

Finding Pathways

Social scientists have identified a need to move beyond the analysis of correlation 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.

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Finding Pathways: Mixed-Method Research for Studying Causal Mechanisms

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Mixed-Method Research for Studying
Causal Mechanisms

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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.

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