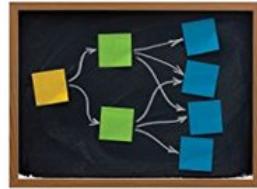# Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines

Derek Beach , Rasmus Brun Pedersen

Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines

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Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines Derek Beach , Rasmus Brun Pedersen Process-tracing in social science is a method for studying causal mechanisms linking causes with outcomes. This enables the researcher to make strong inferences about how a cause (or set of causes) contributes to producing an outcome. Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen introduce a refined definition of process-tracing, differentiating it into three distinct variants and explaining the applications and limitations of each. The authors develop the underlying logic of process-tracing, including how one should understand causal mechanisms and how Bayesian logic enables strong within-case inferences. They provide instructions for identifying the variant of process-tracing most appropriate for the research question at hand and a set of guidelines for each stage of the research process.

Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines Details

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Miroslav Nem?ok says

Beach and Pedersen presented definitely a valuable introduction into process-tracing which could be especially useful for undergraduate and graduate students. However, that's exactly the biggest downside. Even though the explanations are easy to follow and understandable, the book pays insufficient attention to (a) practical aspects related to data collection issues and building parsimonious mechanisms between X -> Y, and (b) tests how also inexperienced researchers implementing the method for the first time could examine whether their resulting product is not too subjective and meets the criteria to be convincingly inferable towards the selected case(s).

Additionally, in the last chapter, Beach and Pedersen try to present the process-tracing method in wider context of multi-method research designs, however, they are building more walls than proposing ides for future integration of process-tracing among research methods. In their view, other research methods could be useful during case selection procedures for a process-tracing study, but between the lines you can feel that they are not very positive about process-tracing outcomes showing directions for other methods too. I find this unnecessary and useless. Authors' perception could be nicely described by analogy from p. 158: "Using an analogy to eating a pizza, in a frequentist analysis, we would only taste the crust on each side, whereas a process-tracing study involves eating both crusts and all of the stuff in between." which I hope is included only as a joke to test reader's attention at the end of the book, not as a serious argument supporting implementation of process-tracing methods.

Keith says

Superb guide on using process teaching in social science research.