

Research Paper (Project #2) The Case Study

“You see but you do not observe.”
--Sherlock Holmes

Prompt: For project #2, you will write your own case study of an individual or small group that presents a problem you think recent research in neuroplasticity might effectively address. Your paper should do the following: 1) detail descriptions of the case subject and the problematic question it presents, including a brief overview of the standard response to this problem and its limitations; 2) analyze relevant developments, innovations or experiments in brain-based methods and concepts of brain plasticity that might help you formulate an alternative solution for your case’s problem; and 3) make an original assertion about the implications of these approaches for this problem. While you may not be able to provide definitive results, your research should help you craft a well-reasoned argument supported with academic research.

Topic Selection: You are free to select a problem from the fields of education, music, sports, psychology, language acquisition, cultural studies, neurology, medicine, child development, disability studies or another discipline that you propose. You can find your individual or group from the media, your personal experiences or observations, your field of study, your hobbies or library research.

The Process: You will need to identify at least two *primary sources* that provide direct or firsthand evidence about your case. These can include eyewitness accounts, pieces of creative writing, literature, non-fiction, audio and video recordings, speeches, film, T.V. shows, interviews, fieldwork, essays, news reports and so on, i.e., wherever you gain an insightful view of the individual and the problem he or she presents. From these you can formulate a problematic question to guide your research. Consider the example of V.S. Ramachandran’s argument about laughter, developed out of historical documents describing patients who died laughing. Since you are not conducting clinical observations, you need to distinguish early in your process between the sources that give you the information on your subject and that help you formulate a problematic question from the expertise that will help you analyze your subject and build an argument, your *secondary sources*.

Major Components:

1. Background Information. Tell the reader what problem you are investigating, what case you are probing, and what your purpose is. Provide any background information your reader should know to understand what follows.
2. Description. Write a compelling profile of the subject using the system of the 10 Ps (portrait, past, problems, people, places, plans, phases, phrases, pleasures, pains).

3. Analysis. Interpret the significance of what you have learned about the case and of the treatment options. Explain how your descriptions tie into your purpose.
4. Argument. Reason through and provide supporting evidence for a timely, conceptual assertion that responds to your subject's problem.
5. Delayed thesis structure: Present your descriptions and argument through a delayed thesis model, as described in our Allyn and Bacon Guide and as adhered to typically by the case study genre. Writing an interesting case study is a bit like writing a detective story; it is a puzzle that has to be solved. You want to keep your readers intrigued by the situation by arranging information in such a way that the reader is put in the same position as the case writer was at the beginning when he or she was faced with a new situation and asked to figure out what was going on. The case study unveils information as it goes, keeping the reader engaged in the mystery.
6. Sources: Incorporate at least 2 primary sources to describe your case, at least 8 secondary sources to analyze your case (6 or more should be academic, at least 1 of these needs to be a personal interview). Consider conducting your interview(s) near the beginning of your process to help you formulate your research question and/or near the end when you need more specific information to fill in gaps.
7. Context and significance. Conclude with the larger implications you believe this has for a broader group of people or institution (a discipline, an illness, a therapy, an educational standard, etc.).

Mechanics: Paper should be 8-12 pages, double spaced, 1" margins in Times New Roman or Calibri, 12 pt font, have page numbers and a title. Your name, date, instructor and course should be double-spaced in the top left corner. Paper should be almost free of mechanical errors.