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The idea behind this method is that any case being studied is representative of many similar cases (if not all) and, hence, will make generalisations possible. This method involves the minute study of all the information and data collected regarding the object or case under study. Hence Burgess called this method “ social microscope.” The case study may make use of various techniques such as interviews, questionnaires, schedules, life histories, relevant documents of all kinds and also ‘ participant observation’ for collecting information about the case under study.

This method is essential in obtaining an insight into the problems of the alcoholic, drug addict, the criminal, the juvenile delinquent, the social deviant, or the immigrant. Thomas and Znaniecki’s “ Polish Peasant in Europe and America” - (1922) is a classic work in the field of case study. This method is often criticised by the social statisticians. According to them, this method cannot provide methodologically precise results of a general nature. Still, it could be used as a valuable preliminary approach in order to discover the significant variables that speak of human behaviour.

These variables may lead to the formulation of hypotheses which could be tested by making references to a large number of instances.