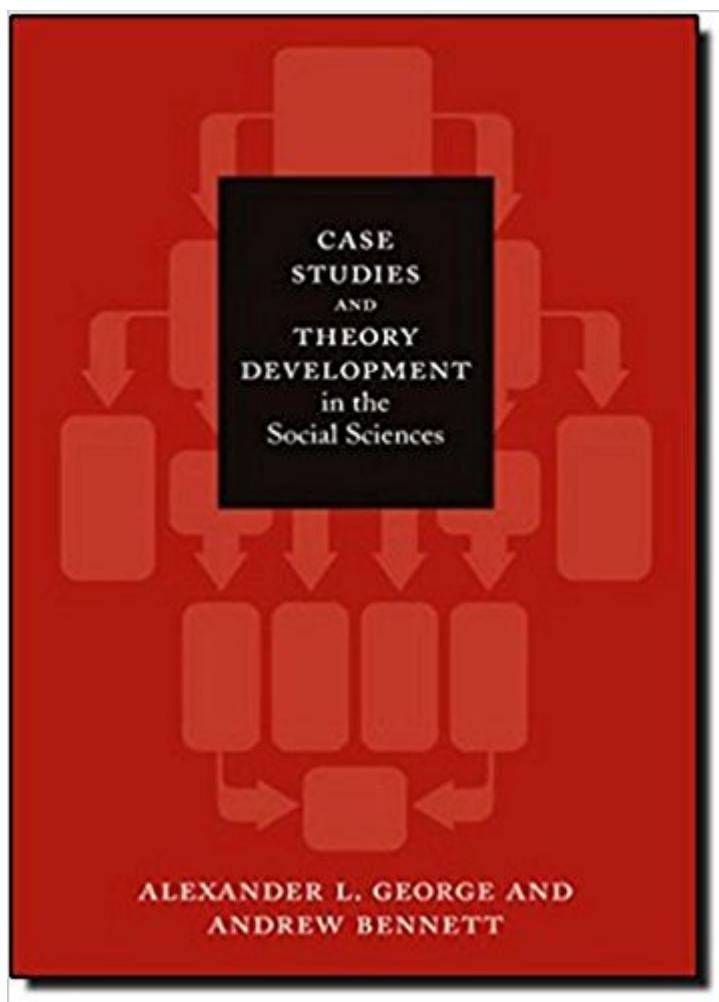


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# Case Studies And Theory Development In The Social Sciences (Belfer Center Studies In International Security)



## **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**

In this book, George and Bennett explain how research methods such as process tracing and comparative case studies are designed, carried out, and used as the basis for theory development

in social science. They provide an invaluable research guide for any scholar interested in the case study approach. But the book is much more than an account of how to do case study research. The authors also offer a sophisticated discussion of the philosophy of science that will be useful to anyone interested in the place of case-study methods in broader debates about social science methodology, and they give a discerning analysis of policy-relevant theory that is sure to draw the attention of a research community increasingly concerned about the social and political relevance of modern social science. In scope, clarity, and erudition, this book sets a new standard not only in the analysis of case study methods, but also in the study of social science methods more broadly.

(David Dessler, Associate Professor of Government, College of William & Mary) This book combines clear and concise instructions on how to do qualitative research with sophisticated but accessible epistemological reasons for that advice. The volume provides step-by-step templates on ways to design research, compare across cases, congruence test and process trace, and use typological theories. This guidance is illustrated with dozens of concrete examples. Almost no other methodology text comes close to matching the authors' top-to-bottom synthesis of philosophy of science and practical advice. (Colin Elman, Executive Director, Consortium on Qualitative Research

Methods, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Arizona State University) This landmark study offers to scholars of all methodological persuasions a philosophically informed, theoretically nuanced, and methodologically detailed treatment of case study analysis. With this book Alexander George and Andrew Bennett help all of us in improving our research, teaching, and disciplinary debates. (Peter J. Katzenstein, Walter S. Carpenter, Jr., Professor of International Studies, Cornell University) Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences makes an indispensable contribution to the growing literature on qualitative methods in the social sciences. It provides a definitive analysis of case study methods and research designs, anchors those methods in contemporary philosophy of science, and argues that case study, statistical, and formal approaches can and should be mutually reinforcing in the development and testing of social theories. (Jack S.

Levy, Board of Governors' Professor, Rutgers University) Today, more and more social scientists recognize the importance of cases in social and political research and are looking for new ways to make their research more case oriented. George and Bennett show how in this important new work.

The beauty of their approach is their careful integration of theory and method and their conviction that the pursuit of empirical knowledge is profoundly theory dependent. (Charles Ragin, Professor of Sociology, University of Arizona) Andrew Bennett and Alexander George have written an immensely helpful practical guide to the case method. It offers sharp insight on scientific inference and very useful how-to guidance on doing case studies. Graduate students in social science: don't leave

home without it! (Stephen Van Evera, Professor of Political Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology)The history of social science shows that well-designed case studies can be both a fertile source of new theories and a powerful tool for testing them. Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences raises our understanding of case study methodology to a new level of rigor and sophistication. George and Bennett provide a careful analysis of the virtues and pitfalls of comparative case study research and offer valuable advice for any scholar engaged in qualitative research. The more widely this book is read, the better future social science will be.

(Stephen M. Walt, Robert and RenÃƒÂ©e Belfer Professor of International Affairs, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University)This is an extraordinarily valuable book -- a guide written with the practitioner in mind, very sophisticated in its approach to the subject, but loaded with practical advice. George and Bennett show how systematic, rigorous, and above all meaningful case study work is to be done. This is the sort of book scholars -- and not just graduate students -- will want to come back to over and over again. (Marc Trachtenberg, Professor of Political Science, University of California, Los Angeles)

Alexander L. George was Graham H. Stuart Professor of Political Science Emeritus at Stanford University and the author or coauthor of many books, most recently *Presidential Personality and Performance* (1998). Andrew Bennett is Associate Professor of Government at Georgetown University and the author of *Condemned to Repetition? The Rise, Fall, and Reprise of Soviet-Russian Military Interventionism, 1973-1996* (MIT Press, 1999).

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.

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.

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.

I am half way through the book and I am already confident with the Case Study reviews in my current field of study.

One of the top to case study works that I have on the shelf.

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.

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