

Six Causal Patterns



LINEAR CAUSALITY

- Cause precedes effect in a sequential pattern
- Direct link between cause and effect
- Has a clear beginning and a clear end
- It is unidirectional
- One cause and one effect; additional causes or effects may turn this pattern into domino or mutual causality

Can you think of an example?



DOMINO CAUSALITY

- Sequential unfolding of effects over time
- An extended linear pattern that results in direct and indirect effects
- •An effect can become a cause
- •Typically has a clear beginning and a clear ending
- •Can be branching where there is more than one effect of a cause (and these may go on to have multiple effects and so on)
- Branching forms can be traced back to "stem" causes
- Anticipating outcomes involves deciding how far to trace effects
- Short-sightedness can lead to unintended effects

Can you think of an example?



CYCLIC CAUSALITY

- •One thing impacts another which in turn impacts the first thing (or alternatively impacts something else which then impacts something else and so on, but eventually impacts the first thing again)
- Involves a repeating pattern
- It is typically sequential but simultaneous forms exist
- Typically no clear beginning or ending (Sometimes you can look back in time to a beginning but often that results in the classic "which came first, the chicken or the egg? problem")

Can you think of an example?





SPIRALING CAUSALITY

- One thing impacts another which in turn impacts the first thing (or alternatively impacts something else which then impacts something else and so on, but eventually impacts the first thing) with amplification or de-amplification of effects
- A cause can be a effect and vice versa
- Involves feedback loops
- It is sequential as each event is a reaction to the one before it
- •May not be a discernable beginning or ending (unless the causes that sustain the cycle stop)
- It is difficult to anticipate outcomes of later feedback loops during earlier feedback loops

Can you think of an example?



RELATIONAL CAUSALITY

- The relationship between two variables accounts for an outcome
- It often involves two variables in comparison to each other
- Typically a relationship of balance or imbalance, equivalence or differentials
- If one thing changes, so does the relationship, therefore so does the outcome
- If two things change but keep the same relationship, the outcome doesn't change

Can you think of an example?



MUTUAL CAUSALITY

- •Two things impact each other
- The impact can be positive for both, negative for both, or positive for one and negative for the other
- The causes and effects are often simultaneous, but can be sequential
- •May be event-based or may be a relationship over time (such as the moss and the algae in lichen
- Typically it is one event, relationship, or process (differentiating it from cyclic causality)

Can you think of an example?