# Finding Pathways

Social scientists have identified a need to move beyond the analysis of cor-relation among variables to the study of causal mechanisms that link them. Nicholas Weller and Jeb Barnes propose that a solution lies in "pathway analysis": the use of case studies to explore the causal links between related variables. This book focuses on how the small-$N$ component of multi-method research can meaningfully contribute and add value to the study of causal mechanisms. The authors present both an extended rationale for the unique role that case studies can play in causal mechanism research, and a detailed view of the types of knowledge that case studies should try to generate and how to leverage existing large-$N$ data to guide the case selection process. The authors explain how to use their approach both to select cases and to provide context on previously studied cases.

**Nicholas Weller** is Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Rela-tions at the University of Southern California.

**Jeb Barnes** is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Southern California.

## Strategies for Social Inquiry

Finding Pathways: Mixed-Method Research for Studying
Causal Mechanisms

### 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 new 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

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*

### Forthcoming titles

Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel, *Process Tracing in the Social Sciences:
    From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*
Diana Kapiszewski, Lauren M. MacLean and Benjamin L. Read, *Field Research
    in Political Science: Practices and Principles*
Jason Seawright, *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and
    Quantitative Tools*
Peter Spiegler, *A Constructive Critique of Economic Modeling*

# Finding Pathways

## Mixed-Method Research for Studying Causal Mechanisms

### Nicholas Weller

Department of Political Science and School of International Relations
University of Southern California

### Jeb Barnes

Department of Political Science
University of Southern California

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

## CAMBRIDGE
### UNIVERSITY PRESS

# Contents

# Figures

# Tables

# Acknowledgments

This project began as a conversation in Nick's office. We were advising a number of graduate students who planned to combine qualitative and quantitative research in their dissertations. The students wanted to use various types of large-$N$ analyses to establish associations between variables and then use case studies to investigate the processes that connected these variables. The idea sounded promising, but the details of how to use multi-method research to probe the links between variables were somewhat vague. At the time, we thought that it might be fun and useful to write a short article on this subject. We soon realized, however, that this topic could not be contained in a single article, and we began the journey of writing a book on what has proven to be an enormously complex subject.

This journey has been supported by a group of wonderful scholars and colleagues. It is our pleasure to thank them for all of their support, insights, and patience, as well as to absolve them of any mistakes that remain in the final version of this work. First, at Cambridge University Press, we would like to thank our editor, John Haslam, his assistant, Carrie Parkinson, and the anonymous reviewers, whose comments greatly improved the manuscript. A special debt is owed to the acquisition editors for the series on Strategies for Social Inquiry, Colin Elman, Jim Mahoney, and especially John Gerring. These three not only advocated for the book but also provided us invaluable opportunities to participate in the research workshop at the Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research at the Maxwell School of Public Policy at Syracuse University. We also thank Joanna North and Lila Stromer for their copyediting assistance.

ix     **Acknowledgments**

Second, many scholars were extremely generous in responding to earlier drafts and offering insights. We are especially grateful to Adam Glynn, who commented on several iterations of conference papers, Jake Bowers, Diana Kapiszewski, and Gerry Munck, who served as discussants at a workshop on the manuscript, and Jane Junn, who tirelessly read drafts at various stages of the project. All of these fine scholars went above and beyond the call of duty and pushed us to produce a much better book. If there was an All Star team for colleagues, they would be in the starting lineup. We also thank our colleagues at the University of Southern California who attended the workshop on the manuscript, including Tony Bertelli, Dennis Chong, Ann Crigler, Ben Graham, Christian Grose, Diana O'Brien, Brian Rathbun, and Jeffrey Sellers. Their participation and comments were greatly appreciated. We are grateful to Justin Berry and Mariano Bertucci for their research assistance.

Third, we would like to thank the Center for International Studies at USC (CIS), its director, Patrick James, and Indira Persad. At a critical point in the process – after the basic ideas for the book had started to take shape but before they were set in stone – we wanted to convene a group of scholars to comment on the manuscript. CIS generously provided funding and the administrative support for this workshop, which turned out to be critical in the project's development. We cannot thank them enough.

Finally, we would like to thank our cherished families, whose kindness, patience, and support allowed us to make this journey in the first place. We dedicate this book to them.