

COMPASSS Newsletter 51

March 2024

AQCA2024 at Northwestern University: QCA Returns Home

Claude Robinson, Peer Fiss and Gary Goertz (AQCA2024 Organizing Committee)

James Mahoney (AQCA2024 Site Coordinator)

Published in 1987, *The Comparative Method* introduced QCA to the world. But, in fact, it was three years prior in 1984 that Charles Ragin, Susan Mayer and Kriss Drass published its first application. “Assessing Discrimination: A Boolean Approach” (*American Sociological Review* 49) introduces truth table analysis as a “complement” and “counterbalance” to the “radically analytic statistical approach.”

It is fitting, then, that 40 years later, the *3rd Annual QCA Conference of the Americas (AQCA2024)* will be held at Northwestern University, where Ragin first developed and published the methodology that brings us together. Building on the success of our two prior conferences, AQCA2024 will again gather researchers and methodologists from around the world to present and



Northwestern University

receive feedback on their current research projects, share theoretical and methodological developments, and discuss new directions in configurational-comparative research practices. We look forward to seeing old friends and colleagues and making new ones. AQCA is a friendly and welcoming community and whether you're new to QCA or a seasoned practitioner, we hope that you'll join us in person or online.

We will have three plenary sessions: a keynote address by Benoît Rihoux, a forum on “Large-N Qualitative Analysis” with Gary Goertz, and a conversation with Charles Ragin about the past, present and future of QCA. The day before the conference, we will offer two day-long training sessions. An introductory/refresher course taught by Claude Robinson and Roel Rutten and an advanced course on the QCA R package, taught by its author, Adrian Duşa. In addition, we have two dozen paper presentations, our plenary poster session (described elsewhere in this newsletter) and ample opportunities for socializing during coffee breaks, happy hours and meals.

AQCA2024 begins on Wednesday, March 20! Registration is still available. For complete details, please visit <https://compasss.org/aqca/>.

AQCA's Plenary Poster Session
Claude Robinson, Gary Goertz and Peer Fiss

At some conferences and in some disciplines, poster presentations are considered less valuable and of lower prestige than paper presentations. This is not the case at the *QCA Conference of the Americas (AQCA)*, which is a decidedly cross-discipline conference dedicated to nurturing the growing QCA community and supporting those using and developing the method.

The goal of AQCA's program committee is to (a) identify valuable empirical, theoretical and methodological proposals that will advance the configurational-comparative paradigm and then (b) create a diverse and balanced program that will (c) provide presenters with useful, critical feedback on their work. We decide whether to assign proposals to a parallel paper session or the plenary poster session based upon fulfilling these criteria, while seeking to ensure a healthy mix of senior and junior scholars in both modalities. For example, a theoretically-heavy presentation may benefit from the collaborative discussion that a parallel paper session affords while complex empirical results may be better conveyed via a poster. We will also assign as posters unique and novel projects that we wish to be visible to the wider audience offered by the plenary poster session.

The concept of holding a plenary poster session was brought to us by Gary Goertz and adopted from the annual Peace Studies Conference organized by the Peace Science Society (International). As a longtime participant of that conference, Gary observed that devoting a specific session to poster presentations increased participation and improved the feedback that presenters received, better integrating the posters into the rest of the conference and showcasing their contributions.

At AQCA, we value poster presentations equally to paper presentations. Reflecting this commitment, posters are displayed throughout the conference, allowing QCA experts ample opportunity to review them and provide critical feedback. The plenary poster session is then held as the culminating event of the conference. Conference participants come together to celebrate the conference and the continuing development of QCA by discussing, reviewing and debating each other's work.

International QCA Workshops, Antwerp 2023
Bart Cambré, Antwerp School of Management

After ten years of a wonderful (but expensive) stay in Zürich, the yearly International QCA Workshops moved to Antwerp in December 2023, co-hosted by UCL (Benoît Rihoux) and AMS/UA (Bart Cambré). The workshops started with a PDW, in which 50 early stage researchers presented their QCA related research and received feedback from experts. The format was round tables, a keynote by Carsten Schneider, an official and intriguing debate and plenty of informal debates around coffee machines and evening beers.

The PDW was followed by the Expert Workshop, in which 35 experts took a deep dive into more methodological or philosophical topics, to further develop the approach and to tackle some technical and conceptual issues. What about a presentation by Peer Fiss & Charles Ragin on 'QCA's truth table analysis versus statistical interaction', or Sho Niikawa and Andreas Corcaci on 'A time differencing configurational analysis', or Reem El Sherif and Benoît Rihoux on 'QCA in systematic mixed methods literature reviews'. And everybody (including Martin) is still figuring out what Martin Schneider introduced in his presentation about 'The Banzhaf index and the explanatory power of INUS conditions'.

Lucky for most participants, the future of QCA was taken to new heights in a cozy restaurant and above all in a blues bar. As for next year, the QCA workshops will most probably move to Tilburg University in The Netherlands. Be prepared for the same high level of feedback and discussions, but also for beer that tastes like water, chocolates that, if any good, are imported from Belgium, and restaurants that, if we are lucky, serve food instead of you pulling it out of a wall...

International QCA Paper Development Workshop 2023, Best Paper Awards
anuel Fischer, Julia Leib, Johannes Meuer, Christoph Niessen & Christian Rupietta
aper Awards Committee

Best Paper: Elie Saad (Umeå School of Business), Medhanie Gaim (Umeå School of Business), and Sujith Nair (BI Norwegian Business School), "From Pitch to Partnership: Startup Engagement Strategies for Securing Corporate Interest in Collaboration."

1st Runner-Up: Niklas Hagenow (TUM School of Management), "Winning the Climate Race: A Configurational Analysis of Inventor Teams Creating Radical Clean Energy Innovations."

2nd Runner-Up: Alejandro Ciordia (Autonomous University of Barcelona), Sophie de Lede (Osnabrück University), Miranda J. Lubbers (Autonomous University of Barcelona), and Maarten van Zalk (Osnabrück University), "Talking Climate, Taking Action: On the Interplay of Psychological and Interpersonal Conditions Leading Climate-Concerned Citizens to Collective Action."



Above: *The 2023 International QCA Paper Development Workshop.*

Below: *The 2023 QCA Experts Workshop.* This is what 30K+ citations on QCA looks like (plus NCA, CNA, MDSO/MSDO, LNQA and whatever other acronyms this community will develop).





Above: You can recognize (or not, if you only cite them) Peer Fiss (first left) and Claude Robinson (third at the left) being extremely happy with the food they serve in a local basement. Below: You can see how Carsten Schneider and Nena Oana are discussing the next version of R-packages to a local moron (actually to three Belgians), if they still remember what was said here ...
 Inset: Dutch “haute” cuisine.



20 Years of COMPASSS: Discover the 'secret garden' of its creation and transformation
Benoît Rihoux, UCLouvain & MethodsNET

Introduction

COMPASSS was launched back in early 2003 – so: it's been close to 21 years already! That's a very suitable occasion to take a look back and bring you into the 'secret garden' of COMPASSS: how and why it was launched, and how it evolved. And so: I took a nostalgic dive in my archives, back into the previous Century, as indeed the process that led to COMPASSS was initiated in 1997. I am afraid some of the lines below might read as quite self-referential and altogether quite immodest... but indeed it is a fact that the launch of COMPASSS back in 2003 was quite largely due to my enduring 'push,' and that I have done most of the lead work for quite a number of years – before Alrik (Thiem) came in support for a couple of years and before my fellow colleague Claude (Rubinson) kindly took over already 9 years ago. Over those 20+ years I have remained as a sort of 'gentle animator' (and formal Chair and convenor) of the whole thing... what an adventure this has been!

1. Planting the first seeds (1997-2000)

The first seeds of COMPASSS were planted in 1997. Looking back: this year was a turning point in my scholarly itinerary, for two reasons: I began to use e-mails(!), and my PhD supervisor and mentor, André-Paul Frogner, recommended that I read a book by a certain Charles Ragin, titled 'The Comparative Method'! Indeed I was stuck in my PhD, mid-way in the process with 14 parallel case studies over 15+years and I just had no clue on how to conduct some sort of systematic comparison. And so: Charles' seminal book became the very first QCA reference in my bibliography.

As I worked like crazy on my PhD with a firm submission deadline in September 1999, the focus of my dissertation gradually shifted from the substantive topic (the transformation of Green party organizations in Western Europe) to QCA itself. Back then in the 'heroic years', there were no detailed manuals, no textbooks, no resource websites, one just had to muddle through with the very first QCA software ("QCA1" and "QCA2", under a DOS environment, developed by the late Kriss Drass, also one of the very first to (co-)author QCA empirical applications). So: I dived quite deeply into the nuts and bolts of QCA, and eventually my PhD dissertation was sort of hybrid: quite a chunk of it was about QCA itself, on documenting the whole QCA process, and also on trying to push the method further – especially via a protocol to process the 'contradictory simplifying assumptions' in a more systematic fashion. Let's say, a bit immodestly: probably the very first attempt towards the QCA 'robustness tests' that have by now been developed by others.

Important to stress: I couldn't have coped with QCA without the friendly support and 1 to 1 training – with an audio recorder and physical audio tapes, this was before the digital age! – provided by Gisèle De Meur (ULB – Free University of Brussels), a mathematician having opening up to social sciences, herself a methods developer (MSDO-MDSO) and also one of the very first QCA users along with fellow colleague Dirk Berg-Schlösser from Marburg, Germany; both of them were already in touch with Charles (Ragin), what a strike of luck! Eventually Charles was kind enough to meet me in-person (no Zoom in these old times!) at the 1999 APSA Conference in Atlanta and provide some key recommendations as I was putting the last touches to the 600(!)-pager dissertation with about 250 of them around the whole QCA thing...

As part of my PhD, I also set out to collect all publications on QCA: both methods pieces and applied pieces. So: when I submitted the PhD I had about 300 references in my bibliographical database (still a simple MS Word file). I then professionalized this a bit from 2000 onwards by entering these in a bibliographical software. In the meantime I had defended my PhD in early 2000 and was lucky enough to immediately get a tenure-track assistant professorship position at my home university, the UCLouvain (Belgium)... which I have kept as a hub ever since.

2. Muddling through towards the COMPASSS concept and launch (2001-2003)

In 2000, I obtained funding to hire my very first PhD student, Sakura Yamasaki, and QCA also stood at the heart of her project; it must have seduced the granting authority, as the process was quite competitive. My hunch is that, in fact, QCA must have appeared as really alien and perhaps even weird, but it must have at least *_looked_* original and sharp! In 2000-2001, I also began to collaborate with Gisèle De Meur, specifically on QCA, and this led to the very first QCA textbook, published in French, though (2002); in the meantime I had also published a monograph of my PhD dissertation with a French publisher (2001), with one single chapter summarizing the whole QCA side of things. Eventually the book was quite well-cited.

In the meantime, Sakura and I had begun to maintain and further complement a sort of a common QCA bibliography. In order to share this bibliography, I launched the very first web site in November 2001, as a sub-page in the UCLouvain www domain, in tandem with Sakura who did most of the back office work. It was labelled as “Comparative methods, Small N, Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Fuzzy-sets (fs/QCA) international resource site”—so: not yet COMPASSS. Importantly, Charles accepted to endorse it, and jointly signed the core messages we were sending out. We also began to compile and further expand a database of email addresses, opened up a sort of one-way emailing list and began to advertise some training events especially. And we linked the page to two other developing sites coordinated by Charles and Dirk, respectively.

I also began, as early as in the summer of 2002, to co-teach a full one-week PhD-level QCA in Lille, France, with Gisèle. This led to further invitations to teach, in Brussels and, surprisingly perhaps, in Kaunas, Lithuania. But this was already in 2003, let's not skip the stages. In the meantime, in this whole 2000-2002 period, because of this QCA focus, I began to link up with other, mostly early career, researchers who shared that interest in QCA, especially young Belgian researchers Axel Marx (sociology) and Peter Bursens (European politics). Together with Gisèle, Dirk, Sakura and these fellow colleagues, we began to constitute a sort of small network.

I took the initiative to formalize this still very informal network, via a first confidential memo in October 2002, in which I proposed to set up a joint UCLouvain-KU Leuven (two leading Belgian universities) “*COMparative Methodological Pool?? [or Pole of excellence??] for the Advancement of Small-N Studies*” – COMPASS. Note: with 2 “S” only. It was meant to be launched as an “*interdisciplinary Centre?? [or Network??] of academics, researchers and practitioners who share a common interest in theoretical, methodological and practical advancements in the field of Small N studies*”. The group also expanded to Lasse Cronqvist, back then PhD student of Dirk's (and programmer of some first QCA stuff; he pursued later as programmer for the Tosmana software & was joint inventor of multi-value QCA with Dirk – but again I am jumping years, it must be old age!). We held further meetings on how to further disseminate QCA, sharing our thoughts and

state of progress with Charles, and also began to establish some first contacts in Japan via Nobuo Kanomata.

This wasn't yet COMPASSS with 3 "S". We held some further meetings in the first months of 2003, which I chaired and minuted, and we eventually decided to attempt to launch the (future) more formalized network as a joint initiative of four Belgian universities: UCLouvain, KULeuven, ULB and University of Antwerp. We did set the full label, though (it still stands today), in January 2003: "*COMParative methods for the Advancement of Systematic cross-case analysis and Small-N studies*". And then we went on to purchase a "compass.org" domain name... but it was already taken by a U.S.-based evangelical organization... (indeed also an advocacy network, but of another nature!), who had bought the domain name just a couple of weeks beforehand – and so we simply decided to add a third "S" (for "Studies"), as simple as that! Call it divine providence if you wish. We then seized the window of opportunity of the 2nd ECPR General Conference, which was hosted by Dirk in September 2003, to hold a COMPASSS launch event.

The scholarly exchanges were very rich, both in Louvain-la-Neuve (at the UCLouvain) and in Marburg at which several QCA-related sessions including one roundtable were held. This also occurred in parallel with me launching an ECPR Standing Group on Political Methodology together with two other colleagues (Bernhard Kittel and Jonathon Moses) via which I also pushed the QCA and 'systematic case-based comparison' agendas. Two years later, in 2005-2006, this pulled me into quite a large enterprise as joint Academic Convenor: the ECPR Summer School that I jointly steered from 2006 to 2021 – but that's another story!

3. Running COMPASSS 1.0 (2003-2015)

Beyond the management team, i.e. mostly Sakura and I and with a support of a few close peers such as Axel Marx, we established a quite broad Advisory Board. From late 2003 onwards, the web site became more comprehensive and gradually enriched further, but was still manually updated, including the bibliography via careful copy-pastes from the ProCite (then EndNote) database. From late 2003 onwards we also began to organize, co-organize or endorse multiple seminars and short workshops especially in Belgium and in Switzerland, which were in general well-attended with participants from diverse social sciences. More importantly probably, we provided global dissemination of information about events, publications etc., via quite regular Newsletters every two months or so – here an illustration with the nr10 Newsletter in July 2005:

However the focus of COMPASSS remained mostly placed on disseminating information, which was also a pragmatic choice as we continued to operate on a voluntary basis and as our HR capacity was quite stretched (it still is today!), even though we received very welcome support from Alrik Thiem (from ca. 2012 to 2015) who provided a first, much needed full upgrade of the website's layout, navigation etc. in 2012. Gladly, from 2013 onwards, a great team in Zurich began to launch the yearly 'International QCA expert workshop' event, which still continues up till now and plays a crucial role, but that's also another story. COMPASSS has naturally supported such events throughout, via providing further dissemination.

In conclusion: COMPASSS 2015-2024... and beyond

In 2015, Claude Robinson, who had joined the core management team, took over from Alrik, and across the years he did a magnificent job in further "upscaling" MethodsNET into a much more professional digital environment. In effect he has become the COMPASSS lead man over these

last 9 years, with me in support when I could prove useful. However this part of the story will be for him to tell when he sees best!

In 2015-2016, I coordinated, together with Claude, a further formalization of COMPASSS by installing a “Steering Committee”, also as an attempt to expand the number colleagues involved in driving COMPASSS and to, hopefully, eventually gather more resources. We also wrote down a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enable COMPASSS to, possibly in a few years’ time, further institutionalize if felt useful – as indeed COMPASSS remains, up till now, a *de facto* network; it does not yet hold a legal form. Over those years from 2015 onwards, I remained formal COMPASSS Chair and I did my best to support the whole enterprise, in particular by taking stock on a yearly basis with the Steering Committee and Advisory Board members via collegial discussions (well—formal meetings, but most friendly and collegial!) usually held at the yearly Zurich ‘gig’.

The issue of resources, both financial and human, has remained a major challenge over the years. This drove several of us, following intensive brainstorming sessions in Zurich in 2016 and 2017, to pave the ground for some joint efforts to obtain some significant collaborative project funding of some sort—some of this funding then providing at least a basic foundation in terms of financial and human resources. I took the lead, together with a core group of fellow colleagues whom I warmly thank here, in preparing and submitting, twice in 2021 and in 2022, a COST Action proposal placing QCA at its heart. Alas we were not able to convince the expert reviewers... so be it, we gave it our best try!

Over the last three years, from 2021 onward, I have been increasingly engaged into a much bigger challenge: setting up a new global network, the Methods Excellence Network (MethodsNET), which was formally launched in September 2021 together with 200+ founding members from diverse disciplines, epistemologies and methodological specializations. This was a strategic move after I decided, together with my fellow ECPR Methods School Academic Convenors, to separate from ECPR – but that is yet another story! Anyhow: I am the Chair and legal representative of this major initiative which is currently being scaled up as a global membership-based association (full 1.0 web site launched planned on 27 February, come and visit us!). Naturally I will continue, via this enterprise, to ‘push’ the QCA, systematic comparison etc. agendas – but my mission has now become much broader indeed and, obviously, I simply cannot dedicate working time to COMPASSS anymore. This is why I have informed my fellow COMPASSS colleagues, in December 2023, that I am in effect handing over the of COMPASSS to Claude, and that I remain in support to facilitate the next steps. Claude and I have been recently discussing, also with a number of close colleagues, on ways via which COMPASSS and MethodsNET could be articulated win-win. That’s not so straightforward as MethodsNET 1.0 will now become a much more institutionalized entity, with paid membership and provision of specific services to (paid) members only – which is a path that COMPASSS has not engaged in.

How shall I conclude this look back into that whole adventure? I would simply say that I have given a lot and that I have received a lot in return. I have invested a lot of sweat, energy and time in COMPASSS, always driven by the idea of providing service to a broad set of colleagues, researchers and practitioners ‘out there’ – that service logic is still what drives me today with MethodsNET. And, in return, many colleagues, researchers and practitioners ‘out there’ have expressed their gratitude in different ways. Probably this whole network-building has also been useful in my career progress as it has provided me with quite some notoriety or at least visibility,

but sincerely this has never been my main driver. I have enjoyed every part of building COMPASSS together with so many travel companions, and for this I would just like to conclude with a heartfelt 'thank you' to all of them, from Sakura to Claude to name but two of them.

All the best to COMPASSS and its further adventures!



WWW.COMPASSS.ORG
COMPARative methods for the
Advancement of Systematic cross-case
analysis and Small-n Studies

LAUNCHING CONFERENCE

Systematic Comparative Case Analysis : Bridging the gap between qualitative and quantitative methods

16-17 Sept. 2003, Louvain-la-Neuve and Leuven (Belgium)

Main Guest Speaker

Prof. Charles C. RAGIN
University of Arizona

Other Speakers: Prof. Peter BURSENS (UA), Prof. Pierre DEHEZ (UCL), Prof. Giséle DE MEUR (ULB), Prof. Lieven DE WINTER (UCL), Prof. André-Paul FROGNIER (UCL), Prof. Jon KVIST (Danish National Institute of Social Research (SFI), Copenhagen), Prof. Geert LOOSVELDT (KULeuven), Prof. Daishiro NOMIYA (Sophia University, Tokyo), Prof. Benoit RIHOUX (UCL), Prof. Marc SWYNGEDOUW (KULeuven), Prof. Geert VAN HOOTEGEM (KULeuven), Prof. Tsutomu WATANABE (Shinshu University, Nagano)

Information/registration : www.compasss.org

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Dép. des Sciences
Politiques et Sociales



Left: Promotional flyer for inaugural COMPASSS event (September 2003)

Below: COMPASSS Newsletter #10 (July 2005)

Small-N
Compass
Systematic cross-case analysis

COMPARative methods for the Advancement of Systematic cross-case analysis and Small-n Studies

COMPASSS Newsletter

Issue 10, July 2005

<http://www.compasss.org>

Here is a quick digest (selective list) of main recent complements (including new pages) on the COMPASSS international resource site - for more detailed information : see respective sections of the COMPASSS site at : <http://www.compasss.org>

(NB : only forthcoming activities are mentioned here; some documents have been added on the archive section of some pages as well.)

TRAINING

<http://www.compasss.org/Trainings.htm>

Fuzzy Sets and Case-Oriented Research
American Sociological Association's 100th Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, August 15th 2005, 10:30am - 12:10pm.
Methodological seminar lead by Prof Charles C. RAGIN.

Scientific Foundations of Qualitative Research
American Sociological Association's 100th Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, August 15th 2005, 4:30pm-6:10pm.
Professional workshop presided by Prof. Charles C. RAGIN.

More info on these two training opportunities:
<http://www.asanet.org/convention/2005/>

Short course on fuzzy sets methods
American Political Science Association's Annual Meeting, Washington, Aug. 31st 2005, 2:00pm.
Lecturer: Prof. Charles C. RAGIN.

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MEETINGS

<http://www.compasss.org/Meetings.htm>

Symposium on "Set-theoretic Methods in Management and Strategy Research"
Academy of Management 2005 Annual Meeting, Honolulu, Hawaii, 8th August 2005, 8:30am-10:20am.
Organizer: Peer C. FISS

Set-theoretic Methods are winning increasing attention across the social sciences. However, while these methods show considerable promise for examining complex causal relations, so far all but a handful of studies have applied such methods to management and strategy research settings. This symposium brings together an international group of scholars currently working with set-theoretic methods in management, with the goal of exposing such *(continued on page 2...)*

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Research Note: Superset Relations and Necessary Conditions
Charles C. Ragin

This research note seeks to clarify several issues regarding superset relations ($X_i \geq Y_i$) and necessary conditions in QCA. In most QCA applications, the understanding of necessity is neither strict nor absolute. Not only do researchers make allowances for inconsistencies due to data and calibration errors, but they also employ a broad conceptualization of necessity, as in “X is usually necessary for Y” as opposed to “if no X, then no Y.” The examination of necessary conditions is not adequately addressed in the QCA literature because truth table analysis—the core analytic device in QCA—focuses almost exclusively on subset relations ($X_i \leq Y_i$). The key assessment is the degree to which combinations of conditions, specified in truth tables, form consistent subsets of the outcome. Thus, as conventionally practiced, QCA is not well-equipped for the analysis of necessary conditions. Below, I discuss practical issues in the assessment of superset relations, focusing on five common shortcomings.

Some Common Shortcomings

1. Not assessing the consistency of superset relations. It is advisable to evaluate the set relation between every causal condition and the outcome prior to conducting a truth table analysis. The simplest way to do this is to use the XY Plot procedure in fsQCA, which reports the consistency of $X_i \geq Y_i$ and $X_i \leq Y_i$ for each bivariate plot. It is important to identify superset relations ($X_i \geq Y_i$) at the outset of an analysis because they may have important implications for theory as possible necessary conditions. Also, truth table analysis focuses on subset relations, which means that conditions that are supersets of the outcome may be overlooked. In fact, parsimonious solutions often drop consistent supersets of the outcome from recipes identified via truth table analysis.
2. Excluding consistent superset conditions from truth table analysis. If the researcher identifies a consistent superset relation that makes sense as a necessary condition, then it should be included as a condition in the truth table analysis. Even though truth table analyses focus on subset relations, it is important to examine all relevant conditions when conducting an analysis. A necessary condition may be required in a recipe for a causal combination to pass the sufficiency test.
3. Concluding that a condition is necessary simply because it appears in all the recipes in a truth table solution. It is tempting to view a causal condition that appears in each recipe identified via truth table analysis as a necessary condition. After all, its presence seems to be required. However, recall that solution coverage is usually much less than 100%, meaning that there are additional causal pathways to the outcome, not captured by the current analysis. These additional pathways may not require the presence of the ingredient shared by the recipes identified in the current analysis. The only effective test of the superset relation is the assessment of the consistency of $X_i \geq Y_i$.
4. Failing to notice that a necessary condition has been dropped from a parsimonious solution. As noted above, parsimonious solutions often drop conditions that are supersets of the outcome. To understand why this occurs it is necessary to consider the coding of superset conditions across the three kinds of truth table rows: rows coded 1 on the outcome, rows coded 0 on the outcome, and remainder rows. Superset conditions are likely to be skewed toward a coding of “present” in rows coded 1 on the outcome and, to a lesser degree, also in rows coded 0 on the outcome. (Cases that display strong membership in a superset condition but not in the outcome

do not undermine the consistency of the superset relation.) However, in the remainder rows, superset conditions are likely to be skewed toward a coding of “absent.” Recall that truth table minimization uses a process of “incremental elimination,” such that rows with the same outcome can be paired if they differ on only one condition. The condition that differs across the two rows can be eliminated. All remainder rows are up for grabs in the derivation of the parsimonious solution and thus are well-positioned to combine with rows coded “1” on the outcome. This arrangement sets the stage for the pair-wise elimination of the superset condition. Parsimonious solutions utilize any remainder combination that yields a simpler truth table solution, regardless of whether the remainder combination makes sense from the viewpoint of the researcher’s substantive knowledge or theory

5. Compounding necessary conditions (i.e., using logical “and” to model jointly necessary conditions) without explicitly testing the necessity of their combination. It is important to remember that most of the time we are able (in social science) to identify conditions that are “usually” necessary or “almost always” necessary. The usual consistency with the superset relation is around 0.90 when we claim we have found a pattern suggestive of necessity. This fact (i.e., that consistency is not a perfect 1.0) complicates the assessment of jointly necessary conditions. For example, if the consistency of $X_i \geq Y_i$ is 1.0 and the consistency of $Z_i \geq Y_i$ is 1.0, then we can state with confidence that the consistency of $X_i \cdot Z_i \geq Y_i$ is 1.0 (i.e., the consistency of $\min(X_i, Z_i)$ as a superset of Y_i is 1.0). If there is any inconsistency, however, the data set will include cases where $X_i < Y_i$ and cases where $Z_i < Y_i$. If the superset consistency of $X_i \geq Y_i$ is 0.90, there will be a modest number of cases where $X_i < Y_i$. If the superset consistency of $Z_i \geq Y_i$ is also 0.90, then the consistency of $X_i \cdot Z_i \geq Y_i$ will be less than 0.90, to the extent that the cases where $X_i < Y_i$ are not the same as the cases where $Z_i < Y_i$ (i.e., the inconsistent cases do not overlap). The important point is that when you combine “usually” necessary conditions, their intersection (i.e., their joint necessity) may NOT meet the “usually” necessary threshold (0.9 in this example).

Discussion

Superset consistency assesses the degree to which membership in a condition is greater than or equal to membership in an outcome. Thus, a superset condition functions as a ceiling, setting an upper limit on the expression of an outcome. All breaches of that ceiling undermine the consistency of the superset relation. When interpreted as necessary conditions, superset conditions are especially relevant to theory, for they reveal possible empirical constraints on the outcome. Thus, testing for superset relations should be a routine part of conventional applications of QCA, especially in the early phases of an analysis.

COMPASSS Updates
Claude Robinson and Konan Seny-Kan

As discussed above in his historical retrospective of COMPASSS, Benoît has decided to step down as co-director of COMPASSS in order to better focus his attention on MethodsNET. Claude will continue to lead the network, supported by the COMPASSS Steering Committee and Advisory Board. We are delighted to announce that Julia Bartosch (Radboud University) has volunteered to help maintain our website and was responsible for designing this newsletter, along with Claude. We also want to thank Paola Alvarado (University of Houston—Downtown), who was our Fall intern. She solicited content for the newsletter and built the website for the winter International QCA Workshops.

Claude is on sabbatical this year, which means that website updates will be less frequent and that this will be the only newsletter published this year. In his absence, Konan will serve as interim director of COMPASSS. To submit news, events or other announcements of interest to the QCA community, please email Konan at konan.seny-kan@grenoble-em.com.

COMPASSS Mailing List

Our current mailing list service is shutting down and we will be migrating to a new provider, FreeLists. Please send your announcements and news of interest to COMPASSS community to compasss-announce@freelists.org. (Note that you must be subscribed to post to the list.) If you are currently subscribed to the COMPASSS mailing list, we have already moved you to the new one. If you would like to subscribe to the mailing list or change your email address, please go to <https://www.freelists.org/list/compasss-announce>.