

Evidence for Use: The Role of Case Studies in Political Science Research

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Abstract

In its most recent form, the debate about the relationship between quantitative and qualitative methodology in political science has been shaped by the publication of *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* by Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba in 1994 (hereafter DSI). The focus of this debate has been case study research. DSI advocates that qualitative research, particularly case study research, be modeled on the template of quantitative research. The authors claim that all research has the same logic of inquiry and that this is most clearly exemplified in quantitative work. I argue that the underlying philosophy of science of DSI is monistic and positivistic in ways not productive for understanding various different purposes that political science knowledge may have. Different methodologies have different strengths and so are suited to different ends. I examine this in relation to Julian Reiss's discussion of different concepts of causality and argue that case study research is suited to understanding causal mechanisms in ways that make such research better suited to inform policy decisions. I finish with an example using David Fearon's 2006 Congressional Testimony on Iraq.

Keywords: political science, case studies, causality

Conferences and Volumes: [\[2009\] SPSP 2009: Society for Philosophy of Science in Practice \(Minnesota, June 18-20, 2009\)](#)

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