Qualitative Comparative Analysis

Claude Rubinson
University of Houston—Downtown
Houston, TX

rubinsonc@uhd.edu
http://gator.uhd.edu/~rubinsonc/
http://grundrisse.org/qca/

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Overview

- Day 1: Introductions and overview
    - Review of QCA resources, publications, and software
    - QCA as an investigation of invariance
    - Three analytic components of QCA: dataset calibration, necessity analysis, and sufficiency analysis
    - Three types of QCA projects: identifying causal recipes, uncovering taxonomies, understanding context
    - Discussion of research projects
- Day 2: Nuts and bolts—QCA in depth
    - Dataset calibration
    - Necessity analysis
        - Consistency and coverage measures for necessity
        - Testing for necessary conditions
    - Sufficiency analysis
        - Consistency and coverage measures for sufficiency
        - Constructing and reducing truth tables
        - Interrogating the analysis and deriving solutions
- Day 3: Putting it all together
    - Conducting a step-wise QCA analysis
    - Writing up and presenting QCA research
    - Discussion of research projects

Primary Readings on QCA

- Ragin (2008) *Redesigning Social Inquiry*
- Ragin (1987) *The Comparative Method*
- Ragin and Rubinson (2009) "The Distinctiveness of Comparative Research"
- Ragin and Rubinson (2011) "Comparative Methods"

Secondary Sources

- COMPASSS web site (http://www.compasss.org)
- Goertz and Mahoney (2012) *A Tale of Two Cultures*
- Ragin and Fiss (2016) *Intersectional Inequality*
- Goertz (2006) *Social Science Concepts*
- Ragin (2000) *Fuzzy-Set Social Science*
- Schneider and Wagemann (2012) *Set-Theoretic Methods for the Social Sciences*
- Rihoux and Ragin (2009) *Configurational Comparative Methods*

Recommended Readings on Case-Oriented and Comparative Research

- Rubinson and Ragin (2007) "New Methods for Comparative Research?"

- Brady and Collier (2004, 2010) *Rethinking Social Inquiry*

- George and Bennett (2005) *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*

- Gerring (2007) *Case Study Research*

- Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003) *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*

- Skocpol (1979) Introduction to *States and Social Revolutions*

- Gaddis (2002) *The Landscape of History*

- Franzosi (1995) *The Puzzle of Strikes*

A Menagerie of QCA Software Packages
(complete list at http://ww.compasss.org)

QCA
(Drass and Ragin 1992)

TOSMANA
(Cronqvist 2017)

fs/QCA
(Ragin, Drass, and
Davey 2017)

QCA (R)
(Duşa 2017)

QCA3 (R)
(Huang 2016)

fuzzy (Stata)
(Longest and Vaisey 2008)

QCApro (R)
(Thiem 2016)

Kirq & acq
(Rubinson and Reichert 2017)

Varieties of QCA:
csQCA, fsQCA, and mvQCA

- *The Comparative Method* (1987) describes "crisp-set QCA"

- *Fuzzy-Set Social Science* (2000) describes "fuzzy-set analysis"

- *Redesigning Social Inquiry* (2008) unifies "crisp-set QCA" and "fuzzy-set QCA"

  - csQCA is a special form of fsQCA

  - *fs/QCA, acq/Kirq,* and R package are all based on the RSI algorithms

- What about multi-valued QCA?

What is QCA?

- QCA is a formalization of the comparative method, using Boolean algebra

What is QCA?

- QCA is a formalization of the comparative method, using Boolean algebra

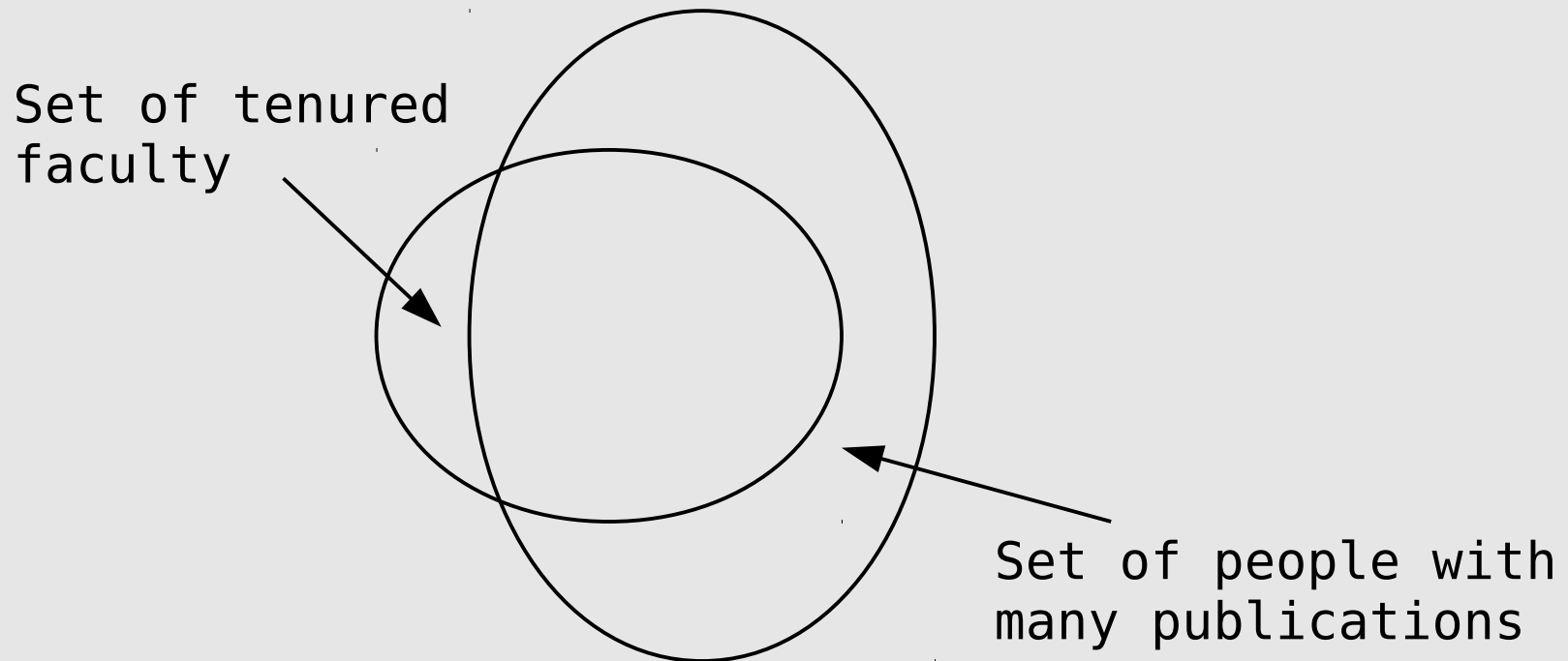# What is the comparative method?

- Many names: comparative research, comparative analysis, small-N comparison, small-N analysis, case studies, cross-case studies

- Is a technique for identifying and analyzing invariant (consistent) relationships.

- Characterized by the search for necessary and sufficient conditions.

- Is comparative research necessarily small-N?

- Is comparative research necessarily case-oriented?

Invariant Relationships

- Definition: Certain aspects of cases tend to co-occur.
  - Tenured faculty tend to have many publications
  - Religious fundamentalists tend to be politically conservative
  - "business leaders and owners of capital … are overwhelmingly Protestant" (Weber 1958:35)
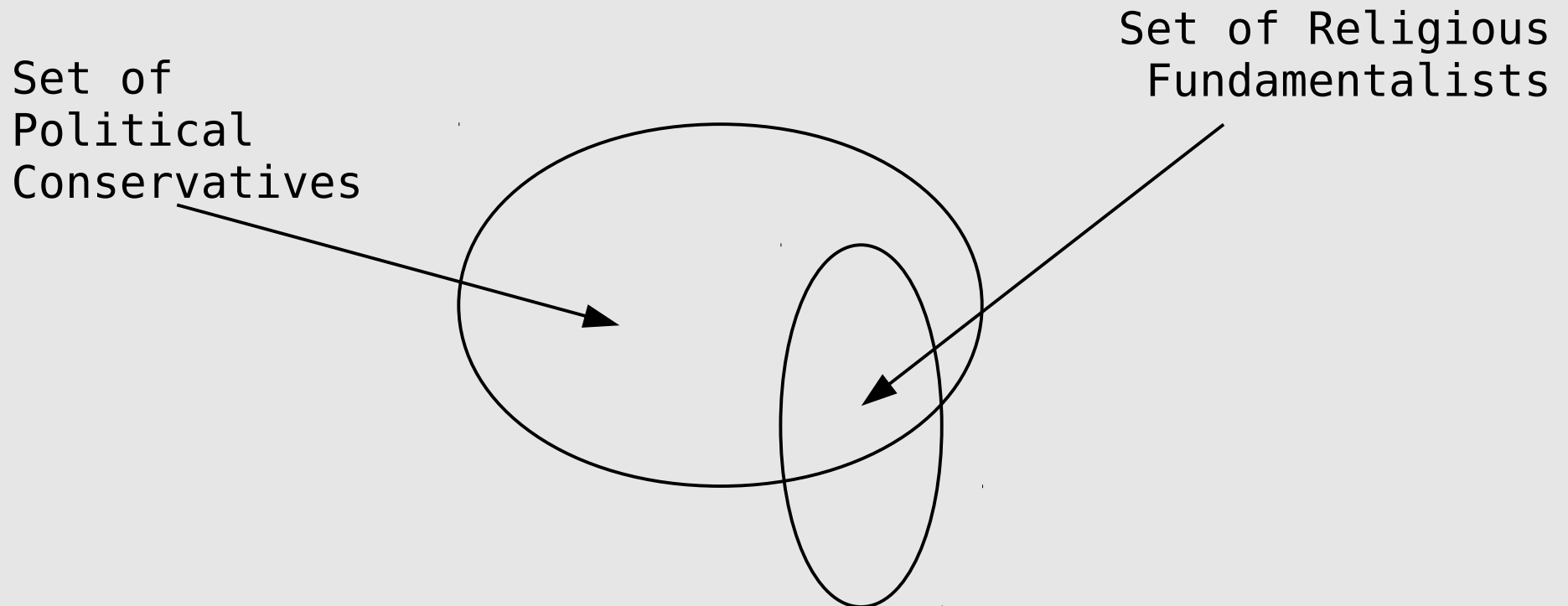 - "No bourgeois, no democracy." (Moore 1966:418)

Invariant Relationships

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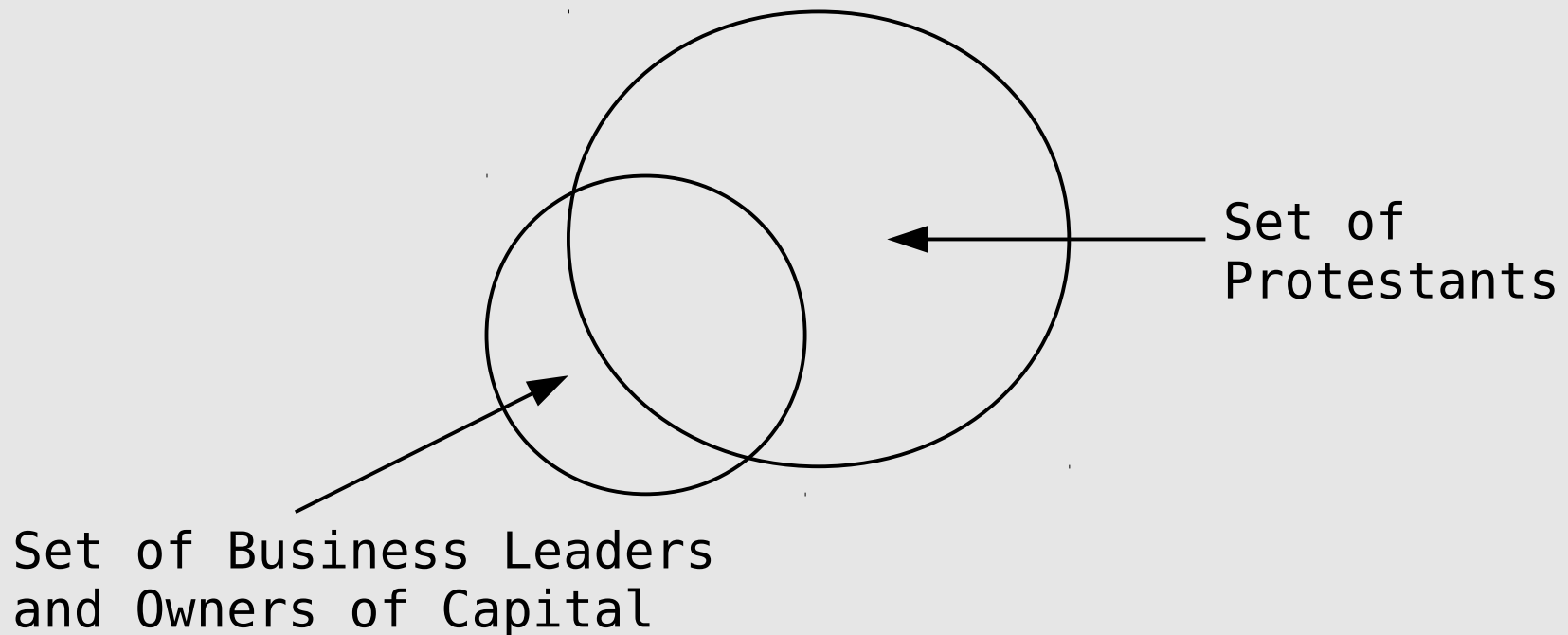 - Tenured faculty tend to have many publications

Set of tenured
faculty

Set of people with
many publications

Invariant Relationships

- Definition: Certain aspects of cases tend to co-occur.
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Set of
Political
Conservatives

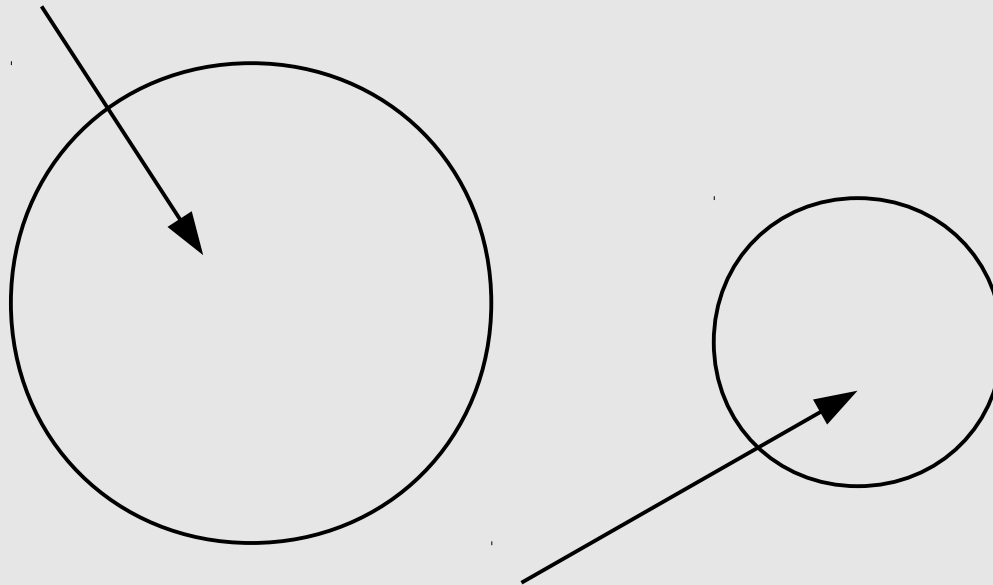Set of Religious
Fundamentalists

Invariant Relationships

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Set of Protestants

Set of Business Leaders and Owners of Capital

Invariant Relationships

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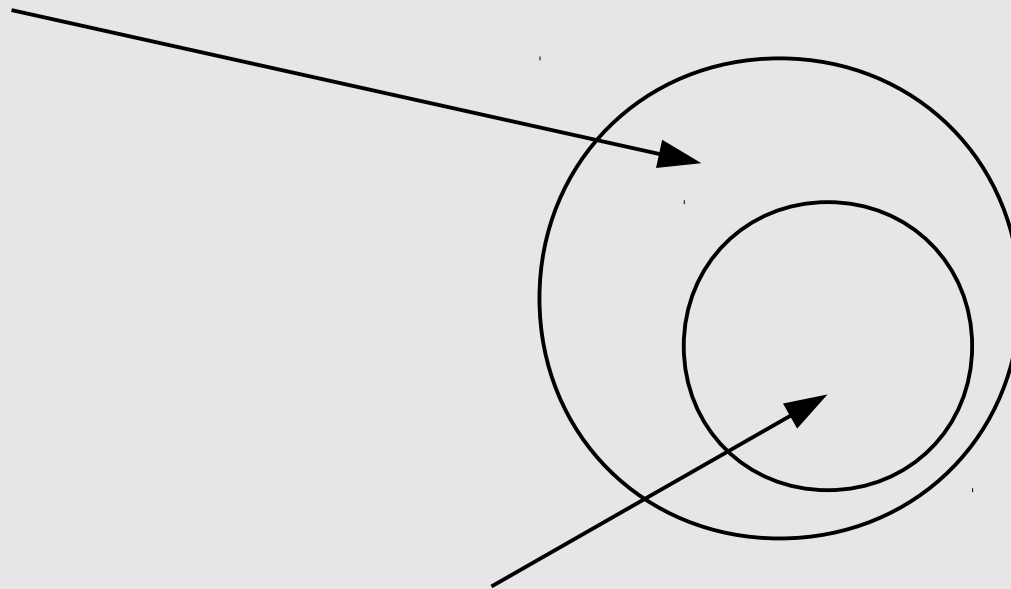Set of Countries **without** a Strong Bourgeois Impulse

Set of Countries that Experienced a Bourgeois Revolution
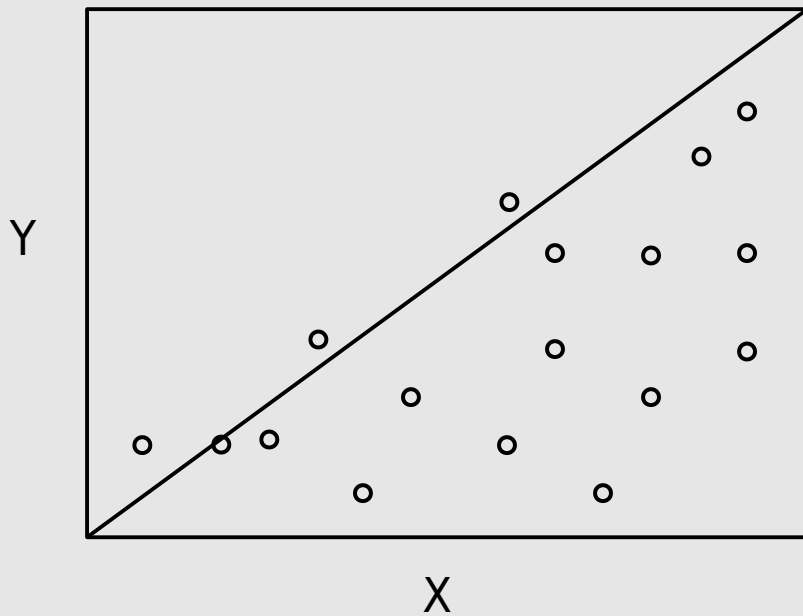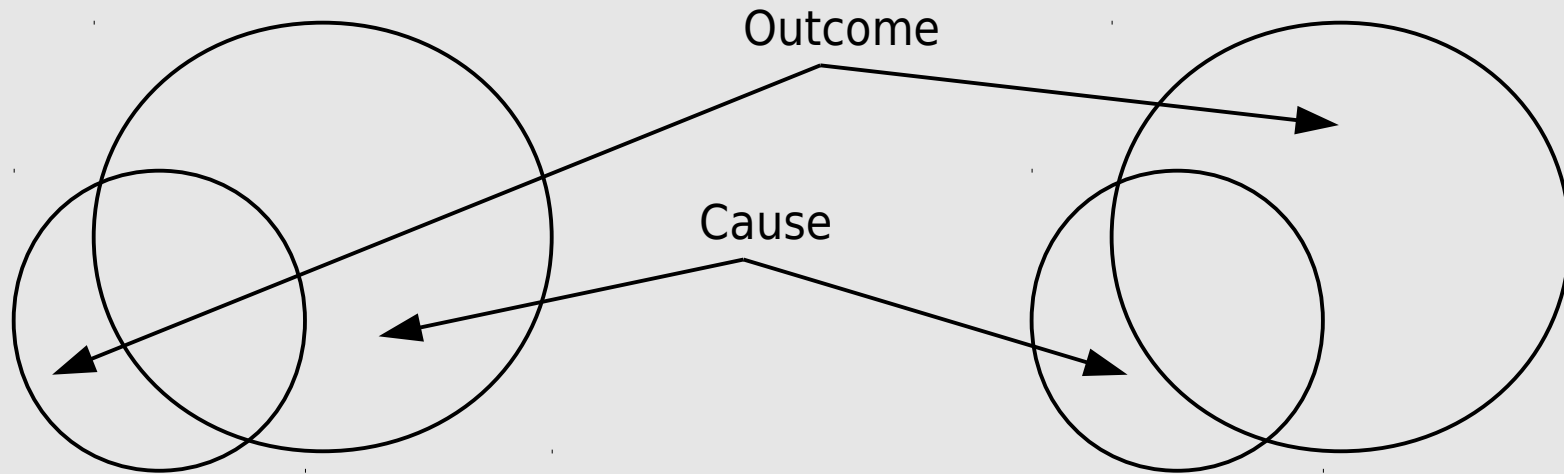
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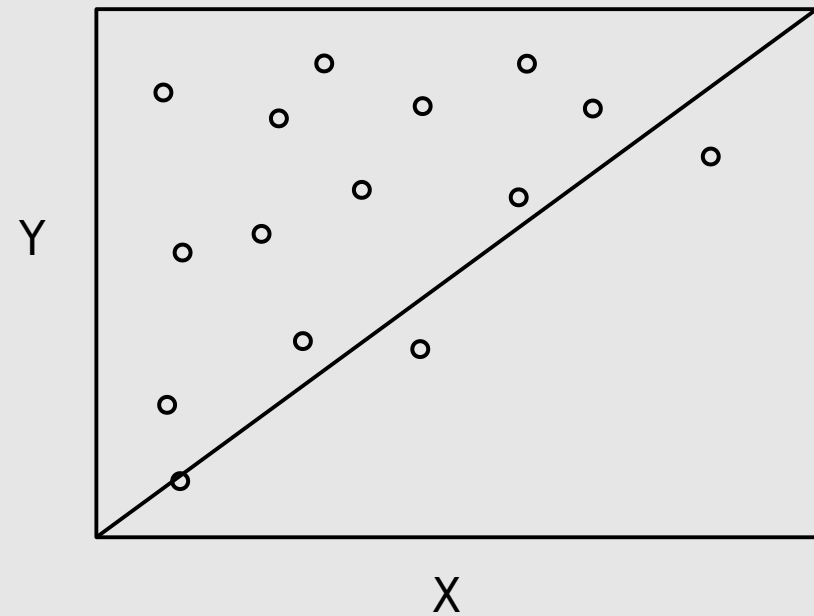Set of Countries **with** a Strong Bourgeois Impulse

Set of Countries that Experienced a Bourgeois Revolution

Invariant Relationships

Outcome

Cause

Y

X

Subset relationship consistent
with *necessity* (X≥Y)

Y

X

Subset relationship consistent
with *sufficiency* (Y≥X)

Invariant Relationships

- Definition: Certain aspects of cases tend to co-occur.
  - Does not imply determinism (or stochasticism)
  - Is not vulnerable to a single disconfirming case
  - Is fundamentally set-theoretic
  - Parallels how we typically formulate social theory:
    - The modern world system is a capitalist world-economy characterized by a core/periphery division of labor that prioritizes the endless accumulation of capital.
    - During unsettled periods, people actively use culture to learn new ways of being.

Software Demonstration
Example: Brown and Boswell (1995)

Distinguishing Features of QCA

- Assumption of invariance
- Assumption of causal complexity
  - Identification of necessary and sufficient conditions
  - There can be multiple paths to the same outcome
- No degrees-of-freedom restrictions
  - Appropriate for small-, medium-, and large-N analysis
- Encourages retroductive analysis (moving back and forth between theory and data)
  - Uses a malleable analytic frame
  - Must identify, measure, and scale (calibrate) your causal conditions and outcome
  - Dataset must include both positive and negative outcomes
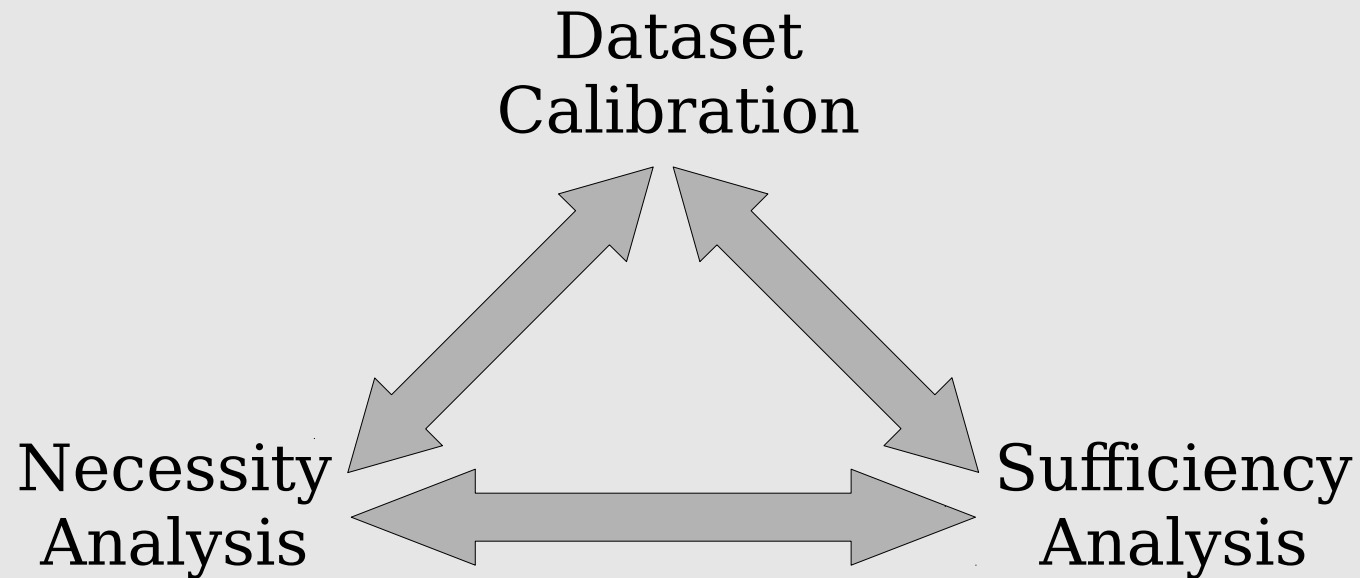 - Identifying and resolving contradictions is key

Historical Affinity with Case-Oriented, Small-N Research

- Holistic approach of comparativists encourages "structured, focused comparisons."

- Small number of countries enables in-depth analysis and helps cases to remain in the foreground

But:

- Small-N statistical analysis is possible (e.g., Esping-Andersen)

- Large-N comparative research is possible (e.g., Ragin and Fiss; Franzosi and Rubinson)

- Small-N ≠ Case-Oriented; Large-N ≠ Variable-Oriented

Three Analytic Components of QCA

Dataset
Calibration

Necessity
Analysis

Sufficiency
Analysis

Boolean Algebra

- UPPERCASE for the presence of a condition

- lowercase or ~ for the absence of a condition

- Negation

  ```
  ~A = 1 − A
   a = 1 − A
  ```

- Logical and (Boolean multiplication/Set intersection)

  ```
  A•b = Ab = min(A,b)
  ```

- Logical or (Boolean addition/Set union)

  ```
  A+b = max(A,b)
  ```

Dataset Calibration

- The process of constructing fuzzy-sets
- May be crisp or fuzzy
- Is about defining set memberships
  - degree of membership in the set of rich people (vs annual income)
  - degree of membership in the set of core countries (vs GDP/capita)
- Importance of negation and asymmetry
  - degree of membership in the set of *not* rich people
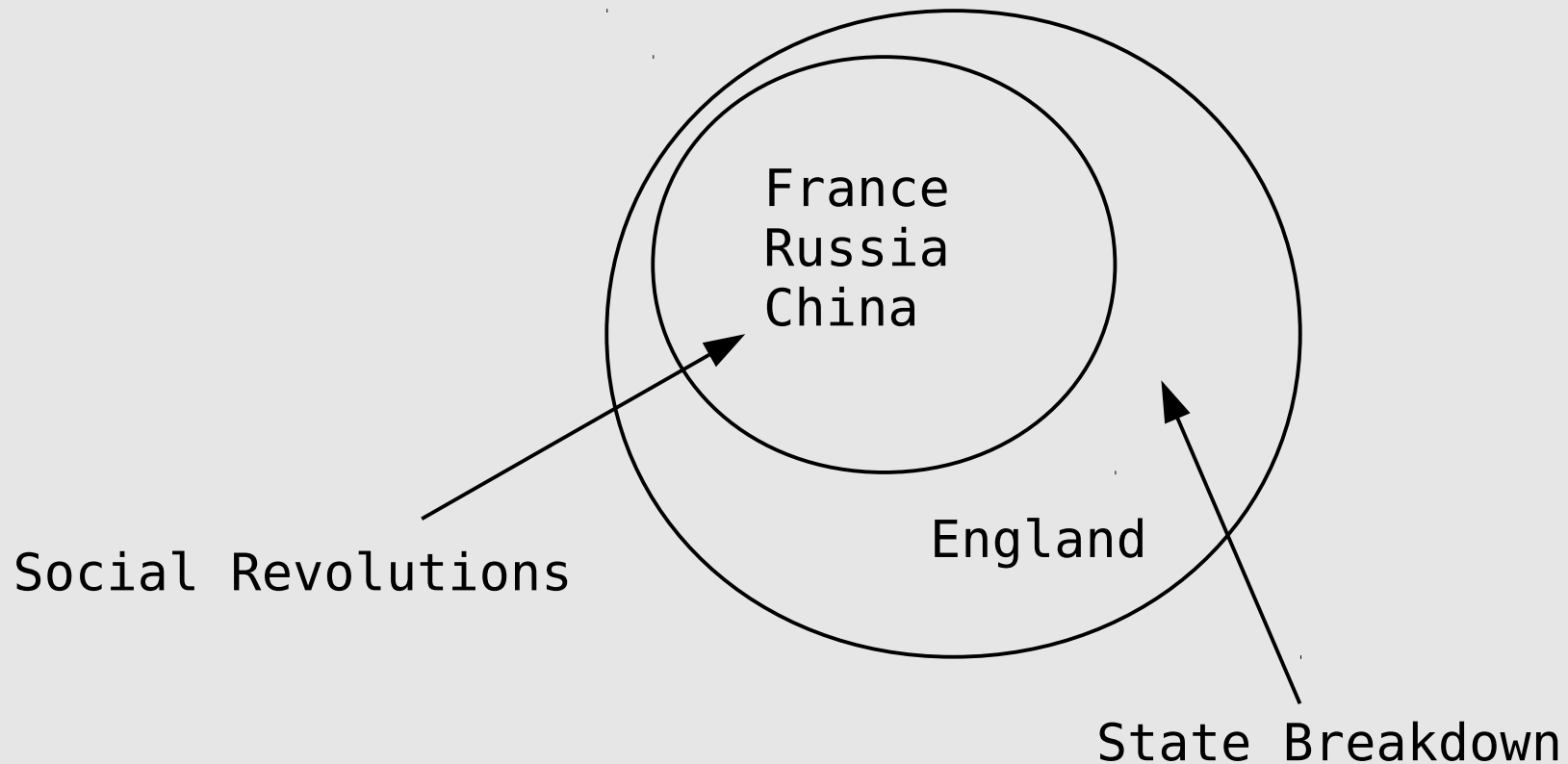 - degree of membership in the set of *not* core countries

Analysis of Necessary and Sufficient Conditions

- Necessity analysis is underdeveloped in the literature; QCA development—and applications—have focused on sufficiency analysis

- but: *Kirq* and *acq* have sophisticated necessity testing

- Sufficiency analysis emphasizes causal complexity (a.k.a., multiple conjunctural causation, "recipes," equifinality, or INUS conditions)

Necessary Conditions
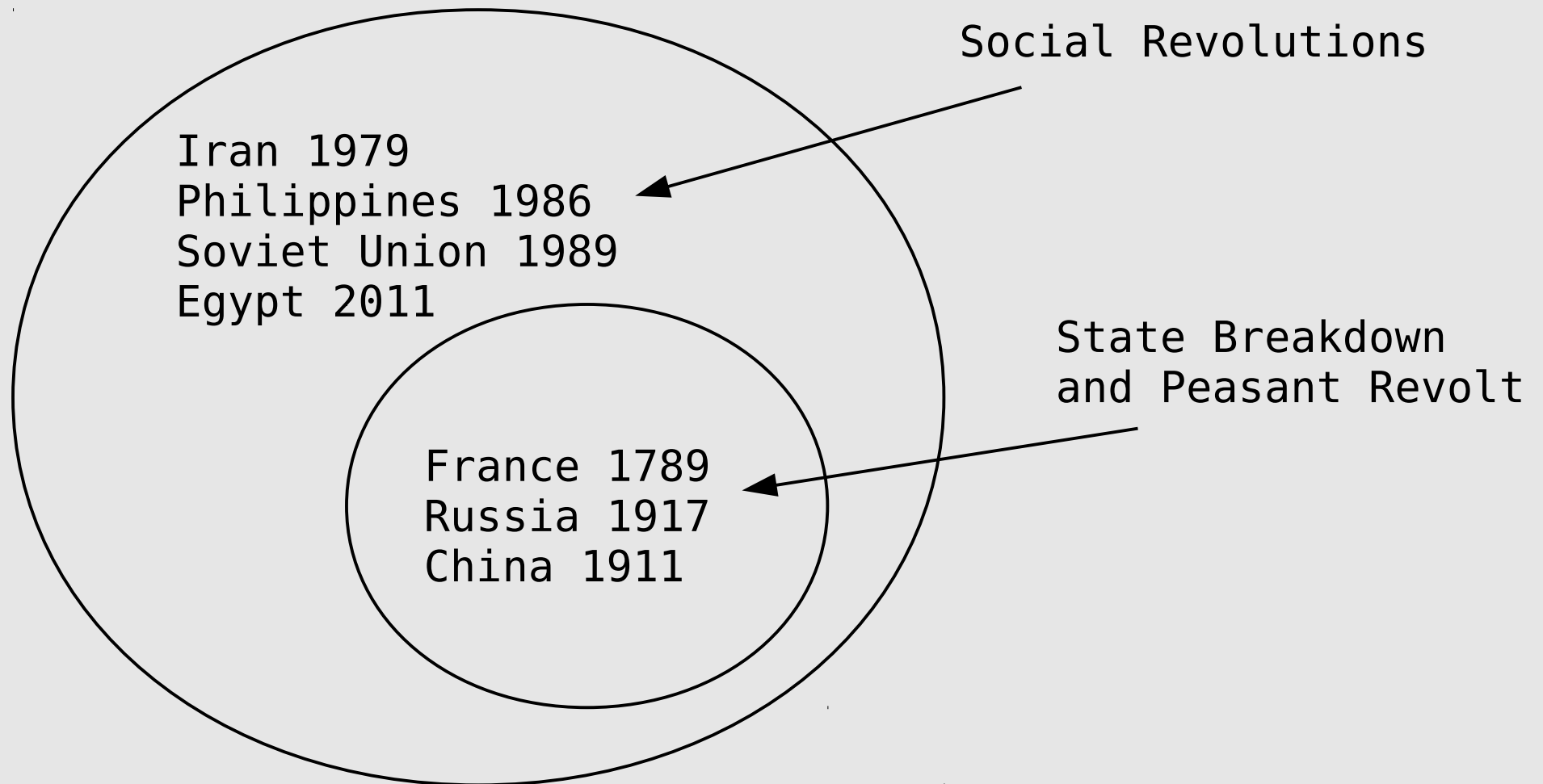Causal condition must (almost always) be present for outcome to occur.

Outcome is a subset of Cause

France
Russia
China

Social Revolutions

England

State Breakdown

Sufficient Conditions
Outcome (almost) always occurs when causal condition is present.

Cause is a subset of Outcome

Iran 1979
Philippines 1986
Soviet Union 1989
Egypt 2011

Social Revolutions

State Breakdown
and Peasant Revolt

France 1789
Russia 1917
China 1911

Three Types of Comparative/QCA Projects

- Uncovering causal recipes
  - The most popular use of QCA, and how we typically describe the method's goal

- Identifying taxonomies and types
  - Based on truth table analysis
  - Often engaged in "along the way" but can be its own end

- Analyzing context
  - What are the conditions under which phenomena do, or do not, occur?