

The Case for Case Studies

This book seeks to narrow two gaps: first, between the widespread use of case studies and their frequently “loose” methodological moorings; and second, between the scholarly community advancing methodological frontiers in case study research and the users of case studies in development policy and practice. It draws on the contributors’ collective experience at this nexus, but the underlying issues are more broadly relevant to case study researchers and practitioners in all fields. How does one prepare a rigorous case study? When can causal inferences reasonably be drawn from a single case? When and how can policy-makers reasonably presume that a demonstrably successful intervention in one context might generate similarly impressive outcomes elsewhere, or if massively “scaled up”? No matter their different starting points – disciplinary base, epistemological orientation, sectoral specialization, or practical concerns – readers will find issues of significance for their own field, and others across the social sciences. This title is also available Open Access.

Jennifer Widner is Professor of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University and Director of Innovations for Successful Societies. Her research focuses on government performance, democratization, and constitutional design. Much of her work uses qualitative process-tracing case studies focused on institutional change, implementation, and service delivery.

Michael Woolcock is Lead Social Scientist with the World Bank’s Development Research Group, and an Adjunct Lecturer in Public Policy at Harvard Kennedy School. He is the coauthor of *Contesting Development: Participatory Projects and Local Conflict Dynamics in Indonesia* (2011) and *Building State Capability: Evidence, Analysis, Action* (2017).

Daniel Ortega Nieto is a Senior Public Sector Specialist at The World Bank. He assisted the Global Delivery Initiative and led a team developing DeCODE, an evidence-based system that helps anticipate delivery challenges. He was an advisor to the Mexican Government and holds degrees from the LSE and Georgetown University.

Strategies for Social Inquiry

Editors

Colin Elman, *Maxwell School of Syracuse University*

John Gerring, *Boston University*

James Mahoney, *Northwestern University*

Editorial Board

Bear Braumoeller, David Collier, Francesco Guala, Peter Hedström, Theodore Hopf, Uskali Maki, Rose McDermott, Charles Ragin, Theda Skocpol, Peter Spiegler, David Waldner, Lisa Wedeen, Christopher Winship

This book series presents texts on a wide range of issues bearing upon the practice of social inquiry. Strategies are construed broadly to embrace the full spectrum of approaches to analysis, as well as relevant issues in philosophy of social science.

Published Titles

Colin Elman, John Gerring and James Mahoney, *The Production of Knowledge: Enhancing Progress in Social Science*

John Boswell, Jack Corbett and R. A. W. Rhodes, *The Art and Craft of Comparison*

John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework, 2nd edition*

Michael Coppedge, *Democratization and Research Methods*

Thad Dunning, *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences: A Design-Based Approach*

Carsten Q. Schneider and Claudius Wagemann, *Set-Theoretic Methods for the Social Sciences: A Guide to Qualitative Comparative Analysis*

Nicholas Weller and Jeb Barnes, *Finding Pathways: Mixed-Method Research for Studying Causal Mechanisms*

Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel, *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*

Diana Kapiszewski, Lauren M. MacLean and Benjamin L. Read, *Field Research in Political Science: Practices and Principles*

Peter Spiegler, *Behind the Model: A Constructive Critique of Economic Modeling*

James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen, *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis*

Jason Seawright, *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools*

John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices, 2nd edition*

The Case for Case Studies

Methods and Applications in International Development

Edited by

Jennifer Widner

Department of Politics, Princeton University

Michael Woolcock

Development Research Group, World Bank

Daniel Ortega Nieto

Governance Global Practice, World Bank



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108427272

DOI: [10.1017/9781108688253](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108688253)

© 2022 International Bank for Reconstruction and development/The World Bank

This work is in copyright. It is subject to statutory exceptions and to the provisions of relevant licensing agreements; with the exception of the Creative Commons version the link for which is provided below, no reproduction of any part of this work may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

An online version of this work is published at doi.org/10.1017/9781108688253 under a Creative Commons Open Access license CC BY 3.0 IGO

All versions of this work may contain content reproduced under license from third parties.

Permission to reproduce this third-party content must be obtained from these third parties directly.

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI [10.1017/9781108688253](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108688253)

First published 2022

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Widner, Jennifer A., editor.

Title: The case for case studies : methods and applications in international development / edited by Jennifer Widner, Michael Woolcock, Daniel Ortega Nieto.

Description: New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2022. | Series: Strategies for social inquiry | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021049586 (print) | LCCN 2021049587 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108427272 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108688253 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Social sciences – Methodology. | Social sciences – Case studies.

Classification: LCC H61 .C273 2022 (print) | LCC H61 (ebook) | DDC 300.72–dc23/eng/20220105

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021049586>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021049587>

ISBN 978-1-108-42727-2 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-44798-0 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.