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Summaries

A Simple Scheme for Analysing Aggregate Change

by Hans Daudt

Since the emergence of survey-analysis political scientists have used sample-data for analysing political change. If one is interested in analysing changes in the *relative* strength of parties, the usual techniques to study this phenomenon are unsatisfactory. A simple solution is to use in tables percentages of the total sample as is done in turnover tables.

In that way the *relative strength* of the various subgroups in samples for consecutive elections can be compared and specific categories within the electorate can be identified that are crucial for the change in the *relative strength* of the parties.

It might be that this simple kind of analysis has not been tried before, because election research has focused primarily on techniques to analyse findings from one sample on the base of which conjectures are made about possible causes and further developments.

Methodology and Comparative Politics

by Bob Lieshout

In this article the author tries to answer the question, whether or not the results of the research which goes by the name of *Comparative Politics*, can be classified as empirical scientific research. Whether or not comparative political scientists infringe the rules of empirical science. These rules are: firstly, the researcher should try to formulate the 'principles' that can explain the observable behaviour '(c)⊃(e)'; secondly, statements about observable phenomena are only accepted if the axiomatic (theoretical) systems from which they can be deduced, and the deductions themselves, are logically valid; thirdly, statements about observable phenomena that can be deduced from theoretical systems should be strictly universal; and fourthly, these strictly universal statements about observable phenomena should correspond with the 'facts', but also it must be possible for them to be refuted by the 'facts'.

A large number of researchers in the field of *Comparative Politics* fails to obey the first rule of empirical science. Instead of explaining why things are as they are, they merely present the reader with collections of curiosities. As Arend Lijphart has observed, too many students of the field are unaware of and not guided by the logic of empirical science. However, also the research-design proposed by Lijphart, the 'area-approach' or 'comparable-cases strategy', does not agree with the logic of empirical science. It does neither take into account the problem of diffusion, nor the problem that statements about relationships at the within-system level cannot be deduced from relationships found at the level of systems. Moreover, as Lijphart himself admits, the comparable-cases strategy can lead to no more than partial generalizations.

Finally, and most importantly, the area-approach, and this objection equally applies to its substitute proposed by Przeworski and Teune, the Most Different Systems Design, rests on the fallacy that 'scientific' methods could provide us with a theory. Nothing could be further from the truth. A theory is an act of creative imagination, while a 'scientific' method can be no more than a means to test whether or not statements about observable phenomena, which can be deduced from theories, correspond with the facts.

There can be no other conclusion than that the results of comparative political research cannot be classified as empirical scientific research. In the light of this conclusion, the author urges comparative political scientists, either to stop pretending that they are empirical scientists, or to begin to perform their research in accordance with the rules of empirical science. With respect to the latter option, the author suggests, that in the future comparative political scientists could concern themselves with devising theories and methods to diminish the effects of the perennial problem of the empirical social sciences, the rapid and constant change in the initial conditions.

The 1979-1980 Dutch MP-Questionnaire

by M. P. C. M. van Schendelen

In the field of legislative studies, self-consciousness on the used methods and techniques of research is usually low. Of many an empirical research among legislators—or to use the equivalent term: members of Parliament—only the results have been presented and discussed, not the various ways in which these results have been gathered.

In the article an account is given of the 1979-1980 survey among 205 (out of 225) Dutch Members of Parliament: the events that occurred, the problems we got, and the solutions we partially found. The survey consisted of both an oral interview (mean duration two hours) and a written questionnaire. The results have already been published.