



Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide

By Gary Goertz

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Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide By Gary Goertz

Concepts lie at the core of social science theory and methodology. They provide substance to theories; they form the basis of measurement; they influence the selection of cases. *Social Science Concepts: A Users Guide* explores alternative means of concept construction and their impact on the role of concepts in measurement, case selection, and theories.

While there exists a plethora of books on measurement, scaling, and the like, there are virtually no books devoted to the construction and analysis of concepts and their role in the research enterprise. *Social Science Concepts: A Users Guide* provides detailed and practical advice on the construction and use of social science concepts; a Web site provides classroom exercises.

It uses a wide range of examples from political science and sociology such as revolution, welfare state, international disputes and war, and democracy to illustrate the theoretical and practical issues of concept construction and use. It explores the means of constructing complex, multilevel, and multidimensional concepts. In particular, it examines the classic necessary and sufficient condition approach to concept building and contrasts it with the family resemblance approach. The consequences of valid concept construction are explored in both qualitative and quantitative analyses.

Social Science Concepts: A Users Guide will prove an indispensable guide for graduate students and scholars in the social sciences. More broadly, it will appeal to scholars in any field who wish to think more carefully about the concepts used to create theories and research designs.

For Course Use:

Social Science Concepts: A Users Guide has been written with classroom use in mind. Many of the chapters have been successfully taught at the Annual Training Institute on Qualitative Research Methods which is sponsored by the Consortium on Qualitative Research Methods. Feedback from those experiences has been incorporated into the text. Each chapter provides useful, practical, and detailed advice on how to construct, evaluate, and use concepts. To make the volume more useful, an extensive set of classroom exercises is available from the author's Web page at http://www.u.arizona.edu/~ggoertz/social_science_concepts.html.

These include questions about prominent published work on concepts, measures, and case selection; in addition there are logic exercises and questions regarding large-N applications.

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Editorial Review

Review

Winner of the 2007 Giovanni Sartori Book Award

"This book will primarily appeal to the social science methodologist...the analysis of concept formation is interesting [and] it clearly contributes to the methodological debate."--**Timothy J. White, *European Legacy***

From the Back Cover

"Gary Goertz is at the forefront of a number of important methodological debates. He is one of the very few scholars who regularly crosses the boundary between quants and quals, and this book reflects his strength in both areas."--**John Gerring, Boston University**

"Goertz reaffirms with great success a foundational idea established more than three decades ago by Giovanni Sartori: concept analysis is an indispensable component of social science methodology, and we neglect it at our peril."--**David Collier, University of California, Berkeley**

"One of the greatest challenges facing the social sciences today is the task of cultivating a closer connection between theoretical concepts and empirical analysis. In this book, Gary Goertz lays the foundation for a new approach to social scientific concepts and demonstrates the many benefits that follow from the thoughtful articulation of concepts in social research."--**Charles Ragin, University of Arizona at Tucson, author of *Fuzzy-Set Social Science***

About the Author

Gary Goertz is Professor of Political Science at the University of Arizona. He is the author of "Contexts of International Politics and International Norms" and "Decision Making: A Punctuated Equilibrium Model", and the coauthor of "War and Peace in International Rivalry".

Users Review

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