, case studies can be used to capture the complexity of a case, including temporal changes, as well as explore the contextual conditions of a case. In addition, Yin presents three major applications for case studies and describes them in detail, showing how they can apply to a variety of situations. These applications are (a) as part of a larger evaluation with the case study portion viewed as complementary and providing explanatory information, (b) as the primary evaluation method where the initiative being evaluated becomes the main case, or (c) as part of a dual-level evaluation arrangement in which a single evaluation consists of one or more subevaluations with the potential of case study playing various roles to inform the program evaluation as a whole. Most usefully, Yin provides key examples of each application in the boxes

at the end of each description. Ultimately, Yin presents case study research as an integral method for program evaluators to consider, but its usefulness, relevance, and quality depend on the evaluation situation and their skills and expertise. Like social science researchers, Yin urges evaluators to become familiar with case study design as outlined in this book and carefully consider whether it is an appropriate method before using it in their evaluations.

In reviewing each chapter in depth, I gained the knowledge needed to not only understand the complex methodological process of case study research, but also to feel comfortable using it for my own inquiry projects. Throughout this latest edition, Yin continues to defend case study research as an integral and rigorous methodology, and he presents this argument through a very practical and readable structure. While retaining the strength of earlier editions, this book is an excellent update that adds further depth to the methodology, a refined definition, and more detailed coverage of certain topics. With Yin's unequivocal emphasis on the quality of the case study research method being directly linked to the researcher's ability, I would highly recommend this text to anyone engaged in social science methodologies, especially the novice researcher and student of program evaluation. By carefully adopting this book's techniques and guidance, it is my view that not only will Yin's ultimate goal "that case study research will be better than in the past" come to fruition, but new exemplary case studies characterized by "engagement, enticement, and seduction" (p. 206) may be "enthusiastically" produced. Perhaps, some of these case studies may even find their way into future editions.

REFERENCE

- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.