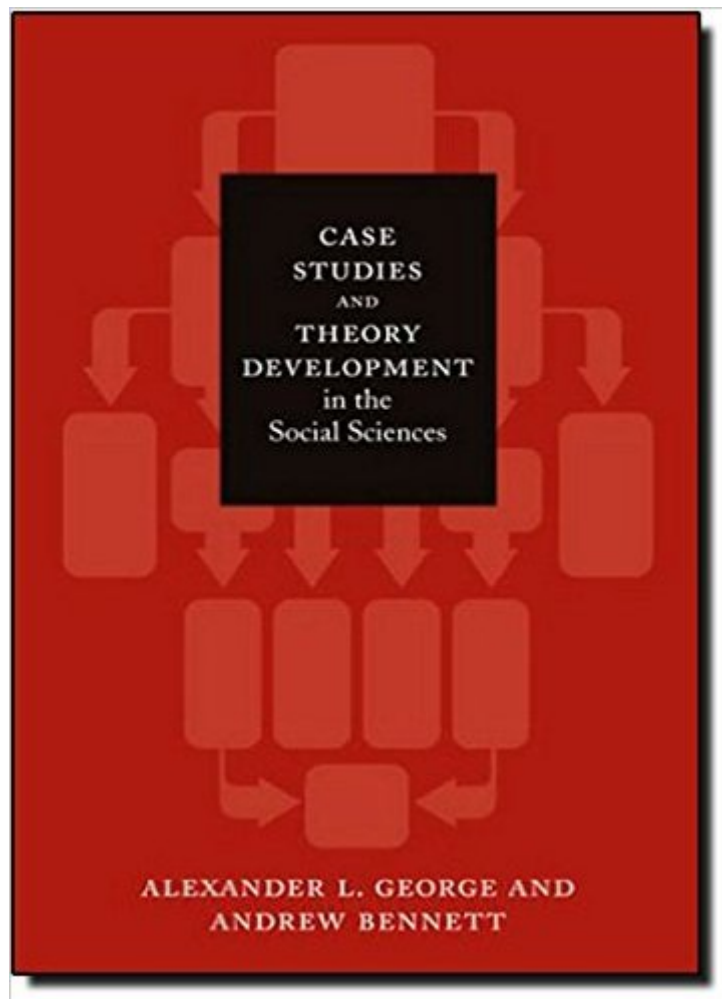


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# Case Studies And Theory Development In The Social Sciences (Belfer Center Studies In International Security)



## Synopsis

The use of case studies to build and test theories in political science and the other social sciences has increased in recent years. Many scholars have argued that the social sciences rely too heavily on quantitative research and formal models and have attempted to develop and refine rigorous methods for using case studies. This text presents a comprehensive analysis of research methods using case studies and examines the place of case studies in social science methodology. It argues that case studies, statistical methods, and formal models are complementary rather than competitive. The book explains how to design case study research that will produce results useful to policymakers and emphasizes the importance of developing policy-relevant theories. It offers three major contributions to case study methodology: an emphasis on the importance of within-case analysis, a detailed discussion of process tracing, and development of the concept of typological theories. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* will be particularly useful to graduate students and scholars in social science methodology and the philosophy of science, as well as to those designing new research projects, and will contribute greatly to the broader debate about scientific methods.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I learned a great deal from the authors' explicit comparison of their views with those of King, Keohane, and Verba (KKV). Indeed, to a great extent, this book reads like an extended dialogue

with KKV. The authors follow the strategy of trying to show that KKV was actually not a unified statement, but rather that Keohane's actual view departs, in significant respects, from what the trio said in their book. One of the strengths of this book is the excellent discussion of the philosophy of the social sciences and how case studies fit into the quest for knowledge about social phenomena. I found it balanced and informative. One shortcoming of the book's discussion of "process tracing," which I think is an innovative way of thinking about dynamic analysis, is that the authors seem unaware of event history analysis. Much of their discussion reads as if they still think of social science research as a successive series of cross-sections on the one hand, or detailed narrative presentations of processes on the other. One of the great advantages of event history analysis, which is now widespread in sociology, is that it gives an investigator the ability to do micro level analyses of the timing, pacing, and rhythm of change which would simply not be possible if we were confined to verbal descriptions. I recommend this book to anyone who wants an alternative to the KKV view of the world and who is also interested in an introduction to how political scientists do case analysis.

I'm a doctoral candidate and was "stuck" trying to figure out how to treat several historical case studies in my dissertation. This book got me going again as it clearly explains case study methodology. Although written from a political science perspective, it's not overly "poly-sci-ish" and is, mercifully, free of jargon. It would be useful for students working in history or sociology, and especially those pursuing an interdisciplinary approach, as well as political science students. I highly recommend this resource.

This book provides many wonderful insights into how to conduct case studies that can withstand methodological criticism from the quantoids. I have used many other texts to build case study strategies, but this one by far was the best. Concepts are made very clear and accessible, which allows for clear application of these ideas.

Alexander George and Andrew Bennett's *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* is a very detailed analysis of case study methods that argues that case studies belong on the same footing as statistical methods and formal models when constructing political science research rather than the separation that currently exists. Having the different methods separate tends to ignore the benefits the individual methods can provide the researcher when conducting their research projects. The only thing that concerns me is the authors concern themselves with

policy-relevant research. While many academics have that hope that their research will prove relevant to Presidents and Prime Ministers, there's certainly plenty of them who question whether policy makers would even read it. With that said, George and Bennett's book is a vital resource for the graduate student embarking on case study research. I mention specifically graduate students because the sometimes heavy and verbose language may make this sleeping medication for undergraduate insomniacs. Because of the depth and completeness the authors give the subject matter, this is not a book to be read once then hidden away in the back of the library, but something that should be put on the desk for reference during those stubborn research papers and dissertation work.

At its core this is an excellent analysis of social science research. This is a well written, comprehensive treatment of the use of case studies. It includes very structured methods for conducting them. It should be required reading for all advanced students in the social sciences including those not intending to use this research method.

My advisor recommended it to me and so I read it, first the individual chapters relating to my methodology and then the book in its entirety on my kindle. It's a must to keep for every researcher to understand the process of research itself.

This book is very helpful if you are pursuing graduate or doctorate work and need to improve your writing and research skills. Very good for people who struggle with literature reviews.

Excellent resource for research using case study. There are many articles written about CBPR but not enough on the case study approach to research.

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