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Set-Theoretic Multi-Method Research

A state-of-the-art comprehensive exposition of combining qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) and case studies, this book facilitates the efficient use and independent learning of this form of set-theoretic multi-method research (SMMR) with the best available software. It will reduce the time and effort required when performing both QCA and case studies within the same research project. This is achieved by spelling out the conceptual principles and practices in SMMR, and by introducing a tailor-made R software package. With an applied and practical focus, this is an intuitive resource for implementing the most complete protocol of SMMR. Features include Learning Goals, Core Points, and Empirical Examples, as well as boxed examples of R codes and the R output it produces. There is also a glossary for key SMMR terms. Additional online material is available, comprising machine-readable datasets and R scripts for replication and independent learning.

Carsten Q. Schneider is Pro-Rector for External Relations and Professor of Political Science at Central European University (CEU), Vienna. He teaches set-theoretic methods worldwide and his research in comparative politics and social science methodology has appeared in leading international journals and publishing houses.

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A Guide to Combining QCA and Case Studies

Carsten Q. Schneider
Central European University

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Preface

This book has been in the making, consciously and subconsciously, for quite a while. The conception of the idea of set-theoretic multi-method research (SMMR) as envisaged in this book can be traced back pretty clearly to one afternoon in the summer of 2012 in Ljubljana, Slovenia. I was teaching a course on qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) at the European Consortium For Political Research (ECPR) Summer School in Research Methods and Techniques and Ingo Rohlfing was teaching a course on case studies. We decided to hold one session together because in both our courses discussions kept coming up on how to best combine these two methods, which, clearly, do have an elected affinity. Our goal for this joint session was to present our first ideas and to discuss them with our students. The session went way over time and we left the room with the firm idea of condensing all that needs to be said about the combination of QCA and within-case analysis in one journal article. Well, here we are today, more than a decade later, after countless discussions, several conference presentations, a dedicated `R` function, and a handful of journal articles. This book is meant to consolidate, update, adjust, further refine, and comprehensively present in one place the insights gained over the past decade. In so doing, the goal of this book is to facilitate the understanding and practical use of SMMR.

As with any intellectual journey, one does not travel alone and I wish to thank my fellow travelers. First to mention here is Ingo Rohlfing with whom the project started. Throughout the years, we have jointly developed the SMMR framework on which this book is based. The adjustments and refinements to this framework that I offer in this book come in small, but sometimes crucial doses. For discussions on many of those new developments I am grateful to Nena Oana. Those exchanges of ideas often took place in relation to implementing SMMR into the `R` package `SetMethods` that Nena and I jointly develop. Nena's skills in making SMMR work in `R` have been

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invaluable. My thanks also go to the many participants in courses on QCA that I have been teaching over the past years, both at my home institution, Central European University (CEU), and at methods schools organized by ECPR, Global School in Empirical Research Methods (GSERM), Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research (IQMR), International Political Science Association (IPSA), MethodsNET, and many other institutions that kindly invited me to share my ideas. Along that way, I have been fortunate to work with brilliant co-instructors – next to Nena, these were at different times Patrick Emmenegger, Airo Hino, Patrick Mello, Charles Ragin, Benoît Rihoux, Eva Thomann, and Claudius Wagemann – and teaching assistants who critically commented on various aspects of the SMMR framwork as it evolved over the years: Priscilla Álamos Concha, Dominik Brenner, Marcos Campos, Adrian Dusa, Nidia Murrieta Roque, Ekataryna Paustyan, Alrik Thiem, and Barbora Valikova. Manuel Bosancianu helped me prepare data on the within-case level mechanism used in Chapter 5.

For feedback on my work on SMMR and for their pathbreaking (and sometimes breathtaking) contributions to set-theoretic methods in recent years, which represent the ground on which SMMR is built, I owe gratitude to Gary Goertz and Jim Mahoney. Making sure that room for discussion was provided, even in the difficult pandemic period during which most of this book has been written, is a huge achievement of the team organizing the annual QCA event in Zurich: Manuel Fischer, Julia Leib, Johannes Meuer, Sofia Pagliarin, Ryan Rumble, and Christian Rupietta.

My deepest thanks go to my family – Sheila, Leo, and Giulia – for all their loving support when writing large chunks of this book in the middle of a pandemic that our family experienced in our new home city Vienna. I'd also thank our dog Laica, but she refuses to read English.

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