

## **. From single-case studies to practice-based knowledge:**

### **Aggregating and synthesizing case studies**

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## **Motto**

- „After all, single-case studies, when systematically replicated with other individuals, can help us not only to understand what aspects of the original study's findings are transferable, but also those that are not.
- When a different result is found, one must try and work out what is specific to this second case which makes the results different to the first study, and in this way one's understanding is gradually enriched and one's understanding refined“ (p. 138)
- (Midgley, Nick (2006). The 'inseparable bond between cure and research': clinical case study as a method of psychoanalytic inquiry. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy* 32: 2, p122-147).

## **The Basic Unit**

- In the practice of psychotherapy, the most basic unit is the „case“ (Eells, 2007).
- Single case studies that allows for the examination of the detailed unfolding of events across time in the context of the case as a whole represent one of the most pragmatic and practice-oriented forms of psychotherapy (Fishman 1999, 2005).
- The recent resurgence of interest in single-case studies has sparked the development of innovative case study methods (e.g., Bohart, 2008; Elliot, 2002; Fishman; Mill, 2004; Stiles, 2005).

## **Journals**

- Two new journals have seen the light of the day:
  - Pragmatic Case Studies in Psychotherapy
  - Clinical Case Studies

## PCSP

# CSP Pragmatic Case Studies in Psychotherapy

reviewed e-journal of systematic case studies & case study method articles

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## Studies in Psychotherapy

## Case Study and Theory Building

Vol 7, No 4 (2011)

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## Clinical Case Studies



- Clinical Case Studies (CCS)*, peer-reviewed and published bi-monthly in an electronic-only format, is the only journal devoted entirely to case studies. It presents cases involving individual, couples, and family therapy. The easy-to-follow case presentation format allows you to learn how interesting and challenging cases were assessed and conceptualized, and how treatment followed such conceptualization. This practical format allows clinicians to replicate successful treatments in their own practices. Cases follow a 12-point format.

## CCS October 2013

### Articles

- Marni L. Jacob, Cynthia Suveg, and Anne Shaffer  
**Developmentally Sensitive Behavioral Treatment of a 4-Year-Old, Korean Girl With Selective Mutism**  
Clinical Case Studies October 2013 12: 335-347, first published on June 26, 2013  
doi:10.1177/1534650113492997

[Abstract](#) [Full Text \(PDF\)](#) [References](#) [Request Permissions](#)

- Christopher D. Watkins and Jenny Macfie  
**Psychodynamic Psychotherapy With Adjunctive Hypnosis for Anxiety Management and Smoking Cessation**  
Clinical Case Studies October 2013 12: 348-359, first published on July 18, 2013  
doi:10.1177/1534650113493348

[Abstract](#) [Full Text \(PDF\)](#) [References](#) [Request Permissions](#)

## Types of Case Studies

- Clinical Case Studies
- Experimental Case Studies
- Naturalistic/Systematic Case Studies

## Clinical Case Studies

- Clinical case studies are essentially therapists' narrative account of what happened during treatment along with interpretations based on the therapeutic work with their own patients.
- Most psychotherapy approaches have been developed not in laboratories but from clinical observation and experience with innovative interventions. (Stiles 2005)
- Even for cognitive therapy, principles and intervention strategies were developed on the basis of close observation of individual cases. (Edwards et al. 2004)

## Critique of Clinical Case Studies

- Lack of systematic and reliable methods
- Expert clinicians also may fail
- Experts are not immune to logical errors and bias
- Clinical case studies are NOT *per se* qualitative studies as defined by recent agreement

## Experimental Case Studies

- Intrasubject replication design
- N = 1 subject experiments
- Rigorous method for testing hypothesis about treatment effects (Barlow & Hersen 1984)
- Record and assess specific changes observed in clients that are attributable to the administration of specific interventions.
- A standard test of behavioral assessment is conducted regularly, and changes are compared with a baseline of target behaviors and other physiological indexes obtained before introducing the treatment (Kazdin 1982)

### Naturalistic/ Systematic Case Studies

- More recent innovative methodological developments
- Pragmatic case studies, pluralist case studies, single-subject research (Eells 2007) and systematic case studies (Edwards 2007).
- Series of assimilation case studies conducted by Stiles (2007) that aim at theory building
- Hermeneutic single case efficacy design (Elliot that explore causal explanation for efficacy)
- Case formulation research (Silberschatz & Curtis 1993)
- Jury research model which examines alternative interpretations for change (Bohart 2008)

### New Features in Contemporary Single Case Approaches

- Data are collected from multiple sources, such as questionnaires from therapists and observer ratings and participant interviews, to construct a rich and comprehensive account or case summary, which is then triangulated in order to examine whether different sources of data converge.
- The detailed narrative summary of the process is grounded in the quantitative process and outcome data.
- Second, a research team, rather than a single clinician, is involved in the process of data analysis.
- The team compares alternative interpretations of case material until it reaches consensus regarding the conclusions (McLeod 2002).

### Guidelines by Fishman 2005

- A systematic case study starts with the **thick** description of the client and his or her presenting problems from three perspectives
- # the practitioner's guiding conception (theoretical approach and preferred intervention methods)
- #The practitioner's professional experience and competence in dealing with similar cases
- # Published research that has direct bearing on the case

### Quality Criteria

- **Owning the perspective:** the disclosure of the author's theoretical orientation, personal anticipation, values and so forth
- **Situating the sample:** description of relevant contextual data about the client, the therapist and the clinical setting
- **Provision of reliability checks:** using multiple analysts and auditors.

## Potential Role in Psychotherapy Research

- A) filling the “research-practice gap”
- B) Areas that are missed in RCT
- C) Clients that are missed (children, elderly people, marginal groups: f.e. transsexuals)
- D) Therapeutic failure
- E) Integrative and / or eclectic treatments
- F) Long-term treatments (f.e. Amalia X, Mrs C)

## Going Beyond Single Case Studies

- Detailing outcome studies:
- comparing cases from each identified subgroup, looking for discriminating variables

## Meta-Synthesis

Characteristics	Computerized case database	Metasynthesis
Goals	Integrating and synthesizing findings from individual case studies Help researchers identify similar or contrasting case studies for clinical practice, meta-synthesis, and case comparison	Theory building and development Systematic identification of shared concepts and themes across similar case that cannot be examined in a single-case study
Identification of case studies	A large number of cases to comprehend a full clinical range from extensive electronic databases (e.g., PsycINFO, MEDLINE) All inclusive	A small number of similar cases matched on dimensions of client characteristics, treatment approaches, and other treatment variables from extensive electronic databases (e.g., PsycINFO, MEDLINE)
Types of case studies	Clinical case studies N = 1 experimental design Systematic single-case studies	Clinical case studies Systematic single-case studies
Data analysts	Trained judges	A group of psychologists with expertise in qualitative methods
Data analysis strategies	Content analysis (classification) Qualitative analysis	Qualitative analysis (meta-study techniques) Consensual qualitative research
Examples of studies in psychotherapy research	Miller (2004)	Iwakabe (2005) Timulak (2007)
Reliability and validity	Interrater reliability and agreement	Research group consensus Auditing
Clinical utility	Is the database useful for clinicians by locating relevant case studies?	Did the synthesis deepen the understanding of the phenomenon or working with a specific

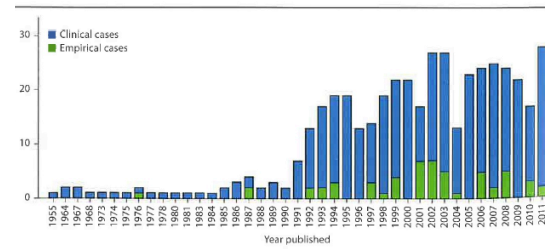
## Archives of Single Cases

- Desmet M, Meganck R, Seybert C, Willemsen J, Geerardyn F, Declercq F, Inslegers R, Trenson E, Vanheule S, Schindler I, Kirsner L & Kächele H (2013)
- Psychoanalytic single case studies published in ISI-ranked journals: A review of basic characteristics of patient, therapist, therapy and research method.
- *Psychotherapy & Psychosomatics* 82: 120-121

## The Tool: IBISC

- Inventory of Basic Information in Single Cases
- Screening the ISI Web of Knowledge

## Archives of Single Cases



. Number of clinical and empirical single cases published per year from 1955 until 2011.