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Inferring Causal Complexity

Baumgartner, Michael (2006) *Inferring Causal Complexity*. [Preprint]



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Abstract

In "The Comparative Method" Ragin (1987) has outlined a procedure of Boolean causal reasoning operating on pure coincidence data that has meanwhile become widely known as QCA (Qualitative Comparative Analysis) among social scientists. QCA -- also in its recent form as presented in Ragin (2000) -- is designed to analyze causal structures featuring one effect and a possibly complex configuration of mutually independent direct causes of that effect. The paper at hand presents a procedure of causal reasoning that operates on the same type of empirical data as QCA and that implements Boolean techniques related to the ones resorted to by QCA, yet, in contrast to QCA, the procedure introduced here successfully identifies causal structures involving both mutually dependent causes, i.e. causal chains, and multiple effects, i.e. epiphenomena. In this sense, the paper at hand generalizes QCA.

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