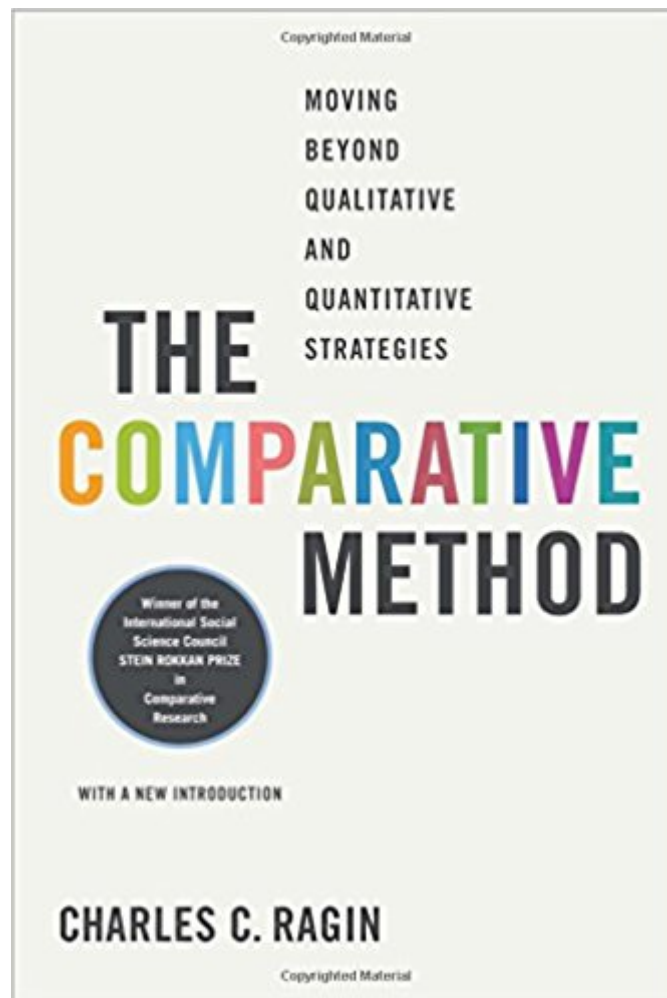




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The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative And Quantitative Strategies



Synopsis

Charles C. Ragin's *The Comparative Method* proposes a synthetic strategy, based on an application of Boolean algebra, that combines the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative sociology. Elegantly accessible and germane to the work of all the social sciences, and now updated with a new introduction, this book will continue to garner interest, debate, and praise.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a PhD candidate, I heard about 'the Comparative Method' a while ago when I studied methodology. I thought I'd give 'the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)' a try. I have not yet gotten to later books developed by Ragin, where elaborates on QCA and 'the fuzzy sets'. Thus, this review judges this book by itself. Has it convinced me that 'the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) is important? It certainly seems so. He spends the first half of the book, as well as the last chapter, defending the QCA method, which is supposed to take strengths from both the qualitative and quantitative methods. That is, while variable-oriented approach is limited by simplified conceptions of cause, the case-oriented approach is limited by its inability to address large numbers of cases. The QCA is supposed to be the middle-road between the two extremes. It is supposed to allow investigators both to digest many cases and to assess causal complexity (p.168). Convinced? I certainly found that Ragin's desire to bridge the qualitative and quantitative approaches was valid. He develops good arguments from Chapter 1 to 5 why the current approaches are inadequate, including combined strategies (which use both qualitative and quantitative methods simultaneously). The evaluation of the QCA is that it holds a lot of promise. Chapter 6 develops

basic concepts that help you understand the Boolean algebra, which Ragin exemplifies with simple data. The problem comes with Chapters 7 and 8, which are respectively supposed to describe 'extensions of boolean methods' and 'show real-life examples'. In practice, Ragin rushes through these chapters, throws us into the water, without teaching us how to swim properly. What do I mean? With table 8 onwards, he begins addressing procedures of complex examples.

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