IPSA Multi-Methods: Lab 3

Due on Third Day

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Problem 1

Focus Group

Join a group of about 4 other students. Come up with (a) a causal question, (b) a main hypothesis for which students in this class are a part of the relevant population and a focus group could be a source of potentially useful causal process observations, and (c) a set of plausible alternative hypotheses. Think about possible implications of each hypothesis and devise questions and activities for your focus group to test at least some of those implications.

Plan a focus group, preparing a list of questions, topics, or tasks that have a good chance of producing relevant causal-process observations. List these out explicitly, and explain your reasoning. Pair up with another group and carry out your focus group plan. Return the favor by also serving as a focus group for them.

Now, with your group, carry out process tracing. Did the focus group produce evidence that fits your theory but is hard to explain given other theories, or not? Alternatively, did you discover ideas for new theories that you did not initially expect?

How could a survey be most helpful in expanding on what you have learned?

Problem 2

Process Tracing Exercises

Process tracing is a pivotal methodology for multi-method research, and David Collier has developed a wonderful set of exercises for refining your understanding of process tracing. They are available at:

`http://polisci.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/people/u3827/Teaching%20Process%20Tracing.pdf`

Please complete at least the questions about Fenno, Skocpol et al, and Weaver, although any others you have time to consider will also be worthwhile.

Problem 3

Analyze a Case Study

Choose a published qualitative/case study analysis on a topic that interests you, and identify the elements of that case study that contribute to causal inference. After specifying the central causal hypothesis or hypotheses, please determine which components, if any, of the research design play each of the following roles.

- Help identify counterfactuals

- Carry out CPO tests

- Refine measurement

- Analyze causal flows

- Discover new variables

Problem 4

Formalize a Case Study

Our discussion of process tracing has drawn on Bayesian ideas, but has not gone all the way toward full formal Bayesian math. Would it be helpful for multi-method research if qualitative scholars fully formalized their research as Bayesian statistical problems, or would that get in the way of the qualitative scholarship?

Try formalizing the case study that you analyzed in the previous problem using qualitative Bayesianism along the lines discussed by Fairfield and collaborators.