

Resources for Cross-National Research

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1. One of the best presentations of the methodology of cross-national research can be found in Przeworski and Teune's *The Logic of Comparative Social Enquiry* (1970). But although a brilliant account, there is nothing special about the methodology that sets it apart from other kinds of research, a conclusion also put forward by Smelser (1976, p. 3). Nevertheless we encounter difficulties when doing research on several countries, difficulties which are of a different kind from those we wrestle with when analyzing data from only one country. One of the obstacles is to find and acquire data from foreign countries. Anyone who has tried it can only lament at the problems. This is especially true when one seeks to get data from countries where they are considered "strategic knowledge". New laws concerning the accessibility of data will make acquisition still more difficult in the future.

A second difficulty, on which the textbooks carry very little comments - Verba (1971) touches upon the problem - relates to the intellectual enterprise as such. We need more information and knowledge about the countries when doing comparative research than when doing research in the country we have grown up and are living in. Whereas a man like de Tocqueville had visited the countries he wrote about, it is now possible to do research on the nine nations which are members of the European Community without ever having left, say, Austin, Texas<sup>1</sup>. - There are thus two problems: one is the acquisition of data for cross-national research, the other the accumulation of knowledge and information about countries other than those the researcher knows well. Here, data archives and scholars connected to them can be of valuable help.

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<sup>1</sup>This is to paraphrase a comment about the well known jazz tune "A Night in Tunisia" which allegedly was written in the middle of Texas, in the bottom of a garbage can.

2. The above mentioned problems would probably be less felt if there was enough money for scholars and students to move around the world freely. But this is not the case. The collection of data from different countries presumes availability of financial resources. There seems to be a growing lack of funds for such purposes as the economic situation of industrial societies grows worse. Control over the economic situation has, over the last decade, become more "nationalized" (despite moves towards integration), e.g. through the floating of the currencies. Problems have to be solved at home and this development may also affect funds for research: first our researchers, then the others!

Furthermore, there is, at least in Germany, an "up-schooling" of university courses, i.e. a rather strict regulation of which courses students should take at what stage, which leaves little room for their own initiative. Curriculae in the social sciences include little about foreign countries. About 80 % of empirical research in Germany is based on data on this country only and only a minor part of the remaining 20 % constitutes comparative projects (Herz and Stegemann 1976a, p. XVIII). The lack of sufficient places for those who want to study at a university has led to a bureaucratic allocation of student enrollment which makes it nearly impossible for someone to change for instance from Cologne to Munich. To go abroad is more or less "out" and not encouraged. This is also true for teaching staff since the situation on the job market is bad and there are many people who are waiting for somebody to leave a position.

This is a rather gloomy situation. How can it be improved?

There are at least two things which can alleviate the situation. One is to push for secondary analysis, i.e. to locate data already collected which lends itself for cross-national research. The other is to supply researchers and students with materials which provide a better basis for training. I shall start with the last mentioned possibility.

3. Those of us who have done analysis of several countries are aware of the difficulties that arise even after one has all data ready and begins getting results out of the computer. Why does Ireland deviate from the other eight EC-members in terms of left-right self-placement of voters and related matters (Inglehart and Klingemann 1976)? Why was Germany's National Democratic Party (NPD) successful only among "marginal" social groups whereas George Wallace in 1968 captured votes from groups which have a more "central" position in social structure (cf. Herz 1975)? Is the stronger reluctance - compared to the US and Great Britain - of SPD and CDU adherents of having their sons or daughters marry across party lines a function of religious and political cleavages (Almond and Verba 1963, p. 136-137) or a matter of perceived upward versus downward mobility? Sometimes, the answers to these questions do not satisfy us, but we have no better ones as we have a relatively scant knowledge of other societies than our own. This is a reflection of the methodology of cross-national research: when we encounter differences between countries, we have to explain them by nation specific parameters (Przeworski and Teune 1970). One way to come to grips with this situation is to furnish researchers with relevant information and give them the possibility to develop their skill in cross-national research, at the same time learning about the social and political structures of other countries.

This is a field in which the International Social Science Council (ISSC) has been active for many years and I have been lucky to teach at four Summer Schools on Comparative Research sponsored by them. Their main aim has not been methodology or analysis techniques - as is the case with most courses at the ICPSR and ECPR Summer Schools. They have instead been directed to substantive topics. This year's Summer School in Vienna was organized somewhat differently from past years and it may be useful to comment briefly on what these differences were and what consequences they had.

At the Summer Schools in Cologne, Glasgow and Amsterdam, participants had to assign to groups who were to work on certain broadly defined topics (e.g. Generations and Cohorts in Politics). Data had been chosen to fit these topics roughly, but when the Seminar began, participants had to define their problem more precisely, look for adequate data and comparable indicators etc. Participants often ended up doing research on only one country, both because of lack of time and of comparable indicators. Furthermore, the techniques used varied widely. Thus, both for substantive and technical reasons, the payoff in terms of comparative analysis - discussions of differences and similarities between countries - was not what one had expected.

For this year's Summer School two "Work Books" had been prepared: One on Comparative Occupational Mobility (Herz, Treiman, Wieken 1977) and the other on Time Budget Analysis (Harvey 1977). Both were based on data from several countries which were comparable from the outset. These teaching aids contained a discussion of a limited set of topics, some multivariate analysis techniques, and a set of exercises for each participant to solve. They had enrolled for one of the Work Groups before the beginning of the Seminar and had to work through the Work Book during the three and a half weeks the seminar lasted. Each morning there was a general discussion of results of the analysis the participants had achieved.

There is no doubt that this type of seminar was more effective than the previous ones, for the participants as well as for the teachers. The discussion was focused on substantive results which more or less all participants had produced. The analyses were based on the same techniques. Since participants and teachers represented most of the countries involved, it was possible to account for many differences between the countries.

Although my evaluation of the Seminar is positive, there is a tendency for one of the problems mentioned above to turn

up again albeit at fewer instances. Once more, it is the lack of nation-specific information which puts up difficulties. One sometimes gets results to which one would need an additional amount of information in order to be able to interpret it. It might not necessarily be included in the Work Book. Since these teaching aids will be used in national seminars, it will not be possible to draw on the information students have of different countries. When Donald Treiman, Maria Wieken and I discussed the putline of the Work Book on Occupational Mobility and especially the question of nation specific information, we concluded that it would not be feasible to include such information in the Work Book. It is possible to summarize the political and social structures of several countries in one chapter only at the expense of being too general. The alternative is to write a book on these topics - but we intended to write only one book. Therefore, my first suggestion is to compile information of a comparative nature which pertains to the political and social structure of a range of countries; much in the way this has been done on a national basis (cf. Ballerstedt and Glatzer 1975; Central Statistical Office 1976; Office of Management and Budget 1973). These and other publications as well as the holdings of data archives carry enough information for this to be a feasible task. Such a publication (or publications) would be a very valuable addition to the bibliographies published by Elina Almasy and her colleagues (Rokkan et al. 1969; Almasy et al. 1976). As a second step one should entertain the possibility of publishing a set of books with a substantive interpretation of similarities and differences between countries, something in line with what has been published by Dahl (1966) and Rose (1974) in the area of politics and electoral behavior. It is somewhat peculiar that up till now there are no equivalents in the field of sociology proper. A third step would be to prepare additional Work Books on comparative problems. In addition to those mentioned, one Work Book on Political Participation (by Herbert Weisberg, Herbert Asher

and Bradley Richardson) and one on Relations between Center and Periphery (by Stein Rokkan and his colleagues) have been sponsored by the ISSC. But these four only cover a minor part of important research areas. As we shall see below, this production can well be tied to a further suggestion which I will make.

4. There are by now several data sets based on well-known comparative research projects available for secondary analysis. They include Almond and Verba's *The Civic Culture* (1963), the *International Studies of Values in Politics* (1971), the so-called Eight Nations survey (cf. Jennings and Farrah 1977) and the Year 2000 survey (Ornauer et al. 1976). But we know that social science data archives contain a wealth of national surveys, many of which include questions which are directly comparable, and some that can be made comparable in one way or another. To some extent, these sources are exploited by scholars who travel from one country and archive to the other. But instead of leaving this to the individual scholar, information on comparative indicators should be made available in a systematic way.

The systematic search for comparable data cannot be done without a set of specified criteria, ranging from quality and representativeness of data to its availability for general use. I would suggest, that a delineation of the substantive fields of interest is important. This has to go hand in hand with a survey of the relevance of cross-national research in these. What progress has cross-national research brought to theories of electoral behavior, occupational mobility or leisure behavior? In which areas of stratification research could available data be used with profit? And what is the current state of the "comparative" theory in these fields? We may be able to answer these questions for some field rather easily but not for most. Therefore, my second suggestion is that we define a set of fields for comparative research and make a thorough investigation of the "state of the art", both concerning the theoretical positions and

especially its cross-national relevance and pinpoint where data from different countries could bring about the greatest progress. This should then be followed by a review of available data and an assessment of the extent and degree of comparability. Miller's well known Comparative Social Mobility (1960) is a model for such an effort.

The first step in this venture is to assess the scientific production in the area of cross-national research. The bibliographies published under the auspices of the ISSC (Rokkan et al. 1969; Almsy et al. 1976) are a good basis for such an evaluation. In both, publications on comparative survey analysis were classified according to the same category system and it is easy to extract a quantitative picture of cross-national publications (cf. Table 1).

The numbers obviate the fact that there are some fields where there has been a lot of research and others where next to nothing has been published. The area of "Personality Characteristics and Cultural Orientations" shows a relatively large amount of research at both time periods; the number of publications on "Conditions, Roles, Behavior and Attitudes throughout the Life Cycle" has grown and become the largest "subfield" in comparative survey analysis. "Public Affairs", an area which includes Politics, Electoral Behavior etc., has also grown in importance. It is, by the way, significant of this development, that all but one of the studies cited above for which data is available for secondary analysis, belong to this area. At the other end of the scale, only scant research can be reported in fields such as "Market Conditions, Levels of Living, Consumer Behavior and Opinions" or "Occupations and Work Organizations".

It may seem that the distribution in Table 1 reflects the availability of data and that one would be better off if one started with life cycle problems or cultural orientation. But this is not quite correct. We have rather precise information on the extent of data production in various



Table 1

Distribution of publications in the area "Comparative Survey Analysis" from 1945-1965 and 1967-1973, by field

	<u>1967-1973</u>	<u>1945-1965</u>
	%	%
Comparative survey analysis: general context. General methodol- ogical problems, retrieval of data, data collections etc.	6	14
Organizational, methodological, and theoretical issues in comparative research	11	11
Conditions, Roles, Behavior and Attitudes throughout the Life Cycle	26	13
Personality Characteristics and Cultural Orientations	20	25
Market Conditions, Levels of Living, Consumer Behavior, and Opinions	0	4
Stratification, Mobility, and Class Relationships	8	10
Occupations and Work Organizations	2	4
Social and Cultural Participation	3	2
Public Affairs	19	8
Language and Communications	3	3
Intercultural and International Experiences	4	7
	<u>484</u>	<u>982</u>

0 = less than 1 %

Sources: for 1967-1973 Almasy et al. (1976); for 1945-1965  
Rokkan et al. (1969)

social science fields in Germany (Herz and Stegemann 1976b). One of the main areas of empirical research is the field of Occupations and Work organizations. On the other hand, Market Conditions etc. belong to the minor research areas. There is, then, no direct relation between national data production and importance of fields of comparative research. Whether to start with the quantitatively most or least important field is thus a decision to be made more in terms of theory or what I above referred to as "the state of the art" than in terms of apparent availability of data. From my own personal point of view, an assessment of the field of stratification should be given a high priority since it is important both for sociologists and political scientists.

Returning to the field of Occupation and Work Organization, it is worthwhile to point out that much of what is done in this area in Germany is done outside the universities. Data has often been collected by national or state authorities and is not generally available. In any case, a survey of the data for comparative research cannot be based solely on archive holdings but must include all organizations. To report that there is data somewhere is to raise demand which eventually can lead to supply.

5. Above, I have made two rather broad suggestions of how to aid the researcher interested in cross-national research. Naturally, the question arises as to what should be the format of the "products", what they specifically should include, what ranges of substance they should cover etc. The examples mentioned give a rough picture of what I have in mind. An answer to these questions can only really be given by choosing one field - e.g. stratification - and working it through. The proof of the pudding is in its eating!

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