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Case Study Research

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Definition

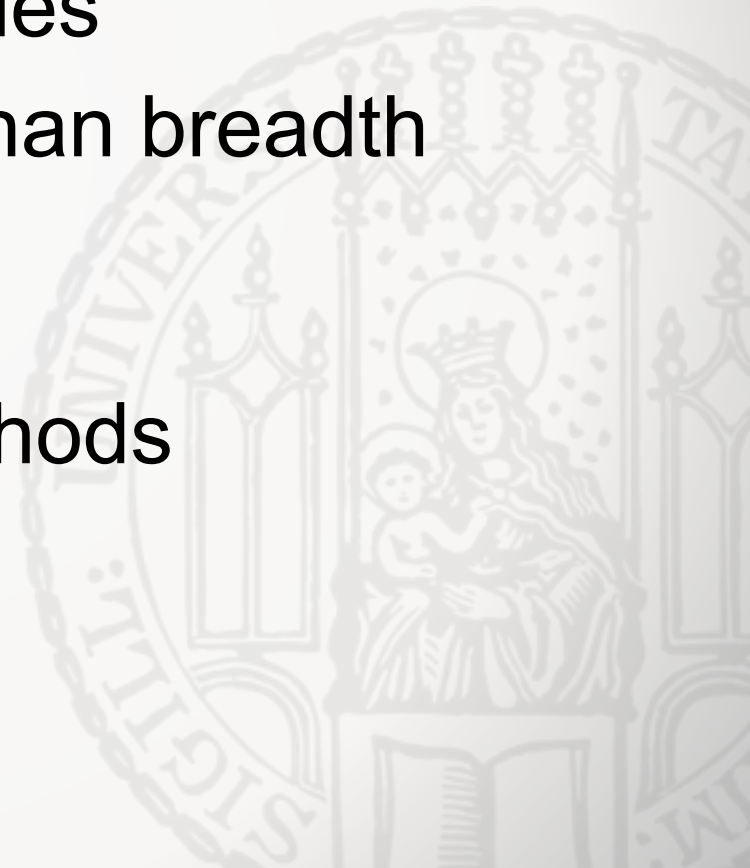
A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. (Yin, 2003b)

Definition

Case studies can clear the **how** and **why**.

Characteristics of case studies

- A focus on depth rather than breadth
- Natural setting
- Holistic study
- Multiple sources and methods



Definition

Approach of time

- Historical study
- Short-term study or contemporary study
- Longitudinal study



Targets

- rich, detailed insight into one case and its relationships and processes
- describe and explain one phenomenon
- build a new theory
- test an existing theory
- evaluate alternative theories



Planing

Types of case studies strategies

- exploratory study
- descriptive study
- explanatory study



Planing

Selection of cases

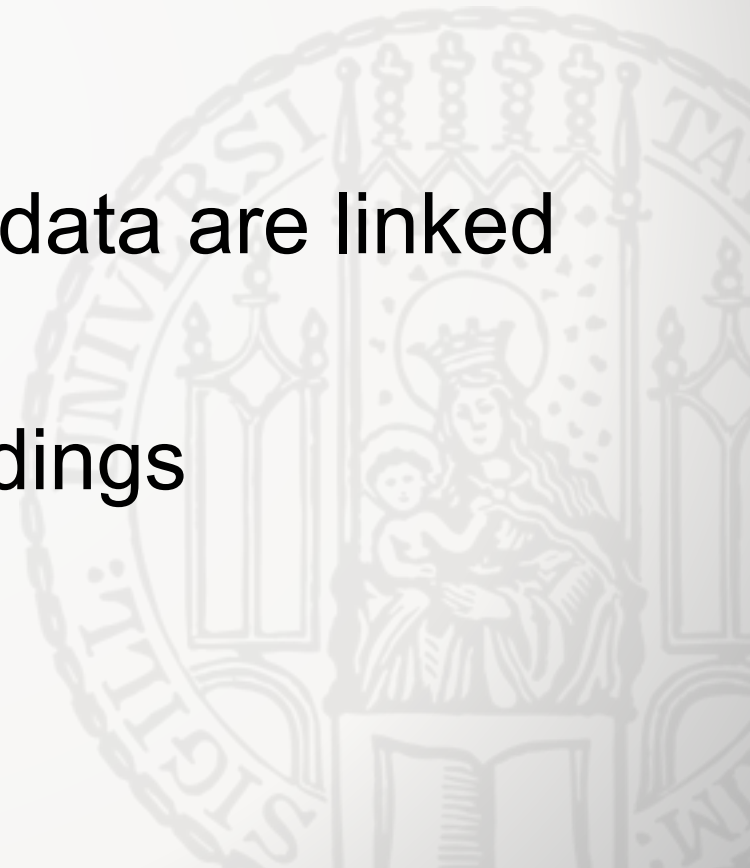
- Typical
- Extreme
- Test-bed for theory
- Convenience
- Unique opportunity



Planing

Five components of a case study

- research question
- propositions
- unit(s) of analysis
- determination of how the data are linked to the propositions
- criteria to interpret the findings



Planing

List possible data sources

- interviews
- records
- observations
- log files
- ...



Realization and Analysis

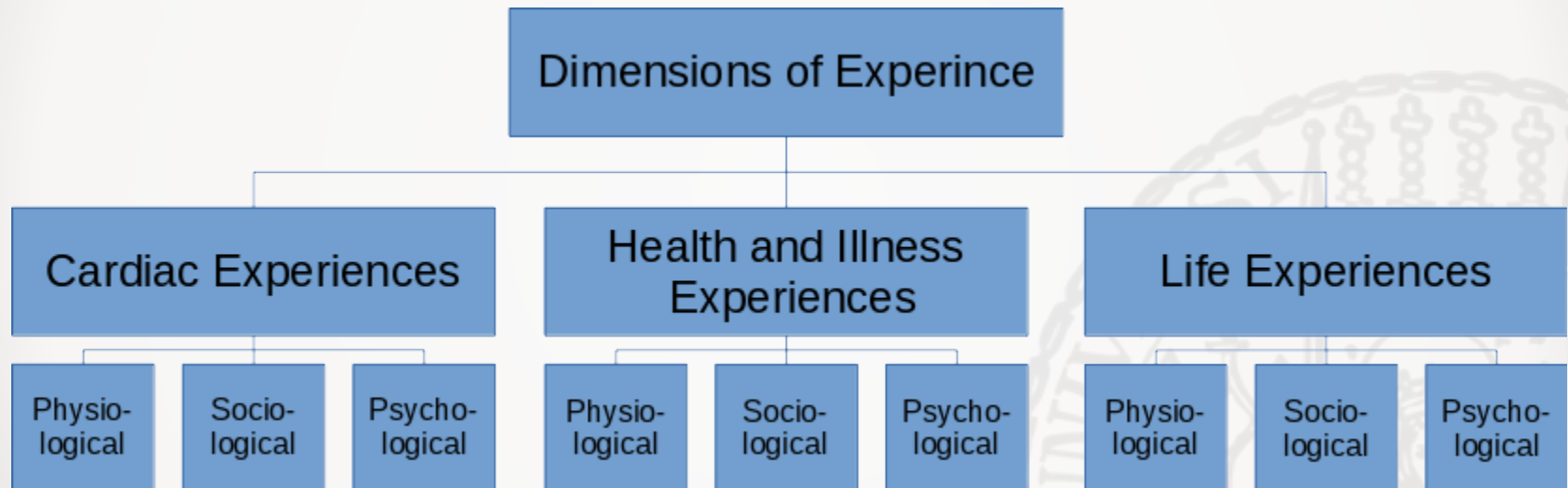
Iterative process

- collect data
- analyze data
- modify methods
- collect data
- ...



Realization and Analysis

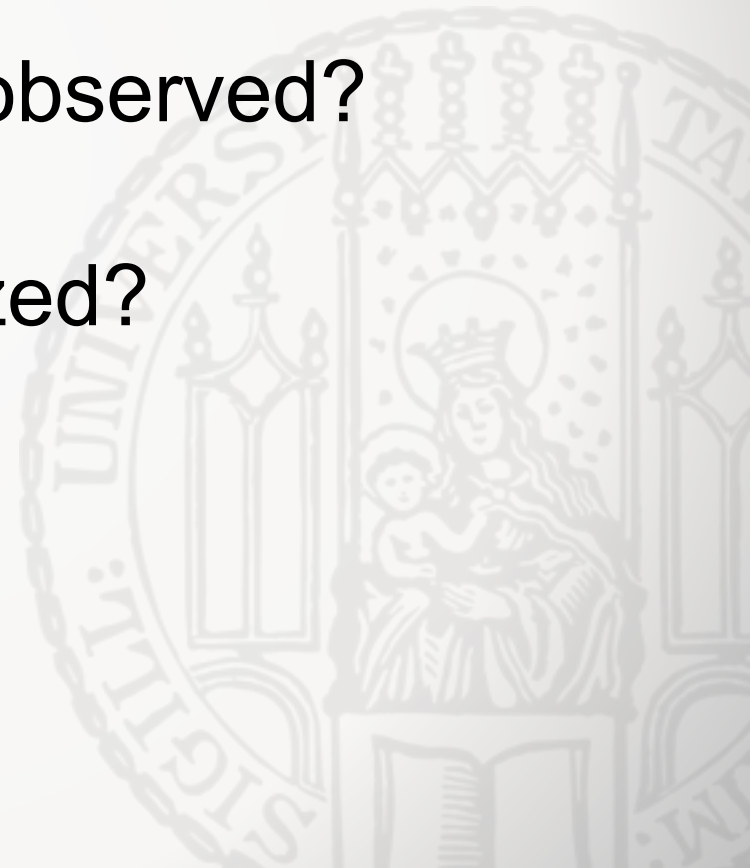
Example: Men with CHD



Reporting

Describe the case and the conclusion in detail

- Why this case?
- Who was interviewed or observed?
- What documents?
- How recorded and analyzed?
- Alternative explanations?



Generalization

Is generalization possible?

Four main types of generalization

- Concepts
- Theory
- Implications
- Rich insight
- Combinations



Evaluation Guide

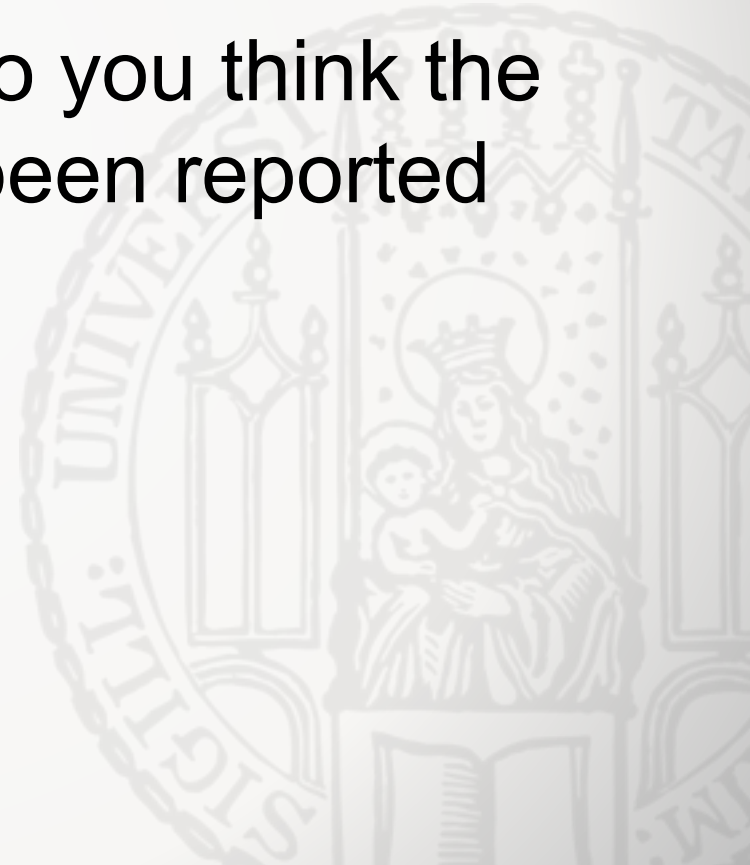
1. Have the criteria for choosing the particular case been described and justified?
2. What kind of case study strategy is used?
3. What data generation methods were used?
4. How long did the researcher spent in the field?

Evaluation Guide

5. Does the researcher look at relationships and processes and provide a holistic perspective?
6. What kind of generalizations are reported, if any?
7. How does the researcher link the theory to the case study?
8. What limitations in the case study research does the researcher recognize?

Evaluation Guide

9. Can you identify other flaws or omissions in the researcher's reporting of the case study?
10. Overall, how effectively do you think the case study strategy has been reported and used?



Advantages

- deal with complex situations
- appropriate for situations where researcher has little control over events
- suitable for theory building and testing
- show complexities and explore alternative meanings and explanations
- data close to people's experience, not much numeric studies

Disadvantages

- imprecise and leading to generalizations with poor credibility
- getting access is difficult and time-consuming
- influence of the presence of the researcher
- no rules
- reporting can be too much for papers

Examples

Internet case studies

- User resistance to the implementation of a management information system (1983)
- Development of a CSCW (1996)
- Improvements or not with CASE tools (1993)
- Small software development company during the dot.com boom and bust era (2004)

Take-Away Message

Case Study Research

- How and why
- Focus on every detail
- Real-life context
- Create or test theories
- Multiple sources and methods
- Deal with complex situations



Question

Are case studies scientific relevant?

