



Redesigning Social Inquiry: Fuzzy Sets and Beyond

By Charles C. Ragin

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For over twenty years Charles C. Ragin has been at the forefront of the development of innovative methods for social scientists. In *Redesigning Social Inquiry*, he continues his campaign to revitalize the field, challenging major aspects of the conventional template for social science research while offering a clear alternative.

Redesigning Social Inquiry provides a substantive critique of the standard approach to social research—namely, assessing the relative importance of causal variables drawn from competing theories. Instead, Ragin proposes the use of set-theoretic methods to find a middle path between quantitative and qualitative research. Through a series of contrasts between fuzzy-set analysis and conventional quantitative research, Ragin demonstrates the capacity for set-theoretic methods to strengthen connections between qualitative researchers' deep knowledge of their cases and quantitative researchers' elaboration of cross-case patterns. Packed with useful examples, *Redesigning Social Inquiry* will be indispensable to experienced professionals and to budding scholars about to embark on their first project.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Charles Ragin’s *Redesigning Social Inquiry* offers social scientists, both qualitative and quantitative, and their readers new ways to analyze social phenomena clearly, honestly, and effectively. Readers prepared to invest a few hours will find a new world of analytic possibilities and understanding open to them. Imagine having techniques, easy to understand and implement, whose results really speak to questions we all care about!”

(Howard S. Becker, author of *Writing for Social Scientists*)

“*Redesigning Social Inquiry* is aimed at social scientists looking to escape the banality of everyday quantitative research, and here they’ll find a sophisticated way out of all the by-the-numbers work. But this book also speaks to those of us who have a profound knowledge of cases and want to explore the implications of this understanding. With this rigorous yet accessible book, Charles Ragin has completed his mission to reorient social science.”

(Edwin Amenta, University of California, Irvine)

“Once upon a time, historically oriented social scientists had to choose between the empirical richness of the case study method and the inferential appeal of ‘large n’ statistical studies. Charles Ragin has worked tirelessly for twenty years to create and refine a ‘third way,’ one that reconciles the general appeal of these two approaches. In *Redesigning Social Inquiry* Ragin has brought new sophistication to his ‘comparative case method,’ while rendering it even more accessible than before. On behalf of comparative historical researchers everywhere, I can only say ‘thanks.’”

(Doug McAdam, Stanford University)

"Ragin's work takes basic working notions about sociological research and forces readers to challenge fallacies and limitations of their own academic training. Any sociological methods professor who can smugly occupy one of the easy chairs of methodological dogma after reading *Redesigning Social Inquiry* probably should visit the benefits office . . . to discuss an expedited retirement plan."

(David K. Brown *Teaching Sociology*)

About the Author

Charles Ragin is professor of sociology and political science at the University of Arizona. He is the author of *Fuzzy-Set Social Science* and *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*.

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